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**Marketing Channels in the Wine Sector:
Wine Distributors in Catalonia as a Case Study**
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The wine sector in Catalonia is clearly dual: on one hand, there is a small group of large companies following differentiation strategies and enjoying economies of scale while, on the other hand, there are many small companies and growers who have suffered a situation of surplus and decreasing prices, resulting in negative outcomes for the last recent financial years (OVVC 2007; 2011). From the standpoint of marketing, the wine sector in Catalonia is fairly uncoordinated (OVVC, 2007). Cooperatives could play a key role in marketing agricultural products by achieving economies of scale and thus, lowering marketing and promotion costs (Costa-Font M. et al., 2009). Nevertheless, wine cooperatives in Catalonia, in spite of controlling half of the Catalan grape production, show low market shares coupled with an overall lack of marketing contracts within the wine sector (Costa-Font M. et al., 2009).

Distribution channels are critical for success. Achieving good partnership with the right distributor can have a significant effect on profitability, by helping out promoting a brand (Prichard, 2004). In this sense, it becomes necessary to take into account the wine wholesaling sector as a key element to enter into the appropriate marketing channels. This issue is especially strategic for those small wineries that do not enjoy economies of scale and that have difficulties to market access. However, so far, there are no studies examining the position of Catalan wines in the wholesale distribution channel. Our study aims at exploring which are the main motivations of wine distributors when buying and selling wines and which winery attributes can provide greater success in their relationship. In this sense, we aim at communicating to wineries what wine distributors are looking for in order to be more appealing for their businesses.

To tackle with this issue we perform a vertical differentiation analysis of the wine supply service for wine wholesaler distributors. Methodologically, we have applied the means-end chain (MEC) analysis to identify the linkages that wine distributors establish between service attributes, the benefits they symbolize and the values they try to reach through them. In other words, wine distributors will assess which are the main attributes they are seeking in a winery to achieve their desired end states.

Results obtained show that a trustful relationship with the wineries is the key strategic factor of success for wine distributors. The most important winery's attribute to establish a trustful relationship with a wine distributor is to provide an excellent product. Furthermore, trust in the relationship can also be achieved by offering a friendly dealing and being professional accomplishing what was agreed upon (timings, contract conditions, availability, etc.). Another interesting attribute that provides trust in the relationship is the winery's own self-esteem, which has been stated as believing in their own product and providing a good image as a cellar (facilities, portfolio, history...). Results obtained from this study could help wineries to design more effective marketing strategies.