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# Themes of U.S. Wine Advertising and the Use of Geography and Place to Market Wine

John P. Tiefenbacher

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- 1 This paper examines the use of representations of place in the advertising of wine in a magazine focused on the retail wine market and wine consumers. Consumers may view wine as not only a product to be consumed and enjoyed, but also as the focus of a hobby. Hobbyist wine drinkers strive to understand the distinctions and qualities of wine varieties and styles produced around the world, and may even study the wine makers, histories and traditions behind wines of various regions and even the environmental and cultural characteristics of the locales where wine grapes are grown. They may follow events that affect supply and demand, wine markets and wine prices. Several popular magazines are published to reveal these matters to engaged wine consumers and they enable entry into the wine world to enhance wine experiences and to foster continued popularity and growth of the volume of wine consumption. Perhaps most importantly, these publications enable presentation of terminology that can influence the cognitive, perceptual, sensual and intellectual experiences of wine enthusiasts and shape the evolving language of wine.
- 2 One particular term that is gaining popularity among contemporary wine makers and consumers in the United States is *terroir*, an idea that connotes the contribution that “place” makes to the flavor and quality of wines. The multivariate aspects of terrestrial, astronomical, meteorological, hydrological, climatological, geological and even cultural factors of the vineyard environment are embedded in this concept. Specific *terroir* varies from location to location and can even vary within a vineyard (the scale to which *terroir* refers varies quite widely among those who use the term). While the concept originated among French wine growers perhaps as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, it has gained traction in the United States over the last few years and is now an oft-used wine selling point among producers, marketers and advertisers of wines in the U.S. (Vaudour, 2002; Barham, 2003).

- 3 Because of its growing popularization, the use of *terroir* (either implicitly or explicitly) in advertising of wine deserves some scrutiny. This study examines the content of wine advertisements appearing in one magazine, *The Wine Spectator*, which is published in the United States for the American market. This particular publication was selected for study primarily because it is dedicated to wine; it is not a “lifestyle” magazine that features cooking, home décor or other activities that appeal to affluent consumers. Rather, it is one of the two magazines competing for print sales to readers of wine-consumer and wine-business news in the U.S. They both feature wine ads. The competition is *The Wine Enthusiast*. Neither is regarded as more important and either could have been examined for this study. *The Wine Spectator*, however, was more conveniently available for evaluation. Advertising published in two years of issues (30 in all) of this magazine was systematically examined to discern the content of ads and to develop a typology of the themes used to sell wine. Particular attention was paid to the use of geographical descriptors in the text and imagery of these ads. Aside from describing the spatial pattern of the advertisers (i.e. locations and regions represented by the advertisements) and identifying the themes used, this research undertook a direct assessment of the use of geographical indications of origin and *terroir* is performed.

## Background

- 4 The spatial dimensions of global wine production and commerce have changed dramatically over the last two decades (Tiefenbacher and Townsend, 2011). Viticulture and viniculture have spread to new regions and intensified in many nascent viticultural regions. The science of wine making has advanced considerably in many ways and the perspectives of wine makers, marketers and advertising agencies have evolved. Wine has also rather recently become a mainstream adult beverage in the United States and is now more widely consumed than ever before globally. It now encompasses a lifestyle (perhaps a culture) that reflects a new view of the role that alcoholic drink plays in the enjoyment of food, social experiences and life itself (Bruwer and Li, 2007). Indeed wine, perhaps more than ever before, is conceived to be a fundamental component of the experiences of cuisine, culture, travel and place.
- 5 While wine generally appeals to mass consumers as a recreational beverage, there are many vinophiles who are not only wine drinkers, but also collect and invest in wine and wine-focused activities. The more-than-casual “upper class” wine consumer has traditionally driven the marketing, branding and advertising of wines in the United States, but their importance to the wine market is slowly diminishing as the wine-consuming population grows in the middle class. Wine is becoming a mainstream drink in the U.S., largely through the increasing quality and supply of affordable wines from around the world and the expansion of the production of wines that appeal to less refined and less sophisticated palettes. An indication of such expansion is reflected in the international proliferation of wine-centered periodicals devoted to educating consumers and *aficionados*. Today, there are more than a dozen such magazines published globally. The goals of these publications are to enable the marketing of wine to consumers in a variety of countries and to ease the process of entry into the wine world. Among these publications are: *Decanter* (United Kingdom), *La Revue du Vin de France* (France), *Vines* (Canada), *Simple Wine News* (Russia), *Wine Enthusiast* (China), *Winestate Magazine* (New Zealand), *Wine NZ* (New Zealand), *Il Mio Vino* (Italy) and *Australian Wine Showcase*

(Australia). Each magazine is financially supported by reader subscriptions, newsstand sales, and the advertising revenues from the wine producers, distributors, bottlers, importers, marketers, regional and national winegrower associations, wine retailers and wholesalers.

