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The Brand Content of Corporate Communications by Grand Cru Bordeaux Wines : A Crossed Lexicometric and Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract

Purpose: Exceptional weather conditions allowed the 2009 and 2010 vintages a huge increase of prices of the Grands Crus wines from Bordeaux, amplified by an important demand coming from Asia. This rare phenomenon is more based on the evocated image of these mythic productions, than by the economic rationality. That is the reason why, it is important to describe and understand, through the corporate communication of the grand châteaux, which kind of story telling is working.

Design

The aim of this paper is to interpret the relations between the main forms of communication and the appellations of the 132 châteaux belonging to the Union des Grands Crus.

Findings

Two methodologies are used: a lexicographic analysis shows 13 main figures of communication, and then a semiotic approach describes their structure and their internal logic.

Practical implication: *The result allows a definition and delimitation of the brand content of these "brands – châteaux" in the present universe of the luxury market.*

Key words: Grand Crus brand content, Storytelling, Lexicographic and semiotics approaches.

INTRODUCTION

For the past few years, the proliferation of interactive electronic devices - and their ability to promote a more efficient communication of products and services - has cast the spotlight on the opportunity and even necessity that consumption goods (even the most common ones) be imbued with brand contents, beyond usual branding through product packaging and mundane advertising narratives (Variot, 2001; White, 2009; Bo and Guével, 2009).

One consequence of brand content and its development through complementary textual narrative vehicles such as storytelling (Salmon, 2007) has been the obligation to define and manage a more subtle strategic relationship between different levels of brand architecture. This has mainly involved allocating greater weight to corporate brands that refer to a company, which is then construed as the legitimate source of brand contents, in terms of both umbrella brands referring to whole product ranges and product brands themselves.

In certain economic sectors such as luxury or technological goods, the importance of corporate brands and their storytelling goes back a long way, even preceding the advent of a digital economy in the consumer goods markets. As far back as the 1980s in France, this was already being theorised by Jean Noel Kapferer (1983, 1985, 1988) and Yves Krief (1986), with a number of other authors entering the field subsequently.

The significance of this corporate aspect is also, in our opinion, one of the chief characteristics of the wine market, where product offers have always been valued using communication narratives that highlight know-how and situational and institutional characteristics such as a wine appellation and other quality indicators specific to a producer or merchant (Bobrie, 2010). What becomes less apparent here is the branding of specific products and product ranges. This “atypicality” of wine branding has been (and remains) the object of numerous studies covering many markets in both Europe and the New World.

Rather than focusing on this aspect, however, the present text tries, for the first time in our knowledge, to take a deeper look at what the brand content means for Grand Cru Bordeaux wines at a moment in time when marketing thinking seems to be rediscovering and fully mobilising this concept so as to study its extension and determine its operationality in all areas of commercial communication.

We opted for this category of Bordeaux wines first and foremost because of the theoretical hypothesis that luxury products of this ilk are communicated from the very outset using corporate brands and the complex narratives they generate. This can also be explained by an empirical reason, which is that the category constitutes a “closed” sample that has been highly stable for nearly a century and therefore helps to create communications rules that have been validated by their long-term effectiveness. This enhances understanding of their construction and helps to explain why they have been preserved in many corporate communications strategies. In addition (and on a more practical level), the corporate narratives associated with the 132 “chateaux” in question here have been combined in a single booklet published by the *Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux* association, which attributes to each the same space and framework for expression. In turn, this means that all of these narrators are forced, *volens nolens*, to give consideration to a more condensed narrative structure that might optimise their staging of a product’s quality based on a rigorous and hierarchised codification of whatever argument is being used. This corpus is particularly useful in understanding how each narrative has performed in terms of differentiation from its neighbors (construed here in both the geographic and editorial sense of the term) in light of the limited number of themes being evoked and developed. Such an approach is useful because it forced us to engage in a twofold analysis. On one hand, there is the coherency of each narrative and the way that it shares recurring themes, something that helps us to identify

expressions of categorical “typicality” (Ladwein, 1994). On the other hand, there is the narrative specificity enabling a description of each chateau’s particular “positioning”.

Investigating the tension between that which is shared and that which is different – and viewing this through the filtre of Grand Cru wines from Bordeaux - can enhance understanding of formal brand contents systems (and specific discursive processes within the full range of commercial communications tools). This comes above and beyond any question of whatever legitimacy is empirically observable within our field of reference, i.e. top-quality wines. Explanations of any intrinsic efficiency would also allow us to draw practical and managerial lessons for the majority of the companies in this sector insofar as they can identify, even partially, with the narrative paradigm associated with these highly selective corporate brands.

Our methodological approach for studying this corpus was both lexical and narrative in nature. It sought both to describe a typical plane of expression (“the words for saying something”) and grasp a plane of contents conveying the potential significations that these words manifested when inserted into a corporate narrative.

Lexical analysis would allow us to bring out figurative variables, meaning concrete images and qualifiers systematically associated in the text with the narrators proposing them. Such figures were then grouped into more abstract brand content themes treated as dimensions that may or not be shared by each of the brands referring to the chateaux. This enabled an identification of four forms of communication within our sample and an explanation of how companies associated with a particular form of narrative are also statistically associated with a particular geographic location within a category of Bordeaux wines, including *primeur* new wines priced on a futures basis.

Semiotic analysis mobilising marketing methods determined by Greimas (1983) and Floch (1989, 1990, 1995) enabled an in-depth study of the four groups of narratives and reveal which values they highlight where “Grand Cru” wines are concerned, together with the modalities proposed for their appropriation by the recipients of the message, being the targets of the communication. Based on this development of a semiotic narrative, it became possible to explain the origins of the differences underlying products’ variable positioning within one and the same group type, even when the products in question share the same values, ones considered attributable to the wines and the chateaux whence they originate.

The study did not purport to establish a typical narrative communicating an ideal brand content for luxury wines and depicting this as a factor of success. Nor did it try to develop a typical narrative for each of the four groups of communication that have been identified. Quite the contrary, the goal was to suggest a narrative method for differentiating each corporate brand’s construction, even where they were thought to represent similar values and share neighboring thematic dimensions within the relatively limited category of Grand Cru wines.

