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MASTER THESIS

**STORYTELLING AS A TOOL IN WINE COMMUNICATIONS**

**Elements for Choosing an Impactful Narrative**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research delves into the dynamics of storytelling in wine communication, employing a triangulation study enhanced by personal experiences and insights gained during the WINTOUR Program. This study explores the strategies used in wine communication by analysing qualitative data, literature reviews, and live case studies. The findings show the importance of emotive storytelling, digital strategy implementation, sensory engagement, audience adaptation, authenticity, collaboration, sustainable communication, cross-cultural exchange, and market trend responsiveness. The case studies, including the marketing campaigns for the Wines of Georgia in the UK Market and the Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG, Italy, in the UK Market, serve as a practical explanation of these concepts, offering tangible and useful insights for professionals in the wine industry.

Through a Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose (CRAAP) analysis of the literature review, this research ensures the validity and relevance of its findings. Themes and keywords are identified from the case studies, literature review and qualitative data analysis to arrive at the findings. In the findings, storytelling emerges as a pivotal tool for branding in the wine industry, facilitating deeper connections with consumers and adaptation to evolving market landscapes.

**KEYWORDS:** Wine Communication, Storytelling, Wine Tourism, Marketing Strategy, Digital Strategy, Sensory Storytelling,

## **DISCLAIMER**

This thesis is the result of the researcher's data collection and analysis combined with the internship with Swirl Wine Group. The thesis recognises the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for specific purposes, which constituted about 10-12% of the total effort. AI assistance was employed exclusively for rephrasing text, correcting grammar and sentence structures to be more in line with the academic paper language. It was also used to aid research and understanding concepts. No content generated directly by AI has been included in this paper. All ideas, conceptualisation, analysis and findings presented herein are the researcher's own. The integrity and authenticity of the work have been maintained as per academic standards.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**AI** - Artificial Intelligence

**AIDA Model**- Customer Journey Model based on **A**wareness, **I**nterest, **D**esire, **A**ction

**CRAAP** - **C**urrency, **R**elevance, **A**uthority, **A**ccuracy, and **P**urpose

**DOC** - **D**enominazione di **O**rigine **C**ontrollata

**DOCG** - **D**enominazione di **O**rigine **C**ontrollata e **G**arantita

**EU** - **E**uropean **U**nion

**KPI** - **K**ey **P**erformance **I**ndicators

**Prosecco CV** - Prosecco **C**onegliano **V**aldobbiadene

**SWG** - **S**wirl **W**ine **G**roup

**UK** - **U**nited **K**ingdom

**UNESCO** - **U**nited **N**ations **E**ducational, **S**cientific and **C**ultural **O**rganization

**WINTOUR** - International Master on **W**INe **T**OURism Innovation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A good story inspires. It draws people in, places them at its centre, connects to their emotions, and becomes a part of their memory. That is why storytelling must become an integral tool of corporate communication strategy. Stories create the experience that allows strategy to be understood at a personal level (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

This paper explores the choice of storytelling as a means to communicate about wines and wine regions. Since the dawn of civilisation, storytelling has forged human connections. From ancient tales around fire, storytelling captured and captivated the audience's attention. It has become integral to marketing and wine communication, where narratives of place, tradition and experience attract consumers. Drawing from case studies of marketing campaigns for Wines of Georgia and the Consorzio di Tutela del Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbiadene (Prosecco CV), along with qualitative data analysis using thematic coding and triangulation methods, this research aims to identify the narrative choices made by wine communicators.

Stories add real magic to wine. As Jean-Michel Cazes, of Bordeaux's Château Lynch-Bages, says, 'Wine is the only time machine that works (Pitt, 2017). The interplay between wine as a time machine and consumer phenomena such as nostalgia and emotional experiences offers a field of research for wine marketers and consumer psychologists.'

Throughout the research paper, wine communication refers to communication strategies for both wines and wine tourism. According to Bonarou et al. (2019), storytelling about a wine or a winery cannot be separated from storytelling about the wine tourism destination. Wines are always about the terroir, and the region greatly affects the terroir. Wineries are part of the region, and the wine region cannot succeed without its wineries' fame and success. In addition, the literature review further highlights the interconnectedness of communicating about wines and wine regions and how they effortlessly transition into one another.

As Bonarou et al. (2019) contended, we have been told stories ever since childhood, and as adults, we continue to tell, read, watch, and hear plenty of stories many times

a day. In today's communication strategies, this translates to content marketing strategies. But not all content tells a story. And that is why it is important to choose the right narrative.

The findings of this research highlight important elements of the stories and how the proper narrative can impact your target audience and benefit all stakeholders.

## **2. INTERNSHIP**

### **2.1 Swirl Wine Group**

The internship was carried out with Swirl Wine Group (SWG), a wine marketing consulting agency based in London, UK. Swirl Wine Group specialises in providing comprehensive marketing and public relations services for the wine and spirits industry. The company, founded by Sarah Abbott, Master of Wine, offers tailored brand development, event management and strategic communication solutions. The team consists of an expert group of consultants that help clients enhance their brand visibility and connect with the target audience. SWG also organises industry events, tastings and masterclasses to promote engagement and education within the wine community. The company is instrumental in putting the client's wines in front of the UK trade and wine communicators to increase awareness about the wines from emerging wine regions and help them find the right niche in the dynamic UK wine market.

### **2.2 Internship Duties**

The internship that formed the practical foundation for this thesis was conducted at Swirl Wine Group from February 2024 to June 2024. SWG offered the internship role of Digital Communicator with the aim of increasing the company's and clients' online reach. The primary responsibilities included increasing the digital presence, developing engaging content, writing articles for the client's website, and actively participating in developing marketing and digital strategies that were sustainable throughout the year.

In addition to the main tasks, duties also included providing valuable insights and ideas to shape comprehensive marketing strategies for clients to help them meet their objectives and target audiences. Monitoring and evaluating the performance of digital

campaigns, leveraging data analytics and Key Performance Indicators (KPI) tracking to assess the effectiveness and identify areas for optimisation, was also a significant part of the internship.

## **2.3 Introduction to Thesis Topic and Objective**

The thesis topic, "Storytelling as a Tool in Wine Communications: Elements for Choosing an Impactful Narrative," explores the relationship between storytelling and effective communication within the wine industry. In today's competitive market, where consumers seek authentic connections and experiences, the art of storytelling has emerged as an important tool for wineries and wine communicators. Since SWG does not have a dedicated wine tourism offering or consulting, wine communication as a broader topic was chosen to include wine, winery and wine tourism communication.

This study delves into how narratives shape perceptions, influence consumer behaviour, and ultimately drive engagement and loyalty. Through an in-depth analysis of case studies and qualitative data, this research aims to uncover the underlying elements that contribute to the success of storytelling in wine communication strategies.

The study's objective is to understand why communicators chose a particular narrative to introduce a wine or wine region to the end consumers, find the critical elements of a good narrative and provide insights for all the stakeholders (including SWG) involved in the wine industry. Through the insights and findings, the wineries and wine communicators can understand the market trends and changing consumer behaviour, promote authentic communication and build loyal consumer connections.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Storytelling is a powerful tool in marketing, especially in the world of wine communication. This review dives into how storytelling can transport consumers away to another world, strengthen trust, and make their wine experience unforgettable. This wine experience can be in the form of drinking wines, attending a wine fair or visiting a winery or a wine region. In the context of wine communication, storytelling plays a major role in shaping the perception and experience of a wine or region. Woldarsky (2019) shows us that stories aren't

just words but emotional journeys. By including emotions into narratives, wineries can build trust, create connections, and keep visitors engaged. In today's competitive market, standing out is crucial. Frost et al. (2020) discovered that wineries use storytelling to highlight their heritage and set themselves apart. Authenticity becomes their secret weapon in drawing in tourists and keeping them captivated. Pera (2014) takes it a step further, showing how storytelling in tourism lets visitors shape their own experiences. Consumers feel a deeper connection when they become part of the story, adding value to their customer journey.

Bassano et al. (2019) found that first-person narratives work wonders when it comes to online storytelling. They boost engagement and make consumers more likely to visit and remember a destination. It emphasises that personalising the story makes all the difference. But does storytelling really impact the wine tourism experience? Absolutely, says Pachucki et al. (2021). Their research reveals that wine storytelling heightens the senses, immerses tourists in culture, and excites them. The same experience stands true for communicating about wine. The stories heighten the taste of the wine being discussed or tasted at an event.

Santos et al. (2022) show us that storytelling doesn't just create emotions—it creates loyal customers. By connecting with consumers on a personal level, wineries can charge higher prices and keep them coming back for more. From sharing winemaker tales to celebrating regional uniqueness, using the correct narrative can make all the difference in attracting the right kind of visitors. The target audience of one wine or wine region may differ from the other wine or wine region. Therefore, understanding the target audience is important before deciding on the story you want to tell.

In wine communication and wine tourism, wine is uniquely tied to its region, culture, and people. Effective storytelling in this industry must reflect these connections, using narratives to enhance the tourist experience and promote the wine region's identity (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Successful wine storytelling combines elements of family tradition, sustainability, and modernity, often emphasising quality and regional characteristics (Golicic et al., 2016). However, there is also a need to include the future of the wine in the stories. Using tools of the future and marketing 5.0, the wine communication industry needs to embrace visual e-storytelling and AI to shape the future of marketing (Kotler et al., 2021)

The "Wine Roads of Northern Greece" network exemplifies these principles, offering a well-organized wine tourism experience that highlights the region's unique attributes through comprehensive online narratives (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011). As seen in the study, this network's websites use language, images, and multimedia to create compelling brand and destination narratives, focusing on themes such as family tradition, authenticity, sustainability, and modernity. Effective e-storytelling in wine tourism relies on high-quality content and visual appeal to attract and engage tourists, promoting the individual wineries and the wine region (Carter & Joseph, 2013).

The world is moving towards using AI for communication, while the wine industry still needs to improve its use of social media for communication. This need to adapt to new technological marketing tools was also seen during our studies, multiple field trips, and internships undertaken during the WINTOUR program.

