Beer packaging design and perceived quality in Thailand

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

With anti-alcohol regulations limiting the promotion of beer brands in Thailand, effective packaging has become a vital touchpoint to communicate quality and image. Within this context, this thesis explores beer packaging designs and how they can affect Thai consumers' perceptions of beer quality. The resultant knowledge is then used to catalyse changes in the packaging design processes within the organisation of interest. The study is undertaken as an insider action research project, with the Group Marketing Director as the lead researcher. It consists of consumer surveys, focus group discussions, and individual interviews with key stakeholders in the organisation.

In Phase One, surveys aim to sense-check if beer packaging cues affect product quality perceptions. These cues include symbols, pictures, product and producer information. Also included are size, shape, haptics, colour, and bottle and label materials. They are subsequently included as focus group discussion points using statistical analyses to affirm their meaningfulness. In Phase Two, focus groups explore why these cues matter in quality perceptions. The results indicate that visual cues like material, colour, shape, and graphics are most important when perceiving quality from product packaging. These are underpinned by themes related to 'Safety and Health', 'Sustainability', and 'Marketing'. However, consumer involvement levels are raised when faced with brand unfamiliarity or design incongruency, and textual information becomes more critical because they offer quality and safety assurance.

In Phase Three, individual interviews elicit reflections about the industry, the consumer themes, and the design processes of the organisation. They reveal that visual and haptic cues enhance quality perceptions. However, such insights are often overshadowed by limitations such as cost, equipment constraints, and a reluctance to challenge typical category expectations. Eventually, the interviewees acknowledge a need to incorporate consumer insights into the packaging design processes. Changes are then made to existing design and research briefing templates to help guide members of the Marketing department.

Action research cycles of observing, planning, acting, and reflecting are embedded in each of these four chapters – Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis and Discussions, and Implications for Management Practices. An initial plan is drawn up in each cycle to refine the

research questions by observing how similar studies were conducted. In the reflective phase, procedural or knowledge gaps are identified and discussed. Specifically, the literature review findings are reflected against prevalent practices and beliefs, while the research methods are reflected against research paradigms and the research questions. The findings from the analyses at every stage are also deliberated on with relevant stakeholders to bring forth deep insights that trigger reconsiderations of existing bias, beliefs and practices.

Finally, this thesis outlines my development as a scholar-practitioner. It details the iteration of an initially lonely academic pursuit which eventually became a collaborative platform which my colleagues and I used to catalyse actionable changes within the organisation. It reinforces the importance of having multiple viewpoints to add richness, underlines that engagement leads to greater receptivity, and instils in me the discipline of critical reflection upon every step taken. These are essential lessons when confronting future wicked and messy problems at work or in life.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This opening chapter starts with an elaboration of the regulatory environment regarding the marketing of alcohol in Thailand. It highlights packaging design as an increasingly important marketing and communication device, especially in a highly restricted environment. It underlines the need to understand better how packaging designs may steer quality perceptions in Thailand and spotlights the possibility to utilise this knowledge to make packaging design processes in organisations more systematic, more robust, less intuitive and more insights-driven.

The following section introduces the key brewers, the leading brands that dominate the Thai beer market, and the competitive context of the organisation of interest. Anonymised details of the organisation are then provided with a specific emphasis on the marketing department and an outline of the lead researcher's involvement in the department.

After establishing an understanding of the Thai beer industry, the organisation and the department, the chapter elaborates on the problem this study aimed to address. It explains why the transfer of best practices has not happened despite the recruitment of external talent into the organisation. It then dovetails into the resultant problem of how standard operating processes in marketing have remained unchanged over the years, emphasising related packaging design processes. This section of the chapter reviews and highlights the issues with these processes and underlines the implications on the organisation and its competitiveness should the status quo remain with the existing processes. There is a clear need to address these issues, and to this end, the consequent research questions of this study are then spelt out.

The chapter then pivots and outlines the general approach this study will take to address the questions raised. Considering that specific methodological details will be provided in subsequent chapters, this chapter only touches briefly on the different phases in the study. However, what is emphasised is that action research will be adopted as a suitable approach for this study, considering that the findings will be used to improve packaging design practices in the organisation. This section underlines the importance of involving key marketing department members in the research to develop actions collectively and pervade new ways of working throughout the department.

Correspondingly, the roles of researchers are discussed. The chapter outlines the involvement of internal stakeholders as co-researchers focused on interpreting consumer findings through practitioners' lenses to enhance existing packaging design processes. This section also highlights the role duality of the lead researcher who is an organisational insider, and the associated ethical issues that could potentially arise. However, these details will be further elaborated in the chapter on Methodology.

Finally, this introduction chapter closes with an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Background

In response to the rapid increase in liver disease mortality (1977–2000), and the high road accident morbidity and mortality rates (1984–2000) that are attributed to the increase in alcohol consumption, the Thai government issued the Thai Health Promotion Foundation Act in 2001 (Thamarangsi 2005). The resulting foundation, known as ThaiHealth, subsequently launched an Alcohol Consumption Control Program with the specific intention to reduce consumption of alcohol and alcohol-related harm (Centre for Alcohol Studies, 2005). Various legislative initiatives were rolled out to further these aims, including alcohol promotion control measures, strict anti-drinking-driving regulations, excise duty increases, advertising bans and branding restrictions, and mandatory health warnings on packaging and advertising. Sales channels, selling hours and product displays were also restricted, and consumer promotions were banned (Thai Government Gazette, 2008). These restrictions are considered the strictest in the entire Indo-China region today, with Juergen Rehm, professor and chair of addiction policy at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, remarking, "Thailand has the strongest tradition of trying to curb alcohol consumption" (Bloomberg, 2015).

With all the regulatory limitations concerning brand communications and promotions, the launching of new brands became difficult, and the revitalisation of declining brands became a lot more challenging. To enhance brand-consumer preferences, and drive market share and profitability, marketers can no longer rely on conventional brand management approaches–product, pricing, promotion/ communications, and distribution. After all, advertising of alcohol products is banned in Thailand. Consumer promotions were also banned, as were trade promotions. Beer brand signages and visibility items like menu stands, coasters were removed and no longer permitted. Events promoting beer consumption were stopped gradually and it was no longer possible to organise such events. The authorities also planned to restrict the promotion of beer on social media. Considering all these restrictions, packaging design stood out as one of the few remaining avenues in the Thai alcohol market that possibly could trigger a reappraisal of consumer perception. It was thus unsurprising that alcohol producers in Thailand have begun to channel their resources into packaging designs to communicate brand positioning and enhance consumer perceptions.

Given the growing importance of packaging designs from a marketing perspective, it was no longer sufficient to rely simply on intuition, and subjective gut feel to get the designs right. Decisions should no longer be subjectively driven by personal bias and collective likes/dislikes. Therefore, this study investigated which packaging design cues steer quality perceptions in Thailand and why. Notably, the intention was to ultimately utilise the knowledge generated to sharpen my organisation's packaging design processes and make them more systematic, more robust, and less subjective. I embarked on this study in this context and with this pair of lenses.

1.3 The beer industry players in Thailand

The beer industry in Thailand is dominated by two leading players – the Boon Rawd Brewery Group and the ThaiBev Group. Boon Rawd is the producer of Singha Beer, Leo Beer, Singha Water and Singha Soda. It has a joint venture with Asahi to produce the Japanese brand locally and holds distributorship agreements with various brands such as Corona and Carlsberg. Boon Rawd was founded in 1933 by the Bhirombkahti family and is the pioneer in the beer industry in Thailand (Boon Rawd, 2016). On the other hand, ThaiBev is a more diversified group with interests in beer, spirits, and non-alcohol beverages. Founded by Charoen Sirivadhanabkhadi and his wife, the group's brands include Chang Beer, Archa Beer, Federbrau Beer, Ruang Khao white spirits, Hong Thong brown spirits, as well as Crystal Water, EST Cola, and Oishi Green Teas (ThaiBev, 2016). Together, Boon Rawd and ThaiBev control more than 95% of the beer market (Nielsen, 2014).

Besides these two leading players, Thai Asia Pacific Brewery, a joint venture between Thai Life Insurance and Heineken NV, is the only other company in the Thai beer market with some significant share, through their brands Heineken and Cheers Beer. Other than these locally produced brands, many other international brands like Corona, Hoegaarden, Asahi, Carlsberg etc., are also available. See Figure 1.1 for a selection of the beer brands available in Thailand. However, the imported international brands remain relatively small in volumes; this is due to a variety of reasons - high import duties imposed on alcohol beverages, the dominant players' control over the distribution network, as well as the highly restrictive regulatory environment that hindered the promotion and advertising of any new brands.

Figure 1.1: Selection of available beer brands in Thailand

Notwithstanding the somewhat restrictive environment, competition between the two family-owned businesses - Boon Rawd and ThaiBev - has been highly intense with product bundling, price-cutting, exclusive distribution tie-ups, and other tactics to outmanoeuvre each other. While Boon Rawd's Singha Beer was the leading dominant brand for many years since its founding, ThaiBev's Chang Beer became the young upstart to usurp Singha Beer as the most popular beer in 1998 and had managed to snare more than 50% market share between 2003 and 2005 (oly). However, since then, Boon Rawd has responded aggressively by launching Leo Beer against Chang Beer; Leo Beer eventually overtook Chang Beer in 2007, and it has held on to market leadership till today.

1.4 <u>The organisation</u>

In this study, the organisation of interest is one of the leading players in the Thai beer industry. The organisation is a family-owned business transitioning into a more professional outfit. In the past few years, several recruitment drives have brought in external talent to boost competencies in every department, including marketing. The focus of this study was on the marketing department, which is responsible for all brand building activities of the organisation's beer portfolio in Thailand, including leading new brand launches or updating the packaging designs of existing brands. Given the regulatory complexities of Thailand regarding the sales and marketing of alcohol, the department plays a crucial role in ensuring legal compliance while maintaining or enhancing the consumers' affinity for the brands in the portfolio.

There were seventeen people in the department with varying job grades, responsibilities and experiences. Some of the staff were new to the organisation while others have been there for more than five years. The department was led by the Marketing Director, who was supported by four direct reports, responsible for different brands within the portfolio. The rest of the department members were organised by specific functions, e.g., events, media, advertising production etc., all of which were carried out using surrogate non-alcoholic products bearing the same brand name. For example, Singha Beer has surrogate products like Singha drinking water and Singha soda; Leo Beer has surrogate products like Leo Soda; whilst Chang Beer has surrogate products like Chang mineral water and Chang soda. See Figure 1.2 below.

Figure 1.2: Thai beer brands and their surrogate non-alcohol products bearing the same brand names

I am the regional Divisional Head of Marketing for the organisation, based in Singapore, and I work closely with the marketing departments across different countries, including Thailand. I am also the lead researcher in this study.

1.5 The problem

As mentioned above, the organisation has recruited many external talents in recent years. The marketing department has, like other departments, benefitted from this recruitment as it sought to bolster its capabilities. The entry of external talent meant that each of these individuals brought his/her own best practices in marketing into the organisation. However, much of this knowledge remained tacit to the individual and was often not explicated for the rest of the department members. Little transfer of knowledge or best practices has transpired, often due to what the organisation called the "not-invented-here" syndrome – a resistance to accept new ideas. Standard operating processes have thus, despite the entry of the external talents, remained unchanged as before; for example, marketing planning templates of many years ago continued to be used. In particular, I noted that the packaging design briefing template and the research briefing template had not evolved at all.

The packaging design briefing template (see Figure 1.3) may initially appear sufficiently comprehensive. Nevertheless, a closer look indicated that there could be room for more specificity. Referring to the brief, it was noted that the briefing objective was more business-oriented than specifying to the agency what the new packaging design was supposed to deliver. It did not detail which design cues in beer packaging mattered to the consumers and why. Without such insights, the agency may be at risk of designing new packaging in the blind. It was also vague regarding the 'considerations' that the agency needed to consider. The briefing template was overall somewhat ambiguous, and depending on the competency or experience of the marketing person leading the packaging project, the information about shopping behaviour, or how the design proposals would be assessed, may be inaccurate or insufficient.

What are the business objectives?

-

What does the Agency need to deliver – which brand, which SKU?

-

How do we wish for the design to help achieve our objectives?

-

What does the brand offer to consumers?

- Image:
- Brew:

What is the brand DNA? (the thing that runs through everything the brand does)

Who are we talking to?

What should the agency take into consideration?

What's the competition?

What are the real strengths and weaknesses of the brand in its market?

<u>Strengths</u>

-

Weakness

-

What are the insights behind this project?

-

Where will this brand be seen, bought and consumed?

-

How do consumers choose what to buy in this category?

-

Points to Take Note on Design (Do's/ Don'ts):

Brand ID

-

Bottle Design

-

Figure 1.3: Current packaging design briefing template

Similarly, a look at the research brief for packaging also indicated gaps for improvement. See Figure 1.4. The agency was not explicitly asked to probe consumers' underlying motivations regarding why they liked or disliked or disregarded specific packaging cues. There was no guidance to the agency to investigate the boundaries of consumers' receptivity towards novel packaging designs. It was unclear if and how each packaging proposal may impact the consumers' perceptions of the brand. Indeed, the brief seemed to be simply seeking superficial assessments of which packaging proposal would be preferred by consumers.

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- **Background**

- **Marketing Objectives**

- **Research Objectives**

- **Information to obtain**
  - Likeability and purchase intention impact on brand loyalists (check for rejection)
  - Likeability and purchase intention impact on brand switchers (check for rejection)
  - Impact on current brand image and brand values
- **Research Design**
- **Target Respondents:**

Figure 1.4: Current research brief

As can be seen, the beer packaging design process – in terms of design agency brief and research agency brief – needed to be enhanced with deeper consumer insights related to packaging; they needed to be more directive and provide more guidance to stakeholders in the process. In their current form, they were not very helpful in directing the agencies, nor would they be beneficial to junior members of the marketing department who may be undertaking packaging design projects for the first time. Too much depended on the subjective likes/dislikes of the project champion, which in turn would be influenced by his/her personal bias and perspectives. Such subjective and intuitive approaches would also mean that junior members of the marketing team would not learn quickly from the tacit knowledge of the more senior members. As a result, the organisation would not accelerate its professionalising transition.

This situation was not beneficial to the organisation, especially considering the increasingly challenging regulatory environment regarding beer marketing activities, which has left packaging design as one of the few remaining touchpoints that may be used to shape consumer perceptions and behaviours legally. If the design process in the organisation continued without change and failed to incorporate real consumer insights into the briefing and assessment templates, the quality of packaging designs would continue to be a process of trial-and-error. There urgently needed to be an impetus or mechanism to stimulate existing senior members of the marketing department to question the status quo towards beer packaging in the organisation and collectively develop a more fact-based, more robust and systematic approach - one they could call their own.

As explained above, the issues were interconnected, complex and unique to the organisation. Not enough was understood about packaging designs; and that any change would likely be messy since many stakeholders, and correspondingly a large number of varying opinions, would be involved. Considering the constant disruptions in the external environment, along with the personnel and cultural changes brought about by the organisation's transformation efforts, to uplift the overall packaging design capabilities in the marketing department would not be simple; it would require great insights and collaboration. It was against the premise of this intention that this study was birthed. Correspondingly, the questions I sought to address were:

- Which beer packaging cues matter to Thai consumers when perceiving quality?
- Why do they matter?
- How can my colleagues and I collectively use this knowledge to enhance our organisational packaging design processes?

1.6 Addressing the issue

To address the first question, it was essential to establish a list of packaging cues relevant to this study. Through literature reviews, a simple consumer survey, and a discussion with an external design agency, I generated a list of items that consumers deemed crucial in their perceptions of quality. The purpose of this preliminary list was to incorporate them into consumer focus groups for in-depth discussions. By fielding this list of items into the discussions and probing the consumers, I could unravel insights and themes that underpinned many of their responses. This hence addressed the second question of "why do they matter". Nevertheless, I was mindful of the third imperative – "How can my colleagues and I collectively use this knowledge to enhance our organisational packaging design processes?"

Ultimately, the findings of this study would be used to improve packaging design practices in my organisation. I would be pursuing action and change at my workplace by understanding consumers' perceptions of packaging, so; action research would be a suitable approach for this study. Coghlan & Shani (2018, p 4) define action research as "an emergent inquiry process that integrates behavioural science with organisational knowledge to bring about change in organisations". Action research studies are undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry, involving key stakeholders of the problem as participants. By promoting inclusiveness and participation, accountability and commitment to actions may be secured (Coghlan & Brannick, 2019).

Given that my marketing colleagues possessed an in-depth understanding of the Thailand beer category and the organisation's packaging design processes, it was only sensible that they were included in this study. By including them as partners in the collaborative reflective and iterative processes of action research, they would become active and empowered participants in the inquiry to effect functional improvements in the packaging design approach in my organisation (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). After all, it was important that my marketing colleagues in Thailand must feel engaged in their roles and become their own change agents, empowered to improve their own and their team's performance.

From an organisational perspective, this is also important because, despite the entry of several external talents to professionalise the operations, there has been little transfer of knowledge or best practices due to a general resistance to accepting new ideas. The status quo in the old way of doing things has remained so for many years. This was sub-optimal because specific ways of working needed to be enhanced, as the earlier review of the packaging design and research briefing templates had shown. Thus, by involving key members of the marketing department in this research, it was intended that they would acknowledge the need for change, commit to the changes, then collectively develop actions and pervade the new ways of working throughout the department. By enhancing and establishing new ways of developing and accessing packaging designs, all marketing colleagues would be guided systematically and robustly whenever tasked to lead packaging design projects.

1.7 Role of the researchers

The action research approach in this study was deliberately participatory for the reasons outlined above. However, I was conscious that the participation of my colleagues in the study would not be perceived as an additional burden to their already heavy workload. After all, the study cannot be deemed an academic pursuit that has no impact on them. Most of the research work involving external stakeholders like consumers and design agencies was undertaken by me as the lead researcher, and the involvement of internal stakeholders like my colleagues was very much at the level of co-researchers, interpreting consumer findings through practitioners' lenses, in the context of our current packaging design processes. This level of participation was manageable from my colleagues' time perspective. It was also highly appreciated since the discussions were directly pertinent to their work, allowing them to ponder and reflect against actual practices.

Playing the role of the lead researcher, however, meant that I had to carefully guide the participation of my colleagues in the action research. I had to establish the topic's relevance to our work and draw them into sharing their current beliefs and practices, before inviting them to provide their views on consumers' feedback on packaging designs. Engaging them to go deeper to appreciate underlying consumer motivations triggered self-reflection and surfaced acknowledgement of gaps in the existing processes. This would open up further dialogue on how best to close these gaps in specific, actionable terms.

As for me, leading the study as a researcher while still playing a dual role as a member of the marketing team in my organisation, posed a role identity dilemma with inherent ethical concerns that I needed to navigate carefully (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). For example, while I could gain access to the informal network within my organisation, I was careful to anonymise the identity of my colleagues in the write-up. At the same time, as we critically reflected on the issues in our current practice, I was mindful that uncomplimentary perspectives might emerge, and I would then need to manage these to prevent unproductive tensions.

Notwithstanding these potential issues, as long as these were managed carefully, this action research would help the organisation to uplift the packaging designs of our brands to improve quality perceptions amongst consumers, which was ultimately the primary goal of this study.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, which has provided an overview of the research background, the problem and the objectives, Chapter Two will detail the literature review conducted for this study. It will provide a better appreciation of the extant understanding of packaging cues and quality perceptions, setting up for investigation the necessary scaffold of packaging items and themes that potentially affected quality perceptions.

Chapter Three discusses the research methodology and the research design process used in this study. It outlines the research paradigm – the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research methodology. At the same time, considering this study's research questions and intention, the chapter elaborates on the rationale for adopting an action perspective. It provides details and justifications for the different phases of the study - consumer survey, focus groups, and individual interviews - along with the corresponding sampling methods and sample profiles. The approaches towards the conduct of the fieldwork for each phase and the analyses of the corresponding results will also be covered in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four focuses on the analysis and findings of the first two phases of consumer surveys and focus groups. The analyses of the consumer survey data, based on descriptive statistics and basic ANOVA, will be detailed. The findings established a preliminary list of packaging items that consumers claimed affected their perceptions of quality. These were then incorporated into the focus groups, and the subsequent thematic analyses of these discussions will be elaborated. The findings explained the relationships between perceived quality and different packaging cues.

Chapter Five is dedicated to the individual interviews with my colleagues. It opens by outlining their views about the macro trends affecting the beer category in Thailand and the implications on marketing, specifically on packaging design. It elaborates on the analyses of their comments and insights related to the current organisational practices and the consumer findings. It ends with their respective reflections on the areas needing improvement, their commitment to change and the specific actions.

The last chapter is the concluding chapter which summarises the salient findings of this study. It will also elaborate on my reflective journey along with this action research as each chapter unfolded. Finally, it will outline my development as a scholar-practitioner throughout the DBA program as I progress towards completing this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to develop the parameters of the present study based on research related to packaging designs and how packaging designs may influence consumers' perceptions of product quality. The review of literature in these fields and how they have evolved helps point the research in the right direction. It provides a theoretical understanding for reflection against actual practices in my organisation. This chapter lays the foundation for the eventual evaluation of the results arising from this present action research.

This chapter will begin with fundamental concepts of brand and brand building and where packaging designs and quality perceptions are situated within these concepts. An overview of the various literature themes (Azzi et al. 2012) related to the subject of packaging - Safety, Ergonomics, Logistics, Sustainability, and Marketing - will then be provided. Considering the aim of this study and the corresponding research questions - what packaging elements matter, why, and how they matter - the resulting literature search and consequent review will be on marketing-driven literature and focus on those that study the communicative and brand-building aspects of packaging.

In particular, special interest will be given to studies and theoretical frameworks that provide more significant insights into factors affecting packaging design, exploring the interactions between these factors and quality perception. After establishing the importance of packaging design and quality perceptions, the focus of the literature review will pivot to specific packaging cues that mattered to consumers. The varied packaging cues will be compartmentalised into high- and low-level sensory stimuli for further literature investigation. Particular attention will be given to those literature that analyse the visual and haptic aspects of packaging and how they affect the perceptions and behaviours of consumers. The literature review of each of these packaging stimuli will confirm if they should be included in my research.

In structuring as such, the literature review will provide a theoretical framework to help me better understand packaging designs and their impact on consumers and their quality perceptions. This will then provide me with appropriate guidance as I look to enhance the packaging design process in my organisation.

2.2 Brands and the importance of brand building

Before discussing the role and elements of packaging in brand building, it is essential to set the stage and define what a brand is. A brand is defined as a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity and build a product's reputation, service, person, place, or organisation (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). To illustrate, Toyota and Mercedes Benz are automobile brands that provide functional transportation. However, the former is associated with perceived reliability emotionally, while the latter is typically synonymous with engineering excellence. Kapferer (2016) and Pickton and Broderick (2005) argue that brands exist to help to entrench consumer loyalty, creating an intangible 'moat' against the competition to protect and improve revenue. It is thus vital for companies to invest in brand-building.

In considering brand-building, it may be helpful to use the metaphor of a person to represent a brand. MacInnis & Folkes (2017) suggest that brands may be seen to possess human-like features, e.g., Disneyland - a brand that is deemed to be friendly. Brands may also be perceived as extensions of oneself and reflect ones' beliefs and values. A brand may be functional, e.g., thirst-quenching, low fuel consumption, etc. They may also be emotional, e.g., feeling reassured, trendy, etc. To illustrate this 'brands-as-humans' metaphor, Levi's denim jeans are often described as personifying the ordinary, hardworking, and traditional American (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). Elaborating, Fernandes & Moreira (2019) argue that emotional benefits are often stronger than functional brand relationships. After all, while functional values or attributes are often generic and easily replicated by competitors, emotional attributes tend to be more distinctive and appeal to the consumer's desire for sensory pleasure and cognitive stimulation (Shimp, 2003).

Communicating a blend of functional and emotional brand values or attributes that resonate with the target consumer enhances consumer affinity towards the brand and positively influences purchase decisions (Ilaw, 2014; Aaker, 1996). After all, such resonance helps reinforce the consumer's desired identity, social position, and affiliations (Cătălin & Andreea, 2014; Corrigan, 2011). As a result of such resonance, consumers will seek and recognise a brand through its packaging design; after all, the packaging design is the visual face of the brand (Ambrose and Harris, 2011). Ambrose and Harris (2011) advocate profiling the archetypical target consumer such as their likes, motivations, aspirations, etc., so that packaging can be designed to ensure good reception. In other words, it can be said that how a brand is designed, how it is packaged, and how it is communicated impresses upon its target consumers the brand equity of the brand. To this end, Chow et al. (2017) suggest that brand associations and perceived quality are significant variables driving brand equity, leading to brand loyalty. This is in line with Kapferer (2016), who proposes that brand equity could be measured by one or more of these four main categories – awareness, loyalty, perceived quality, and image associations.

To this end, packaging is often seen as one element that may increase brand equity and desire (Maffei & Schifferstein, 2017; Underwood et al., 2001). Extrapolating, it can be argued that consumers may perceive the quality of a brand from the way it is packaged. This is an important aspect to appreciate since a better-quality perception allows for a higher price premium to be charged. At the same time, if the actual usage experience matches or exceeds the pre-usage perceptions, a consumer-brand relationship will be established and likely result in brand loyalty (Kotler et al., 2013). This is highly important for my organisation in Thailand, considering the constant disruptions in the external environment, and the unsettling personnel and cultural changes brought about by the organisation's transformation efforts highlighted in Chapter One. It is with this consideration that I focused on packaging in this study.

2.3 The different roles of packaging

Rundh (2009) suggests that beyond the functional roles of protection, preservation, and presentation, the role of packaging is to attract the consumer, evoke interest to know more about the product, trigger purchase, generate consumer trust, and reinforce the likelihood of repurchase. This point was also underlined by Kotler et al. (2001) and Keller (2013). They argue that packaging provides a brand-building medium that communicates the values and positioning of the brand, which in turn helps consumers infer the quality of the product. Indeed, in the highly competitive low-involvement Fast-Moving-Consumer-Goods (FMCG) market, packaging communicates powerful rational and emotive benefits to consumers at the point of sale (Wells et al., 2007; Prendergast & Pitt, 1996). It is thus unsurprising that numerous studies (Gil-Pérez et al., 2020; Mugge et al., 2017) show that packaging could, in fact, influence consumers' perceptions.

As there are numerous studies related to packaging, the meta-analysis from Azzi et al. (2012) is helpful to sense-make of the major literary themes. Reviewing some 89 articles, the authors arrive at five major literature themes related to packaging – Safety, Ergonomics, Logistics, Sustainability, and Marketing. Under Safety are studies that focus on the primary function of packaging – which is to offer safety to the consumer and protect the product. Considerations included the chemical and mechanical characteristics of the packaging and the sensitive nature of the product. Another two themes relate to the ergonomics and the logistics of packaging. These literature analyse the structural aspects of packaging - considerations that affect warehousing and transportation operations, from storage to handling to shipping. Another emerging theme relates to the sustainability of packaging. The studies under this theme focus on packaging materials' economic and environmental impact and their corresponding procurement. Finally, their meta-analysis shows a final theme – packaging and marketing, emphasising the communicative and brand building aspects of packaging. Such studies focus on how packaging designs address the needs of the consumers, help promote brands, and convey brand values and attributes to its targeted consumers. See Figure 2.1 for a diagrammatic depiction of the themes from the meta-analysis.

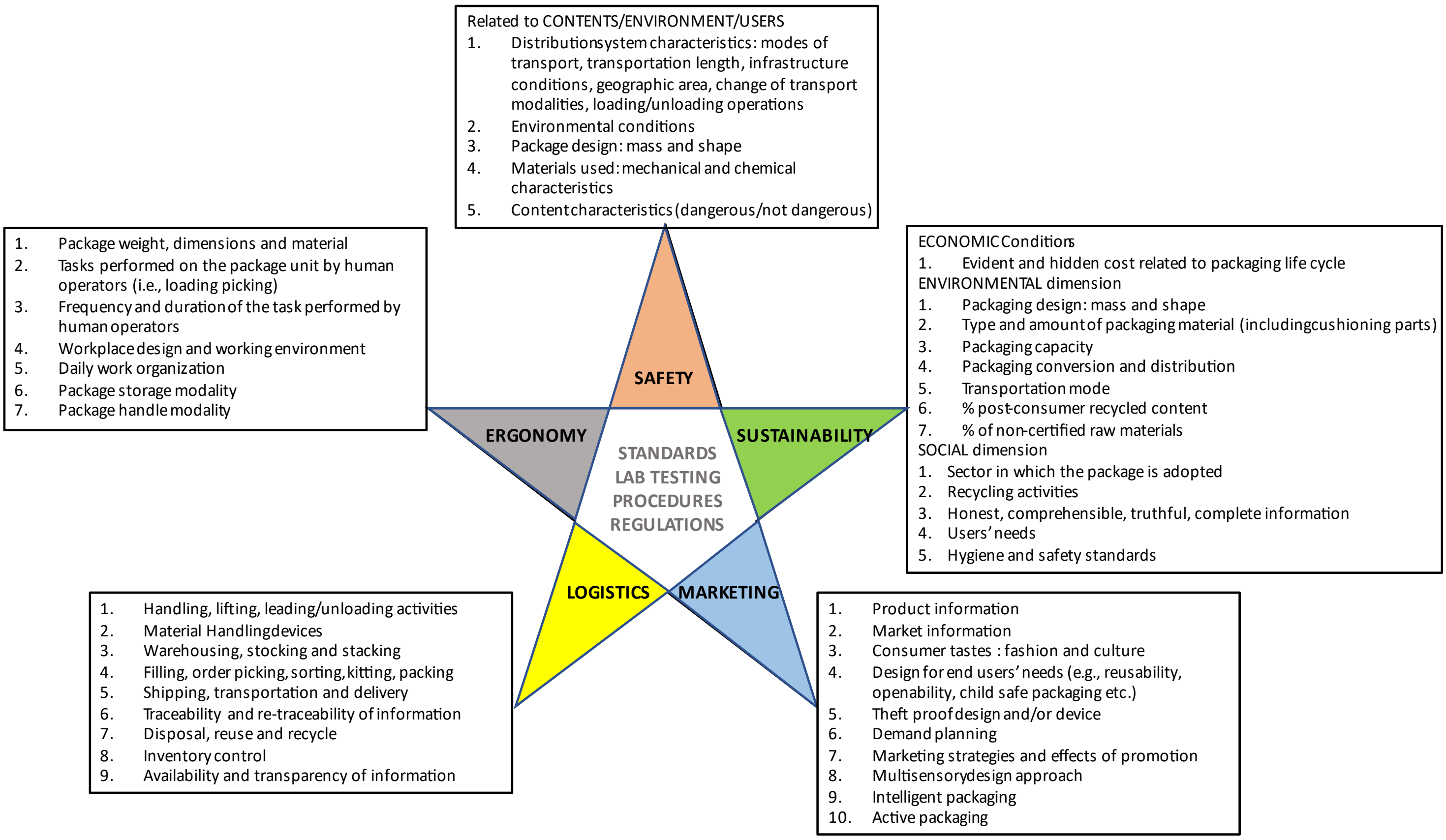


Figure 2.1: Meta-analysis of packaging literature

As highlighted above, one of the themes that emerged from the meta-analysis was Sustainability. Over the last two decades, stakeholder interest (government, manufacturers, and consumers) has been growing to make packaging more sustainable (Oloyede & Lignou, 2021), with an emphasis on the "3Rs"—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle". However, Oloyede & Lignou (2021) observe that consumers are nevertheless unwilling to pay more for sustainable packaging despite increasing awareness. This is in line with the findings of De Koning et al. (2015), who also suggests that sustainability considerations do not influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers in developing countries or emerging markets. Even in developed countries, Boesen et al. (2019) realise that consumers have limited knowledge of sustainability-related ecolabels. Against this backdrop, I decided that sustainable, environmentally-friendly packaging would not be a primary focus of this Thailand-centric research. Nevertheless, this theme is of growing importance and will still be explored in Chapters Four and Five.

Instead, the focus of this study would relate to the marketing aspects of packaging. Of particular interest would be the literature that looks into ways that packaging may help brands stand out on display shelves, grab attention and also assist consumers to infer a brand's quality, especially relative to the many other brands within the category. These studies highlight that familiar packaging offer uncertainty minimisation and provide quality assurance to the consumer, especially in situations where purchase decisions are often quick and habitual, e.g., in cluttered FMCG categories (Melin, 1997; Azzi et al., 2012). It is within this area of studies – packaging and its impact on brand identification, information provision, and purchase persuasion - that this present research shall be situated.

2.4 Packaging design as a brand-building tool

Packaging is an essential communicative and brand-building device, and it is crucial to understand how consumers infer meaning from packaging design. In particular, it is imperative to develop a deeper understanding of how colours, shapes, and graphics may influence stimuli, especially in the context of the shopping environment, the product category, and considering the values and attributes that the brand wants to convey. This is important because purchase decisions are often made quickly in front of the shelf (Underwood & Ozanne, 1998). Based on a study by the Point-Of-Purchase Advertising Institute's (POPAI), which covered 50,000 purchases made by more than 4,200 shoppers in seven major U.S. geographic regions, Clement (2007) shares that when consumers make their choice of daily commodities in-store, 85% of purchases are made without the evaluation of alternatives, and 90% of decisions are made primarily by examining the front of a package. Consumers infer meaning from packaging designs. To understand this better, the ‘sword’ framework – Figure 2.2 - from Brodersen & Manolova (2008) is relevant.

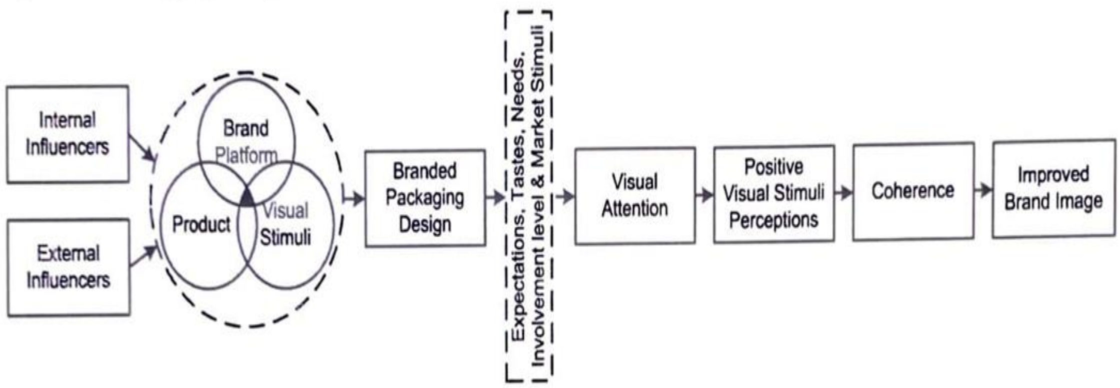


Figure 2.2: Packaging design for brand building framework

In this framework, two primary sources of influence affect the packaging design process. The internal influencers relate to the organisational cross-departmental workflows and may include sales and marketing specialists and production and finance specialists. The external influencers refer to the external environment, including, but not limited to, governing regulations, the available packaging technology and suppliers, the retail environment, as well as social and economic trends. These influences frame the environment within which the packaging design process takes place.

The framework proposes that the packaging design process considers the product, brand platform, and visual stimuli. It is important to recognise that consumers typically equate the product packaging as the product until it is used and experienced (Underwood & Klein, 2002). In other words, a product's intrinsic attributes are initially inferred from its extrinsic attributes, e.g., colour, shape, design compositions, etc., i.e., the visual stimuli it provides. For example, when consumers see the famous aquamarine jewellery packaging from Tiffany & Co, even before they see the actual piece of jewellery, they are likely to sense already the understated class and romance typically exuded by the brand. Similarly, to consumers, the Chanel No. 5 bottle is synonymous with the classic perfume that it contains. The relationship between a product and its packaging is therefore inextricable. The following sections will elaborate on each of the three key considerations in the packaging process in Figure 2.2 – visual stimuli, brand platform, and expectations.

2.4.1 Visual stimuli

In line with the packaging design framework in Figure 2.2 above, Wang (2013) indicates that consumer attitudes towards visual packaging directly influence the perceived quality and brand preference. More specifically, he concludes that designers and marketers should focus heavily on visual packaging design stimuli such as colour, typeface, logo, graphics, and size. Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence (2015) also suggest that consumers derive preconceptions about the product from its packaging prior to actual usage. Likewise, Machiels & Karnal (2016) and Celhay & Remaud (2018) suggest that the communicative impact of visual packaging stimuli such as shape, size, colour, and graphics influence product evaluation and purchase intentions.

In addition, Westerman et al. (2013), Bar & Neta (2006), and Spinelli & Niedziela (2016) conclude that packaging shapes may be used to manipulate consumer expectations and emotions. Separately, Hess et al. (2014) and Venter et al. (2010) demonstrate that the thickness of the bottle material impacts perceived quality, reliability, value, and purchase intentions and that packaging material is critical to the consumer experience. Barnett (2016) also reports that the impact of labelling on people's taste perception is significant. By changing the label's colour, graphics, text, and shape, the responses that relate to perceived quality, overall taste, taste attributes, and purchase intent will change accordingly. An example of how visual stimulus may help associate a specific shape and colour with a brand is Coca-Cola's proprietary contour-shaped bottle and the characteristic use of red and white colours in its logo design configuration. Another example is the distinctive use of triangular shapes in Toblerone's chocolate products and packaging range. See Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Distinctive colour and shape associated with brands

Likewise, for the Thai energy drink consumer, the short golden can is synonymous with the local Thai Red Bull, while the sleek tall silver/blue can is deemed the international Red Bull energy drink – Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Thai Red Bull versus international Red Bull

Closer to the category under study, it is observed that there is an association between colours and brands in Thailand's beer market - yellow is closely associated with Singha Beer, red with Leo Beer, and green with Chang Beer. See Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5: Association between colours and beer brands in Thailand

Therefore, it is vital to create a design that is distinctive and ownable by the brand. It further follows that a brand must draw attention through optimal visual stimuli and lead the consumer to purchase. This is especially so when we consider that there is a cluster of visual stimuli all around the consumer in the retail environment (Pickton and Broderick, 2005; Clement, 2007).

2.4.2 Brand platform

Another consideration in the packaging design framework in Figure 2.2 is the brand platform. A brand platform is a coherent architecture of brand values, functional and emotive benefits that distinguishes a brand from its competitor (Brodersen & Manolova, 2008). As mentioned previously, a brand platform may be understood from a metaphoric perspective - a brand is like a person with values and attributes. This perspective suggests that packaging designs must convey values and attributes in ways that resonate with the environment, the category, and the target consumers. In fact, in the framework, for a branded packaging design to be successful, it is essential that these three consideration points of the packaging design process – product, visual stimuli, and brand platform, synchronise and harmonise with each other to deliver consistency in brand messaging to the target consumer.

2.4.3 Expectations

After considering the product, brand platform, and visual stimuli, designers may develop a branded packaging design, as postulated in the packaging design framework. This design will then be considered against the consumers' expectations. The consumer may expect the packaging to stand out against its competitors, yet, he/she may not expect it to deviate too drastically from typical category cues. In other words, the product packaging must stay within category typicality (Goode et al., 2012). In their study, Goode et al. (2012) demonstrate the need for designers and marketers to be prudent and not exercise over-innovativeness, or risk the product becoming atypical of its category. Such atypicality negatively affects consumer evaluations. An example is Fabuloso (see Figure 2.6), a detergent brand that tried to design its packaging on a fruit-scented smell platform. However, the resultant packaging design was so category atypical that it went against consumers' expectations of what a detergent should look like; consumers confused it as fruit juice concentrate.

Figure 2.6: Fabuloso - category atypicality

Goode et al. (2012) suggest that incrementally innovative designs may be more acceptable than revolutionary visual aesthetic designs, which risk potential categorisation uncertainty.

The authors emphasise that introducing innovative visual aesthetic designs must be carried out prudently by pre-communicating deliberate associations with typical category cues. This is consistent with the findings of Verganti (2006), who states that category certainty provides a point of reference for consumers to assess an innovatively designed product. A look at the zero-alcohol beers from major brewers illustrates this well. The beers were all in green bottles featuring blue-heavy labels. See Figure 2.7. Contrasting the examples of Figure 2.7 with Figure 2.6, the apparent dilemma for designers is the delicate balance between wanting to stand out while not deviating far from category typical cues.

Figure 2.7: Zero-alcohol beers - category typicality

The rest of the framework pertains to the cognitive processes that happen at the point of purchase. At the point of purchase decision, a key point to note is that while pricing remains a crucial determinant, packaging also plays an influential role (Amril & Heryanto, 2020). Packaging provides the all-important visual stimuli intended to draw the attention of the target consumer and engage the consumer's involvement. This, in turn, is dependent on whether the product and packaging matches or exceeds the consumer's expectations, which may include several other factors, i.e., if the brand features promotional packaging or if the brand is already part of the consumer's habitual brand usage repertoire, or if the brand associations resonate with the consumer.