The managerial and practical implications of this research are to provide guidance to the communication managers when choosing narrative themes and values, by understanding how each value is linked with and other one. Thus, corporate brands can be differentiated not by the values themselves but by the way they are arranged into the logical network of the narrative pattern.

The ensuing discussion would then cover the findings’ possible extension to other types of corporate brand contents in the wine field and beyond.

1- LEXICOMETRIC ANALYSIS

1-1 Methodology

The methodological choice here consisted of broaching the corporate communications of the 132 Grand Cru wines comprising our sample as if they constituted an example of storytelling. This tool has been used in a variety of ways to analyse firms' strategic discourses (Christian, Flamant, 2005) and consumers' experiential narratives (Mora, Moscarola, 2010).

The benchmark corpus was a 2010 database compiled by the *Union des Grands Crus*. This organisation publishes an annual list of members, describing 132 chateaux representing Bordeaux's main territorial appellations and dividing them into four categories: Saint Emilion, Médoc, Pessac-Léognan and Sauternais. We possessed objective elements for each chateau: appellation, area, vintage, production volume, type of soil and vinification. This was followed by a 150 to 300-word text presenting the chateau's institutional communications. The following text exemplifies a communication from Chateau Cheval Blanc:

In the 18th century, Cheval Blanc's current domain was mostly covered by an extensive vineyard, which can be seen in a Belleyme map from 1764. Nearly a century later, the domain was acquired by the Fourcaud-Laussac family, which would keep it until 1998 when it was sold to Bernard Arnault and Baron Albert Frère. Altogether, the domain - situated at the edges of the Pomerol district - is run as a homogeneous unit by a single tenant. The conjunction of the land's exceptional quality and highly original grape varieties (Cabernet Franc mixed with Merlot) gives its output a singular sensory identity. Over the past century, Chateau Cheval Blanc has had more exceptional vintages than any other classified Grand Cru Bordeaux wine. Even more surprising is the fact that when some of its vintages peak, they can stay at this level for years. This is a powerful, flexible, generous, smooth and rich wine, silky in its fruitiness and elegance and admirably constant. It is a wine that seems invulnerable and resembles no other.

An initial analysis allowed us to detail the 13 main figures or "motifs" expressing most communications' contents.

Figures	Explanation
History	Reference to important dates in the property's history
Family	Presentation of successive actors and inheritance events
Appellation of origin	Description of appellation characteristics
Geography	Description of sites and orientation
Vinification	Wine fermentation methods
Wine-making	Wine-making methods and duration, description of containers
Wines	Wine descriptions and characteristics
Grape varieties	Input from different grape varieties
Investments	List of recently installed equipment (in vineyards and cellars)
Art, Culture	References to heritage and buildings
Partners	Presentation of investors in the property
Certification	Mention of certification quality or reasoned agricultural
Consumer customer	Reference to purchasers' identity or behavior

Tab 1: The 13 communications figures featured in the corpus

We then measured the intensity of these 13 figures' presence in each of the 132 texts being studied. Applying a single analyst method to calibrate this measurement (Gergaud and

Chossat, 2003), a score of one 1 to 4 was then allocated after a second analysis to measure the intensity of a figure's presence. In turn, this allowed us to engage in descriptive analysis, followed by multidimensional data analysis. Lastly, after developing the four forms of communication, we tried to connect the price levels achieved by each chateau's 2009 *primeur* new wines with its form of communication.

1.1.1- Communications dimensions

Certain nouns are represented more frequently in the corpus of texts that we analysed. The table below characterises the seven words that are most frequently cited using a series of elements found in each of their respective columns:

Specific words, first seven nouns						
Château	Wine	Vineyard	Century	Domain	Property	Terrain
classify	finesse	extend	go back	go back	take over	exceptional
build	elegance	hectare	family	merchant	family	express
Margaux	grand	alone	history	history	now	expression
cru wine	produce	tenant	name	family	old	pebbles
bourgeois	elegant	plateau	origin	name	acquire	quality
town	grow	locate	know	current	origins	unique
Rothschild	barrel	town	current	hectare	name	frank
believe	powerful	deep	better	origin	Pomerol	grand
first	mixture	hilltop	two	buy	noble	finesse
locate	power	Pomerol	acquire		give	produce
belong	thanks to	Barton				vineyard
world	balance	chalky				vinification
France	oak	soil				merlot
Émilien	aroma	Margaux				cabernet
high	selection	beautiful				chalky
origin	times	benefit				
prestigious	modern	profound				
appellation	ageing	high				
family	world	Pauillac				
	wood	gravelly				
	second	work				
	care					
	be able					
	month					
	fruit					
	traditional					
	new					
	bottle					

The table shows significantly over-represented modalities (minimum size of 5)

Tab 2: Characteristics of first seven lexicon words

Three groups of criteria could be identified according to the frequency with which they appear in the texts:

- Themes relating to families and site history were particularly frequent in Grand Cru wines' institutional communications
- This was followed by references to local geography, the appellation category, vinification, wine-making methods and wine descriptions.

- Less frequently, emphasis was placed on financial partners or investments in the vineyard or other equipment. There were few references to culture and arts, certification or wine purchasers or consumers.

Crossing data for the appellation categories has provided additional information enhancing communications' contents.