Collectively, these studies underscore the important role of storytelling in wine tourism, emphasising its capacity to go beyond traditional marketing strategies, form emotional connections, and increase the overall consumer experience. As wineries continue to utilise the power of narratives, they stand to benefit not only in their sales but also in creating a brand recognised through stories and discoveries. To better understand the research context, the literature review is further divided into sections to highlight and define the terms and concepts used in this paper.

## **Defining Storytelling**

Storytelling is the art of crafting and conveying narratives that engage the audience's emotions, imagination, and senses. It involves creating a compelling storyline, characters, and a sequence of events that resonate with the listener or reader. Effective storytelling can transport the audience to a different time and place, promoting a deeper connection with the subject matter (Hasson et al., 2015; Luna, 2021). Storytelling has always been an intrinsic part of human societies, used to share knowledge, wisdom, and values across different mediums, from oral traditions to digital multimedia (Pellowski, 1990; Malita & Martin, 2010). It is important to note that storytelling does not always involve the past or history. Stories about the future are equally important and essential, and there is a need to start conversations

about future innovations while staying rooted in traditions. Good stories stimulate word-of-mouth and help companies build strong identities and meaningful customer relationships (Malita & Martin, 2010; Mora & Livat, 2013).

## **Defining Wine Communication**

Wine communication involves the strategies and methods to share information and stories about wine with different audiences. Wine communicators play a key role in this process. They create and share stories about wine brands, including their history, values, and unique qualities. They produce engaging content like articles, social media posts, videos, and blogs to attract and inform consumers in order to build relationships with media, influencers, and industry stakeholders to gain positive responses. Organising events, festivals, and wine tastings for wine brands and using digital communication are all part of wine communication. Karen MacNeil, in her conversation with Areni Global podcast (Vicard, 2024), says wine communication is the ability to excite someone enough about wine that they want to run right out and buy a bottle of wine and open it with a friend.

## **Use of Storytelling in Marketing**

Storytelling has been a necessary tool in marketing, as it helps brands connect with their target audience on an emotional level. Storytelling in marketing allows consumers to see themselves as the main character, creating a meaningful bond between the brand and the customer (Pulizzi, 2012; Gilliam et al., 2021). Throughout this research, emotional connection to stories has emerged as an important concept in wine communication. Stories about sustainability, innovation and climate issues aim to have a close eye on the future of the wines and be a part of storytelling. Stories can transform a simple wine tasting into an immersive and memorable experience (Beverland, 2006).

## **Storytelling as a Tool for Communication and Connection**

Stories have the ability to transcend cultural boundaries and create a shared understanding among diverse audiences. They tap into universal human experiences, emotions, and values, facilitating communication and fostering connections. Storytelling

presents information in a structured and familiar format that our brains are wired to process and remember (Gough et al., 2017). When we hear or read a story, our brains activate the same neural pathways as if we were experiencing the events ourselves. Stories also contain recognisable patterns that activate our minds and influence our thinking, making them more memorable and impactful than mere facts or data (Hasson et al., 2015; Luna, 2021).

## **Defining Wine Tourism**

Wine tourism's definitions have grown more complex as the phenomenon has expanded. According to Hall and Macionis (1998), wine tourism involves visiting vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and shows primarily for wine tasting and experiencing the grape wine region. Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) highlight that definitions often encompass a lifestyle experience, educational components, and linkages to art, wine, and food, positioning it as a marketing opportunity that enhances the region's economic, social, and cultural values. Wine tourism firms typically offer a range of services, including hospitality, wine tasting, food, tours, cooking courses, and special events (Presenza et al., 2010).

Wine tourism has evolved due to the cooperation between the wine and tourism industries, relying on visitation to wineries. However, it truly flourishes only when integrated with the broader concept of “tourist terroir” or “winescape” of a region (Bruwer & Sigala, 2016; Hall & Mitchell, 2002; Peters, 1997). Wine tourism has significantly grown since the mid-1990s, becoming a valuable component of both gastronomic and rural tourism and cultivating synergies for sustainable tourism development (Hall et al., 2000; Getz et al., 2014; UNWTO, 2016).

## **Storytelling in Wine Communication**

Wine communication combines the elements of storytelling in both wine and tourism. Wineries can leverage storytelling to create a multi-sensory experience for visitors, where the ambience, knowledgeable staff, and culinary experiences all contribute to the narrative. Compelling storytelling in wine communication can transform a simple visit into an unforgettable experience, deepening visitors' appreciation for the wine and the region (Alant & Bruwer, 2004). Storytelling narratives around a destination's history, culture, and traditions can

transport visitors to a different time and place, fostering a deeper connection with the location (Chronis et al., 2012; MacLeod, 2019).

With the advent of the digital era, e-storytelling has become a significant component of content marketing strategy. It ranges from simple narratives using words and pictures to complex multimedia presentations, serving as a medium for expression, communication, integration, and imagination (Malita & Martin, 2010). Engaging wine industry storytelling must use brand- and customer-centric narratives. Brand-centric stories present the wineries or wines at their best, while customer-centric stories relate to the experiences and feedback shared by consumers (Mossberg, 2008).

In wine communication, the winemaker often serves as a central character in the narrative, creating a strong emotional bond with the audience (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). The winemaker's story, combined with elements of nature, history, and culture, enhances the overall appeal and authenticity of the wine tourism experience.

For wineries, tourism offers a unique opportunity to build relationships, educate clients, increase direct sales, and enhance their brand image and identity, along with the overall brand identity of the wine region (Getz et al., 1999; Olaru, 2012).

### **Stories Beyond Verbal and Written Words**

While verbal and written narratives are common forms of storytelling, stories can be conveyed through various mediums, including visual arts, music, and even experiences. Sensory and Experiential marketing has garnered much interest and positive reception in wine tourism (Quadri-Felitt & Fiorei, 2012). For example, a winery's place, architecture, and sensory elements can contribute to the overall narrative, creating a multisensory storytelling experience (Gilliam et al., 2021).

Regarding visual imagery, pictures of the wine harvest season are predominant. Still, images of vineyards covered in snow during winter also appear, creating a distinctive atmosphere and alternative scenery that may resonate with tourists. The wine industry generally employs flattering text, bright or warm tones, and earthy colours (with green, red/Bordeaux, brown, and purple being prominent), as well as high-quality images (though occasionally lower quality photos/videos are seen) to offset the challenges and issues faced by rural areas. Consequently, the visual semiotic analysis indicates that wine symbolises the "myth

of a good life," and wine tourism embodies a high degree of freedom through an escape from everyday urban living.

Whatever channels are used, wine communication must always maintain a balance between the stories it tells. Bonarou et al. (2019) also emphasise the power of stories. Powerful stories use details, are personal, and have characters with strong emotions and triggering actions that can engage the audience. Wine producers ought to learn, understand, and develop their stories, reveal their "hidden secrets," and share them in a creative and fresh way.

### Choosing the Stories to Tell

When selecting stories to tell, it's important to consider the target audience, their cultural background, and their preconceived notions about the wine or region. Storytelling should resonate with the audience's values, experiences, and emotions, creating a meaningful connection. Additionally, the stories should align with the brand's identity and authentically represent the wine or region being promoted (Gough et al., 2017).

According to Bonarou et al. (2019, Table 7.3), good stories are based on answering essential questions such as "Why do you exist?" and "What makes your wine region unique?" These questions are crucial for embracing AI and future tools in the wine communication industry. Table 1.1 represents the questions asked in the study.

Table 1.1 Good stories are based on good answers
Why do you exist? What's your special story? What stories exist behind your brand, labels, logos and wine varieties? What values/attributes distinguish you from competitors and what values/attributes do you have in common? What makes your wine region unique? What are the stories of your region? What makes your wine route (not just winery) worth visiting? What do you offer, besides great wine? What do the tourists say about you? What are the stories or your visitors?

Fagioli et al. (2022) study on wineries' communication strategies reveals considerable regional differences in Northern, Central, and Southern Italy. Central Italian wineries focus on company-centric communication, while those in the North and South emphasise production methods and territory respect. Notably, Northern wineries are the only ones that mention environmental sustainability. The differing strategies reflect regional priorities and the stories that each region chooses to tell, focusing on their values and philosophy (Fagioli et al., 2022).

Understanding the target audience is also important in crafting effective stories. Different generations, cultural backgrounds, and preconceived notions can influence how a story is perceived and interpreted. Tailoring the narrative to the audience's preferences, values, and experiences can enhance engagement and create a stronger emotional connection (Pulizzi, 2012; Gilliam et al., 2021).

Preconceived notions about a wine region or story can shape the audience's expectations and perceptions. During this research interview, pre-conceived notions towards the wines of Georgia and Conegliano Valdobbiadene Superiore Prosecco DOCG were highlighted. Successful storytelling should acknowledge and address these preconceived notions by challenging them or incorporating them into the narrative in a way that resonates with the audience. By harnessing preconceived notions, storytellers can create a more engaging and relatable experience for the audience (Solomon et al., 2022). The marketing campaigns for the wines of Georgia have effectively used these notions to have an impactful strategy, as seen in the case study section of this paper.

### **New Generation and Attention Span**

The attention span of younger generations, who are also new and future consumers, presents a challenge for storytellers. These audiences often have shorter attention spans and are accustomed to consuming information in bite-sized formats. Storytelling for these generations may require adapting narratives to be more concise, visually appealing, and interactive while maintaining emotional impact and authenticity (Pulizzi, 2012; Gilliam et al., 2021). This is where the use of digital strategies becomes important.

The above literature review forms a strong foundation for this research by including many relevant studies done in the past that highlight the use of storytelling in wine

communication. This review is further analysed to extract themes and studied alongside other themes derived through thematic coding of qualitative data collected through interviews.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative research approach, incorporating multiple data sources and methods to triangulate findings. Data collection methods included:

1. Case studies of the marketing campaigns made for the Wines of Georgia and Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene for the UK market were used to understand the current marketing strategies used by the Swirl Wine Group.
2. To identify themes, the qualitative data collected by interviewing 25 wine communicators in the UK was analysed thematically.
3. CRAAP analysis of the literature review to confirm the validity and accuracy of previous studies and to derive keywords and themes.
4. To arrive at findings and conclusions, the triangulation method was used. This method included analysing the themes identified in the case studies, literature review, and qualitative data collected through interviews.