Armed with an appreciation of the product design process framework, I set out to establish the relationship between packaging and brand building, mainly to understand the link between packaging and perceived brand benefits, including perceived quality. Söderlund et al. (2017) and Lundell & Wigstrand (2016) argue that packaging design is a core marketing component to communicate with consumers when they make in-store purchase decisions, and packaging design should therefore be deemed a critical aspect of brand-building.

Having underlined that packaging design is a critical driver in brand-building and how it influences purchase decisions, the following section discusses literature related to perceived quality.

2.5 Perceived quality

As postulated in the framework shown in Figure 2.2, a brand that is attractive to its consumer is likely to be perceived to offer quality that is in line with the consumer's expectations. But what is perceived quality? Aaker (1996), Keller (2013), and Yasin et al. (2007) define perceived quality simply as the overall consumer feeling towards a brand regarding the quality of the product or service. Such feelings can be harnessed to create differentiation for the brand and generate reasons-to-believe and reasons-to-buy (Aaker, 1991). A positive and strengthened perception of quality would affect consumer choice and lead to increased purchase and loyalty towards the brand (Zeithaml, 1988; Delong et al., 2004).

However, it is crucial to realise that given the subjective and individual nature of feelings, perceived quality is a summary cognitive and emotional construct that has little to do with actual specifications of quality (Aaker, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988; Erenkol & Duygun, 2010). Perceived quality is a consumer-based perspective (Garvin, 1983; Pickton and Broderick, 2005), whereby the consumer becomes aware of the different stimuli he encounters, selects, organises them, and interprets them into helpful knowledge to him/her. Due to each individual's subjective processes of selection and interpretation, the same visual stimulus, e.g., packaging, may evoke different perceptions. This individual subjectivity is influenced by his/her way of filtering and compartmentalising information and his/her expectations that past experiences have shaped. For example, an individual may habitually pick out a particular brand of beer very quickly because the familiar brand packaging reminds of a positive recent usage experience, which then resultantly filters out other beer brands from his/her repertoire.

Zeithaml (1988) and Choi & Lee (2019) argue that perceptions of quality may be influenced by extrinsic and intrinsic product elements that communicate specific signals deemed necessary from the consumers' viewpoint. Intrinsic quality cues are integral to the make-up of the product. In contrast, extrinsic quality cues refer to features that do not physically make up the product but remain intimately linked to it, e.g., price, brand, packaging, etc. Expanding on this, Steenkamp (1990) and Sinha & Verma (2020) suggest that intrinsic product elements may more significantly affect quality perceptions in utilitarian product categories (e.g., detergents, personal care), while extrinsic elements may have a more significant influence on perceptions in image-driven product categories (e.g., perfumes, food & beverages). From my own experience in the beer industry, consumers often assess product quality through packaging design. The relationship between packaging and perceived quality is depicted in the framework proposed by Lundell & Wigstrand (2016) – see Figure 2.8 below.

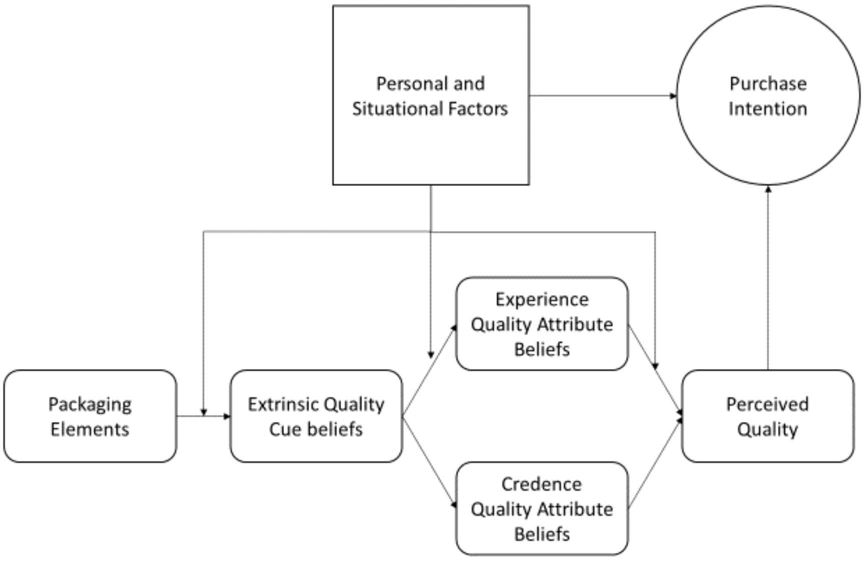


Figure 2.8: Relationship between packaging and perceived quality

In this framework, packaging elements are deemed to provide extrinsic cues that convey beliefs related to quality. The framework suggests that consumers perceive quality from extrinsic cues before purchase; after all, prior to consumption, they cannot observe or experience the product's actual quality (Steenkamp, 1990; Magnier & Schoormans, 2015). Such perceptions arise from beliefs concerning experience quality cues and credence quality cues (Steenkamp, 1990). Experience quality cues beliefs refer to beliefs about attributes that developed from the actual consumption experience of the product, e.g., taste, aroma, texture, etc. On the other hand, beliefs about credence quality cues relate to beliefs regarding quality attributes that are not observable or tangibly experienced from the consumption, e.g., nutritional value, quality of ingredients and production processes, country of origin, etc. These beliefs and how they are formed are further influenced by the interaction between personal and situational factors. In short, this framework translates normative facts about packaging into beliefs, personal and situational factors. Taking on this perspective may provide practical guidance to my colleagues and me as we collaborate on improvements to my organisation's packaging design thinking and processes. With that in mind, the individual parts of the framework - beliefs, the personal and situational factors, and how they affect perceived quality, will now be elaborated on in the following sections.

2.5.1 Personal factor - purchase involvement

Mittal and Lee (1989) define purchase involvement as the amount of interest and time/effort a consumer invests in processing product purchase decisions - from becoming aware of the brand to understanding its functional and emotional benefits and matching these benefits to his/her own needs and expectations, before making the final purchase decision. Automobiles, computers, and audio-visual equipment are examples of products with high purchase involvement, while detergents, snacks, beers and most FMCG products typically feature low involvement. Steenkamp (1990) proposes that as involvement level increases, the emphasis on intrinsic cues to form beliefs about quality increases. Conversely, as involvement level decreases, the emphasis on extrinsic cues to perceive quality increases. To this end, Bloch (1995) suggests that in low involvement purchases, distinctive packaging designs serve to communicate quality, while at the same time allowing the brand to stand out from the competition.

2.5.2 Personal factor - prior knowledge

Previous experiences with a brand lay the foundation upon which the consumer may evaluate the brand. The more extensive the knowledge, the more entrenched the consumer, will be in his/her views. Such experiences provide a framework for comparison against one's expectations and against other available competing brands (Holbrook, 2005). Prior knowledge may arise from impressions formed from encounters with the brand's advertising, friends' or media reviews, packaging design, actual consumption etc. (Schoormans & Robben, 1997; Clement, 2007). If there has been no or limited consumption experience, the quality perception will be shaped by other impression touchpoints and his/her beliefs regarding the extent that the brand can fulfil his/her desired consumption experience. These beliefs will arise from both intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues. Suppose previous encounters offered superior experiences to other brands, i.e., function, image, values and attributes, price, availability, etc. In that case, there is a likelihood of enhanced loyalty and vice versa whether such experiences are deemed superior or otherwise is subjective, depending on the individual's expectations, which in turn is influenced by personal factors such as purchasing power, education, predisposition to risk and quality, his/her motivation to purchase (Sadilek, 2019; Steenkamp, 1990).

2.5.3 Situational considerations

Beyond personal factors such as involvement and prior knowledge, situational factors also affect how individuals perceive quality. Two situational considerations are fundamental – motivation to purchase; and time to make a purchase decision. Depending on whether the individual is driven more by functional (utilitarian) or emotional (expressive) motivations, there will be a differing emphasis on intrinsic and extrinsic cues to base his/her beliefs about quality (Steenkamp, 1990). At the same time, Bettman et al. (1998) suggest that the evaluation of these quality cues will also vary according to the time available to make a purchase decision. They argue that fewer cues will be considered when forming beliefs about quality under time pressure. These situational factors interact with personal factors to influence the emphasis on intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues and influence quality beliefs. Reflecting on the beer category in Thailand, such situational considerations resonate. I have observed that consumers are not highly involved and spend very little time deciding their beer purchase. Their purchase motivation seemed routine, and they appeared to identify their regular brands very quickly visually.

2.6 Quality perceptions from intrinsic and extrinsic packaging cue beliefs

Based on the above framework by Lundell & Wigstrand (2016), we now learn that quality beliefs can be inferred from extrinsic quality cues found on packaging elements. Personal and situational factors influence this inference while the individual makes his purchase decision. At the same time, it is important to appreciate that every individual possesses his/her own set of prior beliefs and biases as shaped by his/her culture. Wu et al. (2014) and Crouch & Plewa (2008) show that consumers infer quality from extrinsic cues such as label style and packaging. Their study supports the findings of Pechmann & Ratneshwar (1992) and Veale (2007) that also indicate that extrinsic cues are strong indicators of high quality.

Similarly, Veidung's (2011) study demonstrates that in the bottled water category, the more aesthetically pleasing the bottle's design, the higher the perceived quality amongst consumers. As Silayoi and Speece (2007) suggest, packaging design is thus a critical brand choice discriminator because it conveys several cues to help shape quality beliefs about the brand. Cues such as colour, shape, material, size, tactility, product information, etc., are stimuli individuals respond to (Kotler et al., 2013). Individuals utilise these cues to obtain and infer information before making their final purchase decision. For example, Spence (2012) suggests that different packaging shapes may influence even taste perceptions, e.g., bitterness is associated with angular shapes while sweetness is associated with round shapes. Similarly, Becker et al. (2011) demonstrate that angular-shaped packaging enhances taste intensity relative to round-shaped packaging.

At this point, it may be helpful to recap what the literature review has revealed thus far. It is now clear that packaging design is a critical component of brand building and a critical factor in influencing quality perceptions. This, in turn, will impact purchase decisions, especially in categories of low purchase involvement. Additionally, we learnt that specific packaging cues would convey different quality beliefs about the brand, subject to situational, experiential, and personal factors. Considering that this study seeks to understand which beer packaging cues matter, why they matter, and how we may use this knowledge to enhance my organisation's packaging design process, it is vital to understand how packaging cues imbue meaning to the individual. As Van Ooijena et al. (2017) point out, any research related to the study of the effects of packaging design and explicit cues in a comparative context will significantly contribute to knowledge on the relationship between packaging design and consumer behaviour. To this end, the following section discusses the Multisensory Analysis of Product Packaging (MAPP) framework (Velasco & Spence, 2019). This framework will help in the inquiry of why specific packaging cues matter more than others.

2.7 The multisensory analysis of product packaging framework

Given the importance of packaging cues in shaping quality beliefs and perceptions, Velasco and Spence (2019) created the Multisensory Analysis of Product Packaging (MAPP) framework to understand better how and why different sensory characteristics of packaging affect consumers' perceptions – see Figure 2.9. This could then guide how best to configure different packaging cues to optimally deliver the brand's intended proposition to its target consumers.

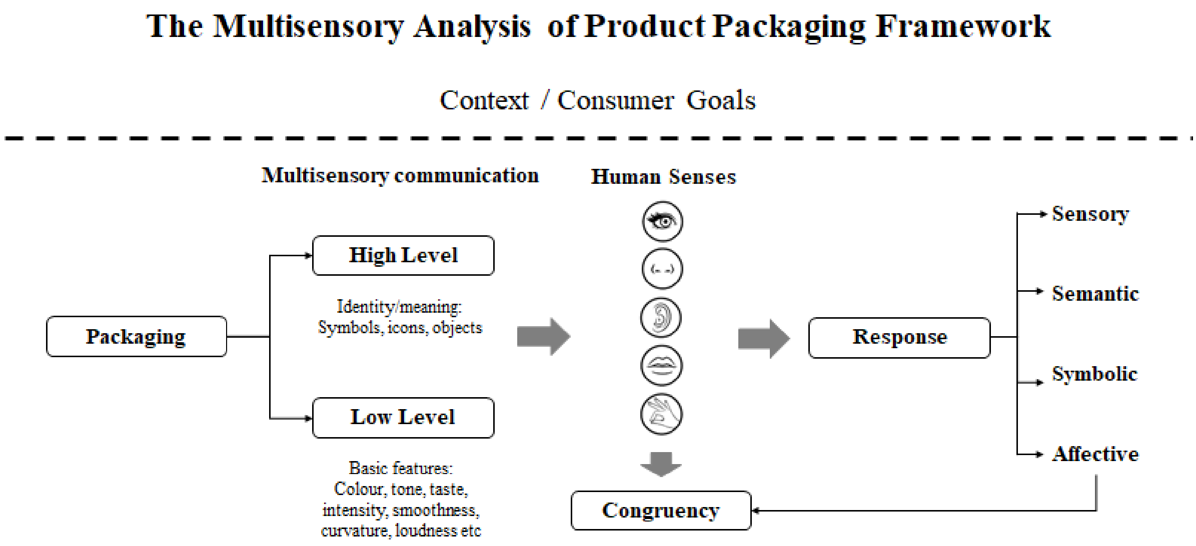


Figure 2.9: Multisensory analysis of product packaging framework

The MAPP proposes that visual stimuli and other multisensory cues related to the product and packaging design influence perceptions of the brand. The MAPP builds on the frameworks of Steenkamp (1990), Brodersen & Manolova (2008), and Lundell & Wigstrand (2016), which have been considered above, and further highlights that external environmental factors, as well as personal and situational considerations, may interact with multisensory cues to help the individual form his/her beliefs and responses towards the packaging design and the brand.

In the MAPP, packaging is split into high-level and low-level stimulus attributes. High-level stimuli refer to complex sensations evoked by images, symbols while low-level stimuli refer to attributes related to intensity, e.g., colour, curvature, weight. At the same time, reinforcing Steenkamp (1990) and Karnal et al. (2016), Velasco and Spence (2019) argue that these high- and low-level stimuli evoke different emotions and sensations in different individuals because each individual is in turn influenced by his/her underlying motivation to purchase (functional or emotional), his/her prior knowledge, his/her demographic and cultural considerations, as well as other situational factors mentioned by Lundell & Wigstrand (2016).

The MAPP further proposes that these low- and high-level stimuli will interact with the five human senses of sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch to evoke responses. These responses could be sensory and/or semantic in words, and/or symbolic, and/or they could be affective or emotional. A semantic response means that the stimuli had conveyed a specific function or brand quality. For example, the picture of a juicy red strawberry on packaging may signal the sweetness and naturalness of the product's content; or a particular fragrance could be perceived either as feminine or masculine (Krishna et al., 2010). A symbolic response means that the stimuli (typically a logo or a typeface) may evoke specific brand imageries, e.g., the Coca-Cola wordmark or its proprietary bottle silhouette may signal refreshment or happiness. On the other hand, sensory responses refer to responses triggered by one or more of the five human senses, e.g., touching and handling an innovative packaging shape or texture. Nevertheless, regardless of whether the responses are sensory, semantic, or symbolic, these responses may affectively be perceived as positive/negative/neutral by the individual, subject to his/her biases and experiences (Velasco et al., 2014).

These responses then impact the resultant attitudes and behaviours towards a brand. Machiels and Orth (2018) also highlight that attitudes and behaviours towards a brand are very much affected by sensory inputs – visual, haptic, acoustic, and olfactory - arising from packaging designs. For example, in the category of perfumes, the low-level stimuli of the product fragrance, the packaging colour, curvature and weight interact with the complex sensations evoked by high-level stimuli such as brand images and symbols to produce responses that could be related to smelling good and looking well-groomed, thereby reinforcing the individual's social standing. Suppose these stimuli match or exceed the individual's expectations and purchase goals within the context of his/her personal and situational factors. In that case, his/her attitude towards the brand will likely improve, thus positively influencing his purchase behaviour.

In the MAPP, there is an element of congruency. What Velasco and Spence (2019) mean is that brand perceptions may be enhanced or diluted, subject to the congruency or incongruency between the sensory cues in the brand's packaging. To this end, Littel and Orth (2013) indicate that packaging designs that are seen as congruent in terms of visual and haptic stimuli rate as being more attractive and more premium when compared to those designs that feature cues that are deemed as incongruent. Their study observes that glass bottles are congruent with premium drinking water brands while plastic bottles are incongruent. Specifically, Krishna and Morrin (2008) show that the quality perception of water is better when consumers receive it in a firm versus a flimsy cup. This is unsurprising because multisensory congruency facilitates ease of perceptual processing and results quickly in increased likeability (Winkielman et al., 2015).

On the other hand, Celhay & Remaud (2018) and Fenko et al. (2018) argue that because multisensory incongruency slows down perceptual processing, it encourages greater involvement in purchase consideration. Given these views on multisensory congruency, it is crucial to find the right balance. As mentioned previously, this is the designers' dilemma between wanting to push the boundaries to stand out from the competition while not deviating too much from category typical cues to stay within category typicality.

2.8 The MAPP framework as a ‘scaffold’ for literature review on packaging cues

The present study will refer to the MAPP framework as a scaffold to guide the literature review of the packaging cues to be studied. In particular, the focus will be on the high- and low-level stimuli and how these stimuli influenced attitudes towards brands, specifically perceived quality. Ultimately, the aim is to include them as research themes amongst consumers.

Silayoi and Speece (2004) suggest that packaging design stimuli may include colour (also highlighted by Ampuero and Vila, 2006), graphics like brand symbols and icons (reinforced by Hyndman, 2015), tactility/haptics (reviewed by Spence & Gallace, 2011), textual and nutritional information (Lobstein & Davies, 2008), etc. Others too have proposed elements such as colour, material, shapes, and tactility (Liang et al., 2013; Spence & Deroy, 2014; Ares & Deliza, 2010; Piqueras-Fiszman et al., 2013). Bone & France (2001), Mizutani et al. (2010), and Sakai (2005) suggest that graphics on packaging can influence perceptions of the product qualities. Separately, Norton et al. (2013), Provencher et al. (2009), and Aaron et al. (1994) indicate that product information and nutritional content impacts consumers' beliefs, sensory perception, degree of liking, and consumption. Further, Caporale et al. (2006), Bell et al. (1994), and Siret & Issanchou (2000) highlight that featuring the country of origin on labels affect sensory perception and liking.

At this point, it is interesting to note that while the authors may use different definitions and classifications in their respective studies, there are relative commonalities, i.e., the packaging stimuli or cues remain similar. Therefore, for the present study, and to help structure the literature review, these individual elements were classified into high-and low-level stimuli as highlighted by the MAPP framework.

2.8.1 High-level stimuli

2.8.1.1 Graphics

Citing Clement (2007) and Rettie & Brewer (2000), Machiels & Karnal (2016) suggest that graphics, i.e., pictures, symbols, typography, etc., are an effective way of communicating with consumers and may help create desired consumer perceptions of the brand. Young (2012) and Spence & Piqueras-Fiszman (2012) also indicate that such visuals attract attention and influence perceptions. Similarly, Brodersen & Manolova (2008) and Silayoi & Speece (2004) argue that using graphics to make a brand stand out on the shelf may help capture the consumer's attention and enhance purchase consideration. Indeed, through appropriate designs, critical information about the brand may be distilled into graphics. As Underwood et al. (2001) and Bone & France (2001) suggest, graphics can be used as an information input for consumers to compare and differentiate between brands. Their findings support the conclusions of Zeithaml (1988), and Richardson et al. (1994) that packaging designs are sources of information for consumers' purchase and brand choice appraisals. For example, beer brands like Heineken and Peroni add visuals of quality medals to their labels to provide the sense of quality "accreditation" that consumers look for.

Using symbols and pictures on packaging design can help with brand recall, recognition and communicate emotional imageries and beliefs (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). The three-spoke wheel of Mercedes Benz is easily recognisable and symbolises luxury and engineering excellence, while the iconic Burger King logo is associated with burgers and fast food. Sometimes, brands may even adopt pictures that are unrelated to the category to stimulate specific desired images. Beer brands like Tiger and Leo – Figure 2.10, use illustrations of the tiger and leopard animal as part of their respective identities to stimulate images of masculinity and raw power, even though such pictures have no direct link to the actual product being consumed.

Figure 2.10: Tiger beer and Leo beer

Meyers-Levy & Tybout (1989) also highlight that other forms of graphics like typography may stimulate the senses and communicate messages without requiring much cognitive processing. For instance, cursive fonts may convey elegance and softness, bold fonts may suggest strength and masculinity, while italic fonts may conjure feelings of fun and motion. The proprietary font of Coca Cola immediately evokes fun and happiness. At the same time, Carlsberg Beer features a distinctive typeface with a unique tail to the letter 'g' to make it look like a tongue thirsting for refreshment. See Figure 2.11.

Figure 2.11: Communicative power of typography

Therefore, in this present study, I seek to understand the importance of visual stimuli such as graphics in quality perceptions amongst consumers in Thailand.

<u>2.8.1.2 Text information</u>

Machiels & Karnal (2016) note that while visual cues are important, textual information should not be neglected. van Rompay & Veltkamp (2014) encourage designers and marketers to consider adding narratives or text-copy to complement the visuals. Doing so would enhance communication and appreciation of the visual and strengthen consumer perceptions. There are several examples in the whisky category that illustrate these points. Each of the brands' labels below features some textual information about the distillation process, the ingredients used, and a short description of the taste profile. All these stimuli aim to enhance perceptions about the brands. See Figure 2.12.

Figure 2.12: Textual information on whisky brands enhanced consumer perceptions

Similarly, product and producer information on packaging may act as a cue in the consumer decision-making process (Butkeviciene et al., 2008; Bone & France, 2009; Kuvykaite et al., 2009). Product information may assist consumers in making their decisions carefully. Country of origin, ingredients, nutritional information, and countries exported to, are possible influence cues. It is common practice for beer labels to highlight their country of origin. Wall et al. (1991) suggest that the country of origin considerably influences perceived product quality. However, while Porto and Soyer (2018) also suggest that text information related to foreignness and country of origin may positively influence image attributes and a willingness to pay a premium, the relationship between foreignness and perceived quality is inconclusive. Indeed, the 'country of origin' cue may be subjugated in the presence of other packaging stimuli, and thus, any relationship between country of origin and perceived quality may not be significant (Javeed et al., 2017).

This is an area that I intend to explore more during this research; after all, incorporating country of origin and foreignness is an oft-practised approach in the beer industry. Producers like AB Inbev, Asahi, and Sapporo, respectively, would add the brands' provenance (Budweiser - American, Pilsner Urquell - Czech, Sapporo - Japanese) onto the labels. See Figure 2.13. This present study would evaluate if such textual information positively impacted quality perceptions amongst beer consumers in Thailand.

Figure 2.13: Provenance information on beer brands

Kupiec & Revell (2001) and Silayoi & Speece (2004) also suggest that packaging cues such as nutritional and ingredient information, conditions of use, and storage and expiration dates influence quality perceptions; this is especially true in the categories of food and food-related products. In a study of dairy-product packaging in southern Zimbabwe, Mutsikiwa (2013) argue that product and producer information are essential packaging cues affecting purchase decisions.

Extrapolating these findings, it may be argued that textual information as a packaging cue could be even more critical in the beer category because of the mandatory regulatory provision of specific details related to health and safety. It is observed that health and safety certifications such as Food Safety Standards and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) certification can often be found on the back labels of many beer brands. Indeed, from a quantitative study conducted in Vietnam regarding consumers' attitudes towards quality certifications of food products, My et al. (2017) conclude that food quality certification is positively associated with food safety. See Figure 2.14 for an example of this textual information and how it is typically used in the beer category. In this example, the back label assured expertise by highlighting the brand's provenance and long heritage, demonstrated transparency with its detailed listing of ingredients used, highlighted social responsibility with clear health warnings and advisories, and provided safety assurance by showing a third-party safety certification. This sort of assurance would presumably be helpful in a developing country like Thailand, where product safety cannot be assumed. However, the question, as Silayoi & Speece (2004) highlighted, was this – what is insufficient or excessive product or producer information before it leads to confusion? In the present study, how important are these textual stimuli in beer brand packaging and quality perceptions in Thailand?

Figure 2.14: Textual Information on a typical back label of a beer brand

2.8.2 Low-level stimuli

2.8.2.1 Material

Smith & Taylor (2010) and Schifferstein & Desmet (2010) propose that the materials used in packaging may stimulate subconscious emotions. Their respective studies suggest that glass bottles communicate prestige, while plastic packaging evokes associations of convenience. Aquilani et al. (2015) further indicate that bottled and canned beer convey different associations to consumers. The quantitative study by Barnett et al. (2016) also suggests that the material of beer packaging influences taste perceptions and quality judgments, with a general preference for glass over other packaging materials. What was interesting was that in the study, while participants were unable to differentiate between bottled and canned beers served in plastic cups under blind tasting conditions, they showed a clear preference for the same beer served from a bottle than from a can when shown the packaging. This is consistent with Spence (2019), who notes that consumers prefer a beer more when it comes from a bottle. Similarly, Spence (2019) reports that consumers perceive the taste of bottled Coca-Cola to be superior to canned ones.

There could be two possible explanations behind the perception that bottled beverages offer better quality and taste. Firstly, Aquilani et al. (2015) suggest that the can packaging format, typically sold in "off-trade" channels such as supermarkets and hypermarkets, are often sold at discounted prices, which may then give rise to a perception of canned beverages as a "cheaper lower quality" pack format. Secondly, they postulate that the significant perceptual differences between bottles and cans may be due to the weight difference between the two formats – glass bottles are heavier than aluminium cans and thus perceived to be of better quality. This is consistent with the conclusions from Kampfer et al. (2017), Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence (2012), and Spence (2019). Therefore, given that packaging material has been shown to significantly influence the perceived quality and taste, packaging material would be included as one of the low stimuli to be studied in this research.

2.8.2.2 Shape

Before the product is handled, it must first engage the potential consumer visually. The shape of the packaging is thus a critical visual stimulus. Fundamental considerations for determining the shape of packaging include the nature of the product, how it is to be stored and transported, and how it will be displayed and merchandised. Lundell & Wigstrand (2016) note that packaging shapes (and size) communicate the convenience of handling. Also, Ampuero and Vila (2006) suggest that consumers may infer volume and imagery from the shape and size of the packaging. For example, long shapes are considered larger, angular shapes are perceived as more masculine, and rounded shapes are softer. Separately, Attwood et al. (2012) note that the ability to distinguish volumes diminishes by adding curvature to glass. Becker et al. (2011) observe a correlation between curvilinearity of form and taste perceptions. Ares & Deliza (2010) study indicates that rounder packaging shapes are associated with creamier perceptions. This finding also applies to the roundness/angularity of labels (Ngo et al., 2012; Westerman et al., 2013). These findings are not surprising because consumers tend to be visually dominant, and packaging shapes may likely significantly impact perceptions (Spence, 2016). It is thus unsurprising that Underwood (2003) recommends that shapes for packaging should aesthetically be simple, regular, easy on the eyes, and preferably tactile.

Brodersen and Manolova (2008) underline that while one of the primary roles of packaging is to communicate how a product is to be used, the ergonomics, the size, and shape of the packaging may influence imagery and perceptions of quality. The Sapporo can exemplify how packaging shape could convey distinctiveness and quality in the beer category. Taller than usual, the contoured Sapporo Premium Beer iconic can communicate quality and commanded a higher price than regular Sapporo cans. Likewise, the distinctive Brahma Beer contoured bottle exuded elegance and quality perceptions. See Figure 2.15

Figure 2.15: Unique packaging shapes convey distinctiveness and quality

Would the shapes of bottles and labels affect quality perceptions in Thailand? If so, why? These are questions that will be dealt with in this study.

2.8.2.3 Colour

A common theme in Kauppinen-Räisänen, H. (2014), Spence (2016), and Velasco & Spence (2019) are that colour is one of the most crucial in packaging – it helps attract attention and set consumer expectation (Esterl, 2011; Wan et al., 2015). This supports the findings of Marshall et al. (2006) and Orquin & Mueller-Loose (2013), who indicate that colour cues strongly affect the consumer's experience with the product and brand. This is particularly true in the FMCG category, which is typically low involvement with purchases made very quickly (Velasco & Spence, 2019). To this end, Bone and France (2001), Ampuero & Vila (2006), and Wakefield et al. (2002) also argue that consumers use colours on packages to identify brands; colours attract consumers' attention and influence their evaluation. Most consumer brands rely on packaging colours to communicate relevant content information (Garber et al., 2001). Mutsikiwa (2013), using packaging colour as a variable in their research, observe that colours attract consumers' attention on the shelf and evoke emotions and feelings, communicating salient features of the brand.

Numerous studies have also found evidence that colour is a critical element in packaging design (Rettie & Brewer, 2000; Underwood, 2003; Silayoi & Speece, 2007; Vila & Ampuero, 2006; Butkeviciene et al., 2008; and Kuvykaite et al., 2009). They show that lighter colours promote perceptions of lower strength, while tones of silver and gold convey status and prestige. Separately, in a study of craft beers, Barnett (2016) suggests that bottle labels' colour influences drinkers' ratings of citrus/fruity notes – a label that is more greenish-yellow in hue is rated as more citrusy/fruity than labels of other colours. Likewise, Lick et al. (2017) note that in the Austrian wine category, red and black labels creates expectations of tanginess while red and orange labels are associated with fruity flavours. Similar results have been reported in other studies and categories by Ares & Deliza (2010), Mead & Richerson (2018), and Piqueras-Fiszman & Spence (2012).

The importance of colour in packaging may be appreciated at two levels. Ares & Deliza, 2010; and Kauppinen-Räisänen & Luomala, 2010 explain that colour may become closely associated with that brand at the associative level, upon repeated interaction with a particular brand and even with that category. That association between colour and brand may become so closely linked that the colour may become part of the brand's identity. Examples include the colour aquamarine becoming a brand identifier for Tiffany's brand in the jewellery category (as referred to above) and the colour red (along with the chevron) being synonymous with Marlboro in the tobacco industry despite the requirement in many markets that they move to plain packaging. The second level of appreciating colour as a key element in packaging is cultural. Machiels & Orth (2018) and Thomas & Chambault (2016) point out that different cultures and societies ascribe meaning to different colours. In turn, the meaning of the colours creates a frame of reference when consumers in that particular society look at product packaging. For example, royalty in Thailand and China is yellow, whilst in the U.K., it is purple. However, in Japan, purple is a colour associated with mourning. On the other hand, red is associated with anger in the West, but in many parts of Asia, the colour red symbolises luck and prosperity. It is thus vital, when designing packaging, to be culturally aware and sensitive to the meanings that societies ascribe to colours (Madden et al., 2000).

This perspective to understand how colours influence consumers through an associative and cultural lens supports earlier findings that colours affect perceptions at different levels (Hine, 1995). Developing this further, it is interesting to observe the meaning of colours when applied to packaging. As mentioned above, the colour red in many parts of Asia, including Myanmar, communicates a positive association. Within Myanmar and in the beer category, it is observed that most high alcohol (>5% abv) beer brands use red as their base logo colour (See Figure 2.16). Resultantly, red in the beer market in Myanmar is now not just associated with good luck; it is also associated with higher levels of alcohol.

Figure 2.16: High alcohol beer brands in Myanmar

Another example cited by Tanei et al. (2020) relates to the packaging of energy drinks in Taiwan and Japan. The study found that while Taiwanese associate energy drinks with red, the Japanese deem blue to be the colour of energy drinks. See Figure 2.17. It showed that the meaning of colours varied by cultural background, even within East Asian countries.

Taiwanese energy drinks Japanese energy drinks.

Figure 2.17: Meaning of colours differ by cultural backgrounds

This is an important consideration because the colour of the packaging should be in sync with not just the brand attributes and values; it should also be congruent to the colour perceptions of the category of the country. In the above example of high alcohol beers in Myanmar, consumers would expect a new entrant to feature red as its primary packaging colour, simply because red denoted high alcohol in that category. This expectation is in line with the findings of Spence (2016), Shovlin (2007), and Underwood (2003), who indicate that colours attract, communicate brand positioning and attributes as well as facilitate recognition of different categories. Colour is, therefore, a vital packaging cue that would be explored in-depth in this study.

2.8.2.4 Haptics

Referencing the studies of Spence & Gallace (2011) and Tangeland et al. (2008), Spence (2016) writes that tactility is an important but relatively under-investigated element in packaging studies. He argues that tactility attracts, communicates, and signals quality. A classic example where the sense of touch is used as part of the brand identity is the contoured Coca-Cola bottle (refer to Figure 2.3). The bottle draws attention and conveys the product and brand values primarily through the tactility of its unique shape and feeschil. Solomon et al. (2016) also observe that tactility is an important sensory channel to convey underlying product qualities (e.g., silk is smooth and thus exudes luxury, while denim is rough and thus signals durability). van Rompay et al. (2018) also observed that taste quality perceptions are influenced by the packaging texture as felt by the hand. Specifically, surface textures of ice cream containers subliminally affect the intensity of the contents in the container – the more textured the surface, the more intense the taste perceptions and sensations.

Indeed, according to Spence (2019), surface texture/ feel is a key haptic attribute that packaging designers need to consider. By manipulating the tactility of the external packaging, perceptions of the product may be influenced. The study by Marlow and Jansson-Boyd (2011) on perceptions of soap and biscuits indicates that while visual stimuli are important in product quality assessment, the texture of the packaging also affects the deemed attractiveness of the product. Similarly, Labbe et al. (2013), in their study of dehydrated soups, conclude that tactile packaging may communicate naturalness better than visual cues. After all, as Chen et al. (2019) and Tijssen et al. (2017) report, perceptions arising from haptic inputs related to packaging may augment visual stimuli inputs and impact product perceptions and assessments. Notably, such responses to packaging tactility have persuasive purchase effects (Peck & Wiggins, 2006). Haptics would therefore be included as an area of packaging interest in this research.

2.9 Reflections from the literature reviews

Conducting the literature searches and synthesis, I have developed a better and more structured understanding of packaging and its impact on perceived quality. The process has also allowed me to reflect on my prior knowledge and practices regarding packaging. This is an important aspect of my doctoral progress. After all, in action research, the study is not just focused on the problem; it also involves an inquiry into the researcher's paradigm, e.g., my beliefs, my latent bias, why I do things the way I do etc. These are essential parts of action research cycles (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) – plan, action, observe, reflect, re-planning, and action. To this end, as I complete the literature review as part of the plan to build my approach to the research, I have incorporated a section here to journal my observations and reflections about the literature review and writing.

2.9.1 Context

When my involvement in beer marketing first began in 1994, restrictive regulations against the consumption of alcohol were not prevalent in Thailand. Other than the minimum legal age of drinking and some drink-driving laws in place, almost all forms of marketing were permitted. Advertising on all forms of media was allowed, and consumer promotions were not frowned upon. Point of sale materials and signage were used as key drivers of brand visibility, and events like beer festivals were organised regularly to facilitate beer consumption. During those days, beer packaging was dictated more by production requirements and to that end, for the sake of efficiency, almost every packaging material was standardised, e.g., the shape of labels, the material of labels, the size and shape of bottles and cans, the colour of bottles, etc. Given the availability of the different tools to conduct marketing of beers, there was admittedly very little relative attention paid to packaging and its influence on the quality and consumer behaviour. The key imperative then was to "keep to brand identity guidelines", i.e., keep the integrity of the brand logo, wordmark, and brand colours. Other than that, the directive was to "make it look nice". It is not surprising that for me, the focus for a long time was hardly on packaging, and much of the decisions made were subjectively driven by personal bias and collective likes/dislikes.

However, over time, more regulations regarding the sales and marketing of beer surfaced. Advertising was first restricted to specific time belts on TV and radio and eventually banned in Thailand. Consumer promotions were then banned, as were trade promotions. Beer brand signage and visibility items were taken down and no longer permitted. Events promoting beer consumption were stopped gradually, and now, it is no longer possible to organise such events. The authorities are currently even working to restrict beer promotion on social media. In the past two decades since I joined the beer industry, many of the marketing tools we had utilised previously have become irrelevant and mandated illegal. Considering that all forms of media advertising, including print and TV ads, have been banned, one remaining form of communication with the consumer is now packaging. As such, to rely simply on intuition and subjective gut feel to "keep to brand identity guidelines" and "make it look nice" is no longer sufficient. Once a neglected aspect of my marketing mix, packaging is now at the forefront of my marketing approach. It is in this context and with this pair of lenses, tempered with the experience I had gathered, that I conducted the literature search and literature review.

2.9.2 Prior understanding and knowledge

I continue my reflection by recalling when I first entered the beer industry. I remembered being briefed then by my technical colleagues on the importance of beer packaging – be it bottles or cans. They emphasised that safety in packaging design should always be the most important of all considerations. The packaging must preserve the contents, i.e., the beer, from sunlight and oxidation or any physical contamination. It must also ensure that those who handle the packaging are not exposed to potential danger, e.g., exploding bottles. To that end, they further stressed that packaging should consider production line capabilities and warehousing and transportation constraints. These were all not surprising as I could appreciate the negative impact on operational efficiencies if any new packaging changed production and logistics configurations. At the same time, I could also appreciate the potential repercussions of packaging defects – lawsuits, reputational damage, loss of sales – on the company. Reflecting on the literature review in this chapter, it appears that my technical colleagues' advice, gained from years of operational experience, supported Rundh (2009), who highlighted that packaging played an essential role in promoting hygiene and safety.

Separately, during my initial years in the industry, my marketing colleagues constantly reiterated the importance of packaging designs needing to adhere strictly to established brand identity guidelines. They explained that we needed to minimise the risk of possible alienation; they were afraid that consumers would stop purchasing if they perceived that the brand had changed. On the one hand, I understood the underlying message that packaging designs conveyed desired brand values and reinforced brands' imageries. Thus, I could appreciate that there is a case to argue for consistency. Reflecting against Prendergast & Pitt (1996), Underwood et al. (2001), Keller (2013), and Wells et al. (2007), my colleagues' perspectives were in sync.

On the other hand, I, however, felt that it was also important to ensure that packaging designs do not stagnate and no longer serve the primary function of attracting attention. Regular rebranding and prudent packaging updates are therefore necessary. Goode et al. (2012) too highlight the role of visually aesthetic designs to attract and persuade purchase. Thinking back, this dilemma between complying strictly to brand identity guidelines, and enhancing packaging to attract and persuade consumers, has led me, over the years, on a trial-and-error discovery journey of finding the elusive balance.

2.9.3 Revelations from the review

It was thus a great revelation for me when I undertook the literature search and review for this study. It affirmed that beyond safety, preservation, and logistical considerations, marketers must deeply understand the communicative aspects of packaging designs. It is not just about adherence to brand identity guidelines; many other factors must be considered if any design were to attract and persuade while not alienating.

To this end, as I journeyed through the literature, it was interesting to observe how the themes on the communicative power of packaging designs have evolved. In particular, while research studies about the communicative power of packaging tend to focus on visual aspects and how to stand out better on shelves (Plasschaert, 1995; Bloch, 1995; Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989), these studies also focus on stimulating brand preference and purchase (Ampuero & Vila, 2006; Nancarrow et al., 1998). I began to appreciate that consumers constantly engaged with the visual and haptic elements of packaging. Colours, material, shape, graphics, and textual information interacted to affect consumers' expectations and perception and their experience of the product itself. Each of these elements has been investigated in depth (Wall et al., 1991; Rettie & Brewer, 2000; Underwood et al, 2001; Silayoi & Speece, 2004; Ampuero and Vila, 2006; Butkeviciene et al., 2008; Tangeland et al., 2008; Schifferstein & Desmet, 2010).

I noticed, however, that over time, these investigations have evolved and given rise to additional streams of studies. Spence & Piqueras- Fiszman (2012), Spence (2016), and Velasco & Spence (2019) have shifted the focus of their studies into packaging designs to consider the role of human senses and how packaging designs affect the consumers' multisensory experience. For example, the MAPP framework (Velasco & Spence, 2019) mark a conceptual shift towards a multisensory perspective. The framework advocates studying packaging cues, not from a design perspective but a sensory perspective, involving low-level and high-level stimuli and the consumers' corresponding responses. Such an approach places a stronger investigative emphasis on uncovering latent consumer insights when studying the different packaging elements and their influence on consumers' behaviours. To this end, I also noticed an emerging academic interest in trying to understand findings through cultural lenses. Machiels & Orth (2018) argue that cross-cultural perspectives give different meanings to the same cue, e.g., one colour may mean something in one culture but a different meaning in another culture. This, therefore, would have implications on brands considering having one pan-global packaging design or several iterations to cater to the cultural nuances of each country.

