

Cultivating Connections: Crafting a Unique Identity in the Competitive Wine Market

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DOI: 10.24818/mer/2023.10-11

ABSTRACT

This article offers a detailed look at current marketing strategies and their crucial role in building brand and engaging consumers. It starts by discussing the shift towards more empathetic and innovative marketing, emphasising the importance of creating real connections and understanding consumer desires. The focus then moves to the use of Social Networks and Social Media Marketing, explaining the various strategies, benefits, and potential issues of using these digital platforms. The discussion continues with an exploration of Digital Content Marketing, highlighting the need for a balance between informative and engaging content and how different characteristics affect brand popularity. The last section provides a tailored marketing strategy for the Romanian wine industry, covering aspects such as identifying target markets, developing a strong brand identity, online promotion, and fostering collaborations. This article acts as a comprehensive guide, combining theory and practical advice, to understand modern marketing and specifically improve the international profile of Romanian wines.

KEYWORDS: wine marketing, social media strategies, consumer engagement

JEL CLASSIFICATION: M31, Q13, L66, O32

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive wine market, brands must stand out and build relationships with consumers. This article takes a close look at wine marketing, exploring the changing relationship between public relations and marketing, the shift toward more empathetic and creative practices, and the important role of social media and digital content. The article is organised into several sections, each focusing on a key aspect of wine marketing: the role of empathy and innovation, the impact of social networks, the strategies of digital content marketing, developing a marketing strategy, and concluding thoughts. A specific focus is given to proposing a diverse marketing strategy to boost the presence and reputation of Romanian wines globally. This includes developing a strong brand identity, promoting online and partnering with restaurants and bars. From this exploration, two main research questions arise: (1) How can empathetic and innovative marketing strategies enhance consumer engagement and brand loyalty in the competitive wine industry? (2) How do digital content marketing and social media strategies contribute to the successful internationalisation and differentiation of Romanian wines?

By exploring these questions, we aim to gain a better understanding of how the strategies discussed can help navigate the challenges and opportunities in the wine marketing landscape.

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2. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a structured review protocol, drawing inspiration from the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021), to explore the intricacies of wine marketing strategies and the promotion of Romanian wines through digital platforms.

A systematic search was conducted in academic databases such as Scopus and Web of Science to identify relevant literature and articles. The search used keywords such as "wine marketing", "digital content marketing", "social media marketing", and "Romanian wines". Specific articles such as those of (Antric et al., 2019; Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Galati et al., 2019) were identified as particularly relevant to the research questions. Examining the references of these articles helped identify other relevant studies.

The identified sources were screened for their relevance to the research questions. Articles that offered insight into the role of empathy and innovation in marketing, the impact of digital platforms on consumer engagement, and strategies to promote Romanian wines were selected. For example, works by Hollebeek & Macky (2019) and Robson & Banerjee (2023) provided valuable insights into digital content marketing and brand post popularity on social media platforms.

Data and insights were extracted from the selected sources, including studies by (Lee et al., 2018) on advertising content and consumer engagement on social networks and (Tănase et al., 2022) on Romanian wine tourism. Contributions from works such as (Godin, 2018) on marketing strategies and (Nedelcu et al., 2018) on wine tourism were integrated to propose a comprehensive strategy to promote Romanian wines.

The synthesised data was analysed to address the research questions, focussing on the importance of human-centric marketing approaches and the role of digital platforms in shaping consumer perceptions and brand identity for Romanian wines. The analysis incorporated findings from studies such as those of (Obermayer et al., 2022) on social media practices in the wine industry and (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2021) on content analysis of YouTube channels.

The results of the analysis were reported in a structured manner, with the article divided into sections that address different aspects of wine marketing, the importance of digital content marketing and social media, and strategies for promoting Romanian wines.

This methodology facilitated a thorough exploration of the subject matter, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are well-founded in a systematic review of the available literature and directly address the research questions posed.

