



**THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF
KWEICHOW MOUTAI IN THE EUROPEAN MARKET**

LI YUZHOU

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**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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This Independent Study has been approved as a Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Business Administration

Advisor: *Jidapa C.*

(Dr. Jidapa Chollathanrattanapong)

Date: *30.* / *Oct.* / *2024.*

.....
(Associate Professor Dr. Jomphong Mongkhonvanit)

Dean, Graduate School of Business

Date: *26* / *Nov* / *2024*

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By: Li Yuzhou

Degree: Master of Business Administration

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Advisor:
(Dr. Jidapa Chollathanrattanapong)

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ABSTRACT

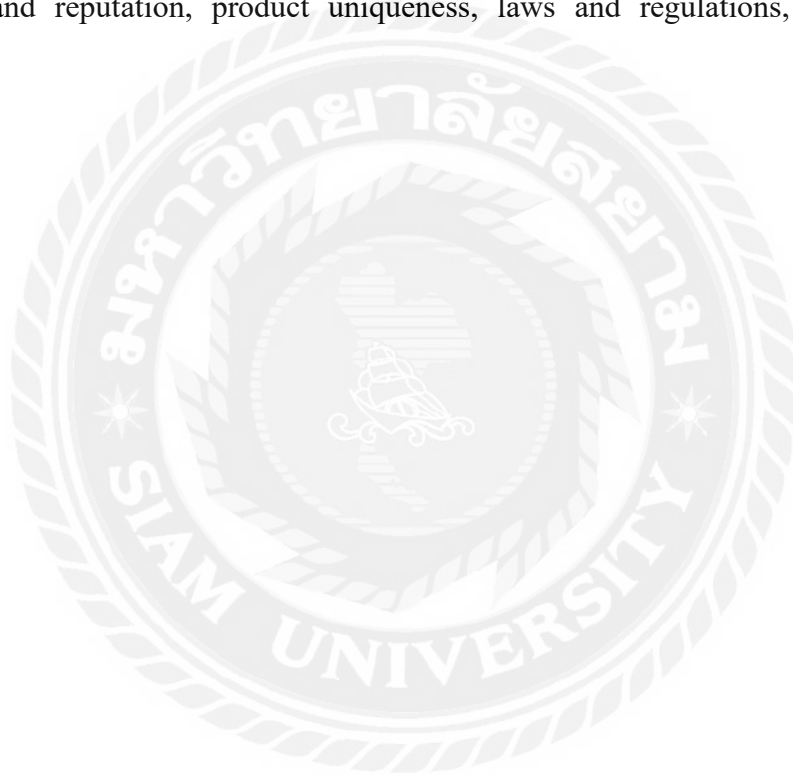
In the context of fierce competition in the domestic liquor market and changing preferences of young consumers, Kweichow Moutai has been endeavouring to expand its international business in order to reduce its reliance on the domestic market. At the same time, influenced by consumer policies, such as restrictions on official spending and the criminalisation of drunk driving, expansion into the international market has become a necessary path for Kweichow Moutai. Europe is a traditional concentration of spirits consumption, with many of the world's largest drinking nations and a long history of alcohol consumption, especially in the mid- to high-end market white wine is more favoured by the market. The European market is also the second largest region for Moutai's overseas exports. Taking Europe as the target market, this study examines the key factors affecting Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness, aiming to help Kweichow Moutai develop a better export strategy. The study of the European market can also provide a reference for Kweichow Moutai's development in other overseas markets.

This study has two main objectives: (1) to identify the key factors affecting Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market; and (2) to examine the effect of brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and distribution channel management on Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market.

This study adopted a quantitative research methodology by distributing questionnaires and using SPSS software for statistical and correlation analyses. The study collected questionnaires from the employees of Kweichow Moutai headquarters

and branches, and 380 questionnaires were completed, with 340 valid questionnaires and a valid recovery rate of 89.5%. The study shows that: (1) The influencing factors of Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market are brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and distribution channel management. (2) brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and distribution channel management have a positive effect on Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness. For recommendations, Kweichow Moutai should focus on building a good brand reputation, enhancing product uniqueness, strengthening research on export market laws and regulations and improving control and management of distribution channels.

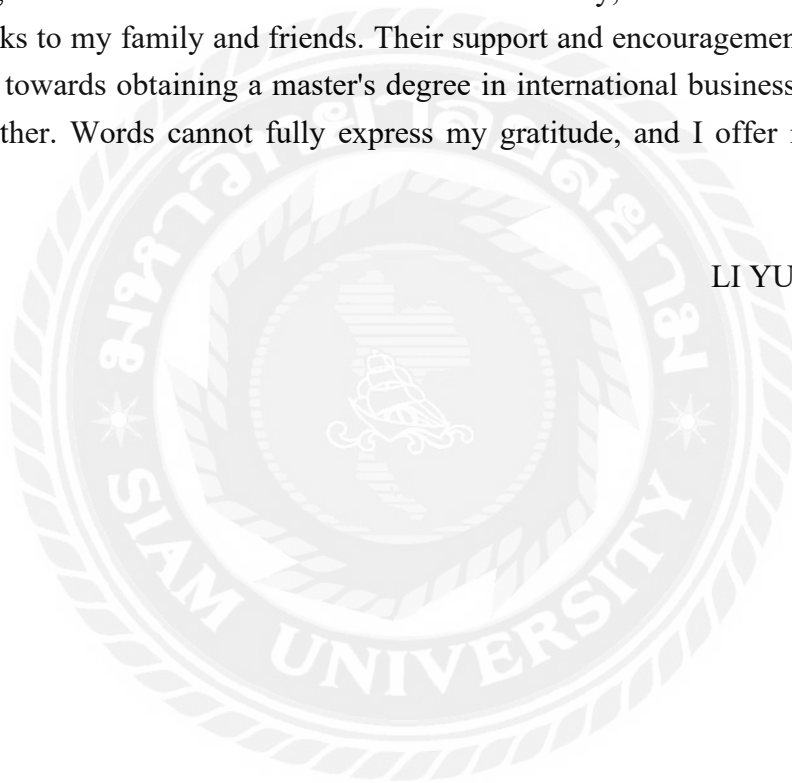
Keywords: Chinese baijiu, Kweichow Moutai, export competitiveness, European market, brand reputation, product uniqueness, laws and regulations, distribution channels



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LI YUZHOU



DECLARATION

I, LI YUZHOU, hereby certify that the work embodied in this independent study entitled “The factors Influencing the Export Competitiveness of Kweichow Moutai in the European Market” is a result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

(Li Yuzhou)

September 5, 2024



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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Chinese baijiu, as a traditional national beverage with a long history, has undergone significant changes in market competition in the 21st century. Traditional large brewing enterprises coexist with emerging small local distilleries, the latter of which have shown strong market competitiveness through regional culture and emotional marketing strategies (Day & Wensley, 1988). However, the introduction of the "Eight-point Regulation" restricted public funds' expenditure and suppressed the high-end consumption market, significantly impacting high-end baijiu brands such as Kweichow Moutai. Additionally, the younger consumer group's preference for beer and foreign liquors also poses a challenge to the traditional baijiu market.

To respond to these market changes, Kweichow Moutai has actively expanded its international market to reduce its dependence on the domestic market, diversify risks, and increase revenue sources. The rise in global consumption levels and the shift in consumption concepts have led consumers to demand more diversified and personalized baijiu, emphasizing quality, health, and uniqueness. There are a lot of Chinese baijiu brands, but they don't have much recognition or competitiveness internationally. This is because most of these companies have focused mainly on the domestic market and haven't paid much attention to expanding abroad (Peng, 2020). To fix this, Kweichow Moutai needs to boost its brand recognition outside China to grow its market presence. China's "Going Global" policy supports this move by creating a good environment for exporting. By pushing into markets along the "Belt and Road," Kweichow Moutai has not only reached more markets but also become more competitive globally. Since Kweichow Moutai started exporting in 1993, its export volume has increased from 45 tonnes to 2,177.47 tonnes by 2019, with sales reaching US\$469 million (China Daily, 2019). This growth trend not only demonstrates Moutai's tremendous potential in the global market but also indicates that the competitiveness of Chinese baijiu in the international market is expected to further improve.

The European market, as one of Kweichow Moutai's main export regions outside Asia, accounted for 21.57% of its overseas export volume in 2019, holding strategic significance in expanding mature international markets (China Daily, 2019). However, overseas consumers have limited knowledge of Chinese culture and Kweichow Moutai. Compared to many high-end liquor alternatives such as whiskey, cognac, and wine, Moutai's unique flavor and cultural background may differ from the taste preferences and cultural identity of overseas consumers, resulting in it primarily

targeting overseas Chinese consumers in the international market. Additionally, breaking through trade barriers and establishing effective distribution channels in overseas markets requires substantial investment and time.