Reflecting these thematic shifts in literature emphasis against my personal experience, I observed that my marketing colleagues and I tend to start our strategic brand plans from the starting point of consumer insights. We believed (and still do) that by understanding these insights - why consumers behave in the way they do – we can then develop brand plans to reinforce consumers' perceptions of our brands. However, recalling the many brand plans that we have generated, we have never zeroed in on consumer insights behind packaging designs.

In hindsight, I realised now that we did not fully grasp how the different elements of product packaging can shape consumers' expectations, influence their product experience, and even affect their perceptions about the brand. This realisation underlined the importance of my quest – what packaging cues matter and why they matter. However, perhaps more importantly, I became even more convinced that to eventually bring this normative knowledge to life in practice within my organisation, I would need to involve and engage key stakeholders in the research process. Only then would we be able to collectively apply relevant findings and make practical changes to improve our packaging design process.

2.9.4 Impact on writing style

Finally, as I reflect on my initial writing style in the literature review, it dawned on me that I should tone down my use of practitioner jargon to enhance reading comprehension and communication. Much of the feedback I had obtained was clarifying in nature, which indicated that I was not conveying what I had intended. The numerous revisions helped calibrate the balance between a purely academic paper and an action-research paper-oriented towards practitioners. For example, while I may be highly familiar with the terminology used in the beer industry and the different packaging elements involved, I had to remind myself that such industry-specific literacy may not extend to the reader of this thesis. At the same time, I also realised that citing concepts from academic journals may come across as being too abstract for practitioners who were not attuned to academic writings. Therefore, it is important to constantly take a step back to assess how the literature findings relate to the problem at hand. This would then put the writing in context and make abstract concepts more palatable to the reader.

Furthermore, in doing so, I became mindful not to deviate my writing onto peripheral subjects that are interesting but may not be central to the problem. Writing the literature review and making constant revisions has reminded me of the importance of organising my ideas and supporting them with credible research. I noticed now, reading the initial drafts and final version of the chapter, how I have, over time, adjusted my style of writing and the way I structured the sections to enhance communications with the reader. This is a significant development for me as a scholar-practitioner.

2.10 Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to develop the parameters of this present study based on research writings related to packaging designs and how packaging designs may influence consumers' perceptions of product quality. Specifically, the framework of Brodersen & Manolova (2008) helps provide greater insights into factors that affect packaging design. Other than internal organisational stakeholders and external influences like regulatory, technological, social and economic trends, the framework considers the product's intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, including packaging, its brand platform and values, and visual stimuli like shape, size, colour, and graphics etc. Additionally, the framework from Lundell & Wigstrand (2016) elaborates on the relationship between packaging and perceived quality. They look at packaging and how it interacts with consumer beliefs about the brand, personal factors like the consumer purchase involvement levels and his/her prior knowledge, situational factors such as the consumer's motivation to purchase, and time to make the purchase. The framework also explores the interactions between these factors and quality perception.

These frameworks establish the importance of packaging design and quality perceptions. After that, the focus of the literature review pivoted to specific packaging cues that mattered to consumers. To this end, I noted that the studies from writers such as Underwood et al. (2001), Ampuero & Vila (2006), Silayoi & Speece (2007), Spence (2012) underline the importance of visual and haptic packaging elements such as colour, materials, shape, tactility, and textual information. To scaffold these varied elements in a more structured manner, I referred to the Multisensory Analysis of Product Packaging framework (Velasco & Spence, 2019) to compartmentalise them into high- and low- levels stimuli for further literature investigation. The high-level stimuli included Graphics such as symbols and pictures and Text Information like product and producer information. The low-level stimuli included Material, Shape, Colour and Haptics of the packaging. The literature review of these packaging stimuli confirmed that they should be included in my research. They also helped me reflect upon my notions and practices regarding packaging. The literature review provided a theoretical framework to help me better understand packaging designs and improve design practices in my organisation.

Details of how these different stimuli affect consumers perceptions of product quality will therefore be studied more specifically within the context of the beer industry in Thailand. These, along with how the exploration will progress, will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by elaborating on the researcher's critical realist philosophical paradigm. At the same time, considering that the quest of this study is to enhance the packaging design practices within the organisation, justification for adopting action research is provided. Correspondingly, the role identity dilemma in conducting an insider action research study will be discussed. Also, this chapter will detail the considerations taken to prevent harm, ensure transparency, and maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

The chapter will then progress to the research design, which would essentially be three distinct but interconnected phases. First, the setup and elaboration of the consumer survey will be discussed. This elaboration will include the multi-item scale, the sampling, the pre-test, and the statistical analysis undertaken. If the results affirmed the meaningfulness of the surveyed items, they would then be included as discussion points in the subsequent focus groups. Next, the conduct of the focus groups will be elaborated. As per Phase One, details of the sampling, the make-up of the focus groups, the development of the discussion guide, the use of participatory drawing as a research method, and the steps in the thematic analysis will be discussed.

The chapter will then segue to the approach undertaken in Phase Three. In this section, the spotlight will shift from consumers to internal colleagues. The selection criteria for the colleague-interviewees will be spelt out, and the interview guide will also be discussed. In particular, the interviewees will be engaged in individual conversations and provide their views on the findings emerging from the consumer focus groups. The discussions will be thematically analysed and interpreted through a practitioner perspective to catalyse reflections, commitment and generate actions for improvements.

Finally, this chapter will end with the researcher's reflections. The reflections will centre mainly on the situational adaptations and constant iterations that had to be made to accommodate new insights. For example, the section will discuss how the study moved from a quantitatively skewed study to a qualitative one and from being singularly focused on knowledge generation to more inclusive and action-oriented, using scholarly findings to improve internal packaging design work processes.

3.2. Researcher's paradigm

Thorpe & Holt (2008) and Johnson & Duberley (2000) postulate that a researcher's worldview shapes his/her research philosophy. This worldview relates to the researcher's perspective of reality and defines the relationship between the world and the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009). This, in turn, shapes his/her paradigm of conducting research (Bell & Bryman, 2007; Creswell, 2013). This research paradigm consists of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Bell & Bryman, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009).

Ontology relates to the researcher's position on whether reality is dependent or independent of the actors in the phenomenon under study. It refers to the researcher's stance on the nature of being—what exists (Maxwell, 2011). If reality is deemed independent of the actors, the ontological position refers to objectivism and lends itself to accurate observation and measurement. If reality is deemed dependent on the actors, the ontological position refers to subjectivism or constructionism, i.e., meanings are attached to phenomenon based on the actors' perceptions and experiences (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Objectivism and subjectivism are located at extreme opposite ends of the ontological continuum (Creswell, 2013). At the objectivist end of the continuum, an epistemology of positivism is preferred, while at the subjectivist end, an interpretivist epistemology is encouraged. Epistemology refers to the nature of the researcher's relationship with the studied phenomenon and is primarily concerned with what is accepted as valid knowledge. It refers to the researcher's stance on what can be known—our understanding of what exists (Maxwell, 2011). It is noted that positivism advocates researcher independence and neutrality, emphasising observing, assessing, and confirming generalisable truths. At the same time, interpretivists believe in the continual and iterative interactions between the social actors, including the researcher himself/herself, and the phenomenon.

Between these two ends of the ontological and epistemological spectrums is the philosophical position of critical realism. Critical realism integrates ontological realism and epistemological interpretivism, i.e., critical realists believe ontologically in the existence of a real-world independent of perceptions and constructions. However, they believe that the understanding of this world is epistemologically subject to interpretations (Maxwell, 2011). Critical realism draws on the realism of positivism and the criticality of interpretivism. It infers acknowledging the less-than-perfect nature of any single paradigm or method. It focuses on capitalising on the strengths of each approach, seeking the best possible fit for the research objectives (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). I identify with this philosophical position of a critical realist. The quote from Frazer & Lacey (1993, p.182) described my position appropriately: "Even if one is a realist at the ontological level, one could be an epistemological interpretivist…our knowledge of the real world is inevitably interpretive and provisional rather than straightforwardly representational".

My ontological and epistemological positions have direct implications for my methodological inclination. Even though I believe that there is a real-world that is independent of interpretations, I am highly mindful of the continual interactions between social actors in shaping and perceiving the phenomenon under study. Hence, epistemologically, I am naturally drawn to the subjectivist nature of qualitative research. In the context of this study, while I believe that there are actual mental processes that guide purchasing decisions, I also believe that there can be more than one way to understand how the different packaging cues may shape these processes.

3.3. Action research

As I reflected upon my philosophical paradigm and how it may influence my preference for qualitative research methods, I was mindful that this study was intended to help me better understand packaging designs to improve design practices in my organisation. To this end, this intention to pursue action and change at my workplace through greater understanding would suitably be achieved through action research.

Action research is based on the critical realist paradigm (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). It differs from traditional positivistic research in that it promotes participant plurality and researcher involvement. It also differs from social constructivist inquiry as it does not just stop at providing narratives and descriptive perspectives but seeks to generate practical actions to real-life issues that are pertinent to the research participants while at the same time contributing to scientific knowledge. Coghlan & Shani (2018, p 4) define action research as an emergent inquiry process that integrates behavioural science with organisational knowledge to change organisations. The process consists of cycles of planning, acting, evaluating action and further planning; in other words, action research is about constant iteration to build the way forward. The action research cycle figure from Milesi & Lopez Franco (2020) illustrates this iterative process well (See Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Action research cycle

As Coghlan and Brannick (2019, p 167) wrote, "action research begins with what we don't know and seeks to find what we don't know," i.e., action research is fuzzy and iterative. At the same time, action research should be undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry, involving key stakeholders of the problem as participants. By promoting inclusiveness and participation, with sensitive navigation around political and ethical considerations, accountability and commitment to actions may be secured (Coghlan & Brannick, 2019).

Considering all of these, an action research approach was most appropriate in this study. It was participative and involved both key external and internal stakeholders. See Figure 3.2 for the relevant stakeholder mapping. Engaging them in the action research process allowed me to create a platform to collaborate actionable and viable enhancements directly.

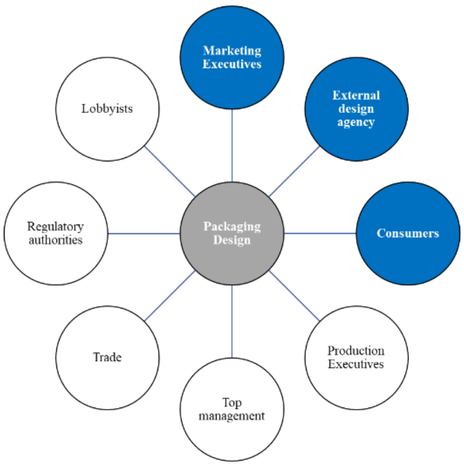


Figure 3.2: Stakeholder mapping

In particular, this study focused on the stakeholders highlighted in blue. These stakeholders in blue – subject matter experts like internal marketing executives and design agency executives - were directly involved in conceptualising and developing packaging designs. Consumers were also included as key stakeholders because they were the ultimate target affected by the packaging designs. By including these stakeholders as partners in the collaborative reflective and iterative processes of action research, they would become active and empowered participants in the inquiry to effect functional improvements in the packaging design approach in my organisation (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). After all, these stakeholders and I shared the same collective intention – to uncover which packaging design cues matter and why they matter in affecting quality perceptions.

As to the other stakeholders, I have excluded them for various reasons. For anti-alcohol lobbyists and the regulatory authorities, their intentions would likely contradict the purpose of this study; with their anti-alcohol stance, they would likely be seeking to make packaging designs as generic and plain as possible. For this reason, they were excluded as viable stakeholders for interviews. Another group of stakeholders that were excluded were trade representatives. Given my dual role as a researcher and representative of my organisation, I was concerned that any discussions with trade partners might result in them unreasonably expecting that their feedback would be fully taken on board in future packaging designs. Hence, interviews or discussions involving trade representatives were not considered. The final group excluded from the study were top management and production department colleagues. Top management personnel typically deferred to the Marketing department in packaging designs, i.e., interviewing key Marketing personnel would be more meaningful. Colleagues from the Production department were also excluded because their main concerns regarding packaging would understandably be framed by equipment limitations and cost, concerns which would have already been impressed upon the Marketing department. For all these abovementioned reasons, this study focused only on the stakeholders highlighted in blue in Figure 3.2.

3.3.1. Ethical considerations - My role as an insider action researcher

I led as an insider action researcher. There were various considerations when synthesising practice, research, and theory; after all, not only was I on a personal pursuit developing an academic thesis, but I also had a dual role as a member of the organisation seeking to effect enhancements to the packaging design process. This posed a role identity dilemma because I needed to balance and perform successfully in the different roles while keeping true to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. For example, while I could gain access to the informal network and generate true insights about the workings within my organisation, I needed to disguise the identity of the actors when disseminating findings. At the same time, in critically reflecting on existing structures, processes, assumptions and practices, new and possibly conflicting or perhaps uncomplimentary perspectives may emerge, and these could cause tensions within the team. However, as an integral part of the team, my socio-political network provided me with a rich picture of stakeholder concerns and the informal power network within the organisation, which helped negotiate potential 'landmines' in the inquiry process (Björkman & Sundgren, 2005).

Finally, I needed to lead in the action research cycles of observing, planning, acting, reflecting, re-planning, and iterating the process throughout the study. There were four cycles of reflections in this study, and these were documented respectively in Chapter 2: literature review, Chapter 3: methodology, Chapter 4: analysis and discussions, and Chapter 5: implications for management practice. In each cycle, an initial plan of approach was drawn up based on observing how similar studies have been conducted. This helped sharpen and refine the initial research questions and scope. It also helped develop the initial plans of approach, be it for literature research and review, research methods, or for analysing and interpreting the findings. These plans were then executed accordingly. After that, procedural or knowledge gaps and areas of improvement were identified and discussed collectively in the reflective phase of the cycle. Resultantly, continually refreshed, iterated plans were developed for further action. See below for a diagrammatic depiction (Figure 3.3) of how the action research cycles were applied in each phase of this study.

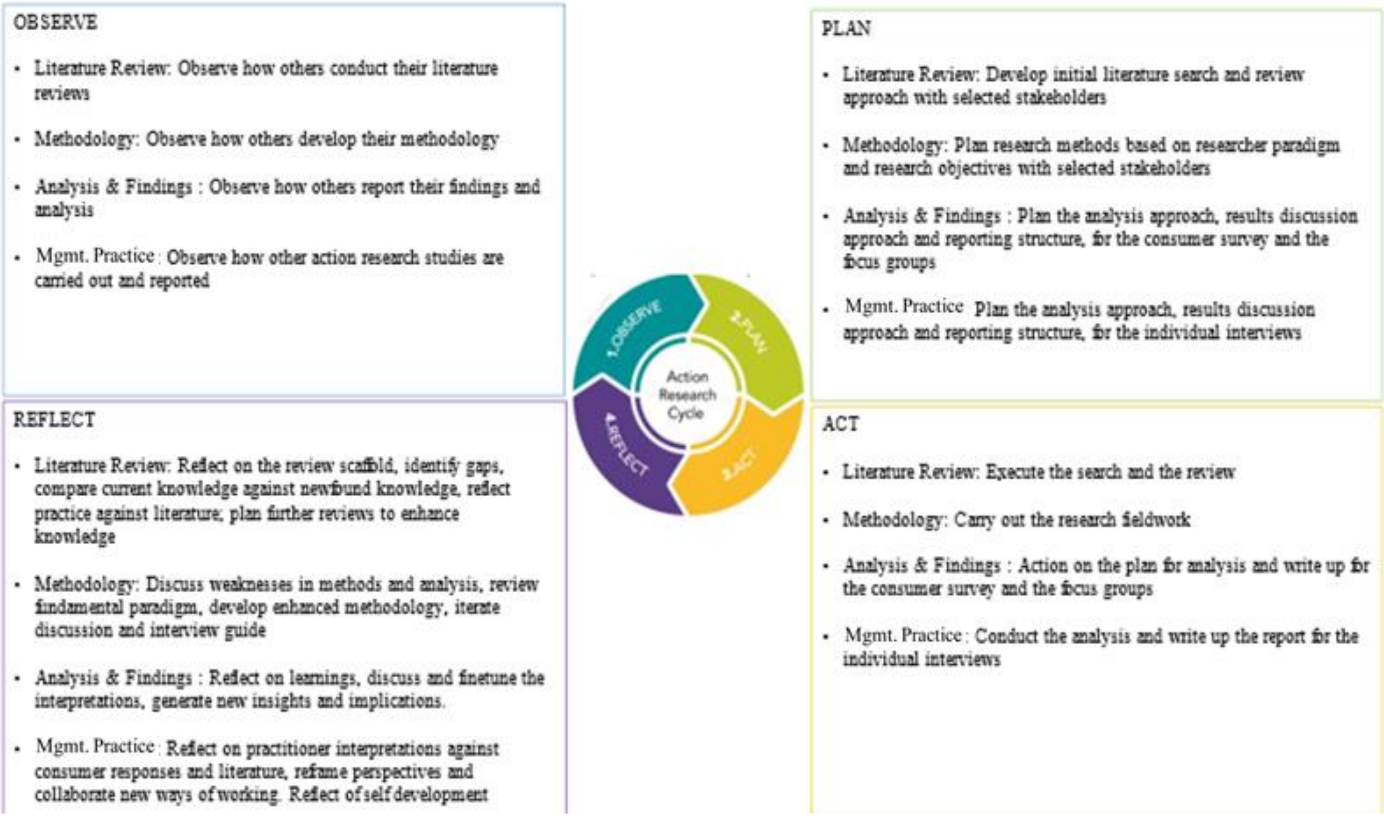


Figure 3.3: Action research cycle within each phase of the study

Acknowledging that this study would be exploratory and iterative, I had to secure active participation from relevant stakeholders to collaborate the research design and provide interpretations and insights from the findings. Ultimately, the goal was the creation of practical enhancements to the organisational packaging design approach and the creation of knowledge that would contribute to the academic community. It was with these considerations that the following research methods were designed.

3.4. Research design

A literature review was conducted in Chapter Two with the overarching research objective to explore the relationship between packaging design and quality perception. The review had surfaced various packaging cues that may affect consumers' perceptions of a product. I had then reflected these findings against my personal experience and my interactions with various stakeholders in the packaging design process. The next stage was to sense-check if these packaging items were meaningful to consumers, and if so, to explore in-depth why they mattered. The final stage then aimed to turn the knowledge generated into specific actions to enhance the packaging design processes within my organisation. As such, the research design for this study was framed along with three phases – Phase One: consumer survey; Phase Two: focus groups; and finally, Phase Three: individual interviews with subject matter experts. Details of each of the three phases – development of questionnaire and discussion guides; approaches in sampling; details about data collection; and approaches in data analysis – are elaborated in the following sections. However, as a lead-in to these details, it may be appropriate to highlight the ethical research conduct observed through all three phases of the study.

3.4.1. Ethical research conduct

In developing the research design and execution plan, consideration was given to prevent harm to the participants, ensure transparency, and maintain anonymity and confidentiality (Orb et al., 2001; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Throughout the study, steps were taken to ensure that participant confidentiality was not compromised. In fact, as part of the research protocol at the University of Liverpool, a formal Research Ethics Committee approval was secured before any fieldwork began. In addition, the ethics protocol required participant information sheets (PIS) to be signed by all participants. See Appendix 1.

The PIS briefed all the participants on the purpose of the study, their right to accept/decline the invitation to participate without consequence, the outline of the research process, any risk/benefits resulting from participation and informed them of their right to withdraw at any time without explanation or obligations. They were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. They were given an undertaking that their responses would be reported in full and that there would be no misrepresentation. All participants in all phases were informed of the estimated duration of their respective participation so that they were fully aware of the time burden should they agree to participate. Also, specifically for the Phase Three individual interviews, given the Covid pandemic, the PIS stated that the interview would take place via teleconferencing, so there would be no physical, social contact. After the pre-participation briefing, the participants were asked to sign the participant consent form if they agreed to continue. The Participant Consent Form may be found in Appendix 2.

At the same time, the readings of Bell & Bryman (2007) remind researchers that in addition to ensuring rigour and authenticity, they need to be mindful of the self-bias that could be present as a result of researcher-participant relationships, which may then unethically skew the study. In particular, because it rejects the notion of researcher neutrality, action research is inherently plagued with questions of biased pre-understanding, possibly unethically gained information access, and role-duality dilemmas (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). In the earlier section 3.3.1, I have already acknowledged my role duality as an insider action-researcher. However, while there existed possible issues of access, pre-understanding, role multiplicity and organisational/industry politics (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007), it was important to recognise that as an insider, I was in a unique position to synthesise information and generate rich and contextual knowledge that would be relevant and useful (Evered & Louis, 1981). Notwithstanding, it remained critical that the research approach be methodical and orderly, emphasising context, participant engagement, and researcher reflection. Only then would the study be deemed as credible, authentic, and scientifically rigorous (Zuber-Skerritt & Perry, 2002).

With these considerations in mind, strict adherence to ethical research conduct was observed throughout the study. Subsequent sections will now elaborate on the methodological details of each of the three phases in this research.

3.4.2. Phase One: consumer survey

3.4.2.1. Survey questionnaire design

The development of the consumer survey questionnaire followed closely the systematic approach suggested by Rickards et al. (2012). Refer to Figure 3.4 and the highlighted boxes in yellow. While it would have been ideal to use an existing survey questionnaire from past research studies conducted, the literature review did not yield any such questionnaire specific to the beer packaging within the regulatory context of Thailand. A draft survey questionnaire with specific items was developed, drawing from the literature review findings and my category insights into the beer packaging in Thailand.

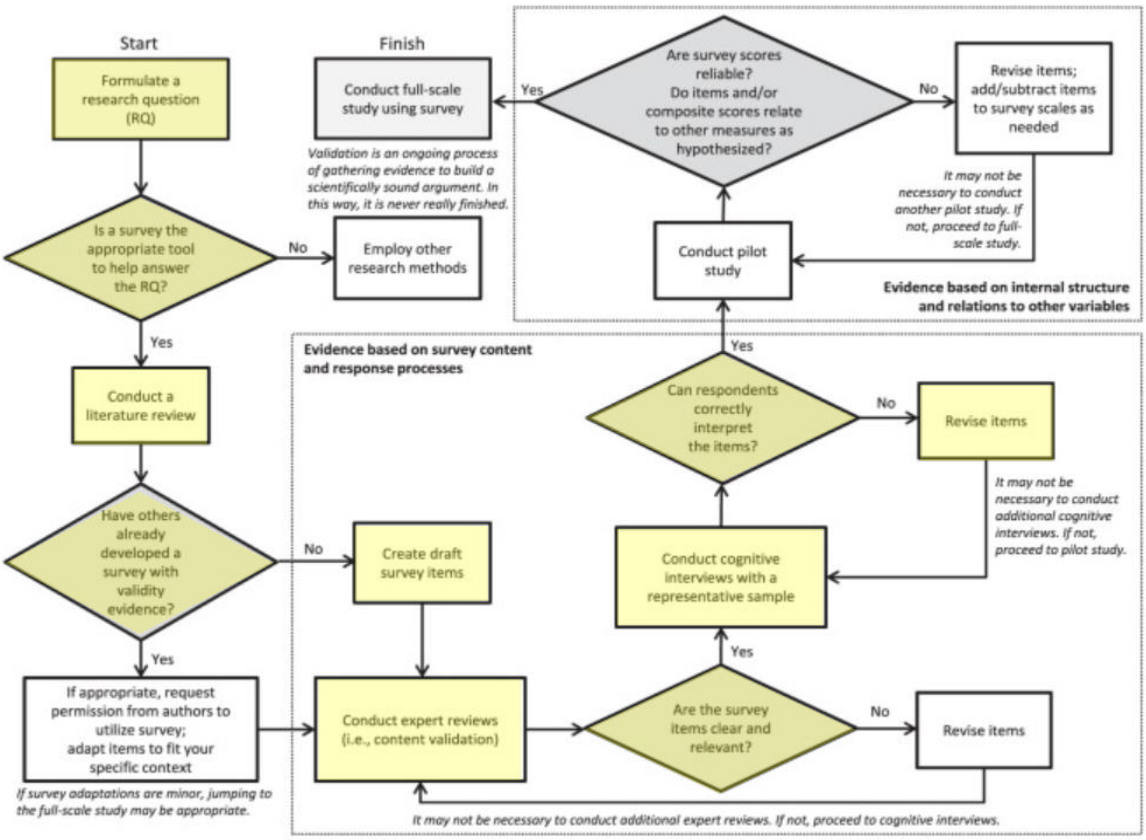


Figure 3.4: A systematic approach to survey design for research

In developing the draft questionnaire, the research aim and objectives of the study were given first consideration. This consideration directed the asking of the right information and helped ensure that the questions were specific and understandable (Ikart, 2019). To this end, I was mindful that the questionnaire sought to gather initial consumers responses regarding their perceptions towards the different packaging cues found on bottled beers in Thailand. Each of the survey items was thus guided by the literature review findings from Chapter Two and based on the features and characteristics found on existing beer packaging in the Thai market.

These items included high-level stimuli such as graphics and text information, as well as low-level stimuli like material, shape, colour, and haptics. Considering that high stimulus attributes evoked brand imageries in the minds of consumers, graphics like brand logos or symbols or textual information were included, as these convey the meaning or identity of the brand. On the other hand, given that low-level stimulus attributes were related to attributes for which magnitude and intensity may be adjusted, the questionnaire also included size and shape (adjust the size or the shape or shoulder of the bottle and label), haptics (embossing or debossing the bottle), colour (change or increase / decrease the intensity of the colour of the bottle and label), and material (change type or density of the material of the bottle and label).

In crafting the questions for the survey, acronyms, technical terms, jargon, and slang that may be familiar to industry insiders were avoided (Krosnick, 1999). As far as possible, the questions were developed using simple sentences and words. At the same time, given that I already have a clear understanding of the topic and how the questions were linked to the overall research problem, and further considering that the intention of this consumer survey was primarily to help guide the development of the discussion guide for the subsequent focus groups, only closed-ended questions were used in the questionnaire. Delport (2005) reported that closed questions were used for quick and fair responses, providing easy processing, comparisons, coding, and statistical analysis.

3.4.2.2. Multi-item scale development

A seven-point Likert scale was used, anchored by a strongly agree/strongly disagree combination. A rating of '1' indicated 'Strongly disagree'; '2'- 'Agree'; '3'- 'Somewhat agree'; '4' – 'Neither agree nor disagree'; '5'- 'Somewhat agree'; '6' – 'Agree'; '7' – 'Strongly agree'. According to Krosnick (1999) and Givon & Shapira (1984), a seven-point Likert scale was deemed optimal. They found that as scales expanded from two-point to seven-point, item reliability improved significantly, while further expansion to eleven-points did not result in further significant improvements.

For this present study, the questionnaire was divided into different sections – A: Screening Questions; B: Statements related to Quality Perception; C: Statements related to attributes about the Beer Bottle and D: Statements related to attributes about the Beer Labels. Multi-item scales were used for each stimulus attribute, consisting of a list of statements to which the respondent indicated his/her agreement/disagreement. The use of multi-item scales avoided content validity problems (Celhay and Trinquecoste, 2014). For more details of the statements and items contained in the questionnaire, please refer to Appendix 3.

To illustrate the use of multi-item scales in this present study, I would refer to Section B: Statements related to Quality Perception. Here, ‘Perceived quality’ was assessed with three statements which respondents were to rate– 'The more intricately designed the label, the better the quality of the beer'; 'The more visually aesthetic the bottle, the better the quality of the beer'; and 'The better the overall packaging design, the better the quality of the beer'. These statements were included early in the questionnaire to frame the participant's mindset towards beer quality and packaging. After that, the questionnaire progressed to Sections C and D, surveying the respondents on their views on the packaging design items of their ideal quality beer.

Multi-item scales for the attributes – label graphics; size and shape of bottle and label; haptics of the bottle; the colour of the bottle and label; and material of bottle and label - were developed based on my industry insider experience of what could typically be found on the bottled beer packaging. See Figure 3.5 for a breakdown of the packaging design items typically found on a beer bottle in Thailand and Southeast Asia. This study focused only on beer bottle packaging because, based on my knowledge and experience, the bottle was the preferred packaging format amongst beer consumers in Thailand.

Figure 3.5: Typical beer packaging and corresponding packaging design items in Thailand and Southeast Asia

To measure the response to a stimulus attribute, e.g., 'Graphics', the multi-item scale included statements like 'Beer labels should include medals won at beer competitions'; 'Beer labels should include only English typography'; 'Beer labels should include descriptors of the beer taste'; and 'Beer labels should include the story of the brand heritage'. To enhance the understanding and interpretation of the various items being measured, visual aids were developed. These visual aids, when purposefully selected and captioned clearly, are very effective in helping respondents infer the meaning of words (McTigue & Flowers, 2011). See Figure 3.6 for some examples.

Figure 3.6: Visual aids used in the survey

3.4.2.3. Review of the questionnaire by packaging design subject matter expert

As a next step, this draft questionnaire was then discussed with a packaging design subject matter expert to review its scope, clarity, and relevance. Bogner & Menz (2009) define a subject matter expert as someone with strong technical and process knowledge and deep domain understanding within the specified area of expertise. Experts may be external or internal, especially if their functional work roles and responsibilities within the organisation pertained to the specified area of expertise. The viewpoints of subject matter experts are insightful because they represent a larger domain. For example, given their privileged access to the community or organisation, an external design expert may express consistent views representative of the design community.

In contrast, internal marketing experts may convey views that speak for the organisation. In this study, the intention of seeking the views of a design expert was to tap on his/her experience to review the consumer survey questionnaire. I aimed to gather his/her inputs regarding the meaningfulness of the study and his/her views about the comprehensiveness of the multi-item scale.

In selecting the design expert, consideration was given to the expert's demonstrated deep understanding of the investigated issue (Ritchie, 2014). In this purposive sampling approach, I considered that this external stakeholder must be someone established in the design industry, with good experience in design beer packaging and preferably, by someone known to the marketing stakeholders within the organisation. Based on knowledge derived from rich interactions with his/her varied clientele base, he/she must be able to provide a perspective as to how different stakeholders view packaging design and share viewpoints regarding which packaging cues matter. Ideally, he/she would also have done some work with my company to appreciate our organisational nuances. To this end, I narrowed in on JG, the founder of a leading packaging design agency with offices in Singapore and Thailand.

My organisation had worked closely with JG on various packaging design projects. JG, who was based in Singapore, had also done work for competitor brands in other parts of the world. In addition, JG has also undertaken packaging design projects for other fast-moving consumer goods categories. I contacted JG via Skype, and we spoke for about 40mins. The dialogue with JG covered the various aspects of packaging design - from designing a product package to branding strategies and recommendations to brand values communicated through the packaging design and the items in the consumer survey questionnaire. The interview with JG, even though highly subjective, intuitive, and without in-depth scientific justification, provided great insights and hence helped provide face validity, i.e., the extent to which a study appears to measure the construct that it is supposed to measure (Taherdoost, 2016).

In the interview, JG concurred that the study would indeed be useful in guiding the work of design agencies. JG also agreed that the packaging cues listed for assessment were key ones designers typically worked on while designing beer packaging. At the same time, JG provided some feedback to refine the eventual survey questionnaire. JG suggested that some statements may be too technical and thus may not be in sync with consumers' lingo in describing packaging, while others may most likely be lost in translation. At the same time, JG highlighted the need to balance innovativeness and category typicality. JG's points and suggestions were valid and reasonable; amendments were therefore made to the eventual questionnaire.

3.4.2.4. Survey sampling and sample profile

Before pre-testing the questionnaire amongst consumers, the sampling approach and the sample profile needed first to be determined. Sampling is the means of selecting a group of people representative of the sampling frame or target population to make inferences from their responses (Taherdoost, 2016).

There were limited resources to conduct random sampling across different provinces to deliver a sample profile representative of Thailand's beer-drinking population; non-probability purposive sampling with identified pre-inclusion criteria was adopted. Purposive sampling was used because of its affordability, simplicity and the short duration of time required to reach the target group. However, it is acknowledged that there could be resultant hidden bias, the possible presence of outliers, and a potentially high level of sampling error, e.g., some demographic segments may be over-represented, and others may be under-represented (Etikan, 2016). After all, the sampling was non-random, and all participants who met the pre-inclusion criteria and were easily accessible, available, and willing were recruited.

The pre-inclusion criteria aimed to identify and select individuals who were well informed with the phenomenon of interest (i.e., in this study, the individuals must be of legal drinking age and were regular beer purchasers). These pre-inclusion criteria were based on the purpose of this study, and further supported with my industry insider understanding of the drinking population and included "above legal drinking age (20 years)", "regular beer purchasers (at least once a month)", age groups of "20-39 years old," and Social Economic Strata.[1] (SES) B & C i.e., “monthly household incomes between 25,000-59,999THB[2]". At the same time, knowing that both males and females would purchase and drink beer in Thailand, participants were intercepted outside various supermarkets within the Bangkok capital city with a quota of 50/50 Male and Females.

3.4.2.5. Pre-testing and finetuning the questionnaire

Finally, a pre-test was conducted to ensure that respondents understood and interpreted the terms used in the questionnaire (Gall et al., 2007). The objectives for the pre-test may be classified into four categories – process, resources, management and scientific (van Teijlingen et al., 2001). The pre-test assessed the feasibility of processes related to recruitment rates and retention rates. It provided an assessment of the resources required (e.g., length of time to complete the surveys). Furthermore, the pre-test also helped uncover personnel and data management issues (e.g., comprehension of the translated questionnaire). Additionally, in social research such as the present study, the pre-test would surface potential underlying ethical issues, e.g., ensuring privacy during the interactions in public areas.

[1] The stratifications followed the 2015 definitions used in third-party reports that my organisation subscribed from The Nielsen Company (Thailand) and Ipsos Research (Thailand). According to these reports, the stratifications were based on the national census. According to this stratification, SES B and C made up 51.2% of urban households.
[2] 1GBP = 55.3891THB as of 18 Sep 2015

Finally, given that the study was conducted within the Thai beer market context, the survey questionnaire was translated into Thai. The back-translation technique was used to ensure the linguistic equivalence of the English and Thai versions (Tyupa, 2011). The back-translation involved translating the material from English to Thai before the material was retranslated from Thai back to English. The translation was done by a Thai American freelancer effectively bilingual in Thai and English, with eleven years of experience in simultaneous translations/interpretations. The original and translated questionnaires were reviewed by comparing them, and the Thai questionnaire was assessed and corrected (Harkness et al., 2003). In the same way, the participant information sheet (PIS) and the informed consent form were also translated.

Eventually, the pre-test was conducted on 18 July 2015 at the public entrance of a popular shopping mall, Central Plaza Ladprao, in Bangkok, where the popular Tops supermarket was located. This location was selected because of its accessibility to the city centre in terms of transportation and reflected the typical characteristics of a Thai shopping centre. Participants were approached randomly as they exited the shopping mall but screened according to the criteria set out in the questionnaire, i.e., age, beer shopping behaviour, income, and their prior exposure to advertising and research. The screening criteria were based on the same inclusion/exclusion criteria intended for the main study. Overall, 47 people were approached for the survey, but only 17 responded favourably. The rest either declined to participate or were ruled out due to the stringent criteria used to screen the respondents. Of the 17 responses, there were 15 completed questionnaires, but the last two surveys had to be rejected as they were incomplete.

The pre-test yielded various important learning points that were adapted into the final fieldwork. Firstly, the pre-test indicated that the response rate of about 1 in 3 was rather low due to unnecessarily stringent screening criteria. Secondly, the pre-test fieldwork took close to six hours which was extremely long. The eventual screening criteria were relaxed with the removal of "Do you, or any members of your household, work in any of these businesses?" and "Purchase a minimum of four brands". At the same time, some common industry terms were not deemed as participant friendly. These words were changed in the final questionnaire.

From a logistical and privacy point of view, the pre-test showed no problem with privacy; the chosen location was sufficiently large to allow the survey to be conducted out of earshot. There were also no issues with permits as the survey was conducted in a public area just outside the shopping mall where the supermarket was located. Initial concerns about the logistical challenge of handling many visual aids proved to be unfounded as they were small and appropriately mounted. The pre-test highlighted the need for some enhancements to the consent form. The consent form originally required the participant to initial against every statement in the consent form in each box. However, it was clear that the participants were unwilling to initial multiple times. Hence, a decision was taken to allow the participant to tick the boxes and sign off with one signatory. The consent form was thus amended accordingly.

3.4.2.6. Data collection – survey fieldwork

The learning points from the pre-test were incorporated into the final questionnaire and helped to finetune the conduct of the survey fieldwork especially regarding processes, resources, management, and ethics. See Appendix 3 for a copy of the final questionnaire. The final survey fieldwork was conducted over three days from 18-21 September 2015 at three different retail locations similar to the one used for the pre-test. The response rate was good, with 2 out of 3 random intercepts resulting in successful interviews. However, the fieldwork generated only 101 completed and qualified survey interviews due to time constraints. This was less than ideal, considering that the subjects-to-variables ratio should not be lower than five for quantitative surveys (Bryant & Yarnold, 1995, cited in Garson, 2008), i.e., the sample size should not be less than 195 for this study which had thirty-nine items of measurement. Notwithstanding, the findings from the survey were primarily intended to help develop the focus group discussion guide; they were not intended for the generalisation of knowledge.

3.4.2.7. Data analysis

With the data collected, the demographic profile of the sample was assessed in terms of gender, age groups, and household income. Extremities in terms of demographic skews were highlighted. Next, normality was assessed by looking at the skewness and kurtosis of the distributions. Skewness is an indicator of asymmetry, while kurtosis indicates the degree of peaks. Typically, the standard error of Skewness should be between -2 to +2 so that there is no excessive Skewness, and the standard error of Kurtosis should be between -2 to +2 so that there were no excessive peaks. These values are considered acceptable to prove normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Normality was also checked against the

Central Limit Theorem, which claims that the sampling distribution of the mean could safely be assumed to be normal if the sample were based on 30 or more observations (Wilcox, 2012). Finally, the mean scores of the responses to each of the statements were reviewed, and inferences were made. Items with mean ratings of 3.5 and above were deemed as corresponding to perceptions of a high-quality beer. Again, I am mindful that the primary intention was to sense-check if the items were meaningful to consumers' perceptions of quality. If the results affirmed their meaningfulness, these items were then included as discussion points in the subsequent focus groups.

3.4.3. Phase Two: consumer focus groups

In Phase Two, the aim was to develop a deeper understanding of the identified packaging stimuli and how they affected perceptions of quality. Focus groups were conducted to collect the data. These were moderated interactive group interviews that discussed a specified subject in a convenient and open setting (Saunders et al., 2009). As Creswell & Miller (2000) point out, such discussions are useful for refining/clarifying preliminary data. Kitzinger (1995) also point out that focus groups are particularly useful in understanding how participants, using their own words, think and prioritise. Hence, discussions are typically kept open-ended but are guided accordingly to allow for purposeful dialogue. The participants were engaged in discussions to draw out information about their experiences, attitudes, preferences, and perceptions towards beer packaging. The proceedings from each discussion were audio-recorded (if the participants permitted) and transcribed. This facilitated the subsequent analytical process of coding, comparing, and contrasting data to identify themes and relationships (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). With these considerations in mind, the following sections now detail the setup and conduct of the focus groups.

3.4.3.1. Objective of the focus groups

In structuring the discussions, I was mindful that the objective was to obtain insights regarding the following topics:

- Provide context to the participants' brand preferences, consumption channels, and the social setting of their consumption. The discussions were also intended to explain their considerations such as brand familiarity, pricing, promotions, time to shop etc.
- Investigate the differences between the packaging cues in impacting quality perceptions.

- Unravel the meaning underlying each of the packaging cues and surface improvement opportunities.

These topics were weaved into the discussion guide to facilitate the dialogue between myself as the researcher and the participants. Details of the discussion guide are detailed below.

3.4.3.2. Discussion guide

Discussion guides are semi-structured scripts to help the sessions on track while allowing participants to talk freely and spontaneously (Brinkmann, 2014). They also act as prompts to remind of necessary topics to cover, questions to ask and areas to probe. Specifically, the discussion guide for this study began with an introduction of myself and the simultaneous translator/interpreter, outlined the objectives, and declared the voluntary nature of the discussions. Also shared were the ground rules of the discussions, the use of a recording device for purposes of transcription and analysis, the use of the information gathered, the right of participants to withdraw at any time, and general logistical information, including how long the interview may take. These were critical in setting a thoughtful and permissive atmosphere.

