



**Specialized conference of the
EuroMed Academy of Business**

**Contemporary Trends and Perspectives in
Wine and Agrifood Management**

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**Contemporary Trends and Perspectives in
Wine and Agrifood Management**

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INTRODUCTION

This specialised conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business aims to provide a unique forum and facilitate the exchange of cutting-edge information on examining and building new theory and business models in the areas of wine and agrifood management.

Many people and organizations are responsible for the successful outcome of the 7th Annual Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business.

Special thanks go to the Conference Chair Prof. Amedeo Maizza, the Conference Organising Committee and the University of Salento, in Italy, for accomplishing an excellent job.

It is acknowledged that a successful conference could not be possible without the special co-operation and care of the Reviewers for evaluating the papers and abstracts that were submitted to this conference. Special thanks to the Session Chairs and Paper Discussants for taking the extra time to make this conference a real success.

The last but not the least important acknowledgment goes to all those who submitted and presented their work at the conference. Their valuable research has highly contributed to the continuous success of the conference.

TABLE OF PAPERS

| | |
|---|-----|
| GREEN ECONOMY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE ITALIAN AGRI-FOOD SECTOR: THE FOCUS ON THE WINE SECTOR..... | 10 |
| <i>Amatucci, Fabio; Pascale, Anna Maria; Serluca, Maria Carmela</i> | 10 |
| EXAMINING CONSUMERS' PREFERENCES FOR WINE ATTRIBUTES. A CASE STUDY FROM THE UK..... | 23 |
| <i>Apostolakis, Alexandros¹; Kourgiantakis, Markos¹; Hong, Jie²</i> | 23 |
| THE FAMILY VARIABLE IN THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN WINE SECTOR..... | 36 |
| <i>Broccardo, Laura; Bresciani, Stefano; Culasso, Francesca; Giacosa Elisa</i> | 36 |
| THE FAMILY VARIABLE IN THE WINE SECTOR: AN ITALIAN SURVEY..... | 56 |
| <i>Broccardo, Laura; Giacosa Elisa; Alberto Ferraris</i> | 56 |
| THE MARKETS SCREENING PROCESS THROUGH THE MARKETING INTELLIGENCE..... | 70 |
| <i>Caione, Adriana¹; Iazzi, Antonio²; Pandurino, Andrea¹; Trio, Oronzo²</i> | 70 |
| ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE ITALIAN ORGANIC WINE INDUSTRY: PRELIMINARY RESULTS..... | 85 |
| <i>Canestrino, Rossella¹; Magliocca, Pierpaolo²; Guarino, Antonio³</i> | 85 |
| EXPERIENCING WINE TOURISM IN BURGUNDY: AN ELITE INFORMANT STUDY..... | 111 |
| <i>Charters, Steve</i> | 111 |
| GREEN COMPETITION: AN INNOVATIVE MARKETING TOOL? AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION IN THE WINE SECTOR IN APULIA..... | 123 |
| <i>Contò, Francesco¹; Rabino, Samuel²; Silvestri, Raffaele³; Fiore, Mariantonietta⁴; Pellegrini, Giustina⁴</i> | 123 |
| WATER SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT OF ITALIAN VINEYARDS: DOC VS. GENERIC WINES..... | 135 |
| <i>De Leo, Federica¹; Miglietta, Pier Paolo²; Massari, Stefania¹</i> | 135 |
| CO-CREATING VALUE WITH CUSTOMERS IN THE APULIAN WINE SYSTEM: STORYTELLING 2.0 IN "TENUTE RUBINO" CASE STUDY..... | 148 |