3. PUBLIC RELATION AND MARKETING

Public relations (PR) and marketing, while often closely linked in the field of corporate communications and brand management, have distinct roles and objectives that differentiate them. Understanding the distinct roles, strategies, and impacts of PR and marketing is necessary for effective organisational management. Managers must strategically allocate resources, align communication strategies with organisational goals, and evaluate the success of PR and marketing initiatives to ensure cohesive and sustainable growth of the organisation. Nuanced, credibility-focused PR efforts must be balanced with more direct, sales-oriented

approaches of marketing, considering consumer reactions to advertising strategies (Jin et al., 2019), thus underscoring the importance of strategic resource allocation and initiative evaluation in PR and marketing management.

The dynamics and dividing lines have been the subject of debate and dispute. Hutton (2010) has advocated for a clear delineation between PR and marketing. In his work, he has highlighted the challenge PR faces in defining its boundaries with marketing and has fiercely resisted marketing's attempts to subsume or incorporate much of what is traditionally considered the field of PR. This sentiment is shared by McKie & Willis (2012), who have expressed their opposition to what they call "marketing imperialism" and the "forced integration" of PR into the broader discipline of marketing. They argue for a renegotiation of disputes about the boundaries between these two fields.

Essentially, public relations focus on cultivating and preserving a company's or person's image in the public eye. This discipline emphasises the importance of building a reputable image, effectively managing crises when they arise, and cultivating goodwill and understanding between an organisation and its public, including internal and external stakeholders. Marketing, on the other hand, focuses primarily on promoting products or services with the aim of increasing sales and market share. This requires a thorough understanding of the target audience and their needs, and then providing solutions to meet those needs.

The tools and strategies used by each area also highlight their unique goals. Public relations rely heavily on tactics such as media relations, press releases, event management, and corporate social responsibility initiatives. In contrast, marketing incorporates a broader set of tools, from advertising and promotions to sales campaigns and digital marketing techniques.

In terms of their communicative nature, public relations messages tend to be more nuanced, aiming to create an enabling environment for the organisation. Information shared through public relations channels is not always under the direct control of the company, especially when it is spread through the media. Instead, marketing messages are direct and overtly promotional. They are generally under the direct control of the company, especially in the case of paid advertising.

The measurement of success in these areas is also divergent. Public relations professionals often measure their impact through metrics such as media coverage, sentiment analysis, and changes in public perception. Marketers, meanwhile, quantify their achievements through tangible metrics such as sales figures, market share, conversion rates, and return on investment.

The duration of engagement is another distinguishing factor. Public relations strategies tend to be long-term, continually striving to shape and protect the reputation of the organisation. Marketing efforts, on the contrary, often have explicit timeframes. Some campaigns are short-term, such as seasonal sales or promotional events, while others are long-term efforts aimed at building brand identity.

Also, the element of trust plays different roles in the two disciplines. Public relations, which often relies on indirect communication through trusted third parties, such as journalists, is often perceived as more credible. On the other hand, direct marketing messages may be met with more scepticism. For this reason, marketers use third-party positive opinions such as customer reviews and testimonials to improve their credibility.

Alongside these discussions, there is an interesting contrast between social marketing and PR. Social marketing, as a discipline, has positioned itself in opposition to commercial marketing, carving out a space that emphasises pro-social initiatives. In contrast, although there are categories within PR, such as activist PR, community relations, and public relations for non-profit initiatives, that have prosocial orientations, these have not been conceptualised or unified under a common banner of "social PR" in the same way that social marketing has been delineated from commercial marketing. Given the age of interdisciplinarity, Antric et al. (2019) argue that PR could benefit from intersections with social marketing, providing a collaborative approach in today's complex media landscape.

In a sophisticated industry such as wine, where story and perception can significantly influence consumer choice, synergy between PR and marketing becomes essential. PR can create and shape the narrative around the origin, terroir, and process of wine production, highlight a winery's heritage, its community involvement, and sustainable practices, building a reputable image and evoking emotion. Marketing, on the other hand, can monetise this story by using tools and tactics to reach the right audience and persuade them to buy. Together, PR and marketing promote not only wine as a product but also as an experience, capturing the essence and passion behind every bottle. In this symbiosis, wines are not just sold but presented as part of a cultural and sensory narrative, amplifying the connection between the consumer and the brand.