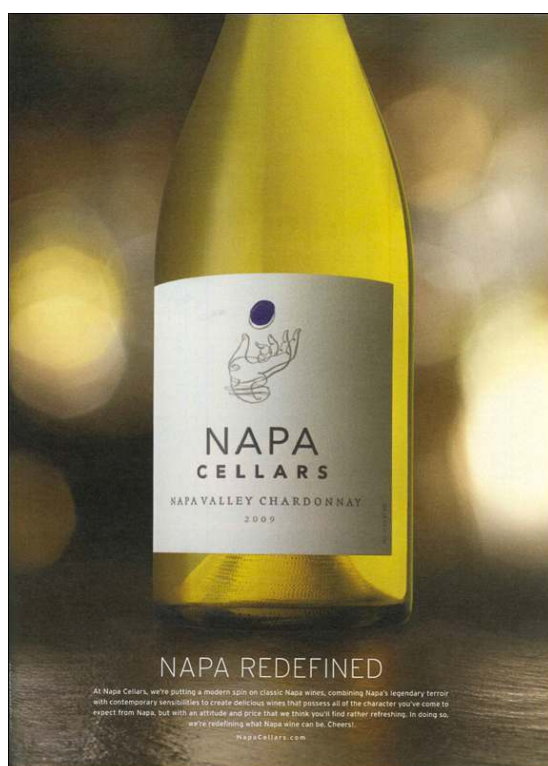
- 6 Advertising and marketing strategies (in particular, branding of wines) create and shape the nuances of how consumers understand and talk about wine. Imagery and the textual language used in advertisements create templates for conceptualization of styles, brands, regions and flavor experiences (Fleming and Roth, 1991). While little scholarship has focused specifically on the content of the print advertising of wines, Thode and Maskulka (1998) may have been the first marketing scholars to regard the fundamental importance of distinguishing agricultural products by sub-national regions of origin and the increasing frequency of doing so in advertising. Banks *et al.* (2007) examined the use of region of origin on wine bottle labels and suggest that the geography of naming source regions is related as much or more to the expectations of consumers as it is driven by the wine producers' desires. Other studies of wine labels reflect similar conclusions (Sherman and Tuten, 2011; Elliot and Barth, 2012). Indeed, where once only wines and cheeses bore the names of their source regions, spatial distinction now extends to a diverse array of products such as chocolate, honey, milk, hops, peaches, citrus, bread, other fruits and even oysters (Trubek and Bowen, 2008). And this may reflect producers' changing perceptions of what consumers want (Wilson and Jourjon, 2010) as numerous studies have examined the role of geographic indication at the point of sale. For instance, studies of consumers in the U.S., France, the U.K., Australia, Croatia, and Japan reveal the importance, to the consumer, of the geographical indicator (Orth, Wolf and Dodd, 2005; Hamlin and Leith, 2006; Shamel, 2006; d'Hautville, Fornerino and Perrouy, 2007; McCutcheon, Bruwer and Li, 2009; Famularo, Bruwer and Li, 2010; Sam and Thompson, 2010; Čačić *et al.*, 2011; Bruwer and Buller, 2012). The evidence that a wine's region of origin appears to be more important than brand to consumers has promulgated a debate in the realm of marketing over place equity (the contribution of place to the value of a product) and brand equity (the contribution of the brand itself to the value of the product). Younger, less knowledgeable consumers of wine tend to be swayed more by brands than by geographic indication while increasing knowledge drives consumers toward choices based on source regions of wines (Nowak, Thach and Olsen, 2006; Viot and Passebois-Ducros, 2010). Priilaid (2006; 2007), however, found in blind tastings that place of origin masks the inherent qualities of the wines and that such indicators reflect no scientific factors found in the wines they intend to describe. For wines, the geographical indication of origin, through identification of country of origin, sub-national regions of origin (or appellations), vintages (which indicate time as well as place), varietals, single-vineyard products, old-vine products, or lot-specific (i.e. a specific part of a vineyard) harvests, reflects the use of place or the location in which a wine was made to enable, entice or enhance consumer selections (Barrère, 2007; Johnson and Bruwer, 2007; McCutcheon, Bruwer and Li, 2009; Atkin and Johnson, 2010; Easingwood, Lockshin and Spawton, 2011). Each of these identifiers serves as template for the advertising of the place contained by the bottle.
- 7 A rather "new" template in United States wine marketing is *terroir*, or the spatial factors that can be measured and used to describe the growing environment of a specific grape variety. The use of the concept of the *terroir* emerged in English-language discussions of wine during the early 1990s (Vaudour, 2002). Vaudour (2002) identified four

interpretations or contrasting uses of the term *terroir* (and this is further elaborated upon by Charters (2010)) that contribute to a confusing array of the term's meaning and to the vagueness of its use. The use of *terroir* in American wine marketing and advertising seems to be growing, but its meaning remains ambiguous (Charters, 2010; Spielmann and Gelinás-Chébat, 2012). *Terroir* could be used to describe the vineyard environment, to identify the place of a wine, to distinguish a region of production or to claim the height of quality achieved in a wine.

- 8 The environmental factors important in production are geophysical (climate, weather events, insolation duration and intensity, temperature extremes and regimes, seasonal changes, precipitation regimes, soil moisture, soil type, depth, composition and quality, soil pH, mineral composition, geology, slope, exposure, elevation and others that influence the vitality and vigor of a plant and the rate of ripening of the fruit) and cultural (vineyard management generally and treatment of the grapes from harvest through fermentation), and can be extraordinarily specific due to the levels of micromanagement that are scientifically and technologically achievable (Bohmrich, 1996; Wilson, 1999; Van Leeuwen and Seguin, 2006). The ideal use of *terroir* would be to guide the choice of a grape variety to grow that is ideally suited for a particular site and its characteristics, rather than letting the wine one wants ultimately to produce to dictate the grape selection.
- 9 Historically, the French employed *terroir* to conceive of their regions of production to control both the quality of similarly place-identified products (eventually named *appellation d'origine contrôlée* or AOC) sold in other regions and the amount of competition among producers within those regions of origin (Stanziani, 2004; Barrère, 2007). For instance, Champagne (or Burgundy or Bordeaux) winegrowers not only desired to establish consumers' trust in the quality and consistency of the wines from their region (and therein maintaining the value of their wines) but they also desired to limit or control the number of competitors (maintaining individual growers' economic and political power in the market) and the quantity of production (maintaining the supply and their individual market shares or profits). Moran (1993) discusses the role of appellations in hegemonic control of space and viticultural production.
- 10 With the legal formalization of AOCs beginning in 1935 (Gade, 2004), the use of *terroir* began to evolve. The expansion of the international commercial wine trade, from primarily European production to a more globally dispersed distribution of producers in North and South America, Africa and Oceania, has led to adoption and use of *terroir* and place-based marketing strategies to distinguish wines among international competitors. Producers occasionally use appellation notoriety to gain visibility in an ever more crowded market. Bruwer and Johnson (2010) show that consumers not only regard the region of origin to indicate the characteristics of the wine in the bottle, but also believe that place-based facts associated with the wine, such as those found on wine labels, indicate the quality of the wine. Noting that one's wine is produced in Napa Valley, for example, enables an unknown brand from that region to gain quick advantage over hundreds of other brands from (for example, Hames Valley or Suisun Valley) California. Napa Valley may be believed by many consumers to have the best *terroir* (collectively speaking) in California or the United States, and this may be made evident by the monetary values of vineyard land in the region compared to other regions or by the prices of Napa wines (illustration 1). But what may be more valuable than the land itself is place's name (Johnson and Bruwer, 2007; Atkin and Johnson, 2010). Whether the wine is

