MILIEU AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A RESOURCE FOR DIGITAL MARKETING: EXPLORING WEB MARKETING STRATEGIES IN THE WINE INDUSTRY

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How to cite this paper: Cerquetti, M., & Romagnoli, A. (2023). Milieu and cultural heritage as a resource for digital marketing: Exploring web marketing strategies in the wine industry [Special issue]. Corporate Governance and Organizational Behavior Review, 7(3), 347–364. https://doi.org/10.22495/cgobrv7i3sip10

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ISSN Online: 2521-1889 ISSN Print: 2521-1870

Received: 03.03.2023 Accepted: 14.08.2023

JEL Classification: M31, Q13 DOI: 10.22495/cgobrv7i3sip10

Abstract

In the current globalised world, the milieu can be a competitive advantage for companies rooted in their local production context, as is the case for the agri-food industry (Riviezzo et al., 2016; Sgroi et al., 2020). Effectively exploiting the relationship between a company, its environment and local assets can be a successful marketing strategy that can trigger a virtuous circle that benefits sustainable tourism development (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard, 2008; Napolitano & De Nisco, 2017). One fundamental tool for exploiting this potential is digital marketing (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2021). Within this framework, the present research investigates whether and how the wine industry in the Marche region (Italy) communicates its relationships with the milieu and cultural heritage on official websites. We developed a model to analyse the web marketing strategies adopted by 83 wineries belonging to a non-profit association whose main objective is the promotion of wine tourism. The model is structured in four sections: 1) corporate data, 2) content, 3) accessibility, 4) technical aspects. Starting with the gaps identified in the scientific literature on this topic, when we analysed the content dimension, we included information related to corporate and local cultural heritage, branding, and services and partnerships. The results show that the relationship between milieu and cultural heritage is not significantly communicated on the website, revealing much room for improvement. The evaluation model and the managerial implications could be applied to all companies in the agri-food sector and, more generally, in the made-in sector.

Keywords: Heritage Marketing, Web Marketing, Made-in-Italy, Wine Industry, Corporate Heritage, Milieu

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualization — M.C. and A.R.; Methodology — M.C. and A.R.; Investigation — A.R.; Data Curation — A.R.; Writing — Original Draft — M.C. and A.R.; Writing — Review & Editing — M.C.; Supervision — M.C.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current globalised world, the local environment (i.e., the milieu) can be a value and a source of competitive advantage for companies rooted in their local production context, such as those whose brands focus on their *Made in Italy* identity (Montella & Silvestrelli, 2020; Bernardi et al., 2021). Indeed, *genius loci* and place-specific resources are becoming productive factors qualifying output and strengthening corporate reliability (Macario & Santovito, 2016). As argued by Montella (2009), tangible and intangible cultural heritage stratified over time in a specific context has a "production

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value"; it affects value creation in many related sectors, directly and indirectly. On the one hand, historical know-how enriches a firm's output. If the distinctive cultural, historical and artistic identity of a place is conveyed by means of suitable marketing strategies, it can enhance the quality of a product, its corporate identity and the value of its brand, in turn supporting competition in the global market, where consumer behaviour is driven by symbolic needs (Montella, 2009, p. 115). On the other hand, place-specific know-how can create social cohesion, increase human capital and quality of life, and generate economic benefits for the local context. This is particularly true for the food and wine industry (Riviezzo et al., 2016; Sgroi et al., 2020). Indeed, in the agri-food market, there is increasing demand for products that are steeped in authentic, local and genuine values and the craftsmanship and traditions of a territory. Therefore, in the agri-food sector, effective enhancement of the relationship between a company, its environment and local assets can be a successful marketing strategy and trigger a virtuous cycle by creating benefits for too tourism development (Askegaard Kjeldgaard, 2008; Napolitano & De Nisco, 2017). These circumstances can provide unprecedented opportunities for rural areas, which benefit from a growing interest in slow and sustainable tourism. These areas are far removed from overcrowded destinations and can provide outdoor activities in an unpolluted environment. Moreover, after the COVID-19 pandemic, slow and proximity tourism is an emerging segment that can be improved (Romagosa, 2020).

Nowadays, digital marketing provides an indispensable tool for enhancing these potentialities by using technological advancements in marketing skills to address consumers' wants and desires. Indeed, its role in positioning companies and territories and reaching various stakeholders is fundamental.

Within this framework, the present research discusses the extent to which web marketing strategies encompass cultural heritage and milieu, particularly in the food and wine sector (Yuan et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2009; Perry & Lockshin, 2010; Cassar et al., 2018; Thach & Cogan-Marie, 2018). Focusing on the case of the wine industry in the Marche region, Italy, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How can we assess the quality of heritage marketing via website communication?

RQ2: Do wineries enhance and communicate their relationship with their milieu and cultural heritage through their websites? How?

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 investigates the relationship between corporate heritage and web marketing strategies, discussing both the role of websites as heritage marketing tools (subsection 2.1) and methods for evaluating websites and their quality (subsection 2.2). After identifying the main gaps in the scientific debate, Section 3 proposes a specific framework for including corporate heritage, milieu and cultural heritage in the analysis of corporate websites. The model is applied to 83 wineries belonging to a non-profit association whose main objective is the promotion of wine tourism in the Marche region (Italy). The research aims to understand whether and how wineries are currently enhancing and communicating their relationship with their environment and cultural heritage, what web marketing strategies are being adopted and what innovations can be suggested. Section 4 presents the research results, and conclusions are drawn in Section 5.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Websites as a heritage marketing tool

Over the last ten years, the scientific literature has devoted increasing attention to the role of corporate heritage in marketing strategies (Burghausen & Balmer, 2014; Garofano et al., 2020; Riviezzo et al., 2021).

