

Positioning of wine regions: Old or New World branding models?

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this research is the position or reputation that a wine region has and seeks to have for itself. This is generally referred to as *regionality* in the wine literature, where regionality is defined as the reputation a wine region has for producing wines with a distinctive style

The research addresses the following question: should New World wine regions try to position themselves narrowly on the basis of a particular grape or blend of grapes (the *Old World* position) or more broadly on the basis of the red wines or the white wines that they produce (the *New World* position)? The research examines an important topic as many New World countries try to establish stronger regional identities.

This research was conducted in Australia, using perceptions of regional wine styles collected from 95 owners and managers of a cross section of wineries.

The article examines perceptions of nine different regional wine styles and finds that in all nine cases the Old World position is rated more highly than the New World position.

The conclusion is that the Old World has got it right all along. Majoring on a single wine style, the traditional model in many of the outstanding wine regions of the Old World such as Chablis, Sancerre and Côte Rôtie, will result in higher perceptions of distinctiveness.

The lesson for the New World is to lead with your best suit. If a region has a single varietal or blend that it does well, that has some heritage, that is high quality across the range, preferably with a few star wines that attract the attention of the media and win prizes at the wine shows, then position the entire region around that style.