In the context of globalization, Kweichow Moutai needs to deeply analyze its competitiveness in the European market and clearly identify the factors affecting its market position. This analysis will not only help clarify Moutai's main competitors and market dynamics in other overseas markets but also aid in formulating more effective market entry and competition strategies, thereby defining the brand's positioning in the international market. These strategies are crucial references for Kweichow Moutai in expanding emerging markets such as North America, Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe.

Through systematic competitiveness analysis, Moutai can better respond to the constantly changing competitive environment and potential risks, identify new market opportunities and growth points. In this way, Moutai can ensure sustainable long-term development in the global market and maintain a leading position in intense international competition.

1.2 Questions of the Study

With the rapid development of the domestic baijiu market, various large, medium, and small enterprises have launched diversified product lines, and international brands have gradually entered the Chinese market. This trend of diversification is closely related to consumers' growing attention to healthy drinking concepts, especially the changing drinking habits of younger consumers (Euromonitor International, 2020). Additionally, the Chinese government's introduction of the "Eight-point Regulation" has restricted public fund expenditures, significantly impacting the high-end baijiu market (State Council, 2012). Against this backdrop, it has become particularly important for Kweichow Moutai to effectively diversify risks and enhance market resilience through international market expansion.

However, according to data disclosed on Moutai's official website, the overseas sales share of Kweichow Moutai fluctuated from 2021 to 2023, accounting for 2.35%, 2.95%, and 2.7%, respectively, with sales revenue shares of 2.47%, 3.43%, and 2.95% (Moutai, 2023). Despite the continuous rise in Kweichow Moutai's total sales, indicating a structural prosperity in a long-term growth cycle (EqualOcean, 2022), since 2019, the impact of the pandemic has caused stagnation or even a decline in Moutai's international sales, mainly relying on the growth of the domestic market.

This study focuses on the international development of Kweichow Moutai, particularly its performance in the European market, and deeply analyzes the key factors affecting Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness. The analysis covers aspects such as brand reputation, product uniqueness, legal and regulatory research, and the control and management of distribution channels. Kweichow Moutai is one of the earliest Chinese liquor companies to export, relying on its industry status as a national liquor as well as its own quality to build a consumer base overseas. This study hopes to provide theoretical support and practical reference for Moutai's expansion into Europe and other overseas markets. This study explores the following issues:

1. What are the main factors affecting Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market?
2. Do brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and distribution channel management affect Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study examines the factors that influence Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market. Based on the theory of competitive advantage and the Porter's Five Forces Model, it focuses on several key factors that may affect the company's export competitiveness in the European market. Such a study will help Kweichow Moutai to review its development in the European market so that it can better see the way forward. In the future, it will be able to make more profits while establishing and maintaining its market position (Smith, 2019). Based on this, this study aims:

1. To identify the key factors affecting Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market.
2. To examine the effect of brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and distribution channel management on Moutai's export competitiveness.

1.4 Scope of the Study

In this study, the researcher surveyed the employees of Kweichow Moutai's headquarters in operational management, as well as the employees of the branches responsible for import and export trade and local European business in Paris. These employees are distributed in different positions and levels of the company and have a basic understanding of the company's export business. As an important part of the

company's human resources, the employees are key to the company's marketing activities, strategy development and implementation. They are familiar with Kweichow Moutai's development in Europe and its global strategy. This study started in March 2024 and ended in July 2024, which lasted for four months. During this period, questionnaire were distributed to collect data and opinions. This research method standardized the data collection process by preparing structured questions for the entire respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part collected basic information about the respondents, such as education level, age and job role, to ensure that the sample was professional and representative. The second part used a Likert scale to design a rigorous set of structured questions. Employees' perceptions of brand reputation, product uniqueness, laws and regulations research, and distribution management were explored, and how these factors affect Moutai's competitiveness in Europe was analysed.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is theoretically significant. The in-depth analysis of the factors influencing Kweichow Moutai's competitiveness in the European market can enrich and extend the international marketing theory, especially the understanding of Chinese brands' positioning and competitive strategies in the international market. At the same time, this study complements and extends the existing literature, especially in regards to the internationalization strategy of Chinese liquor brands in the European market, where there are fewer existing studies (Li, 2020).

This study is also of great practical importance. By systematically analyzing Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market, this study provides concrete guiding suggestions for the company's further expansion in the international market. The study is of great significance not only for Kweichow Moutai, but also for the entire Chinese liquor industry. Driven by China's economic transformation and the "Belt and Road" initiative, more and more Chinese products are entering the international market. The "Belt and Road" is an open and inclusive economic cooperation initiative, which provides policy support for domestic enterprises to export. This study hopes to provide valuable insights that can serve as case references for other SOEs to export and achieve international expansion (Wang, 2018).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review of this study is based on the theory of competitive advantage and Porter's Five Forces Model to explore the impact of brand reputation, product uniqueness, laws and regulations, distribution channel management on Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market. A conceptual model is constructed on the basis of analyzing relevant studies. The role played by these factors in Moutai's internationalization is systematically assessed to provide theoretical support and practical guidance.

2.2 Introduction to Kweichow Moutai

Kweichow Moutai Winery (Group) Limited Liability Company is one of the most representative liquor producers in China, founded in 1951. As a representative brand of traditional Chinese liquor, Moutai is famous for its unique brewing process and long historical and cultural heritage. Its core product is Maotai, a liquor made from sorghum, wheat and water through a complex brewing process and a long aging process, which has won the favour of consumers for its unique flavour and aroma (Ding, 2018).

Moutai occupies a leading position in China's baijiu industry, and its products are widely regarded as the top brand of Chinese baijiu, with market share and brand awareness at the forefront of the industry (China Daily, 2019). The company's competitive advantage is mainly based on its unique geographical location and traditional brewing process, which together contribute to the scarcity and high quality of Moutai liquor (Baker, 2020). Moutai's long-term strategy includes consolidating its leadership position in the domestic market while aggressively expanding into international markets, particularly by promoting the culture of Chinese liquor to enhance the brand's global presence (Wang, 2019). In recent years, the company has performed strongly financially with continued growth in revenues and profits, demonstrating its strong competitiveness in the premium liquor market (EqualOcean, 2022).

However, Moutai also faces challenges in the expansion process, such as intensified market competition, changes in consumer preferences, and cultural adaptation in the internationalisation process (China Daily, 2019). In the future, Moutai will continue to deepen its brand strategy and enhance its innovation capabilities to cope with market changes and improve its competitiveness in the global market (Wang, 2019).

Currently, research on Kweichow Moutai focuses more on its brewing process and

technology. Moutai is known for its unique brewing methods and complex fermentation processes, which give its products a distinctive flavour and quality. As a result, many studies have focused on how Moutai's traditional brewing techniques affect its product characteristics and market value. For example, Niu, Zhu and Xiao (2020) investigated the perceptual interactions of ester aroma compounds in Chinese Moutai liquor, revealing the key role of these compounds in the flavour of the liquor through technological means such as gas chromatography-olfactometry.

However, analyses of Maotai's export competitiveness have been less thoroughly explored. Existing studies usually focus more on the overall international market performance and brand image building of Chinese liquor rather than specifically analysing Moutai's competitive advantages, challenges and strategies in export markets (Ding, 2018). This has led to certain gaps in research on Moutai's export competitiveness. Although Moutai is one of the representative brands of Chinese liquor exports, future research should pay more attention to its unique positioning in the global market and analyse its export strategies and competitiveness in depth (Baker, 2020).

2.3 Theoretical Background

2.3.1 Export Competitiveness

Export competitiveness is the ability of an enterprise to compete with other enterprises in the international market through the export of products and services. It is an important indicator of an enterprise's degree of internationalization and market influence. The enhancement of export competitiveness not only depends on the price advantage of the product, but also involves many comprehensive factors such as product quality, innovation ability, brand awareness, marketing strategy, and the ability to adapt to the international market (Zou, Fang, & Zhao, 2003).

To understand how competitive a company is in exporting, you need to look at more than just figures such as market share, export revenue and growth. Other more in-depth dimensions should also be examined, such as price comparisons, product quality, technological superiority, brand awareness, and market adaptability. Product quality and technological level are the core competitive advantages of a firm in the international market as it not only facilitates access to high threshold international markets but also helps the firm to form competitive barriers (Porter, 1985). Price competitiveness reflects a firm's ability to attract consumers at a lower price for the same quality or function. It depends not only on a firm's cost control and production efficiency, but also involves its market pricing strategy, supply chain management, and responsiveness to competitors' prices (Porter, 1980). Brand and market reputation refers to the brand

image and market recognition that a firm has established in the international market. A strong brand can help a company to gain an advantage in the competitive international market. (Porter, 1980). Market adaptability can also reflect an enterprise's export competitiveness, which refers to its ability to quickly adapt to different market environments, laws and regulations, cultural habits, and consumer needs when entering and developing international markets. All of these aspects together determine a company's strength or weakness in the export market.

