

Article

Transmission of Place Branding Values through Experiential Events: Wine BC Case Study

F.J. Cristófol ^{1,*} , Elena Cruz-Ruiz ²  and Gorka Zamarreño-Aramendia ³ 

¹ ESIC, Market Research and Quantitative Methods Department, Business & Marketing School, Pozuelo de Alarcón, 28223 Madrid, Spain

² Department of Economics and Business Administration, University Málaga, 29013 Málaga, Spain; ecruz@uma.es

³ Department of Economic Theory and Economic History, University Málaga, 29013 Málaga, Spain; gzama@uma.es

* Correspondence: fjcrisofol@esic.edu; Tel.: +34-606837778

Abstract: Sustainability is to promote economic growth that generates equitable wealth for all without harming the environment, becoming one of the objectives that serve as a starting point for many place branding strategies. Cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and the valorization of the territory are nowadays unavoidable elements to sustain brands. This research analyzes the transmission of place branding values through experiential events, as a formula for business improvement according to the principles of sustainable development. The research is focused on the case of wine in British Columbia (Canada). The methodology applied was based on a theoretical framework as a starting point for the study. From there, on the one hand, an analysis of the contents of the events carried out by the winegrowers of British Columbia during the harvest months in 2019 and 2020 has been carried out. On the other hand, interviews were conducted with relevant professionals and academics in the sector in order to determine the extent to which they meet the needs of promotion of the site, taking into account the impact on the sustainability of the territory. The results show the link between the events and the territory brand, which is a means to generate growth through wine tourism promoted by the wineries, thus revaluing the winegrowing landscape and, in general, the traditions of the place, among others. There is also a need to look for strategies that seek collaboration between the public and private sectors to improve the creation of integrated events that transmit the branding values of the place. Events are a tool to generate territory branding and can, if well-conceived, contribute to the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In the case study, the results show that the vast majority of events organized by BC wineries aim to promote place branding within the framework of sustainability. A methodology that could be applicable to other territories and countries.

Keywords: place branding; wine tourism; events; sustainable development; cultural diplomacy



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1. Introduction

Wine-related tourism has earned more and more value in recent times. The need to add value to tourist experiences has led to specialization in different areas. Food, wine, culture, and other elements have been generating new possibilities for brands (commercial and territorial)

The transmission of place branding values through experiential events is presented as a relevant element in the market. Sustainability, as a key factor, is also a concept inherent to place branding: the transmission of heritage, local culture, traditions, or landscape is a basic part of brand building.

In this research, the study is conducted on wine in British Columbia (Canada). Previous studies [1] show that this Canadian state generates a large volume of tourism around its wineries: guided tours, tastings, events related to music, art, or gastronomy are a

substantial part of BC's tourism development. In addition, the responsible sustainability of the small wineries that form the landscape of southwestern Canada is evident in their understanding of the winemaking process: from the harvest to its final consequences.

- RQ1 Are the events proposed by the wineries in BC related to the promotion of the place branding?
- RQ2 Are the events organized related to the promotion of territorial sustainability?

The authors have chosen this publication because of its interdisciplinary nature and its multifaceted approach to sustainability. This allows studies such as the one presented here, which combine several disciplines and evaluate certain aspects of the sustainability of wine tourism, to fit in and generate the appropriate debate on their conclusions and implications.

This paper has a structure that is organized into four points. Firstly, a theoretical framework is presented in which previously published studies and papers are collected. At the end of this section, the objectives are shown. In the next section, we present the methodology. The results can be found below them. Finally, this research is concluded with the discussion and the conclusions.

2. Theoretical Background

Tourism is an industry that has developed in parallel with the emergence of mass society. Until the arrival of Covid-19, the rise in the user curve was unstoppable, a trend that is expected to continue once the problems posed by the pandemic have been overcome. Tourism thus represents one of the most important economic activities, as is the case in several European countries such as France, Italy, and Spain. According to UNWTO data, France stands in first place with 89,400,000 visitors, followed by Spain with 82,773,000 tourists and Italy in fifth place with 62,146,000 tourists. The annual growth was 3%, driven by the evolution of the middle classes worldwide [2] and the decrease in air transport prices [3]. Many territories have seen this tourist flow as an opportunity to improve their heritage and develop innovative programs aimed at extending the benefits of the industry throughout the year, as well as reducing the concentration of tourists in certain areas that are showing signs of overcrowding [4].

The search for new economically profitable and sustainable tourism products has led to new models for the development of rural areas [5], with an increasing interest in local products such as food and wine [6,7], as well as in the enjoyment of natural environments and local traditions [8–10]. At this point, as defined by the European Council of Regions (ECR), we must understand a local product as a natural good or service produced or supplied by enterprises located in rural areas where there is an established socio-economic identity. In this way, the local product undergoes a patrimonialization that aims at its valorization especially for tourism purposes [11] so that local products refer to a geographical area of production delimited by borders and very close to the consumer [12].

The interest in the world of wine and its wineries goes back a long way, although it would become apparent from the nineteenth century onwards, when major exhibitions, both generic and those dedicated to the world of wine, became fashionable [13]. Therefore, wine tourism should be observed from the point of view of those travelers who want to make journeys and enjoy stays focused on getting to know the landscapes and spaces where wine is produced, as well as on participating in activities that increase knowledge about this product, generating an economic and social impact on wine-producing areas [13]. Wine tourism has a series of elements associated with it, including a strong cultural and educational component [14,15], an obvious link with gastronomy [16,17], and an important hedonic interest [18,19]. VINTUR, the body responsible for regulating and organizing wine tourism in Europe, indicates that the wine tourism product is that which integrates under the same thematic concept the existing and potential tourist resources and services of interest in a wine-producing area [20].

Wine tourism has developed in different areas of the planet from the Old World where its development, as has already been pointed out, has been going on for a long time. It

covers almost all of Europe starting with the countries bordering the Mediterranean [21–25], extending to the rest of the continent [9,26–28] and to other regions of the world such as North America [29–35] and the Southern Cone of South America [36,37], as well as New Zealand, Australia, China, or South Africa [21,38–41].