### **4.1 CASE STUDIES**

This section delves into the marketing campaign strategies employed for two live campaigns by Swirl Wine Group: "Wines of Georgia" and "Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene Superiore DOCG". The analysis begins with a comprehensive SWOT assessment, followed by an exploration of the campaign strategies implemented for the respective clients.

#### **4.1.1 Case Study: Marketing Campaign for Wines of Georgia in the UK Market**

This case study details the strategic marketing campaign initiated by Swirl Wine Group for the National Wine Agency of Georgia, aimed at expanding distribution, educating UK trade about the wine region, and increasing marketing penetration. The campaign began in 2017 and has been revised annually to adapt to market trends and progress. The primary objectives include increasing the volume and value of Georgian wine imports, raising

awareness of Georgian wine quality and diversity, enhancing market penetration, positioning Georgian wine as the homeland of wine with 8000 years of unbroken vintages, and supporting both new and existing producers.

With its 8000 years of winemaking heritage, Georgia possesses a rich culture that positions its wines as unique and premium. Despite this long history, Georgian wines face several challenges in finding their place in the highly competitive and dynamic UK market, dominated by established wine-producing countries like France, Italy, and Spain. The Georgian wine industry lacks significant brand recognition, and the diverse offerings of its unique grape varieties remain largely unknown to the UK consumer. This case study explores the marketing campaign's strategies, challenges, and outcomes designed to elevate Georgian wines' profile and market share in the UK. By leveraging its historical narrative and focusing on quality, the campaign seeks to carve out a niche for Georgian wines in the premium segment of the UK wine market.

## SWOT Analysis

Figure 1.2 highlights the SWOT analysis of the Georgian Wines in the UK Market.

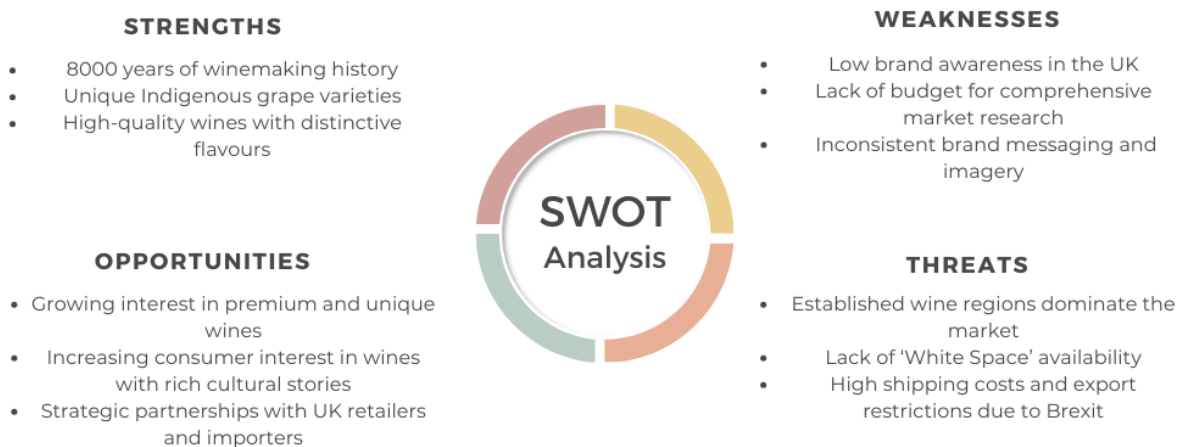


Figure 1.1 SWOT Analysis for Market Entry in the UK - Wines of Georgia

**Strengths:** Georgia boasts an impressive heritage with 8000 years of unbroken winemaking tradition, making it one of the oldest wine-producing regions in the world. The wines are still made using Qvevri, a traditional winemaking method that has been employed for centuries, adding to their uniqueness and authenticity. This traditional method is also recognised as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Monument. Additionally, Georgian wines are made from indigenous grape varieties that are not found elsewhere, making them unique to the terroir. This distinctiveness is a strong selling point in a market that increasingly values originality and diversity. Moreover, Georgian wines have garnered praise from many experts, winning numerous medals and being recognised for their outstanding quality.

**Weaknesses:** Despite these strengths, Georgian wines face significant challenges in penetrating the UK market due to low brand recognition. Without a strong brand presence or established players in this niche category, attracting the attention of consumers unfamiliar with Georgian wines becomes difficult. The lack of market research in the UK further compounds this issue, as producers lack insights into market trends and consumer preferences. Additionally, inconsistent brand messaging and imagery across different markets weaken the overall impact of marketing efforts.

**Opportunities:** There are several promising opportunities for Georgian wines in the UK market. The growing interest in premium and unique wines aligns well with the high-quality wines produced in Georgia, which can be paired with gastronomical experiences and positioned in the premium category. Additionally, there is a rising consumer interest in wines with rich cultural stories. Stories of both the past and future appeal to today's consumers, and Georgia has an abundance of both. These wines are built on strong traditions while looking towards a bright future. As the trade becomes more educated about Georgian wines, there is increased interest in sourcing and presenting these wines to consumers through strategic partnerships with UK retailers and importers.

**Threats:** The Georgian wine industry also faces several threats in the UK market. Established wine regions dominate the market, making it highly competitive with a vast array of global wines available. As a niche category, Georgian wines must find the right market segment or "white space" to gain traction. However, this threat can be transformed into an opportunity with the right marketing strategy. Additionally, export restrictions due to Brexit and

the economic recession have made many importers hesitate to sign up for new business, posing a barrier to market entry.

## **CAMPAIGN STRATEGY**

Based on the SWOT analysis, marketing campaigns developed by SWG to meet the client's goal of achieving market penetration and brand awareness in the UK market are discussed below.

### **Brand Positioning**

The marketing campaign developed by Swirl Wine Group emphasises the premium quality and heritage of Georgian wines. Georgia is a culturally rich country with something for everyone, and the marketing narrative is built around that.

### **Market Entry Support**

To promote the niche category of Georgian wine, SWG also provides market entry support by educating wine producers to understand UK market trends and consumer preferences. The strategy also includes guidance on pricing strategies and networking with the UK trade and importers through tastings and masterclasses.

### **Distribution Channels**

Both on-trade and off-trade channels are targeted to have an overall distribution strategy. They focus on high-end restaurants and bars, with education for sommeliers to pair Georgian wines with food. For off-trade, the target is to penetrate independent wine shops as well as national retail chains. With the advent of online retail channels gaining traction, it is important to include them in the marketing strategy to reach a broader audience.

## **Marketing and Promotions**

The most important part of the entry strategy in the UK wine market is marketing communication and promotions. To put the brand in front of the consumer, multiple touch points are needed to grab attention. This is done by attending trade events like Prowein, London Wine Fair, Specialist Importers Trade Tastings, and by holding masterclasses for the trade people, including experts, journalists, wine shops and restaurant owners.

The UK wine influencer market is also well established, and collaborations and press trips for communicators are conducted to build credibility and reach. Visiting a wine region or trying the wines, and meeting producers open multiple storytelling channels for the communicators. Traditional and digital media for media campaigns also play a vital part in raising awareness.

## **Results and Outcomes of the Campaign Strategy**

Over the past few years, there has been a notable increase in the awareness of Georgian wines among UK consumers and trade professionals. As of 2023, 300+ Independent Retailers now stock Georgian wine, and 6 National Retailers have expanded or introduced the Georgian wine range. There is also National coverage in lifestyle press, as well as in wine specialist and wine trade press, with a 113k total print circulation and 3.8M total monthly website visits. All this has been significant in growing the sales and Increasing the volume and value of Georgian wine imports to the UK.

The strategic marketing campaign by Swirl Wine Group for the National Wine Agency of Georgia has made substantial progress in establishing Georgian wines as a premium choice in the UK market. Despite challenges, the campaign's focus on storytelling about heritage, quality, and strategic market entry has led to increased awareness, market penetration, and sales growth. Ongoing efforts and adaptations to the strategy will be crucial for sustained success and continued growth in the competitive UK wine market.

## 4.1.2 Case Study: Marketing Campaign for Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene

### Prosecco Superiore DOCG in the UK Market

This case study examines the strategic marketing campaign conducted by Swirl Wine Group for the Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG. Aimed at strengthening the brand's presence in the UK, this ongoing campaign focuses on educational initiatives and awareness-building activities. The UK, being the largest export market for wines from this region for two consecutive years, 2022 and 2023 (Redazione, 2023), underscores the importance of this market. The campaign's objectives include increasing sales, raising awareness of the region's unique qualities, and differentiating the DOCG wines from their DOC counterparts.

Prosecco is a very well-known term in the UK wine market, but the brand association of prosecco is with light, fun, inexpensive sparkling wine. The Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG region, recognised as a UNESCO heritage site, is renowned for its premium sparkling wines. As per an SWG report, in 2022, the UK became the largest export market for these wines for the second year in a row, with sales exceeding 10 million bottles valued at €56 million. This reflects a year-on-year increase of 7% in volume and 11.3% in value. Despite this success, the Consorzio faces the challenge of differentiating its DOCG wines from the more widely known DOC Prosecco. This case study explores the strategic initiatives undertaken to elevate the profile of Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG in the UK market, highlighting educational efforts, trade engagement, and digital outreach.

The objectives of the campaign were clearly defined and focussed on: Raising Awareness: Enhance awareness of Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG wines in the UK.

1. Educating the Market: Educate UK buyers, press, and consumers about the region's unique qualities and heritage.
2. Differentiating DOCG: Distinguish DOCG wines from DOC Prosecco among trade and consumers.
3. Increasing Sales: Boost sales volume and value in the UK market.

