

E-BUSINESS READINESS OF WINE PRODUCERS IN ROMAGNA (ITALY): THE IMPORTANCE OF AREA OF ORIGIN EFFECTS

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Abstract

Viticulture and oenology in Romagna can boast a distinctive cultural tradition; the history of the art of wine making for this Italian sub-region finds its roots back to the Etruscan period. However, during the 1950s and '60s the main goal for wine producers became the production of large quantities of cheap wine, with scant attention paid to the productions of excellence. Since that time, new emerging producers have contributed to reducing the gap of reputation with other regions of older quality tradition in wine production: Romagna wine makers are now recognised to be able to reach high standards, and wine produced in this *terroir* seems to fit the attributes identifying a “typical” product connotation (Mattiacci and Vignali, 2004): territory, merceology, legal regulation, industrial nature, time, tradition, specificity, identity, nutritional surplus. This gives the area a potential basis for leveraging new business opportunities.

This study considers one of those opportunities: the use of electronic commerce as a meaningful instrument for selling the *terroir*-linked product abroad, both on the EU and overseas markets. Within this framework, the main objective of this paper is to evaluate the level of e-commerce readiness for Romagna wine producers. The analysis is performed via a questionnaire survey submitted to the members of the Romagna wine protection consortium “Ente Tutela Vini di Romagna”, founded in 1962. The main issue addressed in the analysis will be the role played by the attribute “area of origin” on present marketing initiatives taken by the producers. An important issue to be dealing with is whether e-commerce is considered a viable solution and if it might better be a single-business tool for wine makers, or if it might be handled by a third party, whether as an independent venture business or as a collective marketing action. The results will be useful for the elaboration of strategies aimed at enhancing the value of Romagna wines, and will be transferable to other wine-producing regions facing similar problems.