truly “better” in the well-known region may be less important than that it comes from a region where highly regarded wines are produced. Historical acclaim and achievements (medals won or points awarded to a wine) can be transmitted to new and future production simply because of the reputation of a place. A “New World” winemaker can interpret their *terroir* from their own large-scale perspective, in contrast to one in a French AOC, and can communicate very specific details of their place within the region so as to distinguish his or her wine among the wines of their inter- and intra-regional competitors. A grower can claim that their grapes were grown in the consummate conditions for their variety and that their wine has no equal, even among the wines of their region or appellation.

Illustration 1 – Napa Cellars



This Napa Cellars Chardonnay demonstrates the quest for distinction from direct competition.

- 11 *Terroir* can also be used by a winemaker to proclaim in their advertising their achievement of perfect expression of the grape variety’s character through the expert care (or *savoir-faire*) of the plant in its temporal experience in the place in which it was grown. This can be a self-congratulatory expression of achievement used to provide a theme for marketing a wine. That *terroir* can exist as a rational or scientific description of a vineyard or discrete region cannot be doubted, but that its character or quality is communicated through the wine can be scientifically proven is a reasonably debatable issue. This does not, however, keep producers, marketers or advertisers from using the term to sell their products.
- 12 This study evaluates a sample of wine advertisements to create a typology of the contemporary themes that are used to sell wines in the American consumer market. The intent is to substantiate the various themes used to sell wines in this printed venue and to focus attention on the importance of “place” in achieving distinction of wines and

brands. Specifically, this study answers four questions: what are the common themes found in wine advertising? How are the geographical representations of place, spatial context, region, or the important contribution of geographic factors to the quality and value of wine used in the advertising of wine? How much is *terroir* used in advertising? And what are the definitions of *terroir* represented in these ads? These are questions that have not yet been answered by past research, as there is no scholarly literature that sheds light specifically on the use of either geography or place in wine advertisements.

## Methodology

- 13 To systematically and empirically assess the use of geographic representations, in particular *terroir*, in print advertising, the wine ads present in two years' worth of the magazine *The Wine Spectator* were examined. The 30 issues of *Wine Spectator* published from April 30, 2010 to March 31, 2012 were analyzed for content using a mixed-methods approach. These issues contained 873 separate (partial-page, single-page or multiple-page) advertisements, 398 of which were duplicated at least once, yielding 475 distinctly different ads representing 234 different advertisers.
- 14 Each advertisement was qualitatively evaluated for the presence of specific characteristics and recorded in a database. In addition to the specific advertiser, which was used to keep track of repeated appearance of identical ads, the source country, region and area of the wine advertised were noted. The text of each ad was also recorded for analysis and to distinguish between similar advertisements by the same advertiser. The wine type (varietal, blended, sparkling, fortified and other wine styles) and the specific wine varieties advertised were noted. The text was examined for its facts about the wine, the brand advertised, or the winemaker. Specifically noted was the presence or absence of each of the following in the text: a vintage, the historical connection to family or tradition, awards accrued for a specific wine or by the winemaker, climate of region of origin, vineyard or regional characteristics that implied the importance of the place or winemaker's achievement of *terroir*, explicit use of *terroir* and the use of "*cru*" (also a very old term – perhaps formulated by the French in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – meaning "growth", referring to a prototypical example of a single vineyard or assemblage of adjacent vineyards that reflects a region's ideal *terroir* – as in *Premier Cru* or *Grand Cru*). The imagery used in each advertisement was also noted and described in the database. The presence of wine bottles (photographs or stylized drawings), the use of vineyard landscapes, region-specific terrains, or themes (determined from empirical examination of content) exhibited as images in each ad were characterized and recorded. Finally, the entirety of the advertisement was evaluated for its abstract, prototypical theme and the messages that were being delivered.
- 15 The results are presented in tabular form to represent the characteristics of contemporary U.S. wine advertisements. At present, there is nothing to compare proportions or percentages to in order to evaluate trends, tendencies or changes in the composition of the advertising of these products. These results establish a baseline against which future similar evaluations could be conducted and compared. Archival collections of wine advertisements, for instance in past U.S. publications (even in past issues of this magazine), historical advertising published in non-American magazines, or those appearing in contemporaneous publications from other countries (such as those described above) could reflect contrasts and similarities to other places and/or times.