Thus, three different realities in relation to wine become clear [1]. That of the gastronomic product directly related to the wine routes [42], in which case the new consumption habits of tourists and their increasingly demanding behavior with regard to quality, personalization, and differentiation of the oenological experience are of particular importance [18,43,44]. The second reality has to do with the way in which wine is understood as a cultural concept that allows the visitor to approach and understand the traditions of the rural environments where wine is produced [45–47]. Within this dimension, concepts such as terroir or cultural landscape come into play [48]. Thirdly, the enjoyment of wine has undeniable hedonistic and epistemological dimensions [18,19] that converge in the promotion of the wine tourism experience [49,50]. Interest in the product is only one of the factors expressed by wine tourists during their visits; the ambiance and experience surrounding the wine are equally important factors. Wine tourists are consumers seeking pleasure, enjoyment, and personal development [51]. Bruwer [18,19] highlights the hedonic nature of wine consumption, which consists of wine tourists' search for a complete experience that includes sensory enjoyment of the terroir, the wineries, consumption, and shopping: Thus, once wine tourists make the decision to visit a particular winery, the quality of the wine takes a back seat [52] and the services offered become more important.

This leads us to the need to understand what the wine routes are. The concept of wine tourism is polyhedral: firstly, regarding the consumer behavior; secondly, as a regional development strategy; finally, as the chance for wineries to market their products directly to the end consumer. The creation of a wine route is an occasion for the revitalization of the rural territories, as well as for their sustainable development [53], understood from a perspective that is not only economic but which goes beyond the conservation of the rural heritage [54–56], which generates new business opportunities and closer links with wine tourists. In this way, wine routes are defined as itineraries that encourage tourists to travel along them. ACEVIN, the body in charge of certifying wine routes in Spain, defines them as an innovative, thematic, cultural, gastronomic, and inland tourism product that integrates the tourist resources and services of a wine region.

In this context, the terroir is the space that offers a series of soil and climatic conditions that are optimal for the development of the vineyards, so that the quality of the wines depends directly on these conditions. From the customers' point of view, wine routes are defined by the vineyards, festivals, shows, and especially the wineries of a given production region [32], not leaving aside the attraction of the patrimonial elements of these areas [5,8,57,58]. The combination of interests generated by the growing number of visits to wine-producing areas has led to a close collaboration between the hotel industry and the wineries [59–61] so that wine and wineries become agents of dynamization of the rural territory, without forgetting the main motivation of wine tourists to visit a wine-producing region: to taste, consume, and buy wine [57,60,62].

Establishing a wine route requires commitments to be made by all the parties involved (wineries, service companies, and institutions) as a series of quality standards must be met [63] to create a memorable experience for visitors [64,65], so that the wines are directly linked to the quality and characteristics of each territory.

2.1. Place Branding and Sustainability

Kavaratzis [66] indicates that places (understood from their diversity) are spaces that can simultaneously present different dimensions such as residence, work, leisure, business, finances, social interaction, social activism, emotional attachment, or tourism, among others. The conceptual reality of place branding is multiple, so it is necessary to create an appropriate positioning given the need to differentiate the different territorial concepts, understood as a representation of space, which is subject to continuous transformation

as a result of the social action of human beings, culture, and economic interactions [67]. The nature of each type of territory, its interpretative reality for the individual changes depending on the direct experience or social representation and the way it is apprehended through knowledge and management. Thus, the scale is a determining factor in defining the type of territory, from the most intimate (the home) to community social representations or territories of governance (municipality, region, country) to cultural identifications that identify portions of the universe (continent, planet) [68].

Moreover, the different spatial realities are, in essence, manifestations of the diversity of the place branding. In a simple way, we could define the image of a territory as the perception that the rest of the world has of this territory [69], so that it transcends the traditional meanings of promotion and marketing. In the field of tourism, Cardoso [70] points out that the image of the territory (destination) becomes the set of impressions about the place where tourists do not live. Consumers tend to build the overall image of the destination by making a cognitive and affective evaluation of the destination brand [71–73]. Thus, the tourist experience [74], must be positive and memorable, becoming a fundamental axis that tourist destinations must offer to achieve a positive destination image and increase the level of recommendations among potential tourists [75,76].

Laces have no meaning without the people who inhabit them and the social networks that they develop in this area [77,78]. Therefore, the concept of a brand applied to territories encompasses various theories as Gertner points out [79], among which the one developed by Hankinson [80] should be highlighted, in which he outlines the different areas related to place branding: destination branding, national branding, regional branding, and city branding. It is these last two categories that have received the most attention from experts, despite the fact that place branding can be applied from different scales, from the neighborhood to the city and the region, as well as to the national sphere and even to a continental scale [81]. Place branding allows for the creation of constructs that include ideas, signs, and even territorial practices that allow a local society to identify itself, in a horizontal process in which both inhabitants [82] and visitors must be involved in a process of appropriation and active participation based on a shared vision of the development potential of a space [66].

Tourist destinations, especially in geographically limited areas such as rural areas, help their inhabitants to express their identity and lifestyle, so if they become more than just a place to visit, strategies must be established to develop them as brands [83]. Linked to the place branding is often the creation and development of a tourism brand, which supports the creation of products and services related to it. The key is to design a strategy that differentiates the territory in order to attract tourists, investment, or media attention. In other words, place branding does not only base its strategy on communication but must also stimulate innovation in heterogeneous sectors such as local products, service tourism, infrastructures, education, sport, health care, or cultural heritage. In this way, the territories become discourses [84–86] that influence both those who visit them and their residents.

The strategies of rural areas linked to wine-growing, as well as other products protected under various types of designation of origin (DO) or geographical indications (GI), involve enhancing their identities or images around new rural goods and services [10,87]. These strategies are limited to a broad strategy of the ODCE [88] and can be seen in the context of the valorization of these territories, not only from an economic point of view but also from that of the sustainability of the territory and its tangible and intangible heritage [5,54], their assets and their local resources, which up until now have been little or poorly exploited [89,90], especially the agricultural rural heritage [91]. In this way, the enhancement of rural heritage currently involves strengthening its place branding.

