

Online branding strategies of family SME wineries: a Hungarian-German comparative study

Branding strategies of family SME wineries

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Abstract

Purpose – Both Hungary and Germany belong to the old-world wine-producing countries and have long winemaking traditions. This paper aims at exploring and comparing online branding strategies of family SME (small and medium sized enterprises) wineries at Lake Balaton (Hungary) and Lake Constance (Germany), as two wine regions with similar geographic characteristics.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper, based on a total sample of 37 family wineries, 15 at Lake Balaton and 22 at Lake Constance, investigates the differences in brand identity on the website, brand image in social media and online communication channels deployed in both wine regions. The study applies a qualitative methodology using MaxQDA software for conducting content analysis of texts in websites and social media. Descriptive statistics and *t*-test were conducted to compare the usage of different communication channels and determine statistical significance.

Findings – At Lake Balaton, the vineyard, the winery and the family, while at Lake Constance, the lake itself and the grape are highlighted regarding family winery brand identity. The customer-based brand image of Hungarian family wineries emphasizes wine, food and service, with the predominant use of Facebook. In the German family wineries, the focus of brand identity is on wine, friendliness and taste and includes more extensive usage of websites.

Originality/value – The paper deploys a novel methodology, both in terms of tools used as well as geographic focus to uncover online branding patterns of family wineries, thereby providing implications for wine and tourism industries at lake regions. It compares the share of selected most-used words in the overall text in websites and in social media, and presents the key findings from this innovative approach.

Keywords Brand, Brand identity, Brand image, Family business, Social media, Winery, Web scrapping

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Small and medium sized enterprises (SME) branding and its dissimilarity from corporate branding have been poorly researched topics in the literature (Berthon *et al.*, 2008;

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Horan *et al.*, 2011). This lack of detailed understanding of SME branding by brand management scholars is intensified by a lack of brand-related considerations by SME managers (Merrilees, 2007; Koch *et al.*, 2013; Dressler, 2017; Fleuchhaus and Arnold, 2011; Renton and Richard, 2019). In order to tackle this research gap, the present study deploys brand identity, brand image and brand core as a research construct for researching brands in family SME wineries.

The study researches online brand strategies of family SME wineries in a specific regional context of lakeside wine regions. The approach is based in organizational/inter-organizational family SME branding theory (Binz Astrachan and Botero, 2017; Botero *et al.*, 2018), as well as regional branding theory (Porter *et al.*, 2004; Dressler and Paunovic, 2021b; Butoracova Sindlerova and Hoghova, 2020). The research deals with the duality of family business identity and image, as defined in the previous literature (Beck, 2016; Brown *et al.*, 2006; Krappe *et al.*, 2011; Albattat *et al.*, 2020; Chemli *et al.*, 2020; Toanoglou *et al.*, 2021). Both organizational-level branding as well as territorial, regional branding are relevant for researched wineries and generally for wine industry, consisting of large number of regionally-oriented family SMEs (Shekhar *et al.*, 2021; Camilleri and Valeri, 2021; Santus *et al.*, 2022; Veloso *et al.*, 2021).

With family SME wineries, company level and regional level perspectives dominate the branding efforts, as well as cellar door sales with occasional dining facilities (Mowle and Merrilees, 2005). In this sense, wine hospitality and tourism in family SME wineries represent both a business model innovation, an additional source of income, as well as a powerful tool for advancing winery brand in both regional as well as global markets (Dressler and Paunović, 2021; Hojman and Hunter-Jones, 2012; Valeri, 2021a). This is why family SME wineries are often engaged in a wide range of connected brand functions or consumer markets (wine retail purchase, wine cellar door purchase, wine hospitality experience and wine tourism experience), each function often demanding a different (digital) brand communication channel (Mowle and Merrilees, 2005; Szolnoki *et al.*, 2016; Santos *et al.*, 2021a, b, c). These requirements put a strain on their managerial capabilities by demanding parallel winery brand communication in multiple social media formats (Capitello *et al.*, 2014).

The future challenges in the global wine industry will demand new strategies and combinations in relation to regional branding, heritage and terroir as well as its communication in the digital space (Harvey *et al.*, 2014; Mora, 2016). However, the actual online winery brand communication patterns in Hungary and Germany point to the fact that large parts of the industry are still oriented toward traditional communication channels. According to Szolnoki *et al.* (2014), only 40% of German wineries have used social media, as all wineries in all “old world” countries seem to have lower acceptance rate of social media tools than their counterparts in the “new world”. Social media research of wine brands has already been done before, primarily by using data generated on Facebook (Dolan *et al.*, 2016, 2017; Goodman *et al.*, 2016), as well as by researching wine influencers on Instagram (Ingrassia *et al.*, 2020). The research on social media used by small wineries appears to be an important and growing field of research.

