

# Crafting the image and telling the story

a cross-cultural analysis of winery identity in France and Australia.

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## ABSTRACT

This research explores the construction of winery identity in France and Australia. Focusing on wine producers' perspectives, it is based on case studies of four wineries in Bordeaux (France) and The Grampians (Australia). The research concerns premium, boutique wine producers in both regions. To situate the study in context, the thesis begins with an historical account of the global wine industry, and of each of the two regions. An ethnographical grounded theory approach was used to collect and analyse data from the four case study wineries. Data was collected in the form of interviews, observations and published material, and was analysed using a coding process to organise the data into thematic categories. A detailed ethnographical account of each winery was drawn, revealing producers' motivations, aspirations, philosophies and values. Relationships and change emerged from the data as the two most significant concerns for the wineries as a group. In a rapidly changing market, increased competition and changing consumption habits have augmented the importance of relationships in the wine world and forced producers to rethink how they operate. The research revealed that their principal question is how to continue producing authentic, quality wine while adapting to globalisation, fierce competition, new modes of communication and changing consumer desires. Through exploring the significance of relationships and change, the analysis produced a theory of the way wineries define their identity, craft their image and tell their story in response to the changing market and as a means of ensuring future success. Thus, via the case studies, the research explores the development of winery identity in France and Australia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in a global context. As a cross-cultural study that considers the many factors that constitute and influence how wineries craft their image and tell their story, it aims to elucidate the interaction between production, consumption, commercialisation and culture in a global marketplace.

## DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

- i. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the preface;
- ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;
- iii. the thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.



Amie Sexton

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This research set out to explore wine in France and Australia from an anthropological perspective. Although there are many people involved in the production and consumption of wine – from grape growers to journalists, sommeliers to consumers – I chose to focus on wine producers, the people responsible for creating this beverage and sending it out to the world. As there has been very little research on wine producers to date, the study is exploratory in nature, seeking to discover the intricacies of the situation via a detailed investigation of a small number of cases. It is based on case studies of four wineries in Bordeaux (France) and The Grampians (Australia), and concerns premium, boutique wine producers in both regions: Château Lynch-Bages and Château Beychevelle in France; Best's Great Western and Mount Langi Ghiran in Australia. These four wineries were chosen carefully for their age, ownership structure, and reputation. Each winery is considered individually and as part of the group of cases, presenting a local, regional and global perspective on the research. An historical account of the global wine industry and of each of the two regions underpins the study's contemporary setting.

Seeking to explore the area and find out what was of concern to the people involved rather than impose an existing theory on the study or set out with a hypothesis to prove, the research used an ethnographical grounded theory approach to data collection, analysis and conceptualisation. The research was directed by a number of general lines of inquiry, from an anthropological perspective, concerning how premium, boutique wine producers function; how they see themselves; their understanding of the world in which they operate; their aspirations for the future; and most importantly, their principal concerns. Data was collected in the form of interviews, observations and published material, carried out between 2011 and 2016. The data was analysed using a coding process that organised it into thematic categories, enabling a detailed ethnographical account and discussion of each winery's identity, motivations, aspirations, philosophies and values.

Using the grounded theory methods of coding, constant comparison and openness to the data, relationships, context and change emerged from the fieldwork and analysis

as the two most significant concerns for the wineries as a group. These three themes are the basis for the grounded theory that was generated from the data analysis, which focuses on how wine producers are responding to the rapidly changing global wine industry and market. In this volatile setting, increased competition and changing consumption habits have augmented the importance of relationships in the wine world and forced producers to rethink how they operate. The research revealed that their principal question is how to continue producing authentic, quality wine while adapting to globalisation, fierce competition, new modes of communication and changing consumer desires.

Through exploring the significance of relationships and change, the analysis generated a theory of the way wineries define their identity, craft their image and tell their story. Taking the Oxford English Dictionary definition of *identity* as the “quality or condition of being a specified person or thing” (Oxford English Dictionary 2004), *identity* refers to the private and essential qualities that make a winery what it is. *Image*, on the other hand, is the “character or reputation of a person or thing as generally perceived” and “representation of the external form” (Oxford English Dictionary 2004). In this sense *image* is the communicable representation of *identity*. In other words, *identity* is private and *image* is public. *Image* is communicated to the outside world by telling the winery’s story. Each winery has its own story – of people, history, and events – and its own way of telling that story, which serve to communicate the *image* to others.

Via the case studies, the research explores the development of winery identity in France and Australia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in a global context. It proposes a grounded theory of the way wine producers craft their image and tell their story, and aims to elucidate the interaction between production, consumption, commercialisation and culture in the contemporary wine world.

## 1.1. FRAMING THE THESIS

The French and Australian wine industries have undergone significant change in the past century, particularly the last thirty years. Although total global wine production has remained steady since the mid 1980s, sitting between 25,000 and 30,000 million litres per year (OIV 2016), this masks the considerable changes at national and regional levels. General decline in vineyard area and wine production in Europe has been balanced by increases in New World wine-producing countries (e.g. Australia, America, Chile, Argentina) (OIV 2016). While France was overtaken by Italy in 2008 as the world's largest wine producer, and has held the title most years since (OIV 2016), wine is a vital part of the French economy, with a turnover in excess of 11 billion euros and employing around 300,000 people.<sup>1</sup> Domestic consumption, however, has been rapidly dropping since the Second World War and shows no sign of recovering as the French become occasional rather than regular drinkers.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, as in much of the developed world outside the traditional wine producing countries of Europe (e.g. France, Italy, Spain), both wine production and consumption are increasing. Australian drinking habits have moved away from their colonial origins in beer and spirits, with annual per capita wine consumption increasing more than seven fold since the 1930s to 28.7 litres in 2013 (Winetitles Media 2016b).<sup>3</sup> Absolute wine production remains small compared with France,<sup>4</sup> but the growth in the industry is significant, more than doubling production since the late 1980s, with exports accounting for more than half of this (Winetitles Media 2016a).<sup>5</sup> Australia is the world's fifth largest exporter after France, Italy, Spain and Chile. It was the leader of New World wine-producing countries until overtaken by Chile in 2012 (OIV 2016), and in this capacity is a "significant player in the global wine market" (Campbell and Guibert 2007, 23). In the global wine context, Australia and France are undergoing inverse change – production and

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<sup>1</sup> According to Demossier, 'In 2002, the wine industry was represented by 124,000 wine producers, 850 co-operatives, 240,300 permanent workers, 52,000 employees and 1,400 wine merchants, and had a turnover of 11 billion euros, of which 5.8 billion came from exports. For the state, the wine industry represented no less than 2.94 billion euros in indirect taxes in 2000 alone.' (Demossier 2010, p.5)

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the history of French wine consumption see Part 5, Chapter 1 of (Garrier 2008)

<sup>3</sup> For a brief discussion of wine drinking habits of Australians and possible explanations, see Chapter 9, p.162-5 of Gwyn Campbell's chapter *Domestic Demand and Export Imperatives for French and Australian Wines* in: (Campbell and Guibert 2007)

<sup>4</sup> Wine production in 2015: 47.4 ML France; 11.9ML Australia. (OIV 2016)

<sup>5</sup> In 2015, 59% of wine production volume was exported.



consumption are rapidly increasing in Australia and declining in France. However French wines still command the highest prices globally (OIV 2016), suggesting that control of prestige is still firmly in Gallic hands.

The rapid globalisation of wine has been the catalyst for much of the transformation (including the involvement of multinational companies, improved transport and communication, increased affluence in the developed world and the subsequent demand for variety) (Charters 2006) and with it new modes of operation (Anderson 2003). France's world wine dominance has changed considerably since the 1990s facing fierce competition in its traditional export markets (Campbell and Guibert 2007), but managing to maintain its traditional supremacy in new markets in Asia (Anderson 2003). Improvements in communications and transport technology have enabled great movement of wine and people throughout the world and increased quantities of imports and exports across the board (OIV 2016). Some would argue that this increased global movement is creating a homogenised wine for a homogenised consumer palate (Nossiter 2004). However, the widespread sharing of knowledge and technology has resulted in better quality wine through better selection of grape varieties, viticultural and vinification techniques, aging, transportation and distribution (Garrier 2008). Accordingly, the contemporary wine consumer has access to an enormous range of products from around the globe to quench his or her particular thirst, and the industry is becoming more market oriented, particularly in the New World.

Fundamental differences at a governmental level have also created distinction in the modus operandi of Old and New World wine industries. Wine producers in France, under both European Union and French Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) law<sup>6</sup> – are subject to extensive and detailed regulations governing all aspects of viticulture and winemaking, from vineyard area and grape variety restrictions, to winemaking practices, classification and labelling constraints (ONIVINS 2010). While these laws do not prohibit producers from employing some new technologies in their production processes, the extent to which they can adapt their product to the changing market is restricted (Anderson 2004). For example, although market research indicates that

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<sup>6</sup> *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* is the regulatory system governing French wine production.

specifying grape variety on the wine label simplifies consumer choice and increases sales for the dominant “occasional drinker” in France (Demossier 2010) and for export consumers (Garcia-Parpet 2008 ), under AOC regulations the wine producer is prohibited from doing so and potentially loses business as a result. To complicate matters, extensive government subsidies artificially sustain the industry (beveragedaily.com 2005). Widespread overproduction in France, fuelled by continual decreases in domestic consumption and increased competition in export markets, is perpetuated in part by government initiatives such as distillation, where excess wine is purchased and distilled into industrial alcohol. For many producers, particularly those producing lower quality wines, neither marketing nor market research is necessarily a high priority as they know their wine will be purchased, regardless of the situation (either by consumers or for distillation) and they are prevented by the AOC from making changes in response to the demands of the marketplace.

In Australia, on the other hand, minimal government intervention leaves the industry to operate on a competitive market basis. For the majority of Australian wine producers, the business of making wine must be financially viable in order to survive in an unsubsidised market.<sup>7</sup> Combined with a relatively recent culture of wine consumption in Australia – wine entered mainstream drinking habits in the 1970s – and significant disparity between domestic consumption and production,<sup>8</sup> marketing has always been a critical activity within the sector. Minimal regulations regarding vineyard acreage, varieties and production techniques (with the exception of food safety regulations) allow wine producers to tailor their product in response to market research and demand.

Nevertheless, following the boom of the 1980s, since the 1990s the Australian wine industry has suffered from overproduction problems. As a result, there is a constant wave of new wineries opening and others closing. The majority of Australian production volume is low-value, bulk wine, much of which is exported. Australia has an

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<sup>7</sup> Although throughout the history of Australian wine production, wealthy doctors, lawyers and businessmen have been involved the industry as hobby farmers, particularly in wine regions close to Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. For these producers, winemaking does not necessarily need to be financially viable as they are able to fund it from other sources.

<sup>8</sup> In 2015 Australian wine production (11.9ML) was more than double domestic consumption (5ML) (OIV 2016).

international reputation for good-value bulk wine, however, there is increasing competition in this arena from developing wine industries where labour is cheaper, particularly South America. At the other end of the scale, premium wine-production occupies a prominent position in the Australian wine media and has a loyal consumer following both domestically and internationally. As such, the bulk and premium sectors are almost two distinct industries, operating on very different scales and destined for very different consumers.

Despite their differences, both the French and Australian wine producers are learning from each other's strengths in order to survive in an increasingly competitive global market. Ease of international communication and the "flying winemaker" phenomenon, whereby winemakers are able to make two vintages each year, one in the southern hemisphere and one in the northern hemisphere, enable knowledge and experience to be shared throughout the global wine network (Veseth 2008). This sharing of knowledge and experience also extends to the consumers, who have unprecedented access to a wide range of information and opinions about wine from many different sources.

This brief description of the context of both wine production and consumption in France and Australia highlights the two most visible actors in the wine culture – wine producers and wine consumers. At another level, there are many other factors that play an integral role in the wine world. Some of these are very visible – sommeliers, waiters, and bar staff, wine wholesalers and retailers, wine clubs, wine writers and critics publishing in dedicated wine magazines, websites, books, and in the food and wine sections of more general publications such as newspapers; while others have a less noticeable presence – growers, distributors, the appearance of wine in cinema, television, literature and other media, not to mention in the hands of trend setters creating the next popular fashion. This list of contributors to the wine world is by no means exhaustive, as to conduct a comprehensive study of the wine network would be another research project in itself. Consumers, writers and the wine trade all play a critical role in the world of wine and are undoubtedly worthy of study, however, the focus of this research is on the producer.

## 1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Anthropological enquiry has traditionally been concerned with non-western and supposedly isolated cultures, however there is increasing interest in researching modern Western cultures. As wine is a product of western society, there has been limited anthropological research on wine. Moreover, most research on alcohol and wine has concentrated on consumption. Despite their obvious significance in wine culture, wine producers are relatively absent from studies of the ways in which wine is integrated into modern society. Consumers, on the other hand, are attracting increased interest from researchers. "Drinking" has been established as a distinct academic field in the past thirty years through the publication of key anthropological texts. Mary Douglas's *Constructive Drinking* (1987) set the stage for anthropological research into alcohol consumption; it was followed by several significant publications, such as Dwight B. Heath's *Drinking Occasions: Comparative Perspectives on Alcohol and Culture* (2000), de Garine and de Garine's *Drinking: Anthropological Approaches* (2001), and Thomas Wilson's *Drinking Cultures* (2005). Nevertheless, as Marion Demossier notes "until recently, very little research had been focused on social and cultural aspects of drinking in western societies" (2010, 7). Demossier addressed this issue with her multi-sited ethnographical work *Wine Drinking Culture in France* (2010) that investigates in detail wine-drinking culture in France with a focus on the consumer. It is arguably the most detailed account of a culture of contemporary wine drinking in a single country. Her research investigates wine drinking culture and national identity in France based on ethnographical data collected from a range of situations and locations. Demossier is particularly interested in the changing consumption habits and therefore, as with the vast majority of cultural research into wine, her research focuses on the consumer and the act of wine drinking while only touching briefly on the role of wine producers.

In this recently established field of anthropological study, there is still very little research on wine producers. There are however, several exceptions: Ulin's research (Ulin 1996) investigates Bordeaux wine producers in detail, concentrating on the interactions and power differentials between smaller and larger wine producers. In his book *Vintages and Traditions: an Ethnohistory of Southwest French Wine Cooperatives*

(1996) and several related articles (Ulin 1995, 1987) he presents a rare anthropological study of wine producers, focusing on work as cultural production and the invention of tradition. *Vintages and Traditions* looks exclusively at wine cooperatives, while his subsequent chapter in *Wine, Society and Globalization* (Campbell and Guibert 2007) discusses the power and influence of wine producers in Bordeaux and the hierarchy between cooperatives and châteaux.

Beverland's work (2009) on authenticity in marketing uses case studies of iconic brands to illustrate his theory of the development of brand authenticity and one of these cases considers how an elite Bordeaux wine producer manages consumer engagement with the brand; however, it is only one of many case studies in his research. Other works of Demossier (2011), Ulin (1995, 1987) and Beverland (2005, 2004) all use ethnographical methodologies and case studies for data collection. These texts are a useful starting point for understanding wine culture in France, each one centred on a very specific area.

While a number of studies of wine culture in France have been published, very little research exists regarding wine culture in Australia. There are several texts on the history of wine in Australia, such as *A History of the Australian Wine Industry 1949-1994* by James Halliday (1994), *A Concise History of Australian Wine* by John Beeston (2000) and *Australia's Liquid Gold* by Nicholas Faith (2003), which mention culture and the role of wine producers, however it is always a marginal reference. From a business and marketing perspective, a number of articles have been published investigating wine drinking culture in Australia, among other places (Hall, Shaw, and Doole 1997, Pettigrew 2003), but once again consistently concentrating on consumers rather than producers. Brian Croser's paper *Prospects for Australian Smaller "Fine Wine" Producers* (2010) is one of the few articles to discuss Australian wine producers and their actions, arguing that wine producers can, and should, actively try to change perceptions of Australian wine. Charters, Walker and Brown also investigate wine producers in Western Australia's Margaret River region in their paper *Passion over pragmatism: the motivation of Australian winery owners* (2016).

In *Wine and Society: the Social and Cultural Context of a Drink* (2006), Steve Charters gives a broad overview of wine from a cultural rather than technical view. As the author states in the introduction, it focuses on “how the production of wine itself shapes perceptions about the product, how the consumer may gain from it a range of meanings, and how society tries to control it.” (Charters 2006, 6). The text is aimed at students of marketing, tourism, hospitality and oenology, and wine lovers, and provides a very accessible entry into the study of wine culture. The book has a number of antipodean examples, however it is a general text and does not focus specifically on Australia. Likewise, Black and Ulin’s edited book *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass* (2013) provides an international overview of wine culture in general and specific wine cultures around the world. These two texts are the only books to discuss wine culture from a broad interdisciplinary perspective, each giving equal weight to production and consumption. As such they provide an excellent point of departure for studies in the field. *Wine and Identity: Branding, Heritage, Terroir* (Harvey, White, and Frost 2014) also presents a balanced discussion of consumption and production with a particular focus on identity. It explores the role of branding, heritage and terroir for individuals and regions, with an emphasis on the marketing implications of these aspects. There is an increasing amount of research concerning the notion of *terroir* (Spielmann and Charters 2013, Spielmann and Gélinas-Chebat 2012, Demossier 2011, Hinnewinkel 2004, Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006, Barham 2003, Trubek 2008) and while it informs the discussion of wine producers, this research will not discuss the way the term is employed in the wine world and the broader concept of the definition of *terroir*, and the abstract theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the concept as a whole.