The discussion guide was minimally scripted to encourage participants to express themselves freely and generally followed the flow recommended by Krueger & Casey (2009), which is to open with questions that are easy to answer, e.g., self-introductions and ice-breaker activities. This was intended to put everyone at ease and to develop some level of rapport with each other. After that, the discussion would segue into topics such as their beer purchase habits, purchase criteria, and general decision-making process when buying beers. Once these were established, the questions narrowed into specific topics such as brand packaging recall, probing their feelings and perceptions of packaging cues s such as colour, material, shape, size, tactility, graphics, and textual information. The results from the consumer survey guided the packaging cues used. I, as moderator, would probe and clarify accordingly. After discussing and reflecting upon their responses towards each of these items, the participants were encouraged to share their ideal beer packaging. Once the discussions no longer yielded any new responses, the discussions ended with questions to seek final reflections. Finally, the sessions closed with me thanking them for their participation and allowing them to request a copy of the transcript and the final report. See Appendix 4 for a copy of the discussion guide.

3.4.3.3. Use of visual aids and drawings

The focus group discussions were primarily verbal activities. Nevertheless, considering the characteristics of the Thai culture whereby more listening, rather than speaking, was to be expected (Chung, 2021), non-verbal participatory aids such as visual stimuli and participant drawings were included in the process. Visual aids are very effective in helping participants infer the meaning of words and avoid misinterpretation, especially when they have been purposefully selected and captioned clearly (McTigue & Flowers, 2011). Therefore, the visual aids used in Phase One were used again for the focus groups.

In addition, participatory drawing as a research method was introduced. Participatory drawing is a visual research method suitable across different cultural contexts due to its participatory nature and its lack of dependence on linguistic proficiency (Literat, 2013). The drawn images and a subsequent reflective discussion of the meanings behind these images empower research participants and provide the researcher valuable insights into their contexts and perceptions. By combining drawing and words, information about the complex research problem may be more complete, and intangible participant views may become more tangible (Zweifel & Wezemael, 2012). Supporting this view, Cristancho (2015) underlines that participatory drawings can help collaborate meaning-making and represent experiences beyond words by using colours, position, size, complexity, etc. Drawings enhanced the sense-making processes in communication by "tangibilizing abstract conversation," "contextualising design concepts", and by "unveiling underlying needs" (Wang & Ramberg, 2012: p.2). Löwgren & Stolterman (2004) and Tversky (2002) also find that drawing helps externalise ideas, convey abstract ideas metaphorically, communicate with oneself, and support communication with others. Participatory drawing offers an additional space to enrich researcher-participant dialogue. Indeed, as Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty (2006), Mitchell et al. (2011) and Rees (2018) put it, participatory drawing is non-linguistic and non-textual, and may thus give freedom of expression to participants to ‘voice’ for themselves their otherwise “overlooked, rejected, or silenced” narratives. Drawing is thus a great complement to verbal research methods, especially when used to triangulate data (Fleury, 2012).

With these supporting arguments in mind, participatory drawing was introduced into the focus groups at three points. The first session of participatory drawing occurred when the participants were encouraged to project an animal personification of themselves as part of self-introduction. This was basically to familiarise them with the method of drawing during the research. The second participatory drawing session was when the participants had to sketch and subsequently present the packaging of the beer brands that they purchased regularly. The third session of participatory drawing occurred towards the end of the discussions after the participants had been fully exposed to the different packaging items. At that point, they were asked to design and explain their ideal beer packaging that conveyed a high-quality perception. The emphases of their drawings complemented their verbal responses and further provided insights into the packaging cues that were truly important to them.

3.4.3.4. Focus groups sampling and sample profile

Having firmed up the discussion guide and confirmed the use of visual aids and participatory drawing as research tools, the next stage was to decide on the sample profile and the sampling approach. Like the sampling approach for the survey, non-probability purposive sampling with identified pre-inclusion criteria was also adopted for the focus groups. This approach was adopted alongside convenience sampling, whereby the participants were then selected from my extended network of acquaintances. This was helpful to the recruitment process since no participation incentives were given out. I was cognizant that there could be relationship bias because the participants were distant acquaintances. However, I decided that this bias was unlikely to exist or interfere with the study since the topic focused on individual preferences towards different packaging elements and was relatively independent of any researcher-participant relationship. I, however, acknowledged that in such non-probability sampling, there could be the possible presence of outliers and a potentially high level of sampling error (Etikan, 2016). Notwithstanding, this purposive convenience sampling approach was selected because the study's intention was primarily exploratory and interpretative. Also, such approaches are affordable, given that access to available and willing participants was relatively easier.

Pre-inclusion criteria from Phase One were used to identify and select individuals who were well-informed with the phenomenon of interest. Based on my industry insider understanding of the drinking population and habits in Thailand, this meant that the participants would be "above legal drinking age (20 years)", "regular beer purchasers (at least once a month)", within the age groups of "20-29 years old" and "30-39 years old", in Social Economic Strata (SES) B & C, i.e., monthly household incomes between 25,000-59,999THB (the bulk of beer consumers in Thailand), with a quota of 50/50 Male and Female. With this sampling approach and sample profile in mind, I considered that a focus group would typically consist of between six and eight participants. Four groups were planned, as this was optimal to discuss a topic exhaustively (Nyumba et al., 2018; Burrows & Kendall, 1997).

Eventually, four groups consisting of six homogeneous participants were recruited. Group 1 comprised 20-29-year-old Males with a monthly household income of 25,000-49,000THB; Group 2 consisted of 20-29-year-old Females with a monthly household income of 25,000-49,000THB; Group 3 was made up of 30–39-year-old Males with a monthly household income of 50,000-59,000THB; Group 4 constituted 30-39-year-old Females with a monthly household income of 50,000-59,000THB. The participants' profiles are tabulated below (Table 3.1). As covered in Section 3.4.1, Ethical Research Conduct, there was an undertaking to prevent harm to the participants, ensure transparency, and maintain anonymity and confidentiality (Orb et al., 2001; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Hence, the names of the participants have been anonymised.

Table 3.1: Profile of focus group participants

Groups	Participant Code	Gender	Age	Occupation
Group 1 Male, 20-29 years old, SES C	1A	Male	25	Businessman
	1B	Male	22	Student
	1C	Male	21	Student
	1D	Male	26	Purchaser
	1E	Male	28	Customer service
	1F	Male	29	IT Assistant
Group 2 Female, 20-29 years old, SES C	2A	Female	23	Office Worker
	2B	Female	26	Administrator
	2C	Female	27	Call Centre Operator
	2D	Female	25	Documentation Officer
	2E	Female	22	Student
	2F	Female	22	Student

Group 3 Male, 30-39 years old, SES B	3A	Male	34	Supervisor
	3B	Male	31	Officer
	3C	Male	32	Credit Officer
	3D	Male	37	IT Officer
	3E	Male	39	IT Officer
	3F	Male	38	Assistant Manager
Group 4 Female, 30-39 years old, SES B	4A	Female	39	Export Officer
	4B	Female	32	Secretary
	4C	Female	37	Secretary
	4D	Female	39	Accountant
	4E	Female	33	Finance Officer
	4F	Female	31	HR Officer

3.4.3.5. Engagement of a simultaneous translator/interpreter

Due consideration was given to the participants' lack of English language proficiency and my lack of Thai language proficiency. Stopes-Roe & Cochrane (1991) and Singh (1994) urge a need to give voice to the participants regarding their lifestyle practices, experiences, and cultural values. Therefore, given that the primary language medium of the discussions was in Thai, an experienced simultaneous translator/interpreter was appointed. He was the same person who assisted in translating the survey questionnaire. Not only did he assist as an interpreter in the discussions and help with the transcriptions, but he acted as a 'cultural broker' too – a person familiar with the Thai culture and who advised me on culturally appropriate strategies to meet research objectives. (Hennink, 2017). His appointment also helped put the participants at ease since he fitted into the age group and ethnicity of the focus group participants (Freed, 1988; Riessman, 1987; Rana, 1998).

However, having the simultaneous translator/interpreter involved actively in the discussion groups required careful coordination and collaboration. Murray & Wynne (2001) highlight the importance of pre-discussions to optimise the conduct of the focus groups. Over four weeks from the end of February 2016, the simultaneous translator/interpreter and I frequently corresponded via emails and face-to-face meetings to discuss the purpose of the focus groups, the key themes of investigation, ethical issues related to such studies, and the discussion guide. We pre-aligned the terminology to be used, the roles to be played, and how best to engage the participants. These frequent exchanges anticipated potential issues, and the overall flow was reviewed and improved.

3.4.3.6. Data collection – conduct of focus groups

Once the preparations were completed, the focus group discussions commenced. The discussions took place over two days, on 28 and 29 March 2016, in a neutral and casual service apartment at The Empire Place (Bangkok). Every participant was assured of anonymity confidentiality and that his or her responses would not be misrepresented. They were all asked to sign the participant consent form before the study progressed. In addition, the participants were asked to provide their consent for the use of an audio recorder and the involvement of a professional simultaneous translator. Next, the rules of engagement were emphasised (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) – one person to speak at a time, no right or wrong answers, etc. The discussions would take about 90 minutes.

Following the general structure of the discussion guide (ref. 3.4.3.2), the participants were first asked to introduce themselves. To create a non-intimidating atmosphere of openness and discussion, in addition to a formal introduction (e.g., name, age, marital status, occupation, etc.), the participants were encouraged to project an animal personification of how they see themselves. This user participatory drawing section created much laughter, and as intended, helped to add richness beyond natural language and lightened the discussion mood considerably. This allowed the discussion to move closer to the topic of study.

Participants were then asked about their beer consumption habits – frequency, amount, place of purchase and consumption, occasions, brands, drinking friends, etc. Following that, the participants were invited to imagine that they were shopping for a beer at their local store. They were then asked to share their decision-making process, leading up to the point of purchase – what they looked for, what purchase criteria they adopted, etc. I also gave them a scenario whereby none of their familiar brands was available, and they had to list their key considerations in order of importance. This approach aimed to probe into the different levels of involvement in purchasing a regular brand vis-à-vis an unknown brand.

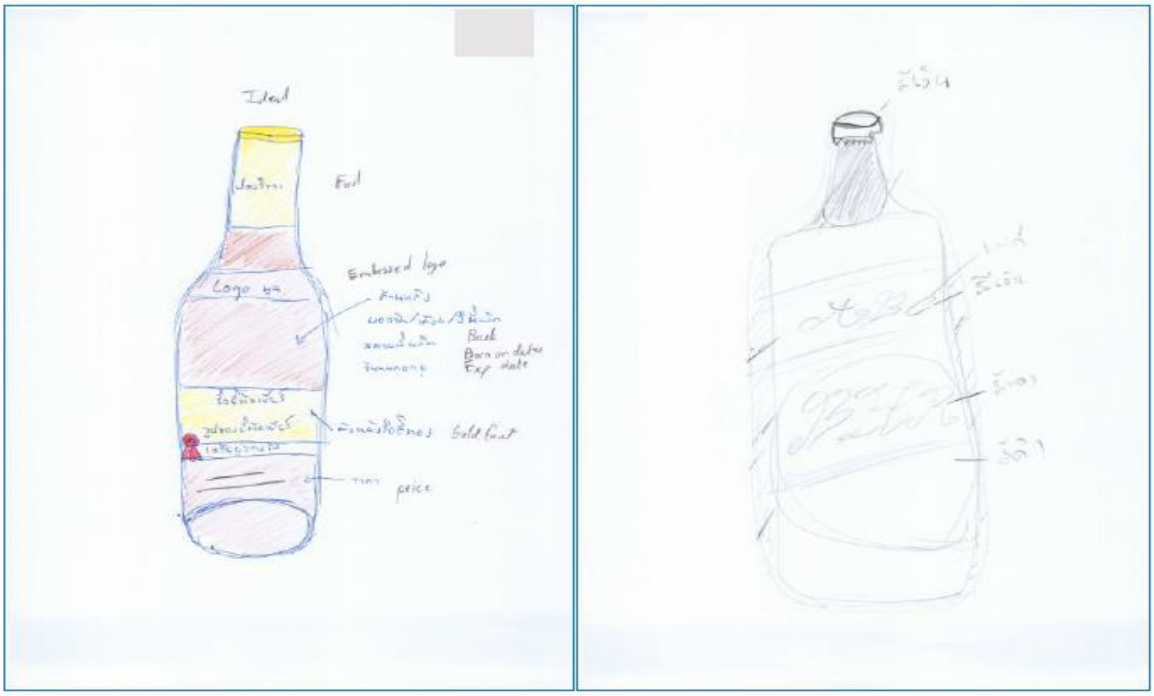
The session then progressed to an interactive section whereby participants had to sketch and describe the packaging of the beer brands that they purchased regularly. A selection of these sketches may be found in Figure 3.7 below. For the sake of anonymity, the participants' names on the drawings are hidden. Without going into the analytics of the drawings at this point, one could already notice that the participants' renderings of their regular beer brand generally focused on the bottle shape, the bottle colour, the brand logo, and the brand colours.

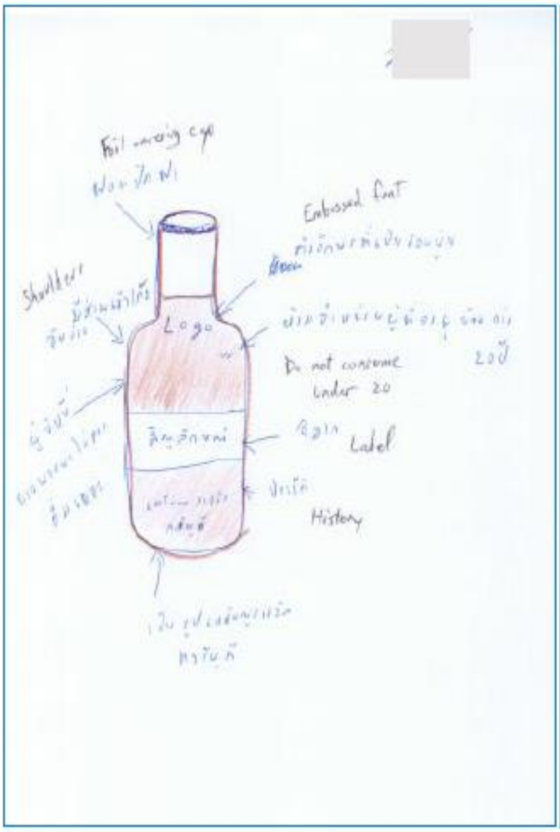
Through this non-verbal approach, the participants subconsciously indicated that these were the cues they would notice and recall.

Figure 3.7: A selection of participants' drawings of their regular beer brands

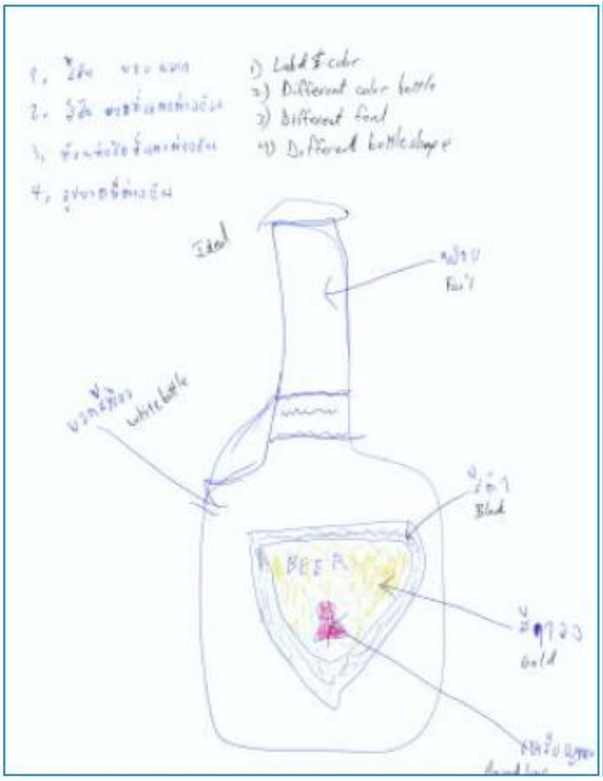
In the next stage, the participants were again asked to imagine that they were in front of the beer display in their local store and faced with a wide array of familiar and unfamiliar imported and local beers. They were prompted to give specific packaging cues that a premium, high-quality beer would feature. They were then asked to substantiate their responses. After that, they were asked to give counterexamples of packaging cues that conveyed poor-quality perceptions. Likewise, they had to explain their responses accordingly. This section intended to direct the consumers' minds towards key packaging cues deemed important; this would set the stage for the next section when stimulus materials were revealed.

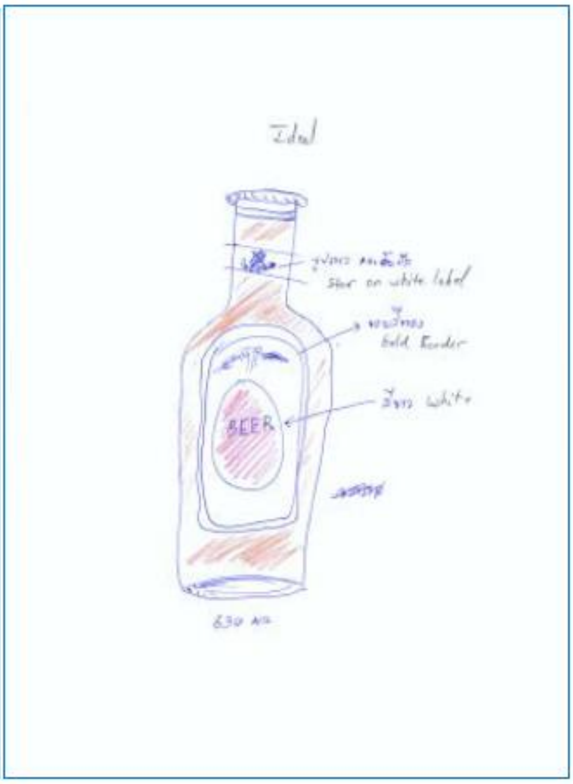
Showcards were then introduced progressively as the conversations flowed. These were the same show cards used during the survey. Each stimuli material featured a specific packaging attribute, e.g., bottle and label shapes, sizes, colours, and material used. Each design on the stimuli material was kept unbranded to minimise any latent association with existing brands in the market. Specific feedback was then obtained. After being fully exposed to the different packaging attributes, the participants were asked to sketch and describe the ideal beer packaging that conveyed high quality. A selection of these drawings may be found in Figure 3.8 below. What may be observed at this stage was that the participants' drawings showed a common emphasis towards bottle shape, bottle colour, label shape and graphics on the label, as well as the neck label. These cues were similar to the ones they had focused on during the earlier renderings of their regular beer brands. While the analysis of these drawings will be covered in the next chapter, it was noteworthy that the sketches already indicated which packaging cues mattered, albeit non-verbally.




Foil covering cap
Embossed font
Shoulder
Logo
Do not consume under 20
Label
History


Brand
Brand
Details
Country of origin


1) Label color
2) Different color bottle
3) Different font
4) Different bottle shape
Ideal
Foil
white label
Black
BEER
Gold


Ideal
Star on white label
Gold Border
White
BEER

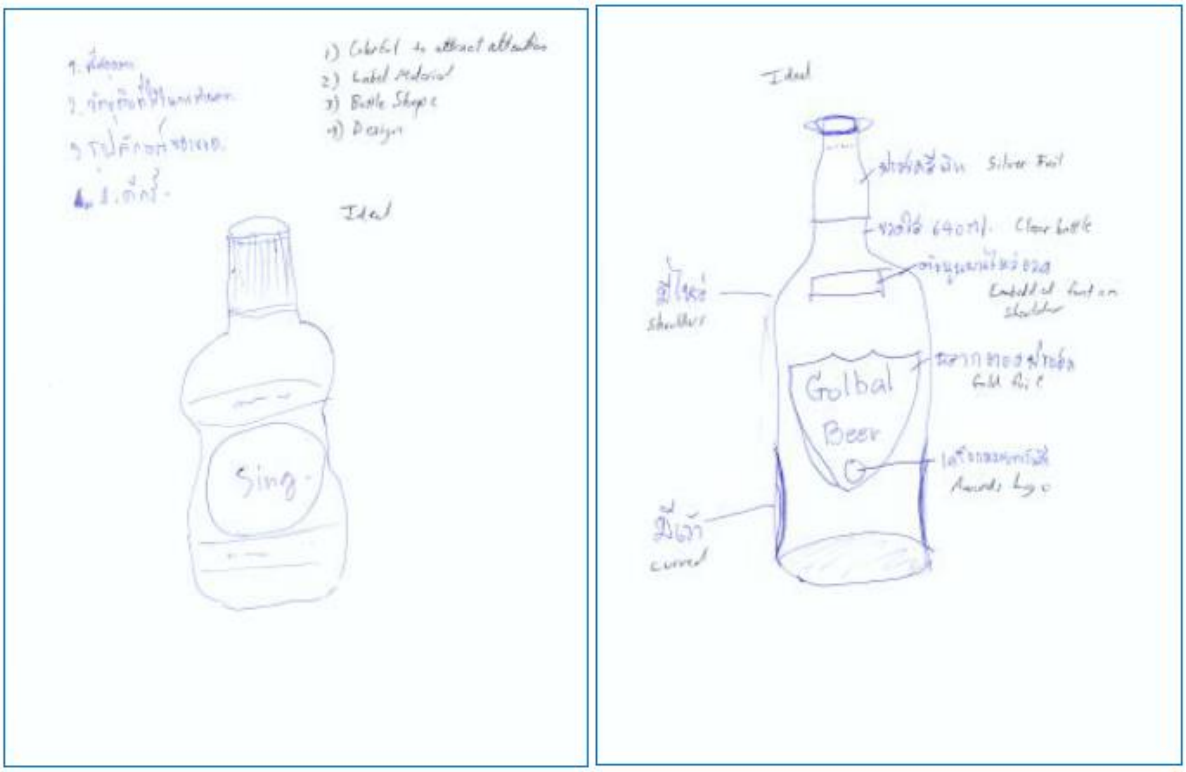


Figure 3.8: Drawings of the participants' regular beer brands

The sessions ended when none of the participants had anything further to share. They were then asked if they would like to receive a copy of the transcripts or the final study report. This approach assured them that there would be no misrepresentation (perceived or otherwise) of their responses. However, none of the participants responded in the affirmative.

Throughout the discussions, the simultaneous translator/interpreter and I continually reviewed the progress in covering the areas specified in the discussion guide. The interactive sections, where the participants had to sketch, provided me with critical short intervals to quickly reflect upon the ongoing discussions, and as appropriate, to suggest supplementary topics and questions for further exploration with the groups. At the same time, the simultaneous translator/interpreter was not only able to expertly translate the questions and the responses, but he was also able to help me ask clarifying questions, as necessary. In this way, he supported me in directing the discussions, taking notes, and asking probing questions. This approach allowed me to cover all the topics outlined in the discussion guide and dive deeper for richer narratives.

As a result, I used open and non-leading questions and followed up with questions to elicit a deeper and more detailed understanding based on what the participants had said. I also used probing questions to obtain deeper and more descriptive narratives when the participants' initial responses were too brief or incomplete (Hennink, 2017). In addition, working with the simultaneous translator/interpreter allowed me to observe the participants better non-verbal behaviours, e.g., whether they were listening carefully, showing interest in a discussion point, or displaying tacit agreement to what was being discussed, etc. When corroborated with the notes and transcripts, such observations were highly useful in gaining better insights (Nyumba et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2007).

3.4.3.7. Thematic analysis

Once the sessions were completed, and the transcriptions were done, thematic analysis was undertaken. This involved combing through the focus group discussions and identifying common recurring themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Braun et al. (2019) describe thematic analysis as an iterative analytical method whereby the researcher examines chunks of data to identify common themes. Themes are ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. Thematic analyses are particularly useful when the intention is to seek people's views, knowledge, or experiences. In this study, the thematic analysis followed a six-step process prescribed by Braun & Clarke (2006).

In Step One, the focus was on data immersion and familiarisation to provide a thorough overview of the data collected. The audio recordings from the four discussion sessions were transcribed, translated into English, and stored as an Excel file in a secured folder for analysis. The simultaneous interpreter/translator helped with the transcription, with the specific instruction to keep the text as close to the original as possible. The transcripts were then read alongside the notes taken during the discussions. References were also made to the user participatory drawings. After a few rounds of reading and re-reading the transcripts examining the drawings and notes, preliminary codes were assigned to the data as the analysis progressed to Step Two. Codes are brief shorthand descriptions of relevant phrases found in the transcripts. All the sentences that were similarly coded were then grouped. Coding, therefore, is a way to organise the data into meaningful groups and ultimately helps provide a condensed overview of the recurring key points in the transcripts.

Moving on to Step Three, I began to look at the various codes and collated them into themes. This was an iterative process of repeatedly collating the codes into themes, refining by moving some codes to other themes or relabelling the theme to be more descriptive. In doing so, I realised that there was sometimes a necessity to branch the main themes into sub-themes to capture better meaningful patterns that had emerged during iteration. The next step in the thematic analysis was the review of these themes. All the codes were re-read a few times to ensure that they supported the themes they were grouped under, and if there were apparent contradictions, they were highlighted and reviewed. This process in Step Four continued until the themes were coherent and adequately/accurately represented the discussions. In Step Five, the themes were reviewed once again, along with their corresponding descriptions, to ensure they reinforced each other to provide a narrative about the research questions (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Once the narrative became clear and coherent, the final step was to write the findings into a report. The final codes, themes, sub-themes, and write-ups will be detailed in the next chapter.

3.4.4. Phase Three: individual interviews with subject matter experts

While Phase One and Two included an external design expert and beer consumers as key stakeholders, Phase Three focused on marketing executives in the organisation. A significant amount of time is spent with each interviewee in discovery-oriented conversations to uncover their perspectives, experiences, and feelings (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020) regarding the findings from the consumer focus groups. By presenting to these stakeholders and seeking their comments, it was intended to enhance their understanding of packaging so that they too could appreciate packaging through a consumer lens. Also, by eliciting their reactions and suggestions, the interviews facilitated consensus on the findings and provided opportunities for them to surface any gaps/concerns that may warrant further investigation.

These individual in-depth interviews complemented the focus groups in providing additional data about the various packaging stimuli and their influence on quality perceptions. After all, these stakeholders possessed useful and relevant knowledge, wisdom, and insight and can provide added authority to the research. Furthermore, by promoting inclusiveness and participation in the research, I intended to enhance packaging knowledge amongst my co-workers and ultimately improve the packaging design practices within my organisation. In this way, better accountability and more precise packaging efforts could be achieved.

3.4.4.1. Interview guide development

An interview guide guided each interview. The interview guide, which was based on the outcomes from the focus groups, allowed for a semi-structured but conversational interview atmosphere. The scaffold of the guide is developed, keeping in mind the purpose of the study and the key findings that emerged from the previous two phases. There were questions to trigger viewpoints about the macro perspective of the beer industry, brand strategies and packaging, packaging trends and examples, and the relationship between packaging and consumer perceptions. The guide also covered discussions about the internal packaging development process and the importance of different packaging cues from consumers' eyes. The list of stimuli items used in the interviews mirrored what was used in Phase One and Two, and feedback was sought about the themes and responses collected during the focus groups. Please refer to Appendix 6 for the interview guide.

3.4.4.2. Subject matter experts sampling and sample profile

Purposive sampling was adopted. The main criteria in selecting the internal stakeholders were that they must be directly involved in the packaging design process. They also had to be fluent in English and have had at least 5-10 years of developing packaging designs. This was to ensure interviewees were well-experienced, articulate, and expressive. To this end, only three internal subject matter experts in my organisation in Thailand met these criteria. They were the three senior marketing personnel who typically spearhead product innovation projects. Other internal stakeholders were excluded from the interviews because they lacked the linguistic ability and/or the depth of expertise in beer packaging design to articulate their perspectives clearly.

Once the three stakeholders were identified, I approached them directly to seek their participation. The Participant Information Sheet was provided to them to read so that they understood the purpose of the research study; their freedom to abstain and withdraw; the use, storage and destruction of data collected; the confidentiality & privacy; the possible risk (or lack of); rewards (or lack of); and their channels of feedback. After this pre-participation briefing and after they had agreed to the interviews, informed consent was sought, and they were asked to sign the informed consent form. The interviewees' profiles (with names changed for anonymity) are tabulated below (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Interviewee profile

Interviewee Code	Years of experience in beer packaging	Date of Interview
X	20	28 May 2021
Y	7	31 May 2021
Z	9	2 June 2021

3.4.4.3. Data collection – conduct of interviews

Each interview lasted about 45-60 minutes and was conducted via Microsoft Teams conferencing software, at a time convenient to both the interviewee and me. Using the screen-sharing functionality, I was able to share the visual aids used in the focus groups and the sketches of the participants. All the interviewees declined to be video recorded but were agreeable to being audio recorded.

Using the abovementioned interview guide (ref. 3.4.4.1) as the scaffold, each interviewee was informed of the purpose of the study, the reasons behind their selection and the approximate time the interview would take. They were then re-briefed on the details contained in the participant information sheet and asked for their voluntary participation in the interview. Upon receiving their informed consent, they were requested to sign and return the consent form, which had been emailed to them earlier. To ease the conversation into the research topic and to create a non-intimidating atmosphere of openness, the interviewees were asked about their views about the beer market as a whole. In particular, they were asked about the macro factors affecting the industry, i.e., the covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the beer industry, regulatory trends, especially health and sustainability concerns, current and emerging consumer trends.

Following their views on these macro factors, the interview progressed to seeking the interviewee's viewpoints regarding his/her thoughts about brand management and how the brand strategies would evolve with the changes in consumer purchase behaviours, especially in Thailand. As the interviewees responded, they would invariably highlight Thailand's regulatory constraints (refer to Chapter 1: introduction) and how packaging has become an important part of their marketing mix. They were then asked about beer packaging trends worldwide and to highlight interesting new packaging and why they found them interesting. In addition, I probed specifically on the issue of sustainability, the use of environmentally friendly materials for packaging and if there would be, in their opinion, any impact on consumers' perception of quality.

Having oriented them to packaging and quality perceptions, I began exploring their considerations in their packaging design process to understand how they used packaging to enhance the quality perceptions of their brands. By this time, the interviewees had become a lot more at ease and conversational, and it was at this juncture I started to share the findings from the focus groups. I asked questions about their interpretations of the consumers' feedback and their perceptions of each packaging cue. To stimulate the conversations further, the sketches from the focus groups were also shared on-screen to assess their interpretations. This section of the conversation added to the richness of the findings and opened up more themes for further investigation. I then tried to link the focus group findings to literature and asked them their personal views regarding how different packaging elements may affect different senses and emotions. Next, I sought their opinions on the various emergent themes that surfaced from the previous phase of the study.

After the interviewees had finished sharing their viewpoints, I prompted them to see if there were anything else they would like to share; this was to uncover any unexplored areas which may not have surfaced during the previous two phases or the earlier parts of the interview. This was important to surface blind spot topics I could have inevitably missed out on in my interview guide. To this end, it was noteworthy that during the first interview, X highlighted the importance of looking at the sum of every packaging element and if they complemented each other, not just simply focusing on each packaging cue. This was a valid point, and consequently, for the remaining interviews, the interviewees were prompted to share their views on the importance of congruence in packaging designs.

Additionally, I sought the interviewees' views on the various themes and sub-themes unearthed in Phase Two - how these would impact the way they thought about packaging designs and how they may change the way they work. As an action research study, this section of the interview was essential as it prompted reflection on current practices against alternative approaches that surfaced during the interviews. The ensuing discussion was candid and open as I remained mindful that the quest was not just to create knowledge regarding packaging design but also to enhance the packaging design practices within my organisation. During this section, the interviewees were forthcoming with their reflections, their acknowledgement of the gaps in the design process, their commitment to making changes and they eventually outlined the specific actions they would take.

Finally, after the interviewees confirmed that there was nothing more to share, the interviews ended. To close, I underlined the collaborative nature of the action research again and expressed gratitude for their participation. To ensure beneficence, autonomy and justice (Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009), the interviewees were also asked if they would like to receive a copy of the transcripts or the final study report; all politely declined.

3.4.4.4. Thematic analysis

With the sessions completed, I immediately moved to transcribe the proceedings of the interviews onto an Excel file in a secured folder. This was done relatively easily as the interviews were conducted in English, and the three interviewees were expressive and articulate in their responses and sharing. After that, I began to analyse the transcripts thematically. As per Phase Two, I adopted the process prescribed by Braun & Clarke (2006). I first immersed and familiarised myself with the data in the transcripts by reading several times all the comments made by the interviewees. I then assigned preliminary codes to help me organise and condense recurring data into meaningful groups. After that, these codes and their corresponding comments were consolidated into themes, either by folding some of the codes under a single theme or by expanding a single theme into a few more specific sub-themes. This process was iterative, and I found myself having to revise the themes and sub-themes repeatedly, even while writing up the report. The repeated iteration was necessary because, during the process, further insights surfaced, more appropriate thematic labels emerged, and opportunities to tighten the narrative developed.

A point worth highlighting is the difference between the thematic analysis of the discussions from the focus groups and the comments from the individual interviews. While the emphasis of the thematic analysis of the focus groups was mainly on uncovering the latent motivations that underpinned the participants' responses, the focus of the analysis of the individual interviews was on the practical applicability of the focus groups' findings in the organisational context. The analytical perspective was thus very much from a practitioner lens to understand how the internal stakeholders received the findings and how this newfound knowledge would affect the way they work going forward. These action-research findings and outcomes will be covered in detail under Chapter Five: implications for Managerial Practice.

3.5. Reflections

In writing up this chapter on Methodology, I found myself coming back, again and again, to update the different sections as I reflected on the actual ongoings. The original plan and the actual implementation were not always exactly in sync. Situational adaptation had to be made to accommodate new insights or revelations. Indeed, the entire methodology development for this study has been a highly iterative process. For example, I originally wanted a purely quantitative research study to test causality and ascertain which packaging elements drove quality perceptions. I had even proceeded to develop several hypotheses for testing. I had also wanted to assess if any socio-demographic factors potentially could moderate the relationships. My initial motivation was to generate a set of findings that could be generalised.

However, I felt that it was insufficient to simply establish a list of packaging items that influenced quality perceptions as I progressed. I needed to understand why these items mattered. It became increasingly apparent that it would be more useful to understand the insights that underpinned the quantitative responses. Furthermore, when I revisited the research problem, I realised that a fully quantitative approach would not be in line with the true intention of the study. This was originally developed as an action research study that aimed to uncover possible reasons as to why certain packaging elements mattered more than others in influencing quality perceptions. These findings could then be used to improve the internal packaging design work processes we currently have within the organisation.

As the findings would be highly contextual to my organisation's circumstances, it was not realistic to expect that the results could be generalised beyond my organisation. That was when I decided to pivot the study's methodology to add a qualitative Phase 2 – focus groups. Consequently, the emphasis changed. With the new intention to simply sense-check the meaningfulness of the packaging items in the survey, statistical analysis shifted from regression analysis to basic ANOVA and descriptive statistics. By evaluating which items correspond or do not correspond to the respondents' perception of a high-quality beer, I could then decide to include or exclude them as discussion points in the focus groups.

Another iteration I made to the methodology was the addition of individual interviews with insider stakeholders. This was aimed to supplement the qualitative findings from Phase Two. This was a crucial methodology revision because I was reminded that a key outcome of action research was to facilitate actionable change to current practices in the workplace. Had I decided to end the study after generating findings from the focus groups, I would have stopped short of achieving the goal of an action research study. Therefore, 'Phase Three – individual interviews with internal stakeholders' was added to the study. These stakeholders were subject matter experts from the organisation's Marketing department. By engaging them in individual dialogue regarding the focus groups' findings and by having them reflect these findings against their current practices, I intended for them to develop some degree of commitment to the knowledge and incorporate them into their existing packaging design process. This reminded me of Coghlan & Brannick (2019). They advocate that action research should preferably be undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry, involving key stakeholders of the problem as participants.

Finally, I found the interviews with the subject matter experts to enrich the overall findings. In response to certain questions raised in the individual interviews, the interviewees could provide further unexpected insights. These additional insights were immediately incorporated into the interview guide for the next interviewee. For example, interviewee X brought up a point about 'design congruency', which was previously not included in the interview guide. This was a crucial insight, and it was immediately added to subsequent interviews. In other words, the interview guide iterated as we progressed. This very much summed up the fuzzy and iterative nature of action research. Indeed, as Coghlan and Brannick (2019) encourage, action researchers should go with the story as it evolves to keep the inquiry active.

3.6. Summary

Following the literature review, which provided the theoretical backdrop against which this study was developed, this chapter detailed the methodological steps taken to develop a greater understanding of how beer packaging designs may influence Thai consumers' perceptions of product quality. Importantly, in developing the research approaches, I was able to incorporate key aspects of action research and progress the study, from a scholarly and consumer understanding of beer packaging to one that would be highly relevant to practitioners, with a strong emphasis to improve the way we work within the organisation.

The approaches undertaken reflected the exploratory qualitative nature of this action research and also reflected my philosophical critical realist paradigm. The survey was purposefully conducted to finalise a list of packaging cues to be tabled for an in-depth discussion in focus groups. After that, the findings from the focus groups were fielded with internal stakeholders in individual interviews to collaborate actions to improve the way we view and action packaging designs. Details of the analysis and the consequent findings for Phase One and Two will be discussed in the next chapter. A dedicated chapter – Chapter Five – will be set aside to discuss the action research analysis and findings of Phase Three.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the details of the analysis of Phase One and Phase Two of the study. The first section elaborates on the statistical analyses carried out on the data collected from the consumer survey. These results are discussed against the findings from the literature review. Specifically, the findings serve as focus group discussion platforms to help understand how Thai consumers perceive product quality through the lenses of each beer packaging cue.

The next section then elaborates on the thematic analysis of the focus group discussions. In addition to explaining the themes from discussions, this section will also reflect the findings against literature and industry practices. These were reinforced with analysis of the participatory drawings generated during the sessions. I have also embedded some of my observations throughout this section, especially concerning the conduct of the focus groups, my personal biases and my organisation's long-held practices.

The last section focuses on my reflections while analysing the data and writing the findings. These pertain to the several iterations made in both phases as I strived to lift the analyses beyond the superfluous. Such iterations had helped surfaced common motivations underpinning the participants' responses. Included also were my perspectives about consumers' attitudes regarding sustainability and bold packaging design.

All the findings and reflections in this chapter provided the scaffold for the following chapter, which will elaborate on the development of practical actions to enhance how beer packaging is designed in my organisation.

4.2 Survey results analysis

In analysing the survey results, I was mindful that the primary intention was to sense-check the meaningfulness of the packaging items measured. If they were meaningful, these items would be included as discussion points in the focus groups. To this end, basic descriptive statistics analysis, and analysis of variances (ANOVA) of means with pairwise comparisons, were carried out. The descriptive statistics analysis aimed to provide a summary of the sample and the data collected. ANOVA assessed whether a significant difference exists between the items, while pairwise comparisons determined if the differences were statistically significant.

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics analysis

The sample was first described in terms of gender, age groups, and household income. Of the 101 completed surveys in the sample, 57% were male, 54% were 20-29 years old, with the remaining belonging to the 30-39 age groups (See Tables 4.1 – 4.2). The sample profile was in line with the pre-inclusion criteria, though I noted that 90% of the sample was highly skewed towards SES C (Table 4.3).

Table 4.1: Frequency table by gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	58	57.4
	Female	43	42.6
	Total	101	100.0

Table 4.2: Frequency table by age

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	20-29 yrs. old	54	53.5
	30-39 yrs. old	47	46.5
	Total	101	100.0

Table 4.3: Frequency table by monthly household income

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	25K-49K THB SES C	91	90.1
	50-59K THB SES B	10	9.9
	Total	101	100.0

4.2.2 Normality assessment

Before ANOVA could be conducted, normality must first be assessed, and this was done by looking at the skewness and kurtosis of the distributions. Skewness is an indicator of asymmetry, while kurtosis indicates the degree of peaks of a distribution. Typically, the standard error of Skewness should be between -2 to +2 so that there is no excessive skewness. The standard error of Kurtosis should be between -2 to +2 so that there are no excessive peaks, i.e., normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Referring to Table 4.4., it was clear that the distributions were normal with no excessive skewness or peaks. At the same time, according to the Central Limit Theorem, the distribution of the mean could safely be assumed to be normal if the sample were based on 30 or more observations (Wilcox, 2012). The present study had a sample size of 101, i.e., normality may be assumed.