Text dimensions by terrain

	Pessac-Léognan	Graves	Saint Emilion	Pomerol	Moulis	Listrac	Haut Médoc	Autre Médoc	Margaux	Saint-Julien	Pauillac	Saint Estèphe	Sauternes and Barsac	Total
History	2,56	2,33	2,46	2,20	2,33	2,50	2,70	1,50	3,05	3,11	2,83	2,75	2,25	2,60
Family	2,25	3,67	2,33	1,70	3,33	3,25	2,00	1,50	2,58	2,78	3,17	2,25	2,38	2,46
Appellation	2,63	2,00	2,25	2,70	2,00	1,75	1,50	2,00	2,05	1,89	1,83	2,75	2,19	2,16
Geography	2,13	2,00	2,38	2,60	1,33	1,75	2,30	3,00	1,95	1,67	2,17	2,75	3,13	2,29
Grapes1	1,19	1,00	1,38	2,20	1,00	3,00	1,30	2,00	1,16	1,22	1,83	1,25	1,31	1,44
Vinification	2,50	3,33	2,17	2,20	1,67	2,25	1,90	1,00	1,89	1,78	2,00	2,00	2,13	2,10
Wine-making	2,19	2,67	2,17	3,70	1,67	2,50	1,80	1,00	1,74	1,78	1,67	2,00	2,00	2,09
Wine description	2,00	1,67	2,17	3,20	3,67	2,75	1,20	2,00	1,63	2,33	1,75	1,25	2,13	2,05
Art, Culture	1,38	1,00	1,21	1,00	2,00	1,00	1,30	1,50	1,21	1,33	1,42	1,75	1,38	1,30
Certification	1,50	1,33	1,33	1,40	1,00	1,00	1,50	1,00	1,32	1,33	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,27
Partners	1,25	1,67	1,38	1,00	1,00	1,00	2,10	1,50	1,26	1,44	1,25	1,25	1,25	1,33
Investments	1,88	2,33	1,63	1,90	1,67	2,00	2,30	1,00	2,21	1,89	2,25	1,75	1,25	1,86
Customers, consumers	1,00	1,00	1,08	1,60	2,33	1,00	1,40	2,00	1,37	1,44	1,00	1,00	1,25	1,25
Total	1,88	2,00	1,84	2,11	1,92	1,98	1,79	1,62	1,80	1,85	1,86	1,83	1,82	1,86

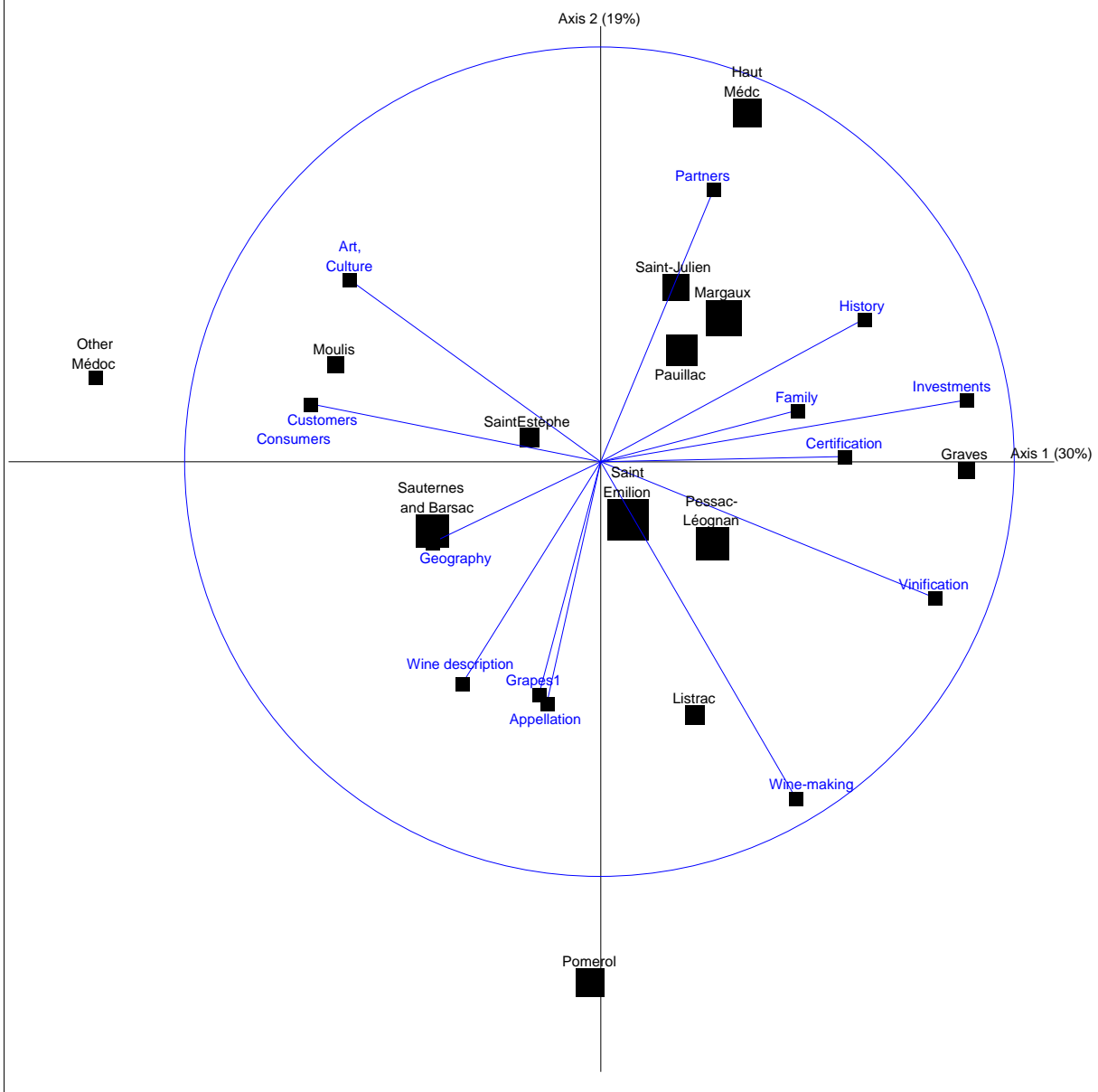


Fig 1: Principal components analysis representation of communications criteria by appellations of origin

The board gives first the average score of each appellation on the 13 criteria. The underlined figures correspond (after ANOVA analysis) to score significantly different from the average. The principal components analysis is a representation of the previous board where the correlations between the various criteria is shown. The locations of the appellations on the map correspond to the characteristics of the criteria.