It is relevant to note the importance for place branding of the role of identity especially in agrarian economies, as well as in natural and cultural tourism marketing that emerge in the context of political action [92,93]. There is a link between rural identity and the perceptual components of authenticity, and the recursive process, through which reflection

on the destination becomes a precondition that catalyzes the processes of sustainable local development and has a final impact on the individuals who are part of that territory [93].

Place branding represents a way for approaching the consumption of quality products with deep links to traditions, where in the case of wines, the terroir is essential as a sign of identity of a space dedicated to wine production [94–96]. Place branding allows the creation of constructs that include ideas, signs, and even territorial practices that allow a local society to identify itself. The qualities that should be highlighted are directly related to the tangible and intangible heritage [4], lifestyles, or family traditions [97] present in a wine-producing area and which are best expressed in wine routes.

The academic debate on sustainability and wine tourism has gained relevance in recent years in line with the importance of the interest aroused by this type of tourism segment. It is the consumers who demand environmentally friendly products [98]; in fact, sustainable attributes can shape the demand for wine tourism, but the sustainability of a wine-producing territory goes beyond the ecological production of its wines and must be observed from a broad perspective. The design of wine tourism routes should integrate all the interests that are generated in the territory [71,99], which have multiple origins (wineries, institutions, population, companies, etc) [100] and which converge in a tourist offer aligned with the interests of the visitors. Wine tourism and its routes are currently conceived as a model of sustainable development that makes it possible to enhance and protect the heritage of rural areas [5,54,55], one of the key elements in the construction of place branding.

Sustainability has been observed from three different perspectives: environmental quality, economic prosperity, and social justice [101]. In the context of place branding, sustainability seeks to understand and contribute to the construction of social, economic, and ecological processes [102].

With regard to the territories, different dimensions of sustainability have been identified, such as the environment, the construction of the surroundings, water and waste management, transport, energy, health, well-being, security, governance, and citizen participation [103]. The links between place branding and sustainability have been addressed by some academic studies, as these are concepts that need to be integrated [104]. The experiences for contributing sustainable elements to the place branding are based above all on the experiences of large countries or cities such as Barcelona [105], Bogota [106], Hong Kong [107], or Dubai [108], among others.

However, despite the high cost that the development of place branding can represent, the capital role that sustainability can play in rural areas is an important incentive for visitors, as well as a commitment to economic, social, and cultural growth [109,110]. In fact, there are experiences that support this approach, where sustainability plays a successful role in developing place branding in these rural territories [110,111]. In the case of gastronomic tourism, and especially wine tourism, sustainability (understood from different angles) is an objective that can be integrated into the development strategies of place branding [112], functioning as a powerful tool for attracting tourism.

2.2. *Experiential Events*

The concept of experience has been researched in depth by various authors, who have related the term to sciences such as sociology, psychology, tourism, economics, anthropology, and marketing [113,114].

When analyzing the strategies for developing the concept of place branding, we highlight two routes that have been widely studied over the last few years and which are related to each other: experiential marketing and event marketing [115].

2.2.1. *Experiential Marketing*

Experiential marketing events can be defined in a number of ways [116]. Experiential marketing is a booming marketing management philosophy [102–119], which has managed to become an effective tool for boosting tourism behavior [76,120–122]. It is a marketing

strategy that aims to bring to life the promises that the brand makes to consumers through organized experiences before and during the purchase process, and in the subsequent interactions (post-purchase sensations). It favors sensory and emotional connections and gives the consumer the necessary tools to involve the brand [123]. The result must be “something extremely significant and unforgettable for the consumer immersed in the experience” [113].

Likewise, [124] go further and emphasize the idea that consumers no longer like to buy a product or service, but rather the stories behind it and the experience that increases satisfaction and brand loyalty.

The experiences are intrinsically personal and exist only in the minds of the client who has been involved on an intellectual, physical, emotional, and/or spiritual level [125,126].

Experiential marketing is key to brands' business strategies and it is vitally important to know the experience generated in the consumer and their opinion of the brand. In this way, if the consumers have a positive experience, they will associate that image with the brand, while if the experience is negative, it will give the consumers a negative image of the brand. Consumers need experiences to create links with brands and it is through experiential marketing that they can generate such links [127].

In today's business environment, the way brands reach out to consumers has evolved. For this reason, they are focusing on improving the experience of their consumers, with the premise of improving the memory that is generated in the consumer's mind as a result of their relationship with the brand for as long as possible.

Brand experience is conceptualized through interrelated cognitive dimensions and categories, evoked by the stimuli to which the consumer is exposed when interacting with the brand [128]. Schmitt [129] proposes an experiential marketing approach taking into account the different types of experience, which he calls “strategic experiential modules”. These experiential modules include sensory elements (I) sensations; (II) emotional (feelings); those related to cognitive capacity (III) (thoughts); physical (IV) (actions); (V) those of social identity (relationships), which invite the individual to relate to the social and cultural context reflected in the brand.

Following Holbrook and Hirschman [130], the first definition of brand experience is based on the 3F model: “fantasies, feelings, and fun”, all of which are emotional aspects of product use. Thus, a brand experience is not an abstract concept, it is a real offer, it is about “organizing experiences” as stated by Pine and Gilmore [126] focusing on establishing and maintaining over time the greatest possible coherence between the expectations generated by the communication and the actual experience of all target audiences when they come into contact with the brand.

Following Cheng and Khan [131], consumer experience with the brand “can affect certain aspects of consumer behavior, such as satisfaction and loyalty”. Helm [132] asserts that online brand experience is critical to improving the quality of customer experience while building relationships with consumers.

Brakus et al. [132] propose a similar model taking into account the sensory, emotional, and cognitive dimensions and includes the interactive dimension of the consumer, measuring the brand experience in relation to tourism and promotional resources, such as events.