- Engaging Younger Audiences: Utilize digital and social media strategies to attract younger wine enthusiasts.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

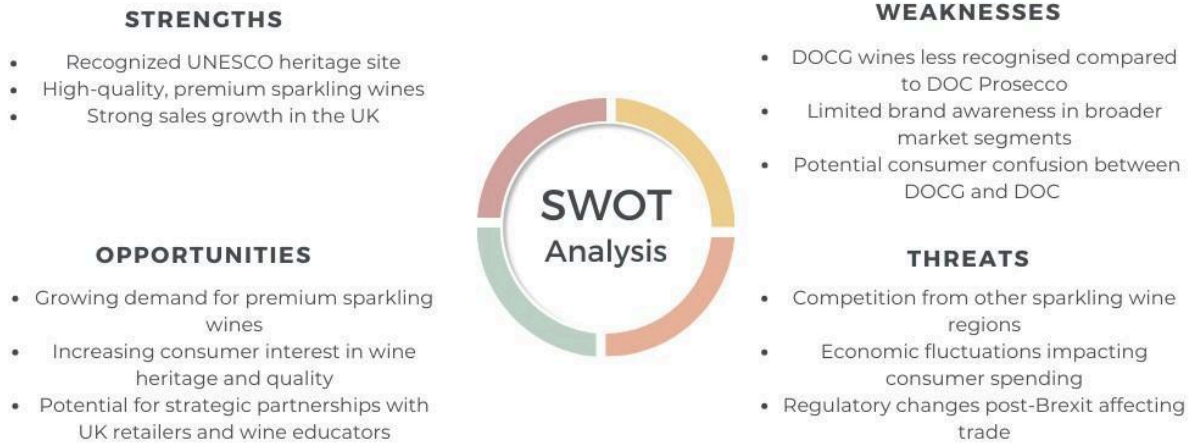


Figure 1.2 SWOT Analysis for Market Entry in UK - Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG

Figure 1.2 highlights the SWOT analysis of Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG.

**Strengths:** The Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG (hereby referred to as ProseccoCV) region is a designated UNESCO heritage site with significant historical and cultural significance, lending an air of prestige and authenticity to its wines. Additionally, the region produces high-quality, premium sparkling wines recognised for their distinctive flavour profiles and superior craftsmanship. The robust sales growth in the UK market, with over 10 million bottles sold in 2022, reflects a growing recognition and appreciation of these strengths, indicating a solid foundation for future market expansion.

**Weaknesses:** Despite its strengths, ProseccoCV faces several weaknesses that could hinder its market penetration. One of the primary challenges is the relative lack of recognition for DOCG wines compared to the more widely known DOC Prosecco. This limited

brand awareness to distinguish DOCG wines from DOC necessitates substantial investment in educational and awareness-building initiatives.

**Opportunities:** A growing consumer demand for premium sparkling wines is driven by a rising interest in quality, craftsmanship, and heritage. This trend aligns well with the Prosecco CV region's offerings, presenting an opportunity to capture a larger market share. Strategic partnerships with UK retailers, wine educators, and influencers can further amplify this message, helping to reach a broader audience. The potential for targeted digital and social media campaigns aimed at younger consumers, who are more likely to engage with and be influenced by online content, presents another opportunity to increase brand visibility and engagement.

**Threats:** The sparkling wine market in the UK is highly competitive, with well-established regions like Champagne and other Prosecco producers dominating consumer preferences. This intense competition requires continuous efforts to differentiate and highlight the unique qualities of DOCG wines. Economic fluctuations, such as changes in consumer spending habits due to economic downturns, can also pose a threat, as premium wines are often considered non-essential luxury items. Regulatory changes, particularly those resulting from Brexit, may affect trade policies, import regulations, and tariffs, potentially complicating the export process and increasing costs.

## **CAMPAIGN STRATEGY**

Based on the SWOT analysis, marketing campaigns developed by SWG to meet the client's goal of raising awareness about DOCG wines and educating consumers in the UK market are discussed below.

### **Brand Positioning**

The campaign's main aim is to highlight Prosecco's Premium Quality and emphasise its UNESCO heritage status. These aims guided the marketing efforts, and all communication through the trade bureau, events, and press ensured that the Superiore DOCG brand was positioned to attract the right target audience.

## **Educational Initiatives**

The first step of the brand positioning was education and awareness. Comprehensive Trade and Press Tastings were organised in London to showcase the diversity of DOCG wines. The AIDA customer journey model emphasises that a consumer only gets interested, shows desire, and takes action on that desire (to purchase or interact with the brand) once awareness is created.

Incoming trips to the region were also arranged so that the UK press and wine educators could experience the region firsthand, understand the difficult yet unique conditions that make this wine special, and place it in the premium category while communicating about ProseccoCV.

## **Digital and Social Media Outreach**

Targeted Campaigns to run digital outreach are part of the marketing strategy to target younger wine enthusiasts. Social Media Engagement is important because all social media platforms need to be used to share stories, educate consumers, and promote the unique qualities of DOCG wines.

## **Results and Outcomes of the Campaign Strategy**

With the help of the targeted marketing campaign, Swirl Wine Group has increased awareness and contributed to the nuanced understanding of ProseccoCV wines among UK consumers and trade professionals. It has also resulted in continued sales volume and value growth in the UK market. The campaign has also been instrumental in brand differentiation of DOCG wines from the DOC Prosecco, leading to a stronger market position.

There is a lot of emphasis on using the UNESCO heritage status of the Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco hills for communication. Including the Prosecco Hills in the UNESCO World Heritage list highlights its unique cultural ecosystem and exceptional landscape. This status aids in developing and marketing the region as a sustainable wine tourism destination by accessing financial assistance from the World Heritage Fund and other

partnerships. The UNESCO designation not only preserves the region's value for future generations but also enhances its tourism appeal through its natural beauty, geographical setting, and cultural products (Bruwer & Joy, 2017; Carmichael, 2005; Getz & Brown, 2006). Visitors' satisfaction is enriched by the aesthetic experiences offered by the winescapes (Bruwer et al., 2013). Thus, the recognition of UNESCO ensures that the Prosecco Hills remains a treasured destination celebrated for its winescapes and cultural heritage.

By focusing on educational initiatives, trade engagement, and digital outreach to promote the UNESCO hills, the campaign has successfully highlighted the unique qualities and heritage of DOCG wines. Ongoing efforts and adaptive strategies are essential in maintaining and further enhancing the brand's presence in the competitive UK wine market.

## **4.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

### **4.2.1 Data Collection**

The qualitative data for thematic coding was collected by interviewing 25 wine communicators in the UK wine industry. The data pool consisted of masters of wine, journalists, PR consultants, wine magazine editors, wine consultants, wine educators, podcasters, bloggers and TV show broadcasters. The researcher ensured the inclusion of different types of communicators that use storytelling in one or more ways to communicate about wine. Given that the case studies used were from two specific regions - Georgia and Conegliano Valdobbiadene in Italy – care was taken during the interviewee selection to have a mix of communicators who have visited or written about wines from these regions, as well as those who have never worked with these regions. The interviewees also included established writers who have been communicating about wine for decades, along with new faces and influencers in the wine communication field.

#### 4.2.2 Thematic Coding

A comprehensive study was undertaken involving interviews with 25 wine communicators in the UK to understand the different strategies used for effective wine communication. The questionnaire and the draft email with the request for an interview are provided in Annexure 2. The six stories model shared by one of the interviewees is shared in Annexure 4. Through qualitative data analysis employing thematic coding, key themes and insights into the art of storytelling in wine communication were identified. Each interviewee offered a unique perspective, drawing from their experience and expertise in the industry. A deeper understanding of the wine narrative's elements was uncovered by dissecting their responses and identifying recurring patterns. The insights included the importance of historical context, emotional resonance, differentiation, and audience targeting in developing wine communication strategies. With qualitative research and data-driven analysis, the following conclusions emerged.

The first themes identified related to choosing the right narrative, also illustrated in figure 1.3. Most respondents emphasised the cultural and historical significance of the wine region along with the need for personal experience and human connection, fostering trust and a deeper connection to the wine or the wine region. Differentiation and uniqueness were also identified as central themes in order to find the unique selling point and set them apart from the competition. While consistent storytelling ensures brand coherence and consumer trust, there was also a theme to seek out lesser-known stories to add depth and authenticity to the narrative. There were many respondents who championed the idea of using technology and AI aspects along with emotional storytelling and integrating design, audio and visuals to add factual value and recall to the brand. Ultimately, tailoring the communication to the target audience was identified as an important theme that can lead to better reception and impact. The data sheet used to develop figure 1.3 is presented in Annex 1, Table 1 and includes the themes along with illustrative quotes.