Promoting corporate heritage can strengthen corporate culture and build internal commitment and pride by increasing staff motivation and involvement in corporate choices and decisions (Urde et al., 2007; Seligson, 2010; Montella, 2014). Furthermore, investing in historical know-how and tangible and intangible assets has a key function in reinforcing the range of attributes that qualify products (Montella, 2009). The enhancement of corporate and local cultural heritage also contributes to the positioning and branding of a company in markets, increases brand awareness and helps build long-term relationships with and retention of customers (Rindell et al., 2015; Balmer & Chen, 2017; Wilson, 2018; Pulh et al., 2019). Indeed, it is now widely recognised that heritage positively affects consumers' perception of a brand (Pecot et al., 2018, 2022). In addition, scholars agree on recognising the importance of leveraging corporate and placespecific assets (Montemaggi & Severino, 2007; Napolitano & Marino, 2016; Napolitano et al., 2018; Montella, 2018; Riviezzo et al., 2021).

Scholars have analysed not only the external and internal benefits of heritage marketing but also strategies and tools to enhance corporate heritage as a marketing lever. Burghausen and Balmer (2014) identified four fundamental strategies for and multisensory implementing multimodal corporate identity systems, by leveraging design, communications and behaviour, and involving all the senses (sight, sound, scent, taste and touch): 1) narrating, 2) visualising, 3) representing, 4) embodying. Corporate websites play a crucial role in this model. On the one hand, they serve as a tool for narrating corporate identity. including a company's history and the stories of its founder, shareholders and staff. On the other, they are useful for visualising corporate identity from historical photographs and illustrations. Moreover, a website can document a company's life, that is, how it performs traditions, rituals and customs (e.g., during events or festivals), or how it embodies corporate identity in objects, spaces and people (e.g., by providing information on historical buildings, visitor centres, museums, archives, historical artefacts, etc.).

Working from similar assumptions, Garofano et al. (2020) and Riviezzo et al. (2021) proposed the heritage marketing mix, based on four different categories of storytelling, each of which adopts specific tools:

1) storytelling through words, images and sounds: corporate autobiographies, thematic series or publications, historical press reviews, historical advertising and publicity, corporate videos, documentaries and corporate cinema, brochures, leaflets, websites, social networks, blogs, forums and other digital tools;

2) storytelling through products and brands: production processes, raw materials, distinctive skills, iconic products, heritage branding, visual identity, retro branding, limited editions, packaging, and merchandising;

3) *storytelling through places:* archives, museums, foundations, factory tours, industrial archaeology, stores, and historical headquarters;

4) *storytelling through celebrations and relationships:* anniversary celebrations, temporary exhibitions, conventions and workshops, cultural events, participation in events promoted by third parties, sponsorships, and associations.

From a heritage marketing point of view, websites are mentioned explicitly in the first category but are also a tool for presenting a company's products (e.g., information on production processes) and places (e.g., information on museums and archives), promoting its brands (e.g., heritage branding) and documenting its activities (e.g., information on anniversary celebrations).

In summary, the web enables companies to spotlight the history of their brand and its cultural universe, thus intriguing and engaging web users. The official corporate website is one of privileged channels for a the "historicising representation" (Brignone, 2008), as it allows to set up albums, chronologies and multimedia narratives about the company's history, through text and images. The website also acts as a repository for oral memoirs on the company's history, that is, evidence that can bring history alive through transcripts and audiovisual reports of interviews given bv a company's key members (Martino, 2013). In this context, a growing number of companies are dedicating a specific section of their official websites to the company's history. As Martino (2013) pointed out, reference to corporate tradition on the web pages of older companies tends to gain prominence and impose itself as the distinctive feature of online self-presentation.

Thus, in the literature on heritage marketing, websites are finally considered an effective storytelling tool by which a multimedia narrative can be implemented (Garofano et al., 2020). For example, as already argued (Mason et al., 2022), the website of a corporate museum could provide an additional experience to that offered by a physical museum. Indeed, in online spaces, documentary and historical resources are always available to visitors and other potential users (Vacca, 2014).

However, few studies have highlighted the opportunities related to digitisation and innovative technologies and none has specifically focused on the role of websites in heritage marketing strategies (Mason et al., 2022).

2.2. Methods for analysing and evaluating corporate websites

Since the beginning of the 21st century, digital transformations and the growth of information and communication technology (ICT) have affected many spheres of the knowledge society. For companies in different sectors, being online has become vital for the success of their businesses. In this context, corporate websites have gained a strategic role.

No longer are they mere platforms where expert consumers search for information (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2021, p. 525); now they are also crucial tools for establishing and maintaining relationships with customers, providing an opportunity to create and strengthen new partnerships with stakeholders at different levels.

As suggested by literature reviews on the topic (Deshwal, 2013; Morales-Vargas et al., 2020), the quality of a website and how it is evaluated have attracted the interest of academics and professionals alike, with an upward trend in the first decade of the new millennium. Even though web quality is not a clear concept, it "can be considered the ability of a website to meet the expectations of its users and owners, as determined by a set of measurable attributes" (Morales-Vargas et al., 2020, p. 2). Among these attributes, usability stands out as the most studied dimension, in addition to reliability, responsiveness and content/information (Deshwal, 2013; Morales-Vargas et al., 2020). In 2001, for example, Hassan and Li (2001) identified seven categories for analysing web usability, namely screen design, content, accessibility, navigation, media use, interactivity and consistency.

Moving from technical aspects to marketing purposes, over the last twenty years, the scientific literature has provided various methods and tools for analysing websites and their quality. Ciani et al. (2017) made a distinction between subjective and objective evaluations. The subjective evaluation prevails in the analysis of technical quality, while functional quality can be evaluated mainly by adopting software (objective evaluation), in addition to content analysis for some specific parameters.

One of the main approaches for the objective evaluation of website quality is the quality evaluation method (OEM) proposed by Olsina et al. (2001). Other examples are provided by the web assessment index (WAI) (Mateos et al., 2001; Miranda et al., 2015; Galati et al., 2016), the 2QCV2Q model (Mich & Franch, 2000) and the 7Cs model (Begalli et al., 2009), which have also been applied in the tourism and wine sectors. The WAI considers four categories, namely accessibility, speed, navigability, and content. The 2QCV2Q model investigates six main dimensions, corresponding to the six Ciceronian loci, namely identity (quis/who?), content (quid/what?), services (cur/why?), location (ubi/where?), management (quando/when?), and usability (quomodo/how?). The 7Cs model focuses on seven evaluation areas, namely content, choice, context, comfort, convenience, customer service, and community.