Table 4.4: Skewness and kurtosis of the distributions

		Statistic	Std. Error
Glass bottle	Skewness	-2.617	0.24
	Kurtosis	6.141	0.476
PET bottle	Skewness	1.128	0.24
	Kurtosis	0.559	0.476
Aluminium bottle	Skewness	-0.124	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.482	0.476
640ml	Skewness	0.687	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.46	0.476
500ml	Skewness	0.311	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.101	0.476
330ml	Skewness	-1.752	0.24
	Kurtosis	1.922	0.476
250ml	Skewness	-0.664	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.067	0.476
Rounded shoulders	Skewness	-1.236	0.24
	Kurtosis	0.944	0.476
No shoulders	Skewness	-0.653	0.24
	Kurtosis	0.051	0.476
Embossed shoulders	Skewness	-1.353	0.24
	Kurtosis	1.042	0.476
Embossed body	Skewness	0.377	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.907	0.476
Embossed shoulder and body	Skewness	0.793	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.106	0.476
Green bottle	Skewness	-0.7	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.662	0.476
Transparent bottle	Skewness	0.209	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.087	0.476
Brown bottle	Skewness	-2.655	0.24
	Kurtosis	7.314	0.476
Metallized label	Skewness	-1.77	0.24
	Kurtosis	2.961	0.476
Wet strength label	Skewness	-1.369	0.24
	Kurtosis	0.983	0.476
Plastic label	Skewness	-0.109	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.255	0.476
Silkscreened label	Skewness	0.118	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.442	0.476
Silver label	Skewness	-0.378	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.202	0.476
Gold label	Skewness	-0.811	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.606	0.476
Black label	Skewness	-0.489	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.874	0.476
Any coloured label	Skewness	-0.19	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.494	0.476
Rounded labels	Skewness	-0.796	0.24
	Kurtosis	0.423	0.476
Bespoke labels	Skewness	-1.036	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.265	0.476
Medals	Skewness	-1.009	0.24
	Kurtosis	0.457	0.476
English only	Skewness	-0.198	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.033	0.476
Taste descriptors	Skewness	-0.572	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.095	0.476
Brand heritage	Skewness	-0.124	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.034	0.476
Paper beck tags	Skewness	0.155	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.453	0.476
Aluminium neck foil	Skewness	0.276	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.818	0.476
Paper neck wraps	Skewness	-0.053	0.24
	Kurtosis	-1.017	0.476
Back labels	Skewness	-0.03	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.521	0.476
Ingredients	Skewness	-1.485	0.24
	Kurtosis	1.126	0.476
Alcohol warning	Skewness	-0.235	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.899	0.476
Nutrition info	Skewness	-0.387	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.917	0.476
FDA approved	Skewness	-1.552	0.24
	Kurtosis	1.409	0.476
HACCP certified	Skewness	-1.842	0.24
	Kurtosis	2.104	0.476
Year founded	Skewness	-0.348	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.908	0.476
Countries exported to	Skewness	-0.431	0.24
	Kurtosis	-0.802	0.476

4.2.3 ANOVA with pairwise comparisons

With normality established, ANOVA was then carried out and pairwise comparisons for the various packaging items. These aimed to determine which packaging items should be included in the focus groups and the individual interviews.

4.2.3.1 Analysis of responses towards bottle material

Regarding bottle material, Glass was preferred (mean at 6.406) while PET Plastic was rejected (mean at 2.366). Responses to aluminium were relatively neutral (mean at 4.228). See Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Group statistics (bottle material)

Bottle Material	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Glass	6.406	.137	6.135	6.677
PET Plastic	2.366	.162	2.045	2.688
Aluminium	4.228	.219	3.793	4.663

Running pairwise comparisons, Table 4.6 below showed that the means between Glass, PET Plastic and Aluminium were significantly different (Sig .000). There was a significant difference (Sig .000) with respondents rating Glass 4.040 higher than PET Plastic. Likewise, between Glass and Aluminium, Glass rated 2.178 higher than Aluminium (Sig. 000). In other words, Glass as a bottle material was significantly preferred to PET Plastic and Aluminium. Given that different bottle materials gave rise to different quality perceptions, this item would be included as a discussion point in the focus groups.

Table 4.6: Pairwise comparisons (bottle material)

(I) Bottle Material	(J) Bottle Material	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Upper Bound
Glass	PET Plastic	4.040*	.240	.000	3.454	4.625
	Aluminium	2.178*	.277	.000	1.504	2.853
PET Plastic	Glass	-4.040*	.240	.000	-4.625	-3.454
	Aluminium	-1.861*	.232	.000	-2.425	-1.297
Aluminium	Glass	-2.178*	.277	.000	-2.853	-1.504
	PET Plastic	1.861*	.232	.000	1.297	2.425

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.2 Analysis of responses towards bottle size

The next area of analysis focused on bottle size. The question asked the respondents to indicate the ideal size of the beer bottle. At mean scores of 3.198 and 3.693, respectively (Table 4.7), the respondents were relatively neutral that beer in 640ml and 500ml bottles were perceived as high quality. However, they agreed that the beer in 330ml bottles was perceived to be of high quality, but only slightly inclined to agree that beer in 250ml bottles gave the impression of a high-quality beer.

Table 4.7: Group statistics (bottle size)

Bottle Size	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
640ml	3.198	.192	2.816	3.580
500ml	3.693	.200	3.296	4.091
330ml	6.030	.172	5.688	6.371
250ml	4.782	.221	4.343	5.221

From the pairwise comparisons in Table 4.8, it was noted that the means between the four different bottle sizes were significantly different (Sig .000-.026). For example, there was a significant difference (Sig .026) in the mean scores of the 640ml and 250ml bottles, with respondents rating the 250ml bottles 1.584 higher than the 640ml bottles. Respondents rated 330ml bottles significantly higher than the other sizes at 2.832 higher than 640ml, 2.337 higher than 500ml and 1.248 higher than 250ml (Sig. 000), with the 640ml bottles receiving the lowest mean scores. As to why different sizes of bottles mattered in the perception of quality, this would be investigated in the later stages of the study.

Table 4.8: Pairwise comparisons (bottle size)

(I) Bottle Size	(J) Bottle Size	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
640ml	500ml	-.495*	.170	.026	-.952	-.038
	330ml	-2.832*	.313	.000	-3.674	-1.989
	250ml	-1.584*	.345	.000	-2.514	-.655
500ml	640ml	.495*	.170	.026	.038	.952
	330ml	-2.337*	.297	.000	-3.135	-1.538
	250ml	-1.089*	.360	.019	-2.059	-.119
330ml	640ml	2.832*	.313	.000	1.989	3.674
	500ml	2.337*	.297	.000	1.538	3.135
	250ml	1.248*	.208	.000	.686	1.809
250ml	640ml	1.584*	.345	.000	.655	2.514
	500ml	1.089*	.360	.019	.119	2.059
	330ml	-1.248*	.208	.000	-1.809	-.686

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.3 Analysis of responses towards bottle shape

Next, the question asked the respondents to indicate their preferred bottle shape – with shoulders or without shoulders. With a mean score of 5.525, respondents agreed that beers of high quality should be packaged in bottles with rounded shoulders (see Table 4.9). However, the mean score for beer bottles without shoulders was 4.990, i.e., while they appreciated bottles with shoulders, there was no rejection of beers being packaged in bottles without shoulders.

Table 4.9: Group statistics (bottle shape)

Bottle Shape	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Rounded Shoulders	5.525	.162	5.203	5.846
No Shoulders	4.990	.157	4.679	5.302

However, from the pairwise comparisons in Table 4.10, it could be seen that the mean scores for bottles with shoulders versus bottles with no shoulders were significantly different at 0.535 (Sig .012). Subsequently, this relationship between different bottle shapes and perception of quality would be investigated.

Table 4.10: Pairwise comparisons (bottle shape)

(I) Bottle Shape	(J) Bottle Shape	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Upper Bound
Rounded Shoulders	No Shoulders	.535*	.208	.012	.122	.947
No Shoulders	Rounded Shoulders	-.535*	.208	.012	-.947	-.122

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.4 Analysis of responses towards bottle tactility

Regarding bottle embossments, the question asked the respondents to indicate how they would prefer their ideal beer bottle to be embossed. Respondents agreed at a mean score of 5.673 that beer bottles with embossments on the shoulders conveyed a better-quality perception (Table 4.11). However, at means of 3.040 and 2.733 respectively, they disagreed with the idea of embossments on the bottle body, or both the bottle body and shoulder.

Table 4.11: Group statistics (bottle tactility)

Bottle Tactility	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Embossed on the shoulders	5.673	.163	5.350	5.997
Embossed on the body	3.040	.180	2.683	3.396
Embossed on both body and shoulder	2.733	.166	2.404	3.062

The pairwise comparisons (see Table 4.12) indicated a significant difference (Sig .000) between bottles with embossed shoulders and bottles with embossed bodies. Bottles with embossed shoulders rated 2.634 higher than bottles with embossed bodies. Between bottles with embossed shoulders and bottles embossed on both the shoulders and bodies, the difference of 2.941 was also significant (Sig .000). However, the pairwise comparisons between bottles with embossed bodies and bottles embossed on both the shoulders and bodies were not significantly different at 0.307 (Sig .169). The differences in embossments had a differing impact on quality perceptions; this would be a discussion item in the focus groups.

Table 4.12: Pairwise comparisons (bottle tactility)

(I) Bottle Tactility	(J) Bottle Tactility	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Upper Bound
Embossed on the shoulders	Embossed on the body	2.634*	.237	.000	2.056	3.212
	Embossed on both body and shoulder	2.941*	.243	.000	2.348	3.533
Embossed on the body	Embossed on the shoulders	-2.634*	.237	.000	-3.212	-2.056
	Embossed on both body and shoulder	.307	.159	.169	-.080	.694
Embossed on both body and shoulder	Embossed on the shoulders	-2.941*	.243	.000	-3.533	-2.348
	Embossed on the body	-.307	.159	.169	-.694	.080

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.5 Analysis of responses towards bottle colour

The next question asked the respondents to indicate what bottle colour they thought a high-quality beer should be packaged in. At mean scores of 5.030 and 6.465 (Table 4.13), the respondents agreed that beers of high quality should be packaged in either green or brown bottles. However, they disagreed slightly that the bottles should be transparent.

Table 4.13: Group statistics (bottle colour)

Bottle Colour	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Green bottle	5.030	.193	4.647	5.412
Transparent bottle	3.396	.191	3.016	3.776
Brown bottle	6.465	.135	6.198	6.732

The means for bottles of different colours were significantly different, with Green bottle rated higher than Transparent bottle by 1.634 and lower than Brown bottle by -1.436 (Sig .000), i.e., there are significant differences in perceived quality due to bottles of different colours (Table 4.14). Given the differences in perceptions arising from different bottle colours, this item would be incorporated as an area of further discussion in subsequent stages.

Table 4.14: Pairwise comparisons (bottle colour)

(I) Bottle Colour	(J) Bottle Colour	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Difference Upper Bound
Green bottle	Transparent bottle	1.634*	.261	.000	.998	2.269
	Brown bottle	-1.436*	.253	.000	-2.052	-.819
Transparent bottle	Green bottle	-1.634*	.261	.000	-2.269	-.998
	Brown bottle	-3.069*	.216	.000	-3.596	-2.543
Brown bottle	Green bottle	1.436*	.253	.000	.819	2.052
	Transparent bottle	3.069*	.216	.000	2.543	3.596

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.6 Analysis of responses towards body label material

The next section focused on body label material, and the question asked for the material used on the packaging of a high-quality beer. Respondents agreed that beers of high perceived quality should have body labels printed on metallised paper (mean score 6.000) or wet-strength paper (5.802) – see Table 4.15. However, they were neutral towards plastic body labels (4.040) or labels that were silkscreened directly onto the bottle (3.812).

Table 4.15: Group statistics (body label material)

Label Material	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Metallized	6.000	.144	5.714	6.286
Wet-strength	5.802	.168	5.469	6.135
Plastic	4.040	.213	3.617	4.462
Silkscreened	3.812	.227	3.361	4.263

The pairwise comparisons of means between labels of different materials were significantly different (Sig .000). However, the differences between metallised and wet strength paper at 0.198 and plastic labels and silkscreened labels at 0.228 were insignificant (Sig 1.000) - Table 4.16. As it appeared that there were differences in perceptions arising from some of the body label materials, this item would be investigated further.

Table 4.16: Pairwise comparisons (body label material)

(I) Label Material	(J) Label Material	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Metallized	Wet-strength	.198	.171	1.000	-.261	.657
	Plastic	1.960*	.254	.000	1.278	2.643
	Silkscreened	2.188*	.256	.000	1.499	2.877
Wet Strength	Metallized	-.198	.171	1.000	-.657	.261
	Plastic	1.762*	.284	.000	.999	2.526
	Silkscreened	1.990*	.260	.000	1.289	2.691
Plastic	Metallized	-1.960*	.254	.000	-2.643	-1.278
	Wet Strength	-1.762*	.284	.000	-2.526	-.999
	Silkscreened	.228	.300	1.000	-.580	1.036
Silkscreened	Metallized	-2.188*	.256	.000	-2.877	-1.499
	Wet Strength	-1.990*	.260	.000	-2.691	-1.289
	Plastic	-.228	.300	1.000	-1.036	.580

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.7 Analysis of responses towards neck label material

Next, the analysis on the label materials continued from body label to neck label. The question asked the respondents to indicate the material of the neck label that should be used on the packaging of a high-quality beer. Respondents were neutral towards the impact of neck label materials on beer quality perceptions - Table 4.17. The means ranged from 4.000 (paper neck tags) to 3.663 (aluminium neck foil) to 4.347 (paper neck wraps).

Table 4.17: Group statistic (neck label material)

Neck Label Material	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Paper Neck Tags	4.000	.219	3.566	4.434
Aluminium Neck Foils	3.663	.184	3.299	4.028
Paper Neck Wraps	4.347	.175	3.998	4.695

However, the pairwise comparisons between Paper neck wraps versus Aluminium neck foil were significantly different by 0.683 (Sig .022) – Table 4.18. What was not significantly different were Paper neck tags versus Aluminium neck foil at 0.337 (Sig. 0.811) and paper neck tags versus Paper neck wraps at 0.347 (Sig 1.000). Still, the results indicated that perceived quality might be significantly different for beers bottled with certain neck label materials; this item would be discussed in the focus groups.

Table 4.18: Pairwise comparisons (neck label material)

(I) Packaging Label	(J) Packaging Label	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Paper Neck Tags	Aluminium Neck Foils	.337	.224	.811	-.265	.938
	Paper Neck Wraps	-.347	.279	1.000	-1.099	.406
Aluminium Neck Foils	Paper Neck Tags	-.337	.224	.811	-.938	.265
	Paper Neck Wraps	-.683*	.230	.022	-1.302	-.064
Paper Neck Wraps	Paper Neck Tags	.347	.279	1.000	-.406	1.099
	Aluminium Neck Foils	.683*	.230	.022	.064	1.302

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.8 Analysis of responses towards label colour

Regarding the responses towards label colour, respondents were neutral towards using Silver (mean score of 4.564) or other coloured labels (4.228) on high-quality beer. However, they were slightly in favour of Gold (5.059) or black (4.960) beer labels (Table 4.19). The question had asked the respondents to indicate the label colour that was indicative of a high-quality beer.

Table 4.19: Group statistic (label colour)

Label Colour	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Silver	4.564	.212	4.143	4.985
Gold	5.059	.201	4.661	5.458
Black	4.960	.186	4.592	5.329
Any colour	4.228	.233	3.765	4.691

Further, the pairwise comparisons between Silver coloured labels versus Gold coloured labels at -0.495 and Gold coloured labels versus Any coloured labels at 0.832 was significantly different (Sig 0.040 & Sig 0.033 respectively) - Table 4.20. However, the pairwise comparisons of Silver coloured labels versus Black coloured labels at -0.396 (Sig. 0.918) and Silver coloured labels versus Any coloured labels at 0.337 (Sig 1.000) were not significant. Therefore, the perceived quality for beer labelled in different colours may be significantly different; the underlying reasons would be assessed further.

Table 4.20: Pairwise comparisons (label colour)

(I) Label Colour	(J) Label Colour	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Silver	Gold	-.495*	.179	.040	-.977	-.013
	Black	-.396	.275	.918	-1.136	.344
	Any colour	.337	.296	1.000	-.461	1.134
Gold	Silver	.495*	.179	.040	.013	.977
	Black	.099	.243	1.000	-.554	.752
	Any colour	.832*	.293	.033	.043	1.620
Black	Silver	.396	.275	.918	-.344	1.136
	Gold	-.099	.243	1.000	-.752	.554
	Any colour	.733	.311	.123	-.105	1.570
Any colour	Silver	-.337	.296	1.000	-1.134	.461
	Gold	-.832*	.293	.033	-1.620	-.043
	Black	-.733	.311	.123	-1.570	.105

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.9 Analysis of responses towards label shape

To the question regarding the ideal label shape to be used on the packaging of a high-quality beer, respondents generally agreed that the labels might be in rounded or bespoke shapes - Table 4.21. Mean scores for both items were greater than 5.0.

Table 4.21: Group statistics (label shape)

Label Shape	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Rounded	5.287	.149	4.991	5.583
Bespoke	5.426	.205	5.020	5.832

In Table 4.22, it was noted that the difference of -0.139 between the means for rounded and bespoke labels was insignificant (Sig .620). The result indicated that the mean scores for the perceived quality of beers with different label shapes were not significantly different. While the difference was not significant, the result nevertheless begged the question as to why this cue did not matter. For this reason, label shapes would be fielded for discussion during the focus groups.

Table 4.22: Pairwise comparisons (label shape)

(I) Label Shape	(J) Label Shape	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Rounded	Bespoke	-.139	.279	.620	-.692	.415

4.2.3.10 Analysis of responses towards label graphics

Regarding the different graphical cues on the label of a high-quality beer, respondents agreed that beer labels should indicate the quality medals attained and slightly agreed that beer labels should include taste descriptors - Table 4.23. However, they were neutral towards the necessity for beer labels to be in English or to include the heritage story of the brand.

Table 4.23: Group statistics (label graphics)

Label Graphics	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Medals	5.574	.161	5.256	5.893
English only	4.109	.199	3.713	4.505
Taste descriptors	4.861	.218	4.428	5.295
Brand heritage	4.040	.193	3.657	4.422

Table 4.24 indicated significant differences between Medals and English text at 1.465 and between Medals and Brand heritage at 1.535 (both Sig 0.000). There were also significant differences between English text and Taste descriptors (Sig 0.008) and Taste Descriptors and Brand heritage (Sig 0.009). However, the pairwise comparisons of Medals versus Taste

descriptors at 0.713 (Sig. 0.064) and English text versus Brand heritage at 0.069 (Sig 1.000) were insignificant. As the results indicated that the perceived quality for beers with different label graphics might be significantly different, label graphics would be incorporated into the focus groups for further discussion.

Table 4.24: Pairwise comparisons (label graphics)

(I) Label Graphics	(J) Label Graphics	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Medals	English only	1.465*	.236	.000	.830	2.101
	Taste descriptors	.713	.274	.064	-.025	1.451
	Brand heritage	1.535*	.239	.000	.892	2.177
English only	Medals	-1.465*	.236	.000	-2.101	-.830
	Taste descriptors	-.752*	.228	.008	-1.365	-.140
	Brand heritage	.069	.267	1.000	-.650	.788
Taste descriptors	Medals	-.713	.274	.064	-1.451	.025
	English Only	.752*	.228	.008	.140	1.365
	Brand heritage	.822*	.253	.009	.142	1.502
Brand heritage	Medals	-1.535*	.239	.000	-2.177	-.892
	English only	-.069	.267	1.000	-.788	.650
	Taste descriptors	-.822*	.253	.009	-1.502	-.142

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.11 Analysis of responses towards product information

The focus next turned to textual information. The question asked the respondents to indicate the product-related information that should appear on the packaging of a high-quality beer. From Table 4.25, respondents agreed that beer ingredients should be included on the labels of beers of high perceived quality (mean score of 5.812). However, they were relatively neutral about whether the labels should carry health warnings or nutritional information (4.426 and 4.337, respectively).

Table 4.25: Group statistics (product information)

Product Info	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Ingredients	5.812	.176	5.462	6.161
Alcohol warning	4.426	.187	4.054	4.798
Nutrition info	4.337	.196	3.947	4.726

Pairwise comparisons further indicated that apart from Alcohol warnings versus Nutrition information at 0.089 (Sig 1.000), there were significant differences between Ingredients and Alcohol Warning and between Ingredients and Nutrition information (both Sig 0.000). See Table 4.26. Given that the differences were meaningful, Product Information and its impact on perceived quality would be investigated in depth in the focus groups.

Table 4.26: Pairwise comparisons (product information)

(I) Product Info	(J) Product Info	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Ingredients	Alcohol warning	1.386*	.209	.000	.878	1.894
	Nutrition info	1.475*	.210	.000	.964	1.986
Alcohol warning	Ingredients	-1.386*	.209	.000	-1.894	-.878
	Nutrition Info	.089	.157	1.000	-.293	.471
Nutrition Info	Ingredients	-1.475*	.210	.000	-1.986	-.964
	Alcohol warning	-.089	.157	1.000	-.471	.293

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.2.3.12 Analysis of responses towards producer information

Finally, the survey asked the respondents to indicate the type of producer information they would like to see on the packaging of a high-quality beer. Table 4.27 showed that the respondents agreed that ‘Food & Drug Administration - FDA’ approval (mean score 5.733) and ‘Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points – HACCP’ certification (6.059) should be included on labels, but they were relatively neutral as to whether ‘Year in which the beer was founded’, or ‘Countries to which the beer has been exported to’, should be included on labels.

Table 4.27: Group statistics (producer information)

Producer Info	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
FDA approved	5.733	.183	5.369	6.097
HACCP certified	6.059	.178	5.705	6.413
Year founded	4.465	.190	4.089	4.842
Countries exported to	4.386	.185	4.019	4.753

In addition, except for Year Founded versus Countries Exported to (Mean Difference at 0.079, Sig 1.000), the pairwise comparisons for the other producer information were significantly different (Sig. <0.05). The results indicated that the perceived quality of beers bearing different producer information was significantly different. See Table 4.28. Producer Information would thus be included and investigated further.

Table 4.28: Pairwise comparisons (producer information)

(I) Producer Info	(J) Producer Info	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
FDA Approved	HACCP certified	-.327*	.106	.016	-.613	-.040
	Year founded	1.267*	.261	.000	.566	1.969
	Countries exported to	1.347*	.244	.000	.689	2.004
HACCP certified	FDA Approved	.327*	.106	.016	.040	.613
	Year founded	1.594*	.240	.000	.949	2.239
	Countries exported to	1.673*	.238	.000	1.033	2.314
Year founded	FDA approved	-1.267*	.261	.000	-1.969	-.566
	HACCP certified	-1.594*	.240	.000	-2.239	-.949
	Countries exported to	.079	.175	1.000	-.392	.550
Countries exported to	FDA approved	-1.347*	.244	.000	-2.004	-.689
	HACCP certified	-1.673*	.238	.000	-2.314	-1.033
	Year founded	-.079	.175	1.000	-.550	.392

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.3 Discussion of survey findings

The results from the survey analysis largely supported Lundell & Wigstrand (2016) and Mugge et al. (2014). They postulate that quality beliefs may be inferred from extrinsic quality cues on packaging elements. The results were also in line with Wu et al. (2014) and Crouch & Plewa (2008), who show that consumers infer quality from extrinsic cues such as label style and packaging. The survey results further supported Kotler et al. (2013), who suggests that cues such as colour, shape, material, size, tactility, product information, etc., helped individuals obtain and infer information before purchase.

Specifically, Aquilani et al. (2015) and Spence (2019) note that bottle material influences quality perception. Barnett et al. (2016) point out that Glass as a beer packaging material positively influences quality judgments. My survey results also showed that Glass was the preferred beer bottle material. Furthermore, as Glass is the main packaging material used to bottle beers in Thailand, while plastic or aluminium beer bottles are rarely seen, this result reinforced Venter et al. (2010), who argues that category typicality is crucial in shaping consumers' perceptions. These preliminary survey findings indicated that including these packaging items as discussion topics for the focus groups would be useful.

The analysis also found that bottle size significantly influenced quality perception, with 330ml bottles preferred. This was consistent with the observation that the beers in high-end in-dining outlets in Thailand (e.g., hotels, international restaurants, and premium cafes) were typically consumed in 330ml bottles. The 330ml bottle was therefore likely to be associated with premium channels of consumption and thus would probably be perceived as a more suitable size for high-quality beers. Conversely, it was observed that in mainstream local restaurants and traditional take-home outlets, beers were mostly sold in 500ml and 640ml bottles. It was thus not surprising that respondents would associate such bottle sizes with beers of lower perceived quality. This was also in line with larger packaging formats perceived as more value-for-money (Silayoi and Speece, 2007).

Next, consumers rated the perceived quality of beers packaged in bottles with rounded shoulders significantly higher than those packaged in bottles without shoulders. This was consistent with Becker et al. (2011), who demonstrate a correlation between curvilinearity of form and perceptions of Taste. Likewise, the results supported Ares & Deliza (2010), who indicate that rounder packaging shapes are associated with richer taste perceptions. Therefore, size and shapes would be considered and incorporated into the discussion guide for the focus groups.

The analysis also found that bottle tactility significantly influenced quality perceptions, as consumers gave higher mean scores to beers packaged in bottles with embossed shoulders. This was in line with Spence (2016), Spence & Gallace (2011), and Tangeland et al. (2008), who argue that tactility attracts, communicates, and signals quality. Finally, the analysis showed that bottle colour mattered in quality perceptions. Beers in green or brown bottles received higher quality perception ratings. This was not surprising because of category typicality (Venter et al., 2010); premium international beers available in Thailand are typically packaged in either green or brown bottles. Going forward, it would be interesting to understand from the focus groups why bottle tactility mattered.

The analysis next focused on labelling cues. Machiels & Karnal (2016) suggest that pictures, symbols, typography, etc., may help create desired consumer perceptions. Young (2012) and

Spence & Piqueras-Fiszman (2012) also suggest that such visuals attract attention and influence perceptions. Results from the survey indicated that beers in bottles with Gold or black body labels were perceived to be of higher quality. In addition, beers of high perceived quality should have body labels printed on metallised paper or wet-strength paper. The results also showed that the mean scores of quality perceptions for beers bottled with certain neck label materials were significantly different. This supported Smith & Taylor (2010) and Schifferstein & Desmet (2010), who propose that the materials used in packaging may stimulate subconscious emotions. Shimp (2003) noticed that sales often increase when upgraded packaging materials are used. While the findings indicated that this might also be the case for the beer category in Thailand, it would be useful to delve deeper during the focus groups.

In addition, the respondents strongly agreed that the body labels of high-quality beers should list the quality medals attained and slightly agreed that the labels should include taste descriptors, as this conveyed quality information of the beer. Finally, the analysis found that printing taste descriptors on labels would reinforce quality perceptions; this supported van Rompay & Veltkamp (2014), who propose that the addition of brand narratives strengthens consumer perceptions. The survey findings on labels were therefore consistent with the reviewed literature. The next step then would be to discuss these during the focus groups.

Product and producer information were discussed next. While the mean scores of perceived quality for beers with labels that included beer ingredients were higher, whether the labels should carry health warnings or nutritional information was inconclusive. At the same time, the mean scores were higher for beers that included FDA approval and HACCP certification on the labels. The findings were consistent with My et al. (2017), arguing that food safety is positively associated with food quality. However, packaging cues such as "year in which the beer began" or "countries to which the beer has been exported" elicited neutral scores. Hence, not all product-and producer-related information was deemed important; the focus groups aimed to clarify the underlying reasons.

Overall, the analysis supported the literature review findings and found that most of the packaging items in the survey influenced Thai beer consumers' quality perceptions. This was important because the primary intention of the survey was to sense-check the meaningfulness of the different packaging cues for incorporation in the focus groups as discussion points. In turn, this would be critical conversational inputs with internal stakeholders as part of the participative process to challenge the status quo, question self-bias, and enhance internal packaging design processes. With that, the chapter now pivots to discuss the analysis and findings of Phase Two – Focus Groups.

4.4 Focus group discussion analysis

The focus groups aimed to understand better why the identified beer packaging items mattered in the consumer's perception of beer quality. Uncovering such consumer insights was important as the deepened understanding would form a solid bedrock upon which future beer packaging design work may be carried out within my organisation. There would be more objectivity, thus minimising reliance on subjective intuition and gut feel. To this end, four groups of six individuals were organised. The rules of engagement were emphasised (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) – one person to speak at a time, no right or wrong answers, etc. Each discussion took about 90 minutes.

4.4.1 Thematic analysis

Once all four sessions were completed, thematic analysis was conducted on the translated transcripts, the user participatory sketches, and the notes taken during the discussions. The thematic analysis followed the six-step process prescribed by Braun & Clarke (2006) and elaborated in Chapter Three.

After a few rounds of immersing myself in the data, preliminary codes were assigned. These codes were phrases that acted as labels that described what the responses were about. For example, such a code could be "Concerns relating to the bottle contents' nature and cleanliness, rust, contamination, and exploding bottles". These codes were useful in helping to sort information easily and to analyse data to uncover similarities, differences, and relationships.

All the responses that were similarly coded were then collated and grouped to provide a condensed overview of the recurring key points. After that, I began the iterative process of collating the codes into themes that were meaningful to the study. The themes were iterated until they accurately represented the discussions. They were then named and described to provide a narrative of the research questions. The themes also considered the meta-analyses conducted by Azzi et al. (2012), who proposed five major literature themes – Safety, Ergonomics, Logistics, Sustainability, and Marketing.

In my thematic analysis, I noted that several responses related to Safety and Health, Ergonomics, and a few were related to Sustainability. Many of the originally grouped responses under the Ergonomics theme were subsequently reclassified into Safety and Health and Marketing upon further reflections and iterations. After all, it was likely that the underlying motivations had less to do with Ergonomics but were more related to the latter two themes. There were three sub-themes under Safety and Health: one related to Product Safety, the next being Packaging Safety, and the last were Health-related concerns. However, most of the responses may be grouped under Marketing, where the emphasis was on the communicative and brand building aspects of packaging. In fact, under the overarching theme of Marketing, it was possible to further break down to sub-themes such as Price, Promotion, Involvement, Brand and User Imagery, Functional Product Impact, Uncertainty Avoidance and Category Typicality. The codes related to the different themes and sub-themes may be found in Table 4.29 below. These themes were not only helpful in meaningfully classifying the consumer responses, but they also served as key discussion topics during the subsequent individual interviews with internal stakeholders in Phase Three.

Table 4.29: Themes and sub-themes from the focus groups

Themes	Sub Themes	Codes
Safety and Health	Product safety	Concerns relating to the nature and cleanliness of the bottle contents, rust, contamination, and exploding bottles.
	Packaging-related safety concerns	Concerns relating to the grip and feel of the packaging design.
	Product-related health concerns	Comments relating to alcohol content, calories, and health benefits.
Sustainability	N.A.	Concerns relating to recycling and environmental friendliness.

Marketing	Price	Comments relating to the influence of price on purchase decision
	Promotion	Closely related to the sub-theme of price were comments related to promotion as a tool to influence purchase decisions.
	Involvement	Responses about the nature of beer purchase tended to be habitual/routine and unengaging.
	Brand and User Imagery	Responses about packaging appeal such as uniqueness, modernity, premiumness, value, and perceived quality.
	Functional product impact	Responses about perceived Taste of beer – no chemical reaction with the container, no oxidation due to exposure to sun and U.V. light, ability to keep beer chilled, and the product quality endorsement in beer competitions
	Uncertainty avoidance	Closely related to Product Quality, but these responses were specific to the country of origin from which they draw references of product quality.
	Category Typicality	Responses about the perceived fit between packaging and standard category cues, or perceived association with other categories or brands, e.g., 'should be like this or that….'

4.4.1.1 Safety and health

The first theme that emerged was Safety and Health and focused on the primary function of packaging – which was to offer safety to the consumer and ensure the product's protection. There were three sub-themes under this umbrella theme - Product Safety, Packaging-related Safety, and Product-related Health concerns.

The first sub-theme was Product Safety and related to the nature and protection of the contents in the bottle, including health concerns regarding potential rust and other possible contamination. It also covered worries about bottles exploding if the wrong material was used in packaging. Due to these product safety considerations, the groups were unanimous in their preference for glass bottles and neck foil to package beer. They opined that the inherent transparency characteristic of the glass material allowed them visibility of the bottle contents, thus assuring them that the beer was free of contamination and devoid of sediments or foreign objects. The participants in the group nodded their heads in agreement when Participant 2A said,

> *"[Glass bottle] In case there are foreign bodies, then I can see it.'.*

Participant 4C echoed a similar preference towards glass bottles,

> *"I know that the liquid inside is not dirty."*

Participant 4F concurred and elaborated further on the risk of contamination and said,

> *"In a glass bottle, you will notice if the cap has rusted or not."*

The responses explicated the Product Safety concerns the participants had when they looked at beer packaging. They needed to be sure that whatever they were consuming would not harm or negatively affect their health in any way. Conversely, the participants also avoided aluminium as a preferred bottle material for these reasons. When asked why he did not pick aluminium bottle as the ideal packaging for a high-quality beer, Participant 1F pointed at it and said,

> *"It looks like there will be rust if there is liquid in there [the aluminium bottle]."*

The inability to see into the bottle, and thus not being able to ascertain the content, was the consistent comment when the groups were asked about the suitability of aluminium as a material to package high-quality beer.

“I don’t know what is going on inside. There may be rust inside. – 4F”

“When I can’t see the liquid colour inside, I don’t know what is inside. – 4B”

"Sometimes, for a package like an aluminium can, we will not know what is inside or the reaction in there. – 4E"

Likewise, safety and health concerns also caused the groups to reject plastic as a beer packaging material. In addition to the consistent theme of packaging safety – *“it’s [plastic bottle] easy to explode, it’s sensitive to pressure. – 3A”*, the participants were visibly worried about possible chemical interactions between the plastic material and the alcohol in beer. For example, Participant 4E frowned and mentioned,

"For the plastic bottle, I know that with beer inside, there are some substances that can harm our body."

Another participant, 3E, even had a strange notion that *“germ comes with plastic [bottle]”*, to which the rest of the participants in his group laughed aloud but nodded. All these responses pointed to an underlying worry about the bottle's material affecting the quality and safety of the product - a common health concern amongst consumers in developing countries.

Other responses that indicated the participants' safety and health concerns came from the discussions regarding neck foil and neck tags—the comments related to worries about product sabotage and potential resultant contamination. The participants believed that a high-quality beer would surely guard against such risks and thus adopt measures to minimise such risks. Participant 2F, holding the bottle and pointing to the neck, said this animatedly when asked about her preference for a neck foil,

"You can tell if it has been opened or not because if it has been opened, you'd know right away".

Participant 3E, who declared dismissively,

“It [neck tag] offers no protection”.

While the participants' concerns about Safety and Health issues were understandable, they may also be amplified because of their relatively low household income levels. After all, should anything happen to them due to consuming contaminated beer or becoming injured due to exploding bottles etc., the financial burden on their families would be greatly increased. While no group freely raised this point, all participants nodded quietly when I tabled this possibility. This consideration appeared to underlie many of the participant's responses to the different questions. It also seemed to be the primary consideration under the second sub-theme of Packaging-related Safety concerns.

For example, the participants' Safety concerns extended to the ergonomics of the packaging design. Specifically, the concerns pertained to the risk of the beer bottle slipping and falling out of their hands, thereby potentially hurting them or those around them. The comments from Group 1 participants were very clear.

> *"The bottle I want has a curve, is embossed and has a line for a better grip. – 1A"*
> *"It [bottle with shoulder embossment] is easier to grasp as well. – 1E".*

The other participants commonly shared this concern of the bottle being non-slip.

> *"You are not going to drop this [330ml] because it is not so heavy and it's easy to grab and carry around. – 3C"*
> *"For me, I prefer the one without the shoulder because it looks easier to grab. No matter how you grab. – 4C".*

There were concerns about the beer container slipping even when discussing other aspects of the packaging, like body and neck labels. For example, Participant 3F said,

> *"When it's wet, the plastic one [neck label] is also slippery."*

Such safety concerns extended to product-related concerns as well. This - Product-related Health concerns - was the third sub-theme under Safety and Health. Specifically, the groups were particular about their health, which manifested clearly in their responses. The concerns ranged from calorie content, nutritional benefits of beer, alcohol level etc. Packaging information related to the health effects of consumption was also a key consideration when the participants looked at beer packaging. For example, when asked what they looked for in their choice of beer, Participant 1D confidently said,

> *"We look for calories as well. I know that Leo has the highest calories."*

Participant 1F listened intently before suggesting,

> *"I want them [the producers] to write down the benefit of beer, how good it is, maybe more people will drink it".*

When discussing back labels, it took time before they responded, indicating that they may be less familiar with this specific packaging element. I inferred from the lack of spontaneous responses that back labels were a less important packaging element for the participants. To illustrate, 2C claimed after an initial period of silence,

> *"Normally, on the label, I just look at the percent of alcohol and quantity of liquid."*

Participant 1F insisted,

> *"Should have it [back label]. If you don't have it and I drink it, it might be dangerous."*

However, the discussions on the colour of bottle and label evoked more robust responses, which were again very much related to health and alcohol level concerns. For example, Participant 1B shook his head and said,

> *"It [black label] looks like there is very high alcohol concentration."*

Similarly, Participant 4B opined that *"It [brown bottle] looks like it is too strong"*, to which the rest of her group acknowledged with a collective *"yes"*.

Quite clearly, the responses from the different groups towards the various aspects of packaging point to an underlying concern over safety and health, which was unsurprising. They reminded me of the sharing by my colleagues in the production department, who had emphasised that safety in packaging design should always be the most important of all considerations. They had also often underlined the need to protect the beer from any physical contamination, e.g., foreign objects in beer, and also the need to ensure that those who handle the packaging are not exposed to potential danger, e.g., exploding bottles. Previously, I had always thought that these were concerns that mattered mainly to my production colleagues and never really thought too much about them. However, listening to the participants' responses in the groups, it now appeared that these were rooted in deep consumer insights.

At the same time, I realised that this was in sync with the literature findings. For example, Rundh (2009) had highlighted that packaging played an important role in promoting hygiene and safety. Furthermore, referencing the MAPP framework (Velasco and Spence, 2019), which proposes that visual stimuli and other multisensory packaging cues influence perceptions, it was clear that participants relied on their sense of sight to develop a perception of the product's safety and health quality. These led to my preliminary conclusion that to be considered a high-quality product, all visual packaging cues must first address concerns related to safety and health.

4.4.1.2 Sustainability

Another theme related to sustainability and focused on recycling and the environmental friendliness of packaging materials. Even though there were not many spontaneous responses on this theme, I found that the related responses stood out; they were rather differentiated and highly specific to sustainability. For example, when discussing the materials to be used for beer bottles, both Participants 3C and 3F were consistent in saying that *"glass is easy to recycle"*, while Participant 4E highlighted,

> *"It [plastic bottle] isn't environmentally friendly".*

Notwithstanding the small number of verbal responses, I observed that everyone seemed to agree to these comments, even though they did not add further to these points, despite being probed. This lack of feedback pointed to a lack of intuitive knowledge about green packaging. This was in line with De Koning et al. (2015), who observes that sustainability considerations do not influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers in emerging markets. Even in developed countries, Boesen et al. (2019) note that consumers have limited knowledge of sustainability-related ecolabels.

As I reflected upon this observation, it hit me that the beer producers in Thailand may not have done much in communicating environmental awareness and sustainability to consumers. This had then resulted in little association, amongst consumers, between sustainability efforts and the choice of packaging materials. Even for myself, sustainability as a theme in my fieldwork did not come naturally. It was only from the literature review that this subject became apparent to me, and I consequently included it as a point of discussion.

However, while sustainable packaging may not be a current topic of great interest amongst Thai beer consumers, it may well turn out to be the next frontier in influencing consumers' perception of a high-quality beer. After all, awareness of environmental sustainability has been increasing rapidly, as evidenced by the high number of publications related to green packaging on the Scopus database (Wandosell et al., 2021). Furthermore, Wandosell et al.

(2021) also highlight the increasing societal (customers' attitudes and willingness to pay) and regulatory pressure on businesses to pivot towards sustainable packaging. Going forward, sustainable packaging would therefore be an area that my colleagues and I have to consider more carefully. Hence, "sustainability" as a discussion point was incorporated into my guide for the individual interviews planned in the next phase of this study.

4.4.1.3 Marketing

Another theme that emerged was Marketing, where the emphasis was on how packaging designs addressed the needs of the consumers, helped promote brands, and conveyed the values and attributes of the brand. As this overarching Marketing theme may be rather broad in scope, several sub-themes were created to cluster the different responses more precisely. These included Price and Promotion, Involvement, Brand and User Imagery, Functional Product Impact, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Category Typicality. In the following sections, each of these sub-themes is elaborated.