While the three major texts cited above provide an excellent overview and entry to the subject of wine culture in general, the overwhelming majority of published research on wine culture focuses on consumers.<sup>9</sup> Ulin’s study of Bordeaux wine producers is the exception. My research continues along this path, concentrating on wine producers, and investigating the development of winery identity. Where Ulin investigates

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<sup>9</sup> There is a growing body of research in wine marketing and business that investigates consumer preferences and behaviours with relation to wine, however, it is focused on the market and consumption from a business and economics perspective, rather than an anthropological perspective on production.

relations between wine producers, I examine the development of winery identity and the importance for relationships in the wine world, in a cross-cultural context. This research aims to add a new perspective to the existing research on wine culture, expanding the knowledge and understanding of the area by focusing on wine producers.

As outlined above, France and Australia both occupy a prominent position in the global wine world. “New world” Australia presents serious competition for the “old world” French wine industry, particularly in export markets. Cross-cultural comparisons in wine research are an area of increasing activity: research in cultural geography has compared Bordelais and Chilean wine producers (Velasco-Graciet and Hinnewinkel 2007); a number of exploratory studies have conducted general cross-cultural research into consumer preferences based on country of origin (Arias-Bolzmann et al. 2003) (Goodman 2009); and in business and marketing, comparisons between France and the United States (Guidry et al. 2009), particularly California (Cholette 2004) (Goodman 2009), have been carried out. Despite the strong export position of Australian wine, a dedicated, comparative study of French and Australian wine cultures has not been conducted. In attempting to address the gap from a cultural perspective, this study investigates differences and similarities between winery image, identity and storytelling in France and Australia through case studies in Bordeaux and Victoria.

### 1.3. RESEARCH SETTING AND APPROACH

Bordeaux, one of the world’s oldest wine regions, lends itself to this style of study. Defined largely by the administrative département of the Gironde, Bordeaux is an official wine region as dictated by the Institut National des Appellations d’Origine (INAO). As well as the categories Vin de Table, Vin de Pays and Vin de Qualité Supérieur (AO-VDQS), within the region there are almost 60 geographically defined Appellations d’Origine Contrôlé (AOC) including the generic Bordeaux and Bordeaux supérieur. The wines of Bordeaux are subject to the prescriptive rules of the AOC and as such, represent, at least at one level, a unified group of producers and product.

Within this unified region, however, diversity reigns: there are more than 8,650 winegrowers and the average vineyard is just 14.6 ha (Vins de Bordeaux 2010).

Bordeaux is recognized internationally as one of the three most prestigious wine regions in France, along with Champagne and Burgundy. It is the largest wine region in France and accounts for almost 40% of French still wine exports (CIVB 2010). Wine has been traded and produced in the region since Roman times, however the circumstances have varied greatly. Unlike Burgundy, where the wine industry was dominated by the church until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, modern Bordeaux is a product of the political and commercial origins of the city. As a port town, trade was always an important part of the city's activities, and by the 15<sup>th</sup> century it had become the main trading centre for international commerce between Europe and the rest of the world. At the same time the Parliament of Bordeaux was founded, leaving an indelible political mark on the history of the city. The grand architecture of the city and the region's châteaux attest to the importance of wine to commercial and political aspirations. The Bordeaux wine industry still relies heavily on the hierarchy that developed out of a society based on trade and politics, which is most evident in the continuing use of the 1855 classification. Despite the fact that the system of *Grands Crus Classés* concerns only a small number of Bordeaux producers in two sub-regions, it is on this reputation that Bordeaux wine, as a whole, depends.

This study looks exclusively at the Grands Crus châteaux and premium wine production. It explores two cases studies – Château Lynch-Bages and Château Beychevelle – which both have a well-developed international reputation and a visible presence in the region.

While France's wine regions have developed throughout a long history into legally defined appellations and regions, the political boundaries of Australia's states provide the basis for the wine regions. From an historical perspective, each state of Australia has a distinct political and social history, particularly prior to federation in 1901, when they were individual British colonies. In the twenty-first century, each state has its own government, laws and social norms which extend to winemaking regulations and the existence of state-based viticultural and winemaker associations. For this study, in



order to conduct a meaningful comparison with Bordeaux, the state of Victoria is treated as a wine region in its own right. Fraught with the fluctuations of a relatively new industry in a relatively new society, Victoria’s wine industry has a somewhat scattered and disparate history, and lacks the ingrained history of its European counterpart. At the wine industry level, the Victorian Wine Industry Association unites the wine producers of Victoria as their representative body,<sup>10</sup> however a relatively low percentage of the total producers are members.<sup>11</sup> There is, however, unofficial collegiality and collaboration between producers united by region or production style.

Characteristically the Victorian wine industry is also distinct from the industry in other Australian states. Victoria has a wide range of small and distinct wine-producing regions, from the snow-prone High Country, to the hot and dry region of Mildura, and all climates in between. While the area under vine and volume of wine produced in Victoria is considerably less than New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia (SA), the number of wineries and cellar doors is considerably higher (see Table 1).<sup>12</sup> Thus, the average Victorian winery is significantly smaller than in other states. This is highlighted further if we consider that 65% of Victorian wineries crush less than 50 tonnes per vintage compared with 58% in NSW/ACT and 45% in SA (Winetitles Media 2016a). This data indicates that Victoria has a much more prominent “boutique winery”<sup>13</sup> sector than other states, and in this regard is well-suited to a comparison with a France, where average winery size is much smaller than in Australia.

<sup>10</sup> “The VWIA is charged to represent and promote the interests of the wine industry in Victoria. We are an independent membership-based Association that works closely with regional and national bodies, and liaises with the Victorian Government.” <http://www.winesofvictoria.com.au/content.asp?pc=16>, accessed 06.10.10

<sup>11</sup> The Winemakers Federation of Australia has a much greater membership than the state bodies.

<sup>12</sup>

State	No. producers	No. Cellar doors	Production Winegrapes Tonnage	Area under vine (ha)	No. Wineries crushing <50 tonnes
VIC	747	499	163,035	23,088	493
NSW/ACT	463	351	284,407	34,024	269
SA	706	375	285,411	66,913	315

<sup>13</sup> ‘boutique winery’: a winery with only a small amount of land planted with vines but producing its own unique wines’ (Wine Define 2010)

Bordeaux and Victoria represent examples through which a cross-cultural analysis of two wine cultures can be successfully conducted. Despite many differences, as one would expect from an old and new wine producing region, both Bordeaux and Victoria include multi-national wine companies and small producers spread across a broad geographical area and producing a diverse range of wines. The diversity of the two regions enables the selection of comparable wineries for the case studies. This study builds on prior research that I have conducted on the Victorian wine industry (Sexton 2005, 2011), and the fieldwork was facilitated by existing contacts that I have within both the Victorian and Bordeaux wine industries. The study is restricted to producers of premium wineries in Bordeaux and Victoria, where the term *premium* denotes a commonly understood category at the top of the wine market with relation to quality, price, aging potential and reputation.

Given that there is so little anthropological research on wine producers, in order to explore this new area, the current research employed an ethnographical methodology for data collection. Following in the footsteps of Demossier and Ulin, the primary sources of data were the people directly involved in the situation – premium winery owners, staff and trade. To investigate how this part of the wine world functions from a social perspective, I observed that world in action and interviewed people actively participating in it. I also collected relevant published material, printed and online, and had many informal conversations during the fieldwork. The research investigates four case studies of wine producers in Bordeaux and Victoria. The study aims to create a detailed ethnographical account of each winery from a range of perspectives and a more generalised account of premium wine producers and how they interact with the wider world, specifically how they perceive their identity and image, and tell their story. In this way, the research moves from the specific to the general, and explores the connections and interactions between the two.

Wanting to explore the area and find out what was of concern to the people involved rather than impose an existing theory on the study or set out with a hypothesis to prove, the research used a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis. The research was directed by a number of general lines of inquiry, from an anthropological perspective, concerning how premium, boutique wine producers

function; how they see themselves; their understanding of the world in which they operate; their aspirations for the future; and most importantly, their principal concerns. Using the grounded theory methods of coding, constant comparison and openness to the data, the fieldwork and analysis revealed relationships and change as the most significant themes running through the discussions. These two themes are the basis for the grounded theory that emerged from the data analysis, which focuses on how wine producers are responding to the rapidly changing global wine industry and market.

#### 1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is divided into three parts, the theoretical framework followed by the ethnographical component and analysis. Part I of the thesis introduces the research area, and presents the methodology for the study. This first chapter discusses the current position of wine in the world and presents a literature review. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical perspective on which the research and analysis are based, developing an appropriate anthropological methodology for a cross-cultural comparison of winery identity in Bordeaux and Victoria. This chapter discusses the details of the data collection: how and why particular producers were chosen for the case studies, and details of the way the data was collected and analysed.

Part II provides background to the topic, placing the regions and case studies in their historical and contemporary context. Chapter 3 traces the evolution of wine from a global viewpoint, and then from the Bordelais and Victorian perspective, in order to understand the current situation. In Chapter 4, a profile of the selected case studies is presented.

Having established the research area and context in Parts I and II, Part III is centred on the ethnographical component of the project. Chapter 5 presents firstly a synthesis and then a detailed analysis of the four case studies investigated for this study, focussing on the interview data. This chapter is organised into the eleven categories that emerged from the data coding process, grouped into three thematic areas.

Chapter 6 presents the Grounded Theory that was developed from the data analysis and conclusions are drawn in Chapter 7.

## 2. AN ETHNOGRAPHIC GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

The research employs an ethnographic grounded theory approach to data collection, analysis, and conceptualisation. It is an exploratory anthropological study that uses case studies of wineries to conduct a cross-cultural analysis of winery identity in France and Australia. Through the exploration of the four case studies in detail, it considers the many factors that constitute and influence how wineries craft their image and tell their story.

This chapter outlines the reasons for choosing an ethnographical grounded theory approach as a methodology and the design of the research undertaken. It begins with a discussion of the theory of ethnography, including case studies, and of grounded theory, followed by the way the two processes are intertwined. It then describes the process of selecting case studies, data collection and analysis, and how the resulting theory was generated.

### 2.1. ETHNOGRAPHY

Centred in sociocultural anthropology, the research aims to create an ethnographical account of each of the wineries in the context of their specific regional wine culture and the global wine world. Concerned primarily with the “interplay between the specific and the general, between the local and the universal” (Monaghan and Just 2000, 20), ethnographical anthropology seeks to understand “the connections and interactions between different elements of society and culture” (Murchison 2010, 11). The focus on the way specific, local examples interact with more universal understandings of humanity naturally leads to cross-cultural comparisons across time and space (Monaghan and Just 2000). Given the global nature of wine production, this perspective is highly relevant. Localised ethnographical research enables in-depth observation and analysis of specific groups and behaviours in the context of everyday life, with all its idiosyncrasies and complications. This results in what Geertz termed

“thick description” (Geertz 1975), highlighting cultural habits (Monaghan and Just 2000).

Acknowledging the limited research conducted on wine culture, particularly pertaining to wine producers, this study takes the form of an exploratory investigation. The exploratory orientation is “used to develop hypotheses and more generally to make probes for circumscription, description, and interpretation” (Bernard 1998, 139), rather than viewing the situation through the lens of an established sociocultural theory. The notion of avoiding theoretical bias and the development of theory from the data will be discussed in detail later in this chapter in the section on grounded theory.

As models, the publications of Demossier and Ulin are particularly interesting as ethnographical studies of wine in modern France. Demossier employs a multi-sited ethnography to investigate consumption in different regions of France, while Ulin concentrates his study on the wine-growing region of Bordeaux and adjacent regions. Both researchers used case studies and collected data in the form of interviews, observations, published works, and anecdotal material. While Demossier and Ulin compared regions within France, the ethnographical research methodologies are also well suited to cross-cultural comparison, and so are employed in this study to compare French and Australian wine-producing cultures through localised research in Bordeaux and Victoria.

As in the aforementioned projects, my research employs ethnographic case studies, but here they are used to explore the way wine producers craft their image, tell their story and define their identity. A variety of standard methodologies in anthropological ethnography were used to collect data: interviews, observation, participant observation, published material. The use of evidence from multiple sources enhances the validity of the study via triangulation (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008), providing a range of perspectives that converge to create a more complete picture of each case (Yin 2003), preserving the multiple realities of the different actors involved (Stake 1995). The research attempts to paint a comprehensive picture of each of the wine producers in the context of their respective geographical and cultural setting. To

situate the study in a relevant context it was necessary to undertake, a sociocultural history of wine from a global perspective, and of Bordeaux and Victoria as regions, prior to commencing the ethnographical research. This contextual work is presented in Chapter 3.

The preliminary ethnographical research was based on published material (winery websites, magazines, newspapers, books and promotional material) and observations (wine-related events, winery visits) in order to establish the specific boundaries of the project and to choose case studies. Once the case studies were selected, interview participants were identified. Interviews form the largest and most important part of the data. Ethnography necessitates “talking to and interacting with people, and ultimately trying to understand their symbolic worlds and social action” (Hess, cited in Zabusky 1995, 38). Thus, the aim in this research is to explore each case study in order to understand the situation and the relationships therein. Interview participants were carefully chosen for their position in the winery and/or their experience in the industry, with the aim of obtaining varied perspectives on the subject. Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. In addition, conversations in an informal context (such as winery visits and trade events) complemented the data. I also had informal conversations with many people in and around the wine industry where I was an active participant in the situation.

Observations and published material form another important part of the data. Throughout the research I constantly observed the wine industry and the selected wineries at events (trade and consumer) and their presence in the media, retail, on-premise and online spaces, contextualising interviews in their workplace and in the wine industry as a whole and gathering additional data. The degree of participation in these observations varied from “moderate participation” where I was present but did not actively participate in the action, to “active participation” where I engaged in most or all of the action taking place (Bernard 1998). This occurred for a number of reasons – long-term participant observation was impossible due to personal constraints on the amount of time I was able to spend in Bordeaux, and to a lesser extent in The Grampians; and although winery staff were happy to be interviewed, they were not enthusiastic about being constantly observed on a daily basis.

While traditional ethnography calls for extensive time spent in the field as a participant observer, there were several advantages to my approach. As I visited the fieldwork scenes on many separate occasions I did not have a clearly defined position in the industry or workplace, so I was able to play a number of different roles in an observational and participatory capacity. At some events I played the part of the consumer, at others I was trade, and at other times I was clearly a researcher. Nor was I restricted by the hierarchy of the workplace, which would certainly have been the case had I been involved in an employee role at the winery. In some fieldwork situations such detachment might have reduced the capacity to conduct candid, in-depth interviews with participants, but in this case the high level of separation meant that participants were actually more open than they might have been if I had been connected to the winery in some capacity. Indeed, Bordeaux-based researchers that I spoke to were surprised that the wineries were willing to participate in my research, stating that they found it very difficult to gain their cooperation. This suggests that as an Australian researcher, my status as a complete outsider made me less threatening. Contact with the wineries over a long period of time also helped me develop a certain rapport with participants. As I followed changes and developments at the winery and in the industry, I was able to discuss with them issues that were pertinent for them at each contact.

In addition to providing an ethnography of the selected wine producers, the research extends the data to a conceptual level through the development of a theory of the construction winery identity and how wineries craft their image and tell their story. In order to move from ethnographical description to conceptual theory, a grounded theory approach was used. Using a grounded theory approach also enhances the quality of the ethnographic methodology by providing a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. Grounded theory is discussed in detail later in this chapter in section 2.3.



## 2.2. CASE STUDIES

Case studies are frequently employed in both ethnography and grounded theory research to investigate real situations in real contexts (Yin 1981). The qualitative data for this research was collected using the ethnographical methods outlined above centred on winery case studies. Rubin and Rubin argue that elaborated case studies are useful processes for developing understanding with a view to generalising to broader processes, discovering causes, and explaining a phenomenon (Rubin and Rubin 2005). A number of leading case-study researchers (Yin 2009, Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008, Eisenhardt 1989) maintain that this research strategy is particularly appropriate in the early stages of a new theory or model, “when key variables and their relationships are being explored” (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008, 1465). Gibbert also argues that case studies are typically conducted in close contact with the actors and deal with real situations, and therefore create relevant knowledge. This concept is highly applicable in the context of wine production where little is written about or by producers, and information must be collected directly from the people involved. In doing so, the critical importance of context is preserved, as highlighted by Yin:

As a research strategy, the distinguishing characteristic of the case study is that it attempts to examine: (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Experiments differ from this in that they deliberately divorce a phenomenon from its context. (Yin 1981, 58)

Taking into account the context is particularly important in cross-case analyses. In this study, four case studies are considered. The small number of cases enabled a thorough investigation and analysis of each case individually, as well as comparing and contrasting with the group.

This research focuses on case studies of four wine producers in Bordeaux and Victoria, exploring their activities from a range of perspectives. In order to understand the public image of the winery, I began with a detailed review of media publications about each producer, encompassing the company website and online presence, cellar door

information, magazine coverage and wine retail material. This survey of freely available published material created a comprehensive picture of the way each producer presents itself to the public and the different channels through which the company image is developed.

Interviews with key personnel in each company were then conducted and form the main data for the analysis. These interviews discussed the winery image and identity, and illuminated issues and ideas that were important to interviewees. Participants were chosen to provide a range of perspectives, from winemaker to customer service to general manager. In Bordeaux, where sales are not managed by the winery, the external market perspective came from interviews with a key *négociant* working with each winery. One step removed from production and operating as the link between producer and consumer, the *négociant* offered an holistic yet intimate perspective of the wine company and its activities. Interviews with other people working in the industry were conducted where relevant. Observation and participant observation was used to further understand the context and quotidian situation of each producer and the wine industries in Bordeaux and Victoria.

In each region two wine producers were selected for the case studies. Eisenhardt (1989) argues that a cross-case analysis of a small number of cases presents a good basis for analytical generalisation, leading to hypotheses that may be tested later through explanatory research. This was chosen as an appropriate research strategy given the lack of scholarship on wine producers. Although this cannot be considered a representative sample of a region, nor a sample size capable of producing statistical generalisation, conducting four case studies offered the opportunity to investigate the particularity and complexity (Stake 1995) of each winery in detail and to acknowledge the diversity within each region. For this reason, I selected one “old” wine producer (established during or prior to the mid nineteenth century) and one “new” wine producer (established or whose reputation was established in the mid twentieth century) to provide two different perspectives from each region. The selection of organisations in Victoria and Bordeaux with certain similarities also allowed for a comparison of like wineries across the two regions. The multiple-case design of this study and deliberate selection of cases in contrasting situations (Stake 1995) created

the opportunity to explore the specific case studies in a local context, before placing them in a cross-cultural and global framework. This analysis then led to the development of a grounded theory that attempts to explain the way wine producers are crafting their image and telling their story in response to rapid changes in the market.