In a context where consumers are more educated, more sophisticated, more demanding and more digital than ever before, content analysis has arisen as one of the most adopted methods for evaluating website effectiveness (Hsieh, 2012; Neilson & Madill, 2014; Iaia et al., 2019; Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2021; Pato & Duque, 2021).

In this debate, Yuan et al. (2004) tested a modified version of the balanced scorecard tool, which considers the performance of a business as a multi-dimensional construct. Aiming to achieve a more accurate and comprehensive evaluation, their model measures a website's effectiveness by analysing a number of balanced perspectives, namely technical, customer, internal and marketing. A set of critical success factors is identified for each dimension, which can be helpful for achieving as truthful and complete an evaluation as possible.

In the food and wine sector, websites can enable wineries to market their products and the overall wine tourism experience more effectively (Yuan et al., 2004). Although small and mediumsized wineries do not rely much on revenues from their online activities, the website is nevertheless a primary tool for communicating with consumers, the market and the media. As part of a marketing strategy, it should reflect the winery's image and contain relevant information about the business, as it is often the only point of contact with its consumers (Taylor et al., 2010). Researchers and industry specialists agree that a winery website should be designed with consumers' needs and expectations in mind. A website should include information about the winery (e.g., its history, its producer, stories about the winery), the wine (e.g., tasting notes, awards, educational information, etc.), tasting rooms (e.g., tourist maps, calendar of events, etc.), memberships (e.g., guest book, discussion groups, surveys) and contact information (Taylor et al., 2010).

As already argued by Yuan et al. (2004), a winery website "should generate potential visitor's involvement with the winery and its wine, convey the winery's brand and role as a tourist attraction, sell the entire wine tourism destination, and increase the winery's regional, national and even global presence" (p. 15). According to this perspective, a website can become a digital hub of information about place-specific resources for starting or continuing the experience of a destination as a whole. For this reason, website evaluation models have started considering tourism-related information. On the one hand, they present the history and/or stories about the winery and information on tastings and, on the other, they provide information about tourist facilities, attractions and further local resources, such as historical buildings, museums and festivals, allowing visitors to extend their experience beyond the winery doors (Yuan et al., 2004; Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2021).

However, all these aspects are not yet part of normal website analysis. Despite the many models for analysing corporate websites, there are no standards for evaluating winery websites (Canziani & Welsh, 2016). Many studies adopt a presenceabsence approach to assessing a website's features, while others use Likert-type scales or other more complex scoring approaches to assess the quality of each feature and calculate overall measures.

In summary, we can identify at least two main research gaps in the scientific literature: first, the role of websites in communicating corporate heritage has not been sufficiently investigated (subsection 2.1); second, that information about a milieu and its resources is not yet included in the analysis of websites.

Given these limitations, in the following section, we present a model for analysing corporate websites in the wine industry. This model takes into account the relationship between corporate heritage, milieu and cultural heritage as a marketing tool.

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3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. A comprehensive framework for analysing heritage marketing via corporate websites

Starting from the analysis presented in the previous section, we developed a model to analyse web marketing strategies adopted by wineries (see Table A.1). Given the gaps identified in the scientific literature on this matter, we focused the analysis on corporate websites and integrated existing models to include communication of the relationship between the company and its environment and cultural heritage.

The model is structured in four sections: 3) accessibility. 1) corporate data. 2) content, 4) technical aspects. The first section presents the main data of the companies investigated to get a general overview. The other three sections present a set of dimensions and sub-dimensions. To analyse Sections 2 (content) and 3 (accessibility), we used a binary 0-1 approach, where 0 means "absent" and 1 "present". For some sub-dimensions, a scale with 3, 4 or 5 values (e.g., 0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75, 1) was chosen. The evaluation criteria for each item are explained in the model. The fourth dimension, technical aspects, was analysed with specific software.

Data were collected between July and August 2022.

1. *Corporate data*. The first section contains the main master data of a company, such as name, official website (if there is one), city and province where its headquarters are located, and year of foundation. These few details are useful for knowing a company's location, age and whether it has a website.

These data gave us initial insight into the web presence and two central dimensions for research: space and time.

2. *Content*. In analysing the content dimension, three aspects were taken into consideration: information related to: a) corporate and local cultural heritage, b) branding, c) services and partnerships.

Given *RQ2*, the focus was on aspects related not only to corporate heritage but also milieu and local cultural heritage. A number of items were identified for each aspect to be collected.

Starting with the models proposed by Burghausen and Balmer (2014), Garofano et al. (2020) and Riviezzo et al. (2021), when we analysed information about corporate and local cultural heritage (a), we included the following aspects: the history of the company, its corporate heritage, and its place of origin (including local recipes and traditions). Words, images and sounds were investigated as information providers. Specifically, the analysis addressed the following elements:

• information about the winery's history (or stories about the winery);

• information about the place of origin (regional or local);

presence of photos and/or videos of the milieu;

• presence of photos and/or videos of the corporate heritage;

• presence of photos and/or videos of the family;

• information about/references to local recipes;

• information about/references to local traditions.

When it came to branding (b), the company name and logo were mainly taken into account. Specifically, the presence of references to the place where the company operates and the place-specific cultural aspects were verified. In addition, the date of foundation was noted. For this section, we investigated the following aspects:

• references to the place of origin (regional or local) in the winery's name;

• references to the place of origin (regional or local) in the winery's logotype or motto;

• references to the local cultural symbols in the winery's name;

• references to local cultural symbols in the winery's logotype or motto;

• date of foundation in the logotype.

Regarding information about services and partnerships (c), we checked for information about visits to the company's premises, i.e., the vineyard and the wine cellar, but also other aspects mainly related to tourism and the enhancement of the territory. Indeed, in this section, the model includes the following sub-dimensions:

• information about guided tours in the cellar and/or vineyard;

information about wine tastings;

• information about accommodation services;

• information about membership of associations and/or federations that promoted traditional products and/or the territory (e.g., for the selected case study, Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche, Le Strade del Vino, etc.);

• information about events in collaboration with other local actors;

• information about/links to local tourismrelated businesses (e.g., hotels, restaurants, tourism portals, travel agencies, etc.);

• information about/links to local cultural and tourism associations;

• information about/links to local cultural sites and other local attractions.