Branding literature is generally rich in organizational branding contributions relating to brand identity (Tuškej and Podnar, 2018; Balmer *et al.*, 2019), brand image (Törmälä and Saraniemi, 2018; Brečić *et al.*, 2013; Suter *et al.*, 2017) and brand core (Yoganathan *et al.*, 2017; Urde, 2016). However, comprehensive deployment and examination of these concepts in the SME context is still lacking. In order to address this research gap, the research at hand presents typical online brand strategy of a family SME winery in the region of Balaton and in the region of Constance and it analyzes and discusses the differences between the two types of strategies.

2. Literature review

2.1 Brand core, brand identity and brand image in Web 2.0 communications

This research builds on the theoretical concept created by [Urde et al. \(2013\)](#), further developed by [Urde \(2016\)](#) and later deployed by [Casprini et al. \(2019\)](#), where a division is made between core identity (consisting of promises and core values), as well as external identity. In addition, a number of social media channels were observed as a descriptive measure of major communication channels for both brand core identity as well brand extended identity (brand image) ([Kallmuenzer et al., 2021](#)). This is an important aspect of branding, as social media have disrupted the classical approach to branding through storytelling and have turned consumers into active participants of the storytelling as well as branding process ([Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012](#)). For wine brand managers, it is important to understand what is being said in the social media, how often and through which social media channels ([Obermayer et al., 2021](#); [Reyneke et al., 2011](#); [Mulhern, 2009](#)). Therefore, research focuses on the text analysis of the content in most popular digital services, but also considers in which popular SME are wineries active. Understanding both digital brand identity as well as digital brand image is essential for precisely defining brand core in the digital space. Therefore, [Figure 1](#) presents a theoretical model deployed in the study to research online brand strategy of family SME winery.

In comparison to previous generations of media, brand image is readily accessible to researchers for further analysis in the web 2.0 communication media. This novel social media environment is specific because it integrates both elements of classic mass media (for interpersonal communication) as well as advanced forms of “mass self-communication” ([Deuze, 2020](#)). Social media users use the media to fulfill their needs in the same way as with other media: informing, convenience, entertainment, self-expression, social expression as well as knowledge sharing ([Eger et al., 2020](#); [Obermayer et al., 2020](#)). Wine brands can use SME to market their products, but also gain valuable insights on how to improve or change their product quality – a true value added through web 2.0 communications ([Fiore et al., 2016](#)). However, the full potential of social media for branding in SME wineries has not been fully utilized ([Canovi and Pucciarelli, 2019](#)).

Having in mind the clear distinction between the content created by the marketer and content created by the consumer inside the web 2.0 brand communications, there is a need to more clearly define and research the two perspectives. There is a gap in the brand literature regarding the intersection between these two perspectives, the inside-out and outside-in perspectives of brand management. Brand core finds itself at the intersection of brand identity (inside-out) and brand image (outside-in) and can be better understood only by taking both perspectives simultaneously ([Urde, 2016](#); [Urde and Koch, 2014](#); [Urde et al., 2013](#); [Baumgarth and Melewar, 2010](#)). Furthermore, authentic brand personality and identity are seen as a prerequisite for forging strong relationships with customers ([Valeri, 2016](#); [Valeri and Baggio, 2020a, 2021a, b](#); [Yoganathan et al., 2017](#)).