However, sometimes, as Holden & Cox (2013) point out, what is good for certain individuals may not always align with what is good for the community. Commercial marketers may be more attuned to individual preferences than social marketers. In viticulture, limited-edition wines, promoted as exclusive and of superior quality, reflect a complex relationship between individual aspirations and community perceptions. For experts and collectors, these wines are not only a rarity but also an opportunity to enjoy an exceptional tasting and possibly benefit from an increase in market value. The local community and loyal customers, on the other hand, may perceive these exclusive releases as a departure from the winery's longstanding commitment to community engagement and accessibility. An overemphasis in PR stories on wine exclusivity could create the perception that the winery is moving away from its core values and loyal customers.

Thus, while the appeal of exclusivity may resonate with a select group, it also risks generating a sense of disconnection or marginalisation among the wider community. Such a strategic shift in marketing and public relations could pose challenges for the winery, especially if it is perceived as valuing exclusivity over community inclusion.

4. EMPATHY AND INNOVATION IN MARKETING

Godin (2018) presents a transformative perspective on contemporary marketing practices. It suggests a move away from traditional, transactional tactics, advocating instead a more empathetic and human-centric approach, rather than classic advertising. He criticises the tactics of some marketers, driven by short-term gains, resort to spamming or various tricks, tarnishing the reputation of the profession. The central thesis is that effective marketing transcends simply selling products; it is about the art of cultivating genuine connections and triggering meaningful change, positioning marketers as leaders in society because "Marketing is the process that makes change happen." Godin's work is seen by various scholars as a benchmark in the field (Antric et al., 2019).

The mantra 'learn to see' emphasises the need to perceive audiences as individuals with distinct aspirations, fears, and desires. Thus, empathy emerges as an integral facet of effective marketing. It also introduces the notion of the 'smallest viable market'. By deeply understanding and addressing this niche, businesses can promote dedicated brand advocates who organically expand their brand presence.

Tension is highlighted as an essential element of the marketing dynamic. This tension stems from the gap between an individual's status and the future they aspire to. Savvy marketers exploit this tension by positioning their offerings as the solution to consumer aspirations.

The concept of 'tribes' - groups of people united by shared values - is explored as an alternative to focusing exclusively on sales figures or click-through rates. Such communities not only help to increase brand loyalty, but also help to spread the brand message through shared experiences, such as the impressions gained from a visit to a winery.

Marketers have a dual role: scientists and artists. Scientific marketers use analysis, testing, and measurement to decipher the impact of marketing. However, their methodologies can fail because human behaviour is unpredictable. In contrast, "artist" marketers operate intuitively, innovating, inspiring, and connecting emotionally. This dual identity presents challenges. When we alternate between artistic and scientific approaches, credibility can suffer, making the company appear inconsistent or even misleading. Ambiguity about one's current role - scientist or artist - can lead to bad decisions. For example, a specialist who has been taught marketing as pure science might misapply strict formulas to decisions that should be inherently intuitive.

5. SOCIAL NETWORKS

Approximately 59% of the global population uses social media, and Generation Z accounts for over 10% of users in the United States (Gen Z News Consumption Sources in the U.S. 2022., n.d.). Social Media Marketing (SMM), at its core, strategically uses social media platforms to meet various marketing objectives, from brand visibility to customer interaction (Ashley & Tuten, 2015) or social marketing (Huang et al., 2019). New generations, especially millennials and centenarians, frequently use platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and Pinterest due to their association with 'fashion', 'connection' and 'images' (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2021) impacting quality of life (Choi, 2022).

Each social network comes with its own peculiarities, algorithms, and ways in which users interact. What is effective on Instagram may not have the same impact on LinkedIn (Macarthy, 2015).

