**Title**
The Wine 2.0 in Italy

**I want to submit an abstract for:**
Conference Presentation

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**Keywords**
winery, social media, segmentation, consumer satisfaction, survey, content analysis

**Research Question**
This study is aimed to explore to what extend Italian wineries follow a communicative social media strategy and what do they expect as brand, consumer and business effects

**Methods**
Firstly, an analysis is done through metrics and content analysis on a representative sample of Italian wineries. Secondly, a survey is done on selected wineries working on social media

**Results**
This study evaluates the social media interest of Italian wineries (website, blogs, social media, other digital marketing services) and their impact on brand, consumer relationships and business

**Abstract**
Social media have strongly changed how people communicate. Wine business has been affected as well. The social media power comes from both the exponential growth of worth of mouth (viral marketing) and the user’s involvement. Social media allow users (fans) to discuss with producers (e.g. winery) and producers can get useful information for segmenting the market.

The growth of social media users is increasing, especially after the introduction of smartphones. Strategically, the role of social media is twofold. First, it is a communicative tool since a direct relation is established between the winery and the user; second, the user may be engaged and he/she may decide to make a purchase. In other words, social media users may know a winery, may know the wines much better than in the traditional retail
and, eventually, they may decide to buy wine through ecommerce or going to retail stores. Online wine market shows a positive trend. However, the growth of this channel changes greatly from country to country. The share of wine online share over total wine sold has reached 6-7% in countries such as United Kingdom or 3.8% in France. In Italy, internet wine sales represent the 1.5% of domestic ones only (Euromonitor, 2015). The reasons explaining this gap are many, going from the high importance of direct sales (high number and geographical dispersion of wineries, often close to consumers) to the fact that most Italian consumers are reluctant towards electronic transactions or to be involved in shipping issues. Still, social media may have a strong impact on the communication of a wine or a winery. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google plus, You Tube, Periscope, Tripadvisor, Forsquare and other services allow people to remain in never ending conversations (Szolnoki and Fortunato, 2014). Premium wine is a high involvement purchase and potential consumers are looking for information especially about previous experiences, or opinions not only from experts but also from amateurs or standard wine consumers. For instance, the success and proliferation of thousands wine blogs can be interpreted as a way to get information about wines and wineries without paying the subscription on well-known, good-reputation but costly wine magazines. Information about wine is a reason why people participate in wine blog and social media. Among wine bloggers, Facebook fans or Twitter followers, there is actually a wide audience where users enjoy read/write comments about wine, some of them want to be involved in the discussion, some of them want to discuss to people that know the wine and, eventually, to get in touch directly to the producer. In other words, most of these users are potential wine “enthusiast” consumers (Constellation, 2013). Blogs and social media give to wineries a valuable feedback which can be helpful in satisfying consumer needs (Szolnoki et al., 2014). This strategy is not as expensive as others communication tools (e.g. advertising) and it can be afforded even by small size wineries. From a marketing perspective, social media play a critical role within the marketing funnel scheme, since they accomplish the so-called connect-engage-influence process where a user may become to potential consumers (McGechan, 2014).

The literature about online wine market is increasing. Some studies about wine blogs are done at the international level looking at the proliferation of blogs (Yarrow, 2012), the interaction between social media and blogs (Lee, 2012; Vrana et al., 2012), the impact of blogs on wine business (Thach, 2009), the content analysis of blogs (Beninger et al., 2014). Some papers are focused on social media making a comparison between the winery visibility in US and France (Bouquet, 2012), doing a content analysis of users’ comments (Laverie et al., 2012, Snolnoki, 2014), or evaluating social media effects on wine branding (Habel and Goodmann, 2011). Others studies are focused on case studies such as the relationships between the online community and Burgundy winegrowers (Peler and Lecat, 2011), the visibility on social media of cru Bordeaux wines (Reyneke et al., 2011), the impact of Twitter on wine business (Wilson and Quinon), the value of social network for California wineries (McGarry and Wolf, 2014), the impact of smartphones and mobile-commerce on wine business through social media platforms (Pelet and Lecat, 2014). This short literature is not exhaustive but show that interest of wineries on blogs or social media is increasing over time according to the number of users as well as the progress in communication technologies (apps/smartphones, broadband, etc.). Indeed, the interest about social media is confirmed by the growth of online wine shops and social media platforms (e.g. Vintank)

In Italy, while wine ecommerce is marginal as sales, there is a strong penetration of mobiles (more than 100%) while the number of social media users shows a fast increasing trend. Smartphones have strongly changed people habits and lifestyle. However, the involvement of Italian wineries in social media is still low. Winery attention is mostly focused on company website or how to arrange their own page on Facebook or Twitter. However, this is not enough to produce communicative effect on users or fans. The marketing funnel suggests that a communicative strategy is effective when all steps of this process are exploited (McGechan, 2014). This process implies a greater attention to visibility on search engine results (e.g. through ads), to blog comments, to posts or tweets, to email messages, etc.. Doing communication on social media is actually not an easy job and it requires expertise and time. In Italy, there are some examples of wineries following the marketing funnel suggestions (es. Donnafugata, Castello Brani) which are usually well-known and export oriented. Why these wineries decided to put effort on social media? What do they expect from being active on social media? Or, why many other wineries do not show interest in social media?

In this study we are going to explore to what extend wineries are following a communicative social media strategy. This explorative study is done in two steps. The first analysis is aimed to measure the interest of Italian
wineries to social media, i.e., how wineries arrange website, blogs, social media and other digital marketing services. According to the results of this screening, we are going to restrict the analysis on a sample of social media active wineries in order to evaluate the effort of these wineries on their communicative strategies, how social media are integrated within a multichannel communicative strategy and the overall winery marketing mix. Eventually, we are expecting to evaluate the impact of social media on wine business as brand image/reputation and sales results.

Methodologically, the first analysis is done by measuring metrics and content analysis on a representative sample of Italian wineries while the second analysis is done through a direct survey of a subsample of selected wineries try to evaluate what they are doing on social network and what they expect as effect on brand and consumer relationships.

References