3. Accessibility. The third dimension included in the model is accessibility, understood both as the accessibility of information and accessibility to the winery's physical space. On the one hand, we looked at how easy it was to find information about it on the web and the languages available on the website, while on the other, we looked for information on how accessible the winery is. The following elements were considered:

• search engine positioning (Google);

• keyword search ("Cantine vino Marche PROVINCIA"/"Wineries Marche PROVINCE");

languages;

opening hours;

• contacts.

4. Technical aspects. The last dimension was the technical aspects, which were analysed by the software program Nibbler. Nibbler aims to evaluate several parameters (information technology [IT] accessibility, technology, user experience and marketing), giving a sum score of 10. Each parameter is divided into sub-parameters, which can be evaluated repeatedly in each macro-category. Specifically, the micro-dimensions are headings, URL format, code quality, page titles, mobile, internal links, Facebook page, Twitter, printability, amount of content, images, server behaviour, popularity, freshness, meta-tags, analytics, incoming links, social interest, domain age. The software gives a score to each individual micro-dimension. In the final evaluation of this research, the "overall" value was taken into account.

3.2. The sample: Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche

The research adopted this model to analyse the website communication of the Marche region's wine industry (Italy). This region displays some of the cultural and production features that are typical of Italy and holds significant, yet-to-be-expressed potentialities.

The wine sector in Italy represents one of the pillars of the national agri-food system and its importance is recognised not only on an economic level but also a cultural one. Indeed, wine, vines and wine-growing territories are defined as "national cultural heritage" in Article 1 of Law No. 238 of 12 December 2016 on the organic discipline of vine cultivation and wine production and trade (referred to as the "T.U. del Vino", the Consolidated Wine Law) (Mancini & Carrega, 2021). Despite the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the global economy and markets, the Italian wine sector has maintained and consolidated an international leadership position, both in terms of production (volume and value) and in terms of exports (MarketLine¹; Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare [ISMEA], 2023).

In the Marche region, wine is a key sector in which 1049 companies operate. In 2021, the top 53 companies in the industry recorded €207 million in sales and an added value per employee of €70,800. The sector is made up of 55% small enterprises, with sales of less than €1 million, 30% medium-sized enterprises with sales of between €1 million and €5 million, 6% medium-sized enterprises with sales of between €5 million and €10 million and 9% large enterprises, with sales of more than €10 million (Iacobucci & Orci, 2023). The sector is therefore characterised by a prevalence of small-sized enterprises that are widespread throughout the region and, in addition, by the coexistence of several designations (controlled designation of origin [DOC], controlled and guaranteed designation of origin [DOCG]) within the same territory. These aspects show that the wine industry is an important sector for the Marche region in terms of its "widespread vocation", with the ability to engage directly with the entire local community (Camera di Commercio delle Marche, 2021). Therefore, the strong link with the terroir and the territory is a competitive advantage that needs to be conveyed through promotional activities that tell the story of the appellations and their local traits.

For the present study, the field research investigated the websites of companies in the Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche², which constitutes a significant and valuable sample not only of the sector but also of its tourism capabilities. Movimento Turismo del Vino is a non-profit association founded in 1993, which represents about 1,000 wineries in Italy. Each region has its own branch and wineries are selected according to specific requirements, including, for example, the quality of their wine tourism hospitality. Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche aims to grow the national wine tourism sector, which is a fundamental economic resource for developing territories and an effective tool for protecting the environment. The association's objectives include:

¹ https://marketline.com ² https://www.mtvmarche.it

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• promoting wine culture through visits to places of production;

• supporting increased tourist flows in all areas of Italy with a strong wine vocation;

• qualifying the tourist services of wine cellars;

• increasing the image and economic and employment prospects of wine territories.

The Marche branch brings together 83 wineries, many of which produce wines with certified origins (DOC and DOCG) and embody the territory.

The wine industry was chosen for our research because wine is a product that is closely tied to the place where it is produced, and its identity is a combination of brand, heritage and terroir. These features constitute a competitive advantage for certain wines and wine regions. Moreover, the aim of the association which brings together the companies chosen for this study is precisely to promote wine tourism in the Marche region. Therefore, a certain type of communication of the milieu and its resources is expected (Harvey et al., 2017).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Eighty-two of the eighty-three wineries belonging to Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche have official websites and were analysed (see Table A.2.).

1. *Corporate data.* The 82 wineries are located in the different provinces of the Marche region, specifically, 7 in the province of Pesaro-Urbino, 45 in the province of Ancona, 17 in the province of Macerata, 5 in the province of Fermo and 8 in the province of Ascoli Piceno. This uneven distribution could be due to two factors:

• The provinces do not have the same number of wineries. 62 wineries (7%) are located in Pesaro-Urbino province, 283 (27%) in Ancona province, 98 (9%) in Macerata province, 74 (7%) in Fermo province, and 522 (50%) in Ascoli Piceno province (Iacobucci & Orci, 2023).

• At the same time, if we look at tourist arrivals and overnight stays, in 2021, the province of Ancona recorded 666,109 arrivals and 2,535,189 overnight stays, while Ascoli Piceno recorded 323,027 arrivals and 1,509,195 overnight stays (Regional Tourism Observatory, 2022).

In light of these data, we can infer that the province of Ancona has more members in Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche because, in addition to having a high number of wineries, it has a stronger tourism vocation.

All of the companies investigated were founded between 1800 and 2018. Most of them (50) were started in the 1900s, followed by those founded in the 2000s (22). In two cases, the foundation date was difficult to trace, whereas the remainder (8) began life before 1900.

2. *Content.* When it comes to information about corporate and local cultural heritage (a), data analysis shows almost 90% of wineries (73 out of 82) publish at least a concise history of the winery on their websites, but less than 70% (55 out of 82) give information about the place of origin and only 35% (29 out of 82) provide information about and photos of the territory. On the hand, only 2.45% (2 out of 82) give information about local recipes and 4.87% (4 out of 82) about local traditions.