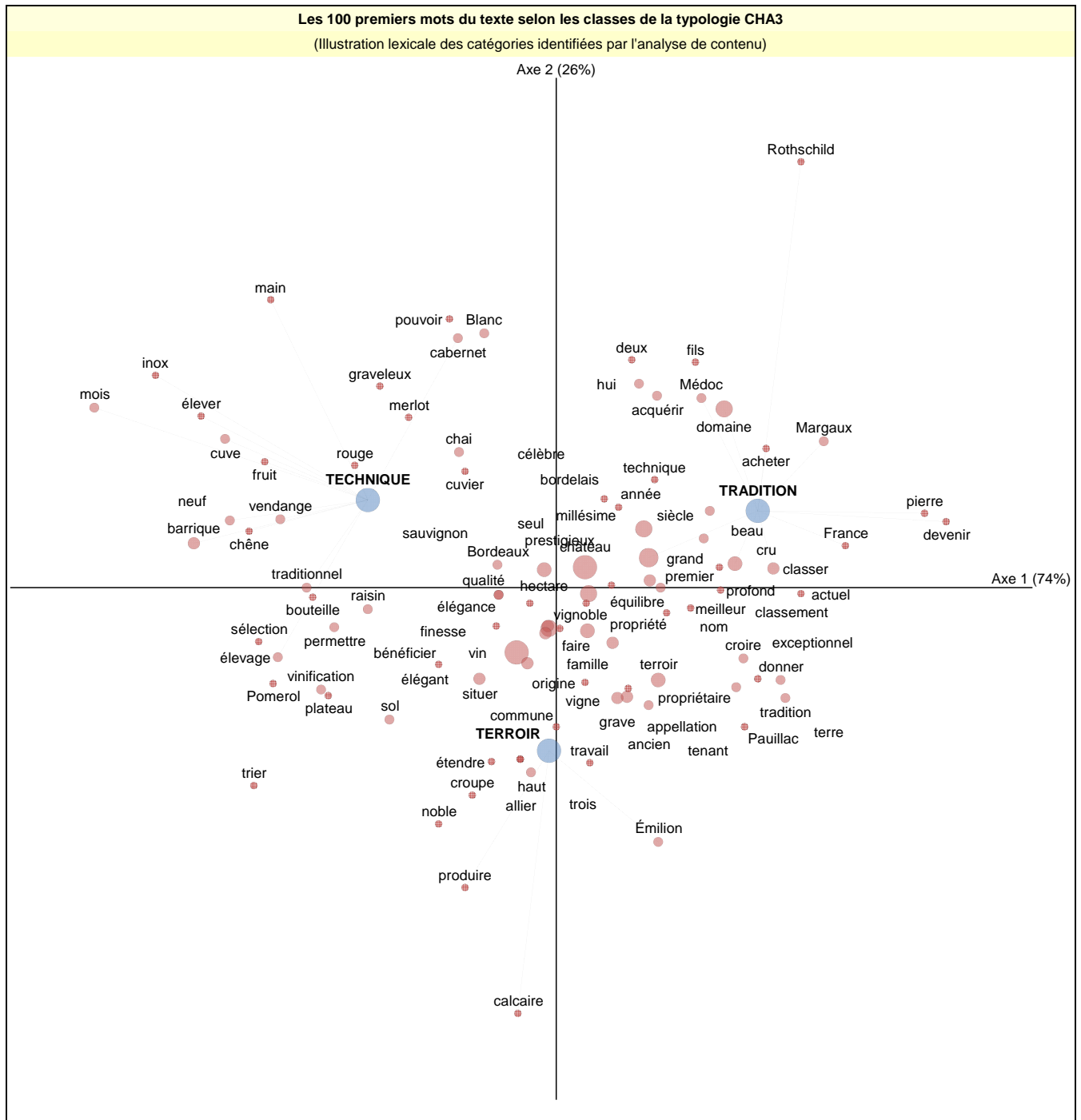
Using principal components analysis, four forms of communication have been observed and derived from the correlations between the aforementioned criteria:

Four kinds of communication	Criteria	Concerned appellations
Group 1	Description of wines, varieties, appellations geography	Sauternais
Group 2	History, family, investments, certifications	St Julien, Margaux, Pauillac, Haut Médoc, Graves
Group 3	Clients, art and culture	Moulis, Saint Estèphe
Group 4	Wine making, wine growing	Pessac Léognan, Listrac

Tab 3: Criteria shaping the four forms of communication

1.1.2- Vocabulary for three main communication styles

Returning to the “tradition”, “territory” and “techniques” forms, we have described the vocabulary characterising each using a factorial correspondence analysis that explains 100% of the variance.



Note : see the translation of the words at the end of the article

Fig 3: Vocabulary characterising three main forms of communication

1.2- Findings

The “tradition” form is over-represented with regards to history (tradition, year, century), family (son, daughter, generation, Rothschild), site (stone, appellation Margaux, domain, France) and certain verbs (go back, give, become, acquire, purchase). The form’s most characteristic chateaus are Mouton Rothschild, Langoa Barton and Léoville Barton.

The “technique” form emphasizes materials and objects (wood, stainless steel, pebble, oak, barrel, vat), stages (harvesting, vinification, fermentation, wine-making, month) and certain verbs (renovate, be able to do something, permit). The chateaus that are most representative of this style include La Conseillante, Rahoul and La Pointe.

The “territory” stresses geography and geology (hilltop, chalky, high) appellations (Bourgeois, Saint Emilion) but few verbs (produce). Chateaus such as Brosutet, Malecasse, and Cap du Mourlin are most representative of this form.

2- SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF CORPORATE NARRATIVES

Lexical analysis identified an organisation of the corporate narratives’ semantic field around four poles that we have called Tradition, Technique, Territory and Market (Business). A whole slew of significations have been organised around each of these poles, something that semiotics conceptualises by the term isotopic (Greimas and Courtés, 1979) meaning a lexical network comprised of a necessary semantic relationship between all of the words or groups of words (syntagms) associated with them, using a lexicometric process.

In a first stage, we have analysed each of these four isotopies to highlight the hierarchised relationships being established between the main words or their constituent syntagms, in line with components analysis principles that determine whether a syntagm already contains the meaning of another term, i.e. a more restrained meaning in line with the so-called hyperonymic relationship – or, conversely, whether the syntagm is part of a signification linked to a broader meaning, in line with the so-called hyponymic relationship.

This analysis of structured semantic relationships has revealed the brand contents or values represented by each of our four labels. We have then analysed the relationships of meaning being created between the four values to reveal the superior (hyperonymic) semantic category of the Grand Cru wine such as it can be produced by interlinking the different narratives.

2-1-Analysis of the four isotopies

2-1-1 Tradition.

The first isotopy is organised by semantically opposing the length of time that the chateaux have been in existence and the timelessness or permanence of the wine domain’s attributes (symbolised by the chateau name-brand) and their compliance with the norms applicable to Bordeaux Grand Cru wines. The length of time that the chateaus have been in existence, irrespective of the domain’s spatial variations over this period, is the main axis along which the narrative is semantically organised.