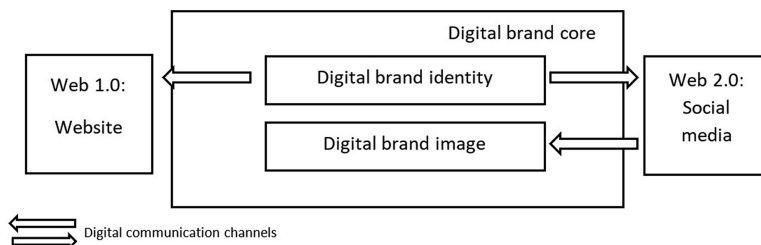


Figure 1.
Online brand strategy
of family SME winery

In the literature, brand personality and brand identity are often used as synonyms (Baxter *et al.*, 2017; Saraniemi, 2010; Parker, 2009; Morgan *et al.*, 2002). However, there is a difference between the concepts, as brand personality is exclusively related to internal/organizational branding aspects, while brand identity can be both internal as well as external/consumer related, thereby intersecting with brand image (Viot, 2011). There are however some more complex considerations of brand identity in the literature, which will not be used in this research. For example, Kapferer (1997) extends the definition of brand identity to include brand personality, brand culture, brand-consumer relationships, reflection, physique and self-image, which is an approach applied in numerous subsequent studies (Nedeljkovic-Pravdic, 2010; de Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). On the other hand, Conz and Magnani (2019) have applied brand identity as an overarching concept and brand personality as a specific concept underneath it to explore family wineries in Italy.

2.2 Family and non-family SME winery branding inside a wine region

Family businesses are very common in the wine sector, as they possess the tradition of long-standing family companies, as well as unique resources in the form of family name, real estate, heritage and country of origin (Casprini *et al.*, 2020; Faraoni *et al.*, 2020), which are essential elements for building strong brands in the wine industry. However, what are the real values and words used for branding the family SME wineries has still not been documented in the literature. More specifically, there is a research gap regarding the understanding of the identity of family wine businesses from a regional perspective (Vrontis *et al.*, 2016). It appears there is an abundance of research on winery branding in a regional context, but it is focused either solely on wine tourism (Karagiannis and Metaxas, 2020; Morrish *et al.*, 2017), or on regional branding of wine products (Aranda *et al.*, 2015; Blair *et al.*, 2017). SME winery branding in a regional context has been neglected in the literature, both for family and non-family wineries. Regional branding and the role of family SME wineries are essential for a more holistic understanding of regional winery branding, both in relation to wine sales as well as in relation to wine hospitality and tourism. The approach of this article is that the wine production and sales and wine tourism are inseparable elements of family SME winery brand building and should not be researched separately. Regional branding and storytelling in the wine region should represent an iconic, collective symbol of identity of the people who live and produce there, which then finds its expression in the cultural, arts, hospitality and tourism related practices—all with the aim of sharing a lifestyle with customers and stakeholders outside the region (Mora, 2016). The terroir of a wine region has many facets – its infrastructure, its people and their social, cultural and technical practices, which are all relevant for branding and storytelling in both wine sales as well as hospitality and tourism (Albrecht, 2014).

Family SME wineries are by definition regionally-oriented and consequently their deliberate brand orientation also needs to be rooted in their regional and organizational circumstances (Hodge *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, the wineries which are more oriented toward services/gastronomy/tourism are dependent on the coherent internal and external branding. It has been demonstrated that staff plays a crucial role in developing competitive advantage through branding in service SMEs (Horan *et al.*, 2011; Dressler and Paunovic, 2019), thereby pointing to the importance of employer branding. SME branding also depends largely on passion, logic and entrepreneur himself/herself as brand personification (Krake, 2005; Valeri and Katsoni, 2021; Valeri, 2021b). Therefore, brand identity needs to build on company brands' strengths and values, which affect brand performance indirectly, through brand vision and brand positioning (Muhonen *et al.*, 2017; Baggio and Valeri, 2020). This is in contrast with the conceptual model developed by Osakwe *et al.* (2020), who propose that brand values impact brand orientation which then impacts brand identity. It appears

therefore that there is a kind of mutual interrelation between brand identity and brand positioning, while brand values are their antecedent. One concept that all SME owners usually best understand regarding the branding process is brand image, as it directly relates to sales effort, apart from reputation and quality (Wong and Merrilees, 2005). While brand identity is often guided by mimicry, opportunism and idealism of the entrepreneur, leaving little for discussion or change, brand image finds itself on the receiver's side and is directly influenced by brand identity through signals that are being sent out (Kapferer, 2008).

Regional aspects of family SME winery branding are very important as this is often where their core market is located, as well as main competitors which are at the same time often also partners. Regional consumers have great brand loyalty to their regional wine makers traditionally in Europe, where export activity (outside the region) is often limited (Mora, 2016). Regional networks and producer associations play an equally important role regarding common communication to a wider audience (Zamparini *et al.*, 2010). In some cases, regional cooperation even leads to developing a common regional wine brand identity focused on style, heritage, quality or tourism offer (Durrieu, 2008; Bruwer and Johnson, 2010; Johnson and Bruwer, 2007). In this sense, winery brands also differ in terms of what proportion of brand value is generated by shared resources (usually small wineries or large grape farmers) and what proportion by internal resources (global wine brand), while family SME brands and cooperatives are somewhere in the middle (Kunc *et al.*, 2019). The deployment of shared resources by separate business entities inevitably raises the question of regional brand governance, as certain public mechanisms need to be set in place in order to co-create the regional brand successfully (Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2016).

