**Title**  
Red, White and Green: Environmental Communication and Green Product Marketing in New York’s Hudson River Region Wine Industry

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

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**Keywords**  
Environmental Communication, Green Product Marketing, Hudson River Region, Wine Industry, Institutional Theory, Communication

**Research Question**  
RQ1: In what ways do Hudson River Region wineries convey information about environmental practices through green product marketing on wine bottle labels?

**Methods**  
By means of content analysis, this research explores how sustainable practices employed at Hudson River Region wineries are communicated via green product marketing messages on wine bottle labels.

**Results**  
Results are in process, taking place over one calendar year: data collection (fall 2018), data analysis (winter 2019), report of findings (spring 2019), and presentation of findings (summer 2019)

**Abstract**  
Abstract  

The consumption of wine has served as an international communication expedient for thousands of years. From classical symposia of ancient times to religious ceremonies practiced for centuries, wine has played a significant role in countless social gatherings across the ages and continents. Recent expansion of global wine markets, however, has impacted an increasingly disrupted natural environment through carbon emissions, use of synthetic chemicals, topsoil erosion, and water mismanagement. Vintners, or winemakers, have been tasked by new legal standards, as well as the urging of environmentally aware consumers, to instill a winemaking process that is green, or ecologically friendly, in order to offset environmental degradation and support the long-term viability of the industry.

As New World wine producers, the Shawangunk Wine Trail in the Hudson River Region of New York (an American Viticultural Area) commands specific attention as vineyards in this particular geographic area are pressed to advance green wine production standards. Fueled by the emergent field of environmental communication, this research investigates the sustainable practices being implemented by vintners in the Hudson River wine industry and examines the marketing discourse communicated via wine bottle labels to construct an environmentally...
friendly image. Ultimately, this project inspects the strategies of all 13 wineries on the Shawangunk Wine Trail by comparing organic and non-organic wine bottle labels to determine the extent to which green product marketing is used as a form of environmental communication.

Rationale for Study

Consumer values regarding environmental attitudes have become increasingly popular and many businesses are expanding their communication strategies to include green product marketing in order to have practices connect to socially responsible behaviors (Beverland & Luxton, 2005; Bulkeley, 2000; Cox, 2010; Cramer & Foss, 2009; Environmental Communication & Social Marketing, 2009). To fully examine this trend, it must be determined if environmentally targeted advertising is merely an attempt to enhance organizational image or if the claim is a legitimate achievement. Applying Scott’s (1995) theoretical framework of Institutional Theory, which describes how media messages are produced, managed and distributed, this exploratory research employs a content analysis of wine bottle labels, the prime communication device for the wine industry. Comparing organic and non-organic Hudson River Region wines will offer a comprehensive means to address the proposed research questions:

RQ1: In what ways do Hudson River Region wineries convey information about environmental practices through green product marketing on wine bottle labels?

RQ2: How does the green product marketing on wine bottle labels for organic Hudson River Region wines compare to their non-organic counterparts?

RQ3: Are Hudson River Region wineries employing green product marketing messages on wine bottle labels for wines that are not organic?

Implications

In the global marketplace, many organizations “acknowledge that environmental degradation is occurring ... reaching crisis proportions” (Bryant, 2007, p. 56). As the attention of business leaders becomes more focused on corporate social responsibility and environmental issues, momentum encouraging green growth across industries is gaining traction (Cox, 2010; Schwarze, 2007). At wineries in particular, vintners are finding that consumers are becoming more informed regarding sustainable practices and leaning toward supporting green initiatives, especially those related to organic food production.

Institutional theory posits that social reality is a human construction and predicts that industry survival is directly related to consumers’ perceptions of organizations (Beverland & Luxton, 2005). Environmental communication “makes use of specified channels of engagement to reach target audiences and draw[s] on different sources of information to shape perceptions” (Camilleri, 2008, p. 60). In the wine industry, wine bottle labels are a core platform for the construction of social understandings and the communication of organizational norms and legitimacy (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Scott, 2008).

Wineries on the Shawangunk Wine Trail may selectively advertise aspects of their operations through green product marketing on wine bottle labels to give the appearance of being environmentally friendly while their actual practices demonstrate otherwise. This research will meaningfully contribute to scholarship in the discipline of environmental communication while carrying potential business implications for the Hudson River Region and the larger wine industry.

Literature Review

Environmental Communication

“Environmental communication influences how individuals, groups and cultures see, value, and ultimately act in the world” (Depoe, 2010, para. 2). Milstein (2009) explains this area of study is “a meta-field that cuts across disciplines. Research and theory within the field are united by a topical focus on communication and human relations with the environment” (p. 345). Depoe (2010) adds that through research, environmental communication is a vehicle to “advocate for change, raise awareness, collaborate to address environmental issues, change
behavior, and pass legislation” (para. 3).

Robert Cox (2010), a seminal figure in the academic advancement of the field who “played a key role in defining and raising environmental communication awareness and credibility” (Seneca, 2007, p. 21), determined seven major areas of study within the field: (1) environmental rhetoric and discourse, (2) media and environmental journalism, (3) public participation in environmental decision making, (4) social marketing and advocacy campaigns, (5) environmental collaboration and conflict resolution, (6) risk communication, and (7) representations of nature in popular culture and green marketing. As such, scholarship in this discipline exhibits a commitment to advancing nuanced explanations between the constitutive dimension of communication and the environment across industry, business and social relationships (Cramer & Foss, 2009; Schwarze, 2007).