4.4.1.3.1 Price, promotion, and involvement

In the groups, one of the discussion questions pertained to the different considerations that the participants had when they were shopping and buying their beers. Invariably, the responses would indicate price and promotion as two of the key factors of influence on their purchase decision. This was understandable because the participants belonged to B & C SES, so they would naturally be sensitive to affordability. Participant 1E said,

> *"Price is important. Not too expensive compared to the others."*

The responses were spontaneous, and whenever price or promotion was mentioned, it would elicit nods of agreement from the participants. However, price was not just a consideration in affordability; it was also a consideration in safety and quality. The participants saw price as a proxy indicator of quality, i.e., the lower the price, the poorer the quality and vice versa. This could be seen from the response of Participant 1A,

> *"If the price is too low, I will be afraid to drink it. It must be in the middle range".*

This insightful comment drew looks of approval from the rest of Group 1. At the same time, the participants highlighted that promotions might also influence their purchases. While consumer promotions like gift-with-purchase, lucky draws etc., have been outlawed in Thailand, temporary price discounts at the retail outlets were more ambiguous. Some retailers have occasionally been known to carry out such discount promotions that improved affordability to consumers. It was therefore unsurprising to hear when asked if they stuck to one favourite brand, or they had a repertoire of different brands, the participants replied,

> *"If there is a promotion, then I will compare. If there is a big discount, I may buy the one that is discounted. – 1F"*
>
> *"I look at the price, and sometimes I will buy when it is cheaper – 3A."*

These responses supported the framework from Lundell & Wigstrand (2016), which refers to price as an extrinsic quality cue, i.e., features that do not physically make up the product but remain intimately linked to it. According to Steenkamp (1990) and Sinha and Verma (2020), such features greatly influence quality perceptions in categories like food and beverages. This was particularly true in the low involvement FMCG category, where purchases were made quickly (Velasco & Spence, 2019). Steenkamp (1990) proposes that the influence of extrinsic cues on quality perceptions increases as involvement level decreases.

Indeed, when asked about their usual purchase process, the groups' responses pointed to the low-involvement nature of beer buying in Thailand. Participant 1F claimed that he would usually buy the same brand, while Participant 1E said he would drink the same brand regardless of the occasion. Similarly, Participant 1C said,

> *"When I go to buy some beer, I will only go look for the beer that I want. I will pick it up."*

The participants echoed each other and pointed to the habitual nature of their beer purchase process. All claimed that they did not spend much time shopping for beer as they already knew what they wanted. Participant 4E expressed what the rest felt when he said,

> *"I have already thought of what I want."*

Participant 4D readily concurred and claimed that he would not spend much time browsing,

> *"Not even 5 seconds because I have in my mind what I like to buy".*

The low involvement nature of beer buying in Thailand may also be due to the habitual buying routine that arose from the participants' loyalty to their regular brand, which blunted their desire to try something new. This low involvement could be seen in the participants' responses to textual information on labels such as the brand story. Participants 2A said, *"For me, I don't pay attention to that [brand story on labels]".*

Participant 2E concurred while the rest of the participants in Group 2 looked at them, nodding in acknowledgement.

“Nobody is gonna read it [brand story on labels]”.

Considering that beer purchase in Thailand was a low-involvement purchase, how may packaging design engage and interrupt what would typically be a habitual purchase process? Firstly, Bloch (1995), Wells et al. (2007) and Prendergast & Pitt (1996) indicate that in a low-involvement category, distinctive packaging designs make brands stand out from the competition and communicate the brands' quality. Next, Lundell & Wigstrand (2016) suggest that beyond involvement, situational considerations are also important in the formation of quality beliefs and in affecting the purchase process. These situational considerations include the motivation to purchase - functional (utilitarian) or emotional (image) motivations; and the amount of time to make a purchase decision, i.e., under time pressure, fewer packaging cues would be considered when forming beliefs about quality. These situational factors interact with the level of involvement during the purchase process. These considerations imply that designers could use different packaging cues to manipulate these situational factors. By using different packaging cues to communicate the brand's desired imagery, designers could shift the motivations to be more emotional and image-driven. At the same time, they could push the design boundaries beyond category typicality to stand out from the competition. As Celhay & Remaud (2018) and Fenko et al. (2018) point out, doing so would create multisensory incongruency, and this, in turn, could slow down perceptual processing, which would then encourage greater involvement in purchase consideration.

With this understanding that packaging cues and congruency may influence motivational considerations and affect multisensory responses, slowing down the time to purchase and enhancing the involvement levels, the next section segued to the sub-theme of how packaging may impact brand and user imagery.

4.4.1.3.2 Brand and user imagery

The discussions emerged a commonality underlying the points raised, and this pertained to how each cue evoked specific imagery or emotions regarding the product or brand. It was interesting to reflect how the cues could trigger perceptions of uniqueness, modernity, premiumness, value, and even quality.

In particular, it appeared that the packaging's colour and material seemed to influence brand and user imagery most. For example, when discussing beer bottles and how they affected perceptions, Participant 1F reminded everyone how the image of Chang Beer was lifted as a result of changing its bottle from brown to green,

> *"For Chang Beer, it used to look like an old product [in a brown bottle]. But now they changed the appearance [to green bottle] and made it more appealing."*

Participant 4B advocated the use of green bottles in packaging beer,

> *"Use green bottles because it looks more premium".*

Conversely, the groups felt that brown bottles conveyed outdated low-end brand imagery. Shaking his head, Participant 1F felt,

> *"It [brown bottle] does not reflect high value."*

When Participant 2B described the brown bottle as rather ubiquitous, the rest of the participants in his group nodded in agreement.

> *"There's nothing unique about it."*

On the other hand, a transparent bottle evoked imagery of the type of users who may prefer this packaging colour. Participant 1E thoughtfully said,

> *"It is unique and different and looks more feminine."*

Participant 1B chipped in cheekily, saying,

> *"It looks like a beer more for girls."*

This association between colour and brand and user imagery also extended to colours used on labels. Across the groups, the participants were unanimous in their preference for Gold as the primary colour for labels. To all of them, gold exuded *"luxury"* (Participant 4D), *"class"* (Participant 4B and 4D), *"premiumness"* (Participants 1C, 2A, 4C, 4D and 4F) and "quality" (Participant 1E). Participant 3C made an insightful observation when he said,

> *"People wear gold to attract attention so, [for the beer label] it's the same thing".*

This comment struck a chord with the rest of the participants in the group, who acknowledged with a chorus of *“yes, yes”*.

The use of different colours for labels also affected the participant's perception of user imagery. Gold was deemed premium but older, and Silver was seen as younger. Participant 4C felt,

> *“Gold [label] looks older.”*

Participant 4F opined,

> *“Gold [label] is more premium. It looks like something older people will prefer. Silver one [label] is softer and maybe for younger people.”*

Besides colour, the packaging material also greatly influenced brand and user imagery. While it was clear from earlier sections that participants preferred, Glass showed that the perceived imagery and emotions also shaped the packaging material's preferences. For example, when asked about his selection of Glass as the preferred material for beer bottles, Participant 4C said,

> *“Because it [glass bottle] looks premium.”*

On the contrary, the groups rejected plastic for bottling beer as they felt that it looked cheap. Participant 4D said with disdain,

> *“[Plastic bottle] Looks like a bottle of drinking water. So, it [plastic bottle] looks cheap.”*

Similarly, when discussing the choice of material for labelling the neck of the bottle, the participants' preference for foil was not just driven by their product safety concerns; the feelings and image also underpinned it that the foil material triggered. Participants 1A and 3A both felt,

> *“Foil material is the best because it is more premium looking”.*

Participant 3A shared that using foil to wrap the neck of beer bottles reminded him of *"champagne bottles which therefore means good quality"*. At the same time, Participant 4A observed that since good quality wine bottles had neck foils, beers in bottles with neck foils must be good too.

> *"Because when the wine bottle has this [with neck foil], I know that it is high quality".*

While colour and material generated the most responses related to brand and user imagery, the discussions about shapes and tactility also evoked similar perceptions. When asked about their comments about whether bottles should come with shoulders, most of the responses were underpinned by product safety and grip concerns, but the comments from Participants 4F and 4B were more image-driven,

> *"It [bottle with shoulder] looks chic".*

Similarly, while responses towards bottle embossing were very much centred around 'grip or slip' issues, some participants felt that the embossments added appeal to the packaging design. Participant 1D said,

> *"I like a bottle that has a bold embossment. It seems it's more appealing than the one that simply used a sticker."*

Participant 2A felt,

> *"It [embossment] makes the bottle unique".*

The discussion on the use of bespoke label shapes, instead of standard round or oval label shapes, also generated responses underpinned by a belief that a high-quality product must use label shapes that were not cookie-cutter. This was evidential from the comments,

> *"This one [bespoke label shape] seems more like an expensive brand. – 2E"*
> *"Because it looks different and luxurious. – 4A".*

When Participant 4F said, the rest of her group responded in agreement.

> *"Thai people like things [bespoke label] like that. Looks like a crown. It looks like a quality product."*

As I reflected on the responses, it was clear that they consistently underlined how packaging cues might signal brand and user imagery. However, what also struck me was that most of the responses were very short and only specific to the questions posed. Even when probed to elaborate, the participants were not very articulate or forthcoming. In fact, at different points during the discussions, especially when the discussion topics pivoted to sustainability concerns or textual information, I observed that the discussions were rather muted. However, I noted there were frequent nodding of heads in agreement. While I was at first concerned at this lack of articulation and expression, I was also mindful that these were no indications of disinterest; rather, in Thai culture, listening and nodding, more so than speaking, was to be expected (Chung, 2021).

Similarly, at other parts of the discussions, the consistency and uniformity of the responses to the questions on bottle materials, colour and neck wraps had me initially concerned that there could be quite a bit of group think between the participants. I noticed, however, that the responses were spontaneous and genuine, with no one single participant in each group trying to impose his/her views on others, and no one was trying hard to play a deliberate contrarian role. I was therefore assured that the responses truly reflected the participants' feelings and opinions. I was further assured when I noted that the robust discussions reinforced literature findings that a product's intrinsic attributes were often inferred from its extrinsic attributes, e.g., colour, shape, design compositions, etc., i.e., the visual stimuli it provided (Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence, 2015; Wang, 2013; Underwood & Klein, 2002).

Indeed, some of the comments from the participants also reminded me of the findings of Krishna et al. (2010), who found that while some responses could be semantic, conveying a specific function or brand quality, e.g., a bottle with shoulder embossment is easier to grasp; other responses could be symbolic, evoking certain brand imageries, e.g., a beer packed in a bottle with neck foil was deemed to be of high quality and for those with high social status. Likewise, concerning the groups' unanimous preference for the bottle with shoulder, the responses were in sync with Becker et al. (2011) and Ares & Deliza (2010). They note a correlation between curvilinearity of form and perceptions of Taste. Similarly, the participants' positive response to embossments on bottles supported Spence (2016), arguing that tactility attracts, communicates, and conveys underlying product qualities.

I noted several other parallels between the responses and the literature review findings. For example, the participants' choice of Glass as their preferred material for bottling beers reinforced Barnett et al. (2016) and Spence (2019), who report that glass bottles, in particular, communicate prestige. This was unsurprising since materials used in packaging might stimulate subconscious emotions that influence taste perceptions and quality judgments (Smith & Taylor, 2010; Schifferstein & Desmet, 2010). Likewise, the uniformity of the groups' comments regarding the colour gold being premium, luxurious, and mature supported Mutsikiwa (2013), who suggest that colours evoke emotions and feelings, communicating salient features of the brand.

Overall, all of the responses under the Marketing sub-theme of Brand and User Imagery reminded me of the sharing from my marketing colleagues during my early years in the industry. They had underlined the importance of brand consistency and emphasised that packaging designs conveyed desired brand values and reinforced brand imagery. The responses also lent further support to the literature findings - that beneath the functional reasons of a stated preference, there were often underlying strong emotional reasons that resonated with the consumer, enhanced brand affinity, and consequently positively influenced purchase decisions (Cătălin, & Andreea, 2014; Ambrose and Harris, 2011, Ilaw, 2014; Fernandes & Moreira, 2019). This interplay between functional and emotional considerations could also be found in other responses, which will now be elaborated under the sub-themes in the following sections.

4.4.1.3.3 Functional product impact and uncertainty avoidance

The sub-themes in this section are related to quality perceptions that pertained to Product and Provenance. These responses tended to be more functional reasons that participants provided to justify their perceptions of quality. Under Functional Product Impact, I grouped all the responses about packaging and the perceived Taste of beer. For example, when discussing bottling material, the groups were very specific and pointed to their belief that bottle material would affect the taste of the beer. Pointing to the glass bottle, Participant 1C said,

> *"As an insulator, it [glass bottle] is better in keeping the beer cold."*

Participant 4B similarly rejected plastic as a material,

> *"...because the plastic [bottle] might change the flavour".*

Conversely, Participant 1A dismissed the aluminium bottle as he felt,

> *"Beer flavour will be bad because there is alcohol in there [aluminium bottle]."*

Such functional reasons also extended to the justifications for their preferred bottle colour. Participant 1C said, and everyone agreed,

> *"If the bottle is clear, sunlight will corrode the beer."*

Drawing approving looks from his fellow participants, Participant 3B commented,

> *"Using green or brown [bottle] will reduce the U.V. ray during the delivery and protect from the taste of the beer from damage."*

The participants' rational concerns about product quality were also apparent when the discussion progressed to the portrayal of medals on labels and how this may affect quality perceptions. For example, the groups were unanimous in their preference for quality medals to be added to beer labels. To them,

> *"That [having gold medals on labels] is the guarantee that it has passed some kind of quality. – 1D"*
> *"It can communicate more about the brand quality because they won a contest. – 2F"*
> *"It [label with medals] can guarantee the product. –3C"*

Based on these responses, it was clear that adding the visual of medals to the body label of the beer would provide credibility, confidence, and assurance of quality. Therefore, it was unsurprising to observe that many beer brands in Thailand have such medal claims or medal lookalike graphics designed onto their labels. Additionally, the participants' preferences supported the findings of Young (2012) and Spence & Piqueras-Fiszman (2012). Such functional concerns with product quality also surfaced for topics like types of foils and the size of the bottle. Participant 3B said,

> *"Neck foil covers part of the bottle so; it helps the bottle keep the temperature better."*

Participant 4C opined,

> *"This is the truth. I think the smaller the bottle size, the flavour and concentration are higher. More alcohol content with gentle flavour".*

From the responses, it was clear that beyond safety concerns and brand imagery concerns, the participants also cared very much about rational product quality issues, which may be affected by the different packaging cues. When the discussions pivoted to textual information on labels, the responses revealed a sense of uncertainty avoidance. The participants voiced concerns about the product's country of origin, indicating that their perceptions of product quality were influenced by their unfamiliarity and bias regarding various countries. Participant 1C succinctly put it across when he said,

> *"The back label contains info about the country of origin and will tell you whether it [the beer] has quality or not."*

This view was shared by many who followed up and expressed concern over product quality and safety if the country origin was unknown or had a poor reputation. Participant 1E said,

> *"When I see a beer, but I don't know what it comes from, I will put it down. If it comes from a nearby country, I also wouldn't want it."*

This indicated a sense of uncertainty avoidance and a bias against certain countries. Without even trying the beer, the participants were quick to conclude on the beer's quality based on the brand's country of origin, especially if the country was deemed to be more underdeveloped vis-à-vis Thailand or if the country has a reputation for counterfeit products. This negative bias was evident in the comments made in the Group 1 discussion,

> *"But if it's a new beer brand from Burma or Cambodia, I won't drink it. – 1A"*
> *"If it comes from China, I will not buy it. Many dubious beers are from there. – 1F"*
> *"But Japan is okay. Korea is okay too. – 4F".*

This finding on the consumers' aversion to certain countries supported Oberecker et al. (2008), who had found a direct positive relationship between affinity feelings for a country and the intention to buy products from that country. It may be wise to incorporate the brand history onto the packaging to counter such biases, especially when marketing new or hereto unknown brands. The participants alluded to this when the discussions turned to the benefits of printing the brand's history on the label. Participant 1C suggested,

> *"They [manufacturers] should add [history of the brand]. It makes me want to try the beer if they tell me about where it is manufactured, how they produce it or more about the company."*

Participant 3C felt that adding the brand story onto labels *"adds more value"* to the brand, and Participant 3F concurred, expressing,

> *"It [adding brand history] is about communicating the good quality of the brand."*

These responses supported the postulations of the framework proposed by Lundell & Wigstrand (2016). In the framework, one of the factors affecting perceived quality was credence quality cues beliefs or beliefs regarding quality that were not observable or tangibly experienced from the consumption. An example of a credence quality cue is the country of origin. To this end, Porto and Soyer (2018), Caporale et al. (2006), Bell et al. (1994), and Siret & Issanchou (2000) propose that featuring the country of origin on labels affects sensory perception and liking.

To address uncertainty avoidance and enhance perceived quality, it may be more prudent to add the brand story onto the label, as many whisky brands have done (refer to Figure 2.12). This would align with van Rompay & Veltkamp (2014), who advocates adding brand narratives onto packaging to strengthen consumer perceptions. By using packaging as an information carrier to communicate knowledge about the brand, by providing more product and producer information to the consumers, comprehension would be facilitated, uncertainty avoidance would be reduced and thus, trial may be more likely (Peiyao et al., 2017). Indeed, the responses indicated that packaging cues that offered assurance of quality and safety, e.g., medals, brand story, country of origins, became more important when the brands were unfamiliar and raised involvement levels. As Grossman & Wisenblit (1999) suggest, such packaging cues become more important as involvement gets higher.

As can be seen, and in line with Velasco and Spence (2019), I noted that different packaging cues evoked different emotions, underpinned by varying motivations to purchase (functional or emotional). As Brodersen & Manolova (2008) suggest, 'consumers' expectations' is another factor affecting quality perceptions. In fact, 'consumers' expectations' would further be influenced by what Goode et al. (2012) term as Category Typicality, a sub-theme under Marketing that will be elaborated in the next section.

4.4.1.3.4 Category typicality

The previous themes and sub-themes discussed the rational and emotional associations that the different packaging cues may stimulate. However, the final Marketing sub-theme - Category Typicality - focused more on the responses about the perceived fit between the product's packaging and the relevant standard cues within the category and how it is distinct from cues in other categories. I observed that in responding to the discussion questions, participants had often used the phrases "should be", "should not", "looks like", etc., and they would constantly refer to existing packaging practices within the category, or in other beverage categories, as the basis of their comments. It appeared that they already had preconceptions of what a good quality beer packaging should look like, and these conceptions seemed to have been shaped by their consumption experiences.

For example, when discussing the appropriate material for beer bottles, Participant 2A felt,

> *"Beer should be in the glass bottle."*

Participant 3B shared,

> *"I think it [plastic bottle] looks like the bottle of soft drinks, that's why it doesn't fit."*

Separately, Participant 4A felt,

> *"It [aluminium bottle] isn't suitable with beer. It is suitable for juice".*

Likewise, when discussing the colour of bottles, the groups again referred to existing practices in the beverage categories,

> *"And the popular beers such as Heineken and Carlsberg, they all use the green one [bottle]. – 3F"*
> *"It [brown bottle] looks like cheap Thai white spirits. – 4A"*
> *"Because it [plastic bottle] looks cheap as a bottle of water.– 4D"*

Such a lens in evaluating packaging was also evidential when discussing the shape of beer bottles. Participant 3C felt,

> *"Without shoulder, it [bottle] looks like soy sauce or white spirits or moonshine."*

Benchmarking against standard category practices and cross-referencing against practices in related categories continued into the discussions on labels. Participant 1E felt,

> *"It [plastic neck label] should be on normal drinking water."*

Similarly, Participant 1F said,

> *"This label shape [bespoke body label] should be for cocktail drinks."*

In terms of label colours, there were also preconceived notions amongst the participants on what was appropriate,

> *"It [silver label] doesn't look like beer. – 3E"*
>
> *"It [black label] reminds me of dark beer. – 3C"*

Indeed, these responses reinforced the postulations of Brodersen & Manolova (2008) that packaging designs are often assessed against the consumers' expectations. Goode et al. (2012) also highlight the risk of over-innovating the design of product packaging, rendering the product becoming atypical of its category and negatively affecting consumer evaluations. Likewise, the responses from the participants supported Verganti (2006), who argue that category certainty provides a point of reference for consumers to assess an innovatively designed product.

This obviously would give rise to the packaging designer's dilemma – without deviating too much from category typical cues, how can a packaging design stand out? Peiyao et al. (2017) suggest that designers should develop designs that were category typical first because this facilitates easier preliminary acceptance within the consumers' existing expectations. However, they should also aim to incorporate and communicate features that distinguish the product from its competitors. After all, some degree of design incongruency may be useful as it would slow down perceptual processing and encourage greater purchase involvement (Celhay & Remaud (2018); Fenko et al., 2018).

Reflecting on this sub-theme of Category Typicality against actual market practices in the Thai market, I realised that the participants might indeed have been influenced by the implicit colour coding conveyed by existing beer brands in the market. Most mainstream beer brands were bottled in amber bottles in Thailand, whilst premium beer brands were generally available in green bottles. Transparent bottles tend to be used by low alcohol products or alcopop brands that target women. Consequently, some of these packaging cues were not well received by the beer participants. Outside the category, I noted that plastic bottles were typically used for drinking water; low-end rice spirits were typically packaged in bottles with no shoulder or embossment; high-end champagne and wine bottles all featured full wrap neck foil etc. See Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Category typicality of packaging in drinking water, rice spirits and champagne & wine

Therefore, it would seem that category typicality considerations of existing alcohol brands and other beverage products in the market significantly shaped the consumers' relationships between packaging cues and quality perceptions.

4.4.2 Other observations from the discussions

Through the thematic analysis of the responses, it was clear that consumer' perceptions of quality were influenced by the functional and emotional concerns such as Safety and Health (Product Safety, Packaging Safety, and Health), and Marketing (Price and Promotion, Brand and User Imagery, and Functional Product Impact and Uncertainty Avoidance). These concerns underpinned their responses to each packaging cue normally found on a bottled beer in Thailand. At the same time, the relative impact of these packaging cues on their quality perceptions was affected by their involvement level during the purchase decision process and the degree of congruency/incongruency with their expectations of what they deemed as category typicality. These findings were in line with the literature findings from Chapter Two and supported several packaging practices and norms observed in the Thai beer market.

In addition, there were other useful observations made during the sessions. These pertained to the degree of interest that the participants exhibited for each topic of discussion and indicated the relative importance they placed on these packaging cues. At the same time, a review of the participants' drawings during the sessions also allowed insights into the packaging cues they truly emphasised. These sets of observations will now be covered in the sections below.

4.4.2.1 Relative intensity and emphases of discussions

As reported previously, it was observed that the participants were most vocal and animated when discussing cues such as material, colour, shape and even haptics. Reflecting these against the MAPP framework (Velasco and Spence, 2019), it was clear that the senses of sight and touch were critical to perceptions of quality. What was equally interesting was that some packaging cues did not generate many comments. In particular, I observed the lack of richness when the topics pivoted to textual information such as 'Alcohol warning', 'nutritional information, and producer information like 'FDA approval', 'HACCP certification'. Indeed, much prompting was required to generate some comments regarding these cues. For example, to trigger some responses, the participants were asked to imagine themselves in a beer aisle where (i) all the beer prices were identical; (ii) there was not a single promotion; and (iii) none of the brands were familiar to them. This placed them in a situation where they could no longer grab and go; consequently, they became more involved in the beer purchase process. In such a scenario, the participants acknowledged spending a long time looking at the different beer offerings. Only then did they begin to highlight some of the textual cues that could affect their perception of quality.

When probed and asked about what they would look for regarding product information, "ingredient" was an item that was invariably mentioned across all groups. This was similar to the results from Phase One, where 'ingredients' was the only item that respondents agreed as impacting quality perceptions. However, the responses in the focus groups were rather muted, which indicated that while "ingredient" may be an essential informational cue, it was not spontaneously influential (Mutsikiwa, 2013). Similarly, from the discussions, only one participant mentioned '*warning*' after much prompting – Participant 1C said, *"There should be a text warning about no drinking and driving";* the rest of the participants did not even display an interest in engaging in discussions about this cue. If consumers do not pay attention to these warnings on the labels, the effectiveness of such mandatory warnings, which Thai authorities have imposed on all alcohol packaging, would therefore be questionable.

Likewise, the lack of enthusiasm extended to those questions related to producer information such as 'FDA approval' 'HACCP certification'; these also failed to yield any spontaneous response from the participants. This was interesting, given that underlying many of the participants' responses were safety and health concerns (see section 4.4.1.1 Safety and

Health). This observation again reinforced the findings of Silayol & Speece (2004), who report that visual packaging cues, and not textual cues, play a more major role in low involvement situations. I further observed that it was only when the participants were probed about unfamiliar beer brands that they highlighted "country of origin." As established earlier, this attention towards the country of origin appeared to be guided by concerns over quality assurance and uncertainty avoidance (see section 4.4.1.3.3).

This apparent lack of interest in textual cues was consistent across the groups. This observation was reinforced when I reviewed the participants' drawings. This shall now be covered in the following section.

4.4.2.2 Observations about the participants' drawings

As explained in Chapter Three, participatory drawing was introduced to supplement the discussions because of its participatory nature and its lack of dependence on linguistic proficiency (Literat, 2013). The drawings, along with a subsequent reflective discussion of the meanings behind these images, would provide a more real and complete understanding of the participants' views (Zweifel & Wezemael, 2012). Indeed, the review of the emphases in the participants' drawings against their verbalised responses provided insights into the packaging stimuli that were truly important to them, e.g., colours, shapes, graphics, etc.

The sketches paid attention to detailing key graphical features such as the logo, brand name, and font type on the labels from the sketches. Other areas included the shape and the colour of the beer bottles. The drawings of their regular brands indicated what the participants recalled most of the packaging. For example, participants who favoured the brand Leo looked for the leopard icon and its distinctive red colour scheme. Participant 4B described her drawing (see Figure 4.2),

> *"Mine is Leo. I remember the logo with the leopard picture. The fonts have a reddish colour to them. The bottle is brown goldish colour. This makes the brand unique."*

Figure 4.2: Participant 4D – Leo beer

The Chang drinkers looked for the elephant icon along with its gold label. Participant 2E said (see Figure 4.3),

> *"This is Chang. It is an elephant logo. The brand features the colour gold, e.g., the cap is Gold. It's easy to remember when I go shopping for it."*

Figure 4.3: Participant 2E – Chang beer

For the Singha drinkers, they looked for the gold lion on a white label and a brown bottle (see Figure 4.4),

> *"Mine is Singha. I like the label; the font is yellow. The bottle has three colours – the gold colour, the white label, and the brown bottle – 1D."*

Figure 4.4: Participant 1D – Singha beer

The Heineken drinkers looked for the red star and the green bottle. Participant 3D offered (see Figure 4.5),

> *"Mine is Heineken; it's a green bottle. You can see the star in the centre and there the Heineken font."*

Figure 4.5: Participant 3D – Heineken beer

Figure 4.5: Participant 3D – Heineken beer

Similarly, the drawings of the packaging that the participants envisioned for their ideal quality beer also indicated which packaging cues they focused on. Participants included more details in their drawings, given the freedom to express their ideas. The key areas they focused on were cues related to the image (e.g., shape and colour) and related to safety and uncertainty avoidance (e.g., foil, embossment, and country of origin). In describing his ideal beer drawing, Participant 1F expressed (see Figure 4.6),

> *"For me, it will be a green bottle. The top will be a gold foil that covers all. Then, there will be a brand name on the bottle and on the label. Also, a logo, and details about the brand. At the bottom will be the country origin."*

Figure 4.6: Participant 1F – ideal beer

Participant 2B, who had been rather quiet throughout the discussions in her group, rendered a simple drawing and described (see Figure 4.7),

> *"I want a foil that encloses the cap and I want a bottle with the embossment. The label will be Gold and the shape will not be round, and it has to have a logo and a medal. I like the colour green still; it looks good."*

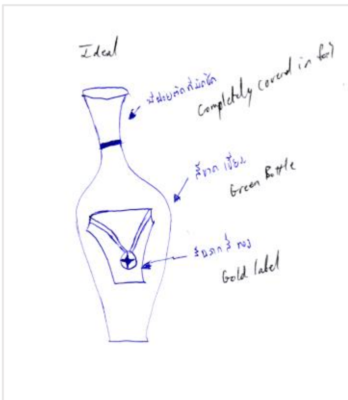


Figure 4.7: Participant 2B – ideal beer

Similarly, the emphases on colour, foil and shape were repeated by Participant 3E when he presented the drawing of his packaging of the ideal beer. He said (see Figure 4.8), *"For mine, it would be something like this. It would be curved and there will be a foil to cover the top. The label would be Gold and Silver. It looks simple but elegant. The bottom would be curved in, so, it is better when you grab it."*

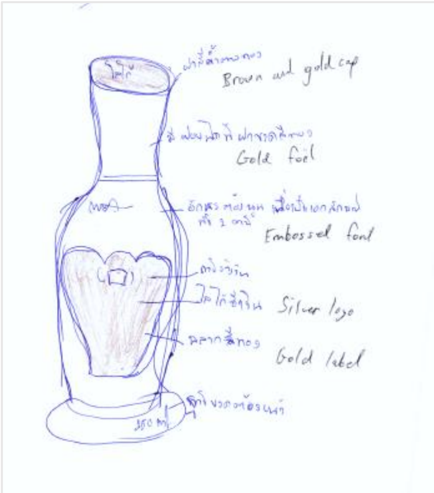


Figure 4.8: Participant 3E – ideal beer

Participant 4D had similar requirements in his drawing and description (see Figure 4.9),

"I want a bottle shape like this which easy to hold. Embossed logo. The name of a brand should be at the top and the logo under it. I did not draw it, but I want the brand story at the back, the manufacturer's country of origin, and the calorie info. On the top, I want it to be completely covered by a foil."

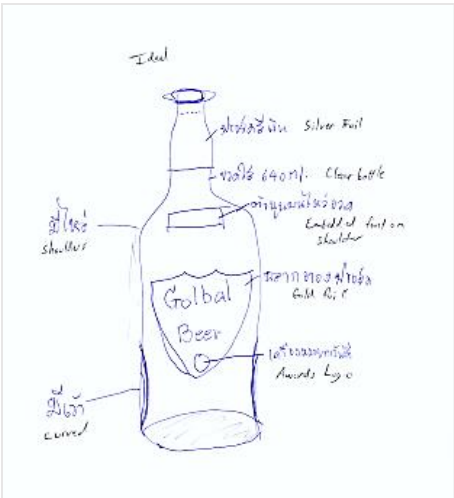


Figure 4.9: Participant 4D – ideal beer

Overall, the responses from the discussions, the participatory drawings, and the literature findings have been consistent. The emphasis when assessing perceived quality appeared to be on high-level multisensory communication stimuli like graphics and low-level multisensory attributes like material, colour, and shapes. This was particularly true in a normal low-involvement beer purchase. Textual information, in general, was not deemed to be as prominent, based on the relative lack of feedback when the discussions turned to nutritional tables, alcohol warnings, and health and safety certifications. However, when involvement levels were raised due to brand unfamiliarity or packaging design incongruency, textual information became more important in the consumers' consideration; they sought quality and safety assurance as they tried to cope with uncertainty avoidance.

4.5 Reflections

Conducting the analysis and subsequently writing up the findings took longer than expected. The key reason for this was the constant iteration in how I looked at the data and how they may be relevant to the study. This was particularly true in analysing the responses generated in the focus groups. Initially, I had grouped the responses according to each of the packaging items discussed and based my write-up accordingly. However, upon reading the writing after that, I felt that the analysis was simply a regurgitation of what participants' have said or done; I was not getting to the latent motivations of the participants. Worse, it may give the wrong impression that I was being selective with quotes and missing large sections of my notes. Most importantly, I felt that I was not unravelling the truth as to why certain packaging cues mattered more than others. That was when I decided to redo the thematic analysis again.

Starting afresh, I began with the broad themes suggested by Azzi et al. (2012) – Safety, Ergonomics, Logistics, Sustainability, and Marketing. This was useful as I was able to view the responses from a different lens, and it helped to surface latent motivations underpinning the participants' responses. While I found the repeated reading and immersion in the transcripts time-consuming, I noticed that thematic patterns did emerge with each reading. The themes constantly evolved with each immersion and each round of writing. Some of the initial themes, e.g., Logistics, were not relevant, while other themes, e.g., Ergonomics, could be folded under Safety and Health. Conversely, I found that Marketing as a theme was very broad, and I could refine it into sub-themes.

In redoing the thematic analysis and reflecting the new insights against literature and actual market practices, I was able to go deeper into the common threads behind the responses. For example, as I reviewed the responses under Category Typicality, I realised that as a leading organisation in the beer category, we shaped what consumers saw as typical packaging for beers. While we may have concerns about the design dilemma, it was perhaps overly and unduly emphasised. We can therefore afford to be bolder to redefine the category design boundaries. Similarly, it could well be due to the lack of understanding of sustainability issues that the participants were not very forthcoming with their comments. As a category leader in Thailand, I became convinced that we must share the responsibility to educate consumers about the environmental impact of our choice of packaging materials.

Armed with a far richer set of knowledge, I could confidently discuss with internal stakeholders in the final phase. The interviewees would be my colleagues in the Thailand office. These were Marketing-focused subject matter experts seeking consumer insights. It would have been a disaster had I stubbornly kept analysing the responses by each packaging item and not taken time to revisit and reflect on the themes. With the new consumer insights from the thematic analysis, I would be better positioned to collaborate with them. I aimed to seek consensus on the packaging cues that matter to consumers, align on why these cues mattered, ascertain gaps in our packaging design processes collectively, and ultimately move forward together to enhance the way we work within our organisation.

4.6 Summary

This chapter elaborated on the statistical analysis of data collected in Phase One – consumer survey, and the thematic analysis of the discussions in Phase Two – focus groups. It explained how the findings resulting from the Phase One analysis were used to guide the discussions in Phase Two. Specifically, the survey findings supported the inclusion of the packaging cues that had surfaced during the literature review. Incorporating them in the focus groups was essential as they served as discussion platforms to elicit responses from the participants to allow me to understand how the participants perceived product quality from each of the packaging cues.

The subsequent thematic analysis resulted in three themes - Safety and Health, Sustainability and Marketing. Within the theme of Safety and Health were sub-themes of Product Safety, Packaging Safety, and Health-related concerns. Under Marketing, there were sub-themes such as Price, Promotion, Involvement, Brand and User Imagery, Functional Product Impact, Uncertainty Avoidance and Category Typicality. These themes and sub-themes were important because they provided valuable insights into why each packaging cue was important.

These insights were then used to form the core of the interview guide for Phase Three, where individual dialogues were held with subject matter experts from my organisation. The findings from Phase Two became the stimulus for eliciting reflection about the gaps in understanding and knowledge in our internal design processes and served to trigger commitment and actions to changes to improve these processes. Such actions were the ultimate intention of this study. The next chapter will be dedicated to discussing the analysis and findings of Phase Three.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to Phase Three of this study. The emphasis of this phase was to take the findings from the consumer focus groups to help refine and improve organisational practices. The first section details the thematic analysis of the individual interviews conducted with my colleagues. It elaborates and discusses the themes from the interviews. It also provides many insider views of the growing importance of packaging in the industry. In addition, there are discussions regarding industry practices and provide an interesting context to consumers' responses towards the packaging cues. Additionally, included are discussions regarding how the various packaging cues stimulated visual and haptic senses, a review of the underlying consumer motivations from the practitioners' perspective, and some highlights regarding concerns related to design congruencies, category typicality and design dilemmas.

The next section then focuses on my colleagues' self-reflections over their preconceptions of how consumers perceived packaging cues vis-à-vis what the consumers felt. It traces their realisation that the current packaging design process in the organisation was lacking in sufficient rigour. Instead of being anchored in consumer insights, the processes were unevenly skewed towards production limitations, cost, and category typicality. The last part of this section elaborates how this realisation led to a commitment to change the way of working, with specific details regarding the improvements that were eventually taken.

The last section focuses on my reflections. Even though I had peppered my reflexive reflections throughout the chapter, this section specifically detailed my growth journey as a scholar-practitioner. My reflections were centred on the iterative learnings gained as I peeled away layers of fuzziness of the problem I had originally set out to address. This included my reflections on my initial stance on researcher neutrality and how it evolved as I eventually became an insider action researcher. Finally, the section will also reflect on the power dynamics in the researcher-participant relationship and how it shifted to become one of equal partnerships to arrive at a commitment to change for the better jointly.

5.2. Analysis of individual interviews with subject matter experts

The individual interviews were conducted as planned. It progressed smoothly as all the interviewees were my colleagues, and the inclusion criteria on good English language capability and in-depth design experience ensured deep, insightful conversations. My colleague-interviewees were also very comfortable with the interviews conducted via teleconferencing on Microsoft Teams. After all, we have become accustomed to this virtual mode of meetings and dialogues since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and its corresponding impact on physical workspace, distancing measures, and travel restrictions. The interviews were conducted using the interview guide mentioned in Chapter Three as a scaffold for the conversations.

The purpose of the interviews was different from the focus groups – the emphasis was to stimulate learning by reflecting organisational practices against consumer insights. The intention was to co-create knowledge that would result in actions that enhanced organisational processes. The thematic analysis took on a different perspective with this consideration in mind. While the steps in analysis remained unchanged, the preliminary codes took on a more practitioner orientation and what the study meant to my colleague-interviewees in their context. For example, responses were collated and grouped under preliminary codes such as "Anti-alcohol regulations restricting beer advertising and promotions, shifting emphasis towards point of sale and packaging"; "Packaging development decisions oriented more towards internal considerations and less on consumer insights"; "New perspectives on some previously held bias regarding some packaging cues" etc.

These codes were refined iteratively to accurately capture the proceedings and offer a coherent narrative. After that, the codes were condensed into themes meaningful to the study – 'Growing importance of packaging design'; 'Optimisation of packaging design'; and 'Changes and Improvements in Practice'. Under each theme were relevant sub-themes that facilitated reading navigation. See Table 5.1 for the themes and sub-themes from this phase. Each of these will be elaborated on in subsequent sections.

Table 5.1: Themes and sub-themes from individual interviews

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Growing importance of packaging design	Pandemic related challenges	Growing importance of packaging in current pandemic and its corresponding restrictions in beer shopping and consumption behaviours.

	Tax and Regulatory Environment	Tax issues (potentially new sustainability-linked taxes) impact the cost of goods sold and affect packaging decisions.
		Anti-alcohol regulations restrict beer advertising and promotions, shifting emphasis towards point of sale and packaging.
	Consumer Trends	Trend towards home consumption – less frequency in purchase, bigger basket size per trip, and its impact on packaging designs.
		Trend towards individualism – looking for novelty to stand out and its impact on packaging designs.
		Trend towards greater environmental friendliness and its impact on packaging designs.
Optimisation of packaging designs	Packaging cues	Understanding which packaging cues matter, how they matter and why they matter.
	Operational limitations supersede consumer-centricity	Packaging development decisions are limited by internal considerations like cost and production equipment constraints.
	Design congruency	Ensure that all the individual packaging cues come together nicely and holistically.
	Design dilemma	Dilemma between making drastic changes to disrupt consumers' beer purchase routine and engaging them more; versus minimal changes so as not to alienate consumers.
Changes and Improvements in Practice	Gaps in current packaging design development process	Provided new perspectives on some previously held bias some packaging cues.

		Acknowledged the need for more systematic briefing and debriefing of design and research agencies.
	New ways of working	Revisions to process, templates, and expectations

5.2.1. Growing importance of packaging design

All interviewees expressed their concerns about the current challenges facing the beer category – the changes in the operating environment resulting from Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, existing and potential changes to tax regimes and anti-alcohol regulations, consumer behaviour shifts etc. These challenges have had implications for beer packaging. These responses from my colleague-interviewees were thus grouped under the theme of "Growing importance of packaging design". Under this theme were three sub-themes “Pandemic-related challenges”, “Tax and Regulatory Environment”, and “Consumer Trends”.

5.2.1.1. Pandemic-related challenges

Under the first sub-theme of "Pandemic-related challenges", my colleague-interviewees noted that in response to the pandemic, the Thai government had implemented several measures such as banning in-premise dining and large social gatherings etc., which in turn further limited the avenues to promote and market beer brands. They realised that as a result, they would need to increase brand presence in the take-home channel, which included placing more emphasis on packaging. Z said,

> *“… For the beer category, on-premise consumption is down due to safety restrictions and the collapse in hospitality. Fortunately, our sales are skewed towards off-premise. … The priority now is market share and share of the consumer mind. This is not easy given that … Thailand is a dark market with few channels of communication. What remains is digital and social media. And yes, packaging too.”*

The regulatory restrictions limited alcohol marketing, and social-gathering measures have discouraged physical in-dining occasions. Consequently, consumption has shifted to off-premise, with beer purchases from modern trade[3] and general trade[4] seeing a pickup in

[3] Modern Trade comprises hypermarkets, supermarkets, and convenience stores
[4] General Trade includes traditional mom-and-pop shops, provisions and groceries stores, and non-air-conditioned minimarkets

business. Cross-referencing this trend with the consumers' beer purchase process – habitual, routine, grab-and-go with low involvement, it has become increasingly important for marketers to attract attention at the point of sale. It is thus unsurprising that my colleague-interviewees expressed the importance of packaging design to better engage with consumers in the challenging environment.