The selection of regions for the research was initially based on geographical boundaries. In France, the AOC system very clearly delineates geographical wine regions and sub-regions. The Bordeaux wine region, or appellation, is a clearly defined area surrounding the city of Bordeaux and within the administrative borders of Aquitaine. The Bordeaux appellation is divided into four sub-regions, of which the Médoc is one. The Médoc is a well-defined and prestigious region that contains all but one of the 61 Grands Crus châteaux. As I discuss in Chapter Three, the classification of Grands Crus châteaux was developed in 1855 for the Universal Exhibition in Paris, ranking the top 61 Bordeaux red wine brands based on market prices. There are five tiers (called “growths”) in the classification, which has remained almost unchanged since its inception. The 61 classified producers continue to command the highest prices for Bordeaux wines, indeed some of the highest wine prices in the world. The choice of the Grands Crus châteaux in the Médoc region of Bordeaux used an existing framework to limit the study to a specific geographical region and a specific segment of producers.

The two wineries selected in Bordeaux were Château Lynch-Bages and Château Beychevelle. Lynch-Bages is situated in the village of Pauillac and is a 5<sup>th</sup> growth. Due to the business acumen of the owners during the twentieth century, Lynch-Bages now enjoys a status resembling that of a 2<sup>nd</sup> growth with its top wines commanding a retail price of around AUD\$150 per bottle for the most recent vintages. Beychevelle is a 4<sup>th</sup> growth in the village of St Julien. It has a significant reputation, particularly in the Asian market, and wines retail for approximately AUD\$110 per bottle for recent vintages.

The selection of an equivalent region in Australia was more complicated. The Australian wine industry does not have an old world prestige hierarchy and has only recently introduced a system of geographically defined wine regions – Geographical

Indicators (GI). Although the GI system was implemented in 1993 (as a result of trade agreements with the European Union), it is an imposed system that is not highly valued in the domestic or international marketplace and therefore it is still difficult to define a region or cohesive segment of producers in Australia. Despite this, for consistency with the French case studies, the state of Victoria was chosen as the region and the GI was used as a defining factor for the selection of The Grampians region within Victoria. The region is geographically isolated from major cities and sparsely populated, with around two dozen wineries dotted throughout a predominantly agricultural area. It is principally a red wine-producing region and is one of the oldest, continuously-producing wine regions in Victoria.

Within The Grampians region the wineries selected for the case studies are producers of premium and super-premium wines, and have a prestigious reputation in Australia and in export markets. The selection of wineries was quite limited and preference was given to wineries that are not owned by one of the giant international drinks corporations. This was to avoid potential complications of the influence of large company policy and politics on winery activities. The wineries chosen were Best's and Mount Langi Ghiran, which produce two of Australia's most respected and highly priced red wines, retailing at AUD\$200 and AUD\$120 per bottle respectively for recent vintages. They are situated near the town of Ararat in one of Australia's coolest climate shiraz-producing areas.

The selection of specific wineries in Victoria and Bordeaux was based on the criteria above – within the geographical area, at the high end of the super-premium category with a significant reputation (in some publications referred to as “iconic” wines) – as well as the availability and willingness of winery personnel to participate in the research. Although in Bordeaux there were many châteaux that fitted the criteria, as an unknown researcher from the opposite side of the world (and from a country perceived to be an aggressive competitor in the global wine market) it was quite difficult to obtain a positive response to my initial contact. As Ulin articulates in his research findings (1996), the response from wineries is quite different if the initial contact comes with an introduction, particularly in France. Thus, when I contacted wineries with a recommendation from a French winemaker from Bordeaux who now

works in Australia, the response was very positive. Through this contact, the selection of wineries was decided – Château Beychevelle and Château Lynch-Bages. In Australia, Mount Langi Ghiran was at the top of the list as the most prestigious winery in The Grampians region and fortuitously they were happy to participate in the research from the initial contact. Best’s were somewhat harder to elicit a reply from. However, as in Bordeaux, once a colleague had made an introduction, the response was supportive of my research.

### 2.3.GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory is an inductive approach to qualitative social research that leads to “the discovery of theory obtained from data systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 2)<sup>14</sup>. It was developed in the mid-1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss as a departure from the “two key features of the established institutional orthodoxy: (1) the primacy accorded to *verification* of existing theories; and (2) what they term ‘theory generated by logical deduction from *a priori* assumptions’” (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, 43). They advocated the development of new theories from the data and “urged social researchers to go into the field to gather data without a ready-prepared theoretical framework to guide them” (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, 43). Hence, the grounded theory method is designed to generate a theory directly from the data and one that is suited to the data. It is a research process used for empirical studies in social research with predominantly qualitative data. The research goal of the grounded theory method is to explore a specific social situation, create a coherent description of the situation, and develop a theory or model that is capable of explaining the way the situation functions, providing “relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 1), with particular emphasis on identifying the main concerns of the participants (Glaser 1992).

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<sup>14</sup> The original publication, ‘The discovery of grounded theory; strategies for qualitative research’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967) has been expanded upon by both Glaser and Strauss, and subsequent practitioners, in many different articles and books, however the 1967 publication outlines the methodology.

Since Glaser and Strauss' first publication, two paths emerged from the methodology as the two researchers "reached a diacritical juncture on the aims, principles, and procedures associated with the implementation of the method" (Evans 2013). Several variations of grounded theory have developed, with four main branches identified (Fernandez 2012): Glaser's Classical Grounded Theory; the Strauss and Corbin qualitative data analysis or Straussian grounded theory; constructivist grounded theory; and feminist grounded theory. The current research uses an approach based on Glaser's classical grounded theory method, but does not adhere strictly to it due to constraints of time, budget and doctoral requirements; for example, it was not feasible to continue data collection until saturation of the data, however theoretical saturation was achieved.

The grounded theory method differs from the traditional scientific research method of hypothesis testing for qualitative and quantitative data, also *de rigueur* in the humanities, in that it does not begin with a hypothesis to test, but with a social situation to investigate. During the research process categories and hypotheses are developed and analysed, but the research does not begin with a hypothesis drawn from existent literature. Rather, hypotheses are generated directly from the data to which they pertain, during the research process. These hypotheses must be clear enough to be verified in future studies, and "readily operationalized in quantitative studies" where relevant (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 3). The grounded theory method is also in contrast to traditional methodologies that rely on logical deductions based on assumptions from theoretical literature. The grounded theory researcher makes a concerted effort to put aside assumptions and existing theories in order to see the data for what it is.

The degree of familiarity with the literature and knowledge of the research topic is a contested notion among grounded theory practitioners. Some (Holton, Stern, cited in Bryant and Charmaz 2007)) advocate little or no prior reading in the particular discipline in order to ensure an open mind and not be influenced by standard theoretical assumptions from the discipline. The supporters of this approach argue that this is Glaser and Strauss' original grounded theory stance, however Glaser and Strauss place much emphasis on the experience of the researcher, including their

knowledge and understanding of the substantive area (Glaser and Strauss 1967). One facet of the researcher's experience is without doubt familiarity with the relevant literature. Many grounded theory practitioners (Gibson 2007, Lempert 2007, Timmermans and Tavory 2007) argue that contextual reading is essential, but should be from a range of disciplines relevant to the research situation. The latter approach gives the researcher a certain knowledge and understanding of the situation prior to data collection, allowing more in-depth interviews from the outset, but there is of course more potential for prior knowledge and assumptions to influence the data collected and the subsequent analysis. Lempert (2007) suggests a middle ground where the existing literature provides a basis for participating in the current theoretical conversation, but does not define the research. She argues that familiarisation with the literature can prevent reinventing the wheel and can also sensitise the researcher to the data, providing insights and answers to questions. Regardless of the approach, the researcher must maintain a constant awareness of how easily assumptions may influence the research, remaining open to the data at all times.

Openness to the data also prevents the occurrence of "exemplification" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 5) or confirmation bias – the selection of data to support a particular theory. If an existing theory is used, the researcher is more likely to select data that substantiates the theory as well as influencing the data collection and analysis in favour of the theory. As a grounded theory is derived from the data, this cannot occur. Examples of the data are used to illustrate the theory, but not to prove its validity. The focus of the grounded theory method is the generation of a theory that fits the situation being investigated and is "meaningfully relevant to and able to explain the behaviour under study" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 3). The verification of this theory is neither desired nor possible – theory verification is a quite different research purpose from theory generation; and theory must be tested on data that is independent of the data used to generate the theory. The purpose of the grounded theory is to further general social theory and give a detailed interpretation of the social situation in question.

Data collection begins from the outset of the research as the data is the basis of the process. Fieldwork data is mostly collected in the form of interviews with people in the social situation studied, augmented by observations and other data, such as written material and statistics. In the current research, interviews with people working in the industry formed the core of the data, supplemented by observations at wineries and wine events, publicity material and other published items, and wine industry reports. As the fieldwork data was collected it was subjected to a preliminary analysis via categorisation and memoing (which I will discuss later in this chapter), which in turn informs the process and line of enquiry of the data collection to suit the particular research situation.

The grounded theory method is appropriate for my thesis as the research is an exploratory project seeking to discover the intricacies of a social situation that has not yet been the subject of anthropological research. The project began with a social situation to investigate – wine producers in Australia and France and the way they interact with the industry and markets – rather than a hypothesis to test. The grounded theory method provided a systematic way of collecting and analysing data, directing reading and developing theory, in order to coherently *explore, explicate and theorise* (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, 245) this particular social situation.

The process of data analysis is based on categorisation. Categorisation involves assigning a label to each phrase or section of the interviews in order to be able to compare data across the sample. The factual content of the data suggests categories which are conceptual elements. Preliminary categorisation serves to analyse the data from the outset, which then directs the course of interviews and observations that follow and the literature to be consulted. Early in the research, low level categories are suggested and as the research progresses, higher level overriding categories are developed (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The list of categories and their properties is refined throughout the process, in order to develop the most representative, relevant and generalizable list for the data as a whole. Categories form the theoretical bones of the analysis and are subsequently expanded by identifying and analysing their properties and relations (Bryant and Charmaz 2007). The relations between categories form hypotheses about the social situation, generating the theory (Glaser and Strauss



1967). Thus, the content of the data suggests conceptual categories upon which the theory is based (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

“Memoing”, or note taking, is an indispensable analytical tool used throughout the grounded theory research process. According to Lempert (2007) memoing is the fundamental process of grounded theory enabling the transformation of data into theory. It is a methodological practice that grounds the researcher in the analysis of the data, conceptualising it into abstract ideas. Memoing is a systematic tool for analytic note-taking which records researchers’ analytical musings and conceptual journey during the project. It begins at the outset of the research noting ideas from interviews and observations, and continues through the coding and analysis process, right through to theory generation and refinement. As the researcher collects and categorises the data, memos are written that explore, explicate, and theorize the social patterns that emerge (Lempert 2007). Memos clarify processes, explain and define categories and their properties, organise data and ideas for subsequent use, and eventually lead to the generation of theory. The memos, written continuously throughout the process, conceptualise the data in narrative form and provide a means to analyse the data, develop the theory.

The primary aim of memoing is to organise and interpret the social world being studied. As a research tool, memoing presents a systematic means of analysis and ideas development and integration. Lempert (2007, 253) describes the process: “the memo records my initial analysis, illuminates gaps in that analysis, provides direction for work outside of the data, and furnishes an elemental foundation for further comparison, contrast, reconstruction, and refinement”. As notes of emerging ideas and concepts, memos are often speculative, messy and incomplete, but become clearer and more integrated as the analysis progresses. Memoing forces the researcher to ask questions of the data (Strauss’ mantra for grounded theory), prevents the overuse of examples (Charmaz 2014), and shapes the data collection and analysis process. Continuous memo writing, re-reading and re-writing leads to a more abstract level of theorising, deepening the complexity and quality of the analysis.

Using the grounded theory method, all elements of the research – data collection, analysis and reading – occur concurrently, each informing the other as the research progresses. As the fieldwork is conducted and data analysed, categories are developed and the theory begins to emerge. This early theory is compared with the next lot of data collected and adjusted accordingly. As the collect-analyse-theorise cycle proceeds, the theory is elaborated and refined to incorporate new data obtained and new theoretical discoveries.

Strauss and Corbin argue for theoretical saturation, ‘that is, the point in the research when all the concepts are well defined and explained’. (2008, 145). This is different from data saturation, advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) where one continues to interview new people and collect new material until no new ideas are being added, (and due to the constraints of this research project, it was not possible to do). Theoretical saturation is achieved via theoretical sampling, whereby ‘an “appropriate” sample is composed of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic’ (Bowen 2008, 140). The objective is to collect ‘sufficient data to account for all aspects of the phenomenon’ leading to an ‘efficient and effective saturation of categories’ (Morse et al. 2002, 12). In this research, saturation of the categories was determined when all of the data was categorised, the categories were replicated across the data, and the data explained each category adequately (Bowen 2008).

The grounded theory method is a process of constant comparison whereby the data is compared with itself (for example, comparing instances of the same category in different interviews), and the theory is compared with the data. In this way the theory is “grounded” in the data, proposing abstract concepts that have developed from this data.

The goal is to develop a theory that is capable of explaining the particular social situation in question, using categorisation and memoing as analytical tools and ways of conceptualising the research. The theory is derived from the data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of the data. The use of a narrative storyline to communicate the research process and findings is central to the grounded theory method,

presenting the information in a way that makes sense for the participants of the study and readers.

#### 2.4. THE MARRIAGE OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND GROUNDED THEORY

I have used accepted ethnographical methodologies for the type of data collected – interviews, observations and published material – combined with a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis as the research progressed. This approach provided a “methodological perspective to combine data gathering and data analysis with the aid of various coding and memo-writing heuristics that draw attention to relationships between concepts and emphasise social processes” (Timmermans and Tavory 2007, 509). The end result is a detailed ethnographic account of the selected wine producers in the broader context of the regional, French, Australian and global wine world, complemented by a conceptual discussion and theory of the social interactions and processes at play in this setting. In this way the grounded theory method was used to “formalise and extend the limited theoretical component of ethnography” (Pettigrew 2000, 258). Taken together, grounded theory offers focus and analytical theory development to ethnography, and ethnography provides context and practical data collection techniques to grounded theory. The ethnographical grounded theory approach has enabled an exploration of the ways in which the wine industry functions from a social perspective and a theory of how premium wineries are responding to market changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### 2.5. DATA COLLECTION

Case studies were conducted of four wineries – two in Bordeaux and two in Victoria. Interviews were conducted with key personnel in each winery to cover a range of roles within the wine business. To accommodate differing business structures, the participants in each winery varied slightly. In all cases, interviews were conducted with the winery manager/owner, cellar door personnel (either manager or guide), sales and/or marketing personnel. The small number of case studies in the research enabled

adaptation of the ethnographical process to account for individual differences between the cases and elicit the most pertinent and interesting information from the interviews. At some wineries the guided tour was a formal part of the visiting experience and at others an informal tour of the winery was offered in response to the research questions. In both situations this formed part of the observational data collected. Further observational data was collected at trade and public events, varying from winery to winery.

Questions for the interviews were developed based on the principle of open-ended interviews designed to guide the conversation rather than a series of questions and answers (Rubin and Rubin 2005). This style of responsive interviewing seeks depth of understanding rather than breadth and is useful in exploratory research where the intent is neither homogeneity nor statistical generalisation. The aim of the interviews was to elicit examples, narratives, histories, stories, and explanations to illustrate ideas and explore notions of identity and image. The elaboration of the ideas using concrete examples provided nuance and precision, context and evidence.

Following Rubin & Rubin's methodology of qualitative interviewing (Rubin and Rubin 2005) the sequence of questions was designed to move from easy (personal wine industry experience) to difficult (wine as a social concept in the context of the particular winery). The flow of questioning assisted in making the interviewee feel relaxed and comfortable in the interview situation before they were faced with questions that might have been construed as more difficult, nuanced or sensitive.

Due to university administrative and ethics requirements, I was required to have a defined research question and list of interview questions to get ethics approval and begin the fieldwork. Although this is contrary to the grounded theory methodology which eschews a predetermined framework, in this I had no choice. It became apparent in the first interviews that the notion of stereotypes (the basis of my initial research question) was not of interest to producers, rather their major concerns related to identity and relationships with the outside world. I accordingly adjusted the questions as I proceeded to account for these insights, following a grounded theory approach.

There were eight questions to guide the interviews (on average 60 minutes duration). The questions combined indirect questioning – asking open questions that the interviewee could answer as they chose, without influencing their response by my research question – and direct questioning – whereby I asked questions that articulated precise areas of the research. The latter style of questions proved to be quite difficult, and throughout the fieldwork process, I adjusted the manner in which I posed these questions to make them more manageable and in turn the responses more useful. The indirect line of questions elicited a more comfortable and open response from the interviewees and they were inclined to tell stories and give examples to illustrate their point. As I learnt this during the fieldwork process, I adjusted the direct questions to be more indirect but still with a focus that would keep the conversation on track.

Question No.1 was designed to relax the interviewee by asking about general personal experience. Interviewees were asked to talk about their history in the wine industry, giving a personal account of their professional involvement. Question No.2 moved onto the next level of involvement – interviewees were asked to talk about the winery and the wines. It was still an easy question to answer and at the same time began to elicit more pertinent information on the image of the winery. While it appeared to be a simple question, it was designed to find out how the interviewee perceived the winery and wines and how they chose to represent them.