| <i>Del Vecchio, Pasquale; Ndou, Valentina; Secundo, Giustina; Paiano, Anna Paola; Valente, Lara</i> | 148 |
| THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS IN THE EVOLUTIONARY DYNAMICS OF AGRO-FOOD ENTERPRISES. A CASE STUDY..... | 162 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Formisano, Vincenzo; Fedele, Maria; Antonucci, Emanuela</i> | 162 |
| ITALIAN WINES IN THE NEW WORLD WINE CONSUMERS COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF THE RUSSIAN MARKET..... | 176 |
| <i>Galati, A.¹; Crescimanno, M.¹; Chironi, S.¹; Tinervia, S.¹; Abruzzo, A.²</i> | 176 |
| SMES' GRADUAL GROWING STRATEGY: STRATEGIC OPTIONS IN THE WINE BUSINESS..... | 188 |
| <i>Gallucci, Carmen; Della Piana, Bice; Nave, Gabriella</i> | 188 |
| A FACT-FINDING INVESTIGATION ON SICILIAN WINE FIRMS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THIRD PARTY VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS: MOTIVATIONS AND ALTERNATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT APPROACHES | 198 |
| <i>Giacomarra, Marcella¹; Galati, Antonino²; Crescimanno, Maria²; Tinervia, Salvatore²</i> | 198 |
| STRATEGIC PROFILES IN THE ITALIAN WINE SECTOR: THE INDUSTRIAL VS COLLECTIVE BRAND DILEMMA..... | 213 |
| <i>Grazia, Cristina¹; Giraud-Héraud, Eric²; Camanzi, Luca¹; Malorgio, Giulio¹</i> | 213 |
| WINE TOURISM IN QUEBEC: BETWEEN MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT OF WINE TERRITORIES..... | 228 |
| <i>Hassen, Tarek Ben¹; Tremblay, Diane-Gabrielle²</i> | 228 |
| INTER-FIRM COOPERATION AS STRATEGIC ELEMENT TO GET A SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN RURAL TOURISM: NETWORK CONTRACT “GREEN-ROAD” | 245 |
| <i>Iaffaldano, Nicolaia</i> | 245 |
| COOPETITION IN THE WINE BUSINESS: A CASE STUDY | 259 |
| <i>Lombardi, Rosa¹; Manfredi, Simone²; Nappo, Fabio²; Russo, Giuseppe²</i> | 259 |
| THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF WINE SME'S IN THE MIDST OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS: PILOT CASE STUDIES FROM GREECE, ALBANIA AND FYROM..... | 268 |
| <i>Mullaymeri, Kevin; Rotsios, Konstantinos; Bizmpiroulas, Athanasios; Loznaieva, Olgica</i> | 268 |
| A SENSORY ANALYSIS OF COFFEE IN BRAZIL: BOUNDED RATIONALITY AND FOOD CHOICE | 278 |
| <i>Oliveira, Mirella¹; Spers, Eduardo¹; Sabio, Renata¹; Chini, Juliana¹;Silva, Hermes²</i> | 278 |
| THE ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONAL CONTEXT IN WINE TOURISM | 293 |
| <i>Pellicano, Marco; Ciasullo, Maria V.; Festa, Giuseppe</i> | 293 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| MARKETING OF TRADITIONAL-LOCAL PRODUCTS IN THE EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE: THE CASE OF THE TRUFFLE MARKET..... | 315 |
| <i>Pencarelli, Tonino; Dini, Mauro; Forlani, Fabio</i> | 315 |
| VALUE OF A SUSTAINABILTY LABEL FOR WINE: A NON HYPOTHETICAL EXPERIMENT | 331 |
| <i>Pomarici, Eugenio; Amato, Mario; Vecchio, Riccardo</i> | 331 |
| AN EYE TRACKING APPROACH TO CONSUMERS REACTION TO OLIVE OIL PROTECTION BRANDS..... | 343 |
| <i>Reitano, Antonella; Fazio, Marco</i> | 343 |
| CAPITAL STRUCTURE OF ITALIAN AGRO FOOD FIRMS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY | 355 |
| <i>Rossi, Matteo</i> | 355 |