In this work, it is therefore considered that the concept of “brand experience” [121,129,133] is composed of five dimensions: the sensory dimension, the emotional dimension, the cognitive dimension, the physical dimension and, finally, the interactive dimension (Figure 1).

2.2.2. Experiential Events

The new consumer profile and the current needs of business organizations to engage with their audiences have given rise to new communication tools. Tools such as conventional advertising saturate the markets, and consumers, in turn, demand innovative forms of communication [127]. Therefore, events have become a solid tool that contribute to the implementation of relational strategies. They allow a close relationship to

be established between the brand and its audiences through the brand experience. Contributions such as those by Brakus et al. [134], Lenderman and Maloney [123], Campillo [127], and Galmés [135] highlight the importance of incorporating experiential events in brand management with their audiences. Through them, brand identity is reinforced, and its reputation consolidated.

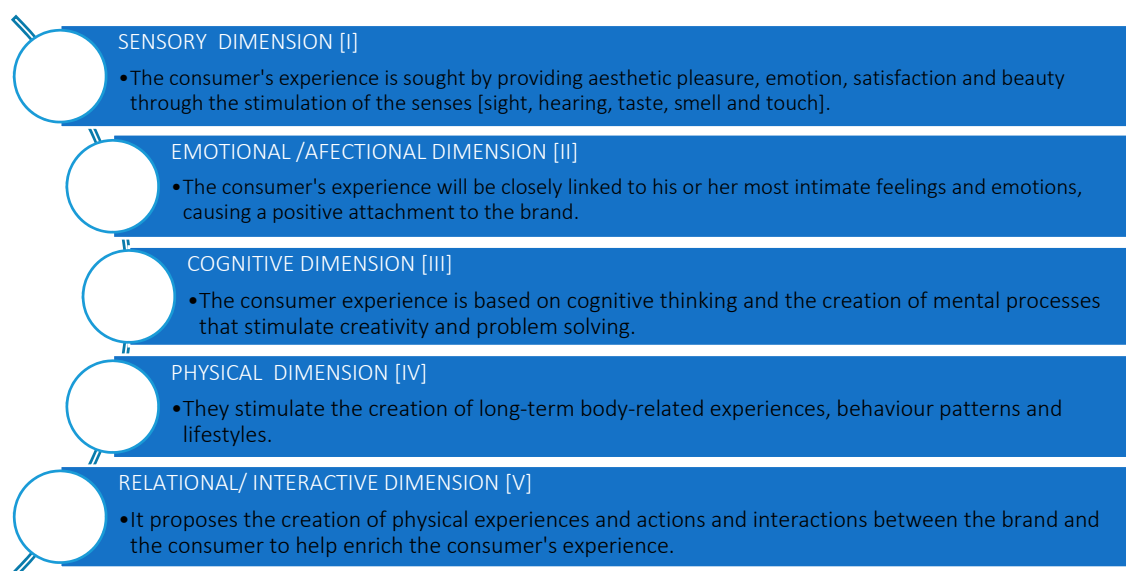


Figure 1. Strategic brand experience dimensions. Source: Own elaboration, based on Schmitt [129] and Brakus et al. [134].

Event marketing is the communication tool that can best increase direct contact between companies and consumers [136]. It offers the opportunity for social interaction between participants and the company [136–139], increasing the value of the experience while interacting with them and increasing the satisfaction of the customers [140]. It has become an important driver for the tourism sector, raising the competitiveness of destinations [141].

Marketing events have the potential to create an unforgettable experience for the consumer, developing lasting relationships with customers, linking the brand to good causes, and strengthening the brand image through association with the qualities of the event. This produces in turn a wide variety of communication effects, from generating awareness and appreciation to purchasing or creating brand loyalty [116].

Similarly, when organizing an event, the brand must always bear in mind the values that are linked to its own identity and corporate reputation [142–144]. They must be approached in a coherent way with regard to the organization's identity and image, as this will have an impact on the reputation and value given to the corporate brand, as pointed out by Currás [145].

In this sense, reference [146] states that “any event should emphasize how the participant will benefit from their presence in it, since the promise of better performance, or simply having a good time, will help to transmit certain brand values”.

For Dwyer and Forsyth [147], events can improve the image of a territory or region, favor networking businesses, facilitate technology transfer, and even enhance the pride of its citizens by providing social and cultural benefits in a given location. In addition, the organization of events can increase the number of visitors in both the short and long term [108].

Various authors claim that events have the capacity to generate unique and unrepeatable experiences, given that no two celebrations of an event are identical [46]. The cost of setting them up is relatively low in comparison to other tourist attraction measures based on the construction of certain physical infrastructures, such as an interpretation center. Attracting visitors, boosting activity in public spaces, improving the urban image and increasing visibility [148–150] are some of the reasons why this tool is frequently used as a strategy for revitalizing tourism in a region or territory [151,152].

2.2.3. Wine Events and Sustainability of the Territory

Wine tourism experiences through events can also contribute to social sustainability, supporting community well-being and quality of life, cultural richness, social equity, and visitor satisfaction [153].

The development of wine events leads to wine tourism activities that encompass activities that sometimes take place outside the wineries and therefore involve other members of the region in various economic activities, from catering (hotels, restaurants, and bars), those related to the production of food in the area and typical local crafts, organizers of cultural and artistic events (exhibitions, concerts, etc.), or even nature activities (ornithology, hiking, mycology, etc.).

In addition, other important social benefits can be achieved, since it can contribute to counteracting the depopulation of the rural environment, and with it the improvement of services such as access to the internet, improvement of communication routes, etc., all of this with a clear impact on the development of the regions and, therefore, contributing to the development of equal opportunities for their inhabitants and the sustainability of the territory [154].

For this reason, some authors point out that the experiential activities generated by wine tourism, such as events, promote the integral and sustainable socio-economic development of the territory, as they are engines that generate employment and wealth and improve the quality of life of the local population, favoring the growth of the territory [155].