The narrative’s hyperonymic composition goes from centuries (in the plural) to century (singular), specifically the one when the chateau had been founded (level 1). Within this secular timeframe, there is the duration of the founding family’s presence and whether the same owner had also been in place or else if the relevant know-how has ever had to be transmitted to new owners (level 2). At a third level, there are references to important generations comprising milestones in the family lineage: grandparents, parents, sons and daughters.

This three-level construction means that a certain number of the domain’s more important events can be distributed around chronological milestones that differ in nature but are interlinked. This creates some temporal continuity producing a signification of “tradition” – an abstract theme that signifies in French the continuous intergenerational transmission of certain modes of action or corpuses of knowledge.

Particularly useful examples for the production of meaning included:

Chateau Cheval Blanc: “In the 18th century (level 1), ...Cheval Blanc had already planted a large vineyard, as shown on a map....from 1764. Nearly a century later, it became a property of the Fourcaud–Laussac family (level 2)... which held it until 1998.”

Chateau D’Yquem: “In 1593 (level 1), the Sauvage family (level 2)..... for more than 35 years, Count A.de Lur Saluces maintained the family tradition (level 3).. in 2004, Pierre Lurton.... who came from a long line of Bordeaux winemakers (level 3)”

Chateau Carbonnieux: “Cultivated since the 12th century (level 1).....In 1956, Marc Perrin bought the Chateau.. today it is his son son (level 3)...”

Chateau Latour-Martillac: “Built in Martillac during the 12th century (level 1).....Alfred Kresmann bought the domain in 1929 (level 2).... Carrying on from him, Jean (level 3)...Tristan and Loïc (level3).... contributed...in 1989 (level 3)”

Chateau Talbot: One of the oldest in the Médoc region (level 1)... the Cordier family has been proprietor since the turn of the century (level 2) preserving this from generation to generation (level 3)

The factor found on the temporal axis is the permanency of both material objects (buildings, vineyards) and immaterial ones (wine-making, know-how) transmitted over time and comprising the actual brand content of the “tradition” specific to a particular chateau in its avatar as a corporate brand.

Buildings, chateaux and cellars retain their historical identity through renovation (i.e. La Louvière, Latour-Martillac, Malartic-Lagravière, Haut-Bergey and Lafon-Roche) with the vineyard itself remaining “unchanged” (i.e. Le Tertre and Petit Village). Modifications in know-how involving the modernisation of techniques will never undermine “tradition”, manifested through expressions such as “hand-picked grapes”, “double leaf removal”, “short trim”, “traditional soil maintenance”, “destemming without crushing”, “barrels made from French oak”, “typical vats” and “spliced with fresh egg white to get greater clarity”.

This adherence to tradition usually justifies a comment that the wine comes under an official classification from 1855 or can be referred to as exemplifying “excellence”.

In sum, this isotopy manifests a continuous history that the narrative’s teller continues through a corporative narrative that is largely presented as a living person (and not as a corporate entity or corporate logo) situated somewhere along a long family lineage. This modernisation narrative personalises very old tangible and intangible assets to explain the wine’s quality in the present time.

We can now reformulate our “Tradition” label as something obtained via lexicographic calculations and which belongs to the following axiological (value) category: “actualisation of the chateau’s immanent excellence”. Depending on the data in question, this articulates concrete significations ranging from vineyards and buildings to production and wine-making tools, as well as other more abstract ones such as the knowledge and methods that the narrators acquired. This new “tag” illustrates the switch from words (plane of expression) to narrative meaning (plane of content).

This initial analysis enables the observation that the ostensible function-mission of Grand Cru chateau is first and foremost to modernise its heritage. As a result, all present and future investments in the company must be viewed as examples of its valuation instead of as attempts to create new capital, even if this promoted innovation, since the only way to successfully justify (and therefore narrate such investments is to portray them as perpetuating pre-existing excellence. Insofar as a Grand Cru chateau cannot be anything other than a manifestation of the best of the Bordeaux appellation traditions, it is easy to understand why such isotopic constructions seem to have no effect on wine prices. This is because the value of the communication is paramount, necessary and almost obligatory to legitimise the presence

of Grand Cru wines. The only justification for lowering the wine's price versus the competition would be its absence.

2-1-2 Land.

The second isotopy isolates, across the whole of the territory, town-specific appellations. On one hand, these are legal-institutional virtual abstractions. On the other, they involve real spaces (the domain) and real production (the wine) – a dual realism that is specific to each vineyard and wine, even as a certain number shared abstract qualities are associated with all wines from a particular appellation. The corporate narrative at this territorial level evokes the tangible reality associated with a chateau, unlike the virtual representation of the appellation that it exemplifies. Once again, the realism is organised around a construction that is hyperonymic for the vineyard and hyponymic for the wine.

For the vineyard, we identify a general level reflecting the geographic situation (1), followed by a description of the domain site (often an area expressed in hectares) (2), and lastly the actual parcels of land where the wine is grown (3) whenever these are characterised by particularities that might explain certain qualitative differences. On the other hand, for the wine itself the narrative starts with the intrinsic taste and then moves on to the grape mixture before ultimately splitting between grapes for red and white wines, all within a particular domain and/or appellation area.

For realistic descriptions of geographic territories, note the following examples:

Chateau Pavie-Maquin: “The vineyard is located on the Saint Emilion plateau (level 1) ..a 15-hectare family property with its soil out of clay and chalk, on porous calcareous rocks (level 2) enabling natural drainage making this a powerful, full and generous wine.”

Chateau Malescasse: “Vineyards spread around a chateau on one of the region's most beautiful gravel hilltops (level 2) ...between Margaux and Saint Julien (level 1).”

Chateau Phélan-Ségur: “Located in Saint Estéphe (level 1), .. this 90-hectare vineyard is situated on clay hilltops (level 2) ...Its parcels are managed so as to enable controlled yields (level 3).”

Chateau Malescot Saint-Exupéry: “Of the domain's 45 hectares (level 2), only 23.5 involve the best terrains (levels 3) ...overlooking the river.”

Chateau Figeac: “Located in Saint Emilion's pebbly Graves district (level 1)...an interesting landscape comprised of three pebble hills dominating an exceptional terrain (level 2).”