TABLE OF ABSTRACTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| AGRIFOOD MARKETING AND CHILDREN: A COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT AGE GROUP | 372 |
| <i>Baldassarre, Fabrizio; Campo, Raffaele</i> | 372 |
| THE INFLUENCE OF WINE TOURISM ON THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ITALIAN SMES | 375 |
| <i>Francioni, Barbara¹; Vissak, Tiia²; Musso, Fabio¹</i> | 375 |
| NETWORKS AND COOPERATION AS CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN WINE TOURISM | 378 |
| <i>Gronau, Werner; Harms, Tim</i> | 378 |
| “NO FRENCH PLEASE, WE ARE IN FRANCE!”: THE USE OF FOREIGN NAMES IN RESTAURANTS AND FRANCHISES | 383 |
| <i>Laurent Binet</i> | 383 |
| AGRIFOOD FIRMS’ RESPONSIBLE INITIATIVES IN THE ITALIAN REGIONS | 384 |
| <i>Musso, Fabio¹; Riso, Mario²; Santovito, Savino³</i> | 384 |
| EXPLORING THE TIME DIMENSION OF COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN EFFECTS ON PORTUGUESE WINE | 387 |
| <i>Rindell, Anne¹; Nurmilehto, Camilla¹; Kauppinen-Räsänen, Hannele²</i> | 387 |
| THE OPEN INNOVATION FRAMEWORK IN THE ITALIAN WINE SECTOR: GENERAL EVIDENCES..... | 388 |
| <i>Russo, Giuseppe¹; Lombardi, Rosa²; Evangelista, Federica¹; Palmaccio, Matteo¹</i> | 388 |
| CHOICE OF BURGUNDY RED WINES: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS AND CONSUMERS | 396 |
| <i>Saidi, Monia¹; Giraud, Georges¹; Le Fur, Yves²</i> | 396 |
| THE IMPACT OF INTANGIBLE ASSETS ON THE WINE FIRMS VALUE: SOME EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE..... | 399 |
| <i>Trequatrin, Raffaele; Lardo, Alessandra; Cuzzo, Benedetta</i> | 399 |

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THE OPEN INNOVATION FRAMEWORK IN THE ITALIAN WINE SECTOR: GENERAL EVIDENCES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to analyse the application of the open innovation model in the Italian wine sector.

Methodology: Following a qualitative research approach, the existing literature on open innovation is analyzed. The application of a single method approach is directed to verify the innovation model adopted by company of the wine sector.

Originality/value: Investigating the state of art of innovation in the Italian wine sector, the paper verify that this sector it is moving toward an open innovation model.

Practical implication: The paper is the first step of an empirical research related to prove the existence open innovation in the Italian wine sector. Future researches will be conducted in this direction.

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The paper investigate the concept of the open innovation model in Italian wine sector by identifying practices which help to describe innovation typologies adopted by wine companies: closed innovation model or open innovation model.

The research presented is the first step of an extended work in order to understand the impact of the open innovation on the wine business sector.

Through a qualitative research approach, the international literature is examined supposing that innovation is crucial for wine companies to compete in our economy (Vrontis et al., 2011). In this vision, an open and collaborative interaction among companies could be used to overcome disadvantages and penalization due to the SMEs size.

This short paper is structured in five sections. After the introduction, in the section two will be analyzed the literature related to open innovation in agrifood sector and specifically in wine sector. Section three describes the adopted research approach. Section four illustrates the research results. Section five proposes final consideration, limits and the future perspectives of this study field.

The research question of the paper is the following: How the open innovation model is characterized in the wine business sectors?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among studies on open innovation, the pioneering work made by Pearson and Ball (Peterson *et al.*, 1979; Griffiths, Peterson 1973) is an useful example of research directed to develop open innovation background.

Rothwell and Zegveld (1985) supported the network model of innovation; they called it the interactive model of the innovation process, emphasizing the interactivity of the innovation process with the stress on exchange, sharing, interaction and feedback among the actors intervening inside and outside the company.

The evolutionary dynamic of the macro and micro environment produces effects on product, process, organization and market innovation. These evolutionary aspects of the innovation process highlight the importance of knowledge transfer and the notion of absorptive capacity (Cohen, Levinthal, 1990) as being crucial to learning, expressed as a multiplicity of interactions in the dynamics driving of cooperation, exchange and sharing of knowledge (Rothwell, 1992; Senker, Faulkner, 1996).