The percentages for branding strategies (b) are lower: 46.34% (38 out of 82) include cultural symbols in the winery's logotype and/or motto, a little over 20% (17 out of 82) refer to the place of origin in the winery's name (often the name of the location where the company is based), while 17.07% (14 out of 82) refer to it in the logo. Finally, 13.41% (11 out of 82) provide the foundation year in the logo and only 7.31% (6 out of 82) refer to local cultural symbols in the winery's name.

Concerning partnerships and services (c), about 56% of the wineries (46 out of 82) give information about visiting cellars or vineyards and specific tours and almost 69% (56 out of 82) provide information about and organise wine tastings. Some (about 30% - 25 out of 82) also have accommodation services. Only a few (about 6% - 5 out of 82) give information about local tourism-related businesses. A very low percentage of wineries (3% - 3 out of 82) provides information on local cultural and tourism associations on their website. The percentage increases (around 19% - 16 out of 82) when considering wineries that provide information on local cultural sites and other attractions in the area.

To get an overview, the average scores for each aspect of the content dimension (corporate and local heritage information, branding, services and partnerships) were calculated.

When looking at the average scores (see Figure 1), it is interesting to note that the score for company history is almost 0.6, while for the place of origin, it is only 0.36.



Figure 1. Corporate and local cultural heritage: average score

These results mainly suggest two things: 1) there is more awareness around the importance of telling the story of the company (which is often also the story of the family), although there could be more emphasis on this;

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2) there is much less awareness about the importance of talking about the milieu, the territory, which, as noted above, can be an identifying and distinguishing factor and, therefore, a competitive advantage for the company.

When we look at images, we see more focus on the family and the environment and much less on corporate assets. In this case, it should be noted that the scores recorded are very low. The score for references to local recipes and traditions is also interesting. In this case, the average is really low, 0.02 for local recipes and 0.04 for local traditions. These data show that the milieu and its intangible cultural assets are not communicated.

Regarding branding (see Figure 2), the highest average score is for the use of cultural symbols in the logo (0.32).



One clarification should be made: coats of arms, especially family coats of arms, but also those of towns and cities, were also considered cultural symbols. In many cases, the connection to the family or the place of origin is made very clear, but sometimes the reason for using these coats of arms is not explained clearly. Regarding the use of the place of origin in the winery name, it is interesting to note that the name of the district or locality where the winery is located is used often. This is followed by the place of origin in the logotype, the year of foundation in the logotype and cultural symbols in the winery name. In general, the average is low for all dimensions of branding. These findings make many of these wineries "brands with a heritage", but not "heritage brands" (Urde et al., 2007). In fact, making heritage part of a brand's value is a strategic decision. This consideration can lead us to interpret the data in different ways: there may be no awareness of the potential of this strategic choice; there may be this type of strategy, but it is not yet well developed; a strategy based on innovation that moves away from the enhancement of the past and heritage might be pursued.

Regarding services and partnerships (see Figure 3), wine tastings and winery visits achieve the highest average scores at 0.48 and 0.41, respectively.



Figure 3. Services and partnerships: average score

Conversely, very low scores are achieved for information on local tourism-related businesses (0.04), cultural and tourism associations (0.03) and local cultural sites and other attractions (0.12). Slightly better are the average scores for information on accommodation services (0.20), memberships (0.21) and collaborations with other local actors (0.24). From these data, it is possible to observe that the activities carried out by the winery itself that could bring in direct income are generally wellcommunicated and valued. The same cannot be said for the communication of activities not directly carried out by the winery, which could bring indirect revenues.

3. *Accessibility.* In the section dedicated to accessibility, the 82 websites achieved overall results

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ranging from 1.75 to 4. These results are the sum of the various elements considered: positioning in search engines, keyword search, languages, opening hours and contact information. The maximum score is 5. As in the previous section, the average score (see Figure 4) was also considered to obtain an overall picture.



Figure 4. Accessibility: average score

All the official websites of the 82 wineries analysed can be found on the first page resulting from a search of their names on Google. On the other hand, when the keywords "Cantine vino Marche PROVINCIA" is entered, only three websites appear on the first three pages of the search engine. Phone numbers, email addresses and social media pages were considered for the contact information dimension. The average score (0.94) is very high, showing good communication of contact information.

Communication of opening hours produces an average score of 0.52, while for language availability it is 0.50. Most of the wine companies (55) provide information in Italian and English, fewer (14) in more than two languages, while the remainder (13) have Italian-only websites.

Accessibility, therefore, gets relatively high scores. This may be a symptom of the focus on the accessibility of online and offline services.

4. *Technical aspects*. The technical aspects section records overall values ranging from 4.4 to 8.8 out of 10 (maximum score). The average value for this part is 7.45. Thus, as for the technical

aspects, it can be argued that the websites analysed respond positively to the technical needs of the web.

5. DISCUSSION

For more insight, some results were cross-referenced and plotted on histograms and scatter diagrams. To assess the quality of communication and enhancement of cultural heritage and milieu on websites, the final results for content were crossreferenced with accessibility and technical aspects.

Regarding content and technical aspects (see Figure 5), the diagram shows that almost all the websites (79) are concentrated in the upper left quadrant. Only two companies score high for both values. Therefore, as a whole, the analysed sample has a good technical rating but scores poorly for content related to corporate heritage, cultural heritage and milieu. It should be highlighted that websites that score high for content communication also have a higher technical quality, which could be a sign of greater marketing awareness.



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Figure 5. Technical aspects and content

Figure 6. Accessibility and content

Cross-referencing the results for content and accessibility (see Figure 6) yields a similar result. Most websites (63) achieve good scores in the accessibility assessment, but very few (2) score high for both values. These two results show certain attention to technical aspects, but the content aspects considered in this research are not central to the online communications strategies of wineries. Thus, the wineries analysed prove to be familiar with the rules of web marketing, but less so with heritage marketing.



In order to assess whether and to what extent wineries currently value and communicate their relationship with cultural heritage and their milieu on their websites, several specific data, mainly from the content section, were cross-analysed.