3. Methodology

The research objective was to investigate online brand strategies of family SME wineries in the lakeside wine regions of Balaton and Hungary. In order to achieve this objective, the research deploys a comparative analysis as a methodological approach, where the Balaton family wineries' brands are compared to Constance family wineries' brands. The reason for comparison is that the two regions share several similarities: proximity of a big lake and water-related activities with dynamic tourist flow around the lake. The comparison of the wineries brands and communication channel was conducted through text and photo analysis (through MaxQDA), and observations of activity in social media was compiled in an MS Excel file, as presented in Figure 2.

The overall sample consisted of 37 wineries, 15 at Lake Balaton and 22 at Lake Constance. The initial sample of wineries obtained from the websites of the Directorate of Branding in Hungarian Tourism Agency as well as Bodensee Tourism Marketing. The initial set consisted of 94 wineries in Balaton and 31 in Bodensee. However, all of the researched wineries and their accompanying brands needed to fulfill the two major criteria for family business brands, as identified by (Botero *et al.*, 2018): they are tradition-oriented with a family engagement component; they are small and medium sized companies in a rural context (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). Both information has been observed on the winery's website. In addition, in order to be included in the sample, the winery needed to have at least 1 Facebook review and 1 Google Maps (formerly Google Plus) reviews in order to qualify for the online branding analysis.

Having in mind the small size of the sample all data collection was performed manually, by observing online content. As presented in Figure 2, brand identity content was collected from the website ("About Us" section and first photo) Google Maps (Google Review account photo), Facebook main photo and Instagram main photo. Brand image content was collected by observing up to 10 most relevant reviews on Google (Google Maps) as well as Facebook. Online communication channels for winery brand were observed by using binary (dummy)

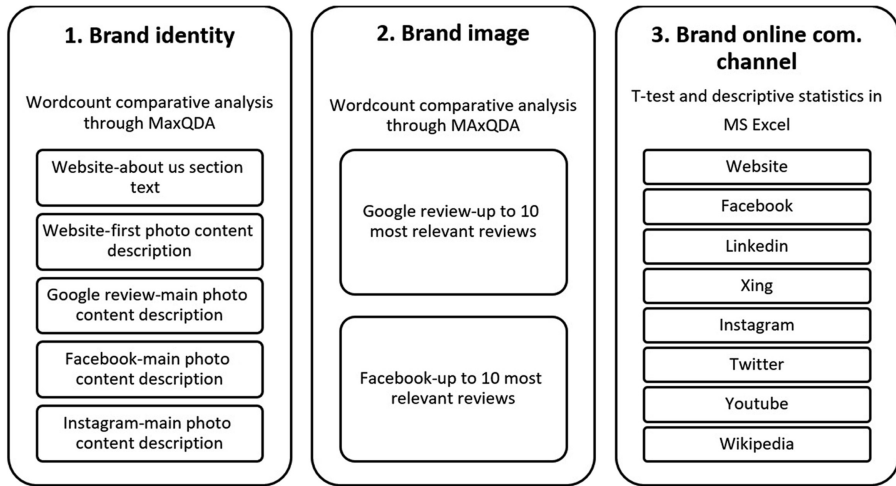


Figure 2. Data sources, data structure and methodological approach

variables to note presence or absence of a communication channel. Some of the wineries have over 10 reviews in Google Maps or Facebook, but these are exceptions as most of the wineries have up to 10 reviews. In order to have textual data which are representative of the researched sample, all the reviews after the 10th review per winery were excluded from the analysis. In addition, the following online media were investigated: Website, Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube and Wikipedia. The research deploys both descriptive statistics as well as inferential, *t*-test statistics to uncover the similarities and differences between online brand strategies. The presented results deal with word frequency of brand identity as well as brand image.