Wine events and wine tourism, therefore, play a fundamental role for local society and rural development [156] and in this way, taking into account the interest in the sustainability of the territory preserves the resources and ensures the durability of the economic system of the wine area [100].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a useful and standard research method [157]. It consists of interpreting the data content through a coding that helps systematization in the coding. In this way, content analysis allows the identification of specific patterns. We are dealing with a methodology that from the qualitative becomes quantitative thanks to the application of tables that code the published text. The use of these tables coded in a systematic way allows us to achieve clear results that facilitate the presentation of data for a deeper understanding of the analysis [158,159]. On the other hand, as stated by Wimmer and Dominick [160], “Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative way, with the purpose of measuring certain variables”.

In this case, the events carried out by the British Columbia wineries that have been registered on the official website of the Wine Growers of British Columbia will be codified. A comparative period has been chosen, taking as a reference 2019 and 2020 harvest dates. That is, all the events published between June 1 and September 30 of both years. The search tool of the Wine Growers of British Columbia website has been used in order to select past events. This is the only database that allows to consult past events, in addition to being the official website of the British Columbia Wine Institute.

In order to carry out the analysis, a table has been generated for the coding of the events, so that, as Hsieh et al. [158] point out, the research work is systematized. In Table 1 four elements are included: the date of celebration of the event, the name of the winery that hosts it, the type of event according to the category, and if there is a presence of cultural heritage. Table 1 is an adaptation of the one used by Cristófol et al. [1].

3.2. Focused Interview

As the second part of the methodology, the interview is presented as a qualitative research technique. This type of methodology is very common in the social sciences, given that the interviewees collaborate with the researcher through topics set with specific objectives in the form of questions and answers [161]. This is what we refer to as the

focused interview. On the other hand, we can find the in-depth interview. According to Sierra [162], we choose the focused interview because both the interviewer and the interviewee must have a common interest previously established and with a sufficient level of knowledge on both sides.

Table 1. Categorization of content analysis.

Date	Date of the event. The timing is divided into two sections: between 1 June and 30 September 2019 and the same period in 2020
Host winery	Analysis of the winery that hosted the event
Type of event	Food, friends, family, hedonism Food as heritage Local music as heritage
Presence of cultural heritage	Local artists as heritage Wine as heritage Landscape as heritage

Source: Cristòfol et al. [1] own elaboration.

Structured in-depth interviews with winemakers, specialists, and agents involved in the production of wine was carried out. It allows for the evaluation of non-neutral knowledge [163–165]. The questionnaire was structured in a single section of nine questions. The interview (Appendix A) invited participants to comment on what they believed to the relationship between sustainability, events, and place branding.

The interview should provoke in the interviewee reactions related to their cognitive and emotional sources. Valles [166] points out that the development of the interview should be based on four pillars: the interview should not be directed, but should try to make the responses spontaneous; these responses should be specific, not vague or blurred; the interviewer should inquire into the emotions of the interviewee; and, finally, the interview should be profound and in a relevant personal context. Valles [166] also places importance on the figure of the interviewee, since he or she must have professional experience in the field referred to in the research.

The interviewees have been selected taking into account two different groups. The first group is made up of experts in the field of sustainability and the wine landscape according to their performance in the academic area. On the other hand, people who work in the technical or professional field of wine have been interviewed, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding of interviewees.

Codification	Profile	Date
Interviewee 1	Academic expert in wine landscape, routes, and heritage. Andalusia	12/7/2020
Interviewee 2	Academic expert in place branding and sustainability. Catalonia	12/7/2020
Interviewee 3	Academic expert in tourism and leisure management. Australia	12/10/2020
Interviewee 4	Responsible for a British Columbia wine experts' website	12/8/2020
Interviewee 5	Researcher and professional in a wine-related company in Canada	12/5/2020
Interviewee 6	Secretary of one of Andalusians's "Denominación de Origen"	12/21/2020
Interviewee 7	Local BC Winery	12/28/2021
Interviewee 8	Local BC Winery	12/27/2020
Interviewee 9	Australian wine business entrepreneur	6/7/2021
Interviewee 10	Wine professional and winemaker from Germany	2/7/2021

As a summary, a flowchart (Figure 2) of the information collected is presented. In this way, the results are presented based on a methodology that includes quantitative and qualitative methods.

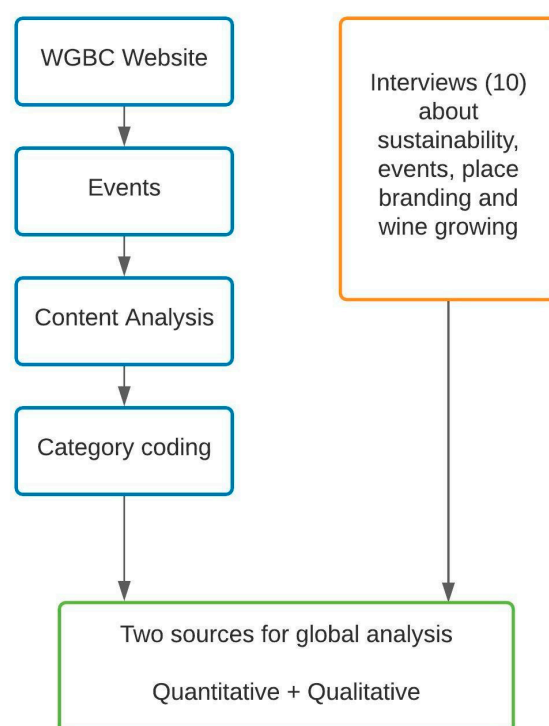


Figure 2. Methodology flowchart. Source: own elaboration.