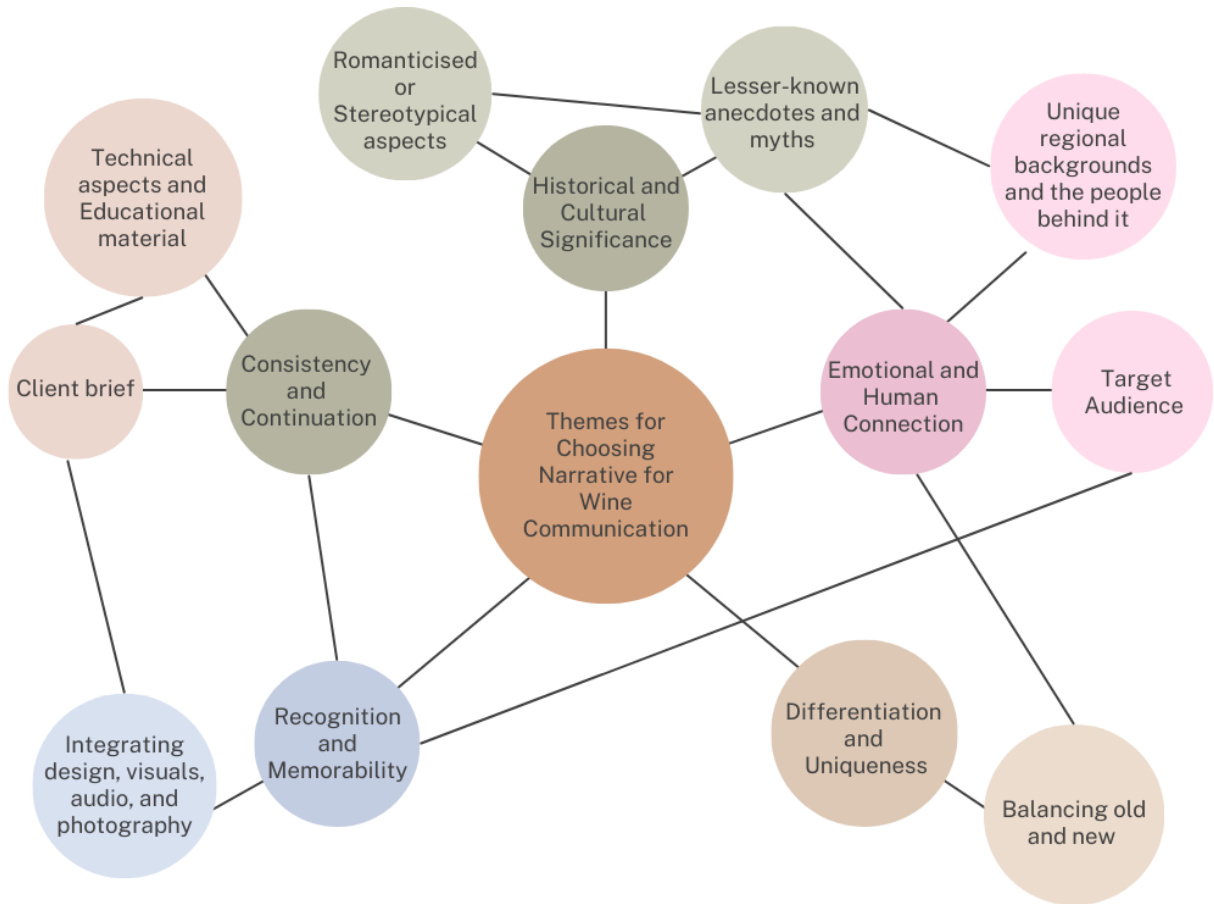


Figure 1.3 Themes identified for choosing a narrative in wine communication

Once the narrative is chosen and communicated, it is important to measure its effectiveness. To manage, we must measure, which is a mantra all marketing communicators live by. A second set of themes were identified to measure effective communication. These are represented in figure 1.4. The figure shows the different methods used by communicators to measure the effectiveness of strategies within the wine communication industry. Firstly, there is a quantitative analysis of sales metrics, visitor visits, click-through rates and social media engagement. These represent the quantifiable goals. However, interaction with audiences through receptivity, feedback, and testimonials is the qualitative analysis that helps to understand whether the message resonates with the audience or not. Finally, client satisfaction and retention are crucial metrics that reflect the success of communication strategies in meeting client objectives and nurturing long-term relationships. Whether it's through publication success or feedback from participants, client satisfaction serves as a testament to the effectiveness of

the communication approach. The themes represented in figure 1.4, along with the quotes where they were derived from, is explained in Annexure 1, Table 2.

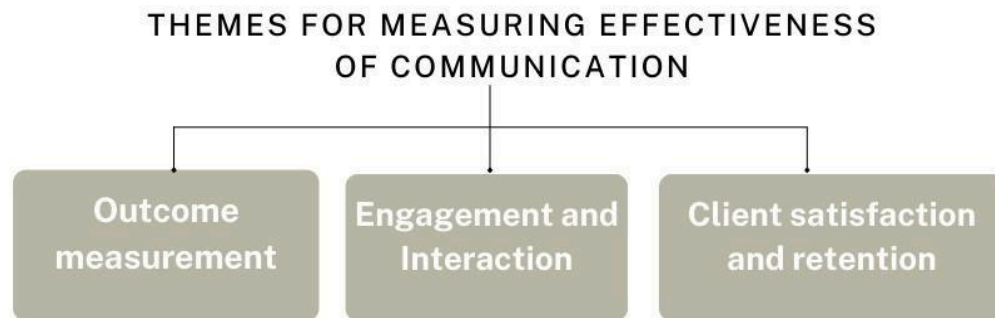


Figure 1.4 Themes identified in measuring the effectiveness of wine communication

The third set of themes were identified to understand the challenges faced by wine communicators and are represented in figure 1.5. Navigating challenges in wine communication is integral to engaging audiences and promoting diverse narratives within the industry. Digital innovation offers vast opportunities for outreach and measurability, yet traditional media poses challenges in assessing impact.

Another challenge faced by communicators is the financial constraints. This can hinder efforts to highlight lesser-known regions or stories. Most smaller regions do not have the funding, and the traditional media does not find enough commercial interest in accepting their stories. Anticipating and adapting to future trends, such as AI and multi-sensory experiences, is also a concern. Staying updated with the trends is essential for ensuring relevance and resonance with evolving consumer preferences. It is also important to uphold authenticity and navigate regulations to foster credibility and trust with audiences. Moreover, respecting diverse cultures ensures equitable representation of all wine regions. Illustrative quotes from the data, that were coded to arrive at these themes are tabulated in Annex 1, Table 3.

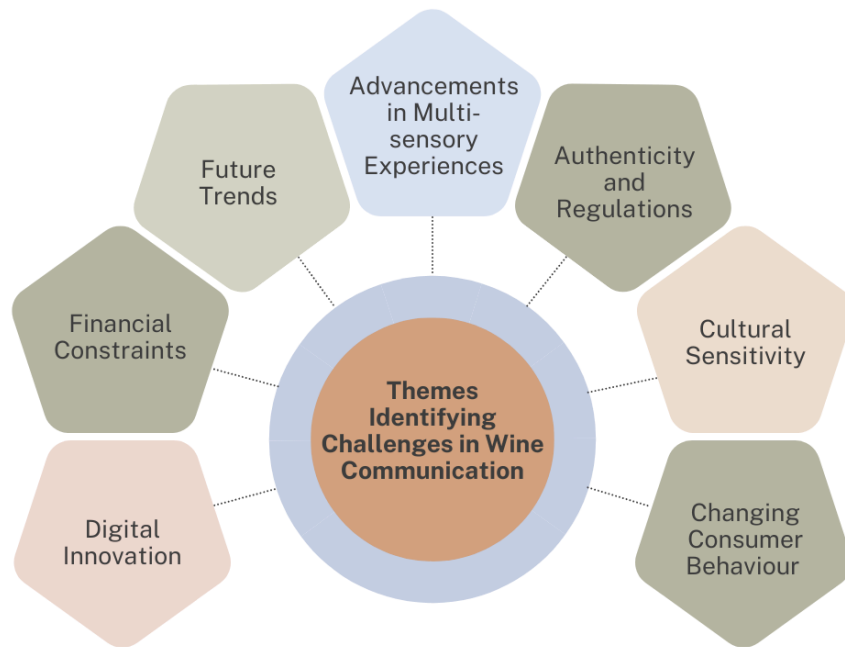


Figure 1.5 Themes identifying challenges in wine communication

Lastly, the interviewees were asked about their thoughts, hook uses or the stereotypical communication that comes to mind when discussing wines from Georgia and ProseccoCV. These answers were analysed to find themes regarding these regions. Figure 1.6 highlights the major themes identified for each of the wine regions. The illustrative quotes and potential use in wine communication are tabulated in Annexure 1, Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

While the Georgian stories highlighted the 8000-year-old tradition, the use of qvevri and the indigenous grape varieties, there was almost no mention of the qvevri traditional winemaking having UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Monuments status. On the other hand, the Prosecco CV themes that emerged had the UNESCO heritage status given to the Hills of the Prosecco of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene alongside themes of quality, authenticity and diversity of wines of the ProseccoCV region (Figure1.6).

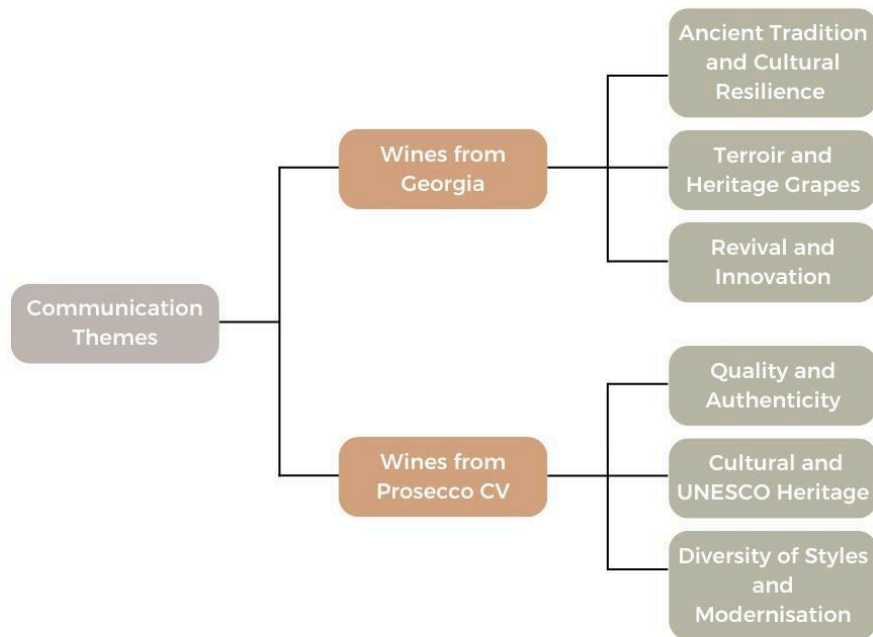


Figure 1.6 Themes identified for communicating about wines of Georgia and Prosecco CV, Italy

The themes derived from thematic coding were combined with the themes from the literature review and studied alongside the marketing campaign case studies using the triangulation method to arrive at the findings of the research paper.

#### 4.2.3 Triangulation Study

This research employs a triangulation study, enhanced by personal experiences and insights gained during the WINTOUR Program, to explore the dynamics of storytelling in wine communication. Triangulation study, as a research methodology, involves multiple data sources, theories, and previous research to study the same phenomenon, ensuring validated findings. In the context of this paper, the triangulation study is used to corroborate the findings derived from case studies, literature reviews, and qualitative data analysis using thematic coding.