2.3.2 Competitive Advantage

(1) Definition of Competitive Advantage Theory

The competitive advantage theory, developed by David Ricardo and Michael Porter, explains why certain countries, regions, or companies are better at certain industries or products and thus lead in the global market. Ricardo introduced the ideas of comparative and absolute advantage, saying that even if a country isn't the best at everything, it can still do well by focusing on what it's relatively better at (Ricardo, 2015). This idea helped shape international trade theory, showing that countries can benefit by focusing on their strengths.

Michael Porter built on this by identifying two main types of competitive advantage: cost advantage and differentiation advantage. Differentiation advantage comes from offering unique features or added values that make a product stand out (Porter, 1985). A differentiation strategy is to capture one of the most important aspects of the process of satisfying a customer's purchase of a product or service, creating a differential advantage over other competitors that meets the needs of the consumer.

Both Ricardo's and Porter's theories of competitive advantage emphasize the criticality of leveraging resources and capabilities to gain international competitive advantage. Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage states that even if a country does not have an absolute advantage in all areas, it can still profit from international trade by focusing on areas where it is relatively stronger, while Porter further explores how firms can achieve competitive advantage through cost advantages or differentiated advantages.

Despite the consensus between the two, Ricardo's theory assumes a relatively static global market environment, which appears more limited in the modern economy. Porter's theory, on the other hand, takes into account more dynamic factors such as innovation and government policies. However, it is still inadequate in the context of globalization.

(2) Factors distilled from Competitive Advantage Theory

Kweichow Moutai's main target group is the high-end consumer market, and differentiation advantages are the focus of this study as opposed to cost leadership.

In the premium spirits market in Europe, Kweichow Moutai faces a group of consumers who are highly sensitive to brand values and cultural context. This group may see Kweichow Moutai as a symbol of Chinese culture and tradition. The uniqueness of Kweichow Moutai is not only reflected in its unique brewing process and flavour, but also in its long history and cultural background. These unique attributes cannot be easily replicated by competitors and are important factors that enable Moutai to differentiate itself and maintain its competitive advantage in the European market. In addition, facing the high-end market, Kweichow Moutai needs to enhance its premium justification. Based on the product characteristics of Kweichow Moutai and the characteristics of consumers in the European market, we choose brand reputation and product uniqueness as the factors for this discussion (Cabigiosu, 2020; Atwal & Williams, 2017). These two factors have a more direct impact on export competitiveness in the European market than other factors such as customer service, innovation capability, market segmentation and positioning.

(3) Brand reputation

In the theory of competitive advantage, brand reputation is one of the key factors for enterprises to gain and maintain competitive advantage, which refers to the degree of consumers' and market's recognition and trust of the enterprise's brand. Brand reputation is one of the important strategic layouts if a company wants to develop a differentiation advantage, because consumers tend to favor brands that they know and trust. This trust comes not only from the quality of the product, but also from the firm's social responsibility, service quality and overall image (Porter, 1985). Brand reputation helps firms to gain market share while enhancing price premiums, enabling them to increase prices without sacrificing profitability. In addition, by continuously maintaining and enhancing brand reputation, firms can build strong competitive barriers in the market, making it difficult for new entrants to easily replace or imitate them. Brand reputation is not only a driver of a firm's success, but also a key factor in maintaining its leading position in a globalized market (Porter, 1990).

Therefore, brand reputation is not only important for firms in the domestic market, but also a key factor in enhancing export competitiveness in the international market. Firms should continuously enhance brand reputation through strategic brand management and globalized brand promotion to ensure competitive advantage in international markets.

(4) Product uniqueness

A differentiation strategy is how companies set their products apart from those of their competitors by offering special features, designs, services, or brand experiences that attract a particular group of customers (Porter, 1985). Unique products help companies gain a larger market share and allow them to charge higher prices without losing profit. When selling in foreign markets, unique products help companies adjust to different cultures and buying habits. Businesses can modify their products or marketing strategies based on local culture, consumer preferences, and buying patterns to better meet local needs and fit market expectations, which improves market acceptance and competitiveness. This is crucial for developing localized marketing strategies (Levitt, 1983).

To sum up, how well a brand is known and how unique its products are are crucial for a company to do well at home and abroad. These factors are also important when analyzing how well a company can compete in international markets.

2.3.3 Porter's Five Forces Model

(1) Definition of Porter's Five Forces Model

Porter's Five Forces Model is a tool for analyzing competition, created by Michael E. Porter in 1979. It helps companies understand their industry's competitive landscape and what drives the level of competition. This model is often used to evaluate different markets around the world. By grasping these factors, businesses can craft better strategies to stay ahead. The model includes five key factors: the level of competition among current players, which looks at the number of companies, how market share is spread, how unique products are, how fast the industry is growing, and how hard it is to leave the industry (Porter, 1980). In export markets, strong competition often shows that the market is well-established and firms need to stand out by either offering something unique or cutting costs. The risk from new competitors depends on how hard it is to enter the market, which includes legal rules, customer loyalty, initial investment costs, and exclusive technology (Porter, 1985). In global markets, cultural and legal obstacles can raise entry barriers and shield existing companies, while also reducing market chances for new ones. Substitutes are products or services that meet the same needs, influencing a company's ability to set prices and its share of the market. In international markets, substitutes can be similar products or different options from various cultures. Companies must understand local tastes well to handle this challenge effectively (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Supplier bargaining power refers to the extent to which a supplier can influence the price, quality and delivery of a product during the negotiation process. For an exporting company, if a supplier has strong bargaining power, it can increase the company's costs and affect its profits. Distributors and

retailers are also part of the firm's suppliers and they control how the product is sold. Mismanagement could lead to pricing problems or counterfeit goods, which could damage the brand's reputation. The influence of buyers, on the other hand, depends on their ability to influence the price, quality and service conditions of the product. This ability is influenced by factors such as cultural differences, market sophistication and purchasing power. (Day & Wensley, 1988).

Porter's Five Forces Model is widely accepted in the global marketplace as an effective tool for assessing market competitiveness. However, it focuses too much on external forces and less on firms' internal innovative capabilities and coping strategies. This limitation may lead firms to overlook the importance of internal management and adaptive capacity when developing globalization strategies.

(2) Factors distilled from Porter's Five Forces Model

Analysing Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market through Porter's Five Forces Model clarifies the challenges and opportunities it faces. The level of competition from competitors in the industry is very intense, with several internationally recognised spirits brands dominating the market, which have strong brand recognition and consumer base in the European market, which poses significant competitive pressure on Moutai. The threat from potential entrants is relatively low, as entering the European premium spirits market requires overcoming high brand barriers, capital investment and market entry thresholds. Maotai, as a brand with a long history and unique cultural background, has the resources and background required for these thresholds. The threat of substitution is significant, with consumers likely to choose other high-end spirits such as whisky and cognac or premium wines, requiring Moutai to enhance its market appeal by enhancing its product uniqueness and cultural values. The bargaining power of suppliers is relatively low because of Moutai's uniqueness and scale advantage in demand for its key raw materials, which leaves suppliers with fewer substitution options. The bargaining power of buyers is high, especially in the high-end market, where consumers have high expectations of brand and quality, and Moutai must offer differentiated value to win the market.

The above analysis reveals that apart from brand reputation and product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations and the management of distribution channels are the factors that most directly affect Moutai's competitiveness. Knowledge of laws and regulations is related to the threat of potential entrants and the level of competition from competitors in the industry in Porter's Five Forces Model, as understanding and complying with Europe's stringent alcohol laws and regulations is key to ensuring market entry and sustained competitiveness, and any breaches could result in blocked market access or brand damage. In addition, understanding the

regulations can help Moutai develop a competitive strategy adapted to the market environment and prevent competitors from taking advantage of regulatory differences. Distribution channel management has a direct impact on the bargaining power of buyers and the threat of substitutes, as effective distribution channels ensure that Moutai has access to the premium market and direct access to its target consumers, while maintaining the brand's scarcity and premium positioning. Therefore, focusing on the knowledge of laws and regulations and distribution channel management helps to understand how Moutai can cope with the fierce competition and the threat of diverse substitutes in the European market and enhance its export competitiveness.