5.2.1.2. Tax and regulatory environment

The second sub-theme is Thailand's "Tax and Regulatory Environment". While my colleague-interviewees were resigned to the likelihood of further hikes in anti-alcohol tax structure and tightening of marketing prohibition laws, they were concerned about the growing impact of sustainability. Their key worry was a potential sustainability tax on beer manufacturers. They were also anxious about possible cost increases if demand for sustainable packaging increased since sustainability was a growing concern. However, they believed that sustainability as a social cause was not a major marketing or brand differentiation platform in Thailand. Nonetheless, they understood that going forward, they would need to start considering sustainability factors in their packaging designs. According to X,

"... As to sustainability, yah, it is getting hotter every year, isn't it? More freakish weather, no? So, this climate change thing is real, and I am not surprised if it becomes more of an issue in the future. Lobbyists and activists will make sure of that. I am sure the government will also eventually use the growing sustainability trend as an excuse to impose more taxes on us in the alcohol industry. So, sooner or later, we will have no choice but to make sustainability an increasingly important consideration in our business."

While it was true that sustainability was not a current topic that generated much discussion with the consumers, I had thought that this issue would generate a lot more discussions or spark greater creativity amongst my colleagues. After all, our organisation was a well-recognised leader on the annual Dow Jones Sustainability Index, i.e., we were well-placed to champion this platform, especially in the way we may adopt the best sustainability practices in our packaging designs. As Boesen et al. (2019) propose, producers, retailers and policymakers need to act collectively and provide better information to consumers to make smarter choices, including issues like eco-friendly packaging. However, my colleagues were hesitant to embrace the sustainability trend. This will be discussed further in the following section.

5.2.1.3. Consumer trends

In their respective interviews, my colleagues opined that the sustainability movement in Thailand was still very much at an infancy stage and that the trend towards packaging materials that were more environmentally friendly has not taken root. Nevertheless, they agreed that it was a trend they needed to pay more attention to, given what was happening in the rest of the world. X offered,

"From our water usage to the energy consumption, as well as the type of materials we use for our products - returnable glass bottles, aluminium cans, paper cartons etc., I am sure we will need to become more accountable over our usage of these over time. But if you ask me if this is an area to differentiate ourselves from the competition, I'd think not. To be honest, by and large, the majority of Thai consumers, across all categories including beer, has yet to become true converts. If you ask them, they may acknowledge the environmental benefits of using sustainable packaging materials and ingredients, but behavioural-wise, they are still very much driven by habit, price, and promotions. However, I do agree we need to pay more attention to this trend, beyond just promoting and using returnable glass bottles for our beers. Because, while we will not win by marketing our brands using a social cause, we got to be careful that we do not lose just because we are not socially responsible."

Y put it across very succinctly,

"… Sustainability issues - these are too distant to them to feel the need to change their habit. Their thinking - Let other people deal with it".

Z added,

"And regarding sustainability, … I don't think this awareness has reached a critical mass yet to become a differentiating factor in brand choice or as a mark of a brand's quality.. the concern with sustainability will be, for now, more vocal than real."

My colleagues were cognizant of the global consumer trend towards sustainability; however, they also did not believe that Thai consumers had embraced this trend. To them, brand affordability remained a key concern. However, I wondered, "should we, as a leading organisation, be contented playing the role of a trend-follower, or should we take a more proactive stance in leading this trend?" While this question circled in my head, I progressed to seek my colleague-interviewees' views on other pertinent consumer trends that may affect packaging designs.

Another trend highlighted was the shift towards home consumption and how this may affect packaging design decisions. X said,

> *"I noticed a trend towards bigger purchase size per shopping trip as people go out less during the pandemic. They shop less so each time, they replenish more. 24 can cartons and 12 bottle cartons seem to have picked up recently. On the contrary, sales of singles and 4 can or twin bottle packs have declined. So, we need to be aware of these changes..."*

This shift towards home consumption pointed to the consumer's need to minimise safety and health risks. As discussed in the previous chapter, beer consumers cared much about safety and health issues. To this end, I found that my colleagues' responses in wanting to develop bigger pack formats were rather reactive. Should they not have proactively predicted a change in buying behaviour in preferring bigger formats? Should they not have been more sensitive to the consumers' underlying concerns for health and safety? Should they not have foreseen that shopping trips would decrease because the consumers wanted to avoid potential virus exposure in public? As these thoughts boggled my mind, my colleague-interviewees highlighted the third trend.

They highlighted a final trend where consumers sought to stand out from the masses. The most obvious manifestation of this trend in Thailand was the emergence of craft brews. Interestingly, these craft brews tended to feature category atypical packaging designs to stand out from the conventional beer brands like Leo, Chang, and Singha. See Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Craft brews in Thailand

Z said,

> *"Another trend is towards what I call collective individualism. With a backlash against mass consumerism and mass brands, I see more consumers seeking individuality…This is why we see the rise of certain mass craft brews in the market. …These brands try to be unconventional, and their packaging designs often go against category norms. Speciality beers try hard to be 'unbeery' in designs."*

Notwithstanding their scepticism on the long-term development of the craft brew segment, my colleague-interviewees recognised that with their unconventional packaging designs, craft brews would likely challenge Thai consumers' preconceived boundaries of how beer packaging should look. This would have implications when designing beer packaging. My colleagues shared their concern that as they looked ahead, they believed they would be caught increasingly in a conundrum between the need to be bolder in packaging designs to attract new consumers and the need to remain familiar to cater to habitual consumers.

All in all, my colleague-interviewees had also already concluded that 'packaging design' would fast shape up to be a core marketing and brand management area in Thailand. X summed it well when he said,

> *"Increasingly, given the limitations in marketing and brand building because of the regulations and because of the pandemic, we are focusing more of our attention at the point of sale. Packaging is now the key channel of communication and brand building given the situation we have in Thailand. The traditional brand and marketing approaches are outdated and irrelevant now."*

Y mentioned,

> *"We focus a lot more on packaging now. We do regular packaging updates to our secondary packs. We do seasonal packaging during the year-end and during the Songkran Festival [Thai New Year that occurs in mid-April]. We do limited-edition packaging to generate social chatter like the 25 can tube pack. We launch new packaging formats like beer in a champagne bottle. Or in a mini-take home draught keg. We try to excite the market through such innovative packaging."*

With the realisation that 'packaging design' could be one of the last few frontiers for marketing beer in Thailand, my colleagues readily admitted that there was room for them to develop greater knowledge to help them optimise the designs. Therefore, it was unsurprising that they all appeared to be highly appreciative to be involved in this study; it provided an opportunity to address a knowledge and practice gap – optimisation of packaging design. Z was the most candid, and she shared,

> *"We are putting a lot more emphasis into packaging designs now, but truth be told, the way we approach is still highly subjective – I like this, I do not like that etc. We do not have a real framework to guide us along in designing packaging. I am sure I can learn something from this conversation."*

5.2.2. Optimisation of packaging designs

The second theme was "Optimisation of Packaging Design". Under this umbrella theme, I have put forth four sub-themes – 'Packaging cues'; 'Operational limitations supersede consumer centricity; 'Design congruency'; and 'Design Dilemma'.

5.2.2.1. Packaging cues

Under the sub-theme of 'Packaging cues', my colleague-interviewees were most expressive in sharing their views about the different packaging cues. It was clear from their responses that they were very much in line with the consumers' views. It was heartening to observe that there were many areas that my colleague-interviewees relied on consumer insights when making packaging design decisions. These mainly pertained to the graphics that were rendered onto the labels. Similar to the responses from the consumer focus groups, label colours and graphics were the key emphases of my colleague-interviewees too. As X underlined,

> *"Graphics is the key foundation of the brand design. Graphics on the label is like the face of the brand and the other stuff are like the dressing."*

When designing labels, my colleague-interviewees were very sensitive to colour codes and their implicit meanings. Gold was perceived as premium to them, but depending on its shade, it could look traditional or modern. On the other hand, Silver was perceived as young and modern, but if used excessively, it could make the overall label look rather cold. Red was deemed auspicious, but too much of it may signal higher alcohol, while black was seen as bitter but mysterious.

The colour codes, their implicit meanings, as well as the associations with a specific brand in the category were well expressed by Z,

> *"I believe that there is an association between label colour and the brand. Which I think is also in your findings. Chang uses green in its label so green is associated with Chang. Leo uses red primarily on its label; so red is associated with Leo. Blue is used by Tiger and blue is seen as the colour of Tiger. I think this simple logic is reinforced in other categories as well. Coke is red and Pepsi is blue. Then there is Johnnie Walker Red Label, Black Label, Gold Label, Blue Label etc. Also, all these brands use secondary colours like gold - more premium or silver to make their brand look more modern. Your findings showed that consumers associate certain colours with certain meanings too, like yes, black is inauspicious, and red is lucky in this part of the world."*

At the same time, my colleague-interviewees were happy to note that the consumers' responses were aligned to their views, especially when it came to label cues that signalled premiumness and craftmanship. For example, they were delighted that they were intuitively accurate to believe that consumers saw medals on labels as symbols of quality and international acclaim and that cues such as malt, hops and text in classic typeface added an aura of premiumness and craftmanship. Y shared,

> *"We have a saying in our industry. People drink their beers with their eyes. So, whatever we put on the body label will attract, will create a perception in the drinkers' mind. I always try to put in medals because it signifies quality. I also like to put in some text to balance the graphics. Not so much for consumers to read but as an aesthetic counterbalance to graphics. It does not matter if it is a taste descriptor or a province story about the brand. I sometimes use English text or a classy English name signature on the label to add foreignness to signal better quality. And I always brief my agency to add in category cues like hops and malt onto the label to show naturalness and convey craftsmanship."*

My colleague-interviewees further felt assured that their intuition to save cost by doing away with the bottle back label was justified, as the focus groups had shown that consumers did not notice back labels, or read the regulatory requirements of the ingredients list, nutritional tables, the health warning statements on them. X explained, *"Frankly, I do not think beer drinkers give two hoots about ingredients or nutrition or warnings. It's very much just about compliance and making our production colleagues happy (the ISOs and HACCP stuff). This info is quite boring, and it's there because of regulations. I would imagine the only time anyone looks at the back-label is when they do not know the brand, and they wish to know where it is produced in. Otherwise, it is very much a grab-and-go purchasing habit for the drinker."*

What X had alluded to, was the consumers' tendency to avoid the unfamiliar and would stick to what has been tried and tested. One of the sub-themes that emerged from the focus groups was Uncertainty avoidance. Regarding this sub-theme, Z added,

"The only time they may care to read is when they are faced with an unfamiliar brand. Like his usual brand is unavailable. Only then will he likely look at the text info – he would want to know who the brewer is, where it is brewed, the alcohol content, and the ingredients used. I can understand why your findings indicate the reluctance of the consumers to buy beers from China or Myanmar or Cambodia. They are afraid of the quality and the safety of the products produced in these countries."

My colleague-interviewees also shared the same consumer view: green or brown bottles offered greater beer protection, green and transparent bottles were deemed more premium. When I shared the participants' drawings of their regular beer brands and the renderings of their ideal beer packaging on screen and asked them for their interpretations, my colleague-interviewees became very interested. Their excitement indicated that they were most delighted to note that the key emphases of the consumers' drawings reinforced many preconceived notions of which packaging cue mattered, e.g., logos, brand name, medals, the colours of the bottles and the labels as well as bottle shape. Y exclaimed pleasingly,

"See, as I told you. What did they draw? They drew the bottle shape, the bottle colour along the label graphics and colours. Did they draw the back label or the text info? No. As I said, these are not important."

Beyond the common perspective on 'graphics' that they shared with consumers, there were also other areas where views were aligned. For example, glass was the material of choice for bottling beer for both consumer focus groups and colleague-interviewees. All in all, my colleague-interviewees were elated that the consumers' responses about the different packaging cues affirmed their intuition and practices. Y said, *“Reassuring to know that I have not been too far off with many of my intuitions and assumptions regarding how drinkers perceive quality through packaging.”*

5.2.2.2. Operational limitations supersede consumer-centricity

However, as the conversations progressed and we began to discuss the deeper motivations that belied the responses, I observed a growing discomfort in each of them. There were more pauses, more reflective silences, and a little bit of stuttering began to creep in. When probed, each of them admitted that their discomfort was more of a jolt. After all, as marketers, they have always preached 'consumer insights' in everything they did. However, when I began to share the deeper motivations that underpinned the consumers' responses, they were reminded that, in reality, many of their past packaging design decisions had little consumer centricity in consideration.

For instance, one key consumer motivation was the consumers’ need to be assured of product and packaging safety. Whether it was their preference for glass bottles and their rejection of aluminium and plastic PET, or their preference for coloured bottles (green or brown) to transparent bottles, safety and health was their underlying concern. However, this consumers’ concern about product and packaging safety was not a top-of-mind consideration for my colleague-interviewees. Their main considerations when deciding bottle material, bottle colour, bottle and label shape were, on the contrary, simply underpinned by internal cost control and production constraints. Z explained,

"There are only three bottle colours in the market – brown, green and transparent. I know that glass bottle manufacturers produce brown bottles regularly, but green and transparent bottles only on an occasional basis. So brown still is the most popular bottle colour while green and transparent bottles are less prevalent. Regarding labels, plastic labels are expensive and not environmentally friendly, and I would rather not use them if given a choice. Also, we need to be mindful of spending too much on labels. The labeller part on the production line is proportionate and thus relatively fixed to the diameter and height of the bottle. There is only so much you can adjust. Given the limited adjustment you can make, it begs the question why bother changing the size of the body label and incur unnecessary capital expenses to purchase a new size labeller part? Likewise for the shape. Why change the shape of the body label when it does not matter in the bigger scheme of things?"

X also said,

"Glass bottles typically come in the size of 330ml and 640ml. These are the most common sizes around the world and glass bottle manufacturers run their production lines using moulds developed to such sizes. So, for most brewers, to enjoy the most economical bottle price, they would stick to these two sizes. We have looked at aluminium bottles too… but these are very costly to produce… Beer is a carbonated liquid and will foam excessively if filled in a bottle that has not been moulded to the characteristic of the production line... There is also only so much angle you can add to the slope of the shoulder before it crosses what is permissible. There comes a point where the limit cannot be pushed further."

Y's response also indicated that cost, and not consumer insight, was the key consideration,

"A big part of our cost is the proportion of bottles we can wash and reuse. So, for us and others in the beer industry here, we prefer glass bottles. As for labels, plastic labels are nice but expensive. And we try not to use back labels, we believe nobody looks at them and so, they add to unnecessary costs. Regarding the shape of the labels, honestly, how different can the label shape be? At the high speed that the labelling line is going at the brewery, any label shape that is too fancy or different will cause the line to jam and stop. That is why in the market, you see only simple label shapes like oval, rectangle or square. Even if your drinkers tell you they like fancy-shaped labels, it is not gonna be viable to be produced."

Cost was also the over-arching consideration when it came to bottle embossment. While the consumers highlighted safety issues like grip and image issues like aesthetics, the reality was that these were not factors of consideration for my colleague-interviewees. X explained,

"The primary reason for us to emboss or deboss a bottle is so that it cannot be used by other companies; bottle loss is quite a significant cost for us. Typically, we will emboss the brand name or logo on the shoulder of the bottle. Why there? Simply because that is the only place, we have space for slightly larger designs."

Even though my colleague-interviewees were pleased that the consumers' responses affirmed many of their intuition and practices, it was obvious that their packaging design decisions were driven not by insights but mainly by cost and technical constraints. They had admittedly not given due consideration to the consumers' underlying concerns.

This was made even more apparent when they were asked to reflect upon consumers' responses towards the different packaging cues from a sensory perspective. This question was about the MAPP framework that proposed that visual stimuli and other multisensory packaging cues influenced brand perceptions (Velasco and Spence, 2019). Without fail, my colleague-interviewees had to ask me to repeat the question, and without fail, they had to pause before they slowly attempted a response. Notwithstanding the lack of spontaneity in responding, they were nevertheless thoughtful, as I noted from Z's answer,

> *"What the consumer sees affects his perception of taste. Beer in a transparent bottle looks light and so, the consumer will assume the taste will be light. A red or black colour label may indicate that it is a strong beer, so the consumer will assume the taste will be heavy. If the label looks European with foreign text, the consumer will assume it is a European brand and thus will taste like a premium European beer. When the bottle is embossed like good quality Western brands, and when the consumer feels that embossments in his hand, it will signal to him that this brand is likely to be well-crafted. So, the sense of sight and taste, and the senses of touch and taste, do go hand-in-hand. As to the rest of the senses, I think it is less relevant when it comes to beer packaging. There does not seem to be much to go by if the bottle is not opened i.e., you can't hear the sound of the bottle opening, you can't smell the beer."*

As Y so succinctly put it,

> *"... Whatever they see on the packaging, it will create a perception in their minds. So, to your question, yes, the elements of packaging affect the senses."*

These reactions were indicative that before our conversations, my colleague-interviewees had not thought much of how packaging cues affected consumers. Their current design practices had been very much led by intuition and subjective aesthetic nuances, tempered by cost and technical limitations. This further reinforced my view that consumer-centricity was lacking in packaging design development practices within the organisation. Therefore, I was pleased to note that the conversations had brought about an acknowledgement amongst my colleague-interviewees that we often do not probe deeply to surface latent consumer motivations. We all then agreed that we needed to truly 'walk our talk' and put consumer insights back in the centre of packaging design development.

5.2.2.3. Design congruency

Next is a sub-theme that X suggested. He offered this near the end of his interview,

> *"While you may have looked at each of the packaging elements, I think it is important also to consider that all the elements must come together as nicely put together. You remember the famous marketing case of the Ford Edsel.*[5]*[see Figure 5.2 below]? They got the engineers to put together what they thought consumers liked about each part of a car in the car. It was the ugliest car ever built and flopped badly. So, you must be careful how you read the responses. After all, marketing is not always about science and data; it is often about art as well."*

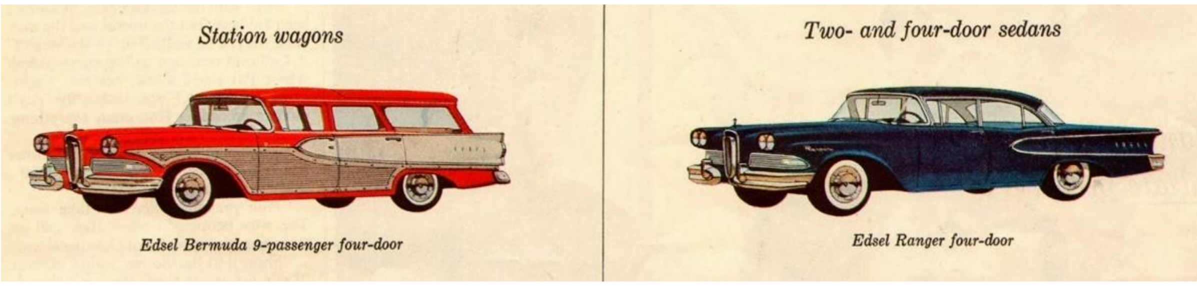


Figure 5.2: Ford Edsel – a failure in design congruency

Congruency was also a point that Velasco & Spence (2019) highlight in the MAPP framework. Perceptions may be enhanced or diluted depending on the congruency or incongruency between the sensory cues in the brand's packaging. Littel and Orth (2013) also suggest that packaging designs seen as congruent are rated as more attractive and more premium to those deemed incongruent. As Winkielman et al. (2015) explain, congruency facilitates ease of perceptual processing, resulting quickly in increased likeability. Based on this supporting literature, and further prompted by X, 'design congruency' was put forth in subsequent interviews with the remaining two colleague-interviewees.

To this end, I noted that both Y and Z separately agreed with the importance of design congruency. Y pointedly shared,

[5] One reason behind Edsel's failure was that it was not prototyped or tested with its target consumers. Everything was developed based on what Ford's executives felt appealed to the consumer. However, when launched, most consumers found the car ugly and unappealing. The Ford Edsel was derided as an ugly and unsightly car (https://www.liveabout.com/the-edsel-a-legacy-of-failure-726013; https://moneyinc.com/why-was-the-ford-edsel-such-a-failure/)

"I will look at the total look and not at each of the different parts. Only after I am satisfied with the total look do I go into specific comments. For example, I may ask for the medals to be made more prominent, reduce the malt and hops,..."

Z said,

"... I tend to look at packaging or review agency's recommendations, based on what looks good as a whole... The overall look must come together aesthetically. That is more important than having each part look good on its own."

In the case of packaging design, the sum of parts must be greater than the total. However, I was reminded that beer purchases in Thailand tended to be a rather low-involvement process. If any brand wishes to attract the consumer, the packaging design must engage and encourage higher involvement. As Celhay & Remaud (2018) and Fenko et al. (2018) suggest, one way to do this is to create a certain level of multisensory incongruency to slow down perceptual processing and generate greater involvement. The challenge, of course, was to find the right balance to stand out while not deviating too much from category typical cues. As Y expressed,

"If you change the packaging too much, you may attract new drinkers as they may think your quality has improved. But you may also lose your current drinkers who think your quality no longer suits them. And if you only change a little, then nobody will take notice. The point, however, is this – I don't think you can change perceptions with small changes in packaging. But if you don't update your packaging with all these small changes, your packaging may one day be outdated. The drinker will then think your quality is getting poorer over time. For new brands, however, I think the packaging is very important. It attracts. It can convey high quality or signal poor quality to drinkers. If it attracts and shouts good quality, drinkers may want to try. Sometimes, we try to challenge what is acceptable in packaging designs, e.g., we use a champagne bottle to pack beer. Why? Because it is important to try to get the packaging as right as possible."

5.2.2.4. Design dilemma

In optimising packaging design, marketers must be mindful not to deviate too much from category typicality. Category typicality refers to the perceived fit between the product's packaging and standard packaging cues within or in other related categories. However, at the same time, excessive conformance to category norms and conservative consumer expectations would go against the intention to attract eyeballs. Without going against some conventions and attracting attention, it would be difficult to generate greater consumer involvement and engagement in what would otherwise be a routine and habitual beer purchase process. This sub-theme was premised on the consumer discussion on category typicality but viewed from the lenses of the practitioner.

Z highlighted beer bottles to illustrate the norms of the beer category in Thailand and used the relaunch of the brand Chang Beer to highlight design dilemmas and the challenges in pushing the boundaries of category typicality,

> *"Heineken, Carlsberg, Stella Artois are all premium foreign brands and they all come in green bottles. Local mainstream priced brands like Leo, Singha, Tiger, Cheers are all in brown bottles. Light beers like San Miguel Light, Tiger Crystal and Corona are all in transparent bottles... When Chang was relaunched, it challenged the category norm for a mainstream local brand by moving from a brown bottle to a green bottle and that worked fantastically. However, experiments using a shrink-wrapped seasonal bottle as well as a limited-edition aluminium bottle failed miserably. Similarly, aluminium bottles like Heineken's year-end editions and contoured aluminium cans like Sapporo have also not taken off. So, it has been a rather random trial and error process to see what consumers can accept or not."*

Z's sharing of past packaging innovations failures, and her admission that the packaging innovation process was very much based on trial-and-error, indicated a lack of structure rigour and an absence of consumer insights to guide the design process. For instance, had she realised that Thai consumers were motivated by safety and health and that it was important for them to see the contents of the bottle, she would have known that opaque shrink-wrapped and aluminium bottles would not be appreciated. At the same time, she would have, based on inferences of category typicality, easily predicted the success of Chang's transition from a generic brown bottle to a proprietary looking green bottle. Conversely, as Y observed, influences from adjacent categories may also negatively affect what consumers saw as beer category typicality, and this could further compound the design dilemma,

> *"About 80% of the beer sold in Thailand is in big 640ml glass bottles. At the same time, many other businesses here also use the same 640ml glass bottles. Like fish sauce and soya sauce brands, and also rice spirits brands. Maybe it's because such*

bottles are cheap and easily available. But because they are everywhere, they become so generic. So, any beer brand that uses such generic bottles would immediately be deemed as poor quality."

In addition to the Thai consumers' conservative expectations on category typicality and the effect that packaging norms in other categories have on the beer category, strict internal rules that guard the packaging design development also hampered marketers from pushing the boundaries further. X explained,

"Here, as you know, every brand has its brand architecture that consists of its brand essence, brand proposition, brand personality, brand rational and emotional values as well as the key consumer insight. This brand architecture acts as the north star to guide us in everything that we do for the brand, including packaging. For example, one of Chang Beer's brand values is Lamiat which is Thai for the pursuit of craftsmanship in all things. Translating that into packaging, it will mean that the bottle needs to show some exquisite embossment, and the label designs need to feature medals and intricate detailing."

Hence, while my colleague-interviewees and I all agreed that the role of visually aesthetic designs was to attract and persuade purchase (Goode et al., 2012), we realised that we would constantly be confronted with the design dilemma between standing out, category typicality, and complying to brand identity guidelines. Peiyao et al. (2017) suggest developing designs that are category typical first to facilitate easier preliminary acceptance before incorporating distinguishing features for the packaging to stand out. While this may be sound advice, the reality was that finding the elusive balance continued to be a trial-and-error discovery journey.

Yet, as I reflected upon this, I realised that we were actually in a far better position than most in dealing with this design dilemma. After all, our brands were leading in the Thai beer market, and in many ways, defined what would be considered typical or atypical in the category. Being in such a privileged position would afford us greater creative license to push or redefine category norms. I concluded that we could be bolder in our packaging design thinking. When I shared this reflection with my colleague-interviewees, they agreed that my observation was rather true; and felt encouraged by my perspective. At the same time, we also agreed that if we were better equipped with deeper consumer insights and understood the motivations that underpinned consumers' responses to the different packaging cues, we would manage the vagaries of this design dilemma better. Therefore, it would be useful if we were to adopt a more systematic approach towards packaging design development.

With this acknowledgement, the individual interviews then pivoted to discussions on existing organisational processes and how new ways of working could be instituted - thus the final theme 'Changes and Improvements in Practice'.

5.2.3. Changes and improvements in practice

This final theme summed up the intention to improve design practices and effect better ways of working at my workplace. This was to be achieved by understanding consumers' attitudes towards packaging designs and how these affected quality perceptions. In particular, by including my colleagues in the inquiry and getting them to provide interpretations as we collaborate pragmatic solutions to pertinent issues, I was able to secure their accountability and commitment to specific actions to enhance the packaging design practices within our organisation. 'Changes and Improvements in Practice' were two sub-themes within this overarching theme. The first being 'Gaps in current packaging design development process' where the current packaging design process within our organisation would be analysed and discussed; and the second being 'New ways of working', which spelt out specific actions that my colleagues committed to.

5.2.3.1. Gaps in current packaging design development process

The current process in packaging development appeared to be straightforward. New packaging designs or updates to existing packaging designs may be triggered by responding to competitive actions, or it could be initiated by top management. Sometimes, the catalyst to initiate a change could be as random as a gut feel. Once activated, discussions with the Production team to establish the limitations of available and new equipment and their related costs and turnaround time. Armed with this technical understanding, a design agency would be briefed with information like target consumer, competitive environment, brand identity guidelines, packaging format, technical constraints, regulatory compliance, and a general direction on colour and other preferred cues. The agency would revert with initial design proposals. After a few rounds of iterations, the final set of designs would be sent to a research agency for testing with consumers to pick the winning design. The selected design would then be shared with top management for approval. Z described the process as follows:

> *"How do I go about developing packaging for our brands? As I shared earlier, the triggers can be rather random; though once triggered, the process is quite standard and cross-functional. What are my key considerations in my brief to the design agency? Target consumer, target consumption occasion, competitive packaging, production capabilities, legal requirements. I design to the needs of the target consumer, taking into account production and legal requirements. What happens after that? Once we are happy with the design proposals from the agency, once we feel we have a few possible options, we either show directly to the boss to make the decision or we conduct research amongst consumers. We then decide based on the research results. We inform our production colleagues, and they start the procurement. Then we work with our sales team on the launch."*

While there was nothing inherently wrong with the process, it was obvious that rigour may be lacking. When I probed if consumer insights formed a critical part of the agency brief, my colleague-interviewees were adamant that it did. Y said,

> *"Most importantly, we consider consumer insights – why they would drink our brand when they would drink it, how they would drink it, where they would drink it and with whom they would drink it. These are important considerations when we brief the design agency."*

However, on closer examination, these so-called consumer insights were not truly insights but mere observations of the consumption occasion. They were not specific to packaging designs, and there was no in-depth understanding of the underlying motivations. As discussed earlier, my colleague-interviewees had acknowledged that their packaging design decisions had little consumer centricity in consideration. They did not brief the design agencies on the safety and health concerns that belied many consumers' responses to the different cues. Neither did they include how each packaging cue stimulated different senses and communicated specific user and brand imagery. When reminded of these during the interviews, my colleague-interviewees eventually admitted to the lack of consumer-centricity in packaging designs.

Considering that my colleague-interviewees had also acknowledged that packaging design was becoming increasingly important, we needed to become more incisive in understanding what drove the relationships between packaging cues and consumers' perceptions of quality.

We needed to make the design process more robust and more consumer-centric, especially how we brief our design agencies and critique their proposals. We needed new ways of working, which we agreed on as we approached the end of the interviews. After all, in a market that banned advertising and promotions of alcohol, at a time when shopping and consumption patterns are shifting towards off-premise, ensuring the appropriate packaging format and creating impactful packaging designs would be critical to gaining market share.

5.2.3.2. New ways of working

Based on the feedback and commitment provided by my colleague-interviewees, there were four areas in which they would adjust their way of working. They would recalibrate the heavy skew on internal cost & production limitations with a more balanced perspective incorporating consumer insights. Y pointed out,

> *"Very interesting… while overall cost and what our production colleagues tell me remain important, I definitely will start to listen more to consumer talk with these new pair of lenses."*

At the same time, when reminded that our brands were category-leading and, to a large extent, shaped the norms of the category in Thailand, they felt more emboldened in pushing the boundaries of category typicality for beer packaging. As they vocalised their reflections, they shared that their personal bias and intuition also needed to be revisited. X said,

> *"As you shared, we are the market leader, and the thinking of consumer are often led by what we say or do. I realised that instead of boldly leading the consumers, we have been conservatively following the consumers. This means we are simply going round in circles with no innovative breakthrough in the category. Your reminder is timely. Also, as I thought about today's discussion, perhaps there are some things I need to rethink. Like my personal preference towards embossment, product descriptors, foreign language etc., since the consumers' sketches did not spontaneously depict these. I don't know why, but I had always insisted on adding product taste descriptors and English text onto the front labels. Maybe it is time to rethink these."*

Thirdly, they agreed to revamp the packaging design briefing template they had used previously. Specifically, they believed they could do better by becoming more systematic and comprehensive in discussing each packaging cue. They also agreed that it was important to share the consumer insights underpinning how these cues affected quality perceptions.

Furthermore, they decided to emphasise the importance of design congruency. X candidly shared,

> *"… Previously, we have always been designing from the brand's perspective and whenever we review new packaging proposals, it is about what we like or what we think is most cost-effective, or what our intuition tells us that consumers like. Specifically, I will now redesign our packaging design brief template to follow your approach more systematically. At the same time, I will create a design proposal feedback form, again guided by our approach, to provide constructive critique systematically and comprehensively to the designers."*

Finally, my colleagues committed to improving how research agencies were briefed when conducting focus group discussions on new packaging designs. They also felt a need to push the research moderators to go beyond the superficial solicitation of how consumers respond to packaging design proposals. They felt that the moderators should seek out the underlying motivations behind consumers' responses. Z shared,

> *"…Whenever we conduct any research on packaging, it was more a disaster check or to help us pick the preferred design. We have never been so systematic in our briefing approach, and we certainly have never delved deep into the nuances that each packaging element conveyed to the drinkers… I will ask the moderators to structure focus group discussions along with themes like what you did… I want the research to go deeper and unravel insights. Your framework is therefore very useful, and I will make it mandatory for all researchers to use this framework henceforth."*

Overall, my colleagues were appreciative that they had the opportunity to participate in the study. It was not an interview format they expected as it was highly conversational. Through the dialogue, they had become convinced that there were gaps in their understanding of the relationships between packaging and quality perception. They were glad to have partaken in the packaging design process enhancements, and they had gone away feeling a lot more emboldened to deal with the design dilemma. X came away from the discussions feeling rather rejuvenated once again about packaging design and exclaimed,

> *"This is a very refreshing approach. It helps to go beyond just the superficial meaning of the responses but to dive deep into the significance of their answers. We have covered both rational reasons like Safety and Health, and also covered emotive reasons like brand and user imagery, and we have layered on situational factors like involvement and*

category typicality. Wonderful. Very good. This is going to be very helpful for us, especially when we develop future packaging designs."

X's sentiments summed up well the feedback towards the study. In the next section, I will elaborate on the outcomes from the study and the managerial implications these have on the organisation.

5.3. Study outcomes and implications for the organisation

It was clear that the cornerstones of the existing packaging design process were built on internal considerations such as production cost and equipment limitations, as well as brand identity guidelines. This study has surfaced key weaknesses in the process - a lack of systematic rigour in briefing design and research agencies. Assessments were based on subjective intuition and not consumer insights, leading to hits and misses in packaging designs.

Specifically, the study has helped refine our understanding of consumers about packaging cues and also managed to surface our latent bias towards certain packaging elements. In the process, we questioned our preconceptions of how consumers perceived packaging and also questioned some of our current design practices. Such an outcome was possible because the discussions involved the direct stakeholders - my colleagues. Involving my colleagues was critical because one of the key aims was to secure their commitment to improving our work. By having them reflect and re-examine their perspectives and their way of working, they began to acknowledge a need for improvement, which then laid the ground ready for suggestions to make things better. By examining behaviours, areas for potential action would be put under the spotlight. This was an important intangible outcome of the study.

An important tangible outcome was the decision to amend the briefing templates. These templates have been around for a long time, and nobody ever questioned their validity or comprehensiveness. They had always been accepted, and it was assumed that this way of working existed for a reason and hence should not be changed. However, from our discussions, my colleagues and I realised that some sections of the brief were rather superficial – they lacked key insights regarding how consumers viewed each packaging element and why they mattered. We, therefore, decided that it was time to update these briefing templates and incorporate a comprehensive list of packaging cues and corresponding insights. This would help make future agency briefings and debriefings more systematic and rigorous. There would be a lot less intuition and subjectivity in assessing any design proposals. The emphasis would shift from subjective likes/dislikes to an objective understanding of which/why packaging cues mattered to consumers.

The revisions reoriented the brief from a high-level business objective to a specific packaging design objective. In addition, instead of the usual 'who are we talking to' target shopper description, the revisions now mandated us to include key themes and motivations that underlie the target consumers' perspective to packaging designs. Also, the revised briefing template highlighted design nuances in the category and the typical beer shopping behaviours that the agency should note. Another key change was incorporating a section about how design proposals would be assessed. See Figure 5.3 – revisions in blue.

What are the ~~business~~ design objectives?
•

What does the Agency need to deliver – which brand, which SKU are to be designed?
•

How do we ~~wish for~~see the design ~~to help~~helping ~~achieve~~ our objectives?
•

What does the brand offer to consumers?
• Image:
• Brew:

What is the brand DNA? (the thing that runs through everything the brand does)

Who are we talking to? Include the themes & motivations through which consumers' perceive each packaging cue

What should the agency take into consideration? Include themes of involvement and category typicality

What's the competition? Be specific to the competitors competing for attention on shelves

What are the real strengths and weaknesses of the brand in its market?
Strengths
•

Weakness
•

What are the insights behind this project?
•

Where will this brand be seen, bought and consumed?
•

How do consumers choose what to buy in this category? Be specific to shopper behavior
•

Points to Take Note on Design (Do's/ Don'ts):

Brand ID
•

Bottle Design
•

Mandatory packaging design elements
•

How will we assess the packaging design proposals?

Figure 5.3: New design briefing template (revisions in blue)

Similarly, it was obvious that the research agencies were not getting clear guidance; resultantly, they would simply play back the participants' comments without detailed insights. My colleagues and I agreed to revise the agency brief by adding specific information the agency would need to obtain. Considering the low involvement shopping process, we needed to know if the designs could attract attention (positive/negative). We would also like to understand consumers' perceptions of each packaging cue; more importantly, we want to know the latent motivations behind their responses. Finally, to test the boundaries of category typicality, we would like to know how far the packaging designs may be pushed – this would help us with much-needed guidance in managing the perennial design dilemma. See below Figure 5.4 for the additions made to the existing template.

- **Background**

- **Marketing Objectives**

- **Research Objectives**
  - Decision to be taken
    - Accept / Reject / Revise – why?

- **Information to obtain**
  - Likeability and purchase intention impact on brand loyalists (check for rejection)
  - Likeability and purchase intention impact on brand switchers (check for rejection)
  - Impact on current brand image and brand values
  - Impact on ability to attract - Spontaneous preference or resistance or confusion on shelves
  - Detailed responses to each packaging cue and uncover the consumers' underlying motivations
  - Check on elasticity of category typicality boundaries – how far can we push the designs?

- **Research Design**

- **Target Respondents:**

Figure 5.4: New research briefing template (additions in blue)

These revisions would benefit the working relationships between the existing agencies and us. Additionally, the enhanced templates would provide essential scaffolds to guide newer marketing colleagues' design thinking and assessment. This meant accelerated learning and greater independence for these newer colleagues. Viewed from this perspective, this study has therefore also helped to uplift the efficiency of my organisation - tacit design knowledge enjoyed by a few senior colleagues can now be democratised into explicit knowledge that would be useful to all members of the marketing department.

5.4. Reflections

As I started writing up this chapter, I realised how important this phase of the research was to my overall study. I had originally approached this thesis from a purely academic approach. My focus was very much on generating data through surveys and focus groups. In hindsight, I realised that there was little criticality in my previous analyses, and there was no collaboration or co-generation of knowledge and no commitment to action. In other words, there was no element of action research, which was so essential in a DBA. I had assumed and insisted that my original academic approach was correct, and I kept pushing on. However, with thoughtful advice and proper supervisory pointers, I began to fold in an action-research perspective into the study. When I did that, I found myself constantly iterating my approach. With each iteration, the fuzziness of the problem lifted, and the corresponding actions became clearer. This was what Coghlan and Brannick (2019) advocate – that action researchers should flow with the inquiry as it evolves.

Indeed, by reframing the study into one incorporating elements of action, what would have been a purely academic pursuit on packaging design evolved into one that had direct practical implications to my organisation. By co-opting my colleagues as participants to address a problem that we shared, Phase Three – individual interviews, became a key cornerstone of this research. Indeed, my role as an insider action researcher would more aptly be described as a facilitator of deep conversations. My colleague-interviewees were equal partners in the conversations, and they often added different perspectives to what I had to offer. For example, interviewee X brought up a point about 'design congruency', which was previously not included in the interview guide. This was a crucial insight, which was immediately added to subsequent interviews. Thus, the conversations were not just about uncovering knowledge; they were also about exchanging experiences and about aligning different viewpoints so that we could jointly arrive at a commitment to act and change for the better. After considering all these reflections, I decided that this part of the study merited its dedicated chapter.

A few distinctions in this chapter set it apart from the others. While the focus in the previous chapters had been very much focused on the consumer and how they viewed packaging and perceived quality, this chapter pivoted inwards towards the perspective of my organisation and my colleagues. Engaging in deep dialogue uncovered blind spots in our viewpoints, e.g., we were often blinkered by an overarching concern over cost, production limitations and category typicality. We realised that we were not as consumer-centric as we had always proclaimed. We were often held back by our intuitive beliefs and bias, e.g., X's insistence on incorporating product taste descriptors and English text onto the front labels. We did not question why we do the things we do, e.g., the briefing templates had been left unchanged for a long time, and we also did not truly go deep to understand why consumers behaved as they did.

Perhaps this is the key highlight of action research – the emphasis should not just be generating a better understanding of packaging design and quality perception; the emphasis should be on deep-diving into how we think and operate. This approach encouraged us to make discoveries, reflect these discoveries against our current beliefs and practices, and then commit to enhancing the way we think and work.

Indeed, as I reflected on the conversations with my colleagues, I saw parallels between their responses and my own experiences. At the start of the interviews, my colleagues had previously accepted that beer packaging must be dictated by production requirements to drive efficiency. We paid very little relative attention to packaging designs and how they influenced quality perceptions and consumer behaviour. Other than the imperative to keep to brand identity guidelines, we simply aimed to "make it look nice", i.e., packaging decisions were subjective, underpinned by our personal bias and collective likes/dislikes. Yet, as we progressed with the conversations, my colleagues realised that "keep to brand identity guidelines" and "make it look nice" would no longer be sufficient. We all felt that we needed to have more specific consumer insights as these would allow us to be bolder and more confident in the way we went about our packaging designs. After all, we have always been concerned about design dilemmas and the risk of possible consumer alienation when we push the boundaries of category typicality too far.