In innovation process knowledge is a critical asset, that could confer the ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends. These abilities collectively constitute the firm's absorptive capacity. The internal investment in R&D impacts directly on the absorptive capacity and on its cumulative character (Machlup, 1984; Foray, Lundvall , 1996), so the firm's resources will be able to fully recognize and exploit the value of new external information, that could be adopt to improve firm's products, productivity and reputation (Fombrun, Shanley, 1990; Lin N. 1999)

The linear view of innovation, focused on science and with a strong tendency to be "closed", was progressively replaced by an "open" and interactive view based on the continuous learning of all the actors involved.

Chesbrough (2003, 2006) define the open innovation paradigm, which assumes that innovation is based on firms' necessity to combine their internal and external technological developments to realize successful innovations able to create added value for the firm. The author focused on topics like the degree and type of openness (i.e. outbound or inbound), effectiveness, context and process.

The cooperation among companies and the sharing of knowledge between related industries in wine sector is important to competition and in creation of competitive advantage (Porter, 1985; Porter, 1998).

In this sense, there's a gap in the literature about the understanding of the open innovation in the different stages of the innovation process, from the idea generation to the commercialization phase.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach adopted reflects the qualitative research approach (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005; Myers, 2013). In this way, following the analysis of existing literature on open innovation, the study investigates on the existence of open innovation models in the Italian wine sector.

Therefore, it is given attention to the following aspects:

- the definition of open innovation model;
- the analysis of wine sector in order to verify or thesis.

The data acquisition was carried out through a single method approach (Yin, 1994) developed on secondary sources from national and international literature (reports, newspapers, websites, articles, paper and scientific books) in the period from 1973 to 2014.

The secondary source includes:

- two database, in particular Ebsco and Google scholar, in which have consulted articles through the following key words: 1. innovation models 2. open innovation; 3. wine sector; 4. open innovation in wine sector;
- the existing literature on innovation models in wine sector;
- documents published by trade association, like Fedevini, and banking institution, as Mediobanca survey on the wine sector.

DISCUSSION AND FINDING

The wine companies are different from other manufacturing companies. They are more dependent on natural resource; consequently, companies in the agrifood sector are often considered conservative, slow-growth, in which innovative activities are less likely to occur. The implementation of cooperation among companies for sharing knowledge and promoting open innovation is, generally, a well accepted concept. At the same time, companies of wine sector are based on production and commercialization of their products with local and family procedures which make the quality of product unique.

In this respect, they benefit more from the interaction with downstream partners (retailers, distributors) and customer so as to introduce on the market new product of success (Rossi et al 2012).

We find that open innovation is increasing in Italian wine sector: companies develop and commercialize new ideas in cooperation with other partners.

An example is given by Zonin. This firm recently refocused its R&D strategy on open innovation paradigm by introducing a strategy inspired by consumers (consumer inspired) such as My Feudo Project.

The project involved 13 wine bloggers and experts by providing them the assembly kit of Bordeaux blend, from the firm's Sicily estate. Each expert proposed his own blend that has been evaluated and discussed on a web platform specially created for the project.

Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot: these are the samples wines that participants received in order to combine grapes in different percentages to reach, after all the experiments needed, the perfect assembly bottled. Finally, wine has been tasted in a discussion table between the company and the participants in the Vinitaly 2010.

Another sample is given from the collaboration between H-FARM and Vinitaly International: it is the H-ACK WINE, a marathon 24 hours non-stop, held March 1, 2014 and entirely dedicated to the development of ideas and projects to innovate digital communication in the wine industry.

Concerning traceability an interesting case is given by "E-wine, tracing the bottle". This project is made up to provide an electronic ID card for bottles. The innovation consist in apply a "clever label" that contains a wider range of informations to direct consumers and distributors.

Some internal innovation were found: the Agricultural Cooperative Firm named "Il Raccolto". The innovation introduced by this merging consist in a sustainable and efficient production that aims to rationalize all the inputs (water, fuel, chemicals, etc.) in order to realize an innovation process that is able to ensure, at the same time, higher profits for extension of land and an appreciable level of sustainability.

The finding of our analysis are interesting.