(3) Laws and regulations

In the Porter's Five Forces model, legal and regulatory barriers are obstacles that prevent new companies from entering a market due to laws and regulations. These barriers can significantly impact competition in the market. In various industries, businesses need to get special licenses or patents to operate legally. Such legal requirements often involve complex and costly procedures, making it difficult for new entrants to enter the market. In addition, patent protection not only prevents other firms from copying or infringing, but also strengthens the market position of incumbent firms because they hold unique technologies or products (Maskus, 2000).

In some industries, firms are also required to comply with stringent compliance standards, such as health and safety standards, environmental protection regulations, and quality certifications. These compliance requirements not only increase the operating costs of firms, but also raise the height of barriers to entry. For example, hygiene standards in the food industry and clinical trial requirements in the pharmaceutical industry are high thresholds that new entrants must face (Gans & Stern, 2003). At the same time, the government imposes tariffs or sets quotas on certain imports, a trade defence measure that, while intended to protect local industries, also restricts the entry of foreign firms into the home market, thereby reducing market competition (Baldwin & Evenett, 2008). These measures make the market more closed and new entrants have to overcome additional costs and regulatory barriers.

By conducting in-depth analyses of each country's legal environment, including import tariffs, licensing requirements, environmental regulations, etc., firms are able to develop a more effective market entry strategy that identifies and responds to potential barriers to entry. For example, understanding the laws governing intellectual property protection in different markets not only helps firms protect their innovations, but also provides the basis for long-term strategic planning (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). Further legal and regulatory barriers can stimulate a firm's ability to innovate, and by adapting to and surpassing these regulations, firms can not only deal with existing

market barriers, but also identify new market opportunities, ensure compliant operations, and enhance market competitiveness (Blind, 2012). In this way, firms are able to achieve a stronger position in the global marketplace and advance their sustainable development.

(4) Control and management of distribution channels

In Porter's Five Forces Model, the control and management of distribution channels is one of the important means for enterprises to build competitive advantages. This process covers a number of links from the production of products to the final consumer, through effective channel management, enterprises can significantly improve their market position and competitiveness.

The structural design of distribution channels is one of the core aspects of channel management. Enterprises need to choose the most appropriate channel structure based on product characteristics, target markets and consumer behaviour. This may include direct sales, wholesale, retail or multi-channel strategies. The direct sales model enables companies to interact directly with consumers, reducing the involvement of intermediaries, thereby reducing costs and enhancing brand control. Wholesale and retail channels, however, help to cover a wider market and increase the market penetration of a product through co-operation with channel players at all levels. Multi-channel strategy, on the other hand, allows flexibility in responding to different markets and consumer needs by integrating online and offline channels to achieve full market coverage (Coughlan et al., 2006).

Firms also need to consider whether to adopt a vertically integrated strategy in channel control. By building their own retail network or acquiring distributors, firms are able to increase their control over the entire supply chain. Such integration not only improves operational efficiency, but also ensures brand consistency and service quality, and reduces management complexity due to channel diversity (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Vertical integration can also help companies better respond to market changes and quickly adjust their strategies to meet new market demands.

The management and incentive mechanism of channel members is also a part of distribution channel management that cannot be ignored. Businesses should choose partners who have a strong reputation and enough resources. They should also boost sales by offering reasonable incentives like commissions, discounts, and rewards. Additionally, companies need to establish strict quality control standards and monitoring systems to ensure their products and services are of high quality, which helps keep their brand's reputation intact (Rosenbloom, 2012).

2.4 Research Relevant

A company's brand reputation is an important part of its intangible assets and has a direct impact on how it performs in the marketplace and competes with other companies. A solid brand reputation increases consumer interest and loyalty and provides a safety net during tough times (Aaker, 1996; Klein & Dawar, 2004). For global firms, a good brand reputation is key to success in new markets. Managing brand reputation is becoming increasingly important, especially with the rise of digital media and social networking. Future research could explore how brand reputation management is changing and how companies are responding to global challenges.

Product uniqueness plays a crucial role in a company's ability to compete in global markets. Unique products can help companies overcome obstacles when entering new markets. They meet unmet needs or address specific problems in international settings, which can lead to quick recognition and acceptance. This is especially vital in markets with different cultures and buying habits, where unique features can attract consumers seeking something new or valuable. It also helps companies keep or grow their market share despite global competition. In a globalized economy, companies often deal with rivals from all over the world. Unique products can act as a barrier, making it hard for competitors to copy or replace them. This not only improves a company's market position but also helps avoid profit losses from price competition by building stronger brand loyalty among customers (Porter, 1985).

The way laws and regulations affect the ability of companies to compete in exporting is quite important. Different countries have their own rules, such as import taxes, limits on the amount of goods, licensing, and standards certifications, which can make it hard for companies to enter new markets. Businesses might need to invest a lot of time and money to meet these local rules, which can be especially tough for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that don't have the same resources to handle complicated compliance issues. Additionally, some markets have specific demands for quality, safety, environmental impact, and technical standards for imported goods. To enter these markets, companies might have to change their products to meet these local requirements, which can increase research and development and production costs, and also cause delays in getting products to market. This can affect how quickly companies can respond to market changes and their overall competitiveness (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2008). In a fast-changing market, companies need to adapt to new regulations, which can lead to more uncertainty in their operations. It's crucial for companies to deeply understand the legal landscape of their target markets and create strategies to comply with these rules to ensure their products can successfully enter and

compete.

Managing distribution channels is key to the success or failure of a company's exports. Good management ensures that products get to the right place quickly and smoothly, reducing barriers and speeding up reaction to market changes. This adaptability is crucial in global trade, allowing companies to quickly adapt to changes and customer needs. Effective channel management also maintains product quality and brand image. By working with trusted distributors and retailers, companies can ensure consistent product quality and service in their target markets. In addition, controlling distribution helps to discourage unauthorized sales or counterfeiting and protects intellectual property rights and market interests (Coughlan et al.) All of these aspects help firms to remain internationally competitive.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

In this study, the researcher looked into what affects how competitive Kweichow Moutai is when exporting to Europe. The factors examined include the brand's reputation, how unique the product is, understanding the relevant laws and regulations, and how well the distribution channels are controlled and managed. A model of these relationships is formulated as shown in Figure 2.1.

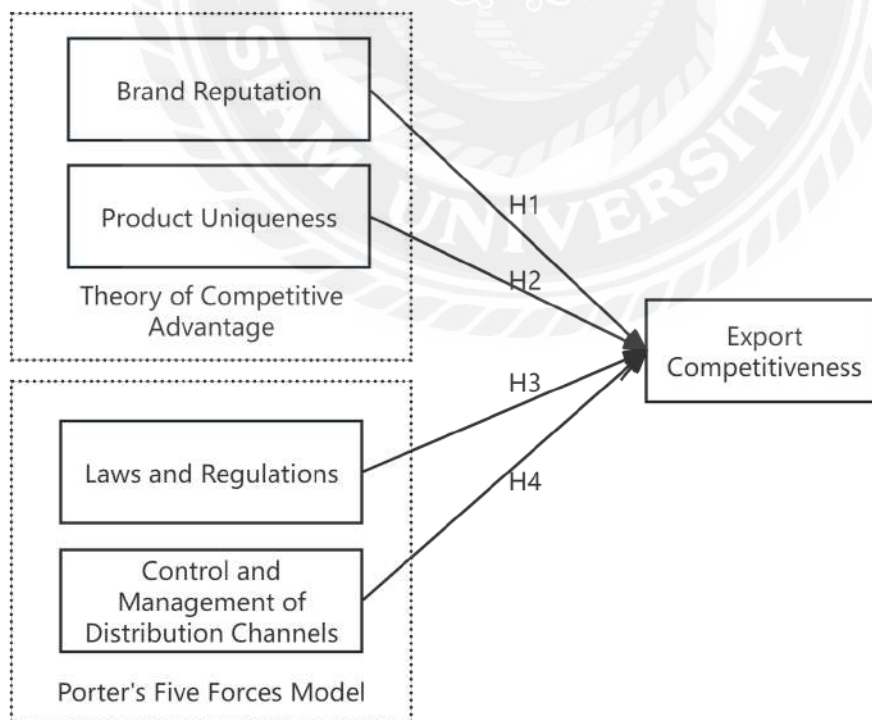


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study took a quantitative approach and focused on the factors affecting Kweichow Mouta's export competitiveness in the European market. The research was built on ideas about the competitive advantage theory and Porter's Five Forces Model. The key factors considered are brand reputation, product uniqueness, legal and regulatory aspects, and control over distribution channels. Export competitiveness is the dependent variable. A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data for analysis. On this basis, a questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale with options ranging from 5 to 1, representing strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree, respectively.