## Results

- 16 The 873 advertisements (note that this includes all advertisements whether unique or repeated) in *Wine Spectator* most commonly portray varietals (n=378; 43%). Blends comprised 16% (n=136) of the advertisements. Sparkling wines (n=67; 8%), ports (n=49; 6%), Champagnes (n=23; 3%) and Amarone (n=19; 2%) account for about one fifth of all ads. The balance (n=208; 24%) featured no specific wine or style, but rather focused on brands. The advertisements were for wines produced in only 17 countries, including those from the United States and the top ten countries whose wines are imported into the U.S., including Italy, France, Chile, Portugal and Spain which, with the U.S., accounted for 770 (or 88%) of all advertisements. The countries generating the most advertisements are those leading among U.S. imports (table 1). Within this these ads grouped by country, one can discern a subset of 135 (or 15%) generic (not specific to a brand or specific wine) ads that collectively market for countries or regions of countries (e.g. Tuscany, Valpolicella or Rioja). The largest numbers of region-focused ads were posted by California (U.S.), Tuscany (Italy), Douro (Portugal), and Veneto (Italy) associations (table 2).

Table 1 - Origin of Advertisers in The Wine Spectator by Country

Country	Rank	# of Advisers
1. Italy	2	233
2. U.S.	*	177
3. France	1	114
4. Chile	5	72
4. Portugal	9	72
4. Spain	4	72
7. Argentina	6	40
8. Australia	3	27
9. New Zealand	8	21
10. Greece		17
11. Israel		12
12. Austria		9
13. Brazil		1
13. Canada		1
13. Germany	7	1



13. Romania		1
13. South Africa	10	1

\*Shown is the Rank of Each Producing Country Based on Percentage of US Imports, 2008

Source: American Association of Wine Economists Blog at <http://www.wine-economics.org/wordpress/>

**Table 2 – Advertisers by Region**

<b>Region</b>	<b># of Advisers</b>
1. California	130
2. Tuscano	77
3. Douro	53
4. Veneto	39
5. Mendoza	31
5. Colchagua Valley	31
7. Burgundy/Bourgogne	30
8. Castilla-La Mancha	27
8. Côtes du Rhône	27
10. Washington	25
11. Oregon	22
12. Marlborough	21
13. Valpolicella	17
14. Bio Bio Valley	14
15. Bordeaux	13
15. Champagne	13
15. Alto Adige/Südtirol	13
18. Rioja	12
19. Barcelona	11

## Advertising Content

- 17 More relevant to the primary intent of this study are the content and thematic orientations. What images or narratives were used to entice consumption of wines? Of 873 advertisements, 748 (86%) used either a photograph of the bottled and labeled wine (presumably to enable product brand recognition in retail settings) or an artistically stylized image of a bottle or a wine-bottle motif. Often, the visual presence of a wine bottle reflected the ad theme that implies that the brand and the product are the entirety of what is being sold. By contrast, other ads physically place wine within an event or experience that implies the social role that it can play or the emotional enjoyment it can deliver. Others employ images of wines or wine bottles as vehicles to deliver eye-catching art and design, to link a wine to the past, to link it to a specific culture, or to tie it to a positive social value.
- 18 The craft, or art, of winemaking is occasionally the focus of advertisements. The biography of a winemaker (and his or her family) or the history of a vineyard from which a wine is produced is a popular theme that has been given a name, “familiness”, and is regarded to have equity in wine (Maguire, Strickland and Frost, 2013). Traditions and links to the past are used in 243 (28%) ads. Images of a winemaker, old family photographs, detailed biographies, and even historic tales of settlement of a region or the establishment of a vineyard and business exemplify these (illustration 2).

Illustration 2 – Beringer Knights Valley wine



Beringer Knights Valley wine ad employs the legend of discovery of an ideal vineyard site.

- 19 Images of the landscapes from which wines are produced are used to convey a place's ambience or beauty and are intended to compel the consumer to visualize the “flavor” or

taste of place. Some ads are more explicit about a place's flavor (illustration 3), and many use stereotypical imagery of the regions they represent to "brand" the place for consumers.

Illustration 3 – Mezzacorona



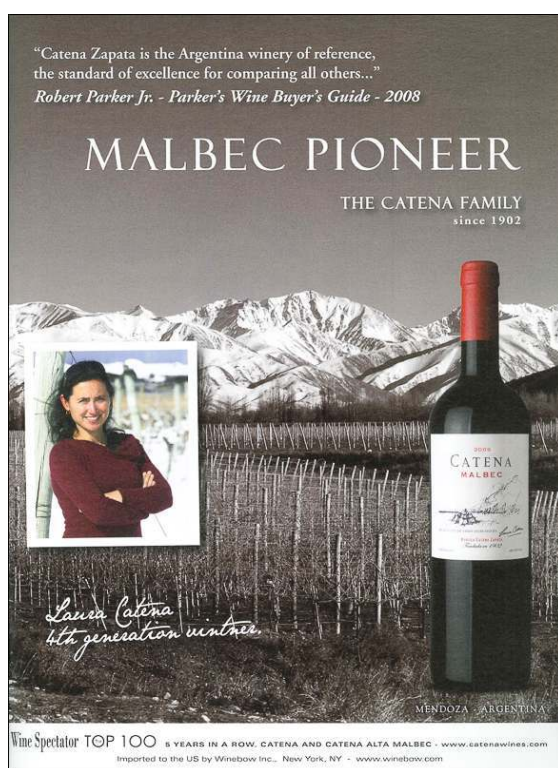
Mezzacorona's ad reflects the theme that the wine contains the place, in this case the Dolomitic Alps.