The research deals with identifying the brand strategies of family SME wineries in the two lakeside wine regions: Balaton (Hungary) and Constance (Germany). The research focuses on two components of winery's online branding strategy: (1) brand core (positioned between brand identity and brand image); and (2) online brand communication channels. The research explores winery brand core in web 2.0 in two similar wine and lake tourism regions: Balaton and Constance. For this purpose, following research questions were created:

- RQ1.* What are the most used words for communicating winery's brand identity in winery's websites in Balaton and Constance?
- RQ2.* What are the most used words for communicating winery's brand image in social media reviews in Balaton and Constance?
- RQ3.* What are the most relevant winery brand communication channels in Balaton and Constance?

The article deals with brand identity by observing winery websites (text in the "About Us" section as well as the photo content on the first page), Google Maps, Facebook and Instagram (profile photo content). The article also deals with brand image by observing Google Maps reviews and Facebook comments (up to 10 reviews sorted by relevance), while brand online communication channel is revealed by observing whether the winery uses the following online communication channels: Website, Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube and Wikipedia. Previous research has revealed that websites and Facebook are relevant for SME winery branding (Canziani and Welsh, 2016); Xing as a LinkedIn equivalent

in the German wineries, along with Twitter, Google Plus (Google Maps) and Youtube (Szolnoki *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube are often used in Hungarian companies (Gaal *et al.*, 2010; Obermayer-Kovács *et al.*, 2014). In addition, Wikipedia has been found to be relevant for company branding in the previous literature (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2014), and has been observed to be relevant for certain researched wineries in both regions.

The research extracts and compares the top used words in terms of their share in the overall text in both 15 Balaton and 22 Constance wineries, and compares them. In the first part, the research presents the percentage which the 12 most used words on the winery websites take up in the overall text presented on the websites, as a representation of typical words used to describe winery brand identity at Balaton and at Constance. It also presents the percentage which the 12 most used words take up in the overall text from the 10 most relevant reviews on Google review as well as 10 most relevant reviews on Facebook profiles, as a representation of the typical words used to communicate winery brand image at Balaton and at Constance. The last part deploys dummy (binary) variables to record the presence/absence of a certain communication channel and compares the results between Balaton and Constance wineries through descriptive statistics and *t*-test.

The present research approach is rooted in a qualitative research tradition and is very specific to the nexus of wine sales, hospitality and tourism in the lakeside regions. Having this in mind, the generalizability of the research is rather low. Therefore, further studies are needed in order to scrutinize the used methodological approach in other geographical regions as well other related industries.

4. Results

Comparative analysis of brand identity (sometimes name brand personality) and brand image (extended brand identity) has revealed significant differences in family SME winery brand communication in the lakeside wine regions of Balaton and Constance.

The major attributes of family SME winery brand identity and image are presented in Table 1. Major brand identity attributes of Balaton family SME wineries are: wine, vineyard, winery, family, grape and year. For Constance family SME wineries, major brand identity attributes are: wine, lake, grape, vineyard, winery, family. The major similarities between Constance and Balaton wineries' brand identity in the sample are related to the focus on wine, winery, family, vineyard and grapes, confirming the connection between wine and winery, regional or "terroir aspects" and family. The major differences in brand identity attributes relate to higher importance of attributes of lake and grape in describing brand identity in

Winery brand identity				Winery brand image			
Top words	Balaton	Constance	Difference	Top words	Balaton	Constance	Difference
Wine	5.56 pp	3.98 pp	1.57 pp	Wine	7.53 pp	9.19 pp	-1.66 pp
Lake	0.77 pp	2.34 pp	-1.57 pp	Friendly	1.29 pp	2.16 pp	-0.87 pp
Grape	1.06 pp	1.65 pp	-0.58 pp	Taste	1.29 pp	1.29 pp	-0.01 pp
Vineyard	1.66 pp	1.65 pp	0.01 pp	Service	1.56 pp	1.17 pp	0.39 pp
Winery	1.48 pp	1.38 pp	0.10 pp	Delicious	1.16 pp	1.11 pp	0.05 pp
Family	1.24 pp	0.88 pp	0.36 pp	Beautiful	0.84 pp	0.92 pp	-0.08 pp
Year	0.92 pp	0.77 pp	0.15 pp	Food	1.54 pp	0.92 pp	0.61 pp
Work	0.59 pp	0.73 pp	-0.14 pp	View	1.29 pp	0.86 pp	0.42 pp
Cellar	0.74 pp	0.57 pp	0.16 pp	Excellent	0.99 pp	0.8 pp	0.19 pp
Bottle	0.62 pp	0.50 pp	0.12 pp	Winery	0.69 pp	0.8 pp	-0.11 pp
Variety	0.71 pp	0.50 pp	0.21 pp	Recommend	1.14 pp	0.74 pp	0.4 pp
Quality	0.38 pp	0.57 pp	-0.19 pp	Wonderful	0.69 pp	0.68 pp	0.02 pp

Table 1.
Comparative analysis
of winery's brand
identity and brand
image in Constance
and Balaton lakes

Constance family SME wineries included in the sample, while in Balaton, the importance of attributes vineyard, winery and family is higher.

