

An emerging brand strategy in the Italian wine sector: towards an accessible luxury goods marketing

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Abstract

The wine sector is affecting by many changes. In particular, two aspects seem to play an interesting role. On the one hand, new competitors, over all Chile, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and the USA, joined the sector with new competitive advantage linked to new marketing mix strategies and an innovative way to produce wine (Campbell & Guibert, 2006). On the other hand, middle-high market consumers are moving to higher levels of quality and taste. Moreover, luxury goods producers started to be interested in these new consumers. Indeed, unlike old-luxury goods, the new luxury goods can generate high volumes despite their relatively high prices. This new kind of luxury is called accessible luxury (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003, 2004).

Traditionally, the Italian wine producers linked their brand strategies with reference to a specific territory, land and tradition (*terroir* label), such as DOCG, DOC and IGT. However, some producers have recently started to play a new brand strategy. Very excellent wines are commercialised with labels that are not linked to any traditional or geographical reference (Lockshin et al., 2000; Zampi, 2003). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to answer the following question: is there any relation between the higher price and a *non-terroir* label? In other words, are the Italian wine producers going to a new brand path for marketing their best wine?

To answer this question, a database from Gambero Rosso 2008 has been used; it concerns all the Italian wine producers with an annual production of at least a million bottles in 2007. The main result of this research shows a new brand path, where labels do not belong to a particular geographical area nor tradition for marketing excellent wine. Furthermore, the best wines are becoming more and more similar to a fashion product.