## Themes in Wine Ads

- 20 After compiling the characteristics of the 873 ads, a typology was developed to represent the messages or themes that the ads conveyed. The eight main messages reflected in this set of advertisements include: claims of achievement of high quality and distinction; the production of wines that fit a specific socio-economic status (both upper- and middle-class, in fact); wines with connections to the past, to a family, to a winemaker's heritage, or to a winemaker's passion about the craft; the culinary fitness of a wine and its capacity for pairing with suitable comestibles; a wine's value in enabling enjoyable social moments and lubrication for romantic encounters; fun and humor that generated by the brand; a wine producer's commitment to environmentally safe, sustainable or even healthy (using organic or bio-dynamic processes) viticulture; and even the "taste of place" (literal portrayal of the presence of a specific landscape in a glass). Eleven themes were discerned in this array of ads. In order of frequency, the themes served to communicate that: a wine or wine maker received awards (medals) or notoriety (points) for their wines and/or vintages; the producer's wines are of high quality, are superior or have extraordinary flavor; the wine possesses the style or class to meet the desires of the status-minded consumer or fits in their world (this also includes wines that are diametrically opposed to symbolic hierarchical status and insist their wine isn't a "snooty", high-class product but

is rather perfect for the anti-elitist); the wine is suitable for certain cuisines, spices, or flavor palates; the wine is crafted by a winemaker who comes from a family associated with the crafting of fine wines (illustration 4); the wine was made by someone who is passionate about winemaking and is not just a business person; the wine is a great social “lubricant” and can promote memorable gatherings of friends; the wine is an ideal romantic “lubricant” and will improve intimacy; the brand is light-hearted, fun and not pretentious, as seen through the humor in the advertisement; wine production is premised upon environmental ethics and is driven to use sustainable practices or organic methods, pays attention to environmental impacts, or somehow achieves a “green” product; and the place can be tasted or a sense of place can be experienced in the wine.

Illustration 4 – Catena’s advertisement



Catena’s advertisement emphasizes the generational foundation of their Malbec.

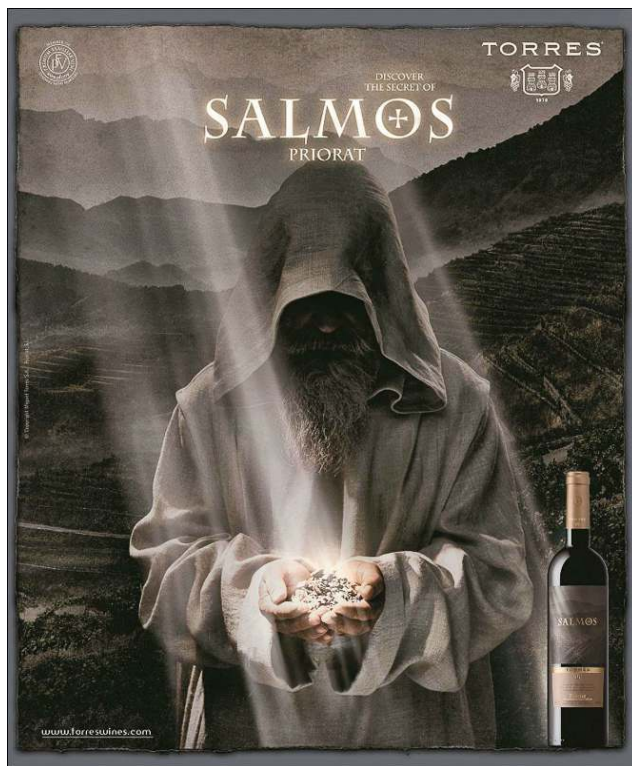
## Forms of Place Used in Advertising

- 21 While not commonly realized by many consumers, vintage is not merely a date. Vintage is both time- and place-specific as it reflects the experience of *terroir* abbreviated to a production year. Vintage is one of the leading ways to incorporate place in the selling of wine, albeit implicitly. Specific vintages of wines were prominent or identifiable in 345 (40%) of the 873 ads. Brands are more likely to highlight their wines’ vintages as they often focus their advertisements on unique, highly sought out, or the most recent releases, rather than presenting an array of varietals and blends they might offer or the general characteristics of their regions or countries. Vintages are, of course, more than temporal links to “ideal” years of production. They are also connected to precise locations that produced the harvest from which the wines were made. In a sense, some

vintages (particularly for varietals) are temporal and spatial representations of *terroir*. Often (250, or 29%, of ads), vintages are tied to awards (or tasting scores) received as wines (as opposed to winemakers) are often the focus of objective competition. In fact, some European (particularly French) wines have been assigned the nominative recognition of *cru* (*premier* or *grand*) and this designation is employed in marketing and advertising to stress the high regard held for a vineyard in an appellation. *Cru* appeared in 52 (6%) of the advertisements published in the two-year period.

- 22 It is this emphasis of location or place that is most salient here and an assessment of advertisements for their content of place-specific factors yields fractions within which climates were mentioned or to which vineyard attributes were eluded, implying *terroir* and sometimes explicitly using the term *terroir*. Climate (general regimes of temperature and moisture usually defined for large regions) is mentioned in 59 (7%) of ads. *Terroir* (as the collection of geophysical and atmospheric factors at work in the genesis of the grapes used in wines) is implied in 53 (7%) advertisements (illustration 5). And *terroir* is employed explicitly in 43 (6%) of all ads. *Terroir* was used or suggested by advertisers from nine of the seventeen countries, accounting for 96 (13%) of their 764 advertisements (table 3).

Illustration 5 – Torres vines’Samos Priorat



Torres Wines’Salmos Priorat is a blend that contains the “secret” ingredients of *terroir*.