The major brand image attributes of Balaton family SME wineries included in the sample are: wine, service, food, view, friendly and taste. On the other hand, in the studied Constance family SME wineries, major brand image attributes are: wine, friendly, taste, service, delicious, beautiful and food. The major similarities between the two researched regions in terms of brand image of family SME wineries are in the use of the words wine, service, friendly and taste, although with different relative importance. There are however several marked differences. The researched Balaton family SME wineries have higher importance of brand image attributes regarding service, food and view, while in Constance, the importance of brand image attributes friendly, taste, delicious and beautiful is higher. The differences could be due to a more flexible and diverse business model of Balaton wineries included in the sample, compared to Constance wineries in the sample. Perhaps there are less water related activities around Balaton compared to Constance, but the connection between wineries and lake-related branding is worth exploring, especially for wineries oriented toward tourism and hospitality. The studied Lake Constance wineries are concentrated on craftsmanship, quality of their wines and the connection to lake for brand identity, but their brand image suffers from less service orientation. Their performance is perceived as rather friendly, while in the researched Balaton wineries the performance is perceived as recommendation worthy and excellent. This means that there is much less customer delight in brand image of researched Constance wineries. They are also much less oriented toward foods than Balaton wineries included in the sample.

Comparative analysis of brand communication strategies in social media has revealed interesting differences between Balaton and Constance family SME wineries (Tables 2–4). Balaton family SME wineries concentrate on Facebook and Instagram as a primary brand communication channel, while website comes as third most important online media. There are also several wineries that have no digital communication apart from being in Google Maps, which is not the case in Constance—they all use website for brand communication, with no exception. There are also no family SME wineries that have a website but do not have a Facebook at Constance, while vice versa (Facebook and no website) which is a common communication strategy at Balaton. YouTube is more popular with Balaton wineries than with Constance wineries, as well as Twitter and Instagram. Constance wineries all have a website, with no exception, followed by Instagram and Facebook. LinkedIn and Wikipedia are also more popular in Constance wineries than in Balaton, especially regarding wineries connected with natural or cultural monuments. These results point to higher propensity for social media and sometimes almost exclusive use of social media at Balaton family SME wineries, whereas Constance family SME wineries are still in web 1.0 era, deploying primarily website, while web 2.0 social media services are rare. When Balaton and Constance family SME wineries are analyzed together, it is noticeable that a mainstream brand communication

Table 2.
Website and social
media usage in
Constance and Balaton
family SME wineries

Digital communication channel	Balaton	Constance	Difference
Website	0.68	1.00	-0.32
Facebook	0.88	0.60	0.28
LinkedIn	0.04	0.07	-0.03
Xing	0.04	0.00	0.04
Instagram	0.84	0.73	0.11
Twitter	0.12	0.00	0.12
YouTube	0.32	0.13	0.19
Wikipedia	0.17	0.20	-0.03

strategy for most wineries is a combination of website, Facebook and Instagram. On the other hand, employer branding options through Xing or LinkedIn are not explored, while YouTube is only being used in Balaton wineries, although moderately. These are important results for understanding which digital branding channels are being used by family winery SMEs in the international context. Despite some smaller differences, major three brand communication channels are website, Facebook and Instagram. Regarding employer branding on the professional websites, such as Xing and LinkedIn, perhaps this type of communication is not relevant for family business in the rural, regional context, where social and family connections are much more efficient and easier to use when skillful workforce is needed, or maybe this information is communicated through existing SME channels, namely website, Facebook and Instagram.