Green Product Marketing
An organization’s attempt to associate products, services, or identity with environmental values and images is known as green product marketing and is generally used for product promotion, image enhancement or image repair. This concept also includes communication about environmentally beneficial business practices or product modifications in the use of advertising to improve the image or identity of an organization, reflecting its environmental concern and sustainable performance (Cox, 2010).

Institutional Theory
Institutional theory was largely developed in the mid 1990’s by W. Richard Scott (2008), however, “the roots of institutional theory run richly through the formative years of the social sciences” (p. ix; see also Bill & Hardgrave, 1981; Hodgson, 1994; Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Scott, 1995). This theory has “captured the attention of a wide range of scholars across the social sciences and is applied to examine systems ranging from micro interpersonal interactions to macro global frameworks” (Scott, 2008, p. 2). The theory argues that institutions “collectively provide social lenses through which individuals and groups interpret their social world” (Kilbourne & Carlson, 2008, p. 107). In many cases this results in conforming to industry standards (Scott, 1995), such as implementing environmental procedures.

Methodology
By means of content analysis, this research will explore how sustainable practices employed at Hudson River Region wineries are communicated via green product marketing messages on wine bottle labels to construct an environmentally friendly image. Data collection and analysis will take place over one calendar year (July 2018 – July 2019).

Sample Selection of Wineries
The data for this study will be collected from all 13 wineries on the Shawangunk Wine Trail (see Appendix A). As a result, the sample selection from the population of wineries in the Hudson River Region will be exhaustive. This comprehensive approach allows for greater validity and reliability in comparing data related to wine production and the evaluation of green product marketing (Denzin, 1978; Hakim, 2000; Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Procedures for Data Collection
Data will be gathered from winery resources during various collection phases throughout the summer and fall of 2018 while the researcher is on-site in the Hudson River Region. The researcher will travel to the Shawangunk Wine Trail to conduct field research at each winery, perform informal interviews with wine industry representatives regarding design of bottle labels, and collect data from the sample selection. Digital images of each wine bottle label included in the study will be captured for analysis. All original wine bottle labels making up the data set will be available upon request.

Data Analysis
Previous research examining environmental claims found on products demonstrated that print labels produced the strongest marketing resource on store shelves (Berenson, 2004; Dodd, Pinkleton, & Gustafson, 1996; Polonsky et al., 1998). Polonsky et al. (1998) provide a thematic framework for the content analysis of bottle labels based upon 10 categories. In the spring of 2019, content analysis will be performed using a rubric assessing text, design, and imagery based on Polonsky’s work (see Appendix B). During this explanatory phase, wine bottle labels (both front
and back) from the sample population will be analyzed to reveal patterns of green product marketing used by Hudson River Region winemakers.

Based on the outlined methodology, the three research questions will be determined.

Outcomes

Peterson (2007) writes, “environmental communication becomes a system of practices aimed at creating a more inclusive community” (p. 83), which entails generating innovative solutions to form an accurate relationship between consumers and the business promotion of environmental actions. This research has the potential to inform, challenge, and inspire the Hudson River Region and the broader professional wine industry.

APPENDIX A
Alphabetical List and Location of Wineries on the Shawangunk Wine Trail

Winery Name and Location

1. Applewood Winery; Warwick, NY
2. Baldwin Vineyards; Pine Bush, NY
3. Benmarl Winery; Marlboro, NY
4. Brimstone Hill Vineyard; Pine Bush, NY
5. Brotherhood Winery; Washingtonville, NY
6. Clearview Vineyard; Warwick, NY
7. Demarest Hill Winery; Warwick, NY
8. Glorie Farm Winery; Marlboro, NY
9. Palaia Vineyards and Winery; Highland Mills, NY
10. Robibero Winery; New Paltz, NY
11. Stoutridge Vineyard; Marlboro, NY
12. Warwick Valley Winery; Warwick, NY
13. Whitecliff Vineyard; Gardiner, NY

APPENDIX B
Content Analysis Rubric for Wine Bottle Labels

Category (Explanation)
(1) Product Name, Branding and Logos (Font and visual representation of name, certifying seal)

(2) Pictures and Images (Image of winery, picture of Earth)

(3) Licensing Agreement (Certified, approved, recommended by, tested)

(4) Scientific Environmental Attributes (Biodegradable, 100% organic grapes, 35% recycled post-consumer waste plastic used for the packaging of this product)

(5) General Environmental Claims (No sulfites added, eco-safe, “recycled” is
stated without any specificity as to how)

(6) Meaningless Environmental Language (Promotes a healthy planet, save our world, please recycle)

(7) Statement Spectrum (The taste of a sunny day, the sun grows healthy grapes)

(8) Appeal to Romanticism (Referring to a special occasion, family-run business, pop of cork)

(9) Materials and Colors (Etched into bottle, no label, gold leafing, painting, green, burnt orange, earthy tones)

(10) Proportion of Text (Actual word count)

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