Table 3 - Use of *Terroir* and Representations of Place in Advertisements by Country (# and % of Ads)

	Implicit Terroir	Explicit Terroir	Total Terroir	Cru*	Vintage**	Landscpa Image***	Total Place	# Ads	%Use Terroir	%Use Place
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Argentina	0	7	7	0	23(1)	14(13)	30	40	18	75
Australia	2	0	2	0	9(0)	2(2)	11	27	7	41
Austria	0	0	0	0	1(0)	1(0)	2	9	0	22
Brazil	0	0	0	0	1(0)	1(0)	1	1	0	100
Canada	0	0	0	0	1(0)	0(0)	1	1	0	100
Chile	8	10	18	0	35(12)	18(9)	50	72	25	69
France	2	6	8	51 (4)	46(2)	11(8)	102	114	7	89
Greece	0	3	3	0	7(0)	1(1)	10	17	18	59
Israel	4	0	4	0	12(4)	10(10)	12	12	33	100
Italy	16	2	18	1(0°)	63(1)	64(38)	107	233	8	46
New Zealand	0	0	0	0	13(0°)	4(0)	17	21	0	81
Portugal	0	0	0	0	25(0)	6(2)	29	72	0	40
Spain	3	7	10	0	8(0)	4(3)	19	72	14	26
USA	18	8	26	0	102(20)	27(21)	114	177	15	64
Total	53	43	96	52	344(40)	163(107)	505	764	13	66

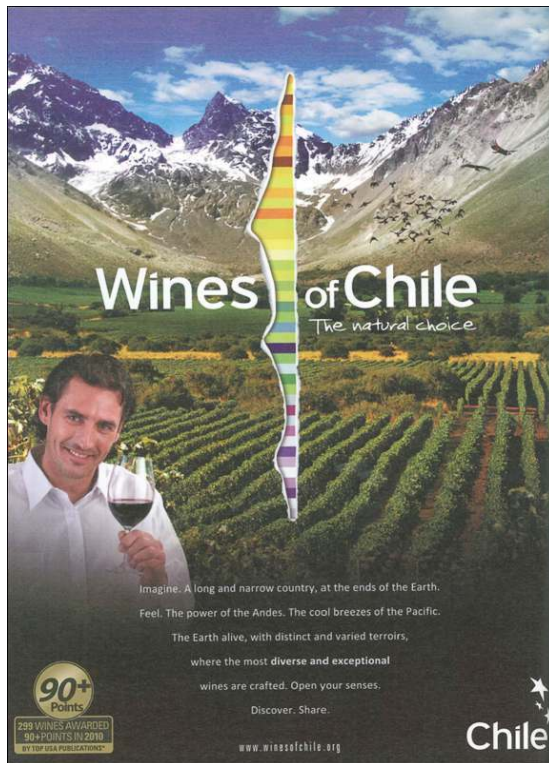
\*Number in parentheses indicates the number of ads that used "cru" that had also used "terroir." To avoid double-counting, these were subtracted to determine the total number using a reflection of place, shown in the last column.

\*\*Number in parentheses indicates the number of ads that used vintage that had also used either "cru" or "terroir." To avoid double-counting, these were subtracted to determine the total number using a reflection of place, shown in the last column.

\*\*\*Number in parentheses indicates the number of ads that used landscape imagery that had also used vintage, "cru" or "terroir." To avoid double-counting, these were subtracted to determine the total number using a reflection of place, shown in the last column.

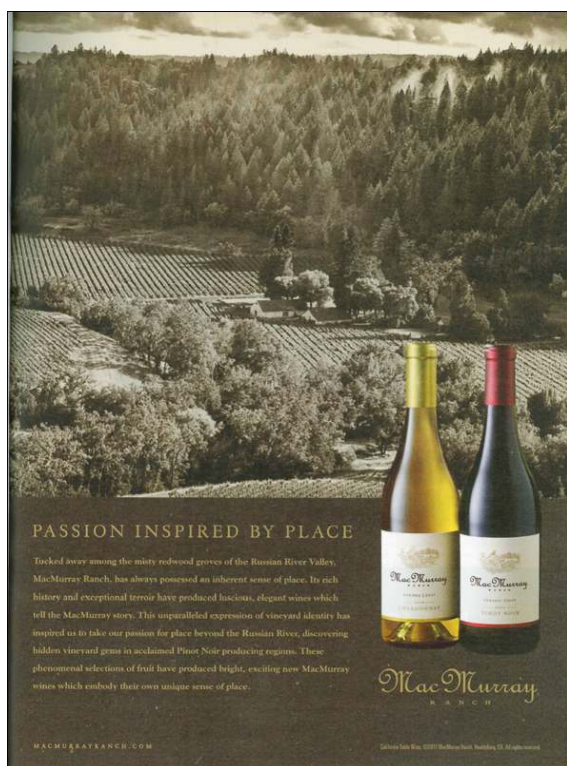
- 23 American (26) and Chilean (18) advertisers most frequently used *terroir*. Chilean wines ads are more likely to employ the term than any other country's ads (illustration 6). The Chilean advertisers' use of *terroir* may be part of a seemingly aggressive marketing campaign that relies on the association between place and quality (Gwynne, 2008; Overton and Murray, 2011). Proportionately, however, after Chile, the next most likely to employ representations of *terroir* were Argentina, Greece and Israel, though the latter two countries had relatively few advertisements. Winemakers of Australia, Italy and France infrequently advertised their products by claiming the "sense of place" is resident in their wines (illustration 7). While this may be because the Australian or Italian advertisers are less likely to do so, the French may regard it as inherent.

Illustration 6 – Vines of Chile



This Wines of Chile ad typifies the regional- or national-scale use of terroir.