In this study, the researcher chose a sample size that met the objectives of the study and collected data via email and Questionstar platform. To ensure the quality of the data, the researcher checked the reliability and validity before examining the relationship between the variables and testing the hypotheses. The researcher tested the reliability and consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). To ensure the data was suitable for factor analysis, the researcher used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of homogeneity (Kaiser, 1974; Bartlett, 1954).

3.2 Questionnaire

Based on the competitive advantage and the Porter's Five Forces Model, the study examined the key factors affecting export competitiveness namely brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and distribution channel management.

This study examined the impact of Kweichow Mouta's brand reputation on its competitiveness in the European market, including its acceptance, customer loyalty, pricing and competition (Aaker, 1996). To measure these factors, the researcher created specific survey questions for each one as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Brand Reputation Items

Variable	Measurement Item	Serial Number
Brand Reputation	1. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market affects its product market acceptance?	Q1

	2. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market helps increase customer loyalty?	Q2
	3. In your opinion, does Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market enhance consumer trust in its product quality?	Q3
	4. Do you think brand reputation influences Kweichow Moutai's pricing strategy in the European market?	Q4
	5. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation helps differentiate it from competitors in the European market?	Q5

This study examined the uniqueness of the product from different perspectives: how it attracts customers, how it builds the brand, how it influences buying decisions, how it stands out from competitors, and how it affects pricing (Porter, 1985). To comprehensively assess the impact of these factors, the researcher designed specific survey items for product uniqueness as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Product Uniqueness Items

Variable	Measurement Item	Serial Number
Product Uniqueness	6. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's product uniqueness significantly attracts consumers in the European market?	Q6
	7. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's unique product characteristics help enhance its brand recognition in the European market?	Q7
	8. Do you think the uniqueness of Kweichow Moutai's products has a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions in the European market?	Q8
	9. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's product uniqueness provides a competitive advantage over its competitors in the European market?	Q9
	10. Do you think the unique attributes of Kweichow Moutai's products help achieve price premiums in the European market?	Q10

Regarding knowledge of laws and regulations, the researcher focused on analyzing their impact on several aspects: market entry and expansion, brand maintenance and protection, competitiveness, brand marketing and advertising, and sales channels and market expansion (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2008). To

comprehensively assess the impact of these factors, the researcher designed survey items for each factors as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Laws and Regulations Item

Variable	Measurement Item	Serial Number
Lows and Regulations Research	11. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of alcohol sales regulations in the European market is sufficient to aid its market entry and expansion?	Q11
	12. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of intellectual property protection regulations in the European market is sufficient to effectively protect its brand image?	Q12
	13. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of import tariffs and quota restrictions in the European market is sufficient to maintain its competitiveness?	Q13
	14. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of European market regulations helps ensure its marketing and advertising activities are not restricted?	Q14
	15. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of sales licensing and compliance requirements in the European market is sufficient to help expand its sales channels and market?	Q15

Regarding control and management of distribution channels, the researcher focused on analyzing its impact on several aspects: market coverage, brand image, consumer purchasing convenience, pricing and sales performance, and competitiveness (Coughlan, Anderson, Stern, & El-Ansary, 2006). To comprehensively assess the impact of these factors, the researcher designed survey items for each facor as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Control and Management of Distribution Items

Variable	Measurement Item	Serial Number
Control and Management of Distribution Channels	16. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's distribution channel management in the European market helps increase its market coverage?	Q16
	17. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's control of distribution channels in the European market helps maintain and unify its brand image?	Q17

	18. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's selection and management of distribution channels enhance customer purchasing convenience in the European market?	Q18
	19. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's distribution channel strategy in the European market affects its product pricing and sales performance?	Q19
	20. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's management and support of distributors help improve its competitive advantage in the European market?	Q20

This study evaluated Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness strategies in the European market, focusing on the impact of brand promotion strategies, product quality and characteristics, measures to address challenges in the European market, and pricing strategies on export competitiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2012). To comprehensively assess the role of these factors, survey items were designed for each factor as shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Export Competitiveness Items

Variable	Measurement Item	Serial Number
Export Competitiveness	21. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand recognition in the European market has strong competitiveness?	Q21
	22. Do you think the quality and characteristics of Kweichow Moutai's products meet European market demands and enhance its competitiveness?	Q22
	23. Do you think Kweichow Moutai performs well in adapting to the laws and regulations of various European markets?	Q23
	24. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's supply chain management in the European market is effective?	Q24
	25. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's pricing strategy in the European market is competitive?	Q25

3.3 Population and Sampling

To achieve the research objectives, the researcher adopted a questionnaire survey

method. This approach allows for efficient data collection in a consistent format when dealing with a large number of analytical units. In this study, internal employees of Moutai were chosen as the research subject. On the one hand, Moutai's internal employees are directly involved in the company's export operations and management, and they have an in-depth understanding of the company's marketing strategy, sales channel selection, and brand promotion in the European market. On the other hand, internal employees are familiar with the company's internal decision-making process and implementation details, and are able to obtain more accurate data and first-hand information, which is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of Moutai's competitive situation in the European market.

The survey included employees of the management team at Kweichow Moutai's headquarters, the branch specializing in import and export trade, and the Paris branch (the only European branch responsible for local business in Europe). These employees hold key roles in market operations, strategy formulation, and execution, and are familiar with the brand's internationalization strategy and its implementation in the European market. The sample selection was conducted using the sample random sampling, and the sample size calculation was based on Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967). The formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N \times Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{e^2 \times (N-1) + Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}$$

According to the 2023 annual report disclosed on Moutai's official website, the total number of employees in the headquarters and branches who met the survey criteria was approximately 32,000 (N). At a 95% confidence level, the corresponding standard normal distribution value (Z) is 1.96, assuming a sample proportion (p) of 0.5, and an allowable error (e) of 0.05. Applying Yamane's formula, the required sample size is approximately 379.6. For practical purposes, the researcher rounded the sample size to 380 for study.

3.4 Hypothesis

Based on the literature review and relevant theoretical analysis, this study constructed a model to clarify the interrelationships between the variables. The model explores the key factors influencing Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market, including brand reputation, product uniqueness, laws and regulations, and control and management of distribution channels. The researcher established hypotheses to examine the relationships between these variables as follows:

H1: Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market has a significant

positive impact on its export competitiveness.

H2: The uniqueness of Kweichow Moutai's products has a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness.

H3: Kweichow Moutai's research on European laws and regulations has a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness.

H4: Kweichow Moutai's control and management of distribution channels in the European market have a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness.

In summary, this study constructed a hypothetical model of the factors influencing Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market as shown in Figure 3.1 for details.

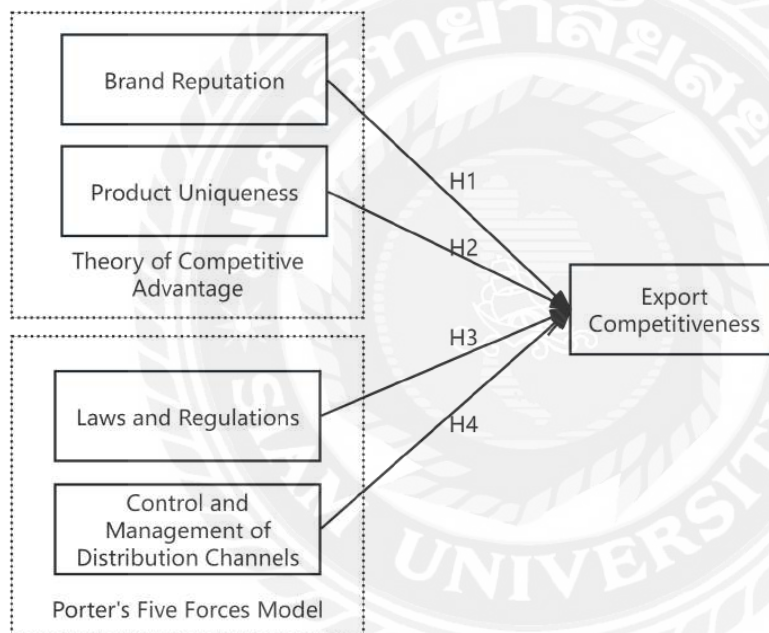


Figure 3.1 Hypothesis

3.5 Data Collection

In this study, the researcher systematically reviewed and analyzed relevant literature, identifying important literature sources related to the research variables. Based on the theory of competitive advantage and Porter's Five Forces Model, the researcher made appropriate adjustments and improvements to the questionnaire measurement items to ensure their accuracy and relevance. The survey questionnaire was distributed and collected via email and the Wenjuanxing platform. Given the large scale of Kweichow Moutai's staff, the researcher contacted employees from the

management team at Kweichow Moutai's headquarters and branches over a period of four months (from March 20, 2024, to July 20, 2024) through email, phone calls, and recommendations. The researcher paid special attention to ensuring that each respondent could answer the questionnaire questions relevant to their specific roles. The collected data were classified, statistically analyzed, and rigorously reviewed to verify the validity of the research hypotheses. The questionnaire structure consisted of four sections: the title, questionnaire introduction, basic information, and the factors involved in the survey. During the survey period, 380 questionnaires were distributed, and 340 valid questionnaires were ultimately collected, resulting in an effective response rate of 89.5%.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Reliability of the Questionnaire

