

# The People Behind the Appearance

## A Case Study of Design Communication in Public and Private Breweries

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**Abstract:** Puli Brewery is a very popular sightseeing winery operated by the Taiwanese government. Shaoxing rice wine is the main product of the brewery. Fortune Brewery, known for its sorghum, is the first private sightseeing winery in Yunlin County. Using the distinctive local features and natural resources of Yunlin, it was able to successfully transform from a bamboo factory into a brewery. The different environments of the two breweries create different lifestyle and business benefits for their respective local areas. They both have unique wine cultures but also represent thousands of years of the Chinese wine tradition.

This study will compare and contrast the design communication of public and private breweries by analyzing their display design, theme style, and customer services. These factors of communication design will not only be analyzed based on the outward appearances of the breweries, but also with attention to the overall business operations, human interactions, and relationships between factory directors, employees, outsourcing companies, and customers. The purpose of this study is to thoroughly delineate the communication process in order to identify how differences arise between public and private breweries. Through this understanding of the communication process, this research will identify who designs the displays, who determines the theme style, and who is in charge of customer service. Obtaining this information requires the truth from employees about their work experience.

This study is qualitative research using interviews of main employees and personal observation of both breweries. After interviews and observation, the research will analyze the theme style, display design, and customer service of each brewery. This data will then be used to understand the communication process and determine its implications in design communication.

**Key words:** *Design Communication, Display Design, Taiwan, Wine Tourism*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Puli Brewery**

Puli is a small town in central Taiwan and is known as being representative of Taiwan's wine culture. Taiwan's wine culture is not only rooted in Chinese wine tradition, but also in the pure water of Alian Oasis, from which Puli Brewery brews its wines. Puli Brewery was opened in 1911 as the first private brewery established during the Japanese Occupation. During its 100 years of development, Puli Brewery has experienced a revival by the Taiwanese government, a period of growth through exportation of wines, and a transformation stage from a traditional winery into a sightseeing winery by cooperating with local businesses. This final milestone brings huge benefits to Puli Brewery. They learned that to open the brewery to the public is the best method of maintaining complete operation of the brewery in modern times. The transformation stage started in 1995 when Puli Brewery launched a strategy "to brew wine through culture, art, and sightseeing" using "industry enculturation" as the main idea for the local business in Puli. At the same time, they also built a culture center to promote sightseeing for tourists. Puli Brewery has gradually developed its own style and has realized how to prevent the traditional brewery from becoming boring and old. Innovation while simultaneously embracing its own wine strengths, such as shaoxing rice wine and ailan liquor, has become the optimal method of maintaining the brewery's prosperity [9].

### **1.2 Fortune Brewery**

Fortune Brewery is located in Taiwan's Yunlin County. The unique rural environment provides the brewery with pure water perfect for beginning the wine-brewing process. Inside the brewery, there is a pure and deep well called Zhu Gong Well. The water inside the well is from mountain snow and is not exposed to pollution. Fortune also had been a bamboo exporting factory for 36 years. In 1998, Fortune Brewery modernized and became involved in wine engineering and researching. Until 2002, Fortune brewery was officially licensed as a private brewery. Today, they mainly produce white wines such as sorghum and rice wine. In order to preserve wine culture in Taiwan, Fortune Brewery established the "Fortune Wine Museum" to let tourists explore the wine-making process and other wine culture-related information. In 2008, Fortune brewery also passed the industrial technology evaluation of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and became the third sightseeing wine factory in Yunlin. As a private sightseeing brewery, Fortune Brewery puts a lot of emphasis on wine quality and uses a traditional method to brew wine. Fortune Brewery has successfully become a unique and celebrated sightseeing brewery in Taiwan and a brand recognized worldwide.[5]

### **1.3 Motivation**

Today, it is common that local cultural industries financially depend on travel consumption. According to K. K. Sharma:

*A recent surge of interest in the formal planning, development, and marketing of wine tourism reflects a major late-twentieth-century phenomenon: the intensification of global competition for tourism and the search for competitive advantage through niche marketing. Also stemming from this phenomenon is the*

*increasing linkage of tourism to other industries for mutual benefit. This has resulted in many new partnerships and a growing emphasis on joint marketing efforts [8].*

Jack Carlsen and Stephen Charles add that:

*Wine tourism is often perceived as a means to marginally increase sales of wines, and it can also provide new opportunities for wine distribution as well as for building positive brand image and identity for the many small wineries competing in an increasingly crowded market [3].*

Compared to breweries in Western countries, breweries in Taiwan tend to have a wide array of extra products because cultural and creative industry standards cause local industries to cooperate. Thus, the differing appearances of breweries reveal differences in design communication.