As we conversed, it felt like my colleagues and I were on a journey filled with unknowns; as we walked towards a common destination (key insights to improve packaging design), we felt hesitant and weighed down by concerns (e.g., cost, production limitations and category typicality). We then encouraged each other and new perspectives (e.g., as the category leader, we do have more leeway in being more creative in packaging) and new ways of doing things (e.g., revising our briefing templates for design and research agencies).

At the same time, I felt that I had become more reflexive during Phase Three of this study. I realised that even as my colleague-interviewees provided me with their viewpoints in dialogue, I was reflexively reflecting their responses against my understanding of the subject matter. For instance, when my colleagues shared their reluctance to embrace more eco-friendly packaging materials, I immediately reflected on our organisation's stature as a well-recognised leader on the annual Dow Jones Sustainability Index and felt that we were well-placed to champion this platform and educate consumers. Another example was the issue of category typicality and the resultant design dilemma. Reflexively, I thought that as a market leader, we could shape what the consumers defined as the category. Thus we should be leading the consumers instead of merely following the category. In other words, I was pleased to see myself developing as a reflexively reflective doctoral scholar as the study iterated and progressed.

5.5. Summary

In this chapter, the themes and sub-themes resulting from the thematic analysis of the individual interviews were explored. Under the theme of "Growing importance of packaging design", we discussed the business challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on shopper behaviours. We also discussed Thailand's tax and regulatory environment and how it has shaped packaging designs in the alcohol beverages sphere. Finally, we reviewed consumer trends such as Individualism and Sustainability to assess how these may affect the future of beer packaging.

The next theme focused on the "Optimisation of packaging designs". Much time was spent discussing and reconciling both consumer and practitioner perspectives about each packaging cue. In the process, we developed a better understanding of how consumers perceived packaging cues and how such perceptions were rooted in latent motivations. We also gained a better appreciation of the different visual and haptic triggers to enhance perceptions of quality. Yet, at the same time, it emerged that we often allowed operational limitations to supersede consumer-centricity in our design process. Also, issues such as design congruency, design dilemma and category typicality expectations were brought up. By surfacing all these concerns while sense-making the consumers' perspectives through our practitioner's lenses, there was a consensus that we needed to improve how we go about designing beer packaging.

To this end, and specifically against the context of our newfound knowledge, my colleagues and I reviewed our current packaging design development process to identify possible improvement gaps. The related discussions, the commitment to change, and the agreed actions were explored in the last theme, "Changes and Improvements in Practice". These eventuated in new ways of working, especially how we brief our design and research agencies. Finally, the changes in the briefing templates also helped uplift overall efficiency as the learnings from this study were democratised into explicit knowledge. All marketing department members, not just a select few senior and privileged members, would now be able to follow a rigorous scaffold when briefing or debriefing the agencies.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

6.1 A look-back

This concluding chapter highlights my journey as a DBA student. When I first registered for the DBA program in 2012, I took a sabbatical break from the private sector. Then, I had worked for twenty years, of which the last eleven were spent in three different developing countries as an expatriate. Throughout, I had only worked in the beer industry. I then decided to put my career on hold as I needed to recharge, find opportunities to contribute to underprivileged communities and focus on my personal development. During those eighteen months of sabbatical leave, I involved myself in several community projects and felt revitalised. I also took that time to complete most of the required DBA modules.

As I was not actively working, I had to rely on my past leadership and cross-cultural experiences to complete the modules. It was very illuminating for me as I could use the modules to reflect upon my past practices from an academic perspective. I was also able to contribute to scholarly discussions from a practitioner lens. I managed to sense-make many of the scholarly concepts in practical terms in the process. However, because there was no formal organisation that I belonged to, I could not apply the knowledge gained to make specific, actionable changes. This became increasingly obvious in the classroom exchanges because I was constantly contributing to the discussion using grammatical past tenses, whilst my fellow students would relate and share their present circumstances. While this was not a problem as far as the program modules were concerned, I became increasingly aware that eventually, this would become an issue because the culminating thesis needed to be an action research study. Fortunately, this concern went away when I decided to re-enter the private sector in late 2013. I joined my present organisation, a Thai company in the beer industry, as the Group Marketing Director, which I have held since then. The challenges I observed and experienced in my current position eventually formed the basis for this thesis.

Specifically, I had found the packaging design processes in my organisation to be unsystematic, highly vulnerable to personal bias, and lacking in consumer centricity - they were outdated despite the changes in the operating environment that had elevated packaging design as a key marketing avenue for beer brands. The questions I, therefore, sought to address in this study were:

- Which beer packaging cues matter to Thai consumers when perceiving quality?

- Why do they matter?
- How can my colleagues and I collectively use this knowledge to enhance our organisational packaging design processes?

6.2 Missteps in the original thesis development

While the intention to conduct action research within my organisation was spot-on, the subsequent developments somehow did not support that intention. Perhaps this was because I had initially begun developing the thesis from a myopic and impatient perspective of simply ticking what I thought were the necessary boxes, i.e., conduct a literature review, carry out a quantitative survey to test some hypotheses, followed by organising a few focus groups. I had treated each of these sections perfunctorily in silos without holistically looking at how they should interlink to provide answers to the research questions. It stopped short of delivering actionable change to a practical situation at work when this was a critical aspect in any action research. After all, while action research is rooted in theoretical foundations, the key focus should always be to generate knowledge for application in the real world. It is centred around dialogic and reflective engagement with internal stakeholders to trigger necessary organisational changes.

In the case of this study, this would mean securing the involvement of stakeholders related to the packaging design processes in my organisation and getting them to understand the importance of making necessary changes in the way we work. Specifically, the goal was to galvanise senior members of the Marketing department in Thailand to shake off the complacency of the status quo and to get them to commit and make changes to the way we went about designing and assessing packaging. With these changes, the aim was to make the processes more systematic and rigorous. Agencies would then become more directed in their work. At the same time, the more junior members of the marketing department would also become more guided whenever they were tasked to spearhead packaging projects.

However, my failure to incorporate this critical aspect of the study - engage my colleagues in the development of practical solutions - was not highlighted throughout the development of the original thesis. Instead, the original submission simply focused on generating copious amounts of literature reviews that did not generate a clear framework to scaffold the research work. Much effort was misdirected at developing and testing irrelevant hypotheses through redundant statistical analyses. Finally, taking the so-called conclusions from the quantitative survey, focus groups were conducted, and the proceedings were superficially reported as core findings without thorough thematic analyses. In hindsight, there were admittedly many flaws in the original thesis submission. It was no wonder that it was not of acceptable standards; importantly, it lacked the key elements of reflection and action necessary in an action research study.

6.3 Adopting a new approach

That debacle catalysed a rethinking of how this study should be approached. While strong theoretical foundations and rigour remained important, it became essential to integrate a strong action dimension. There was a need to rebalance academic rigour and organisational relevance. At the same time, there was a clear need to reorganise the thesis for better coherence and to focus the study on the research questions. Through these revised lenses, a more purposive effort was put into the Literature Review to establish a theoretical foundation for the rest of the study. Starting with a broader literature perspective of brand building concepts, the review funnelled progressively into literature that studied the interactions between quality perception and the factors that affected packaging design, e.g., brand platform, consumer expectations, purchase involvement, prior knowledge and experience as well as situational considerations like time and motivation to purchase. It narrowed into specific packaging cues that mattered to consumers like colour, material, shape, tactility, and textual information.

Using the Multisensory Analysis of Product Packaging framework (Velasco & Spence, 2019) as the theoretical framework, and based on my industry insider experience of what would typically constitute bottled beer packaging in Thailand, different cues were compartmentalised into hi- and low- levels stimuli for investigation. The high-level stimuli included graphics such as symbols and pictures and textual information like product and producer information. The low-level stimuli included size and shape of bottle and label; haptics of the bottle; the colour of the bottle and label; and material of bottle and label. These cues were then purposefully used to develop a multi-item scale for a survey that assessed consumers' responses regarding the impact of each of these packaging items on quality perception.

The survey in the original submission was conducted to test hypotheses for generalisation. In the revised approach, the intention was to sense-check if the extensive list of packaging cues proposed in the multi-item scale would be meaningful to consumers. With this in mind, I decided that basic descriptive statistics and simple ANOVA with paired means comparisons would suffice for the survey analysis. The consumers' responses and subsequent analysis affirmed their meaningfulness; this effectively addressed the first question highlighted above – "Which beer packaging cues matter to Thai consumers when perceiving quality?" Resultantly, these items were included as focus groups discussion points to understand better why they mattered in quality perceptions.

Another change I made to the study was the analysis of the focus group discussions. Previously, I was content to simply collate the responses, group them by each packaging cue, and write the report accordingly. This was admittedly rather superfluous and failed to surface any consumer motivations underpinning their responses. In the revised approach, I took conscious efforts to immerse myself in the transcripts and participatory drawings; I reviewed them repeatedly as I attempted to surface thematic patterns. The themes constantly evolved with each immersion and with each round of writing. Some of the initial themes proved irrelevant, while others were too broad and needed to be sharpened. Eventually, the finalised themes were Safety and Health, Sustainability, and Marketing. Within the theme of Safety and Health were sub-themes of Product Safety, Packaging Safety, and Health-related concerns. Under Marketing, there were sub-themes such as Price, Promotion, Involvement, Brand and User Imagery, Functional Product Impact, Uncertainty Avoidance and Category Typicality. These were reflected against literature and industry practices, and the generated knowledge helped answer the second research question – “why do these packaging cues matter to consumers?”

The final question – "How can my colleagues and I collectively use this knowledge to enhance our organisational packaging design processes?", was left unanswered in the original thesis submission. In this revision, an additional layer of individual interviews was added to specifically tackle this last research question. Armed with a set of rich consumer-based knowledge, I set out to engage and discuss with internal stakeholders. The consumer-generated themes and sub-themes became the stimulus for eliciting reflections about the weaknesses in the internal design processes of my organisation. The conversations with my colleagues also aimed to trigger commitment and actions to changes to improve these processes, which was the ultimate intention of this study.

From the thematic analysis of these individual interviews, three themes were derived. Under the theme of "Growing importance of packaging design", the business challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, Thailand's tax and regulatory environment, and consumer trends such as individualism and sustainability were discussed. This helped generate a better practitioner's perspective into how these macro factors had shaped packaging designs in the Thai alcohol beverages sphere and how they may affect the future of beer packaging.

Once these were established, the discussions segued to discuss and reconcile consumers' and practitioners' perspectives regarding each packaging item and the corresponding consumer themes. From these discussions, it became clear that visual and haptic triggers in beer packaging were important to enhance perceptions of quality. Logically, these insights should feature in agency design and assessment briefs. Yet, it emerged that such consumer-centricity in design development was often overshadowed by operational limitations such as cost, equipment constraints, as well as hindered by a general reluctance to challenge category typicality expectations.

Nevertheless, through the dialogic engagement with my colleagues on their concerns, as they sense-make the consumers' responses through their practitioner's lenses, we came to the consensus that there was a need to improve how we as an organisation went about designing beer packaging. The commitment to change eventuated in new ways of working, especially how our design and research agencies were briefed. Changes were made to the respective briefing templates, which helped turn tacit knowledge related to beer packaging designs and research into explicit and rigorous scaffolds that guided all Marketing department members when briefing or debriefing agencies. In other words, the third research question, "How can my colleagues and I collectively use this knowledge to enhance our organisational packaging design processes?" was also finally addressed.

6.4 Limitations

As with all research studies, there would be limitations. Firstly, this study adopted purposive approach sampling, and this would bring about the possibility of hidden bias, the possible presence of outliers, and a potentially high level of sampling error, e.g., some demographic segments may be over-represented, and others may be under-represented (Etikan, 2016). Caution must therefore be exercised in generalising the findings to the population of beer drinkers/purchasers in Thailand.

Also, the samples in Phase One and Two presented some limitations. For the survey, the fieldwork, due to time constraints, eventually only generated a relatively small sample size of 101 valid responses. At the focus groups stage, the clustering of the different individuals into groups was sub-optimal. Recruiting older participants and placing them into the same groups as those with higher SES B income made it challenging to distinguish the responses between older participants and higher-income earners.

The setup of the fieldwork at both stages could also be improved. The survey was carried out at a shopping mall outside a supermarket. At the same time, the focus groups were conducted in an unfamiliar but cosy room that bore no semblance to a retail environment. In both stages, visual aids that featured unbranded packaging cues were used. In such setups, consumer involvement would naturally be heightened and would thus not represent the usual beer shopping experience of grab-and-go. Indeed, the setup lacked retail variables such as store atmospherics, promotional displays and banners, and store format.

There are also limitations in generalising the findings across product categories and cultures. This action research study focused on beer packaging in Thailand and pertinent to improving ways of working within my organisation. Care must therefore be exercised to avoid over-generalising the findings beyond these parameters. Considering that consumption experiences would vary between categories, it is important and necessary to conduct any research studies of relevant individual packaging cues within specific categories and not rely on the findings of this study. Similarly, the actions arising from this study were relevant only to my organisation and would not be pertinent to other organisations.

Finally, the nature of perceived quality is dynamic and may change with time, as symbiotic meanings may evolve and consequent responses to designs may change over time. Hence, generalising this study's findings beyond this point in time will also require caution.

6.5 Potential areas of further study

During the individual interviews with my colleagues, it emerged that design congruency was an important consideration, and that packaging should be viewed as the sum of its parts or as a "coherent whole" (Silayol & Speece, 2007, p.1512). This was also evident from the focus groups' rather generalised descriptions of their regular brands. Indeed, this contrasted against the design of this study, which had presented each single packaging cue in isolation, with the participants providing their evaluations. To address this limitation, future researchers may also wish to provide an assortment of fully designed stimuli for in-depth discussions to gain insights into how the different packaging cues interact together to shape perceptions of quality.

Another area that could be investigated further is the relationship between perceived quality and purchase behaviours. While this study may have established the relationships between individual packaging design cues and perception of quality, it did not directly conclude that better-perceived quality would enhance consumers' buying behaviour. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies investigate the impact of variables, such as price, promotions, and brand equity, on the relationship between perceived quality and purchase decisions.

While this study had primarily focused on generating greater knowledge about packaging cues influencing consumers' quality perceptions and using that knowledge to improve internal packaging design processes, it also highlighted that the pervasiveness of the 'not-invested-here' syndrome as exhibited by senior members of the department, had discouraged the adoption of best practices. This had hindered the institutionalisation of tacit knowledge that externally recruited talents possessed and brought into the organisation. Therefore, beyond the scope of enhancing beer packaging design processes, improving knowledge management and sharing within the organisation may also be fertile ground for further research studies.

6.6 Final reflections

When I first started the thesis development, I must admit that I was hesitant on a few fronts. As highlighted in section 6.1, I was concerned that the thesis was an action research study; then, I was still on sabbatical leave and had no specific organisation to base my study on. Even after I returned to work, and even after I had decided to base my thesis on packaging designs, I was unsure if my thesis should be quantitative- or qualitative-based. After all, I was not very comfortable with statistics, and neither was I confident to undertake thematic analysis. Yet, I was somehow convinced into conducting a mixed-methods study to answer the research questions I had outlined. The result was that I muddled up both stages in the original submission and even neglected to address the third core question of application.

As mentioned previously, after encountering various issues in the original submission, I had to revise the study approach. While the present study has become a lot more qualitative and exploratory, a lot more action-oriented towards change in my organisation, and different chapters have become a lot more coherent, it was not always like that. I was rather lost and unsettled when I had to start the revisions. I found the literature review challenging as I did not know how to connect the dots between the many disparate works of literature I had reviewed. The spectrum of topics was just too wide, and I kept getting distracted by venturing into areas that were more related to brand building but less specific to the communicative power of packaging designs. It got so messy that at one stage, I found myself writing about everything related to brand building with little emphasis given to packaging. This was a total opposite of the literature review in the previous submission, which had focused entirely on packaging cues without offering a clear context of where packaging design should be situated within the premise of brand building and consumer purchase.

On reflection, there was considerable time wasted sorting out the reviews, simply because I did not have any framework to guide me due to my failure to plan before commencing the literature search. It was only when I decided to refresh my approach by searching for relevant frameworks first that I managed to make headway. Ultimately, it was the frameworks from Brodersen and Manolova (2008)- Packaging design for Brand Building, from Lundell & Wigstrand (2016) - the relationship between packaging and perceived quality, and from Velesco and Spence (2019) - Multisensory Analysis of Product Packaging, that helped me sense-make of the different concepts and consideration points. With that, I was then able to funnel the review from a macro brand-building perspective to one that was specific to packaging designs. Eventually, I was able to structure together a theoretical foundation for the research I was to conduct.

Reflecting further, I was initially reluctant to de-emphasise the survey and re-orient the study to be more qualitative. This was because I was overwhelmingly concerned that I would not be able to conduct a sufficiently robust thematic analysis. I did not want to confront the dreadful prospect of having to sift repeatedly through the transcripts and notes of qualitative research to look for themes and patterns that may not even be there. It was only when I was strongly advised to put in an additional layer of interviews with internal stakeholders that I was suddenly jolted out of my stubbornness; then, I had my epiphany and remembered that this was supposed to be a DBA study and not just a pure PhD pursuit. I then realised that the survey and the focus groups were meant to feed into the core part of the study - to catalyse actionable change in the organisation and address practical problems. With the lifting of this paralysing concern about quantitative versus qualitative methodologies, I focused on conducting a true scholar-practitioner study. I became aware that there would be a need for dialogic engagement with key influential internal stakeholders to catalyse actionable change. Thus, I was determined to no longer conduct the research alone within my little 'well'.

Yet, while I was comfortable with the idea of inviting more participation from my colleagues, I was also unsettled with the iterative nature of such an approach, e.g., how many iterations will there be with each round of participation? Will there be constant changes without any light at the end of the proverbial tunnel? Also, getting my colleagues involved may mean conflicting views and tensions – how should I manage? Would they participate and discuss freely since I was more senior to them in the organisation? How do we decide on the eventual actions to be taken? Will their inclusion slow down the entire study, especially if they disagree with the research approach and the interpretations of the results? Or will their different perspectives help enrich the study even though their involvement may result in a further iteration of the research?

Notwithstanding these concerns, I proceeded to plan and incorporate an additional Phase Three - individual interviews into my study. I decided that the inquiry would benefit from the multiple viewpoints that add richness to the findings. By being more inclusive, my colleagues would also become more receptive to any eventual recommendations and actions. In this way, the responsibility to effect any changes would no longer solely be upon my shoulders but would be shared with them.

In hindsight, I also realised that my initial concerns regarding qualitative research and thematic analysis were unnecessarily inflated. With well-thought-out discussion interview guides and stimulus materials, ensuing conversations could be steered and kept within the parameters of the intended topic. Common themes would surface resultantly from subsequent and repeated immersions into the transcripts. Furthermore, it helped that I held on to the firm belief that my colleagues and I would collectively identify gaps for improvements. We would be able to develop specific actions to close those gaps as long as I objectively provided a set of rich consumer-generated insights about packaging designs. I engaged them on a subject that was highly relevant to their work.

Finally, I found myself holding back from providing my views on the different discussion topics. I was acutely aware that my role was to steer the conversation along with the interview guide, and I needed to give most of the airtime to my colleagues to express their opinions and perspectives freely. Sometimes, this was not easy as the interviewee may go off-topic when speaking. Whenever this happened, I would abstain from interrupting immediately. I would allow a little time for them to continue expressing themselves before gently steering the conversation back on track.

While these off-tangent sharings may initially seem irrelevant to the research topics, on reflection, they often provided a rich insight into the personalities involved. For example, one of the colleague-interviewees – X, spoke about his stubborn bias towards certain packaging elements and showed an initial dismissive tonality towards some of the consumers' feedback. However, as the dialogue progressed, his layers of stubbornness peeled away, and he eventually became a staunch advocate for change. In that instance, I was completely convinced of the importance of dialogic engagement and the power of participatory action research in generating commitment to actionable changes. It demonstrated that our process helped shift us beyond a single loop-learning of template enhancements towards a double-loop learning of thinking deeper and questioning our assumptions and beliefs. Perhaps the next challenge will be for us to try to nudge towards triple-loop learning and reflect upon how we learn in the first place because understanding more about ourselves and others will raise further the level of collaboration and communication within our organisation.

6.7. Endnote

This chapter brings the thesis to a close. On top of the summary findings from the study, it provides a personal and introspective look into my journey as a DBA scholar-practitioner. The challenges and the learnings gained from this journey have made me much more resilient when worried or mired in complexity. I am quietly confident that the resultant discipline and criticality it has instilled will put me in good stead when confronting future wicked and messy problems, be it at work or in life.

Word Count: 53,976 (Abstract + Chapters 1 – 6)

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

One-on-One interview with internal stakeholders

1. Title of Study

Beer packaging design and perceived quality in Thailand.

2. Version Number and Date

Participant Information Sheet – Qualitative One-On-One Interviews. V2.0. 23 Jan 2021.

3. Invitation Paragraph

Hi. My name is Ronnie Teo. I am a doctoral student at the University of Liverpool, and I am conducting a one-to-one interview by means of teleconferencing as part of my research thesis. I would like to invite you to participate in this interview. The topic of the interview is "Beer packaging design and perceived quality in Thailand".

Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives, and GP if you wish. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

4. What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to gain insights that explain how visual aesthetics of product packaging impacts quality perceptions in the Thai beer market identify. This will help marketers in our organization develop packaging that is more impactful and relevant to consumers.

5. Why have I been chosen to take part?

I will be conducting three one-one interviews. All the interviews will be conducted via teleconferencing. You are considered a subject matter expert in the field of beer packaging and consumer insights in Thailand, and you play an integral role in packaging design in our organization. Your personal perspective will serve as a good practitioner lens to contextualize the study's findings. Your voluntary participation is for the purpose of the doctoral thesis and there will not be any professional conflict of interest.

6. Do I have to take part?

Participation is fully voluntary. You are also free to withdraw your participation at any time without explanation and without any obligation and without incurring a disadvantage.

7. What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part, I will be asking you questions based on an interview guide. It is an open discussion to seek better understanding of the topic on visual aesthetics of beer packaging and how they impact consumer quality perceptions. There is no right or wrong response. You are fully entitled to your own point of view. The interview will take place outside of workhours and may last about 30-60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for purposes of transcription and analysis. Rest assured that your identity and your responses will be kept anonymous. You can abstain from answering any questions you may be uncomfortable with. Should you feel uncomfortable or disadvantaged about any of these or if you wish to withdraw at any time, you may do so immediately without explanation and without any obligation. Finally, you may request for access to the information you have provided.

8. How will my data be used?

The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit.

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. The Student Investigator acts as the Data Processor for this study, and any queries relating to the handling of your personal data can be sent to Ronnie Teo at ronnie.teo@online.liverpool.ac.uk, or his supervisor Dr John Byrom at j.byrom@liverpool.ac.uk.

Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	Data will be collected by one-on-one interviews via teleconferencing after workhours.
How will my data be stored?	The interview will be audio-recorded, and it will be transcribed before being transferred onto a password-secured laptop for further analysis
How long will my data be stored for?	All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept for a period of five years after the end of the investigation.
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	Steps will be taken to anonymize all the interviewees. As all interviews will be audio-recorded, the audio storage device will be stored securely under lock-and-key in the office of the student investigator. Furthermore, all data will be transcribed and stored in a password secured laptop.
Will my data be anonymised?	Steps will be taken to anonymize the interviewees so that they will not be identified in any reports.
How will my data be used?	The data collected is for the purpose of a doctoral thesis. The findings of this investigation may be published in relevant journals so as to contribute to knowledge pertaining to packaging design and perceived consumer quality. Finally, the findings may also be used to help our organization improve beer packaging.
Who will have access to my data?	The data will be made available primarily to the faculty members of the University of Liverpool. The findings may be published and made available in relevant public academic and industry journals. Finally, the report may also be shared with the senior management of our

	organization. At the same time, an interviewee may request for access to the information he/she had provided.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	The data will be deposited in the Archive for sharing and use by other authorised researchers to support other research in the future.
How will my data be destroyed?	Upon the expiry of the five years, all audio recordings and transcripts will be erased, and any hard copies shredded.

9. Expenses and / or payments

There will be no forms of compensation - gift, award or token given – or reimbursement of expenses, to avoid influencing your freewill to be part of the research study.

10. Are there any risks in taking part?

Overall, potential risks associated with participation in the study are unlikely and low. You will not be asked to perform any tasks as part of the interview that could result in physical or emotional harm. During the interview, you will be asked to provide information about your demographic data (gender, official designation, years in the industry) and beer packaging design experiences. These questions have a very small likelihood of posing a low psychological risk. In view of the pandemic, the interview will take place via teleconferencing so there is no physical social contact. The interview is expected to take place outside of workhours and may last about 30 -60 minutes, and this may as such inconvenience you. You can abstain from answering any questions you may be uncomfortable with. Should you feel uncomfortable or disadvantaged about any of these or if you wish to withdraw at any time, you may do so immediately without explanation and without any obligation.

11. Are there any benefits in taking part?

You will be taking part in a research that potentially will lead to highly impactful beer packaging that will be more relevant to consumers' decision-making criteria. You will also be contributing to extant knowledge pertaining to beer packaging design and quality perception. For participation in this interview, no token of appreciation will be given.

12. What will happen to the results of the study?

The interview is for the purpose of a doctoral thesis. The results of the study will thus be made available primarily to the faculty members of the University of Liverpool. I may publish the findings of this investigation in relevant journals so as to contribute to knowledge pertaining to packaging design and perceived consumer quality. The findings may also be shared with the senior management of our organization to help them to better understand beer packaging. Steps will be taken to anonymize all interviewees so that they will not be identified in any report unless they have consented to being so.

13. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw at any time, without explanation. To do so, you may contact me at ronnie.teo@online.liverpool.ac.uk, or my supervisor Dr John Byrom at j.byrom@liverpool.ac.uk. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise, you may request that they are destroyed, and no further use is to be made of them. Note however that given that the results will be anonymised, only results prior to anonymisation may be withdrawn.

14. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting my supervisor Dr John Byrom (j.byrom@liverpool.ac.uk), and he will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then you should contact the Research Ethics and Integrity Office at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Ethics and Integrity Office, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make. The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113.

15. Who can I contact if I have further questions?

If you have any further questions, you may email me (the student investigator) at ronnie.teo@online.liverpool.ac.uk or call me at +65-85111554, or my supervisor Dr John Byrom at j.byrom@liverpool.ac.uk.

Appendix 2: Participant consent form

Participant consent form

Version number & date: Consent Form – *On-on-one interview. v1.0 24 Jan 2021*

Research ethics approval number:

Title of the research project: *Beer packaging design and perceived quality in Thailand*

Name of researcher(s): *Ronnie TEO Soon Keong*

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 23 Jan 2021 for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that taking part in the study involves an audio recorded one-on-one interview.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part and can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. In addition, I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular question or questions.
4. I understand that I can ask for access to the information I provide, and I can request the destruction of that information if I wish at any time prior to anonymization. I understand that following anonymization, I will no longer be able to request access to or withdrawal of the information I provide.
5. I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Liverpool until it is fully anonymised and then deposited in the Archive for sharing and use by other authorised researchers to support other research in the future.
6. I understand that signed consent forms and original audio/transcripts will be retained in an audio storage device that will be stored securely under lock-and-key in the office of the student investigator. Furthermore, all data will be transcribed and stored in a password secured laptop. All these will be kept for five years after the end of the study before they are erased and destroyed.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

______________________ ________ ______________________

Participant name Date Signature

Ronnie TEO Soon Keong ________ ______________________

Name of person taking consent Date Signature

Student Investigator

Ronnie TEO Soon Keong

438 Alexandra Road, #20-00 Alexandra Point, Singapore 119958

+65-85111554

rontsk2010@gmail.com

Appendix 3: Copy of survey questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

SURVEYOR NAME :	

DATE OF SURVEY:	D D M M Y Y Y Y	SURVEY START TIME:	H H M M
LENGTH OF SURVEY:	M M M	SURVEY END TIME:	H H M M
GENDER OF PARTICIPANT:	M F		

SCREENING QUESTIONS

Q1	Please tell me your age.		
	Age	Code	Go To
	Below 20 years old	0	Terminate
	20-29 years old	1	Go to Q2
	30-39 years old	2	
	Over 39 years old	3	Terminate

Q2	Have you participated in any market research study during the past 6 months?		
		Code	Route
	Yes	1	Terminate
	No	2	Continue to Q3

Q3	Do you purchase beer in bottles at least once a month?	Code	Route
	Yes	1	Continue to Q4
	No	2	Terminate

Q4	Please tell me the various beer brands you have bought before	Code	Route
	2 brands or more	1	Continue to Q5
	Only 1 brand	2	Terminate
	Archa	1	If 2 brands or more, continue to Q5. If less, terminate.
	Chang	2	
	Cheers	3	
	Heineken	4	
	Leo	5	
	San Miguel	6	
	Singha	7	
	Tiger	8	
	Others (name___________)	9	

Q5	Kindly indicate to me your monthly household income. Please be assured that all information you have provided will be kept confidential and anonymous.		
	Household income	Code	Route
	Less than 25,000 THB	0	Terminate

	25,000 – 49,999 THB	1	Go to Q6
	50,000 – 59,999 THB	2	Go to Q6
	60,000 THB or more	3	Terminate

PERCEIVED QUALITY

Q6	**I am now going to ask you about beer packaging and your perception of its quality. I will read out some statements and you can choose to agree or disagree on a response scale from 1 to 7. 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is slightly disagree, 4 is neither agree or disagree, 5 is slightly agree, 6 is agree and 7 is strongly agree. There is no right or wrong answer and we are seeking your views only.**							
		Code						
	Perceived Quality	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q6a	The more intricately designed the label , the better the quality of the beer							
Q6b	The more visually aesthetic the bottle, the better the quality of the beer							
Q6c	The better the overall packaging design, the better the quality of the beer							

VISUAL CUES: STRUCTURAL ATTRIBUTES

Q7	**I am now going to ask you about your perception of beer bottles. I would like you to think of your ideal beer bottle first. I will read out some statements and likewise, you can choose to agree or disagree on a response scale from 1 to 7. Again, I emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer and we are seeking your views only.**							
		Code						
	Bottle Material (show samples)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q7a	Beer bottles should be made of glass							
Q7b	Beer bottles should be made of PET plastic							
Q7c	Beer bottles should be made of aluminum							

		Code						
	Bottle Size (Show card)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q8a	Big Bottle with content 640 ml is a suitable volume							
Q8b	Medium Bottle with content 500 ml is a suitable volume							
Q8c	Small Bottle with content 330 ml is a suitable volume							
Q8d	Mini Bottle with content 250 ml is a suitable volume							

		Code						
	Bottle Shape (Show card)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q9a	Beer bottles should have round shoulders							
Q9b	Beer bottles should have no shoulders							

		Code						
	Bottle Tactility (show card)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q10a	Beer bottles should be embossed on the shoulders							
Q10b	Beer bottle should be embossed on the body							
Q10c	Beer bottles should be embossed on both the shoulders and body							

		Code						
	Bottle colour (show card)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q11a	Beer bottles should be in green							
Q11b	Beer bottles should be transparent							
Q11c	Beer bottles should be in brown							

VISUAL CUES: GRAPHIC ATTRTIBUTES

Q12	**I am now going to ask you about your perception of beer labels. I would like you to think of your ideal beer label first. I will read out some statements and likewise, you can choose to agree or disagree on a response scale from 1 to 7. Again, I emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer and we are seeking your views only.**							
		Code						
	Label Material (show sample materials)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q12a	Beer labels should be printed on metallized paper							
Q12b	Beer labels should be printed on wet strength paper							
Q12c	Beer labels should be printed on plastic							
Q12d	Beer labels should be silkscreened directly onto the bottle							

		Code						
	Label colour (show card)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q13a	Beer labels should use silver as the primary colour							
Q13b	Beer labels should use gold as the primary colour							
Q13c	Beer labels should use black as the primary colour							
Q13d	Beer labels can use any colour as the primary colour							

		Code						
	Label shape (show card)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q14a	The edges of beer labels should be rounded (oval, circle, rounded rectangle)							
Q14b	Beer labels should be die-cut into distinctive bespoke shapes							

		Code						
	Label Graphics	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q15a	Beer labels should include medals won at beer competitions							
Q15b	Beer labels should include only English typography							
Q15c	Beer labels should include descriptors of the beer taste							
Q15d	Beer labels should include story of the brand heritage							

		Code						
	Packaging labels layout (show card)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q16a	Beer bottles should use paper neck-tags							
Q16b	Beer bottles should use aluminum neck-foil							
Q16c	Beer bottles should use paper neck-wraps							
Q16d	Beer bottles should use back labels							

VERBAL CUES

Q17	**I am now going to ask you about your perception of product information on label. I will read out some statements and likewise, you can choose to agree or disagree on a response scale from 1 to 7. Again, I emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer and we are seeking your views only.**							
		Code						
	Product Information on labels	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q17a	The beer label must state the beer ingredients							
Q17b	The beer label must state a alcohol health warning							
Q17c	The beer label must state the beer's nutrition information							

		Code						
	Producer / Country of Origin information on labels	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Q18a	The beer label must state if the producer is FDA approved							
Q18b	The beer label must state if producer is HACCP certified							
Q18c	The beer label must state when the beer producer first began							
Q18d	The beer label must state how many countries the beer producer has exported to							

Thank you very much for your time and contribution.

Appendix 4: Focus group discussion guide

Discussion Guide

1. Introduction & Ice Breaker
    - I will start by introducing myself and the interpreter. I will then explain the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the discussions, the presence of a recording device for purposes of transcription and analysis, the participation of a simultaneous translator, their right to withdraw at any time and our commitment to anonymity and confidentiality. I will emphasize the rules of engagement – one person to speak at a time, no right or wrong answers etc. – and that the discussions will take about 90 minutes.
    - I will get the participants to introduce themselves: name, age, marital status, current job, etc. To facilitate a more casual and conducive atmosphere, I will ask them to personify themselves as an animal and the reasons for their choice of animal.

2. Current beer purchasing habits
    - Next, I will warm them up towards the category of discussion – beer. I will ask them to share their beer purchasing and consumption habits e.g.
        - How often do they drink?
        - What brand and pack type they prefer?
        - Where do they buy and where do they drink?
        - Do they buy the beers themselves and who do they drink with?

3. Purchasing criteria/Decision making journey *(Focus is on involvement level)*
    - Following that, I will ask them to imagine that they are in the beer aisle at their local store shopping for their beer. I will have them tell me what their purchase decision considerations are. I will then ask them to rank the criteria in order of importance. I will also ask them on the time they spend before they decide and purchase the beer.
    - I will then ask them how the decision process will change when they are faced with shelves of unfamiliar brands, all at the same price and without any promotion.

3. Packaging recall
    - This section will be more interactive. I will ask each of them to draw the packaging of the beer brands that they purchase regularly. Thereafter, they will present their drawings– this is to help me understand packaging cues that are important to them (*paper and colored pencils will be provided*).

4. Probing purchase behaviors
    - Next, I will ask them to recall all the bottles of beer they have seen in the market. I will get them to share with the group how a good quality beer should be packed. They are to give me some examples of good beer packaging and poor beer packaging and their reasons for saying so. The goal of this section is to try and focus the consumer's minds on the relationship between packaging cues and beer quality before exposing them to the stimulus materials.
    - I will then deconstruct the bottle packaging and expose the respondents to each packaging cue to get feedback
        - Structural attributes
            - Bottle material
            - Bottle size
            - Bottle shape (shoulders)
            - Bottle embossment
            - Bottle color
        - Graphical attributes
            - Label material
            - Label shape
            - Label color scheme
            - Label graphic design
            - Label configuration (types of neck labels, necessity of back label)
        - Verbal Cues
            - Information (ingredients, nutrition, alcohol level etc.)
            - Country of origin and quality accreditation

5. Ideal packaging

- Now that the participants are attuned to the various packaging cues and their relationship to quality perception, I will ask them to design and draw what they think will be the ideal packaging for a high quality beer. They will then present and explain their drawings.

6. End

- As we come to the end of the session, I will ask them if they have anything else they would like to share.
- I will thank them for their participation.
- I will ask them if they would like to receive a copy of the transcripts or the study, or if they mind if we call them to reconfirm any response which we may not have fully understood.

Appendix 5: Stimulus materials / show cards used in the survey and focus groups

Q10: ผิวสัมผัสของขวด

ขวดเบียร์ควรมีการพิมพ์นูนบนไหล่ขวด

ขวดเบียร์ควรมีการพิมพ์นูนบนตัวขวด

ขวดเบียร์ควรมีการพิมพ์นูนทั้งบนไหล่และตัวขวด

Q11: สีของขวด

ขวดเบียร์ควรเป็นสีเขียว

ขวดเบียร์ควรเป็นสีขาวใส

ขวดเบียร์ควรเป็นสีน้ำตาล

Q13: สีของฉลาก

ควรใช้สีเงินเป็นหลักบนฉลากเบียร์

ควรใช้สีทองเป็นหลักบนฉลากเบียร์

ควรใช้สีดำเป็นหลักบนฉลากเบียร์

ฉลากเบียร์จะใช้สีอะไรเป็นหลักก็ได้

Q14:รูปร่างของฉลาก

มุมของฉลากเบียร์ควรมีความโค้งมา (รูปไข่ วงกลม หรือสี่เหลี่ยมที่มุมเป็นแบบมน)

ฉลากเบียร์ควรจะถูกตัดเป็นรูปร่างที่ออกแบบมาเป็นพิเศษโดยเฉพาะ


Q16: เลย์เอ้าท์ของฉลาก
ขวดเบียร์ควรใช้
ป้ายกระดาษ
คล้องคอขวด
ขวดเบียร์ควรใช้
ฉลากอลูมิเนียม
ฟอยล์ห่อตรงคอ
ขวด
ขวดเบียร์ควรใช้
ฉลากกระดาษห่อ
ตรงคอขวด


Q16: เลย์เอ้าท์ของฉลาก
ขวดเบียร์ควรใช้ฉลากติดตรงด้านหลัง

Appendix 6: Interview guide

Protocol and Questions	Rationale
1. Introduction.	Ensure interviewees' understanding of the purpose of the study and their role in the study.
2. Voluntary participation & confidentiality.	Assure confidentiality and underline the voluntary nature of participation.
3. Ice Breakers.	Ease the conversation into the topic on at a general level.
Macro factors affecting the industry:	
- Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the beer industry,	
- Regulatory trends especially with regard to health and sustainability concerns	
- Current and emerging consumer trends.	
Brand management:	
- Operating in macro-environment as described	
- Brand strategies and the changes in consumer purchase behaviours, especially in Thailand.	
4. Packaging and quality perceptions.	Establish interviewee's understanding of the subject matter.
- Beer packaging trends around the world and interesting new packaging,	
- what about the sustainability movement towards environmentally friendly packaging materials	
- impact of packaging on consumers' perceptions especially with regard to the quality of the beer.	
- internal organizational process when developing packaging innovations or renovations.	
5. Relationship between brand and packaging.	Explore the relationship between brand strategy and packaging.
- Can you share your views about how brand impacts packaging?	
6. Packaging development process.	Explore the considerations and understand the process in developing packaging innovations or renovations at the organization.
- How do you go about developing packaging for your brands? What are your key considerations?	
7. Viewpoints on consumers' feedback.	Explore the interviewee's interpretations of the consumers' feedback and to understand the interviewer's perceptions towards each of the hi- and lo- level packaging stimuli attributes and items.
· What do you think of the findings of the consumer focus group discussions with regard to -	
o colour of the bottle and label;	
o material of bottle, body label and neck label	
o size and shape of bottle and label;	
o haptics of the bottle;	
o label graphics;	
o textual information on the label	
· What do you think of the consumers sketches? What do they tell you?	

· From what we have discussed, do you think each of the packaging elements stimulate different senses in the drinker? If so, how?	Seek interviewees views on emergent themes.
· I shared that the consumers' responses may be categorised into different themes like safety & health, sustainability, and marketing. Under Marketing it was possible to further break down to sub-themes such as Price, Promotion, Involvement, Brand and User Imagery, Perceived Product Quality, Perceived Quality of Provenance, and Category Typicality. What do you think of this approach and these themes?	
8. Additional feedback	Uncover any unexplored areas which may not have surfaced during the previous two phases.
· What else do you think has not been discussed sufficiently?	
· Thank you. After this discussion, is there anything you will do differently from now on?	Allow interviewee to reflect and respond as part of action-learning
9. End and Thank You	Underline the collaborative nature of the action research and to express gratitude for the participation.
· Do you have any questions for me?	
· Would you like a copy of the transcript of this interview or a copy of the final report?	