Evaluating the validity of the questionnaire results is crucial for determining whether the survey method used can achieve the research objectives and significance of this study. An effective questionnaire design should ensure that data fluctuations only reflect the true changes in the phenomena being measured, rather than defects in the measurement tool, thereby making the conclusions and recommendations based on this data more reliable. To this end, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the reliability and validity of the data in this study. Typically, an alpha coefficient greater than 0.8 indicates high reliability; a coefficient between 0.6 and 0.8 is considered acceptable; and a coefficient below 0.6 indicates that the questionnaire's reliability is insufficient (Cronbach, 1951).

During data processing, the researcher structured and filtered the collected statistical data, excluding unusable data, and used SPSS software to analyze the collected variables. The results of Cronbach's alpha coefficients shown in Table 3.6 demonstrate the internal consistency of the five factors, each consisting of five questions. Specifically, the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for brand reputation is 0.885, indicating good consistency and high reliability; the alpha coefficient for product uniqueness is 0.886, suggesting high internal consistency; the alpha coefficient for laws and regulations is 0.881, indicating high consistency and good reliability; the alpha coefficient for control and management of distribution channels is 0.874, showing high reliability; and the alpha coefficient for export competitiveness is 0.759, indicating good internal consistency.

Overall, the factors demonstrate high consistency and reliability in the reliability analysis, suggesting that the scales used in measuring the relevant constructs have good

reliability, providing a solid foundation for the conclusions of this study.

Table 3.6 Reliability Tests Results

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CITC)	Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
Q1	0.735	0.86	0.885
Q2	0.708	0.864	
Q3	0.736	0.858	
Q4	0.721	0.862	
Q5	0.724	0.861	
Q6	0.829	0.842	0.886
Q7	0.758	0.853	
Q8	0.755	0.854	
Q9	0.628	0.882	
Q10	0.678	0.872	
Q11	0.69	0.862	0.881
Q12	0.748	0.848	
Q13	0.67	0.866	
Q14	0.692	0.861	
Q15	0.781	0.839	
Q16	0.825	0.821	0.874
Q17	0.625	0.865	
Q18	0.684	0.851	
Q19	0.698	0.85	
Q20	0.711	0.846	
Q21	0.547	0.708	0.759
Q22	0.443	0.745	
Q23	0.501	0.725	
Q24	0.432	0.747	
Q25	0.734	0.644	

3.6.2 Validity of the Questionnaire

In this study, the collected survey data must ensure accuracy and reliability. Reliability evaluation has met the requirements, but a comprehensive evaluation of the validity of the data is still necessary. Typically, we use the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity to verify validity. If the KMO value is greater than 0.8, it indicates that the data is suitable for factor analysis; a KMO value between 0.6 and 0.8 is generally considered satisfactory; and when the KMO value is below 0.6, the reliability and validity of the information obtained from the questionnaire may be insufficient (Bartlett, 1954).

Table 3.7 KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

KMO Value		0.883
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3938.209
	df	190
	p-value	0

The validity check results of this study show that the KMO value is 0.883, which is significantly higher than 0.8, indicating that the data is very suitable for factor analysis. Additionally, the p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity is significantly less than 0.05, rejecting the null hypothesis of no correlation between the variables, further confirming the significant correlations among the variables (Kaiser, 1974; Bartlett, 1954).

3.6.3 Statistic Analysis of Questionnaire Data

In this study, the questionnaire data will be analyzed by using descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis. First, the descriptive statistical analysis will be used to summarize the basic characteristics of the variables, including mean, median, standard deviation, etc., in order to understand the overall attitudes and responses of the respondents to different factors. This shall then be followed by a correlation analysis to assess the interrelationships between the various variables, mainly the factors influencing brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and control and management of distribution channels on export competitiveness. Using these approaches in data analysis will provide a basis on which the hypotheses can be tested with regard to key drivers affecting Moutai's competitiveness in the European market.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This study utilized an email survey method, distributing a total of 380 questionnaires and ultimately collecting 340 valid responses, resulting in a valid response rate of 89.5%. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, this study employed quantitative research methods to analyze the collected data's reliability and validity. The data analysis process was conducted using SPSS software, primarily including descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis. The analysis results show that the sample data basically obey normal distribution. Through in-depth analyses of the data, this study not only provides detailed statistical information on the basic characteristics of the samples, but also provides theoretical support for understanding the potential relationships between the variables, which further verifies the validity of the research hypotheses and ensures that the results of the study are scientific and credible.

4.2 Demographic of Sample

The survey collected a total of 340 valid questionnaires, covering several key demographic parameters, including gender, age, education, professional category, position type. After data integration and analysis, the results showed the following: In terms of gender distribution, male employees accounted for 52.4%, while female employees accounted for 47.6%. Regarding age distribution, employees aged 30-40 years made up the highest proportion at 54.4%, while those aged 50 and above accounted for the smallest proportion at only 2.1%. In terms of education level, employees with a bachelor's degree accounted for 67.1%, those with an associate degree accounted for 28.2%, and other educational levels had smaller proportions. Among professional categories, production personnel accounted for 27.6%, sales personnel and technical personnel accounted for 18.2% and 11.2%, respectively. Position type analysis showed that professional positions had the highest proportion at 42.4%, while operational positions and management positions accounted for 21.1% and 17.1%, respectively. The distribution of these data is shown in Table 4.1, and the sample overall meets statistical requirements.

Table 4.1 Demographic of Sample (N=340)

Item	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	178	52.4

	Female	162	47.6
Age	Under 30 (excluding 30)	78	22.9
	30-40 (including 30, excluding 40)	185	54.4
	40-50 (including 40, excluding 50)	70	20.6
	50 and above	7	2.1
Education	Secondary school or below	5	1.5
	Associate degree	96	28.2
	Bachelor's degree	228	67.1
	Master's degree or above	11	3.2
Professional Category	Production personnel	94	27.6
	Sales personnel	62	18.2
	Technical personnel	38	11.2
	Financial personnel	13	3.8
	Administrative personnel	50	14.8
	Other	83	24.4
Position Type	Operational	72	21.1
	Professional	144	42.4
	Managerial	58	17.1
	Other	66	19.4

In this study, Table 4.2 presents the results of descriptive statistics for each variable, containing a total of 340 samples. The statistical indicators include sample size, minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, median, kurtosis and skewness. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the overall distribution and outliers of the data collected in this survey, statistical tests were conducted for each variable using SPSS. The results showed that the mean for each question ranged from 3.138 to 3.653, and the median for most of the questions was 3 or 4, indicating an overall tendency towards neutral or slightly positive ratings. Standard deviations ranged from 0.705 to 1.048, showing consistent differences in responses across questions. A higher standard deviation (e.g., Q3) indicates more dispersed responses with greater individual differences, while a lower standard deviation (e.g., Q24) indicates more concentrated responses. The kurtosis values for all questions are negative, indicating that the score

distributions are relatively flat with fewer extreme values compared to a normal distribution. The skewness ranges from -0.318 (Q1) to 0.154 (Q25), with overall low skewness values, indicating that the data distribution is close to symmetrical. The above data show that there are no missing values or outliers in the questionnaire results, and the data can be directly described based on the mean for descriptive analysis.