## TRIANGULATION STUDY

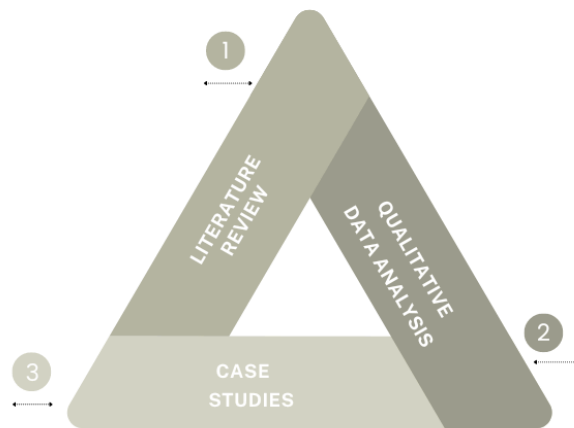


Figure 1.7 Triangulation Study Diagram

The themes identified in qualitative research were examined alongside previous studies on storytelling in wine and wine tourism communication and live case studies of client work undertaken during the internship. This is represented in figure 1.7.

To identify keywords in the literature review, the CRAAP method was used to understand the Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose of the studies. The worksheet used for this study is provided in Annexure 3. A lot has been said about storytelling in wine, tourism, and wine communication, and many studies have been conducted on crafting narratives as a marketing strategy in the past. Therefore, it was important to find the relevant studies and derive the themes for further data analysis of this research.

**Currency:** The oldest study used in the literature review is from 1990, where Pellowski discusses storytelling as an intrinsic part of human societies. While this study was not the most current, its summary was relevant to understanding human behaviour and their reactions to storytelling. The second oldest study was conducted in 1998, when Hall and Macionis provided a definition of wine tourism, focusing on visiting vineyards and wine regions for tasting and experiences. Researchers around wine tourism still find this study relevant as it

was one of the pioneers in defining wine tourism. All the other studies are recent and show that the literature review is up to date.

**Relevance:** The previous studies used are highly relevant to communication and wine and wine tourism, addressing critical aspects of storytelling, marketing, consumer experience and digital strategies.

**Authority:** The review cites various authoritative sources, including well-regarded authors, academic papers, and industry reports. Multiple studies from reputable scholars (e.g., Kotler, 2021, and UNWTO) lend credibility to the review.

**Accuracy:** The review uses multiple case studies and practical examples, with detailed methodology in each paper. Concepts and theories are explained clearly and supported by relevant citations, which leads to an understanding that the review is accurate.

**Purpose:** The review's purpose is to explore the role of storytelling in wine communication and tourism, and it achieves this goal effectively. The review aims to inform and educate readers about the importance of storytelling in marketing and consumer engagement within the wine industry.

After the CRAAP analysis of the literature review, keywords were identified to corroborate the interviews' findings. The themes identified from the literature review were studied alongside themes derived from coding the qualitative data and the live case studies in the UK market. The themes identified from the Literature Review are tabulated in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 : Themes Identified in Literature Review	
Emotional Connection	Visual Storytelling
Authenticity and Genuine Experience	Wine Tourism Services
Heritage and Tradition	Word-of-Mouth communication
Digital Storytelling	Personal stories and Cultural connection
Marketing Strategies	Brand-centric stories and Customer-centric stories
Sensory marketing and Experiential Marketing	Cultural background and Preconceived notions
Target Audience	Innovation and Future
Consumer Experience and Preference	Changing Market trends
Tourist Terroir/Winescape	Sustainability

This multi-faceted approach of the analysis of three different data sources led to the following findings and conclusions.

## 5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this research paper, developed after the triangulation study, identify the key elements that need to be used in storytelling in order to craft the most impactful narrative in wine communication.

**Emotive Storytelling:** Emotional engagement is important in creating memorable and impactful narratives that resonate with the customer. Several studies (also mentioned in the literature review section of this paper) have highlighted the use of emotions or human connection to relate with the consumer. Emotional connection also emerged as a theme in qualitative data analysis used for this research. Therefore, choosing one narrative over the other depends on which 'hook' is most relatable to the target audience.

**Digital Strategy:** According to the literature review, a strong digital presence is essential for relevance and visibility. Leveraging digital platforms, including a well-designed, fast-loading website and active social media presence, helps reach a broader, younger audience who are future consumers. This trend was also seen in the themes identified in the qualitative data analysis and the case studies of the live marketing campaigns. To stay consistent on social media, behind-the-scenes content, visual landscapes, and music can be used. There is also a need to develop e-storytelling and use artificial intelligence optimisation and generative search to be visible on digital platforms in order to forge lasting connections and enhance brand recall.

**Sensory Storytelling:** Consumers are more receptive to multi-sensory and experiential storytelling. As seen in the marketing strategies of case studies used during this research and the qualitative study of the interviews, most wine communications are designed to include festivals, tastings, and events that give more space for multi-sensory experiences, integrating different elements to create an immersive experience for the audience.

**Adaptation to Audience:** Tailoring the narrative to the target audience is vital. Each wine can tell a historical, cultural, personal, or futuristic story. Understanding and identifying the appropriate narrative is the key. For instance, in our case studies, the target audience was the UK trade community, yet the communication strategies differed: Georgia emphasised its history, while the Italian Consorzio focused on landscapes.

**Authenticity and Diversity:** This research also identified authenticity as another key element for successful storytelling. Diverse stories, including personal anecdotes (especially by winemakers), enhance credibility and engagement.

**Sustainable and Responsible Communication:** Promoting sustainability and responsibility in wine communication is not just a trend but a necessity. This was a common theme identified during all interviews conducted for the research. It is essential to encourage responsible tourism and consumption, protect the health, the environment, historical and cultural heritage, and maintain collaboration transparency.

**Adapting to Market and Trends:** Continuous adaptation to market demands is necessary. Both case studies demonstrated the importance of evolving marketing strategies over multiple years. Interviewees unanimously emphasised the need to adjust communication in response to changing consumer behaviour, highlighting the importance of feedback and flexibility. Keeping pace with evolving customer preferences and trends is also critical. The wine industry must not lag in adopting digital platforms, social media marketing, and emerging technologies like AI marketing. The wine world is still struggling with digital platforms and Social Media Marketing while the world is moving to AI marketing!

**In conclusion,** this research sheds light on the myriad roles of storytelling in wine communication, drawing insights from case studies, literature reviews, qualitative data analysis and triangulation studies. The findings highlight the key elements of a good and successful story that should be used by wine communicators. Storytelling has become a new form of branding in the wine industry, and by integrating emotional, sensory, and authentic narratives and leveraging digital strategies, collaborations, and cultural exchanges, wineries can build stronger connections with their audiences and adapt to the ever-changing market landscape.

## 6. IMPLICATION TO STAKEHOLDERS

This research offers significant implications for a wide range of stakeholders in the wine industry. Wineries can gain insights into choosing the best narrative that resonates with the consumers. This will enhance brand differentiation and market positioning. Wine communicators can use the findings of this study to refine their storytelling techniques and engage audiences. Government agencies, wine boards, and tourism boards can use the research to support their destination marketing and wine tourism efforts. These strategies, along with themed tours and events, will help attract intentional tourists and preserve cultural heritage. Retailers and distributors can use this research to understand the importance of storytelling in sales and marketing in order to drive sales. The findings can also be useful to the hospitality industry by helping it develop or enhance its wine programs and customer experiences by incorporating sensory storytelling and cultural narratives into wine offerings and tasting experiences. Educational institutions offering wine programs can enrich their curriculum with knowledge about storytelling in wine communication, preparing students for careers in the industry.

Overall, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of storytelling's role in wine communication, offering actionable strategies for stakeholders to enhance their engagement, visibility, and impact in the dynamic wine market landscape. As stakeholders will embrace storytelling as a fundamental aspect of their communication strategies, they will be better equipped to understand the complexities of the wine market and become relatable to the diverse consumer preferences. Through collaborative efforts and innovative storytelling approaches, the wine industry can continue to attract audiences, promote wine tourism, and celebrate the rich heritage and diversity of wine cultures worldwide.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

### Limitations

**Sample Size and Representativeness:** While the study involved interviews with 25 wine communicators in the UK market and case studies of marketing campaigns for Wines of Georgia and Consorzio Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG, the

sample may not be representative of the entire wine industry. The insights gathered, though valuable, might not fully capture the diversity of experiences and strategies used across different regions and market segments.

**Geographical Focus:** The research primarily focuses on the UK market and specific regions like Georgia and Italy. This geographical limitation may not reflect the storytelling and communication strategies effective in other global markets with different consumer behaviours, cultural contexts, and competitive landscapes.

**Qualitative Data Limitations:** Thematic coding and qualitative analysis rely heavily on the researchers' subjective interpretations, which may have introduced biases and variability in the results.

**Evolving Digital Landscape:** The study's conclusions regarding digital strategies are based on current trends and platforms, which are rapidly evolving. New technologies and platforms continue to emerge, potentially rendering some of the findings obsolete in a short period.

**Limited Scope of Case Studies:** The detailed examination of two specific marketing campaigns, while thorough, may not encompass all possible strategies and outcomes. Other campaigns or approaches within the wine industry might yield different insights and conclusions. Furthermore, the research does not include any consumer survey to measure the impact of any of the storytelling strategies or measure effectiveness of the marketing campaigns.

**Financial Constraints and Resource Availability:** The findings do not take into account the financial constraints or challenges that some wine regions or producers may face in implementing some of the strategies discussed, such as leveraging UNESCO heritage status or executing comprehensive digital campaigns.