## **1.4 Purpose**

Puli and Fortune breweries are both prime examples of innovation in Taiwan's cultural industry. They may have long histories, but they also use modern branding and marketing strategies to optimize their business. Over the years, history and culture both have added different flavors to the breweries. They have differing display design, atmosphere, and wine-selling methods. To an outsider visiting the two breweries, it is easy to think that the two breweries operate differently. However, the outward appearances do not explain everything about the businesses. Much research in the fields of marketing and development has determined how sightseeing breweries have been successful, but explanation for the differences between breweries is lacking. Therefore, this research seeks to elucidate the interactions between the people behind the outward appearance. There are even more factors influencing the development of Puli and Fortune breweries than what has been previously discussed. Publicly-owned breweries such as Puli Brewery and privately owned breweries like Fortune Brewery have different company structures. People communicate and influence one another differently in the development process, resulting in substantial variations in overall design communication. Moreover, drinking culture has meaningful historical value for Taiwanese. People produce wine and people use wine to interact with one another.

## **1.5 Research Method**

In this study, interviews were selected as the main research method. To realize the communication process and any factors causing misunderstanding about design communication, five experienced employees in the two breweries were interviewed. Additionally, open-ended interviews were conducted to converse with interviewees freely, ensuring that the interviews would not be impeded by unclear or elusive answers to difficult questions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Communication**

Communication may be defined as the process by which information is exchanged among two or more social systems [1]. Further research has been undertaken to thoroughly delineate the steps involved in this process.

Patrick O. Marsh [7] identifies three steps in the communication process: integration of communication and cognitive models, control of message elements by source and receiver, and separation of information load and message complexity. Using these steps, the communication process itself can be designed in the process called communication design.

## **2.2 Design communication**

According to Ho, the communication of ideas and concepts is essential to the design process. Therefore, design communication has become a crucial research topic. This topic “demonstrates the processes, principles, and methods of communicating design among practitioners, educators, researchers, and others involved in the design process” [6]. In his 2001 book, *Communication in the Design Process*, Brown highlighted the importance of design communication through an in-depth study of problems that occur during the design process. Communication has been cited by 25% of all construction employers as a basic reason for failure according to Brown’s study. Moreover, research has gone beyond identifying communication problems in design to solving these problems. Chiu identified team organization as a vital issue in design communication, and suggested that a structured organization can facilitate design communication and consequently contribute to the success of the design project” [4].

Despite the growing frequency of communication across different languages and cultures, Brown viewed the fact that miscommunications still occur within companies “with some incredulity” [2]. This observation demonstrates the increasing relevance of the topic of design communication and offers a foundation to begin this research. In this study, the differences in communication structure of two breweries that heavily cooperate with other industries are determined.

## **3. Research and Analysis**

The interviews were compared to determine the differences in organization, display design, theme style, and customer service between the two breweries. The research focused on all parts of the communication process to identify any design communication problems. The layout of the display areas differed between the two breweries, creating different experiences for the customers. As shown in Figure 1, the layout of Puli Brewery is separated into several rooms, and visitors view the displays in the order that they desire. In addition, the displays were designed inconsistently among the rooms. For example, the primitive style of the aboriginal souvenirs area starkly contrasts the formal style of the Shaoxing area. However, the layout of Fortune Brewery guides customers through the displays, enabling them to gain a full understanding of the information.

