

## Padua 2017 Abstract Submission

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### Keywords

Sustainability, semi-structured questionnaire, Internal drivers , External drivers, Strategic Decision-Making, SMEs family run wine producers

### Research Question

The function of sustainable internal drivers and external drivers in the determination of strategic decision-making and delivery of a balanced mix of organizational values in family run wine firms

### Methods

Interviews conducted based on a semi-structured questionnaire using the Miles and Huberman (2003) qualitative research protocol and the case study approach offered by Yin (2014).

### Results

Findings indicate that sample firms are making more intense use of sustainability practices than expected, use a wide array of tools, have a holistic interpretation of the concept of sustainability

### Abstract

This paper reviews the transformation which has occurred in the promotion of sustainable development in the leading wine producing regions of the world in the last two decades and examines the relationship between sustainability and strategy. Programme initiatives such as the Australia Sustaining Success initiative, the New Zealand Sustainable Winegrowing, the Integrated Production Wine Scheme in South Africa, the Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance in California, the EU Commission's publication on a Sustainable EU Wine Sector and the International Wine Industry Trade Association (FIVS) have recognized the importance of sustainability principles and have attempted to address sustainability issues and coordinate actions towards sharing more sustainable economic, environmental, social practices in the sector. More recently, individual countries such as France have initiated a National Strategy of Sustainable Development which have stimulated local initiatives, such as the certification released by the Champagne Wine Board, (Haute Valeure Environmentale) and the Système de Management Environmentale SME established by the Bordeaux Wine Council (CIVB) while Italy has also initiated a forum for environmental sustainability- Vino Sostenibile. Fundamental to these sustainability initiatives is the relationship between sustainability and strategy. Recent reported academic empirical evidence in this field has identified both internal and external drivers of sustainability in a strategic context. However, much of the published evidence has focused on large corporate wine producers and very little investigations into SMEs in the sector, particularly family owned and run wine businesses. This paper addresses that deficit and explores the nature and function of sustainable internal drivers and external drivers in the determination of strategic decision-making and delivery of a balanced mix of organizational values in family run wine businesses. Our study is a comparative analysis of internal drivers of sustainability in family run firms in three separate and distinctive

regions: Italy (Sardinia), France (Bordeaux), and US (California) and examines how strategic decision-making creates and maintains sustainable businesses. Since the late 1990s a substantial number of research papers concerned with behavioural research methodological approaches to research questions have appeared in the academic literature. Expectations of academics discussed in recent literature demand broader investigations of research questions which adopt a behavioural perspective rather than the use of complex quantitative econometric models imported from the field of neo-classical economics. Therefore the objectives and methodological choices made in the current study necessitated the use of qualitative research techniques. In that context our study focussed on conducting in-depth interviews with the chief executives/owners of SMEs and in particular family owned and run wine producers. Given their education, practical training and experience, the subjects identified and interviewed could be expected to deal comfortably with questions concerning strategic issues in family owned and run wine producers. Interviews were undertaken in Bordeaux and California in 2015 and 2016 and the Sardinian interviews will be undertaken in April 2017. The interviews are semi-structured in nature and were based on existing theoretical and empirical work. The questions raised were sufficiently open-ended to allow the interviewees to participate in conversation without being made so general that ambiguity might have been an issue. Multiple questions were avoided to prevent confusion and although the same key questions were covered in each interview, given the open-ended nature of the discussions, the sequence in which the questions were asked inevitably varied as the order of questions essentially depended upon interviewee responses. This approach facilitated conversation within a particular topic, without restricting other related topics from emerging during the course of the interviews. At the commencement of each interview interviewees were assured that no prior academic or theoretical knowledge of the dividends phenomenon was required. The interviewees were also given a guarantee of confidentiality and we confirmed that neither the interviewee nor their firms would be identified in any published work. Questions explored the relationship between internal drivers and external drivers of sustainability; how the mix of internal drivers and external drivers affects the company's decision making process, how that mix effects the organizations' business model; how companies address sustainability issues in a multidimensional setting (economic, environmental, social), and, finally, how organizations use these tools to shape a strategic perspective. The Miles and Huberman (2003) qualitative research protocol and the case study approach offered by Yin (2014) were used to analyse our results. Preliminary findings indicate that family run wine firms are making more intense and conscious use of sustainability practices than we expected, are using a wide array of tools and have a more holistic interpretation of the concept of sustainability drivers and in strategic terms integrate their sustainable practices for the decision making processes. At a practical level we constructed a conceptual model as an aid for family run wine businesses to use strategically internal drivers and external drivers of sustainability, the mix of internal drivers and external drivers of sustainability and provide a more holistic perspective on sustainability which is more advanced than simple regulatory compliance.

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**The impact of sustainability drivers in the European SME wine sector:-  
an explorative comparative study**

**Abstract**

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