## **Scope for Future Research**

Future studies in wine communication could expand to include broader geographical and cultural analysis to give a more holistic view of global wine communication. Longitudinal research could also be undertaken to track the effectiveness and evolution of wine communication strategies. As mentioned in the limitation of this study, a future scope is to measure the impact these stories have on the consumers. This could help tailor more effective communication strategies. Incorporating more quantitative methods alongside qualitative approaches could help validate the findings. Surveys, experiments, and statistical analyses could provide additional data to support or refine the conclusions drawn from qualitative interviews and case studies. Identifying these impacts would be beneficial for both academic research and industry practice. Finally, future studies can include how technological changes are affecting the use, dissemination and reception of stories as a marketing tool in wine communication.

These limitations and directions for future research highlight the need for ongoing exploration and adaptation in the field of using storytelling as a tool in wine communication. Ensuring that strategies remain effective and relevant in a rapidly changing landscape will be crucial for sustained success in the industry.

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**ANNEXURES**

**ANNEX 1 : Illustrative Quotes used for thematic coding**

<b>Table A1 : Themes for choosing the right Narrative</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Illustrative Quote</b>	<b>Importance for Wine Communication</b>
Historical and Cultural Significance	<p>"Firstly, I focus on the region itself -any unique background, historical narrative or geographical special points that can be a hook. Then, the people behind the region and the specific wines being showcased."</p> <p>"by explaining anything relevant to the background of that wine or region."</p>	Emphasising the rich history and cultural background of a wine region helps create narratives that appeal to consumers' sense of tradition and authenticity.
Emotional and Human Connection	<p>"I'm trying to be as personal as I can, find interesting winemakers to highlight."</p> <p>"For consumers, storytelling is far more important and memorable than any wine facts and technical details."</p> <p>"For me, stories without human connection are useless standardised marketing formulas."</p> <p>"People want to hear genuine personal experiences."</p> <p>"The thing is, how do you bring the fun also, have you thinking back to something people are familiar with?"</p> <p>"Storytelling adds that emotional connection, making the information more memorable. It's about getting to the 'why,?'"</p>	Establishing an emotional and human connection through storytelling allows consumers to relate to the wine on a personal level, fostering trust, loyalty, and a deeper appreciation for the product.

<p>Differentiation and Uniqueness</p>	<p>“Stories are key because they provide context, be it historical, geographical, environmental, or human, for the cultural product that is wine.”</p> <p>“Storytelling is the core of promoting a brand's uniqueness and the key to differentiate from other competitors.”</p> <p>"I believe it's vital in engaging new audiences and also telling the true stories of regions, winemakers, and vineyards."</p>	<p>Storytelling is essential for highlighting what sets wine apart from others, whether it's the unique geographical features, the distinct production methods, or the personal stories of the winemakers.</p>
<p>Recognition and Memorability</p>	<p>"I think it is what makes different regions unique and, therefore, very important."</p>	<p>Creating memorable narratives about a wine region helps ensure that consumers remember and recognise the wine, fostering brand loyalty and repeat purchases.</p>
<p>Right Narrative Building for consistency and continuation</p>	<p>"Storytelling is scientifically proven to be more effective than just presenting facts and figures."</p>	<p>Consistent and continuous storytelling ensures that the brand message is effectively communicated and retained by the audience, enhancing brand coherence and consumer trust.</p>
<p>Seeking out lesser-known anecdotes and myths</p>	<p>"I aim to seek out lesser known anecdotes, myths, local legends about the wines or grapes in question and share them in my writing."</p>	<p>Unearthing and sharing unique stories and myths about a wine region can captivate consumers' imaginations and provide a distinctive edge in a competitive market.</p>
<p>Focusing on unique regional backgrounds and the people behind it</p>	<p>"For consumers, storytelling is far more important and memorable than any wine facts and technical details."</p>	<p>Emphasising the unique aspects of the region and the individuals involved in winemaking makes the narrative more engaging and personal, fostering a stronger connection with consumers.</p>

<p>Integrating design, visuals, and photography</p>	<p>"These elements don't necessarily have to be on the core of the messaging, but have to be clearly present (sometimes through design, visuals, and photography)."</p>	<p>Visual elements complement storytelling by providing an appealing and tangible representation of the wine region, enhancing consumer engagement and recall.</p>
<p>Importance of technical aspects and educational material</p>	<p>"In a few cases, access to authentic and verified data to back up the story"</p> <p>"For me, the technical aspect of wine is also important. I appreciate regions delivering educational material so wine enthusiasts can learn and connect with the region."</p>	<p>Providing technical and educational information can satisfy the curiosity of more knowledgeable consumers and add credibility to the narrative, deepening their appreciation and connection to the wine.</p>
<p>Client Brief</p>	<p>"It depends on the target audience and what the client wants to communicate. As PR people, it helps if the brief is specific and on point. It helps to get the right media coverage."</p>	<p>Understanding and adhering to the client's brief ensures that the narrative aligns with the target audience's interests and the client's communication goals, enhancing the effectiveness of the wine promotion.</p>
<p>Use of romanticised or stereotypical aspects</p>	<p>"There's a bit of romanticism involved because if people aren't tasting the wine, you need to convey the culture or traditions to get them interested."</p> <p>"This often means using romanticised or stereotypical aspects that give a feel for what the region means."</p>	<p>Employing romanticised or stereotypical elements can evoke a sense of nostalgia and allure, helping to attract and engage consumers who are drawn to the traditional and picturesque aspects of wine culture.</p>
<p>Balancing old and new technical and emotion, tradition and emotion, history and innovation</p>	<p>"They all have a great tradition and a new generation of winemakers that is willing to add vision and modernity to their specific styles."</p> <p>"Another challenge with wine regions is communicating in a way that isn't overly technical, yet technical aspects make the wine region great..."</p>	<p>Balancing tradition with innovation and technical details with emotional storytelling ensures a comprehensive and appealing narrative that caters to diverse consumer preferences, making the wine story more versatile and engaging.</p>

<p>Target Audience</p>	<p>"It depends who you are promoting them to firstly, consumer or trade; then further segmenting your market from there."</p> <p>"ensuring that we are communicating about wine where consumers are most present (which is currently on their smartphones!)"</p> <p>"It depends on the audience... but I generally think about what the audience will be interested in and extract the best/most appropriate storytelling from there."</p> <p>"Rather than thinking it starts with us trying to tell people what we want, it starts with listening to what where the consumers are, and then tying that story into our own."</p> <p>"Personal anecdotes are very important as they show why a person is passionate about a topic, which translates to authenticity."</p>	<p>Tailoring the narrative to the specific target audience, whether it's consumers or trade professionals, ensures that the message resonates and engages effectively, leading to better reception and impact.</p>
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**Table A2: Measuring the effectiveness of communication**

Theme	Illustrative Quote	Importance for Wine Communication
Outcome measurement	<p>"By the number of times, I'm asked back by the same magazine or publication to write another article."</p> <p>"In Instagram, it's engagement rate and conversion of posts into bookings of tastings, training or tours."</p>	<p>Effective measurement of communication outcomes provides valuable insights into the impact of wine communication strategies, informing adjustments and improvements for future endeavours.</p>
Engagement and Interaction	<p>"Engagement, link clicks/readership, direct messages/mentions to me,"</p> <p>"The easiest to measure today is social media through KPI like engagement and followers."</p>	<p>Understanding the level of engagement and interaction with wine communication efforts allows for the assessment of audience involvement and receptivity, indicating the effectiveness of the messaging and content.</p>
Client satisfaction and retention	<p>"I continue to be employed for the publications I write for!!"</p> <p>"Feedback, usually informal, from the participants. In the case of commercial sessions, the interest and purchase of the wines I have showcased."</p> <p>"In terms of printed media, it's much more difficult to measure how much brand awareness has increased. That's how I would gauge it, how many people are repeating the story back to me or asking questions about the story itself?"</p>	<p>Client satisfaction and retention are paramount in wine communication, as they signify the effectiveness of the communication strategy in meeting client objectives and fostering long-term relationships.</p>

**Table A3: Themes Identifying Challenges in Wine Communication**

Theme	Illustrative Quote	Importance for Wine Communication
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<p>Digital innovation</p>	<p>"it is the ONLY tool."</p> <p>"In terms of printed media, it's much more difficult to measure how much brand awareness has increased."</p>	<p>Digital innovation presents both opportunities and challenges in wine communication. While digital platforms offer vast reach and measurability, traditional media poses difficulties in gauging impact. Navigating these digital landscapes is essential for effective communication strategies.</p>
<p>Financial constraints</p>	<p>"If regional/national bodies don't exist, aren't well funded, aren't easy to work with etc. – then it's harder for me to write about these regions."</p> <p>"There's no lack of wine regions or great stories to write about, but as a freelance journalist, the challenge is convincing an Editor that they are of commercial interest to write about."</p>	<p>Financial constraints can negatively impact wine communication efforts, particularly in highlighting lesser-known regions or stories. Securing funding and garnering commercial interest for the writers is crucial for promoting diverse narratives within the industry.</p>
<p>Future trends</p>	<p>"Wine is constantly evolving, while at the same time being a product which has been around for millennia, so finding new ways to talk about and engage interest in a product that many people know well can be challenging."</p> <p>"You need to keep your finger on the pulse of things, be it through newsletters, high-quality blogs and, of course, study."</p> <p>"Observe, read, speak to consumers and professionals, try to keep my knowledge and delivery of the knowledge fresh. "</p> <p>"QR codes and video content are underestimated. "Those going for NO-LO alcohol wines, canned wine (or anything alt packaging), innovative and really cool labels are clearly targeting a younger, more health-conscious crowd."</p>	<p>Anticipating and adapting to future trends is essential in wine communication. Staying informed and embracing innovations like AI, multi-sensory experiences, and alternative packaging ensures relevance and resonance with evolving consumer preferences.</p>

	"Wine buying is an emotionally led decision, and live events can make a significant impact."	
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Advancements in Multi-sensory Experiences	<p>"AI for tech sheets would be MARVELOUS. This is more a wish than a possibility, but AI that can craft the brand message to your wine knowledge."</p> <p>"It's important to stay flexible and responsive to these changes".</p> <p>"Storytelling will continue to be important in using different senses."</p>	<p>Staying adaptable and responsive to technological innovations ensures effective communication in the evolving wine landscape. To stay relevant, communication strategies must adapt to changing consumer behaviour.</p>
Authenticity and Regulations	<p>"Getting genuine info. A lot of it is copied and pasted from one original author."</p> <p>"So long as the anecdote is authentic... For me, personal anecdotes are really important for adding colour to a story."</p> <p>"Be authentic as a communicator and winery is crucial to me."</p>	<p>Upholding authenticity and navigating regulations are non-negotiable in wine communication. Ensuring genuine information and incorporating personal anecdotes fosters credibility and connection with audiences, while adherence to regulations maintains integrity and trust in the industry.</p>