The first cross data are content results and year of foundation (see Figure 7). This data crossover is useful for understanding whether there is a correlation between the age of a company and the level of communication and enhancement of its heritage and territory. In general, the results obtained from the content section are not very high. Indeed, the average value is 4.62 out of a maximum of 20. In addition, using the formula for correlation, the result is 0.12, which is very close to zero. Thus, we can consider the correlation neutral. Therefore, looking at the data, it is possible to assume that there is no correlation between the foundation date and the higher results in the content section. This could be interpreted as a lack of awareness of the potential of communicating and enhancing corporate heritage, cultural heritage and milieu, even in companies that boast more longevity.





Year of foundation

After this, the overall results for the three aspects under the content dimensions (corporate and local cultural heritage, branding, services and partnerships) are cross-referenced.

As can be seen in the graphs, when we crossanalysed corporate and local cultural heritage and branding (see Figure 8), corporate and local cultural heritage and services and partnerships (see Figure 9), and branding and services and partnerships (see Figure 10), almost all the websites always have low results in both parameters and are concentrated in the lower left quadrant.



Figure 8. Corporate and local cultural heritage and branding



Figure 10. Branding and services and partnerships

Figure 9. Corporate and local cultural heritage and services and partnerships



If we examine the graphs more closely, Figure 8 shows that 67 wineries score low in both the corporate and local cultural heritage and branding sections, while 12 wineries score well for corporate and local cultural heritage and poorly for branding.

Similar results can be seen in Figure 9, where 65 wineries are in the lower left quadrant and 13 in

the lower right part of the graph. It is interesting to note that the wineries on the right-hand side are mostly in the province of Ancona (10), while two are in the province of Macerata and only one is in the province of Ascoli Piceno. This result suggests that these wineries have a greater awareness of the role of corporate and local cultural heritage, despite the need to improve branding strategies and

partnerships. As already mentioned in subsection 4.1, the province of Ancona has more members in Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche, as well as more wineries and a greater vocation for tourism. Moreover, these wineries were founded between 1837 and 1997: all of them have been operating for at least 25 years and some can boast more than 150 years of history.

Conversely, young wineries founded from 2000 onwards are on the left-hand side of the graph. However, in this quadrant, only 22 wineries were founded in the 21st century, while the majority were founded earlier. As previously shown in Figure 7, this confirms that there is no correlation between a company's age and its performance.

The few most virtuous companies are located in different provinces (Ancona and Macerata). One of them was founded in the 1960s and one in the 1980s. These companies obtained a total score of 10.75 for content and scored highest in the corporate and local cultural heritage sections. Both devote a special section to the history of the company, accompanying the text with pictures of the family or the historical building that houses it. Similarly, information on the surrounding area is provided, with one of the wineries dedicating a specific section to possible destinations to visit in the region. A certain attention to history, tangible and intangible heritage and the place where these wineries operate shine through from their websites, where their ties to local history, culture and tradition are spotlighted. However, one consideration should be made: the most virtuous ones scored 10.75 out of a maximum of 20. This means that, to date, no special attention has been placed on communicating their relationship with their milieu and cultural heritage via their corporate websites.

In Figure 10, 75 wineries are in the lower left quadrant. No winery has good results for both dimensions. This result confirms very little attention to branding and services and partnerships, thus considerable room for improvement.

In conclusion, cross-data results, combined with the average scores illustrated above, indicate poor communication of corporate heritage, local cultural heritage and milieu. Companies do not communicate these aspects on their websites, even those with a long history, thus revealing a lack of attention and awareness of the importance of attributes which, as argued by Montella (2009), have the ability to qualify products in the glocal context.

As seen in subsection 2.2, websites should play a key role in promoting brands and wine tourism destinations, particularly in the wine and food sector. However, the data analysis shows that, although the wineries whose websites were analysed are part of an association whose very aim is to promote wine tourism, there is little information on tourism-related activities and the milieu in general on these sites.

6. CONCLUSION

This exploratory study analysed 82 websites of wineries differentially located across the Marche region and founded at different times. As members of the association Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche, the investigated wineries were expected to

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communicate their respective milieus and their resources on their official websites.

Several interesting insights can be drawn from an analysis of the results for the content section. The three aspects considered (information on corporate and local cultural heritage, branding, services and partnerships) registered low average scores. The scores for accessibility and technical aspects were higher. When we consider the average scores and cross-reference the data, it emerges that, to date, even the wineries performing well from a technical point of view do not sufficiently communicate the link between their corporate heritage, cultural heritage and, in general, their territory. Thus, their relationship with their milieu and cultural heritage is not communicated and emphasised in a meaningful way in website communications, not even by those wineries that can boast a history spanning several decades. Therefore, the role of the milieu in online corporate communications still has unexpressed potential.

The research results confirm the difficulties many small wineries face due to budget restrictions on marketing and advertising, and a lack of skilled human resources (Yuan et al., 2004). We can also state that websites do not meet the needs of visitors looking for the total wine tourism experience (Yuan et al., 2004, p. 23). As emerged in previous studies, scant information is offered about activities related to wine tourism that would attract tourists and this limitation "does not seem to be remedied by the development of business networks in the area. Consequently, very few websites offer tourism information about the region where they are located" (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2021, p. 534).

Poor communication of corporate heritage, local cultural heritage and milieu may be symptomatic of a lack of awareness about the relevance of these aspects in marketing strategies and their "production value". In addition, behind these limitations, there may also be a lack of awareness about the role of websites as a marketing tool. Given the strong historical and cultural relationship between local food and wine production and milieu, it is clear that there is considerable room for improvement. Wineries should invest in their digital marketing strategies and positioning in the global market by leveraging their link with the milieu in which they operate.

The communication gap that emerged from the research could be filled with training courses, specific events and workshops on heritage marketing aimed at bringing awareness to the sector around the potential of this strategy and the tools that can be used to implement it. It might be opportune to present best practices, including international ones, to provide concrete examples of what can be done and the results that can be achieved from heritage marketing. In addition, wineries should increase their collaboration with the territory, public actors and entrepreneurs to knowledge about the milieu spread and the company's reputation and trigger a virtuous circle for all the local actors.