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Name	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q1	340	2	5	3.653	0.897	4	-0.619	-0.318
Q2	340	2	5	3.585	1.017	4	-1.084	-0.132
Q3	340	2	5	3.588	1.048	4	-1.172	-0.119
Q4	340	2	5	3.576	1.015	4	-1.093	-0.082
Q5	340	1	5	3.45	0.981	3	-0.937	-0.02
Q6	340	2	5	3.297	0.743	3	-0.582	-0.149
Q7	340	2	5	3.538	0.923	3	-0.843	0.046
Q8	340	2	5	3.538	0.932	3	-0.88	0.097
Q9	340	2	5	3.585	0.777	4	-0.409	-0.002
Q10	340	2	5	3.532	0.884	4	-0.706	-0.047
Q11	340	2	5	3.432	0.786	3	-0.432	-0.013
Q12	340	2	5	3.509	0.891	4	-0.732	-0.002
Q13	340	2	5	3.618	0.813	4	-0.528	-0.02
Q14	340	2	5	3.515	0.897	4	-0.753	0.005
Q15	340	2	5	3.497	0.907	3	-0.782	0.068
Q16	340	2	5	3.271	0.774	3	-0.7	-0.125
Q17	340	2	5	3.482	0.754	4	-0.355	-0.272
Q18	340	2	5	3.626	0.848	4	-0.713	0.096
Q19	340	2	5	3.535	0.969	3	-0.978	0.027
Q20	340	1	5	3.544	0.969	4	-0.89	-0.018
Q21	340	2	5	3.247	0.789	3	-0.919	-0.215
Q22	340	2	5	3.215	0.774	3	-0.606	0.03

Q23	340	2	5	3.262	0.775	3	-0.607	-0.032
Q24	340	2	5	3.179	0.741	3	-0.44	0.094
Q25	340	2	5	3.138	0.705	3	-0.238	0.154

4.3 Results of the Study

In this study, correlation analysis was used to evaluate Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market, with the results shown in Table 4.3. The value of the correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to 1, where r values closer to 1 or -1 indicate a stronger association between the variables, and r values closer to 0 indicate a weaker linear relationship between the variables (Taylor, 1990). The correlation coefficients (rrr) in this study range between 0 and 1, and at the 0.01 significance level, they exhibit high correlations (Field, 2013).

Table 4.3 Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Export Competitiveness	Brand Reputation	Product Uniqueness	Laws and Regulations	Export Competitiveness
Export Competitiveness	1				
Brand Reputation	0.694**	1			
Product Uniqueness	0.575**	0.383**	1		
Laws and Regulations	0.576**	0.217**	0.103	1	
Control and management of distribution channels	0.517**	0.193**	0.059	0.380**	1

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

The correlation coefficient between brand reputation and export competitiveness is as high as 0.694, with a significance level of p<0.01. This indicates that brand reputation is one of the key factors in enhancing export competitiveness, showing a significant positive correlation.

The correlation coefficient between product uniqueness and export competitiveness is 0.575, with a significance level of $p < 0.01$. This indicates that the uniqueness of the product has a strong positive impact on export competitiveness, with significant statistical significance.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between knowledge of laws and regulations and export competitiveness is 0.576, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that knowledge of laws and regulations has a strong positive impact on export competitiveness, and it is statistically significant.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between control and management of distribution channels and export competitiveness is 0.517, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the two, implying that effective control and management of distribution channels can significantly enhance the export competitiveness of enterprises.

At the significance level of $p < 0.01$, the correlation coefficient between knowledge of laws and regulations and control and management of distribution channels is 0.380, and the correlation coefficient between brand reputation and product uniqueness is 0.383. This indicates that there is a significant correlation between the different factors, and the correlation terms are positive. Together they affect the overall export competitiveness to some extent.

Table 4.4 Hypothesis Test Results

No.	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market has a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness.	Supported
H2	The uniqueness of Kweichow Moutai's products has a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness.	Supported
H3	Kweichow Moutai's knowledge of European laws and regulations has a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness.	Supported
H4	Kweichow Moutai's control and management of distribution channels in the European market has a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness.	Supported

In conclusion, Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market, product uniqueness, knowledge of European laws and regulations, as well as control and management of distribution channels all have a significant positive impact on its export competitiveness. As shown in Table 4.4, all four hypotheses are supported, indicating that these factors play an important role in enhancing Moutai's competitiveness in the European market.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the theory of competitive advantage and Porter's Five Forces Model, this study explores the factors affecting the export competitiveness of Kweichow Moutai in the European market. Four possible influencing factors, namely brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and distribution channel management, were initially identified. A total of 380 questionnaires were distributed and 340 quantitative data were recovered. Through SPSS analysis, the influence of the above four factors on Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market was verified.

5.1.1 Influencing Factors of Export Competitiveness

Through literature review and related analyses, it is concluded that the influencing factors of Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market include brand reputation, product uniqueness, laws and regulations research, and the control and management of distribution channels. In the study, the collected data were analysed for reliability and validity, which meets the requirements of the study.

The Pearson's correlation coefficient between brand reputation and Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market is 0.694 ($p < 0.01$), indicating a significant positive and strong correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient between product uniqueness and export competitiveness is 0.575 ($P < 0.01$), showing a positive correlation of medium strength. The Pearson correlation coefficient between knowledge of laws and regulations and export competitiveness is 0.576 ($P < 0.01$), also showing a positive correlation of medium strength. The Pearson correlation coefficient between control and management of distribution channels and export competitiveness is 0.517 ($P < 0.01$), showing a positive correlation of medium strength.

The correlation analysis leads to the conclusion that there is a moderate to strong positive correlation between these factors and Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market with a p-value of less than 0.01, emphasising the statistical significance of this relationship. Specifically, brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, as well as control and management of distribution channels positively affect Moutai's export competitiveness. This implies that firms need to carefully consider how to optimise these factors when developing their

international marketing strategies. The interaction of the factors may have a significant impact on Moutai's competitiveness in the European market. Enterprises can conduct more in-depth strategic planning based on the results of these analyses to ensure sustainable development in the international market.

5.1.2 Positive Impact of Factors on Export Competitiveness

According to the correlation analysis, brand reputation, product uniqueness, knowledge of laws and regulations, and control and management of distribution channels are correlated with export competitiveness. Combined with regression analysis, brand reputation ($\beta=0.694$, $P<0.05$), product uniqueness ($\beta=0.575$, $P<0.05$), knowledge of laws and regulations ($\beta=0.576$, $P<0.05$), and management of distribution channels ($\beta=0.517$, $P<0.05$) significantly and positively affect export competitiveness. Together, these variables explain the major part of Kweichow Moutai's export competitiveness, which meets the requirements of the study. The above results indicate that these factors have a significant positive impact on Moutai's export competitiveness in the European market, and that optimizing these factors is important for enhancing Moutai's international market position.

5.2 Strategic Recommendation

5.2.1 Building a good brand reputation

A good brand reputation helps Kweichow Moutai to enhance its competitiveness in the European market. Brand reputation reflects consumers' positive or negative assessment of a brand's image, which influences the degree of consumer recognition of the brand, and in turn influences consumers' purchasing decisions. Kweichow Moutai has been working to introduce its rich brand culture in Europe. Moutai not only organises wine events, tastings and festivals to share its brand story and heritage with European consumers (Baker, 2020). Moutai has also partnered with renowned companies, cultural organisations and luxury hotels for brand promotion, cultural exchange and high-end consumer experiences (Williams, 2019). For brand promotion, Moutai has also set up wine-tasting or display areas in high-end hotels and restaurants across Europe (Chen, 2018). These efforts may not be as extensive as they are in China, but expanding and strengthening these activities could increase Moutai's brand presence in Europe.

However, with the rise of social media and behavioural shifts among younger generation consumers, Moutai has not invested enough in digital marketing and social media. Social media has become a crucial battleground for enterprises to establish a

strong brand reputation. In order to build a stronger brand reputation, Moutai can expand its investment in several mainstream social media apps. Instagram and Facebook can help Moutai reach a wide audience. LinkedIn is able to reach high-end consumers. YouTube is suitable for telling the brand's story and showcasing its products. At the same time, Moutai can also work with popular food bloggers and wine experts to leverage KOLs to build a good brand reputation (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is beneficial for brand reputation. Right now, Moutai mainly focuses its CSR efforts in China, and its activities in Europe are limited and not very well known. As a well-known global brand, Moutai has the chance to show its commitment to social responsibility by engaging in and supporting community projects, cultural exchanges, and environmental efforts in Europe. Getting involved in these areas can help strengthen Moutai's positive image with European customers, improve relations with local communities and markets, and boost its competitiveness and influence in Europe (Husted & Allen, 2007). A strong brand-building and marketing strategy will help Moutai solidify its leadership in the European market and support its international growth.

5.2.2 Enhancing product uniqueness

Kweichow Moutai's unique products greatly boost its export success in Europe. To keep this advantage, Kweichow Moutai needs to enhance its product uniqueness even more. Moutai has always highlighted its brand's history and special brewing method. The story and cultural background of the brand have been shared worldwide through books, promotional materials, and different media outlets (Ding, 2018). Kweichow Moutai puts a lot of effort into its product packaging, teaming up with designers to create special and limited edition packaging with strong cultural elements. This significantly boosts the value and appeal of their products. They regularly host tastings and cultural events to let experts and consumers experience the unique taste of Moutai wine. These events help increase the brand's presence among high-end buyers, build its distinct image, and improve its market position (Wang, 2019).