In social media marketing, several strategies and associated benefits are essential for brands looking to establish a strong digital presence.

Content creation and selection are essential components of a marketing strategy (Demirgüneq, 2023). Companies not only produce original content that reflects the brand's values, but also actively disseminate third-party content (via share, retweet, etc.) that matches the interests of their audience. This type of personalised content often captures the attention and engagement of the target demographic, increasing visibility and engagement. A consistent approach to content management emphasises the brand's distinctive voice in the digital environment. If

executed well, this strategy can also improve search engine rankings, attracting organic traffic (i.e., unpaid traffic) and reinforcing the brand's position as a leader in its field.

In parallel, the advent of targeted advertising campaigns has revolutionised the advertising landscape. Using the advanced segmentation features offered by social media platforms, brands can create advertising campaigns that perfectly match specific audience groups, defined by demographics, interests, and behaviours. This precise approach to advertising is often linked to higher conversion rates, thus maximising the return on investment.

However, targeted advertising campaigns are not without drawbacks. One of the most obvious disadvantages is the risk of oversaturating certain audience segments with advertising messages, which can lead to advertising fatigue and a decrease in engagement (Marušić & Vranešević, 2021). There are also privacy concerns, as precise targeting may be perceived as invasive or a violation of users' privacy (Wang et al., 2023). This can generate mistrust or even rejection from the target audience. In addition, over-reliance on demographics for targeting can exclude potential customers who do not fit tightly defined parameters, thereby limiting the brand's growth potential. However, some research has shown that indirectly, through connections on social networks, such campaigns also reach people outside the target group. This ripple effect has been quantified as a "social multiplier" of 1.28. That is, the impact of the campaign on the friends of the targeted customers was 28% of the impact on the targeted customers themselves (Ascarza et al., 2017). Targeted campaigns can also be expensive, especially if target audiences are not correctly identified or the messages do not resonate as expected.

Another important strategy focuses on cultivating on-line communities (groups or forums). By encouraging spaces for direct interaction and feedback, brands can cultivate deeper relationships with their audiences. Such communities often become reservoirs of brand loyalty, with members acting as brand advocates. The immediacy of feedback from these communities provides brands with invaluable insights into their products and services. In addition, an active approach to community management can serve as a shield against potential reputational damage, allowing brands to quickly address issues.

However, managing and maintaining digital communities or communicating with customers using social media tools come with their own challenges and drawbacks. First, online communities can be unpredictable. A single negative experience that generates a negative review or an unpopular brand decision can trigger adverse reactions, quickly turning a positive feeling into a negative one (Kushcheva & Eilola, 2023). In addition, moderating discussions and content in these communities can require significant resources, both in terms of time and personnel. There is also the risk that false information or rumours can spread quickly within the community, which can damage the reputation of the brand or sometimes even the person behind the firm in the case of micro-businesses (Sawy & Bögenhold, 2023). Furthermore, communities can sometimes become echo chambers, where divergent views and opinions are suppressed or marginalised, thus limiting diversity and innovation. There is also a fine line between collecting feedback and invading privacy; brands must be cautious in how they collect and use information from their communities so as not to violate members' trust. Maintaining long-term engagement and relevance within a digital community can be challenging, especially in an ever-changing digital landscape.

6. DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING

Digital Content Marketing (DCM) is a promotional approach that focuses on creating and distributing valuable and brand-relevant content on digital platforms. While social media is an essential medium for building relationships with customers, DCM is not limited to social media. One of the most effective methods of DCM outside of social media is maintaining a corporate or trade blog, where companies can publish articles that address topics relevant to their industry, providing valuable insights, tips, and in-depth analysis. A winery or wine distributor could maintain a blog or article section on its website dedicated to wine enthusiasts.