Chateau Kirwan: “Chateau Kirwan is located on the Cantenac plateau (level 1)... Its different plots, of varying age and featuring different grapes (levels 3), produce highly elegant wines”.

This sensory reality expands to include ampelological realities and then wine colours, often featuring some direct causality to territorial realities. Note the following examples:

Chateau Bouscaut: “Red wines, mainly from Merlot grapes (level 2) have a great deal of body (level 1). Whites (level 3)...are the perfect expression of...Sauvignon-Sémillon (level 2) from centuries-old vines.”

Chateau Franc Mayne: “A qualitative terrain .. that naturally confers a multi-faceted expression on its wines: .. finesse, complexity, vivacity and not lacking in power (level 1).”

Chateau Coufran: “Only Merlot vines or almost (level 2)...a wine that is full, complete, flexible, with a touch of mature fruit (level 1).”

Chateau Guiraud: “The Sémillon and Sauvignon vineyards (level 2), ...create wines that are rich and complex, concentrating terrains and grapes to an admirable extent.”

Chateau Lafaurie-Peyraguey: “The diversity of soils ...gives Sémillon (level 2) its regularity and complexity (level 1) whereas Sauvignon and Muscadelle (level 2) offer finesse and elegance.”

Chateau Croizet-Bages: “55%, Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, 10%, Cabernet Franc and 35% Merlot (level 2).”

In sum, this isotopy is embedded in the reality of a vineyard’s soil and subsoil, and concretely in the domain’s vinification cellars, referred to as a unique brand that is also the name of the place in question, thereby translating a tangible presence combining vineyards and buildings indissociably. Thus, at least in this corpus, chateau names are also corporate brands, i.e. true “rigid descriptors” (Kripke, 1980), meaning that the only reality that they can describe is the toponym or place name. This very particular “ontological” quality accounts in and of itself for the necessary differentiation of “second wines” through the use of different brands and because it is impossible for a chateau to be used as a range brand or “umbrella” (as demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the way that Mouton-Cadet comes under the umbrella of “Baron Phillippe de Rothschild” and not “Chateau Mouton Rothschild”).

We can now reformulate our “Territory” heading using the following axiological (value) concept: “The chateau’s reality resides in its dual existence as toponym and unique wine brand”. Alongside the narrator’s “existence” value, further value is achieved because message recipients are receiving access to the reality in question, insofar as they construe this in the corporate narrative as a description that is necessary and non-contingent (i.e. non-fictional) – unlike the habitual regime of commercial brand narratives that merely describe product ranges and products. (Bobrie, 2009, 2010)

2-1-3 Technique

The third isotopy describes outcomes that might potentially be associated with more or less recently updated know-how. This can tie into the systems and techniques that are being used for the wine’s production. Contrary to “Tradition”, Technique introduces discontinuity into the chateau’s continuous existence. As aforementioned, since Technique can neither be questioned nor dissociated from the modernisation of Tradition, its potential must be justified, either because an optimisation of Tradition is taking place (i.e. when the chateau’s history is uninterrupted) or else because certain ways of reconstituting or redressing the chateau enable a rebirth of Tradition in those instances where it has suffered an “existential” interruption, one that occurs for human reasons (changes in families, owners), natural reasons (phylloxera, climate change) or social reasons (changes in economic or political context). Clearly, references to techniques as factors that highlight the “potential” of Tradition dominate in this corpus but there are also quite a few references to the latter situation as it relates to vineyards and cellars.

Examples of Technique serving continuity include:

Clos Fourtet: “Traditional vinification controlled by the most modern techniques, the wine is made in new barrels stretching across the vast expanse of the cellars and supplementing the wine’s natural qualities.”

Chateau Mouton-Rothschild: “In 1924, Baron Philippe de Rothschild initiated the practice of bottling wine at his chateau...In 1926 he built the famous “Great Cellar”.. whose dramatic perspective remains a leading attraction for visitors...”

Chateau Balestard La Tonnelle: “Combining respect for territory, traditions and cutting-edge technique”.

Chateau Fonréaud: “A vat room featuring a number of small thermo-regulated vats... helps us to express the wealth and nuances of each parcel of land.”

Chateau La Lagune: “A new fermenting room uses a gravity method to help transfer the grape harvest into thermo-regulated stainless steel vats.”

Chateau Cantenac Brown: “Methods have changed. The vineyard operations are more environmentally-friendly nowadays.”

Chateau Dauzac: “Cellars were totally renovated in 2004 to provide this great wine with a high-performance tool.”

Chateau Lagrange: “Production methods combining tradition with modernity. “

Chateau Pichon-Longueville: ”Spectacular facilities mean that the wine develops today in the best possible conditions.”

In terms of Technique being used to resurrect Tradition:

Chateau Belgrave: “Today’s vineyard has been entirely rehabilitated and benefits from the protection of a reasoned agricultural regime...The wine-making cellars’ refurbishment in 2007 completed the winery’s full-scale renovation. Having been rehabilitated and modernised – and recognised for this - Belgrave has confirmed its elite status...”

Chateau Ferrière: “Since the 1992takeover ...Claire Villard has worked hard to raise the profile of this chateau. ... Critics...have saluted the phenomenal renaissance of this Grand Cru wine.”

Chateau Haut-Bages Libéral: “The domain was acquired.. in 1960 and then in 1983 by the Villars family. The equipment was entirely renovated and modernised. The vineyard has reached maturity.”

In sum, this isotopy reflects the potentialisation of all outcomes where Tradition is respected through the use of new means that may apply to wine-making practices and the actual wine production or else that may involve continuity in the chateau’s history and efforts to resurrect this. We can now reformulate our “Technique” heading using the following axiological (value) concept: “A chateau’s potential for excellence - and the technical choices reflecting individual or collective human preferences – are the drivers behind experimentation and ultimately achievement.”

This experimentation, or potentialisation value turns the narrative towards the future (or the past future), whereas the actualization value describes a movement from past towards present and the reality value an eternal present.

2-1-4 The Market.

Lexicometric analysis indicates that this latter theme is less present than the three others. At this level, corporate narratives reveal a more sporadic kind of isotopy, one that is absent in most texts. References here revolve around the market towards which the chateau is oriented, either on the demand-side (involving customers) or (and more rarely) on the supply-side when the chateau describes itself as a listed company replete with investor-shareholders - and no longer as a family wine producer.