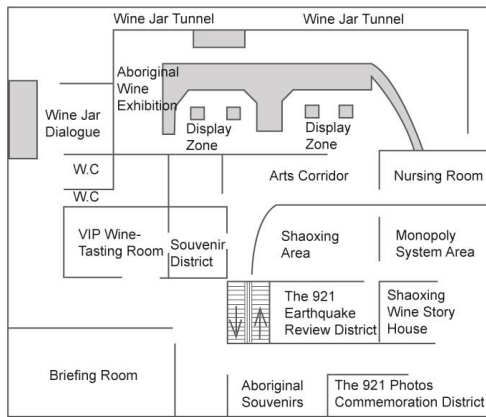


Figure 1 A map of Puli Brewery

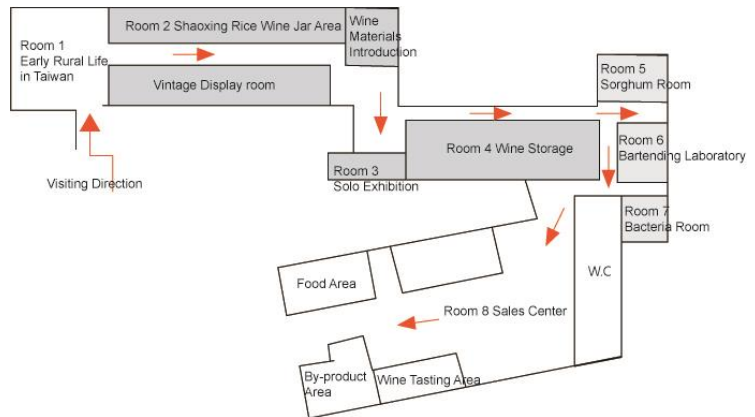


Figure 2 A map of Fortune Brewery

### 3.1 The Organization and Display of Puli Brewery

According to the interview of a Puli Brewery employee, Puli brewery once had a display department responsible for all displays in the brewery, but this responsibility was passed to the planning and marketing department. Because the department structure changed, the jobs of the employees changed. As a result, communication between planning and marketing became increasingly difficult and some confusion has resulted. In one instance, the products to be displayed were not compatible with the display board behind them because no single unit was responsible for display in the brewery. The complete organizational structure of Puli Brewery is shown in detail in Figure 3.



Figure 3 The organizational structure of Puli brewery

Figure 4 is an image of the Shaoxing display in Puli brewery. On the sign, the Chinese information is displayed in large, readable characters, whereas the English information is displayed in extremely small writing. Although this display enables clear communication with Chinese-speaking visitors, the display does not allow for clear communication with foreign tourists. In addition, an experienced employee revealed that different departments were responsible for different parts of the display design in this room. As a result, some information was not correctly matched to the corresponding products in the display.

Moreover, employees expressed that designers often have different opinions from brewery employees. Designers for the space display assert their own professional opinions and the ignore opinions of others. This type of flaw in the communication process once decreased sales in the VIP wine-tasting room because a wall in front of

the side door covered the sign so that customers did not notice the area for buying and drinking wine (Figure 5).



Figure 4 Shaoxing Area



Figure 5 A wall covers the VIP wine-tasting sign

Experienced employees stated that most decisions about the display were former factory directors' ideas. Factory directors often have many opportunities to go abroad to see how breweries operate or appear in foreign countries. Factory directors found some new ideas to display at Puli Brewery from their trips abroad. Before making the decision to create a new display, factory directors call the managers of each department to discuss the new design. After reaching a conclusion, they announce their needs to outsourcing companies to find the lowest bidder. As a public brewery, the process often takes a long time and money from the government always needs to be approved by numerous departments. The communication structure between outsourcing companies and Puli Brewery is standardized. If the outsourcing company cannot follow the rules set by the government, Puli Brewery must find another company. No private changes in the display are permitted because government departments will not raise additional money after the outsourcing companies have taken a case. Therefore, it has been difficult to make any changes in the brewery's display. Also, brewery employees, as government workers lacking personal connection to the brewery, are not eager make changes. This indicates a lack of communication channels for change to be initiated. Overall, the meetings in which factory directors convene with department managers serve as the most productive phase of the communication process. The government regulations involved in the following phases critically hinder the design process.