The research analysed the wine sector in the Marche region, but the evaluation model and the managerial implications could be applied to all companies in the agri-food sector and, more generally, in the made-in sector. This research provides a framework for the current communication and enhancement of the milieu on winery websites. Future longitudinal research can analyse the evolution of the heritage marketing approach. The limitation of the research is that the reasons for this lack were not investigated. Therefore, further developments could come from qualitative research to better understand the level of awareness about the importance of milieu in corporate communication strategies.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1. A comprehensive framework for evaluating heritage marketing strategies via corporate websites
(Part 1)

Dimensions	Variables	Sub-variables	Evaluation criteria			
1. Corporate data	 Name of the company Website link City Province 					
	• Foundation year					
	2a. Corporate and local cultural heritage (max. 7)	Winery history (or stories related to the winery)	 0 = absent; 0.25 = a few lines (3-5) in other sections; 0.5 = a fully dedicated text section; 0.75 = a fully dedicated section with a short text (< 10 lines) and multimedia elements (photos, videos, audios); 1 = a fully dedicated section with detailed text and multimedia elements (photos, videos, audios). 			
		Information about the place of origin (regional or local) on the websites	 0 = absent; 0.25 = a few lines (3-5) in other sections; 0.5 = a fully dedicated text section; 0.75 = a fully dedicated section with a short text (< 10 lines) and multimedia elements (photos, videos, audios); 1 = a fully dedicated section with detailed text and multimedia elements (photos, videos, audios). 			
		Presence of photos and/or videos of the milieu	 0 = absent; 0.5 = 1-3 elements; 1 = > 3 elements. 			
		Presence of photos and/or videos of the corporate heritage	 0 = absent; 0.5 = 1-3 elements; 1 = > 3 elements. 			
		Presence of photos and/or videos of the family	 0 = absent; 0.5 = 1-3 elements; 1 = > 3 elements; 			
		Information about/references to local recipes	 0 = absent; 1 = present. 			
2. Content		Information about/references to local traditions	 0 = absent; 1 = present. 			
(max. 20)	2b. Branding (max. 5) 2c. Services and	References to the place of origin (regional or local) in the winery's name	• 0 = absent; • 1 = present.			
		References to the place of origin (regional or local) in the winery's logotype or motto	 0 = absent; 1 = present. 			
		References to local cultural symbols in the winery's name	 0 = absent; 1 = present. 			
		References to local cultural symbols in the winery's logotype or motto	• 0 = absent; • 1 = present.			
		Date of foundation in the logotype	• 0 = absent; • 1 = present.			
		Information about guided tours in the cellar and/or vineyard	 0 = absent; 0.25 = only related to other events; 0.5 = they do guided tours, but do not give additional information; 0.75 = dedicated section with information on packages, prices and how to book (by email or telephone); 1 = dedicated section with information on packages and prices with the possibility of online booking. 			
	partnerships (max. 8)	Information about wine tasting	 0 = absent; 0.25 = only related to other events; 0.5 = they do wine tasting but do not give additional information; 0.75 = dedicated section with information on packages, prices and how to book (by email or telephone); 1 = dedicated section with information on packages and prices with the possibility of online booking. 			

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Table A.1. A comprehensive framework for evaluating heritage marketing strategies via corporate websites
(Part 2)

Dimensions	Variables	Sub-variables	Evaluation criteria			
2. Content		Accommodation services	 0 = absent; 0.25 = they have accommodation services, but do not give additional information; 0.75 = dedicated section with information on packages, prices and how to book (by email or telephone); 1 = dedicated section with information on packages and prices with the possibility of online booking. 			
	2c. Services and	Information about membership of associations and/or federations that promote traditional products and/or the territory (Movimento Turismo del Vino Marche, Le Strade del Vino)	 0 = absent; 0.5 = information provided; 1 = information provided with links to their websites. 			
(max. 20)	partnerships (max. 8)	Events in collaboration with other local actors	• 0 = absent; • 1 = present.			
		Information/links to local tourism- related businesses (hotels, restaurants, tourism portals, travel agencies)	 0 = absent; 0.5 = information provided; 1 = information provided with links to their websites. 			
		Information/links to local cultural and tourism associations	 0 = absent; 0.5 = information provided; 1 = information provided with links to their websites. 			
		Information/links to local cultural sites and other local attractions	 0 = absent; 0.5 = information provided; 1 = information provided with links to their websites. 			
	3a. Search engine positioning (Google) (max. 1)		 0 = absent or from page 4 onwards; 0.5 = the site appears within the first 3 pages of results from a search of the winery's name; 1 = the site appears on the first page of results from a search of the winery's name. 			
3. Accessibility (max. 5)	3b. Keyword search ("Cantine vino Marche PROVINCIA") (max. 1)		 0 = absent or from page 4 onwards; 0.5 = the site appears within the first 3 pages of results from a search with "Cantine vino Marche PROVINCIA"; 1 = the site appears on the first page of results from a search with "Cantine vino Marche PROVINCIA". 			
	3c. Languages (max. 1)		 0 = Italian only; 0.5 = Italian + English; 1 = more than 2 languages. 			
	3d. Opening hours		• $0 = absent;$			
	(max. 1) 3e. Contact information (max. 1)		 1 = present. 0 = absent; 0.25 = telephone number or email only; 0.75 = telephone number and email; 1 = telephone number, email and links to social media pages. 			
		Headings URL format Code quality				
		Page titles				
	Overall (max. 10)	Mobile Internal links	• Analysed with the Nibbler ^a software, consider the "overall" value.			
		Facebook page				
4. Technical aspects (max. 10)		Twitter Printability				
		Amount of content				
		Images				
		Server behaviour Popularity	4			
		Freshness	1			
		Meta tags				
		Analytics Incoming links				
		Social interest	1			
Nota: « https://nibbla		Domain age				

Note: " https://nibbler.insites.com.