Illustration 7 – Mac Murray Ranch



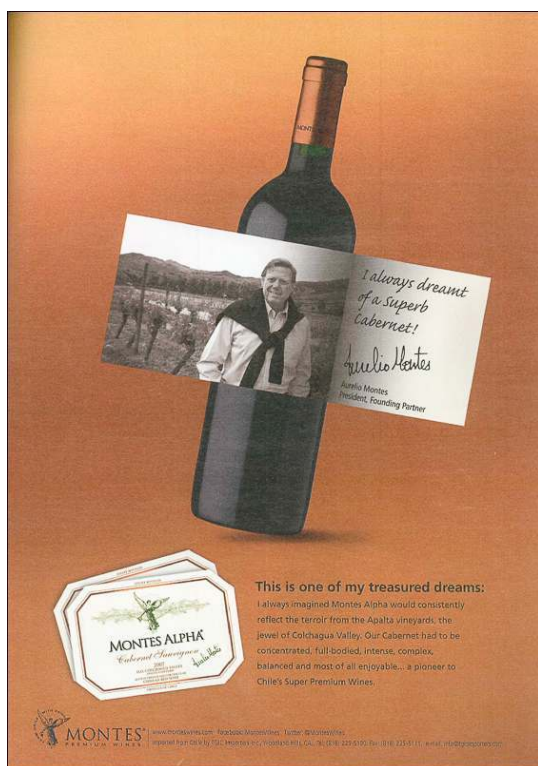
MacMurray Ranch's ad suggests that sense of place is not a universal among vineyards, but the wines seem to also have their own sense of place.

## The Meaning of *Terroir* in Advertisements

- 24 The meaning of *terroir* varies in these advertisements. One significant contrast can be drawn between those ads that portray *terroir* as the collection of location-specific (i.e. at the vineyard scale) attributes that are ideal for a specific grape and those that portray *terroir* as a variety of settings within which an assortment of grape-growing environments (i.e. appellation scales) can be found within a region or country to yield an array of varietals and blended wines. The first use of *terroir* is deterministic and the second seems to reflect abundant opportunity. The first focuses on selling the wine and the second focuses on selling the region.
- 25 Within these two groupings, one can also find a continuum of clarity-vagueness in the use of the term. Some seem to suggest that the conditions of vineyards were assessed scientifically to match the right grape to the circumstances and reflecting their expertise and skill in the craft of viticulture. By contrast, some advertisers leave the professed achievement of accurate reflection of a *terroir* in the wine open to interpretation; that it could be entirely serendipitous (or even unsurprising) that the skill (and maybe even passion) of the vintner released the wine grape's potential (illustration 8). It would be hard to imagine an advertisement for a winemaker who admits that they hadn't achieved such a success. The latter could reflect the growing popularity of using the terminology in marketing; people are beginning to expect to see it featured in wine ads. But perhaps some marketers feel that the French term *terroir* or the detailed description of vineyard landscapes will lend legitimacy or authority to their products in the consumer's mind.



Illustration 8 – Montes Alpha



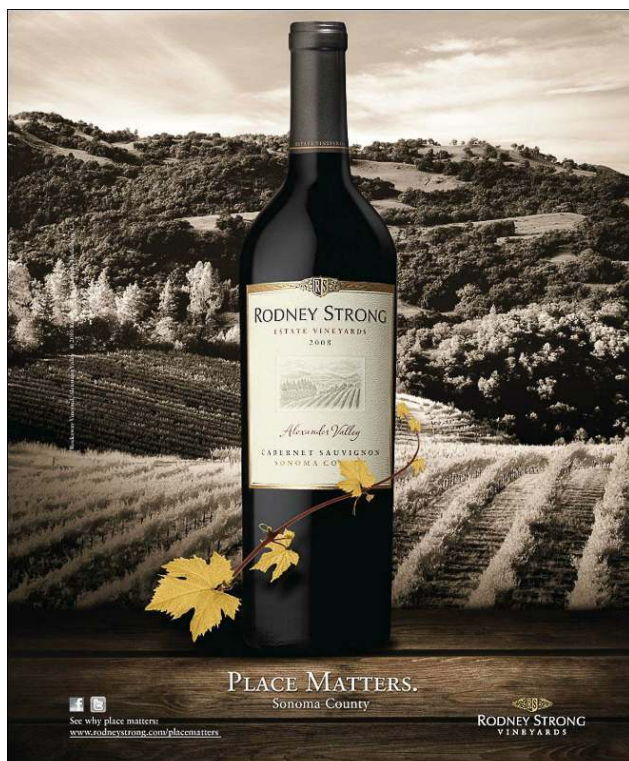
Aurelio Montes exemplifies the confident achievement of one's terroir in the wine.

## The Use of Place in Wine Spectator Advertisements

- 26 Finally, a tally of the use of the various representations of place described above (including *terroir*, *cru*, vintage, and landscape imagery) to support the marketing of wines reveals the perceived importance and value of geography to wine consumers. While the total number of advertisements employing *terroir* was 96 and only France and Italy employed “*cru*” in 52 advertisements (48 more than those using *terroir*), the use of geography to sell wine was heavily reliant on the use of landscape images (vineyards and the environs of production) and prominent display of vintages of their products. Vintage was included in slightly less than half of all advertisements (344), but was not often used in conjunction with *terroir* or *cru* (only 40 ads included two or more of these). Admittedly, the geographic component of vintage may not be obvious or even intended by the advertisers because to make the connection one might need a very advanced knowledge and understanding of the role of place and time in the making of wine; this may be overlooked by many wine consumers. Finally, 163 advertisements featured photographs of terrain (often dramatic mountains or picturesque valleys beyond wine-growing regions) and 107 of these were combined with the aforementioned place referents (*terroir*, *cru*, or vintage). In all, 505 of the 764 ads included one or more of these four geographic representations in either imagery or text. That amounts to about 66% of the advertising in *The Wine Spectator* over this two-year period. It would seem that the role of geography is significant in wine advertising and this may be unparalleled among all products, except perhaps tourism. In fact, it may be that the use of place to advertise wine predominates primarily among the small and medium sized firms (family or small estate producers)

rather than global conglomerates. Small vineyards and wineries that draw from specific locations have a greater claim to place in the sense that their scale of production is more likely to reflect the large-scale setting of a single vineyard, whereas mass production by large producers of wine entails the draw of grapes from greater areas and this significantly diminishes place identity. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century wine industry, it is apparent that “place matters” (illustration 9).