In general, the customer orientation evokes an international presence in prestigious markets. By metonymy, this means that wines from the chateau in question are true luxury objects since their customers belong to a globalised elite.

Highlighting an entrepreneurial structure generally means declaring that the chateau belongs to powerful groups capable of substantial investments in “technique”, which as aforementioned constitutes a key factor of potential excellence. Once again (and using a metonymic shortcut), the investment becomes a representation of legitimised and incontestable quality. Customers’ prestige and investors’ power provide narrative vehicles that transform virtual legitimacy into a strong statement.

Customer reference examples include:

Chateau de France: “Chateau de France wines regularly win awards ...and feature on elite wine lists.”

Chateau Malartic-Lagravière: “Acknowledged worldwide for its wines...”

Chateau Gazin: “80% of whose production is exported .. . Chateau Gazin is a member of the Bordeaux Wine Academy.”

Chateau de Lamarque: “..served by leading restaurants in France and across the world.”

Chateau Greysac: “Wines sold worldwide by exclusive agents..”

Regarding a company’s capital structure, examples include:

Chateau Rahout: “Acquired in 1986 by Alain Thiennot, a merchant in Champagne and Bordelaux wines ..”

Chateau Bélair: “Wines that can only be bought from Ets Jean Pierre Moueix”

Chateau Canon: “ In November 1996, Chanel Inc acquired this jewel and began a major renovation programme ..”

Chateau Cantemerle: “.. In 1981, the chateau became the property of a powerful mutual society ..SMABTP.. and underwent full-scale renovation ..”

Chateau Canon-la-Gaffelière: “After a few years of major investment, the chateau was reborn.”

In sum, this isotopy reflects the need for “reality” by demonstrating, on the demand-side, the non-virtual nature of global marketing efforts plus the prestigiousness of the customer base, and on the supply-side, the very tangible nature of the investments being made, materialising in the chateaus’ transformation and rebirth.

We can now reformulate our “Market” category using the following axiological (value) concept: “The non-virtual nature of commercial successes and the economic reality of the company’s investments.” This value, which represents a shift from the virtual expectations to the real outcomes, situates the narrative in the historic past, portraying it as a past action being continued in the present.

2-2- From narrative value to the value of a Grand Cru wine

The four values associated with the themes’ four isotopic structures are all clearly mobilised in the different corporate narratives. What needs to be done now is to understand their interconnections and the logical necessity of revealing the higher semantic category of a Grand Cru Bordeaux wine such as the narratives tried to describe this.

The four values each use four different modalities (out of reality, potentiality, actuality and non-virtuality) to express what a Grand Cru wine means to its narrator and what it should mean to recipients of such corporate narratives. Thus, a Grand Cru wine is a reality because of its links to a territory but no more than a potential for excellence in terms of the techniques that it applies, which enable it to modernise its traditions and de-virtualise market uncertainty.

The axiological logic that speaks of the value of a Grand Cru wine results from a relationship opposing this certainty of the territory where it is grown to the uncertainty of the marketplace. Market uncertainty (virtuality) is diminished by the potentiality of a technique that, in turn, should materialise in the actualization of tradition. This system of reciprocal presuppositions builds the semiotic square of the semantic category to which Grand Cru wines belong and can be represented by the following figure :

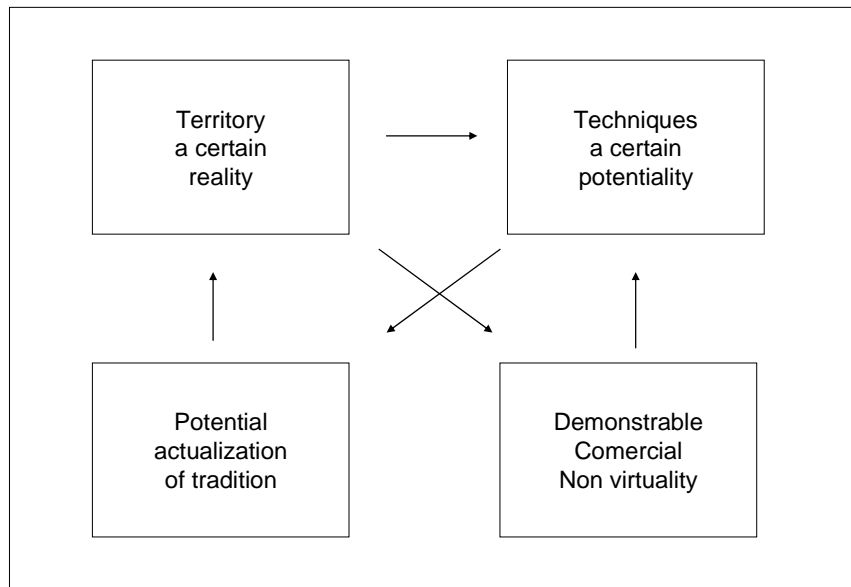


Fig 4 : The semiotic square

The axiology of a Grand Cru's corporate narrative also links different time horizons. A Grand Cru wine is eternal because of the territory where it grows (which does not change over the course of human history). It exists on a secular plane because of the way that it modernises tradition. It carries the future through its technical potentiality. And it offers immediacy through its de-virtualisation of commercial performance. For the message recipient whom the narrative is targeting, the chateau is an immanent gateway to a timeless reality typifying a unique wine from a unique territory, one whose renewal it alone can guarantee through its- actualization of tradition (know-how) and potentialisation of technique (ability to do).

Using the semantisation-valuation of Grand Cru wines – as proposed in the corporate narratives - each Chateau will stage its differentiation by allocating varying levels of intensity and extension to the four values comprising this category. As indicated in the lexicometric analysis, the narratives do not all attribute the same weight to the different values and even ignore some of them, without this oversight weakening the narrative logic in any way. For instance, efforts to reduce market uncertainty by simply ignoring it do not eliminate the problem yet the narrator will act as if it has been semantically neutralised by other elements in the narrative and therefore no longer feel the need to highlight de-virtualised commercial actions or the effectiveness of any investments undertaken.

Within the present framework, it is impossible to analyse the axiological variances between the 132 narratives. At most, by mobilising lexicometric analysis it becomes apparent that the particular history of each of the chateaux induces a different balance between the value of actualizing excellence (Tradition) and the value of potentialising this (Technique). Moreover, belonging to one or the other local appellation districts means that the territorial value will receive a greater or lesser extension.