3.3. Geographical Context

Okanagan Valley, also known as Okanagan Country, is a Canadian region belonging to British Columbia, bordering the USA, that surrounds the shores of the lake from which it takes its name, and which is partly crossed by the Okanagan River. Kelowna, which is the administrative center, has a population of around 120,000. The first known vineyards were planted in the Okanagan Valley in 1866, but it was not until 1925 that it was considered a wine production area, increasing its importance from the 1980s onwards. The area devoted to vineyards is 3573 hectares as stated by Wines of British Columbia [167]. British Columbia's wine regions are currently divided into nine Geographical Indications (GI), similar to "appellations" used in other countries and Ontario, each with their own distinctive identity for the wines that grow and are made there. These GIs are determined based on the analysis of similar soils, climate, annual weather, etc., that all contribute to the style of the wines. The Okanagan Valley GI is further divided into four sub-Geographical Indications (sub-GIs): Golden Mile Bench, Okanagan Falls, Skaha Bench, and Naramata Bench. All of them, grouped together, form a variable number of wineries that, according to the data provided by the Taste Advisor platform, would be between 175 and 195 due to the constant changes in the sector (closures, sales, or wineries starting their activity and not yet registered). According to the data provided by the Employment, Business, and Economic Development Department of the British Columbia government [168] there are 184 licensed wineries in the area that produce a wide variety of wines from more than 60 grape varieties.

Wine Growers of British Columbia (Former BC Wine Institute)

Wine Growers of British Columbia (WGBC) is a non-profit organization that has recently changed its name on 1 February 2021. The original name was BC Wine Institute (BCWI). Instead of this, the brand name still remains as Wines of British Columbia. BCGW is the lead organization for the wine sector in British Columbia. Their mission is "to represent the interests of BC wineries engaged in the production of 100% BC grape wines certified" [167].

The government of WGBC is a board of volunteers from nine wineries. These nine voting members are elected at annual meetings, and they are on the board for three years. There are three non-voting members, two of them are optional (an independent winemaker and the last president), and the WGBC President.

Wines of British Columbia have 180 members from the 284 licensed wineries in British Columbia. As a fact, WGBC represents 94% of BC VQA wine sales in British Columbia. A notice on their official webpage states that WGBC is a “volunteer, membership-based, and not for profit society” [167].

4. Results

The results will be presented in this section. Firstly, a graphic presentation of the results derived from the content analysis will be made. Next, the results of the interviews will be shown.

4.1. Content Analysis Results

As can be seen in Figure 3, the events published on the dates set out in the study were a total of 65. There is a large difference between the months of June and September 2019 and the months of August and September 2020. The absence of events during the month of June is mainly due to the existence of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic. It is noteworthy that 61% of the total events held between 2019 and 2020 took place in August and September 2020. The Wine BC website recorded up to 41 events out of the total 65 recorded in those two months.

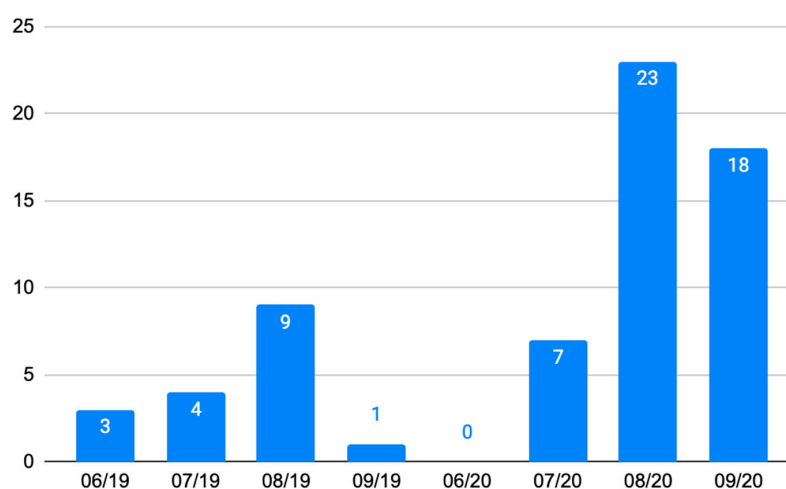


Figure 3. Date. Own elaboration.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of events according to the type of classification. Only 5.7% correspond to events announced for the whole family, which can be related to alcohol consumption linked to wineries. On the other hand, dinners and gastronomic events in wineries account for 25.7% of the total. At more similar percentages, over 30%, we can find the events in which activities related to groups of friends are announced in the wineries and, as the main category, events related to hedonism. These events include, among others, days of yoga, chocolate, and wine among the vineyards as relaxation and enjoyment activities for visitors.

The presence of cultural heritage in its different facets is presented in Figure 5. In this sense, the total adds up to 105 elements, given that most of the 65 events can be classified in more than one category. The category that focuses on local music as part of the heritage stands out, with 28 events with this type of presence. In most of them, it is also linked to local artists. On the other hand, not all the events present wine as heritage, but in 20 of the 65 analyzed wine appears as a relevant element in the promotion of the event. On the

other hand, the landscape of wine as a heritage element and food also appears on 17 and 16 occasions, respectively.

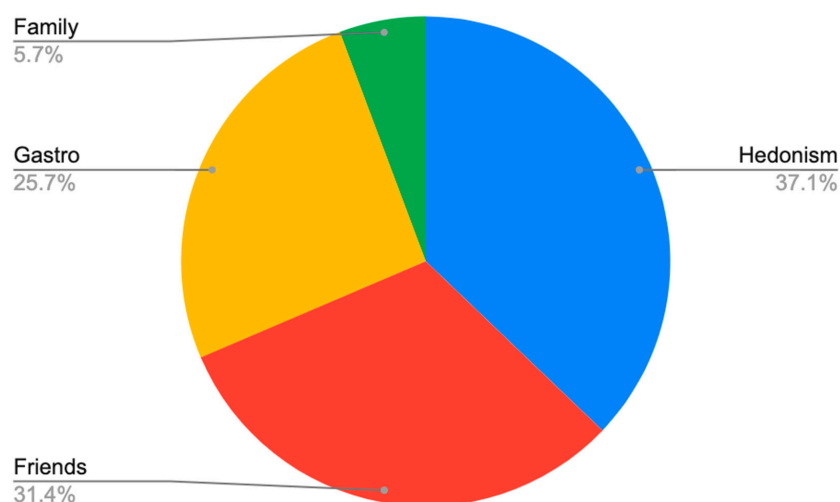


Figure 4. Type of events. Own elaboration.