Because of the difficulties in the communication processes involved in display design, there are some faults in the display design in Puli Brewery. Based on observation of customer behavior, the display design does not adequately communicate with customers. It does not capture their attention because the information behind the wine products contains too many words. Customers tend to pass it quickly without reading. Although a service desk was set up on the first floor to allow customers to ask questions, the display area in the second floor lacks a complete education display.

However, there are also communication processes that have successfully benefited the outward appearance of Puli Brewery. The brewery corresponded with local artists to organize an art display for customers to view the paintings or calligraphy of the local artists. In this process, most artists were eager to collaborate with Puli Brewery. They did not refuse to cooperate with government. Instead, they believed it was a valuable opportunity to promote and improve the cultural industry in Puli. Innovative cooperation with diverse partners has allowed

Puli Brewery to become the most diverse brewery in Taiwan.

### 3.2 The organizational structure and display of Fortune Brewery

Fortune is a private brewery, allowing displays to be changed easily. As a family brewery, the organizational structure is simple. Almost all of the employees are related to the founding family, and the company has not been divided into numerous departments. Like Puli Brewery, the factory director plays an important role in the communication process. The last factory director of Fortune Brewery was especially involved in making decisions on all of the brewery's affairs. Additionally, the design communication process is simpler than the process at Puli brewery because the use of money is not defined by government rules and regulations.

Before becoming a distinguished brewery, Fortune Brewery was old and unattractive. One of the former factory director's friends, a design teacher at National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, suggested that they change and improve their status in the brewery market. At first, the former factory director did not respond, but the teacher continued to persuade him to make changes. Eventually, Fortune Brewery cooperated with the design school at National Yunlin University of Science and Technology. The communication process took a long time as the design school tried to determine a suitable new appearance for the brewery. The former factory director was involved in the entire discussion for the new display, although his conservative opinions did not always agree with the opinions of the designers. Overall, this private brewery provided more freedom to the designers and allowed for a more efficient communication process than the public brewery.

The display in Fortune Brewery communicates more effectively with customers than the display in Puli Brewery. The space design in Fortune Brewery's museum successfully leads customers to look around the whole museum. Additionally, the display board allows customers to interact with some small games. At the end of the museum, customers enter a sale center and are exposed to products for sale. The display in the brewery connects directly to the wine-making process through transparent views into the factory's assembly lines and offices, as shown in Figures 6 and 7. Although employees inside cannot talk to customers, the ability to observe the wine-making process becomes a form of communication with customers. This interaction among employees, customers, and moving factory lines creates a distinctive brewery image for Fortune Brewery.



Figure 6 Transparent office



Figure 7 Wine-making process

#### **4. Conclusion**

Puli Brewery and Fortune Brewery are two well-known businesses in Taiwan that cooperate heavily with other cultural industries. Puli Brewery represents a publicly owned business and Fortune Brewery represents a privately owned business. The design communication process was compared between public and private breweries using interviews and analysis of the display design, theme style, and customer services. In general, communication in the design process occurred more easily and efficiently in the private brewery than in the public brewery. This was because the private brewery was not subject to numerous government restrictions, allowing designers more freedom and interaction during the design process. Moreover, the superior communication process of Fortune Brewery has resulted in a display that communicates more effectively with customers than the display at Puli Brewery.

In conclusion, the differences among the displays, theme style, and customer services of a public and a private brewery primarily arise from differences in the increasingly relevant topic of design communication. Previous research has focused on marketing and development of sightseeing breweries, but this study paid particular attention to the communication processes and the connections between people because design communication is especially relevant to sightseeing factories and other businesses in the industrial tourism industry. In Taiwan, opening factories to tourists has enabled traditional businesses to thrive and grow. This growth was created through increased communication between a business and its customers. However, if businesses that have opened to sightseeing seek to maintain this growth, they must enhance communication by resolving problems in display designs. The main problem identified in this study was inconsistency in design that resulted from diffusion of responsibility and disorganization during the design process. Therefore, businesses seeking enhanced communication with their customers should designate one person or department to be responsible for display design. This, as well as the other information presented in this study, not only applies to businesses involved in industrial tourism but also to any business that seeks to improve communication with customers. This study also provides a foundation for further research on other topics from the perspective of design communication.



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