Example of content:

- Wine history: Articles exploring the history of winemaking in different regions, the evolution of grape varieties or the stories behind famous wines.
- Tasting guides: Tips for tasting wines, how to recognise specific notes in a wine, or how to pair wine with different dishes.
- Production process: Articles describing the stages of wine production, from growing grapes to bottling.
- Wine recommendations for special occasions: Wine suggestions for different events such as weddings, anniversaries, or celebrations.
- Interviews with sommeliers or winemakers: Discussions with industry experts offering unique insights and valuable information about the world of wine.

By providing this type of content, the company positions itself as an authority on wine, attracting interested visitors and educating them at the same time. It builds trust and brand loyalty, encouraging customers to explore and purchase the wines featured or recommended on the blog.

However, social media is the most widely used medium to distribute digital content. For a long time, the focus on social networks has been on accumulating followers. However, further analysis revealed that only a fraction of these followers actively interact with the brands followed (Creamer, 2012). This has led to a strategic reorientation, encouraging companies to create content that appeals to a broad audience, but also stimulates engagement. Engagement can be measured by likes, comments, shares, and clicks on messages distributed by the company. Content that reflects the personality of the brand, such as emotion or humour, increases consumer engagement. On the other hand, purely informational content, which presents details about products or promotions, can decrease engagement if presented in isolation (Lee et al., 2018; Penttinen, 2023).

Recent studies (Chan et al., 2023) have shown that alcoholic beverage brands achieved a significantly higher level of user interaction on Facebook compared to venues serving these beverages: an average of 228.7 interactions per post compared to 19.0. In terms of social media marketing (SMM) for alcohol products, the central themes were celebrations, camaraderie, cultural heritage, and contemporary music. The SMM content promoted an elite and aspirational lifestyle while highlighting the premium quality of the drinks. However, an area of concern was the limited attention given to responsible drinking: only 8.1% of the brands' posts addressed this topic and there was a complete absence of this topic in the venues' posts.

Thus, it is essential to strike a balance between strictly informative content, aimed at attracting potential customers and stimulating sales, and content that reflects the personality of the brand, aiming to increase consumer engagement (Lee et al., 2018). This balance becomes even more important in the context of the feed algorithm of different social networks, which relies on the current level of engagement of a company's followers to decide how its content will be presented in the future (e.g., in the user's News Feed or the order of posts).

(Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) emphasise the central role of DCM in metamorphosing potential customers into actual consumers by offering them engaging content. The essence of the content, such as clarity, presentation, and intrinsic value to the user, appears to be paramount to the success of DCM. In addition, the authors acknowledge the theoretical nature of their study and stress the need for empirical investigations to validate and refine the proposed framework and fundamental propositions (FP). They also encourage further academic efforts to explore DCM through alternative theoretical approaches, such as social identity theory or attachment theory.

A study predicted that the presentation, engagement, brand awareness and temporal characteristics of posts from some startups would influence their popularity on social media (Robson & Banerjee, 2023)]. Together, these elements are essential in developing SMM strategies that resonate with the target audience, driving both engagement and conversions.

- **Presentation Characteristics:** This refers to the way the content of the posts is presented. It includes elements such as format, vividness, and the informative nature of the content. For example, the use of images, videos, or animations can enhance the visual appeal of a post, making it more captivating for the audience. In addition, the clarity and relevance of the information presented can determine how informative a post is perceived by its audience.
- **Engagement Characteristics:** Engagement refers to the interactive properties of posts that facilitate two-way communication between brands and their followers. Posts that encourage interaction with users, such as those that contain calls to action, contests, or questions, fall into this category. The idea is that by directly involving the audience, there is a higher likelihood of getting responses, whether in the form of likes, comments, or shares.
- **Characteristics of brand awareness:** These features allow brands to highlight and strengthen their online presence. Elements that highlight the brand's name, core values, or corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives can enhance recognition and loyalty towards the brand. The goal is to ensure that the brand remains in the audience's attention, thereby increasing the chances of positive engagement.
- **Temporal Characteristics:** This category refers to the timing and relevance of posts. It considers factors such as the time of day a post is published, its relevance to current events or seasons, and any time-specific promotions or announcements. The idea is that posts timed to coincide with certain events or periods might receive more attention.