Question No.3 explored communication with consumers asking how people became aware of their wines. It provided an opportunity for the interviewee to give examples of what they were talking about by telling some stories about interactions with the real people they meet at cellar door, at events and further afield. I extended the discussion around this question with examples of possible communication channels. This gave interviewees the opportunity to discuss whether and how they used that particular channel and elaborate on other means of communication.

When I asked interviewees to describe the winery's image in Question No.4, the conversation at this point became much more focused. This proved to be a difficult question and initial responses indicated that interviewees felt it should not or could

not be answered by someone working in the winery. I subsequently adjusted the phrasing of the question to place the emphasis on the interviewees' personal opinion rather than a more objective marketing perspective. I also found it was helpful to give some examples of aspects of image that could be described.

Question No.5 asked about key events or moments that changed the image of the winery. It was a very open question that nonetheless allowed the interviewee to be quite specific in their answer. Talking about a particular event or moment focussed their thoughts, facilitating the discussion and eliciting quite a lot of information compared with other questions. This question seemed to make it easy for interviewees to talk about concepts and broad ideas by placing them in the context of a specific event.

Question No.6 broached the subject of stereotypes in the wine industry. It was a complex question as it was quite abstract and was not something that the interviewee had necessarily thought about in detail before. I discovered that the word "stereotype" is quite problematic in itself as it carries many negative connotations and is frequently understood as a very strong and ignorant attitude. After the initial interviews, I modified the question to ask about "image" which was clearly of more concern to interviewees. Question No.7 was an extension of the previous one, asking interviewees to describe aspects of the winery image that are well-developed and parts that need improving.

Question No.8 asked directly about the winery's intentions with regard to changing consumer perceptions. It became clear in the first few interviews that I needed to state that the question was not asking about *manipulation* of consumers but *communication* with consumers. I elaborated this question to emphasise the educational role of the winery and how they interact with the wine world.

Interviews were audio recorded using a Zoom H1 hand-held recorder. The recorder is simply placed on the table or held in the hand and does not require the interviewees to have a personal microphone. This method was preferred over video recording as it is very unobtrusive and in most cases the interviewees forgot they were even being recorded. This enabled a relaxed and open conversation where interviewees felt able

to speak openly. The interviews were transcribed into a text document for data analysis.

## 2.6. FIELDWORK

The first round of fieldwork was conducted in Victoria in November 2011 at Mount Langi Ghiran. Staff at the winery were happy to be involved in the research project from first contact. There was a certain amount of luck involved as the chief winemaker had done an Arts degree in Renaissance Italian which no doubt encouraged his participation in socio-cultural research. The initial contact was made over the telephone and participants were enthusiastic and generous with their time and in sharing their knowledge and experience. This was particularly helpful in the first round of fieldwork when the interview and observation process was quite new. Prior to visiting the winery to conduct the interviews I read Mount Langi Ghiran's website, which included a blog written by the chief winemaker, and articles in *Gourmet Traveller Wine* magazine that related to the winery and its staff. Two of the participants had also sent me their notes from recent presentations they had given. My aim was to have a certain amount of background knowledge on which to base the interview conversation, without having too much information that would influence my line of questioning. Interviews with the viticulturist, chief winemaker and cellar door manager were conducted on the same day at Mount Langi Ghiran.

As The Grampians is quite isolated and Mount Langi Ghiran is not on the main road, they do not attract enough visitors to run official tours of the winery. However, my first interview began with an informal yet comprehensive tour. The first interview was with the General Manager and viticulturist, who has been at Mount Langi Ghiran since 1996. On his suggestion we started the interview in the vineyard where he could show me what he was talking about. The interview then moved into the boardroom. This interview took several hours and was an excellent introduction to the winery. I then interviewed the administration and cellar door manager. Low visitor numbers mean that her job is divided between administration and cellar door, with most of the interaction with consumers happening online, over the telephone and in events in

larger cities such as Ballarat, Melbourne and Sydney. The interview with the chief winemaker was similar in format to the first one. We began with a tour of the winery facility and ended in the boardroom.

The final interview for Mount Langi Ghiran was with the global sales and marketing manager, who manages the Mount Langi Ghiran brand and the other brands owned by the Rathbone Wine Group. The interview took place in late 2013 in Ballarat, halfway between his main office in Melbourne and the winery. This was one of the few interviews conducted outside the interviewee's office or winery, but it did not change the interview format or conversational ease. Given the travelling role of the sales and marketing manager it seemed quite appropriate to meet him away from the winery.

Observational notes were recorded during and after the interviews. In addition to the interviews and observations at Mount Langi Ghiran, I also attended a number of events where the winery had a presence, such as Seriously Shiraz (a Grampians tasting event in Ballarat), Savour Australia (trade conference), in-store tastings, and winemaker dinners. Further information was collected from magazines, newspapers, websites and tourist information to explore how the winery presents itself to the public.

The first interviews at Best's Great Western were conducted in May 2013. I began by interviewing the Brand Manager, whom I had met at a tasting event in April. This interview began with the same guided tour of the historical buildings, winery and vineyards that was offered to visitors. We then moved into the office and followed the interview questions for the remainder of the conversation. I then interviewed the semi-retired owner who has been at the winery all his life. He took over managing the winery from his father in 1967 and has recently passed management over to his son. An interview with the current Managing Director (the fifth generation of the family at the winery) took place in late 2013. All three interviews were conducted in the offices at the winery. During the interviews several phone calls and personal inquiries were dealt with, which, rather than detracting from the interview, provided the everyday context of work at Best's. As with Langi, I also collected observational data from a number of events, tastings, and publications.



The first round of fieldwork in Bordeaux was conducted over ten weeks in March, April and May 2012. This was a much more concentrated period than the Victorian component as I had limited time in France. As in Victoria, I drew up a list of suitable châteaux, and in doing so decided to restrict the list to the 61 Grands Crus in the Médoc as a way of limiting the study. Initial attempts at contacting the châteaux were disappointing. I sent many emails, most of which did not even elicit a response. Those that did reply were unwilling to participate. Perhaps the Berthomeau Report's (2001, 81) damning judgement of Australian and New World wine which stated that "Right now the barbarians are at the door!"<sup>15</sup> was an accurate representation of Bordelais attitudes. Realising that perhaps I represented the uncivilised and threatening competition for this old world wine industry, I solicited the help of a French winemaker in Australia. On his advice I completely changed the initial email to be much shorter and simpler, and contacted the châteaux he suggested. With an introduction from a respected winemaker and a different approach the response was very positive. While choosing case studies via contacts could be construed as a bias, in fact the recommendation created more trust and thus the participants were more relaxed. This in turn increased the likelihood of more open interviews where participants were inclined to give interesting and detailed information. With a recommendation from a colleague, both Château Lynch-Bages and Château Beychevelle agreed to be involved in the research and their directors were very helpful. In addition to interviews and observations within the châteaux, through these contacts I was able to attend trade-only events, meet other people of interest in the Bordeaux wine industry, and gain access to some private libraries. All of these things increased the volume and quality of information I was able to collect.

Both Château Lynch-Bages and Château Beychevelle conduct daily organised tours, so I began the fieldwork with a guided tour. At Château Beychevelle I was able to interview the Customer Relations Manager/tour guide directly after the tour. At Château Lynch-Bages I interviewed the guide some weeks later. The guided tour offered an opportunity to observe directly the way the château presents itself to on-site visitors.

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<sup>15</sup> author's translation. Original: "Aujourd'hui les barbares sont à nos portes!"

Notes were recorded after each tour. The tour also gave me a knowledge base to contextualise the conversation in the interviews. I also did the guided tours at other Grands Crus châteaux to place the two case studies in context.

The first interview at Château Lynch-Bages was with the semi-retired owner. I first met him as he was pouring wines at the village Easter celebrations and interviewed him the following week in his office at the château. I later interviewed one of the tour guides, also at the château. The intention had been to interview the CEO, viticulturist or winemaker, cellar door personnel, and sales and marketing personnel, but it became apparent very early in my fieldwork trip that this model (developed in Australia and based on the Australian wine business structure) would not work in Bordeaux. The Bordeaux wine industry is structured quite differently – particularly the Grand Crus – and sales and marketing is managed by the merchants who buy the wine. Fortunately, I was able to interview Lynch-Bages's long-term business manager who was at the time working for a firm of négociants (she has since returned to work for Jean-Michel Cazes). Her insights into Lynch-Bages and the Bordeaux wine industry were very detailed and insightful.

Interviews at Château Beychevelle were conducted during this same period in Bordeaux in 2012. The first interview was with the General Manager in April in his office. We had met at lunch several weeks prior to the interview, which allowed a certain amount of ease from the beginning of the interview. There were building works going on at the time, which added a level of complexity to the interview, but did not interrupt it unduly. Several weeks later the Customer Relations Manager took me on the official visitor tour, which was directly followed by the interview in her office. Some phone calls were answered during the interview, but were all part of daily life at the château. During the following fieldtrip to Bordeaux in 2013 I was able to interview the Director of Barrières Frères, the négociant house responsible for sales and marketing of Beychevelle wines. This interview began in the courtyard but moved inside to the director's office when machinery activity became too noisy. There was a marked difference between the setting of the beautiful, old château among the vineyards and the commercial zone and practical warehouse building of the distributor. This change of atmosphere was heightened by the director making me very

aware of the time constraints and quizzing me on whether my intentions were indeed for research or more journalistic in nature.

I also had the opportunity to interview several other people working in the wine trade in Bordeaux – the owner of a reputed wine shop; the manager of a group of châteaux owned by a banking corporation; and the President of the Cité du Vin, wine representative on the Bordeaux Municipal Council and former president of the Grands Crus association.

I attended many relevant events during the period in Bordeaux and recorded observations. These included the En Primeur week; Easter Monday family day at Lynch-Bages; Evening with Château Giscours at Max Bordeaux; Le Weekend des Grands Crus; Portes Ouvertes au Médoc; Max Tasting Facility; Bar à Vins in central Bordeaux. The events were attended by a range of different groups, from professionals to tourists, and included a variety of wines and activities. As in Victoria, further information was collected from magazines, newspapers, websites and tourist information to explore how the wineries present themselves to the public.

## 2.7. DATA ANALYSIS

As the fieldwork data was collected it was subjected to a preliminary analysis via categorisation and memoing, which in turn informed the process and line of enquiry of the data collection to suit the particular research situation. After each interview was completed, the audio recording was downloaded and filed ready to be transcribed. Immediately following the interview, notes were made of the contextual elements that were not picked up in the audio recording, and of ideas and questions that arose from the interview conversation. Interviews were transcribed verbatim into a text document. Any words that were incomprehensible on the audio recording were assessed for their importance to the conversation – if they were not deemed sufficiently important they were left blank, however if it was a word or phrase that was central to the discussion, the phrase was verified with the interviewee. There were very few instances where the conversation was unable to be deciphered through close listening.

Transcription of the interviews was carried out concurrently with further interviews, rather than conducting all interviews first and transcribing them at the end. This was done in order to enable the adaptation of subsequent interviews by refining the wording of questions and interview technique, and seeking clarification and extrapolation of ideas raised in previous interviews. Furthermore, this concurrent approach to collection and analysis began the process of theory generation. This process allowed me to gather the most relevant data for the emerging theory. As the conduct, transcription and analysis of all interviews was carried out by the one researcher, this ongoing refinement of the interviews was a straightforward part of the process.

After the interviews had been transcribed, a preliminary coding was carried out during the proofreading stage. This generated a list of possible categories from the very first interview. As each interview was proofread, the list was augmented and refined, generating an initial set of categories from which to analyse the data further. During this preliminary categorisation process, and as the process continued, memos were made about categories and properties, and the relations between them. The categories were eventually refined into a list that was relevant and inclusive of all data, providing a coherent and structured basis for the analysis of the data and development of the theory. (See page 90 for more details of this process). From the categorical analysis, it was then possible to develop more abstract concepts and theory. The theory explores the relations between categories and suggests explanations for the particular social situation of the wine industry investigated by the study and for the behaviour of the people operating in that milieu.

A comprehensive discussion of the data, analysis, theory and implications of this process is presented in Part 3 of the thesis, but there is no attempt to validate the theory. As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, it is impossible to test a theory using the same data from which the theory was developed. Validation requires a new data set – in this instance different wine regions and/or case studies – to test the hypotheses. While it would be an interesting and useful extension of this research it is beyond the scope of the project. The aim of this project is to explore the social

situation of the wine industry in the two regions, offer a detailed ethnography of the selected producers, and generate theory from the data collected.

The trustworthiness of the research (data, analysis and verification) was assured by a number of different processes throughout all phases of the project. Triangulation via the use of multiple data sources – interviews, documentation, and observations – ensured that the concepts were explored from a range of perspectives, thus verifying the findings. Negative case analysis was used during the category refinement process to find if any themes were contradicted by the evidence, and only after this had been done were the categories were set. The entire research process, from setting the sample, through data collection and analysis, and theory generation, was reviewed and critiqued by my two research advisors, and several other interested and knowledgeable parties (in academia and in the wine industry). They sought out inconsistencies and omissions, and offered suggestions to improve the research and its credibility. In this way, if the evidence were reviewed by an independent other, they would arrive at similar conclusions to those presented here.

### 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

In order to situate the case studies and ethnographical research in their proper context, it is imperative to understand the historical background of wine and its current situation. Therefore, this chapter presents a sociocultural history of wine from a global perspective, and a regional perspective – Bordeaux and Victoria. It also describes the contemporary situation of both regions in a global context. Understanding the development of the wine industry, market and consumption in this broad sense gives meaning and depth to the study of the individual wineries presented in Part 3.

#### 3.1. GLOBAL WINE HISTORY

Following its inauspicious beginnings as the spontaneous fermentation of wild grapes in what is now Iran, wine seemed destined to conquer the world. In ancient times, viticulture and wine production spread throughout Egypt, Rome, Greece, and Europe, creating the foundations for what has become a global product with cultural significance in most regions of the world. Wine is now produced all over the globe, resulting in diverse combinations of grape variety, soil, climate, aspect, winemaking and maturation techniques, and packaging. Consistent with this diversity of production, wine has also played many different roles in cultures around the world throughout its history. In order to understand wine culture in the present, it is necessary to grasp the significance of its history and the way this has shaped its role in society through the ages.

The origins of wine can be traced back many thousands of years to the parts of the world that were geographically and climatically suitable for grape growing, and where *vitis vinifera*, the species of grape vine most suited to making wine, was available. The earliest evidence of grapes is in the form of 8,000 year old seeds in Georgia, and the earliest evidence of wine dates back 7,400 years to residue found on clay pots in Iran (Hereford 2016). The birth of wine, thus, occurred in the hills of Caucasus, Taurus and Zagros to the east of the Mediterranean Sea, where nomadic peoples probably made

wine from wild grapes, although Phillips (2000) asserts that its importance in society must have been limited until the transition to settled societies led to cultivation of grapes and other fruits, and the development of vessels suitable for fermentation and storage (Charters 2006). Wine production was dependant on a settled society due to the time required for vines to produce fruit. Phillips even goes so far as to suggest that wine may have been an incentive to become a settled society (Charters 2006). The earliest evidence of grapes and winemaking – the world’s first winery – is around 6,100 years old and was found in the Areni-1 caves in Armenia (Hereford 2016). Winery facilities in the Areni caves – fermenting vats, a grape press, and subterranean clay storage vessels – and remains of rituals and burials indicate that wine was integrated into society for these people (Hereford 2016).

Viticulture began to spread around 4000BCE, moving north into Turkey and south to Sumer, reaching Egypt by 2600BCE (Charters 2006, 16). The existence and importance of wine in early times as a beverage and object of cultural significance are clearly linked to geographical suitability for viticulture. A suitable climate for the cultivation of vines provided the potential for wine production, but societal motivation was the crucial element. Actual cultivation and production were “human activities that reflected social, economic and cultural decisions, and these were in their turn determined by the economic and social value attributed to wine” (Phillips 2000, 11). Phillips (2000) argues that there were a number of important reasons for the spread of viticulture in the ancient world: firstly, that after being exposed to wine via imports and as a market for wine developed, societies began wine production to meet demand locally; secondly, that wine “became endowed with powerful cultural meanings, both religious and secular” (Phillips 2000, 11); thirdly, that it was a profitable agricultural product; and finally that the spread of wine-drinking cultures necessitated a corresponding spread of wine-producing regions” (Phillips 2000, 12).

Wine flourished under the rule of the Egyptian Pharaohs when “knowledge of viticulture and winemaking was meticulously expanded” (Dominé 2004, 16). However, small quantities and high prices meant that it remained a drink of the elite (Phillips 2000). Murals from Egyptian tombs show scenes of viticulture, winemaking and consumption (Legouy and Boulanger 2008, 119), and attest to its importance in

society, both as a locally produced and consumed product, and as an important export product traded along the Nile Delta (Dominé 2004, 16). Wine was a part of daily life as an agricultural activity and tradable product, but it also had religious significance. It was poured as a libation to the Gods in religious rituals and its placement around the body of the pharaoh in the tomb, rather than in the store room with food and other objects (Guasch-Jané et al. 2006), indicates that its role in religion and culture was significant. The scarcity and cost of wine contributed to its status as a luxury drink, where it became a symbol of the wealthy and powerful status of those who could afford to consume it (Phillips 2000). In Mesopotamia and Egypt the elite drank wine while the masses drank beer.