Illustration 9– Rodney Strong Vineyards



Advertisement of Rodney Strong Vineyards from Wine Enthusiast asserts that “place matters.”

## Discussion and Conclusions

- 27 In this assessment of wine advertising found in *The Wine Spectator*, geography is used in diverse ways to represent wine. *Terroir* is either implicitly or explicitly found in about 13% of advertisements during this 2-year period. An unsystematic, undetailed, but purposeful “perusal” of the ads found in the previous 3 years (back to 2007) of the magazine, suggests that the use of *terroir* might be increasing in U.S. wine advertising.
- 28 While this is merely anecdotal and needs suitable study to substantiate it fully, if true it is interesting for what it might tell us about the thinking of advertisers, marketers and their clients. Perhaps all believe that consumers are developing geographic awareness and intellectual understanding of the place of winegrowing to develop their engagement with wines. Alternatively, however, advertisers could be simply assuming that the wine consumer has no understanding of how such factors impact the qualities of the product; perhaps the text is intended to mystify the consumer with expertise (and mysterious and foreign) jargon. Another possibility is that the use of geography and *terroir* reflect the increasing global practice of viticulture, the rapidly globalizing wine trade, growing

competition between regions and within regions for market shares, and the growing sophistication of wine consumers. Furthermore, this may signal the maturation of the wine consumer as a consumer of not only wine but place as well; this supports purposeful efforts to differentiate consumers to promote wine tourism as an additional money-making endeavor for vineyard and winery owners.

- 29 A number of avenues need to be explored on this matter. This work needs to be extended deeper into the *Wine Spectator Magazine* archive to enable a real temporal evaluation of the trends associated with marketing *terroir*. An analysis of wine advertisements in other English-language magazines (such as the *Wine Enthusiast*, *Vines*, and *Decanter*) would enable not only a richer comparison of the trends among advertisers, but also a cross-cultural understanding of what themes are used to appeal to consumers in specific countries. And of course a multi-language comparison should be undertaken as well. Is *terroir* popular among wine drinkers who speak English because of their affinity for French (*vis à vis* their love of all things associated with wine)? Is the term used with any frequency among advertisers in Spanish, Italian, German, Russian or Chinese? Or is the popularity limited to English? Contemporary comparisons with French, Spanish, Russian and Italian wine magazines can help to determine whether *terroir* accompanies wine wherever it goes or if only the English-speaker searches for place in a bottle.
- 30 The science of oenology and the sophisticated development of winemaking suggest that *terroir* is reasonably relevant to making and differentiating quality wines. Passage through and out of decades of abundant supplies of low-quality wines developed for uneducated consumers is testament to what is produced if the variety-place relationship is ignored. The wine world is learning about the importance of *terroir* and this understanding is diffusing “back” into other agricultural products because people are becoming more sensitive to the quality of globally traded products and producers are recognizing *terroir* and place as tools to achieve distinction in a more and more crowded market place.

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## RÉSUMÉS

Cet article décrit et traite du rôle de la géographie en matière de publicité pour le vin dans le célèbre magazine américain spécialisé en la matière : *The Wine Spectator*. L'analyse systématique du contenu visuel et textuel des 764 annonces publiées dans les 30 numéros (correspondant à deux ans de publication) démontre qu'environ 66 % d'entre elles présentaient des éléments géographiques, révélant clairement l'importance du lieu dans la production et la qualité de vin.

L'approche qualitative basée sur une combinaison de méthodes a fait ressortir 8 messages identifiables et 11 thèmes distincts traités dans ces annonces. Le plus important d'entre eux étant l'importance du lieu et du paysage pour la qualité des vins. L'utilisation explicite de la notion de « terroir » n'est qu'un composant de la publicité vinicole actuelle et peut traduire l'évolution de la filière, passant de l'ère de la production de masse par les grandes entreprises viticoles à la prolifération des plus petits producteurs intimement liés aux lieux et aux conditions de production. Cette étude jette les bases des recherches plus approfondies en vue de comparer les approches passées en matière d'annonces et l'importance relative de la géographie dans la publicité vinicole.

This paper describes and discusses the role of geography in the advertising of wine in a popular American wine magazine, *The Wine Spectator*. Systematic assessment of the visual and textual contents of 764 advertisements that appeared in 30 issues (2 years of the publication) reveals that approximately 66% of advertisements contained geographical components that clearly suggest that place is important in the production and quality of wine. A mixed-methods qualitative approach yielded eight identifiable messages and eleven distinct themes reflected in these advertisements. The most important of these relate the importance of place and landscape to the quality of wines. Explicit use of the notion of *terroir* is but one component of contemporary wine advertising and may reflect a movement toward the “down-scaling” of the wine industry, reflecting a shift from the era of mass production of wine by large corporations to a proliferation of smaller producers who are intimate with the places and conditions of production. This study establishes a baseline for further research that can compare past approaches to advertisements and relative importance of geography in wine advertising.

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