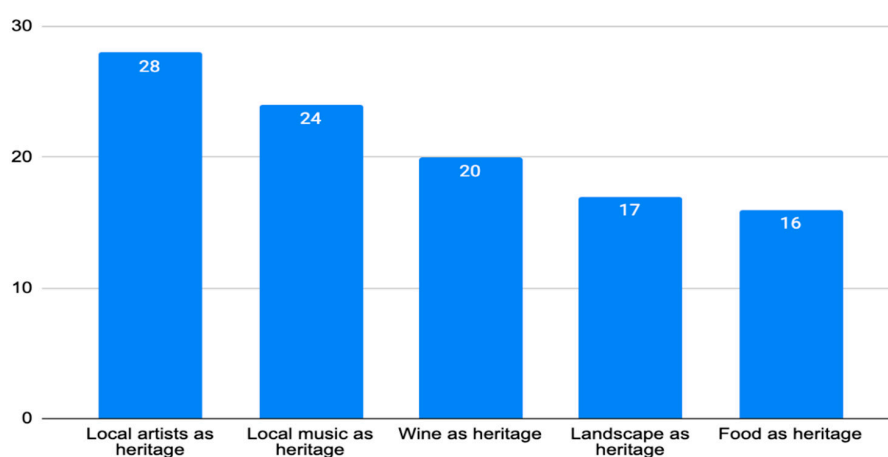


Figure 5. Presence of cultural heritage. Own elaboration.

Finally, of the 65 events announced at Wine BC, The Vibrant Vine winery is the one that has made most use of the British Columbia Wine Institute's website calendar, with 29 events, representing 44.6 % of the total. The View, with 12, is the next one, significantly far from The Vibrant. Next is Spearhead with seven, Meadow Vista Honey Wines with four events and Scenic Road, Quail's Gate, and Truck 59 with three events each. Four of the 11 wineries analyzed only published one event (Figure 6).

4.2. Interview Results

The results of the interviews are presented in Table 3. At this point, they have been summarized by theme. Questions 1, 2 and 3 refer to sustainability. Questions 4, 5 and 6 focus on integrated events. Finally, questions 7, 8 and 9 are specific to place branding.

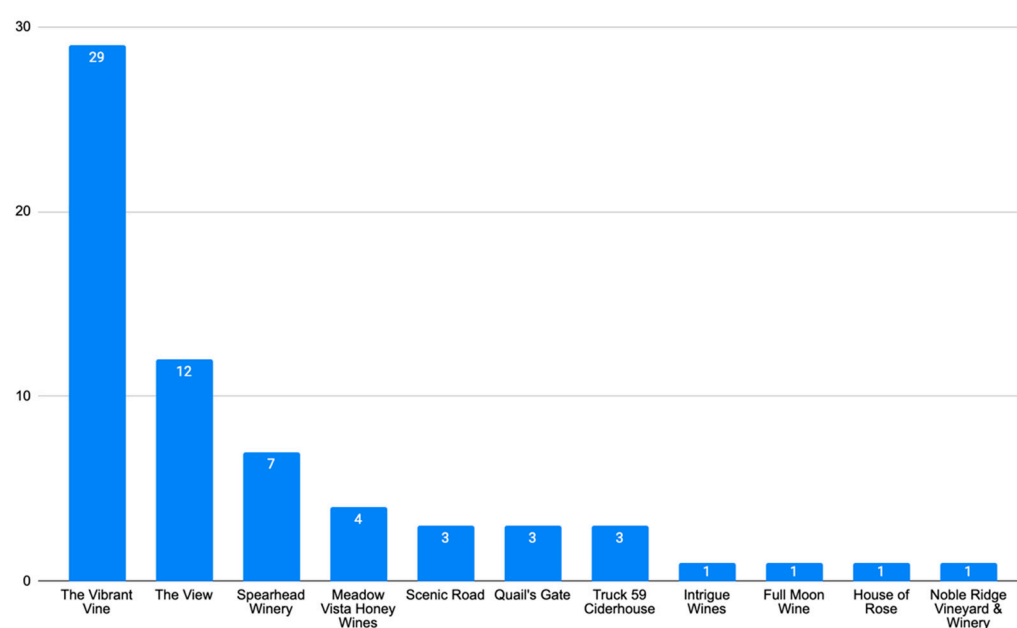


Figure 6. Host winery. Own elaboration.

Table 3. Summary of interviews.

Subject and Questions	Results
Sustainability Q1, Q2, Q3	From the point of view of the academics interviewed, sustainability is a relevant element for wine-growing territories. In this sense, it is stated that the cultural element must be taken into account above all. On the other hand, the international professionals interviewed speak of a broader concept of sustainability, taking into account environmental elements such as the weight of bottles (to minimize CO ₂ emissions), or concern for water cycles. Winemakers agree, above all, with academics regarding the importance of cultural heritage, but they also speak of environmental sustainability of the environment.
Events Q4, Q5, Q6	The academics interviewed affirm that integrated events should be organized taking into account the importance of culture. They also focus on elements that represent the whole territory, something that should be included in the individual brand image. Professionals include in the concept reflections on fun and good experiences that help to identify wine consumption with moments related to family and friends. Finally, producers, who are event organizers in this case study, focus on the importance of the heritage elements of the territory.
Place Branding Q7, Q8, Q9	In these questions, the academics point out the importance of the existence of a common brand (WGBC) that helps to create a territorial brand within which the individual brands are included, while maintaining their peculiarities. In the case of professionals, they understand that, as happens in other territories, the existence of WGBC can serve as a sign of the quality of the wines of a territory. This is why, also for producers, it is important that there is a strong territorial brand that pushes all winemakers to proudly transmit their identity.