While wine played a key role in ancient Egypt – as a product, religious symbol and marker of social distinction – its significance was magnified enormously in Ancient Greece. Wine was exported from Egypt to Crete, where by 1100BCE it was being produced. The Greeks expanded wine's social and geographical territory rapidly and by the 5th century BCE consumption and production were both firmly entrenched in all levels of society, consumed by rich and poor alike (Phillips 2000). Original murals and documents from attest to the integral place of wine in society – for enjoyment at the banquet table and symposium, for sustenance as an everyday beverage, for health in medicine and for offerings in religious rituals. The ancient links between wine and religion were maintained – wine was considered a divine gift of the Greek god Dionysus, which “freed man from his day-to-day worries ... thanks in no small part to the intoxicating effects” (Dominé 2004, 19). Restraint, however, was the key to civility: the intoxicating effects of wine were perceived as beneficial in moderation, but drunkenness was frowned upon as barbarian behaviour (Phillips 2000, 45). As such, wine and the context of its consumption were social markers indicating inclusion or exclusion from different groups.

As the Greek Empire expanded into southern Europe and beyond, the vine followed, to support the new colonies and to secure supplies for the Empire. By this stage wine was considered an essential part of everyday life. A similar pattern of expansion ensued under the Roman Empire, with viticulture spreading as far as Germany in the north and Bordeaux in the west. Towards the end of the first century BCE and first few centuries



AD a coherent body of wine writing emerged, discussing viticulture, winemaking and consumption (Phillips 2000, 35). Around this time rapid population growth in Rome increased demand and therefore production of wine. Wine consumption became the norm for all members of society with an average consumption of half a litre per person per day (Phillips 2000, 35). Class distinction was marked by wine quality and this era saw the emergence of wine connoisseurship (Charters 2006, 18). Not surprisingly, in Rome where wine was regarded so positively, Bacchus, the god of wine and ecstasy, was widely celebrated.

Inevitably, the golden age of Rome and wine began to fade. As Rome lost its power, “the decadent pleasures of the declining Roman Empire no longer seemed to have their place” (Dominé 2004, 18), and its disintegration heralded the decline of nearly all wine-producing regions in Europe. For the once-powerful Romans, wine was transformed from an integral part of society at all levels to a simple agricultural activity for personal consumption (Charters 2006, 25). The invasions in the 5th and 6th centuries by the Barbarians – non-wine-producing peoples from northern Europe – exacerbated the decline in wine production and consumption. Viticultural knowledge became the preserve of the Church, due to the necessity for wine in Catholic rites and the maintenance of scholarship and libraries by the clergy (Charters 2006, 25). The need for wine in Christian rituals ensured continued production, albeit in tiny amounts.

While the Barbarian invasions are often cited as the main reason for the decline of wine in Europe (frequently to support the modern idea of wine as a “civilised” drink) others argue that the rise of Islam was much more influential (Phillips 2000, 79). Prohibition of both production and consumption of alcohol under Islamic law had grave consequences for wine with the expansion of the Islamic Empire during the 7th century and the subsequent Arab rule of Spain and Portugal for almost 800 years. Viticulture did not cease entirely in Spain and Portugal, probably due largely to the cultural significance it had and therefore the difficulty in enforcing cultural change, but also as the new rulers recognised its potential as an export product generating income and taxes.

To the north, the crowning of Charlemagne and the beginning of the Carolingian Empire around 800 proved more fortuitous for viticulture. Wine production was actively encouraged; during this period many of the famous vineyards of Burgundy were planted, and Champagne emerged as a wine-producing region (Phillips 2000, 75). As Champagne had been established as the traditional site for the coronation of French kings for centuries, the royal association with wines was cemented beyond doubt.

It was not until the Middle Ages, however, that wine production once again became an important part of society, and by extension the economy. The expansion of the European vineyard at this time laid the foundations for the modern wine industry – the emergence of many of the most of prestigious wine-producing regions in Europe occurred amidst massive viticultural growth in France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and Eastern Europe (Phillips 2000, 85). The growth in the industry was a direct result of an increased demand for wine, fuelled by rapid population growth; Europe’s population doubled between 1000 and 1300 (Phillips 2000, 86). Increased urbanisation (Charters 2006, 26) amplified the wealthy middle class for whom wine, as a luxury good, was a symbol of their status.

Meanwhile, the connection between wine and religion became stronger during the Middle Ages – not only did wine have symbolic representation as part of Christian religion, but it was also entwined with the church for economic reasons. The relationship of wine and church became mutually beneficial: “Monasteries especially preserved the knowledge of how to make wine but also had the economic resources to spend on good equipment and to expand their knowledge base. Monasteries would provide hospitality to travellers; in viticultural areas it allowed them to showcase their wines to nobles, royalty and emissaries passing through” (Charters 2006, 27). The intermingling of politics and religion meant that wine became the most important French export during the Middle Ages. The high quality of French wines compared with much of Europe also established the basis for the current high status of wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy (Dominé 2004, 18).

By the 16th century, vineyards were planted in most of Europe, as far north as Scotland and Scandinavia (Legouy and Boulanger 2008, 120), however widespread changes in climate reduced this region significantly. In the 17th century the gradual decline in temperatures throughout Europe contracted the northern limits for viticulture to the north of France and Germany, and extended from there south to the Mediterranean. Unable to produce wine locally, and as one of the most important political and military world powers, England became the driving force behind the global wine trade (Dominé 2004, 22). The fortunes of Europe's wine-producing regions rose and fell according to shifting allegiances with England. The reputation of Bordeaux wine was established during this period as the region was under English rule for most of the 13th to the 15th centuries. Cut off politically from France, and with a direct trade route to England, the London market was the destination for most Bordeaux wine.

The 16th to 18th centuries were a time of great social and economic change in Europe, from which emerged the beginnings of capitalism. During the first half of the 17th century the Dutch – the most powerful trading nation at the time – had a crucial influence on the European wine industry, particularly in France, Spain and Portugal. They dominated the trade in wine and thus were able to influence production, quality and style. In Bordeaux the Dutch were instrumental in changing the style of red wine from the light “clarets” so loved by the English to more full-bodied, stronger and sweeter wines (Phillips 2000, 127). They left an indelible mark on the Bordeaux vineyard by reclaiming marshland north of the city (the Médoc) for viticulture. This area has become one of the world's most prestigious wine regions.

The late 17th century brought serious political unrest between the English and French, which shifted the focus of wine production to Spain and Portugal. London had become a major centre of general commerce and wine trade, no doubt due to its geographical location and direct shipping links with the Atlantic coast of France and Portugal. Shifting political allegiances made port wine a very fashionable drink in London society; Port, along with Tokay, Sauternes and Riesling, catered to the sweet preference of consumers (Phillips 2000, 141). The rarity and expense of the newly invented sparkling Champagne ensured it a prominent place in fashionable society and it became a “sign

of luxurious and wealthy lifestyle in both England and France” (Phillips 2000, 138). Thus, the constant struggles between the rulers of England, France and the Netherlands greatly influenced the development of the wine industry, but conversely, the demand for wine influenced government, taxes, laws and the politics of Europe.

The 17th century also saw the start of vineyards in the New World. Vineyards were planted by Tuscan and English settlers in North America, the Dutch in South Africa, and the Spanish in Central and South America. For many of these settlers the production of wine stemmed from a desire to make their new lands more like home, where wine was part of the diet and culture (Phillips 2000, 157). Transporting wine across the seas was neither practical nor economical, thus local production was essential if they were to continue living in the European tradition. For the Spanish colonists, wine was an essential part of the process of converting the world to Catholicism (Charters 2006, 27). Without the sacrament, conversion was not possible and the evangelical nature of their mission was doomed to fail before it began. Viticulture in the Spanish colonies was so successful that it began to worry wine producers in Spain and restrictions were implemented to limit new plantings (Phillips 2000, 158). The English colonies, on the other hand, were perceived as a potential solution to England’s dependence on Europe for the supply of wine (Phillips 2000, 162). However, due to lack of expertise and without wine embedded into British culture, wine production was not significant in the colonies until much later.

Significant changes were also afoot in the wine industry in Europe: revolution in the vineyard and cellar in the mid-17th century yielded a range of technical improvements that continued into the 18th century, leading to increased control and quality in all aspects of wine production. Ampelographic categorization, soil science, adding beet sugar to must during fermentation, the use of sulphur as a stabiliser, glass bottles, corks, filters and pipe-systems all contributed to the evolution of wine production into the modern wine industry (Charters 2006, 32). Consumption habits also developed in line with societal changes. Consumerism had arrived, and with it advertising, fashions and increased wealth (Charters 2006, 33), all stimulating the market desire for wine and its associated social cachet. The industry continued to grow throughout the 18th century. A reduction of internal taxes and better transport meant consumers were

able to source wines from all over Europe. This meant that consumers became more discerning and demanding, and the quality of wines became much more important.

By the 19th century the European wine industry had become a large and very significant agricultural and economic activity. This century would see the 1855 Bordeaux classification, the creation of the typical Bordeaux château, the first cooperatives (in Tuscany), and the creation of schools of viticulture and research institutes in Bavaria and Prussia, which contributed to improvements in wine quality. While the sharing of research and techniques was of benefit to the industry, increased movement of people and products also brought serious problems. In 1847 powdery mildew arrived in France, then spread through Europe; in 1863 phylloxera arrived in the Midi in France and during the following 40 years caused widespread destruction throughout the world, decimating the industry; 1878 brought downy mildew; then in 1880 came black rot (Charters 2006, 36-7). Technology eventually presented viable solutions to all of these issues, but not before they changed the face of the wine industry and wine-producing societies. By the early 20th century the global wine industry was severely shaken by phylloxera, the temperance movement, economic crisis and war. The tentative moves to recovery in the 1920s and early 1930s came to an abrupt halt with the onset of the Second World War.

After the Second World War, the move to mechanisation, industrialisation and mass production radically changed wine production in many parts of the world (Dominé 2004, 27). Mechanisation in the vineyard, improved disease control, and better vines all paved the way for a significant increase in global wine production, concentrating on bulk wine. This came at the same time as post-war social changes heralded a general decrease in per capita consumption in traditional wine-drinking countries, although small increases in consumption in the New World (Phillips 2000, 312). The appellation system of geographical designation was introduced, codified and legalised in France in the first half of the 20th century in an attempt to help the industry recover from the many decades of difficulties. Similar appellation concepts were subsequently implemented all over Europe and, in recent decades in the New World (eg. in the 1980s in America, and the 1990s in Australia).

Major technological advances have occurred since the 1950s with many wineries operating under strict scientific conditions. Perhaps as a reaction to this, the 1970s saw the beginning of the organic and biodynamic movements focusing on returning to a more “natural” approach to wine making. This approach, while far from dominant, has maintained its presence, alongside other experimental techniques such as reviving uncommon, old varieties.

Overproduction, rapidly expanding wine regions in the New World, changing tastes and globalisation have all had their impact on wine in the second half of the twentieth century, leading to what is now a global industry of enormous diversity. Wine is now produced and consumed on every continent (except Antarctica), primarily in Europe, North and South America and Australia. The European countries which were instrumental in the development of wine under ancient Roman rule are still dominant in terms of volume of both production and consumption, however unprecedented development in the New World increasingly challenges traditional perspectives on wine.

Throughout history, wine has assumed many roles, and continues to do so as it finds new areas of production and consumption. In its most basic form, it is a beverage and an intoxicating substance, yet its role as an object of cultural significance cannot be overestimated. The power and importance of wine in cultures is evidenced by its many and varied religious roles and its strong links with politics. Less apparent, but no less important, wine is resolutely integrated into the everyday practices of many societies – wine with a meal, for celebration, as a social norm, as a shared activity. The rich history of wine has only been touched upon in this chapter, however, this overview serves to situate the study in context, explaining in part the complexity, diversity and historical resonance of contemporary wine culture.

### 3.2.A HISTORY OF WINE IN BORDEAUX

Bordeaux has always been a trading town. Some 100km inland from the Atlantic coast, it is protected from the harsh coastal weather, yet well connected with sea routes and

inland trade via the Garonne River. It is only in the last century that the importance of the Garonne as the main thoroughfare for trade both upriver and down, and the ensuing economic prosperity, has diminished.

Known as Burdigala to the Greeks and Romans (Johnson 2004, 48), Bordeaux is situated on a bend of the Garonne River. The inside curve of the *porte de la lune* (Bordeaux was nicknamed the Port of the Moon after the shape of the bend) had a large expanse of gravel which allowed for easy access to the shore – a crucial element for a successful port town. The first written account of Burdigala dates from the reign of Augustus (27BCE – AD14), when Greek geographer Strabo I wrote of the town. He described it as a wine emporium as vines were not planted in the vicinity (Johnson 2004, 48), confirming Bordeaux's primary function from its earliest days as a wine trading centre. Mention of a negotiator Brittanicus (Johnson 2004, 48) at the port of Bordeaux in the first century confirms this orientation and indicates that the wine trade was highly organised even at that stage. Wine traded in Bordeaux came from the High Country, inland up the Dordogne and Garonne Rivers, which was supplying wine to Bordeaux well before Bordeaux was producing any wine itself (Johnson 2004, 49).

Later written accounts indicate that the Bordeaux vineyard was planted in the middle of the first century. In 71AD Pliny discussed the Bordeaux vineyard and his understanding of the grape varieties used (Johnson 2004, 50). Under Roman rule the wine trade prospered and the vineyard area immediately surrounding the city grew. Wine produced in Bordeaux would have supplied the local inhabitants with their daily beverage, but more importantly it was a valuable trading commodity. Trading wine from the north was already profitable, therefore if the city could produce its own wine significant profits would be retained in Bordeaux (Johnson 2004, 50).

The decline of the Roman empire exposed the city of Bordeaux to a series of attacks from the north during the fifth century (Johnson 2004, 75). After invasions by the Goths in 406 and the Vandals in 408, Bordeaux was conquered by the Visigoths in 414. They continued to manage the local government and land based on the Roman model and intermarried with the local community. The Franks invaded in the late fifth century and subsequent invasions during the seventh century by the Gascons, Saracens and

Carolingian Franks meant extended political upheaval in the region. Throughout this time wine production continued and wines from Bordeaux and the High Country were exported to Ireland and the western Celtic fringes of Britain. With the total destruction of the city at the hands of the Vikings in 870, vinous activity in Bordeaux came to an abrupt halt and did not recommence for 250 years (Johnson 2004, 75).

After a long period of inactivity, the wine industry began to develop again during the twelfth century. In the following hundred years wine reasserted its position as one of Bordeaux's important commercial endeavours. And while some contemporary marketing implies that Bordeaux's reputation for quality wines has existed for two thousand years, it was not until the 12th century that Bordeaux wines began to be associated with quality.

Many historians (Ulin 1987, Réjalot 2003, Lachiver 1988) have argued that the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry Plantagenêt, Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou, in 1152 was the single most influential event in the history of wine in Bordeaux. This marriage forged the political ties between Aquitaine and England, which exerted a critical and enduring influence on the Bordeaux wine industry (Luddington 2013). The following year, Henry became King of England (which included Bordeaux) and his wife no doubt had a preference for wines from her homeland. The first official advantage for the wines of Bordeaux occurred in 1203. Eleanor's son, recently crowned King John of England, lowered taxes on Bordeaux wine in exchange for ships and support from Bordeaux in the war against France (Phillips 2000, 87). This enabled Bordeaux wines to be sold at a lower price than wines from other regions, affording them significant advantage in the English market. King John also placed a royal wine order as a reward for Bordeaux's resistance to the attempted Spanish invasion, thus making it London's official cellar (Hinnewinkel 2004, 25). Any remaining competition in the English market was erased in 1224 when all trade links with La Rochelle were severed when it was captured by the king of France (Phillips 2000, 87). Thus, it was not until the 13th century that Bordeaux emerged as a major player in the international wine trade (Phillips 2000, 87). These events laid the foundations for the ensuing reputation and supremacy of Bordeaux wine, with politics more than anything else influencing progress.



With the rapid development of the English market for Bordeaux wines, the Bordeaux region became intensively planted with vines (Phillips 2000, 88). In addition to local production, large quantities of wine from the High Country were still being exported via Bordeaux; it is around this time that the term “clairet” emerged, distinguishing the lighter Bordeaux wines from the dark reds of the High Country and Spain (Phillips 2000, 88). “Clairet” from Bordeaux probably resembled the modern Beaujolais Nouveau – light, fruity and pale in colour – and was the preferred style of the English consumer.

This distinction of Bordeaux wines by name was further enhanced by restrictive trading policies that were introduced to protect Bordeaux wines in the marketplace. *Les Privilèges de Bordeaux* (the official legal ruling governing wine trade), instigated during the 12th century, prevented wines from outside Bordeaux from entering the port until a fixed date, by which time the Bordeaux vintage had been sold. In a time when wine did not age well – it was best drunk in the same year that it was produced – these restrictions created a hierarchy in the market, with Bordeaux placed firmly at the top. The only export route for wines from the High Country was down the river via Bordeaux, thus there was no way of escaping the punishing conditions imposed. Bordeaux wines would have been in much better condition when they arrived in England than the wines from the High Country which had lost quality while sitting in the port. In this way the wine producers of Bordeaux cleverly used legal means to impede rival producers and thereby enhance their own reputation. Motivated more by taxation than naming rights, this distinction between wines from Bordeaux and wines from elsewhere created the first geographically delineated wine area (Hinnewinkel 2004, 27).

By the mid 13th century the Bordeaux wine trade was at its zenith (Phillips 2000, 90). Hundreds of ships left the port on the Garonne each October laden with wine; exports amounted to almost 100,000 barrels (900 million litres) annually (Phillips 2000, 90). Most of these ships were bound for England, the main market for Bordeaux wine. More than 75% of Bordeaux wine exports went to England, supplying the upper classes and more than three quarters of the English royal wine (including supplies for the royal household, civil servants, gifts, and the English army) (Johnson 2004, 78). Other ships

were destined for Spain, Flanders, Germany and other parts of France (Phillips 2000, 89). The volume of trade testifies to the immense production and wide distribution of Bordeaux wine.