<p>Cultural sensitivity, changing consumer behaviour</p>	<p>"Yes, of course. You have to be respectful of the culture you are writing/communicating about, and equally to the audience you are communicating to."</p> <p>"I adapt too."</p> <p>"As a writer writing for different publications, I have always had to tailor my style/tone/register to the audience I write for."</p> <p>I would love to work more with wine regions, but the current challenge is that often they don't trust foreigners to have the sensitivity and empathy to communicate their place with passion or commitment."</p> <p>"World of wine is still very Eurocentric, everything 'new world' can be seen as not as good."</p> <p>"There's a sensitivity in respecting cultural traditions and seriousness in different regions."</p>	<p>Respecting diverse cultures and tailoring messaging accordingly fosters inclusivity and understanding while addressing biases ensures equitable representation and appreciation of all wine regions.</p>
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**Table A4.1: Themes for communicating about wines from Georgia**

Theme	Illustrative Quote	Importance for Wine Communication
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<p>Ancient Tradition and Cultural Resilience</p>	<p>"I would talk about the 'birthplace of wine' story"</p> <p>"The traditional qvevri method and orange wine"</p> <p>"For Georgia, it's the amazing history of wine and the qvevri. the cradle of winemaking 8000 unbroken vintages"</p> <p>"Georgia - qvevri, and a return to an old/lost tradition"</p> <p>"To me, Georgia is the grassroot winemaking connected to the ancestral memory and mythology, the thread between very distant past and present day."</p> <p>" it's the tradition of Supra"</p> <p>"Georgia: the cradle of wine - historic, now reinventing itself through its native grapes and wines."</p>	<p>Emphasises the deep historical roots and cultural significance of Georgian winemaking, showcasing the continuity and resilience of its traditions. Highlights the uniqueness of Georgian wines and the ancient qvevri method, appealing to consumers interested in heritage, authenticity, and the story behind the wine.</p>
<p>Terroir and Heritage Grapes</p>	<p>"For Georgia, it's the history, traditional methods, and indigenous varieties."</p>	<p>Focuses on the distinctive geographical and climatic conditions of Georgia that contribute to the unique characteristics of its wines. The emphasis on indigenous grape varieties and traditional viticulture methods highlights the authentic and diverse wine offerings, appealing to connoisseurs and adventurous wine lovers.</p>

Revival and Innovation	"A very hands-on, savvy wine region, so a combination of quality related to latest developments within the region, woven in with personal stories that bring the topic alive."	Showcases Georgia's dynamic wine industry, blending ancient traditions with modern techniques and innovations. Personal stories of winemakers and the evolution of the industry provide a compelling narrative, attracting consumers interested in contemporary developments and the human element of winemaking.
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**Table A4.2 :Themes for communicating about Prosecco CV**

Theme	Illustrative Quote	Importance for Wine Communication
Quality and Authenticity	<p>"Fruity, easy-drinking wines with quality"</p> <p>"For Prosecco, what does it do beyond cheap fizz..... (e.g. Cartizzi, Col Fondo)"</p>	Highlights the high-quality aspects of Prosecco, moving beyond the stereotype of cheap sparkling wine. Emphasising premium labels and traditional methods like Cartizze and Col Fondo appeals to discerning consumers and enhances the prestige of Prosecco CV.
Cultural and Environmental Heritage	<p>"For example, with Prosecco, we take the UNESCO hills, the amazing viticulture you encounter, the steep hills, the different styles of Prosecco, not just the basic Prosecco but Brut, Extra Brut, Extra Dry, Dry, Cartizze, and Prosecco on the lees."</p> <p>"it's the UNESCO World Heritage hillsides."</p> <p>"Small-scale, family-run vineyards with a deep heritage and challenging grape growing conditions."</p>	Focuses on the cultural and environmental significance of the Prosecco region, including UNESCO World Heritage sites. Emphasising small-scale, family-run vineyards and the challenging viticulture conditions adds a narrative of authenticity, tradition, and sustainability.

<p>Diversity of Styles</p>	<p>"It depends on what you want to focus on. You can focus on different grape varieties of that region or appellation, or you can enhance it."</p> <p>"It's the amazing diversity of wines, wine styles, and grape varieties."</p> <p>"Italy's 900-1,000 grape varieties and the sheer diversity"</p> <p>"it's the heroic viticulture of the steep slopes juxtaposed with the light, celebratory nature of Prosecco."</p>	<p>Highlights the variety within Prosecco, including different styles and grape varieties. This diversity appeals to a broad audience by showcasing Prosecco's versatility and ability to cater to different tastes and occasions.</p>
<p>Modernisation with Tradition</p>	<p>"For Prosecco, I think about the push back against mass production and specific vineyard sites in Conegliano Valdobbiadene."</p> <p>"They all have great tradition and a new generation of winemakers that is willing to add vision and modernity to their specific styles."</p> <p>"Col Fondo .. the original Prosecco"</p>	<p>Balances the traditional aspects of Prosecco production with modern innovations and approaches. This theme appeals to consumers interested in both the heritage and the forward-thinking aspects of Prosecco, highlighting its relevance in the contemporary wine market.</p>

## **ANNEX 2 : Questionnaire for Semi-Structures Interviews**

### **Thesis Interview Questions Shalini Singh**

#### **Proposed Interviewees**

- Conorzio/ Agency Representative and some producers
- Industry Experts - MW, MS, Marketing Experts
- Communicators - Writers - for Trade and Consumer, Educators, Bloggers, Podcasters, Influencers

Below are the questions I would like to ask them. The questionnaire for each category will be different (some questions may be similar).

#### **Questionnaire for Consorzio Representatives and Producers :**

1. What are your preferred communication strategies and communication channels for the UK market?
2. What is the consortium's long-term goal in the UK Market?
3. How do you decide which storytelling narrative to give precedence - Historical, Cultural, Winemaking, Landscape, Gastronomy?
4. How important are cultural or historical symbols in defining your consortium in the market? What are they?
5. If there was only one 'story' you could use to promote your wines or your wine region, what would it be?
6. What, in your opinion, is the future of communication about wines and wine regions in the UK?

#### **Questionnaire for Industry Experts:**

1. How important is storytelling in the context of promoting wines or wine regions?
2. When promoting a wine from a specific region, how do you integrate the historical, cultural, or traditional aspects in the story?
3. Are stories only about the past? What is the importance of creating a narrative for the future of wine communication?
4. If you had to choose only one form of 'story' to tell about each of the following regions, what would it be? Georgia, Italy, Turkey.
5. Can you tell me about a campaign/promotion of a wine or wine region that you think had a compelling story?

6. What is the future of wine communication in the context of changing technology and consumer behaviour?
7. What are the key challenges in choosing a narrative for a wine region?
8. Have you experienced or seen any cultural sensitivity while communicating about wines or wine regions?

### **Questions for Communicators:**

1. How important is storytelling in the context of promoting wines or wine regions?
2. How do you approach the narrative selection while writing about wines from a specific region?
3. Can you provide an example of a successful storytelling campaign or initiative you were involved in?
4. How do you measure the effectiveness of the communication you put out?
5. What future developments do you see in the use of storytelling as a marketing tool?
6. What are the challenges while choosing to write about wine regions?
7. How important are the personal anecdotes while communicating a story? Does that equate to authenticity?
8. Have you experienced or seen any cultural sensitivity while communicating about wines or wine regions?
9. How do you adapt to changing consumer behaviour and preferences?
10. What is the first story hook that comes to your mind when you hear the following wine regions :

Georgia, Turkey, Italy (especially Prosecco Conegliano Valdiobiaddene  
DOCG region)

### **Wordings/Draft for my email request**

Dear .....,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Shalini Singh, and I am an Intern at Swirl Wine Group. In addition to my internship, I am pursuing a Master's Degree in Wine Tourism innovation.

I am reaching out to request you to kindly share your insights and expertise to help me develop my thesis. The thesis is about the choice of narratives in the wine industry and as part of it, I am conducting research on storytelling strategies in wine and wine tourism marketing.

My objective is to understand how individuals navigate the process of choosing a particular story or hook to promote a region and how that impacts the recall of the target audience.

I am attaching a short questionnaire, and I would greatly appreciate your participation. The questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. If you prefer, we can also schedule a brief Zoom meeting to discuss the topic. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes.

Thank you very much for considering my request and I look forward to the possibility of benefiting from your insights.

Warm regards,  
Shalini

## ANNEX 3 : Worksheet for Literature Review Analysis

### CRAAP Test Worksheet

*Modified version of CRAAP Test created by Meriam Library at California State University, Chico.*

**Name of Website:**

**URL:**

**Currency** of the information:

When was the information gathered?
When was it posted?
When was the page last revised?
Are links functional and up-to-date?

**Relevance** or uniqueness of the content and its importance for your needs:

What is the depth and breadth of the information presented?
Is the information unique?
Can you find the same or better information in another source?
Who is the intended audience?

**Authority** or the source of the web page:

Who is the author or creator?
Are the author's credentials listed?
Is there contact information?
What is the domain?

**Accuracy** or reliability or truthfulness:

Where does the information come from?
Are the original sources of information?
Can you verify from a different source?
Are there spelling or grammar errors?

**Purpose** or the reason the website exists:

Are possible biases clearly stated?
Is the advertising content easily distinguished?
Is the purpose to inform? teach? entertain? sell? enlighten?

Would you trust this site for reliable information for an assignment? Why or Why not?

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## ANNEX 4 : Six Wine Stories Model

## SIX WINE STORIES



Source : INTERPRETING WINE