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Wineries Winery 1	2a (max. 7)	2b (max. 5)	2c	3a	3b	3с	3d	3e	aspects	Total
Winerv 1			(max. 8)	(max. 1)	(max. 1)	(max. 1)	(max. 1)	(max. 1)	(max. 10)	(max. 35)
	2.5	2	3.5	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.6	20.1
Winery 2	0.75	1	0	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.2	12.45
Winery 3	2.5	2	0	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.8	15.8
Winery 4	2	1	3.25	1	0	1	1	1	8	18.5
Winery 5	2.25	1 2	4.25	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.5	19.5 19.25
Winery 6 Winery 7	2.25	2	3.25	1	0.5	0.5 0.5	1	1	7.5 8.7	19.25
Winery 8	1.75	0	2.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	8.5	16.25
Winery 9	1.25	0	1.5	1	0	0	0	1	6.3	11.05
Winery 10	2.75	0	1.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.8	14.55
Winery 11	3	1	3.25	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.8	17.55
Winery 12	0	0.5	0	1	0	1	0	0.25	5.2	7.95
Winery 13	0.5	0	1.25 2	1	0	1 0	1 0	0.75	7.5 5.4	13 11.9
Winery 14 Winery 15	2.5	0.5	1.25	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.5	13.75
Winery 16	3	1	4	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.6	19.1
Winery 17	1	0.5	1.5	1	0	0.5	0	0.75	7.1	12.35
Winery 18	1.25	0	3.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.8	15.05
Winery 19	0.75	1	0	1	0	0.5	0	1	8.2	12.45
Winery 20	2.25	1	0	1	0	0.5	0	1	6.8	12.55
Winery 21	4.5	3	3.25	1	0	1	1	1	7.6	22.35
Winery 22	1.75	2	4	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.2	18.45
Winery 23 Winery 24	1.5 3.75	0	2.5 3	1	0	1 0.5	1	1	<u>8.3</u> 8.6	16.3 19.35
Winery 24 Winery 25	0.5	0.5	1	1	0	0.5	1	0.75	8	19.55
Winery 26	0.75	0	3	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.1	15.35
Winery 27	1.5	0	1.5	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.2	14.7
Winery 28	1.5	0	0.5	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.6	13.1
Winery 29	2.25	0.5	1.5	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.2	15.95
Winery 30	0.25	0	2	1	0	0.5	1	0.75	7.3	12.8
Winery 31	3.5	1.5	2.75	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.6	19.85
Winery 32	2 1.75	1.5	1.5 2	1	0	0.5	1 0	1	7.2	15.7 14.25
Winery 33 Winery 34	3	0 2	3.25	1	0	0.5	1	1	8 7.5	14.25
Winery 35	1.25	0	2	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.4	13.15
Winery 36	0.5	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	7.1	9.6
Winery 37	3.5	0	2.5	1	0	0.5	0	0.75	8	16.25
Winery 38	2.75	1.5	1	1	0	0.5	0	1	8.3	16.05
Winery 39	3.5	0	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	8.2	14.2
Winery 40	1	1	0.75	1	0	0	0	0.75	6.3	11.3
Winery 41	6	1	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	6.9	16.9
Winery 42 Winery 43	1.5 3.5	1	2.5 2.5	1	0	1 0	1 0	0.75	7.8 8.5	16.55 17.5
Winery 45 Winery 44	0.25	1.5	2.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.9	12.15
Winery 45	3.5	1.5	3.25	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.6	18.85
Winery 46	3.25	0	1.75	1	0	0	0	1	7.4	14.4
Winery 47	2.5	0.5	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	5.9	11.4
Winery 48	0.75	0	0.5	1	0	1	1	1	8.1	13.35
Winery 49	3.25	2	0.5	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.4	18.15
Winery 50	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	8.3	16.3
Winery 51 Winery 52	3.5 3.5	1.5 1.5	2.5 3	1	0	1	1	1	7.4 7.9	18.9 19.9
Winery 52 Winery 53	0.75	1.5	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	7.9	19.9
Winery 54	1	1.5	1.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	4.4	11.9
Winery 55	0.25	2.5	2	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.3	14.55
Winery 56	0.5	1	3	1	0	0.5	1	1	6.3	14.3
Winery 57	1	0	2.25	1	0	0.5	0	1	8	13.75
Winery 58	1.25	1.5	0	1	0	0.5	0	1	6.9	12.15
Winery 59	0.25	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	8	11.25
Winery 60 Winery 61	2.75	2	3.25 3.25	1	0	0.5 0.5	0	1	7.5 7.5	18 21.75
Winery 61	1.25	1	3.25	1	0	0.5	1	1	8.8	15.55
Winery 63	1.25	1	1	1	0	1	0	0.25	5.4	10.9
Winery 64	2	2	0	1	0	0.5	0	1	6.4	12.9
Winery 65	0.25	1.5	3.25	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.9	16.4
Winery 66	0.25	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	6.8	9.05
Winery 67	0.75	0	3	1	0	0	0	1	6.9	12.65
Winery 68	2.75	0	2.75	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.4	16.4
Winery 69	4	1	1.75	1	0	0.5	1	1	6.9	17.15
M/inor 70	1	3	2	1	0	1	1	1	7.7	17.7 13.7
Winery 70	0	~								
Winery 71	2	0	1	1	0	0	0		8.7	
	2 2.25 0.5	0 1 2	1 2.75 0	1 1 1	0	0 0.5 0.5	0	0.25 1	6.8 7.4	13.7 14.55 12.4

Table A.2. Research results (Part 1)

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	2. Content (max. 20)				3. Acc	4. Technical	Total			
Wineries	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	3с	3d	Зе	aspects	(max. 35)
	(max. 7)	(max. 5)	(max. 8)	(max. 1)	(max. 1)	(max. 1)	(<i>max.</i> 1)	(max. 1)	(max. 10)	(110111-00)
Winery 75	2.75	0.5	3	1	0.5	0.5	0	1	8.1	17.35
Winery 76	4	0	1.25	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.3	16.05
Winery 77	2.25	1	2.25	1	0	0	0	1	5.9	14.4
Winery 78	2.5	1	0	1	0	0.5	1	1	7.3	14.3
Winery 79	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	6.8	12.8
Winery 80	1.25	0.5	2	1	0	1	1	1	7.6	15.35
Winery 81	1.5	0	1.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	7.7	13.2
Winery 82	1.75	1.5	1.25	1	0	0.5	0	1	6.8	13.8
Average score	1.96	0.90	1.76	1	0.01	0.50	0.52	0.94	7.45	15.07
Std. dev.	1.24	0.80	1.23	0	0.09	0.28	0.49	0.15	0.87	3.01

Table A.2. Research results (Part 2)

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