Empirical findings have provided nuanced understanding of these relationships (Robson & Banerjee, 2023). The presentation category was found to be effective in terms of information quality, post-length, and vividness. Although informative and lively posts were seen to promote popularity, long posts did not produce the same positive results. The engagement category was influential in offering deals, interactivity, and member recognition. Regarding the brand awareness category, the brand name, the centrality of the brand, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) had a positive impact on post-popularity. However, the temporal

category received limited support, deviating from previous studies on well-established brands. Only seasonally relevant posts on LinkedIn appeared to have a negative impact on comments.

However, data-based information provided by social media platforms is indispensable, representing a valuable resource in the digital age (Huang et al., 2019). These platforms, equipped with advanced analytical tools, allow brands to probe into user behaviour, assess campaign effectiveness, and measure audience engagement levels. This continuous flow of information, available in real time, not only informs, but also shapes the decision-making process. In a world where speed and adaptability are essential, brands can respond with agility to market fluctuations, adjusting their strategies based on received feedback. Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) and systematically monitoring them provides a clear map of progress, identifying areas of success and points for improvement. Furthermore, through careful analysis, brands can anticipate and react to emerging trends, ensuring that they remain relevant and prominent in an ever-evolving digital landscape. This ability to adapt and innovate, based on concrete data, places brands in an advantageous position, preparing them to successfully navigate the future of digital marketing.

7. MARKETING STRATEGY

Taking into account the aspects discussed in the previous sections and further research (Galati et al., 2019; Nedelcu et al., 2018; Obermayer et al., 2022; Retamosa Ferreiro et al., 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2020; Tănase et al., 2022; Viers et al., 2013), a promotion strategy should include as many of the elements detailed below.

Identification of Target Markets

To efficiently promote Romanian wines, identifying target markets is a crucial step in developing a marketing strategy. A detailed analysis of growth opportunities, potential distribution networks, and obstacles that may arise in different markets is necessary to ensure the success of the initiative.

An initial aspect to consider is selecting a region or country with a high potential for consumption and interest in Romanian wines. To identify these markets, market studies and comparative analyses can be conducted with wines from similar regions. Additionally, identifying opportunities for collaboration with local distributors and retailers to facilitate product access to the target market is important.

Another approach could be to target a specific consumer group, such as wine lovers or professionals in the winemaking field. This may involve organising tastings, participating in specialised events, or creating personalised marketing campaigns to attract the interest of these market segments. In this context, collaboration with sommeliers, wine critics, and other influential figures in the wine industry can greatly help promote Romanian wines and consolidate their reputation.

In addition to identifying target markets, adapting the marketing strategy according to the specifics of each market and consumer preferences is essential. Therefore, promotional messages can be developed highlighting the unique characteristics and traditions of Romanian winemaking, as well as the superior quality of the wines produced in our country.

Development of a Strong Brand Identity

Once the target markets are identified, it is important to create a strong brand image for Romanian wines. This should include a well-defined logo, a specific colour palette, attractive labels, a slogan, and an authentic and memorable story about the origin of Romanian wines.

Also, offering a high level of quality and product consistency is crucial for building a solid reputation and a trustworthy name in the wine industry.

Maintaining consistency across all wine labels is essential, whether the brand is new or already known. Finding a unique element that makes the winery stand out and incorporating it into the brand can aid in brand recognition. Using suitable paper types and special finishes for wine labels can effectively communicate the brand.

Participation in Fairs and International Exhibitions

Participating in industry-specific fairs and international exhibitions is a valuable opportunity for Romanian wine producers, with the potential to increase their visibility and open new markets. At these events, native wines can be showcased to a diversified international audience, including both end consumers and industry professionals.

This strategy requires thorough preparation, including selecting the most representative wines, creating attractive presentation materials, and investing in an exhibition stand that captures the attention of visitors. Also, it is important to set clear objectives for participation in fairs and exhibitions, such as attracting new customers, establishing partnerships with distributors, or increasing market share in a particular region.