Nevertheless, the golden age of Bordeaux wine was not to last. Like any economy that relies heavily on one product “Bordeaux was sensitive to changes in the market, which often reflected political, economic and social instability” (Phillips 2000, 89). Exports fell in 1324 when war broke out between England and France, and dropped further the following decade with the outbreak of the Hundred Years War (Phillips 2000, 90). Not long after, the Black Death swept across Europe in the 1340s, killing around one third of Europe’s population and disrupting production, market and trade. The Bordeaux wine industry had barely recovered from these events when the invading French armies damaged large parts of the vineyard as they captured the city in 1453 (Phillips 2000, 89).

While damage to the vines could be repaired with time, French rule cut Bordeaux off from England, its most important market; this proved disastrous for Bordeaux wine producers (Ulin 1996, 71). Although wine exports to England were not actually prohibited under French rule because the value of the wine trade to the economy was recognised, high taxes reduced exports and drove up prices (Phillips 2000, 90). A small market for high-quality and expensive wines from Bordeaux continued, but the English now sourced the bulk of their wine from Spain and Portugal, their new political allies.

The change in political control of Bordeaux left a gap in the market and in the wine business. The Dutch took advantage of this opening, arriving in Bordeaux around 1500 (Hinnewinkel 2004, 40). As Europe’s trading powerhouse, they were involved in all forms of commerce, including viticulture and winemaking (Phillips 2000, 127). Over the two hundred years, Dutch involvement resulted in a profound transformation of the Bordeaux wine industry, influencing production, quality and wine styles (Phillips 2000, 127). Given the Dutch preference for sweet white wines and dark, full-bodied red wines, many viticulturists began planting new grape varieties to suit the Dutch taste (Hinnewinkel 2004, 40). Having discovered that alluvial reclaimed lands produce excellent strong reds, Dutch technicians in the 17th century drained land along the

banks of major rivers in Bordeaux, reclaiming marshland (palus) suited to vines. In doing so they created the world famous Médoc region, on which much of Bordeaux's modern reputation relies. The influence of Dutch tastes during this period saw the beginnings of the signature Sauternes botrytis wines (Phillips 2000, 128) from the south of the city and the dark reds from the Médoc. The Dutch were also responsible for improving the durability of wine by burning sulphur in barrels to kill bacteria before filling (Phillips 2000, 128). As well as technical innovations, they introduced new administrative measures – most notably the wine tax of 1647 which is the first known classification of Bordeaux wines (Hinnewinkel 2004, 40).

The English and French governments were not content to allow the Dutch to control the commercial activities of the region and introduced policies to reduce their power. The English made it almost impossible for foreign ships to enter their ports, while in the 1660s the French government imposed tariffs on foreign merchants (Phillips 2000, 129). This created a disadvantage for Bordeaux wine on the international market (where the majority of its production was destined), leading to conflict between Bordeaux and the French government. The Dutch had significantly changed and improved Bordeaux wine, but politics, particularly the relationship between France and England, proved once again to be the most powerful factor in deciding the fate of the industry.

The final decades of the seventeenth century created havoc for Bordeaux trade as conflicts between England and France resulted in high taxes and numerous bans of French wine to England (Phillips 2000, 130). The beginning of the eighteenth century brought a new war between England and France, and the English market was once again closed. London society was no more content to stop drinking Bordeaux wine than Bordeaux wine producers were content to lose their market, and thus a curious situation arose where extraordinary amounts of wine were allegedly stolen at sea then sold at auction in London. The volume of wine supposedly stolen suggests that arrangements had in fact been made between the Bordeaux wine merchants and the English privateers to circumvent the restrictive policies (Phillips 2000, 179). Huge prices were paid at these auctions for wines such as Haut-Brion and Margaux by London's

thirsty elite – the scarcity and expense of Bordeaux wines making them all the more desirable as a status symbol.

The significance of the connection between social status and Bordeaux wine took root in the sixteenth century. Until the end of the Middle Ages, wineries in Bordeaux were owned by lay and ecclesiastic “grand seigneurs” who operated on feudal principals (Réjalot 2003, 226). The sixteenth century brought significant change to the organisation of the Bordeaux wine industry and is considered the beginning of the modern Bordeaux wine world (Réjalot 2003, 226). Power began to shift away from the church and noble families to the bourgeoisie: “There is then, a direct correlation between the modern French bourgeoisie and the materialisation of powerful viticultural landlords in Bordeaux.” (Réjalot 2003, 228).<sup>16</sup> Réjalot, in his work on the development of the Bordeaux châteaux, asserts that there were three main contributors to the shift: lay culture and the prominence of the jurists of Bordeaux; a return to the ancient values that underpin modern aristocratic life; and the distinction between Catholics seeking power and status and Protestants with their strong work ethic and aversion to risk (Réjalot 2003, 210).

This social distinction between the “business ethic” and the “aristocratic ethic” (Réjalot 2003, 224) was reflected in the practical distinction between the protestant négociants who respected commerce and hard work and the catholic vineyard owners who perceived agriculture as the epitome of noble activities (Réjalot 2003, 240). For the lawyers of Bordeaux, vineyard ownership enabled them to climb the social ladder. The widespread damage and high repair costs caused by the freezing temperatures of 1709 created the perfect opportunity for wealthy jurists to acquire vineyards cheaply from viticulturists in financial difficulty. By the end of the reign of Louis XIV in 1715 more than 70 percent of Bordelais lawyers owned a rural property close to the city (Réjalot 2003, 237). By the nineteenth century wine had become such an important part of Bordeaux society and economics that simply owning a vineyard was not enough. It was in this era that the “grands domaines” were created, complete with impressive

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<sup>16</sup> Author’s translation. “Il y a donc corrélation étroite entre bourgeoisie moderne ‘à la française’ et apparition des grandes propriétaires viticoles bordelaises”

châteaux to demonstrate the status of the proprietor. A new path of social advancement had been generated: “a successive path from the commercial bourgeoisie to the gentry, then the legal nobility, forming a land-based aristocracy with little concern with matters of law, but on the contrary, very protective of their provincial interests” (Réjalot 2003, 230).<sup>17</sup> In addition to having significant capital available to invest in methods to produce better quality wines, wealthy vineyard owners – unlike farmers – were not subject to the Bordeaux city tax when the wines entered the port because they retained their city residences. Wine was the main source of income for noble landowners (and importantly was a morally acceptable way of generating income); quality wines were particularly profitable. As the subdelegate of Bordeaux wrote in 1744, over half of his jurisdiction was under vine and 90 per cent of this land was owned by nobles (Phillips 2000, 183).

Not surprisingly in a city and industry run by lawyers, many laws were enacted concerning the wine industry and a number of restrictions were put in place to give Bordeaux wines an advantage in the market place. In 1758 the parliament prohibited the entry of non-Bordeaux wine into the city (Hinnewinkel 2004, 77); in 1764 the blending of Spanish wine with Bordeaux wine was forbidden and at the same time a new requirement that each barrel must be marked with the name of the winery and owner was introduced (Hinnewinkel 2004, 77); in 1776 the *privilèges* were abolished, but wine from the High Country could only enter the city on certain days (Hinnewinkel 2004, 78); finally, in 1789 all restrictions were ended. Although the *privilèges* were officially removed, the reputation that had developed over 500 years of advantageous circumstances could not be erased so easily. These trading policies invented by the winery owners to benefit their wines created a reputation that still endures.

Another key development in the marketing and reputation of Bordeaux wines was the “notion of distinctive wines from specific estates” (Phillips 2000, 142). Arnaud de Pontac, the head of a powerful, wealthy and noble Bordeaux family and president of the royal court of Bordeaux, began naming and labelling the family wines after the

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<sup>17</sup> Author’s translation. “passage successif de la bourgeoisie marchande à la ‘gentry’, puis à la noblesse de robe, formation d’une aristocratie territoriale peu préoccupée de la vie de la Cour mais au contraire très soucieuse de ses intérêts matériels provinciaux”

vineyard, Haut-Brion. As is still the convention, this was the name of the premium wine, while the second wine bore the family name of Pontac. With limited supply and high prices “De Pontac thus created a premium wine that appealed to the status-conscious London wine market” (Phillips 2000, 142). Then in 1666 De Pontac opened an expensive and exclusive restaurant in London – Pontac’s Head – where his wines and other quality wines were served. The launch of the full-bodied Haut-Brion red wine in London coincided with a change in English tastes away from the lighter clarets (Phillips 2000, 143), which undoubtedly contributed to the astounding success of the restaurant.

Following the marketing innovations of De Pontac with Haut-Brion, the reputation of individual regions and estates became increasingly significant in the 18th century, and by the middle of the century some great Bordeaux names were well known: Haut-Brion, Margaux, Lafite, Latour (Phillips 2000, 191). Wine quality was linked to the wealth of the proprietor and his ability to refine the winemaking process, drawing on the surge in scientific research on wine production during the Enlightenment. “Those who had the motivation and the resources to improve their wines paid attention to all stages of the process” (Phillips 2000, 190) and gained high prices for quality wines, polarising the industry. On the one hand a small-scale, luxury product and on the other, bulk wine made for local consumption (Phillips 2000, 222). For both sectors, improvement in productivity led to increased volumes, and advances in transport and rail links to Paris during the nineteenth century assisted Bordeaux in selling more to the urban market (Phillips 2000, 223).

During the first half of the nineteenth century advances in scientific texts on wine production was complemented by publications written mainly by English physicians advocating the health benefits of quality wine (Phillips 2000, 225). This focus created an increased interest in defining “quality” with relation to wine, culminating in the 1855 classification. The classification was originally constructed for the 1855 Universal Exposition in Paris and ranked the top 61 producers in Bordeaux (all from the Médoc except Haut-Brion). It was based on price and divided the producers into five tiers – crus or growths. Despite the original intention that the classification would be reviewed and updated periodically, there has only been one change since 1855:

Château Mouton-Rothschild was elevated from second to first growth in 1973. The longevity and importance of the 1855 classification testifies to the significance of reputation in the Bordeaux wine industry.

In addition to the producers, négociants and courtiers were equally critical to the wine trade in Bordeaux. Négociants bought wine as soon as it had been made and took charge of blending and aging in their cellars. In the 19th century the négociant was the only trade not looked down upon socially and many négociants hoped to become parliamentarians (Réjalot 2003, 229), aspiring to luxury and social standing (Réjalot 2003, 231). In keeping with these aspirations, extensive construction in the négociants quarter, the Quai de Chartrons, occurred at this time, as négociants built elaborate residences above their cellars, seeking to display their status and wealth. They retained their significance until the mid-20th century when their influence was greatly reduced by the introduction of the “mise en bouteille au château” policy which meant they were no longer responsible for blending, aging and bottling (Hinnewinkel 2004, 40).

This policy, among others, was in response to the escalating production difficulties experienced by the wine industry in the last decades of the 19th century. The phylloxera epidemic was no doubt the most serious, decimating most of the French vineyard in the 1880s and 1890s. During and after the phylloxera crisis, many wine substitutes were invented, and many wines from other regions and countries were passed off as Bordeaux wine. In an effort to regain its reputation for fine wines and help the industry get back on its feet, the government imposed new regulations: the law on the notion of “origin” was first introduced in 1908; the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC) delimitation for Bordeaux, based on the administrative area of the Gironde, was established in 1911 (Hinnewinkel 2004, 90); laws governing grape variety were passed in 1927, followed by restrictions on the addition of sugar in 1929, and other production regulations in 1936 (Hinnewinkel 2004, 89); the official AOC system was instituted in France in 1935; The many rules of the AOC were enforced in 1952, specifying the criteria of wines labelled “Bordeaux” and as well as the specifics of each of its sub-regions. The Graves was classified in 1953, Saint-Emilion in 1955. Mandatory tasting was introduced into the AOC process in 1973, and the same year, the only change to the 1855 classification in its entire history occurred: Château Mouton-

Rothschild moved up a step to become a 1<sup>st</sup> growth. According to Réjalot, the codification of the AOC in 1935 significantly changed the operation of the Bordeaux wine world as it greatly reduced the power of the négociant.

The current situation in Bordeaux is complex. While the wine industry is still intertwined with the bourgeoisie and social status, at the same time it is operating in an increasingly globalised world and represents big business. The whole range of wine producers is represented, from the small vigneron who crushes his grapes in the local cooperative, to multinational corporations producing wine for the luxury market. With around two thousand producers, 60 appellations and an annual production of more than five million hectolitres. As a result of this complex political and social history, Bordeaux is a very diverse region united under the name and reputation of the city.

### 3.3. GRANDS CRUS CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

The Médoc was drained by Dutch technicians in the seventeenth century and the resulting high percentage of gravel in the soil is said to be responsible for the quality of the terroir. The region is home to all the Grands Crus producers except one. The region produces 300 000 hectolitres annually of which approximately 20 percent is classified Grand Cru. All classified wines are red, made from a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Carmenère. The percentage of these five grapes and the inclusion of other varieties varies depending on individual appellations, however, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are dominant. In recent times, particularly during the last twenty years, the 1<sup>st</sup> growths can fetch in excess of \$1000 per bottle retail. The elevated prices have been fuelled by demand from the Asian market for prestigious brands, and has no doubt improved wine quality as the châteaux are able to invest in better equipment and resources. The industry is a very complex organisation and for the Grands Crus, most châteaux sell 98% of their production via the courtiers to négociants at the *En Primeurs* campaign two years before the wine is bottled.



### 3.4.A HISTORY OF WINE IN VICTORIA

Having looked at the history of Bordeaux, we now turn our attention to Victoria. Australia's first encounter with the vine and wine occurred with the arrival of the first English settlers from England in 1788. Among the many supplies unloaded at the new colony at Sydney Cove were several rooted vines and a handful of seeds of the "claret" grape (Beeston 2000, 2). The insignificant size of this first vinous arrival prefigured the similarly minor role that grapes were to play in Australia for many years to come.

These first vines and seeds were planted at Sydney Cove in Captain Arthur Phillip in the hope that Australian wine would "become an indispensable part of the luxury of European tables" (Faith 1991, 11). Further experiments were conducted in the colony of New South Wales by early settlers, such as Lieutenant John MacArthur and Phillip Schaffer (McIntyre 2012). Despite their efforts, they found little success in the vineyard, reflecting their lack of knowledge and the fact that there was not a single viticulturist in the colony, and, in MacArthur's words, "an almost entire absence of practical acquaintance with its details" (Dunstan and Museum of Victoria 1994, 3).

It was not until the early 19th century that wine for more than personal consumption and curiosity was produced and recognised. Gregory Blaxland, who had been cultivating grapes in Sydney for some years (probably Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier), shipped wine to London in 1822 and won the Royal Society of Arts' medal for the first quality Australian wine (Beeston 2000, 13). Two years later, James Busby, the first champion of wine in Australia, arrived in Australia (McIntyre 2012, 63) intent on promoting wine in the colonies. Presumably in response to the lack of viticultural activity, Busby made an extensive tour of France and Spain, returning to Sydney with 362 cuttings from the botanical gardens in Montpellier. One set of cuttings was planted in Sydney, a duplicate collection in the Hunter Valley and other cuttings sent to various other regions (McIntyre 2012, 66). Busby also wrote a number of books intended to encourage Australian farmers to plant grapes and produce wine, and it was from books such as these that most viticultural and wine knowledge was gained. Busby's second book, *A Manual of Plain Directions for Planting and Cultivating Vineyards and for Making Wine in New South Wales*, was well received upon release in

1831 (Beeston 2000, 16) indicating a reasonable interest in viticulture by the agricultural public. His round trip to Europe in 1831 with several casks of wine proved that Australian wine could travel successfully; arriving back in Sydney, the wine was pronounced “perfectly sound” (Beeston 2000, 15).

The 1830s also saw the establishment of the settlement of Port Phillip: modern day Melbourne. As was customary at the time, John Batman (founder of the new colony and the city of Melbourne) exchanged goods with the local Aborigines for 250,000 hectares of land in 1835 (Beeston 2000, 37). By the end of the decade, the population had reached 2000 and Charles La Trobe had been installed as Melbourne’s superintendent (Beeston 2000, 37). La Trobe was a fortuitous choice for the vine as his French background and Swiss wife ensured an interest in encouraging wine production (Beeston 2000, 37). He planted his own vineyard at the government residence, “Jolimont” (Beeston 2000, 38), and supported the immigration of a number of Swiss vigneron who continued to plant vineyards in and around Melbourne.

Within ten years of its foundation there were not only numerous small vineyards in Melbourne and nearby areas, but also in Geelong and the Yarra Valley. There was a vineyard in what is now Collins Street (the business heart of the city) owned by Skene Craig, La Trobe’s Commissary Officer, another in the centre of Melbourne owned by Pelet, husband of La Trobe’s housekeeper. Yet another was established above the banks of the Yarra. In 1840 one of the pioneers of Victoria, John Pascoe Fawkner, a man of many pursuits, convict, inn-keeper and newspaper editor, planted ten acres (4 hectares) at his property, “Pascoe Vale”, near present-day Flemington. Soon South Yarra, Toorak and other parts of Melbourne’s nascent suburbia were dotted with vineyards. (Beeston 2000, 38)

The Yarra Valley was planted soon after the first vineyards in Melbourne. In 1837 William Ryrie moved from NSW to Yarra Yering and had planted one acre of vines by 1840. A number of Swiss followed, including Paul de Castella, who purchased part of Yarra Yering from Ryrie and planted 20,000 cuttings from Château Lafite. By 1857 100 acres (40 hectares) of the property were under vine and de Castella’s cabernet won

the gold cup for the best Victorian wine by the Melbourne newspaper *The Argus* (founded by the wine-loving editor, Fawkner) (Beeston 2000, 38). Vineyard planting was also underway in the Geelong area. 1842 saw the planting of vines at Pollock's Ford by David Louis Pettavel and Frederick Brequet, Swiss vigneronns (Beeston 2000, 39).