5. Discussion, limitations and future research

The presented results have implications for both the practice of family SME winery brand management, as well as for the theory of family SME brand management. Study results demonstrate certain similarities between the two regions, in terms of focus on wine(ry), family and vineyards for brand identity, as well as the focus on wine, service, friendly and taste for brand image. There are however also differences in brand identity and brand image of family SME wineries in the two researched wine regions, especially regarding the focus on vineyard, winery and family as brand identity at Balaton and the focus on lake and grape as brand identity at Constance region. Furthermore, brand image at Balaton is marked by wine, food and service, while at Constance is marked by wine, friendliness and taste. This means that the gastro brand image as well as the gastronomic business model element of Balaton wineries is much more pronounced than that of Constance wineries. Family SME wineries, like the ones

Digital comm. channel	N		Mean		Std. deviation		Std. error mean	
	Balaton	Constance	Balaton	Constance	Balaton	Constance	Balaton	Constance
Website	15	22	0.68	1.00	0.48	0.00	0.10	0.00
Facebook			0.91	0.6	0.29	0.51	0.06	0.13
LinkedIn			0.05	0.07	0.21	0.26	0.05	0.07
Xing			0.05	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.05	0.00
Instagram			0.86	0.73	0.35	0.46	0.08	0.12
Twitter			0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.00
YouTube			0.32	0.13	0.48	0.35	0.11	0.10
Wikipedia			0.18	0.20	0.40	0.41	0.08	0.11

Table 3.
Descriptive statistics for the use of website and social media as family SME winery brand communication channels in Constance and Balaton

Digital communication channel	Mean difference	Std. error difference	p-value	Hypothesis
Website	-0.32	0.10	0.005	<i>Confirmed</i>
Facebook	0.31	0.15	0.046	<i>Confirmed</i>
LinkedIn	-0.02	0.08	0.795	Not confirmed
Xing	0.05	0.05	0.329	Not confirmed
Instagram	0.13	0.14	0.361	Not confirmed
Twitter	0.14	0.08	0.083	Not confirmed
YouTube	0.19	0.14	0.184	Not confirmed
Wikipedia	-0.02	0.14	0.895	Not confirmed

Table 4.
T-test results for the use of website ad social media as family SME winery brand communication channels in Constance and Balaton

researched in the Constance (Bodensee) and Lake Balaton, produce modest quantities of wine compared to corporate, global wine brands, but usually have higher value added because of wine production craftsmanship, as well as a business model based predominantly on cellar door sales and some hospitality/tourism components. It appears that Balaton wineries in the sample make a better use of the wine gastronomy as a value-added, branding and business model innovation activity, while their Constance counterparts concentrate on wine production craftsmanship and cellar door sales. These business model and brand strategy differences are often path-dependent in the light of previous decisions on the business level as well as on the level of the whole region (Laudien and Daxböck, 2016; Vergne and Durand, 2011). The results of the study regarding brand identity and brand image of the family SME wineries address the gap identified in the literature, regarding the relation between organizational identity and image, especially in the family SME (Beck, 2016; Brown and Getz, 2005; Krappe *et al.*, 2011). Present research provides insights into the differences that family SME winery brands can have in different regional contexts, and how the interplay between family SME identity and image differ in both wine regions.

The results demonstrate the use of Facebook, followed by website, Instagram and YouTube as brand communication channels at Balaton, while at Constance the channels are somewhat different and include more extensive usage of websites, and a lower usage of social media-predominantly Facebook and Instagram. These are important practical implications for brand managers and storytellers. In this sense, it should be noted that branding and storytelling in Web 2.0 is changing in parallel with the change of usage patterns of social media by different demographic groups. For example, generation Y uses predominantly Facebook, and then YouTube and Instagram; while generation Z uses predominantly Instagram, followed by YouTube and Snapchat (Kadekova and Holienčikova, 2018). Fietkiewicz *et al.* (2016) confirms that Generation Z uses Instagram more than generations X and Y, and is less likely to use business networking sites like Xing/LinkedIn. Brand managers should therefore take into account the social media usage demographics, match it with their own target markets and take also into account the increasing proliferation of SME channels.

The research approach is also of relevance for strategic brand management literature, as it provides a detailed insight into family SME winery brand core, thereby closing the gap identified in the branding strategy literature. There is a paucity of strategic brand management research dealing directly with brand core by addressing both brand image and brand identity at the same time. However, this research goes a step further to include digital communication channels as an important element of brand strategy. Regarding digital communication channels, the results confirm that family SME wineries at Balaton Lake prefer Facebook as a medium of online communication in the same way as farmers in Slovakia (Petrilak *et al.*, 2020; Valeri and Baggio, 2020b).