The study's limitations relate to its global analysis of a corpus that tries to understand the brand content of the *Grand Cru de Bordeaux* semantic category but cannot explain how or why each chateau has chosen a particular construction of meaning when it is expressing similar values. Future studies at an appellation or classification level (or at the level of some

other objective criterion) will very probably enable greater understanding of any recurrences or individual differences.

Nevertheless, in conclusion, what we can offer is an analytical method for these semantic productions of differences, one that is based on the tension between the significations being manifested (Fontanille and Zylberberg, 1998) in each corporate narrative between the emotional intensity introduced into the descriptions, and the cognitive informational scope deployed for the benefit of the message's recipient.

CONCLUSION:

From commonalities to differences

Our dual lexicometric and semiotic analysis may have enabled us to understand and explain commonalities between the brand content of chateaux and the semantic category of the Bordeaux Grand Cru wines to which they refer, but we have merely glimpsed the specificity of each of these narratives. In terms of our findings' managerial application, it is crucial to understand how each company produces its own key corporate narrative, since this will be key to its positioning.

To mobilise this, we can highlight the theoretical and practical utility of a semiotic mechanism within a tensive scheme that will provide the logical frameworks enabling a possible differentiation between narratives comprised of identical values but where valences are attributed according to varying levels of emotional imagination (intensity) and intelligible information (extensivity).

For each value, the narrator can vary the presentation of its constituent figures and themes by adding or subtracting emotions or informational precision. As an example, the actualization of "Tradition" is often described as a "passion" for family actors, one that is transmitted from generation to generation, with the potentialisation of "Technique" sometimes referring to lists of varying length referring to the systems and tools that are used in wine-making. As for commercial non-virtualisation, this is often described emotionally as an honour that has been merited on the sell-side but as an ethical obligation on the investment side. Lastly the "Territory" value can generally only dissociate the things that are knowable (i.e. pedology) from the things that people feel (i.e. their sense that a landscape or domain possesses an aesthetic beauty and/or that its wines are sensual).

By evaluating their own narratives - both in terms of the axiological logics typifying a Grand Cru wine narrative and also in terms of the emotional and sensitive intensity and informational and intelligible range attributable to each of the values comprising the narrative structure - each of the chateaus can ultimately determine the strengths and weaknesses of its corporate communications in both intrinsic and comparative terms. Without refusing the kind of shared brand content that is necessary to help message recipients identify such categorisations, the chateau might be able to understand how to deploy its more specific dimensions using a differentiated corporate narrative that expresses its own positioning.

The question here is whether this reflexive methodology for comparing narratives with shared brand content categorisations can be extended to other wine categories. The present study cannot answer this question since we would first need to define a new benchmark semantic category, such as "Bordeaux" wine or "French" wine or "Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée" wine, etc. Our approach is only validated here, in both lexicometric and narrative semiotic terms, through its highly precise definition of a corpus of narratives that are very homogenous, in both expression and content terms. It would clearly be imprudent to engage with other corpuses without first defining the conditions of coherency and feasibility applicable to a structural and then tensive analysis of their narratives.

Managerial implication

Institutional communication must first fulfill two missions: to differentiate the company here the Châteaux - of their colleagues, and also speak to the reader-consumer or investor.

On the first point, the study presents various components of corporate communication of the Grands Crus of Bordeaux. It reveals themes that can eventually be reduced to thirteen dimensions. Moreover, the main forms obtained - traditional, technical, local, business - summarize the essence of verbatim quite effectively. Therefore, two managerial implications can be drawn:

- Firstly is there a real power of differentiation of these texts to supply each of the 132 Châteaux with a specificity ? This question is particularly relevant as the Grands Crus express constantly their differentiation and the "uniqueness" to their offering. A further study could verify this: it would be - after removing all references identifying the text - to be tested in each of the 132 blind communications to see if the Grands Crus are properly associated with texts that are supposed to describe them.

- Moreover, if the Grands Crus are models for the whole profession on the conduct of the vineyard, winemaking and wine aging, is it the same for the corporate communication ? The latter - almost for Cru Bourgeois Medoc or Cotes de Bordeaux - claiming too few specifics. If this happens, the development of communication media in contexts less elitist, withdraws many trappings of the promise of differentiation of Grands Crus in magma where "anything goes".

On the second point, one can think of another approach: comparing the lexicon of the emotions of a consumers' population with those mentioned here. The producer and the consumer ultimately have to speak the same language. In this regard a recent study (Mora Moscarola, 2010) conducted on the narratives of consumers or purchasers of wine on the representation they have of their emotions shows three types of evocation: the wine as "product performance" (Age 30-50 years), the wine as "mood factor" (young people under 30 years), and the wine "cultural roots" (in more than 50 years).

A new study could usefully compare the proximity or otherwise the distance between the representations developed by the consumers and the signs issued by the producers.

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Translation fig 3 :

Acheter : to buy	Cuvier : vat	Pierre : stone
Acquérir : to acquire	Deux : two	Plateau : plateau
Actuel : present	Devenir: to become	Pouvoir : power
Ancien : ancient	Élégant : elegant	Produire : to produce
Barrique : barrel	Elevage : wine growing	Profond : deep
Beau : pretty	Elever : to grow	Propriétaire : owner
Bénéficiaire : to benefit	Equilibre : balance	Propriété : estate
Blanc: white	Etendre : expand	Qualité : quality
Bordelais : from Bordeaux	Exceptionnel: exceptional	Rouge : red
Bouteille : bottle	Faire : to make	Seul : alone
Célèbre : wellknown	Famille : family	Situer : to locate
Chai : chai	Fils : son	Sélection: selection
Chêne : oak	Fruit: frute	Sol : ground
Cibler : to target	Grand : big	Technique : technics
Classement : ranking	Grave : gravel	Terre : ground
Commune : communal	Graveleux : gravelly	Terroir : terroir
Croire : to believe	Haut : high	Traditionnel : traditional
Croupe : croup	Inox : stainless	Travail : work
Cru : cru	Main : hand	Trois : three
Cuve : vat	Millesime: vintage	Vignoble : vinyard
	Mois : month	Vinification : wine making
	Neuf: new	
	Noble : noble	
	Permettre : to allow	