In the midst of all this vineyard activity, significant changes were happening in the new settlement. After several attempts, the colony of Port Phillip won its independence from New South Wales in 1851. To toast the occasion the wine poured was none other than a Melbourne wine from Pelet's vineyard (Beeston 2000, 39). The Victorian vineyard (164 acres/66 hectares in 1850) "was flourishing and would in the next half-century outgrow the vineyards of the mother colony and threaten those in South Australia" (Beeston 2000, 26). However, Australia's "infant wine industry needed continued drive, European expertise and above all willing markets, if it were to survive, and those markets, in a most unexpected way, it was about to obtain" (Beeston 2000, 45). 1851 was significant for Victoria and Australia as gold was discovered that year. Gold fever created substantial population expansion in Victoria and by the end of the decade the population exceeded 500,000 (more than five times greater than in 1851) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006), thus increasing the demand for wine. Like many other industries, "at this time the Victorian vine followed the mine – from Melbourne to Ballarat, Ararat, Bendigo and other regions and back again – to slake the thirsts not only of the miners but also of that thriving capital not far away" (Beeston 2000, 48).

In rural Victoria the French connection continued with the arrival of Jean and Anne Marie Trouette and Emile Blampied at Great Western in 1858. While gold may have been the original motivation for their relocation, wine soon became the focus. By 1867 they had planted 50,000 vines on their property, St Peters (Beeston 2000, 48), and began to be known for both their quality wines and fine celebrations (Dunstan and Museum of Victoria 1994, 122). At around the same time the Best brothers, having made their fortune from cattle yards and a slaughterhouse in Ararat, purchased land and planted grapes, and by 1877 the vintage produced 7000 gallons (31,850 litres) (Beeston 2000, 49). The famous Great Western drives – 3km of underground tunnels, the largest underground cellars in the Southern Hemisphere – were begun in 1868, dug

by unemployed miners, for stable storage for Seppelt's table wines, and later, in the 1890s, became the cellar for their sparkling wines.

While Great Western was producing significant amounts of wine and had a ready market in the grand gold town of Ballarat and cosmopolitan Melbourne, the north of the state was growing too. By 1884 Rutherglen had claimed the title of Victoria's largest wine region, producing mainly rich, ripe and high-alcohol red wines, a style that appealed to drinkers in the colony. Its commercial success was ensured by the extension of the North Eastern Railway connecting the region to Melbourne and a thirsty market:

With Melbourne being the leading wine market in Australia, any Victorian winemaker could justify virtually any expenditure on vineyards and wine-making equipment. Thus it is quite surprising that Melbourne did not become the Venice of the south, a city whose streets were flooded with cheap red wine of abundant strength. (Beeston 2000, 51)

Victorian wines had a distinct advantage in the Melbourne market due to the high taxes imposed on wines from other states.

In the 1860s the Victorian economy was very prosperous, increasing the demand for "luxury" items such as wine. While this did not guarantee success – many entrepreneurs encountered large difficulties in their attempts to set up and manage wine companies – the Victorian vineyard continued to grow. The Illustrated Australian News commented in 1866 that "the vineyard interest in Victoria, should it progress in the future as it has done in the last decade, will be entitled to rank as the fourth great producing interest of the Colony" (Beeston 2000, 63) and praised the beneficial effects of vineyards on the health and morals of the people. Wine was perceived as a health-giving, morally suitable, and cheap beverage that could be grown almost anywhere in Victoria (Beeston 2000, 63).

By this stage, Australian wine had made its debut on the international stage. At the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855, the same event that prompted the 1855 Bordeaux classification, Victorian wines were presented to the world (Beeston 2000, 26). While

the records indicate that most wines that made the long journey to Europe were of good quality, they were not always positively received by the Old World. At the Vienna Exhibition of 1873 the French judges highly praised a number of Victorian wines, but quickly withdrew in protest upon discovering that the wines were from Bendigo, stating that “wines of this quality must clearly be French” (Beeston 2000, 61) – a sentiment that continues, albeit less overtly, to this day.

The discovery of phylloxera near Geelong in 1875 should have immediately stopped the growth of the Victorian vineyard under the government vine-pull scheme (where growers were paid to remove vines). However, the very same government also had a planting scheme in place resulting in a massive increase in vineyard plantings in the 1880s. Most of the wine produced was low-quality wine destined for the British market. The consequences of governmental mismanagement were dire: new vineyards all over the state meant vine material was travelling, aiding the spread of phylloxera; and excessive export production flooded the British market, bringing down prices and reputation (Beeston 2000, 93).

The golden age of Victorian wine was grinding to a definite halt. Between 1875 and 1915 phylloxera systematically destroyed most of the Victorian vineyard. The severe economic depression of the 1890s, together with changing tastes also contributed to the decline of the wine industry, but the most influential factor was political. Federation occurred on 1 January 1901, joining the colonies of Australia into one nation. The ensuing abolition of tariffs on goods moving between states changed the way the wine industry functioned from a business perspective, leaving room only for the fittest business operations. South Australian producers “marched triumphantly into the eastern states” aided by a renewed nationwide taste for fortified wines and brandy (Beeston 2000, 141). Eighteen years later the Federal Viticultural Council was formed, nationalising the Australian wine industry at an official level.

Following Federation, and in the wake of phylloxera and the First World War, economic depression and the temperance movement drove the Victorian wine industry further into the ground. During the 1920s and 1930s heavy reds and fortified wines were the only profitable wines and “those areas suitable only for table wine

went into free fall” (Beeston 2000, 176). By 1937 dairy cows had taken over the Yarra Valley and there was not a single vineyard remaining (Beeston 2000, 175); Geelong and the Pyrenees regions all but disappeared. Warmer regions, more able to produce stronger wines, struggled on despite significant reductions in vineyard size.

Despite the massive downturn of the Australian wine industry and half a century plagued by depression and war, the 1950s saw the faint beginnings of change. Post-war improvements in technology and marketing (e.g. stainless steel fermentation tanks, bottling and labelling at the winery, brand establishment) heralded a new era of production. However, of more importance were changes in consumption habits in Australian society. After the difficult times of the “Great Depression, the Second World War and its aftermath of austerity [...] a whole new generation of Australians, influenced [...] by newly imported European culture, had begun to experiment with ‘lifestyle’” (Beeston 2000, 191). Post-war, soldiers returned from Europe with a new understanding of wine, and considerable numbers of European immigrants brought their wine culture with them, increasing wine consumption and the cultural significance of wine in Australian society.

Producers took advantage of the changing attitude and modified their businesses to suit. For example, David Wynn of the now famous Wynn’s Coonawarra Estate “began a policy of popularising wine by introducing the returnable half-gallon (2.25 litre) flagon and also stressing the importance of wine as an accompaniment to food” (Beeston 2000, 193). Finally François de Castella’s hope that light, dry table wines would be the successful wines of Victoria (Dunstan 2001, 212) was manifesting itself. A reduction of the vineyard area in the North-East with the demise in popularity of fortified wines signalled the return of a dry, red style, and a new optimism for wine in Australia:

That wine tastes were inching towards change due to a wider European mix of the Australian population, easier economic times and an increasing Anglo-Celtic understanding of the proper use of wine, there was little doubt. [...] Though markets had swung violently during the decade, the 1950s ended on a note of optimism. The 1960s and the red-wine boom would remove the wine industry

from a long period of stagnation and provide a long-needed impetus for growth. (Beeston 2000, 200)

Australians were very prosperous in the 1960s, with high employment and consequently more disposable income. As travel to Europe became more accessible, increasing numbers of young Australians traversed the globe, opening their minds to new cultures. Lifestyle and consumerism were now important to the Australian way of life, and this included wine. Demand for information on products gave birth to wine writing: wine books began appearing on shelves and the first regular wine press began in 1962 with a column in the Bulletin magazine by Len Evans (Beeston 2000, 202). Soon after, in 1965, Evans was appointed the first director of the Australian Wine Bureau, Australia's first domestic promotional body. This organisation was supported financially by the Wine and Brandy Producers Association (Beeston 2000, 202).

The 1970s saw major corporate involvement in the Australian wine industry, including global interest, as international companies started to invest in Australian wine. Tax legislation favoured larger companies with more capital, that they could invest in new technology and branding. At the same time, the rise in popularity of the boutique winery, typically owned by city professionals – doctors, lawyers and businessmen – encouraged the development of new vineyards, particularly in areas close to Melbourne such as the Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra Valley. This polarisation continues to this day with a handful of big companies producing large quantities of wine at one end of the scale and numerous boutique wineries with a tiny output at the other end.

In terms of consumption, wine-drinking culture continued to develop. Substantial changes in wine style occurred in the 1970s – residual sugar in Riesling, oaked Chardonnay, and improved blending skills for reds – “and the acceptance of these styles indicated the increasing sophistication of the Australian palate” (Beeston 2000, 251). Initially an Australian phenomenon, the white wine boom of the 1970s placed a cask (bag-in-box) of white wine in every fridge (Beeston 2000, 229). The increasing popularity of wine continued throughout the 1980s when it “was seemingly becoming

an essential part of the Australian lifestyle, as rising per capita consumption figures readily showed” (Beeston 2000, 260).

A number of developments in the industry were also occurring: in the late 1980s wine laws were revised and a “universal recording system”, the Label Integrity Program (legislation governing record-keeping and the veracity of information on wine labels) was introduced. The 1990s were characterised by corporate takeovers, mergers and acquisitions, and the dominance of big business in the wine industry (Beeston 2000, 265), setting the scene for the current situation. At the same time, bottled wine sales increased (Beeston 2000, 270), indicating an increasing demand for quality wines rather than cheap, bulk wine.

At the end of the century, the image of Australian wine earned new respect. Though challenges to that image from traditional prohibitionists will doubtless continue from time to time, the wine industry through its professional association, the Winemakers Federation of Australia, has distanced itself from the beer and spirits groups by encouraging the consumption of wine in moderation and in its proper social context (with food either at home or in a restaurant) and by promoting its beneficial effects on health when taken moderately. It is resolutely refusing to be backed into the corner of ‘guilt by association’ with the more casually consumed beer and spirits. (Beeston 2000, 270)

The growth and success of the Australian wine industry in the last two decades of the 20th century and into the 21st century is the most rapid expansion in the history of wine in the world. Australian wine now accounts for 4.4% of global production, ranking it seventh in the world, and contributes an estimated \$40 billion to the Australian economy (Australian Grape and Wine Authority 2015). Domestic consumption is steady, and currently stands at around 29 litres per capita per year (Australian Grape and Wine Authority 2015). Nevertheless, environmental and market forces propose a number of problems for the Australian wine industry. Overproduction and bulk wine have to brought to the fore issues of sustainability, both environmentally and fiscally. The industry is struggling with its image as a producer of cheap, low-quality wines that



lack character, and with the national wine glut; both of these problems are pushing prices down. Despite this, premium wineries seem as determined as ever to produce high-quality wines with a distinctive character for the local and global markets.

### 3.5. THE GRAMPIANS HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

The first vines were planted in Great Western in 1863 by Jean-Pierre Trouette and Emile Blampied, French immigrants responsible for establishing the wine industry in the region. As well as producing still wines, they pioneered sparkling wine in Australia (Australian Dictionary of Biography 2005). While *Sparkling Burgundy*, as it was then known, had been tried elsewhere in Australia, Great Western became the home of this singularly Australian wine and by 1934 was the sole producer. The region is still known for its Sparkling Shiraz. Unlike much of Australia and the rest of the world, the Grampians was not affected by phylloxera, however, the economic decline of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the removal of many vineyards and the land used for grazing. Wine production in The Grampians was extremely limited until the 1960s when the renaissance of the Australian wine industry prompted replanting. The region has grown slowly over the past 50 years, focused on Shiraz.

The Grampians region of Victoria is situated approximately 200km west of Melbourne in the south east of Australia. The region is geographically isolated from major cities and is sparsely populated, with around two dozen wineries dotted throughout a predominantly agricultural area. The Grampians is not a wine tourism destination in itself – most tourists to the region visit for the natural attractions or are simply driving through from Melbourne to Adelaide – however wineries do attract some cellar door visitors as a secondary activity. As cellar door and local sales are a small percentage of the wineries' business, marketing and communications are critical for generating sales and developing a reputation. The Grampians is a cool-climate region producing predominantly Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Riesling, with a vineyard area of approximately 600 hectares, and is renowned for producing refined and elegant Shiraz.

## 4. CASE STUDIES

This chapter gives an overview of each of the four case studies. It gives a brief history of each winery and their contemporary situation. Information was gathered from each winery's website (Ghiran 2017, Château Lynch-Bages 2017, Beychevelle 2017, Western 2017), and book on the winery in the case of Beychevelle (Faith 1991), Best's (Best's Great Western 2015, Brasch 2016), and Lynch-Bages (Cazes and Cazes-Hachemian 2013). Each interviewee is also introduced with a brief description and outline of their professional history in the wine industry, as they described in the interview.

The writing style varies from this point in the thesis onwards, away from the impersonal academic style of previous chapters to incorporate the personal nature of the fieldwork, for both the researcher and those studied. Clifford discusses the issue of juxtaposed styles in writing anthropology, acknowledging that the research process is varied, "some of it very orderly and disciplined, some of it much more free-flowing and open-ended" (Clifford 2003, 384). As an accepted practice in ethnographical writing, it that acknowledges that human interactions are the basis of fieldwork and the research is inherently subjective in nature. To omit the tale of the fieldwork would present an incomplete account, as "artful ethnography is evocative in addition to being factual and truthful" (Van Maanen 2011, 34). The use of a less formal style in parts allows a more holistic depiction of the fieldwork setting, drawing on Van Maanen's premise that "stories, by their ability to condense, exemplify, and evoke a world, are as valid a device for transmitting cultural understanding as any other researcher-produced concoction" (Van Maanen 2011, 119). The prose thus moves between impersonal and personal styles "tacking back and forth between an insider's passionate perspective and an outsider's dispassionate one" (Van Maanen 2011, 77) and enable a view of the world that allows room for individual stories. My intention is that the individual voices of the people and places studied are allowed to resonate throughout the exploration and analysis.

#### 4.1.MOUNT LANGI GHIRAN

The vineyard at Mount Langi Ghiran was originally planted in 1870 during the post-gold rush years. Despite escaping the international scourge of phylloxera, like most of the region the vineyard was ripped out in favour of farming during the economic decline of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The vineyard was replanted in 1963, at the beginning of the renaissance of the Victorian wine industry, by the Fratin brothers. Fruit from these vines was sold to local wineries (including Best's in 1985 and 1986), however it proved to be of exceptional quality, and in 1978, the brothers appointed Trevor Mast as consultant winemaker. Convinced that the vineyard was special, in 1987 Trevor Mast left his position as winemaker at Best's and purchased Mount Langi Ghiran. He improved and expanded the vineyard and wine quality in the following years, achieving international success in less than ten years – in June 1996 the “Langi Shiraz” was featured with Penfolds Grange and Henscke Mount Edelstone on the cover of Wine Spectator magazine. In 2002 Langi was acquired by the Rathbone Wine Group (whose portfolio includes premium wine brands Yering Station and Xanadu Wines) who employed Dan Buckle as chief winemaker in 2003. Trevor Mast retired in 2006, leaving Dan Buckle in charge of winemaking until his departure in 2012. Kate Petering assumed the role until 2014, and Ben Haines is currently chief winemaker. The one constant Throughout these recent changes in the winemaking team, Damien Sheehan has continued as general manager and viticulturist, and has been at Langi since 1996.

Mount Langi Ghiran takes its name from the granite peaks of a mountain rising from the flat plains of western Victoria, aligning the wines instantly with the place where it is made. The use of the Aboriginal name – meaning “home of the black cockatoo” – evokes the timelessness and permanence of this impressive geographical landmark, subtly appropriating its ancient history. Opposite the vineyard is Mount Buangor, and the climatic effects of these two mountains makes Mount Langi Ghiran one of Australia's coolest vineyards. The cool temperatures and marked diurnal variation result in an extended ripening period, producing intense fruit flavours.

Almost all Mount Langi Ghiran wines are named after a geographical feature or vineyard: the Billi Billi range after the Billy Billy Creek; the Cliff Edge range after the

dramatic granite cliff face behind the winery; several wines identified by particular vineyard parcels, such as the “Old Block Shiraz”, and “Double Vineyard Shiraz”; and the flagship wine, simply called “Langi Shiraz”. One wine is named in honour of Trevor Mast, who died in 2006.

Mount Langi Ghiran currently produces 60,000 cases per year from 80 hectares of vineyard. Cool-climate Shiraz is Langi’s speciality and the dominant variety at the vineyard. Fruit for the flagship “Langi Shiraz” comes from the “Old Block” that was planted with cuttings taken from Best’s Nursery block. This is a pre-phylloxera Shiraz clone, brought to Australia by Swiss immigrants during the gold rush, and is therefore one of the oldest Shiraz clones in the world. The rest of the vineyard is planted predominantly with red varieties – Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sangiovese – and a small amount of white – Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Riesling. All wines are single varietal still wines except for the Sparkling Shiraz, a speciality of The Grampians region.

Langi is located approximately 200km west of Melbourne, midway between the rural towns of Beaufort and Ararat. Upon leaving the highway, the small road lined with eucalypts takes the visitor through a quintessentially Victorian farm landscape. Rounding a bend (with warning signs to pay attention the large trees very close to the edge of the road) the vineyard comes into view, then the winery, sitting directly under the steep side of Mount Langi Ghiran, and facing the cliff face of Mount Buangor. It is a striking setting, the ordered vineyard against the impressive and rugged natural landscape. The winery itself is a modern, architecturally designed building with floor-to-ceiling windows taking full advantage of the view.

DAMIEN SHEEHAN, VITICULTURIST

Damien Sheehan’s interest in wine was sparked at the age of twelve on a family trip through the Barossa and Eden Valleys in South Australia. This interest grew through spending time in The Grampians (his wife is from the region), visiting cellar doors, and meeting Trevor Mast. Damien decided to pursue a career in the wine industry and began a wine science degree at Roseworthy College, South Australia, in 1989. He was

one of four graduates of the first pure viticulture degree and went on to work for Southcorp in the north-east of Victoria in 1992. The desire to move south led Damien to apply for a job at a winery in The Grampians. He didn't take that position, but Trevor Mast offered him the role of viticulturist at Mount Langi Ghiran in 1996. He is now General Manager and Viticulturist and says it is his dream job to be caretaking such a special vineyard.