While the presented research is based on family SME branding and regional branding perspective for wine and tourism, it does not consider concept brands in the wine industry. Concept brands, which are usually corporate brands are the ones who have well defined and implemented concept management maps and start with consumer needs: functional, symbolic and experiential (Kottemann *et al.*, 2017; Park *et al.*, 1986; Kuehnl *et al.*, 2019). Corporate, concept brands are part of mass culture and aim at creating mass popularity by shaping personal self-concept of the consumer, as well as his lifestyle, beliefs and aspirations (Roubal, 2017; Nagyova *et al.*, 2017). This is usually not the case with SME family winery brands, due to lack of resources and ambitions for such large-scale operations. Having in mind a lack of professional and formalized market research and branding in family firms (Botero *et al.*, 2018), as well as cheap access to social media, the present research was focused on brand identity and brand image as suitable approach for researching brand management in family SME wineries.

Research findings about the winery use of social media correspond well with the previous research conducted by [Obermayer et al. \(2019\)](#), where 39% of respondents in the Balaton region are obtaining information about the wineries from Facebook, 16% from YouTube, 15% from Instagram and only 5% from Pinterest, 2% from Twitter and 1% from Flickr. Wineries' customers mostly prefer picture about the winery and the wine/grapes with text (46.1%), short posts about the wine and the winery (45.1%), gastro-picture about the wine with text (35.3%), picture about the vineyard with the text (23.5%) and picture about the wine bottle with text (21.6%) ([Obermayer et al., 2019](#)). The analysis of brand image through Google review comments is consistent with this finding, as it reveals that the word "wine" is by far the most used word. Moreover, compared to a benchmark region of Constance lake comments are more often concentrated on food, view, recommendation, service and excellence. This food and service-related link does not exist in Google review comments of the Constance lake wineries.

6. Conclusions

The research compares family SME wineries in two European lakeside wine regions with very similar geographical resources. These regional and terroir similarities make the comparison of typical winery communication strategies possible and purposeful. The results are relevant for territorial, regional marketing of wine tourism, as well as regional and national product labeling schemes. The importance of both national as well as regional product labeling has been confirmed in the previous literature ([Butoracova Sindlerova and Hoghova, 2020](#); [Dressler and Paunovic, 2021c](#)). The results present the comparison of the common denominator of family SME winery brand identity, image and communication channel for the two regions. The results are therefore a suitable starting point for single case studies in both regions. In this sense, a so-called Point-of-Difference-Positioning and Point-of-Parity-Positioning aspects for the two regions can be identified ([Keller, 2012](#); [Dressler and Paunovic, 2021a](#)). In this sense, results demonstrate that Balaton family SME winery brands rely predominantly on the combination of wine and foods as well as excellent hospitality, while Constance wineries' brands rely on wine craftsmanship, subtle but informed way of communication with customers and connection with the lake. Digital brand communication channels used in Balaton wineries are Facebook, Instagram, Website and YouTube, while in Constance are website, Instagram, Facebook and Wikipedia.

The quantitative growth in Hungarian wineries in terms of the surface under vine as well as regarding the produced quantities of wine ([OIV, 2017](#)) needs to go hand in hand with modern online communication and branding practices. Innovative and modern communication techniques are of paramount importance for remaining competitive on the global wine market. In order to ensure the appropriate positioning of the wine brands on the wine market, wineries ought to be capable of branding and communicating effectively in the digital world ([Arcese et al., 2020](#); [Elmo et al., 2020](#)). In the future, even family SME wineries will have to gradually turn to professional brand communication management, by deploying integrated social media management software solutions. Prices for these software solutions are falling, while benefits include enabling coordinated posting across social media, scheduling of posting in a calendar, social media analytics and team collaboration tools. These functionalities should be more than enough for most family SME wineries to manage their digital brand communications.

The study directly deploys measuring brand identity and brand image, while brand core is being measured indirectly by measuring brand identity and brand image. This approach is in line with the approach developed by ([Urde, 2016](#)). However, it is important to notice that brand management actually deals with more than two brand identities, to include multiple coexisting brand identities. The task of SME winery brand managers is to identify this

spectrum of synchronizing and managing this diversity between brand identity and brand image for successful communication with the customers and with the public. In this sense, the brand storytelling environment has become more fragmented as well as more interactive, demonstrated by the abundance of feedback data which are readily available across platforms in the online space, and were used for the analysis in this study.

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