Moutai hasn't invested enough in creating different types of products. Although they stick to their traditional offerings, Kweichow Moutai could grow its market by introducing limited editions, unique vintage wines, and personalized options. The scarcity and collectible value of limited edition products will attract high-end consumers and collectors, while special vintage wines can showcase the unique flavor and quality characteristics of Moutai wines in specific years (Zhao, 2021). Offering a distinctive product not only makes the product stand out, but also enhances the brand's

premium image, thereby increasing customer interest and loyalty. These measures will help consolidate Moutai Wine's position in the global market.

5.2.3 Strengthening research on export market laws and regulations

Kweichow Moutai's knowledge of the rules of the European market has greatly enhanced its export competitiveness. However, Moutai still needs to strengthen its flexibility in responding to European trade policies and the establishment and management of its legal and compliance teams.

Kweichow Moutai needs dialogue Kweichow Moutai should improve its interaction with European governments. Moutai should play an active role in trade negotiations and seek opportunities to reduce tariffs or ease import regulations through agreements (Baldwin & Evenett, 2008). Partnering with local European companies for production or marketing can also help circumvent certain tariffs or import regulations (Gans & Stern, 2003). These strategies can simplify the process of dealing with European trade barriers, reduce market entry costs, and increase market share.

Kweichow Moutai needs to strengthen its legal and compliance team. Although the company has a legal department, the department lacks detailed knowledge of European rules. Moutai could set up a specialized legal office in Europe or hire local experts who are familiar with European laws (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). The company should also invest in enhanced training for its legal team, especially in the areas of intellectual property, antitrust law, and data protection (Maskus, 2000). In addition, Moutai should join European industry organizations to stay abreast of new regulations and exchange information with other international firms to better cope with the complex legal environment (Blind, 2012).

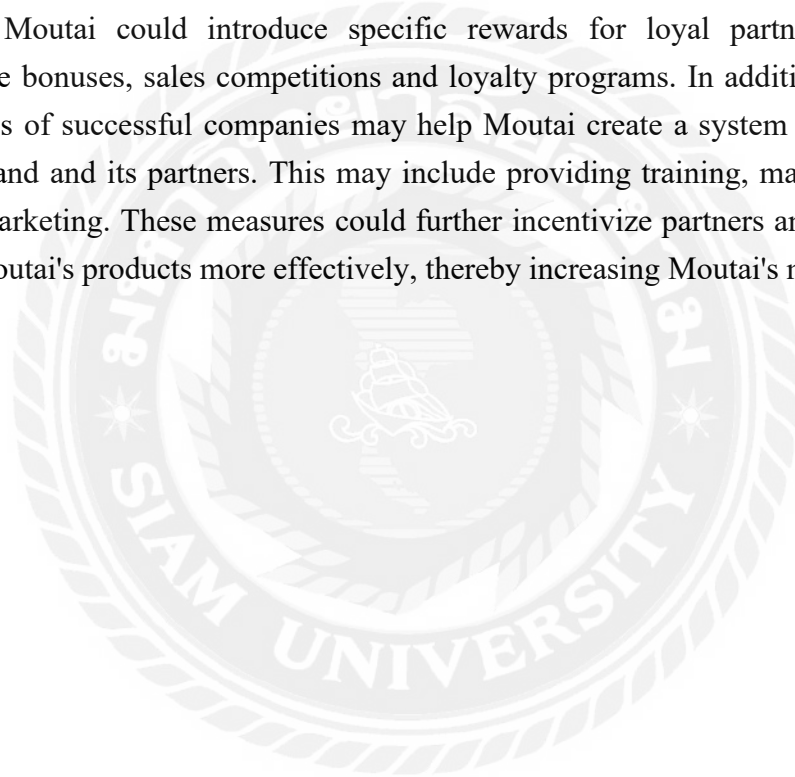
5.2.4 Improving control and management of distribution channels

Kweichow Moutai has improved its export competitiveness in Europe by focusing on its distribution network. They carefully select distributors and use systems to monitor sales and inventory to make the distribution process simple and effective (Zhang, 2019). Regular training, open communication with distributors, and unified branding and sales policies help build strong, lasting partnerships (Li, 2020).

As Moutai attempts to grow in Europe, it needs to focus on a few key areas in order to better adapt to local market demands and enhance its brand presence. Currently, Moutai relies heavily on local dealers and distribution networks in Europe, while direct sales methods such as online platforms and branded shops are underdeveloped. Improving direct sales will help Moutai connect directly with its customers. This

approach not only cuts down on middleman costs, but also gives Moutai more control over its brand and customer experience (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In addition, Moutai needs to improve the way it integrates its various sales channels in Europe, especially the combination of online and offline. Although Moutai is available on multiple online shopping sites, better integration of its online and offline sales could create a more consistent brand experience. Increasing brand awareness through digital marketing is key to Moutai's growth (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Moutai should strengthen its support and supervision of its European partners. Currently, Moutai mainly uses traditional methods such as commissions and discounts, which may not be sufficient in a tough market environment. As European distributors and retailers have many options, offering more attractive incentives could be very beneficial. Moutai could introduce specific rewards for loyal partners such as performance bonuses, sales competitions and loyalty programs. In addition, studying the practices of successful companies may help Moutai create a system that benefits both the brand and its partners. This may include providing training, market insights and joint marketing. These measures could further incentivize partners and help them promote Moutai's products more effectively, thereby increasing Moutai's market share.



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Appendix

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for participating in this survey. The survey will be conducted anonymously and information about you will be kept confidential. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Part 1

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: Under 30 30-40 (including 30, excluding 40)
3. 40-50 (including 40, excluding 50) 50 and above
4. Education Level: Secondary school or below Associate degree
5. Bachelor's degree Master's degree or above
6. Professional Category: Production personnel Sales personnel
7. Technical personnel Financial personnel Administrative personnel Other
8. Position Type: Operational Professional Managerial Other
9. Affiliated Company: Parent company Paris branch Import and export trade branch

Part 2

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following descriptions according to your actual situation. Please mark the corresponding number, "1" for strongly disagree, "2" for disagree, "3" for neutral, "4" for agree, and "5" for strongly agree, with the specific meaning of each number indicating your level of agreement.

Measurement Item	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Reputation					
1. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market affects the market acceptance of its products?					
2. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market helps increase customer loyalty in the European market?					
3. In your opinion, does Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation in the European market enhance consumers' trust in the quality of its products?					
4. Do you think brand reputation affects Kweichow Moutai's pricing strategy in the European market?					

5. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand reputation helps distinguish it from competitors in the European market?					
Product Uniqueness					
6. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's product uniqueness significantly attracts consumers in the European market?					
7. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's unique product features help enhance its brand recognition in the European market?					
8. Do you think the uniqueness of Kweichow Moutai's products has a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions in the European market?					
9. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's product uniqueness provides a competitive advantage compared to competitors in the European market?					
10. Do you think the unique attributes of Kweichow Moutai's products help achieve price premiums in the European market?					
Legal and Regulatory Research					
11. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of liquor sales regulations in the European market is sufficient and helps market entry and expansion?					
12. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of intellectual property protection regulations in the European market is sufficient to effectively protect its brand image?					
13. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of import tariffs and quota restrictions in the European market is sufficient and helps maintain its competitiveness?					
14. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's research on European market laws and regulations helps ensure that its brand marketing and advertising activities are unrestricted?					

15. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's understanding of sales licensing and compliance requirements in the European market is sufficient to help expand its sales channels and market?					
Control and Management of Distribution Channels					
16. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's management of distribution channels in the European market helps increase its market coverage?					
17. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's control of distribution channels in the European market helps maintain and unify its brand image?					
18. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's selection and management of distribution channels enhance customer convenience in purchasing in the European market?					
19. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's distribution channel strategy in the European market affects its product pricing and sales performance?					
20. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's management and support of distributors help enhance its competitive advantage in the European market?					
Export Competitiveness					
21. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's brand awareness in the European market is highly competitive?					
22. Do you think the quality and features of Kweichow Moutai's products meet the demands of the European market and enhance its competitiveness?					
23. How do you rate Kweichow Moutai's performance in adapting to the laws and regulations of various European markets?					
24. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's supply chain management and after-sales service quality in the European market are effective?					
25. Do you think Kweichow Moutai's pricing strategy in the European market is competitive?					