Title
Exploring the role of place for wine branding

I want to submit an abstract for:
Conference Presentation

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Keywords
brand architecture, brand heritage, small family wineries, Northern Greece, Crete

Research Question
How is the importance of place reflected on the corporate and product branding strategy of smaller wineries?

Methods
Thematic analysis built on the theory of brand architecture and brand heritage and looked into the websites of all wineries located in Northern Greece and Crete and their respective associations.

Results
For corporate branding family heritage emerges more in important than place heritage, whereas for product branding hybrid branding strategies, occasionally referring to place too, is preferred over an umbrella brand.

Abstract
Place is vital for wineries, given the role of place/its characteristics (e.g. terroir, culture) for the existence and differentiation of grape varieties and wine products. Similarly, the importance of brand architecture and the role of brand heritage has been the subject of extensive scholarly research, with regards to larger firms in general. In specific, Urde et al. (2007, pp. 4-5) define brand heritage as the 'dimension of a brand’s identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and particularly in an organizational belief that its history is important'. Blombäck and Brunninge (2013) proposed a typology of communicating history in the family business, either focusing on the past or highlighting relevance of the past for the future. According to their approach, there are six types of communication that family businesses can use, combining the historical time frame with the identity frame. More specifically, businesses can emphasize history (past) in relation to family, company or both, or alternatively they can underline heritage (past and present) in relation to the same dimensions. That way, communication can be built upon six different combinations of either history or heritage with family, business or both. Heritage and authenticity can be used as a means of differentiation and uniqueness for wine branding as well (e.g. Kladou et al., 2020), whereas place, in particular, is not superficial to the brand and the conceptualization of corporate heritage identity but an integral component (Spielman et al., 2021).

Despite interest in heritage, corporate and product branding for small businesses, what literature still falls behind is exploring the importance of place as reflected on the brand architecture and brand heritage for smaller wineries. This paper addresses this gap by investigating all wineries located in two well-known wine-producing regions of Greece. Data were collected from the websites of wineries-members of two regional winemakers’ associations and of the respective networks at the regional level, i.e. 28 wineries located in Northern Greece and 32 wineries in Crete were examined. Thematic analysis built on previous studies, identifying family name, tradition and experience as key dimensions falling under the family heritage construct, and geography, climate and culture under the place heritage construct (Kladou et al., 2020; Spielman et al., 2021). Findings reveal that wineries often refer to place brand heritage and place-exclusive elements offer opportunities for differentiation, yet family heritage, and especially family experience, develops as the cornerstone of their corporate branding efforts. Furthermore, the vast majority of the wineries prefers hybrid product branding strategies over an umbrella brand. Subsequent wine branding choices often link to place heritage, more frequently to place culture and wine varieties unique to the place. Given the description on the websites and the number of different brand names employed by the wineries at the product level, this link to place heritage may not reflect a strategic choice but be attributed to the fact that the winery ‘run out of names’ in its effort to launch new products. Findings confirm the need to strengthen extant literature in a more appropriate manner for smaller family wine businesses and to facilitate winery decision-makers’ understanding of branding strategies.

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Acknowledgements
The authors wish to express their gratitude to Deree - The American College of Greece, which partially funded data collection.

References

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