In addition to promoting wines among consumers, participation in these events also offers the opportunity to interact with industry professionals, such as importers, distributors, and sommeliers. Collaborating with these individuals can facilitate the entry of Romanian wines into foreign markets and contribute to improving production and marketing processes, following the feedback and recommendations received.

Online Promotion

Nowadays, online promotion is essential for any business, and the wine industry is no exception. Through a well-constructed web platform, Romanian producers can present and market their wines in an attractive and informative manner. Additionally, by using social networks, producers can create an online community of Romanian wine supporters, who can be informed about news and events related to them. Through online promotion campaigns and digital marketing, producers can attract new customers, consolidate relationships with existing clients, and increase their loyalty. This promotion can also include collaboration with influencers and wine bloggers. They can share their experiences related to tasting and enjoying Romanian wines, including in combination with different foods, with a wide audience, which can contribute to increasing awareness of these wines among the public.

Collaboration with Restaurants, Bars, and Specialised Stores

Another effective way to promote Romanian wines is by working with restaurants and bars. These locations can be used to offer tastings of Romanian wines and present products to interested customers. In addition, producers can encourage restaurants and bars to include Romanian wines in their menus, giving customers the opportunity to try them. This strategy can help increase sales of Romanian wines and improve their notoriety and trustworthiness.

Participation in Competitions and Awards

Participating in national and international competitions and awards is an effective strategy to enhance the visibility of Romanian wines and gain recognition for their quality. By participating in such events, wine producers can showcase their products to a wide audience and experienced judges who evaluate wines based on well-established criteria.

Winning awards or receiving honorable mentions in these competitions can increase consumer confidence in Romanian wines and attract the attention of distributors and merchants. Furthermore, these distinctions can contribute to strengthening the reputation of Romanian producers on the international market and opening new export opportunities.

To benefit from participating in competitions and awards, wine producers must know the most relevant events in the field and prepare accordingly. This involves, among other things, continuously improving the quality of the wines, selecting the most representative products to be presented in competitions, and proactively promoting the awards received in communication with customers and business partners.

Promotion of Wine Tourism

Romania has many beautiful and interesting wine regions that can be promoted as tourist destinations. In recent years, wine tourism has become a popular way to promote wine and wine regions. Through wine tourism, producers can present their wines and offer tourists an authentic and enjoyable experience. This strategy can help increase the notoriety of Romanian wines and increase sales through tourists who wish to buy the wines they have tried during their vacation.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This article has explored the diverse world of wine marketing, providing insights into the strategies that can help establish a unique identity in a competitive market. Addressing the first research question, the findings indicate that marketing approaches centred on empathy and innovation are crucial in enhancing the connections consumers form with a wine brand. By cultivating genuine relationships and triggering meaningful change, brands can position themselves as leaders, creating dedicated advocates, and expanding their presence organically.

In response to the second research question, the article reveals the significant role of digital content marketing and social media in promoting Romanian wines internationally. These platforms are not just tools for creating engaging content and building communities, but also sources of valuable insights through data analytics. This allows brands to adapt and innovate according to market trends, thereby increasing brand visibility, fostering consumer engagement, and achieving higher conversion rates.

The article also proposes a comprehensive marketing strategy to enhance the global reputation and visibility of Romanian wines. This strategy includes identifying target markets, developing a strong brand identity, online promotion, collaborations with the hospitality sector, participation in international events and competitions, and promoting wine tourism. Implementing these strategies can help build consumer trust, open new opportunities for growth, and secure a competitive edge in the wine market.

Overall, the insights and strategies discussed offer a practical guide for wine brands aiming to navigate the complexities of the digital marketing landscape. By emphasising empathy, innovation, and the effective use of digital platforms, brands can forge meaningful connections with consumers and establish a distinctive identity in the evolving wine market.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was co-financed by The Bucharest University of Economic Studies during the Ph.D. program.

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