The model of open innovation was proposed as a way to share experience, cooperate with consumers and competitors, suppliers and clients, that contributing to the development of new ideas and projects related to wine.

This linkages and complementarities could define the boundaries of a critical masses characterized by unusual competitive success (Porter, 1998) in the wine field. The linkage allow companies to operate more productively in accessing information, developing new technology, improving production and developing products in line with costumer tastes.

In this direction, the present study allows to compare the general model of open innovation through its principles, hypothesized by Chesbrough, and the specific model of open innovation in the wine sector as represented below by table 1.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| Open innovation Model | Principles | Open innovation Model in the Wine Sector | Example |
| | 1 Not all the smart people work in our organization. | | H-Ack Wine |
| | 2 External R&D can create value for our organization. | | E-Wine-Tracing the bottle |
| | 3 Internal R&D is needed to grasp that value. | | Il Raccolto Agricultural Cooperative |
| | 4 We have to be involved in basic research to benefit from it, but the discovery does not have to be ours. | | - |
| | 5 If we make better use of external and internal ideas and unify the knowledge created, we will win. | | My Feudo Project |
| | 6. We should optimize the results of our organization, combining the sale or licensing of our innovation with the purchase of external innovation processes whenever they are more efficient and economic. | | - |

Table 1 – Comparing open innovation model in the Italian wine sector

In the table 1 we matched the examples listed in this section with principles hypothesized by Chesbrough.

The H-Ack Wine (<http://www.h-farmventures.com/>) is a sample that not all the clever people work in the own company. This digital brainstorm was proposed to share experience and expertise contributing to the development of new ideas and digital projects relates to wine.

E-Wine-Tracing the bottle (<http://www.torinowireless.it/>) is an innovation engendered by Torino Wireless Foundation and Industria Grafica Eurostampa SpA, that could be adopted by each wine companies in order to create value. The smart label, allows manufacturers to differentiate their products, uniquely identify its production, make more visible the quality of its production processes through integration with the traceability system within the company, reconstruct the geographical distribution of consumption of its products and therefore perform targeted marketing actions.

The Agricultural cooperative “il Raccolto”, in order to achieve technological and process innovation for the improvement company’s efficiency in production and environment, implemented a new technology of precision agriculture to monitor the main qualitative characteristics of the products during harvesting and proceed to a study feasibility to develop qualitative data in correlation with the input of cultivation and characters of soils business.

My Feudo project by developing an "open source" conception of wine, open to ideas and to interactivity with its audience, reveals step by step the progress of participants and the process of creating the blend on blog. This project unified the knowledge accomplished by consumers and firms' R&D function.

According to the 4th and the 6th principles we are not able to match any examples. Italian producers aren't usual to spread their recipes or preparation methods and there are no cases of firms that have developed new products to yield recipes to other producers. At the same time we should specify that a good part of Italian grapes require particular climatic and land conditions that made the production unique, or at least special.

CONCLUSION

The wine sector in Italy is one of the industrial sectors of the national economy with the 0,83% of 2013 GDP (Federvini annual report 2014), with a high ranking in terms of employment, turnover and value added investment.

For the wine companies, as well food companies, adopt an effectiveness innovation process to successfully introduce and develop new products to the market has become one of the most important strategies. (Garcia Martinez, 2013; Karantininis et al., 2010).

The analysis shows that wine sector companies open their business model more in the development phase of the production, My Feudo Project, Il Raccolto Agricultural Cooperative, and the commercialization phase, H-Ack Wine, E-Wine-Tracing the bottle, with downstream partners.

This is the first step of analysis realized on the open innovation in the wine sector, at a later stage we will further develop the analysis.

Empirical studies on this topic have been conducted on high-tech industries (equipment computers, information and communication technology or pharmaceutical industries), instead in agrifood sector and in particular in wine sector investigations there are relatively scarce. Future research will be conducted in this direction. We will identify a sample of wine companies in order to verify their adoption of open innovation model, as a model that could ensure increased competitiveness and endanger long term value for the companies.

Keywords: *innovation models, wine sector, open innovation, wine sector open innovation.*

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