5. Discussion

There is currently strong pressure on the wine industry from both regulators and consumers to improve the environmental practices related to winemaking processes [100,169], as well as the communication processes on the impact that this production generates. Consumers are increasingly demanding and aware of environmental problems [170], hence interest in sustainable wine products has increased [100,171]. However, the sustainability of production is only one aspect in order to make a wine route sustainable. In addition to the environmental aspects, there are also the practices generated by the companies that offer their services, particularly the wineries [27]. Wine tourists are highly demanding and seek a memorable and hedonic experience [19,90] that goes beyond the consumption of wine itself. For this reason, wine routes should place special emphasis on the conservation

of their heritage elements so that they become a sustainable resource [172,173] and have a positive socio-economic impact while being perceived as a differential value by visitors [8].

Beyond wine tasting or enjoying the natural spaces associated with the production areas, events play a very important role in attracting wine tourists by offering a unique experience. The main purpose of the events is to provide the client with a meaningful way to interact with the brand and the product, so that a deeper and more meaningful brand connection is developed, as cited by many of the interviewees, particularly in the case of the academics. Knowing the type of consumer is fundamental [174] for the design of the events, which must provide unique attractions not only in the wineries but in the production area itself, involving every local agent and population [16]. In this way, memorable experiences are built up in which visitors want to get involved and which in the end serve to promote a particular territory.

Wineries have a key role to play, not only promoting their own brands and products through these events but also belonging to a spatial environment is one of the characteristics that define them, therefore adding the values of that place to their products is a form of differentiation and allows them to be recognized by consumers. Wineries should think about sustainability from a holistic point of view: including organic wine production, cultural heritage, carbon footprint, or influence on water reserves, as indicated by some of the wine professionals interviewed.

Incorporating the values of a place branding requires the development of creative skills which include storytelling or imagineering [175], so that what have been called experience landscapes (experiencescapes) [176] and meanings landscapes (meaningscape) [177] can be developed. The latter has the virtue of serving as inspiration for the creation of new events and spaces in which companies, organizations, and residents are involved to create experiences for visitors.

Events are a way of incorporating the experience of living the space, capable of transmitting the subjective characteristics of a tourist destination (emotional brand), in combination with the traditional objective attributes (merely informative and/or promotional) [178], so the acts generated in the territory have in the creation of a brand one of their main objectives. In this way, emotional links are created with visitors who identify with the image of the place branding [179], creating a process of recognition and loyalty.

Thus, as stated in the interviews, it is not only important for wineries or public-private agents to promote events; they must also be strictly linked to the territory and transmit its values.

In this way, the answer to the RQ1, “Are the events proposed by the wineries in BC related to the promotion of the place branding?”, is supported by the responses of the interviewees—according to most interviewees, yes. Events are related to the promotion of place branding. The use of other local products and even music are aligned in this sense of promotion.

Regarding RQ2, “Are the events organized related to the promotion of territorial sustainability?”, it is not clear that the events are directly or explicitly related to the promotion of territorial sustainability.

6. Conclusions

The final conclusions of this research lead us to state that the vast majority of events promoted by wineries based in British Columbia are aimed at promoting the place branding. Although it is not clear that this is done in a sustained and conscious way, it is understood that the events try to highlight the values for which the territory stands out: the landscape, the food, the wine, and the possibilities of interaction between people around the vineyards.

In view of the results, therefore, the events organized are related to local music and artists, i.e., it is usual to present concerts in the vineyards or wineries to attract visitors. This is an added value to wine tourism, as it is intertwined with other local elements such as culture and leisure time.

On the other hand, this promotion of culture, wine, or local food implies per se a defense or promotion of the sustainability of the territory. Keeping artistic activity alive or holding events in which the landscape is relevant are part of a larger task such as the maintenance of cultural heritage.

The wineries in BC do a common branding job by strengthening individual brands. The small and numerous wineries generate an enriching movement that serves as a substrate to attract the attention of institutions—such as Wine Growers of BC—or public administrations—such as the BC Government or the Council.

As a final conclusion, authors state that the following recommendation will be useful for wineries that try to develop experiential events related to sustainability and local heritage. Starting from BC wineries, it will be adapted to any winery that can develop a relationship with the environment and the cultural heritage of its area:

1. Generating common strategies from private or public institutions is mandatory. Small wineries can thus have a guide about promoting the territory and the place branding. In this way, the coherence of the message transmitted will be greater.
2. Making the sustainability of the territory the fundamental pillar of the events helps to raise awareness among the participants and to project this need as a common project for the future.
3. Putting wine in a preeminent position at events. Although there are events related to yoga, music, or gastronomy, wine must be present at all stages of the event experience.
4. Using all means of communication available to the wineries. In the case of BCWG, only 11 of the more than 130 wineries associated have used the online event publication service between 2019 and 2020. Using these means in a sustained manner implies the presence of a specific brand and an improvement in the place branding.
5. Providing access to events, not only to the inhabitants of the area but also to national and foreign tourists through government campaigns that support the weight of this communication.
6. Keeping in mind that the importance of events as a place-branding strategy is unquestionable, as is the use of heritage elements. Despite the extensive programming of the wineries, it would be interesting to include a large event that would promote the whole region in a global way and in which public and private participants, as well as the inhabitants of the area, would be involved.

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Appendix A

Interview script:
Sustainability related questions

7. From your point of view, what should be the relationship between promotion of the territory and sustainability through events?
8. Could you define, from your point of view or experience, sustainability?
9. How can the concept of sustainability be made explicit at events?

Events related questions

10. How would you define the concept of an event to promote wine from the wineries? What should be its main characteristics?
11. In the case of BC, where each winery organizes its events, is it possible to generate (or project) a commonplace branding from the individual brand promotion?
12. What elements of sustainability of the territory should be present in an event to promote wine?

Place Branding related questions

13. To what extent do you think events related to music or gastronomy can influence—positively or negatively—the place branding image?
14. In areas such as BC, where there are more than 280 wineries, would it be convenient to organize one or several generic events to transfer the common values of the place branding?
15. How should local institutions be involved in the promotion of wine events?

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