After nearly twenty years at Mount Langi Ghiran, Damien is very connected to the land and vines there. His approach is grounded in a caretaking role of the vineyard, greater environment and people with a drive to produce the best fruit possible. He speaks about the vines in almost human terms and has an obvious respect for the power of nature. He is interested in developing innovative ways to better manage the vineyard and winery, and is focused on creating balance in all things. As General Manager he works closely with the winemakers, marketers and Rathbone Wine Group on all aspects of managing Langi.

Damien has been actively involved in research, development and marketing in the Victorian wine industry throughout his career. He is currently the chair of *Wine Victoria* and chair of the *Victorian Viticulture Biosecurity Committee*.

DAN BUCKLE, WINEMAKER

Dan Buckle was Chief Winemaker at Mount Langi Ghiran from 2003 until 2012. He is now Senior Winemaker at Chandon Australia. Dan grew up in the Mornington Peninsula wine region where his father had a small hobby vineyard. After an Arts degree in Classical Studies & Italian, he decided to become a winemaker and completed a degree in winemaking at Charles Sturt University. Dan was dux of his graduating class and was awarded a scholarship to spend the 1997 vintage in Bordeaux. That same year, he landed a job as winemaker at James Halliday's Coldstream Hills winery. In 1998 he moved to Yering Station in the Yarra Valley, owned by the Rathbone Wine Group. The Rathbone Wine Group bought Mount Langi Ghiran in 2003 and Dan took up the position of Chief Winemaker the same year. This was an

enviable position to fine tune Trevor Mast's work, developing the Langi wines and achieving notable success in the eight years he worked there.

Dan is an articulate man with a well-developed sense of humour and his feet firmly on the ground. He describes himself as competitive, constantly striving to be the best in his field, and with a keen attention to detail. Burgundy and Champagne appear to be his points of reference and the interviews demonstrated a national and global perspective on winemaking, along with a broad awareness of the wine business, from vineyard and winery to marketing, sales and consumers. He does a lot of wine judging at shows to keep his palate in shape, believing tasting is very important for winemakers. His international experience and constant tasting underpins his confidence and enthusiasm for high quality, elegant wines.

AARON DRUMMOND, SALES & MARKETING

Aaron Drummond also grew up surrounded by vineyards in the Mornington Peninsula wine region south of Melbourne. He studied business at university and began leasing vineyards on the Peninsula to satisfy his passion for agriculture and the country. In 2007 Aaron took on the role of Brand Manager at Mount Langi Ghiran, a role that later expanded to become National Sales & Marketing Director for the Rathbone Wine Group, overseeing all the wineries in the portfolio. He left Mount Langi Ghiran in 2015 to work for a winery in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand.

Aaron is an interested, gregarious and energetic man who is clearly passionate about wine. He has a global perspective on business and the wine industry, and an enthusiasm for innovation and challenging the status quo.

Aaron and Dan also have a small, joint-venture winery on the Mornington Peninsula – Circe – producing premium Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

Prior to joining Mount Langi Ghiran Anne MacPherson had worked in a variety of administration and cellar door management roles for ten years. Her wine industry experience began at Seppelt, Great Western, then took her to South Australia, working for Wynns Coonawarra and corporate roles within Fosters. She returned to The Grampians in 2008 to take on the role of Cellar Door Manager and Administration at Mount Langi Ghiran until 2014. She said she enjoyed the position at Langi despite the different environment of working for a small winery as distinct from a large corporate drinks company. As cellar door visitor numbers at Langi are small, most of Anne's communication with consumers occurred online, over the telephone and at external events. She said she had regular contact with the Rathbone Wine Group head office for administrative activities (mainly financial), but described Langi as largely self-contained from an administration perspective.

#### 4.2. BEST'S GREAT WESTERN

In 1866 Henry Best, son of the butcher in Ararat, 150km west of Melbourne, purchased 73 acres of land backing onto the Concongella Creek. The next year he planted the first vines on the property from cuttings from St. Peter's vineyard in Great Western. The first vintage was made in 1869 and the *Best's Great Western* trademark was registered in 1907. When Henry Best died in 1913, his son Charles inherited the property, but he was not interested in farming, so he sold the property in 1920 to William Thomson for £10,000. The Thomson family had been growing grapes in the area since 1893 and added the Concongella property to the 100 acres of vineyards they already owned; however, William was not to see the vineyard flourish. He died four years later, leaving Best's in the hands of his son Frederick.

The 1920s saw a downturn in the Australian wine industry and the fortunes of the Thomson family. Forced to sell the original Rhydney vineyard in 1927, the bank reclaimed Concongella and the Thomsons relocated to Lake Boga in the north of the state in 1930. Six months later the bank concluded that Concongella was effectively

worthless and allowed the Thomsons to reclaim the property and return to Great Western. They retained the Lake Boga vineyard until 2010, when it was no longer viable to compete with larger companies producing large volumes of cheap table wines and fortified wine.

After William's death in 1949, his sons Eric and Bill took over management of the Best's winery and vineyard. From the 1920s until the 1960s, development was slow across the entire Australian wine industry. By 1960 there were only 16 wineries in Victoria and just two in the Great Western region. However, this was the decade that the industry began to flourish again. Eric's son Viv returned to work at Best's in 1960, working with his father and uncle for seven years until he took over management in 1967. He made continual improvements to the vineyard and winery, and in 1975 appointed Trevor Mast as the first external winemaker.

Responding to increased competition and commercial pressures, a Sales and Marketing manager was appointed in 2005. The same year Viv moved into semi-retirement and his son Ben became Managing Director and Vineyard Manager. In 2008 a business manager was appointed. In 2012 Best's Bin 1 Shiraz won the coveted Jimmy Watson Trophy at the Royal Melbourne Show, cementing the reputation of Best's Great Western as a producer of fine wine. Winemaking has since focused on producing fine wines from the Great Western vineyards.

Concongella is home to significant plantings of pre-phylloxera vines, including the original nursery block containing over thirty-nine different varieties, eight as yet unidentified. These vines are still producing grapes, bottled as the *Nursery Block Dry Red* and *Concongella Blanc*. The more recently acquired Salvation Hills vineyard at Rhymney was planted in 1996 and produces Shiraz, Riesling and Pinot Meunier. In total, Best's own 34 hectares of vineyard with vines ranging from five to 140 years old. They also buy grapes from local growers to produce approximately 20,000 cases per year of mostly red and some white wine.

Best's is located 20 kilometres west of Ararat. The road meanders through the village of Great Western, crosses the snaking Concongella Creek five or six times before turning into Best's Road, over Best's Bridge and arriving at the front gate. An



unassuming old-style picket fence marks the entrance but quickly becomes farm fencing. The original buildings dating from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century still exist (and are still used) with newer sheds built around them. The scene is a juxtaposition of traditional Victorian farm and practical new world winery – a strange combination of cows in the front paddock, ringlock<sup>18</sup> on the stairs to the cellar and rough-hewn timber beams holding up the roof, with the distinct smell of a winery, grand old barrels that are still in use, external stainless steel vats against a backdrop of 140 year-old Shiraz vines, traditional silver labels on the bottles and sparkling new wine glasses.

A small pamphlet allows visitors to take a self-guided tour of the winery. The path meanders past offices and pallets of new wine, a small exhibition of photographs by one of the Thomson boys, and artefacts of the winemaking tradition scattered about. Moving through into the old storage area, the boards are squeaky and uneven underfoot, while cobwebs and century-old graffiti attest to the building's age. The tour then descends into the cellar where the original white wine storage tank still stands – albeit now used for holding intimate dinners rather than wine – and many of the barrels (still in use) are over a hundred years old. In one of the great rough-hewn posts holding up the ceiling *CB 1897* is carved. These are the initials of Charlie Best, the eldest child of founder Henry Best. The Thomson family's private wine collection resides here alongside the museum collection of Best's wines dating back many years. Cellar door is housed in the rustic surrounds of one of the original buildings, filled with personal and industry artefacts.

VIV THOMSON, OWNER & WINEMAKER

Viv Thomson is a veteran of the Australian wine industry. Born into a wine-making family, he is the fourth generation to manage Best's Great Western. After finishing school, travelling overseas and graduating from Roseworthy Agricultural College, Viv returned to Great Western in 1960. Although he says he would have preferred to farm sheep, when he returned from overseas the family winery needed help and he needed

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<sup>18</sup> A typical square wire fencing used on Australia farms.

work. Now in his seventies, Viv has completed 56 consecutive vintages at Best's. As well as maintaining and improving the Best's winery, he has been heavily involved in the Australian wine industry, in an official capacity as president and long-standing judge of the National Wine Show and with the Victorian Wine Industry Association, and informally as a mentor for young people in the wine industry. In 2014 he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his services to the Australian wine industry.

Viv is a humble man, crediting much of his success to the support of his family and colleagues. In the words of his son Ben, "he's not one to big-note himself" and is a very affable man who "is always on for a chat" (Madigan 2012, 20). He seems very connected to the land and the vines, acutely aware of the influence and capriciousness of the weather. He is conscious of the need to adapt to a changing environment, both the physical and the market, while at the same time he is unequivocally committed to the integrity of the wines and the business. Through hard work and persistence Viv has taken Best's into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the practicality of an Australian farmer and the broader perspective of a global traveller.

On the day of the interview I met Viv Thomson on the stairs to the cellar. With true country style hospitality he had come down to meet me and welcomed me with a firm handshake. I interviewed Viv in his office – a small and very ordinary office that he shares with his son Ben, the General Manager. Viv's desk is an old, wooden roll-top, which on this particular day was home to a large bottle of cow treatment. Ben's desk is simply a table with a few papers and a laptop. Ben joined the conversation for a few minutes, but left when he got a message that some cows were out on the road. Both men were dressed in typical farm garb, very low-key and matter-of-fact, demonstrating that they are ordinary people getting on with the job of growing things in an unforgiving landscape.

BEN THOMSON, VITICULTURIST

Ben Thomson is the fifth generation of the family to manage Best's Great Western, having taken the reins from his father, Viv, in 2008. Ben spent some of his younger

years dividing his time between Western Australian wheat-sheep stations and Great Western vineyards, and said he would have liked to have been a farmer. He has learnt through hands-on experience and observation, working closely with his father and grandfather at Best's. In addition to managing Best's winery, Ben owns a grape harvesting business that operates in Victoria and South Australia.

Ben is often described as quiet, retiring and reluctant to talk, however, despite this reputation he seemed more than happy to be interviewed and talked at length about his experience, Best's and the wine industry in general. He described himself as a bush boy who would rather be outside in the vineyard than in the limelight. Recent recognition of the quality of Best's wines with trophies and prizes has pushed him into the public eye, but he prefers to leave that role to Viv or others in the business. Ben expressed a philosophy of simplicity and respect for the natural environment. He has a palpable connection to the land and vines that he has spent most of his life caring for and his primary concern is to make wines that are representative of that place.

#### STEPHANIE CAIRNS, SALES & MARKETING

Stephanie Cairns was the Customer Relationship & Brand Manager at Best's from January 2012 until January 2015. Her role at the winery began with implementing a new customer database system and grew to include brand management, monitoring how and where the Best's brand is seen. She is a young and energetic woman with a Public Relations degree. Steph worked in tourism before entering the wine industry and is now working in a different field. I first met her at the Grampians *Simply Shiraz* wine tasting event in Ballarat. I had been trying for some time via telephone and email to get a response from Best's about participating in the research, but it was meeting Steph in person that helped open the door.

I interviewed Steph at the winery. She began the visit with a tour of the cellars and the vineyard and we then moved into the shared office for the rest of the interview. It was somehow quite fitting that this fashionably-dressed, young woman was showing me through the old, dusty cellars and agricultural landscape. Perhaps due to her

enthusiasm, Steph spoke incredibly quickly and at length. It was clear that she was conscious of the image of the winery and customer and trade perceptions of the brand, and she discussed these aspects in detail. This was a very informative and useful interview to begin with at Best's as it gave me, as an outsider, a comprehensive overview of the winery as a whole.

#### 4.3. CHÂTEAU LYNCH-BAGES

Château Lynch-Bages takes half of its name from the winery's location in the old hamlet of Bages, fifty kilometres north-west of Bordeaux, near the town of Pauillac. The original vineyards were planted during the sixteenth century by the Déjean family, but did not produce wine of note. The reputation for quality did not emerge until the property was acquired by Pierre Drouillard in 1728. Upon his death in 1749, he left it to his only child, Elizabeth, and her husband Thomas Lynch. The property remained in the Lynch family for the following 75 years until it was sold in 1824 to Sébastien Jurine, a négociant from Bordeaux, who changed the name to *Jurine-Bages*. It was during Jurine's ownership that the vineyard was classified a 5<sup>th</sup> growth in the 1855 Classification. Jurine was not to leave a lasting impression however, and in 1862 sold it to the négociant brothers Cayrou who reinstated the name *Lynch-Bages*.

The property remained in the Cayrou family until the 1930s when they encountered financial difficulties. Thus, in 1933 the vineyard was leased to Jean-Charles Cazes, a banker and insurance agent from Pauillac. Jean-Charles was already assisting his widowed sister to manage the winery *Ormes de Pez* in the neighbouring town of Saint-Estephe. This was a time when owning a vineyard was more of a liability than a livelihood, however Jean-Charles had the security of a successful business to support his endeavours, and thus on the eve of the Second World War he purchased Château Lynch-Bages and Ormes de Pez. He expanded the vineyard and improved the wines, and by 1950 Château Lynch-Bages was recognized for quality by négociants in Bordeaux.

Jean-Charles' eldest son André took over management in the 1960s. This proved to be a challenging period with difficult vintages and a slow market, however André

continued to expand Lynch-Bages throughout the 1960s and 1970s, purchasing new vineyards and replanting vineyards that had been destroyed by phylloxera. André's son Jean-Michel returned to winery from Paris in 1973 and by the end of the decade the market had begun to improve. Jean-Michel's arrival sparked a process of modernization that continued for the next 15 years. 1989 saw the inauguration of the new winery and a total vineyard area of 100 hectares. Lynch-Bages wines are dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon, blended with Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

In 1987 the Cazes family joined forces with AXA insurance company, with Jean-Michel directing all the wine businesses in the portfolio until his retirement from AXA in 2001. At this point Jean-Michel Cazes took the business its own way with a portfolio that includes, in addition to Château Lynch-Bages, the large volume label Michel Lynch, and wineries in the Languedoc and Châteauneuf du Pape, Portugal and Australia. In 2006 Jean-Michel handed management to his son Jean-Charles who is currently at the helm.

Lynch-Bages is the most tourist-oriented château in the Médoc – possibly in the whole Bordeaux region – and has been pivotal in establishing wine tourism in the Médoc. The château conducts guided tours seven days a week, 363 days a year. The tour begins in the original buildings dating from the sixteenth century which house a rare example of a mid-nineteenth century gravity fed winery system, as well as the modern facilities and cellar, finishing with a tasting. When visitors exit the château at the end of the tour, they emerge into the old stone Village of Bages, which is owned by Lynch-Bages and was restored in 2003. The village has a café-restaurant, bakery, butcher, gift shop, fountain, and wine school. Lynch-Bages also hosts *Viniv*, a make-your-own-wine experience. (Priced between 7000 and 11,000 euro per barrel, it is a leisure activity that requires a certain budget.) Just down the road from Bages is Lynch-Bages' high-end hotel and two star Michelin restaurant Cordeillan-Bages, purchased in 1990. In a sense Lynch-Bages has become a destination in the Médoc – a distilled version of the Bordeaux wine industry's image of tradition and prestige.

Jean-Michel Cazes has always been an advocate of promotion and tourism, which has no doubt created the global reputation the Lynch-Bages enjoys. He was promoting the

wines and encouraging visitors from the UK and the US early in his role as manager, and most recently in China, before any other Bordeaux château. He says that they have a philosophy of welcoming anyone who wants to visit, and has created a tourist destination at the château that is open yet elite, with an underlying sense of luxury. Lynch-Bages is a 5<sup>th</sup> growth but enjoys the status of a 2<sup>nd</sup> growth. At more than 100 euros a bottle for a recent vintage, and significantly more for older vintages, it is not a wine that most people can afford to drink regularly, if at all, but in visiting the château they are able to see inside that luxury world and experience a small part of it.

Lynch-Bages sits on the top of the hill overlooking Pauillac, the river and a 360° view of the surrounding vineyards. The building itself is not particularly impressive compared with other châteaux in the region, however it is aesthetically pleasing in a practical way – old buildings made from stone, with garden walls and lush green grass. I followed a standard winery visit with a group of other visitors. The tour starts in a waiting room furnished with brown leather couches around coffee tables with magazines arranged immaculately. The magazines are high class publications, a number of them about wine, but by no means most. In addition there are two glass cabinets: one has a display of Lynch-Bages wine bottles of various sizes and vintages, some in boxes, and the other contains books at the rear with a row of Lynch-Bages and wines sitting in front. Next to the bookshelves on an easel is a large aerial drawing of Lynch-Bages.

Laetitia, our guide, pointed out where the château is situated on the map and showed us the path the tour would take. She also pointed out Jean-Michel Cazes' residence, complete with swimming pool. As we moved into the winery, full of stainless steel vats, a very brief history of Lynch-Bages before the Cazes family was recounted – some details about the origin of the name and then skipping over the centuries until it was purchased by the Cazes family.

The overview of the winemaking process emphasized tradition – traditionally fermented, racked, blended, aged, etc. – despite the fact that we were looking at stainless steel tanks and computer controls that are very modern. We were then taken to the museum where the wooden barrels that were used up until the 1970s stand. The château is quite proud to be one of the only ones in the Médoc to have kept the

old winery facility. Everything was gravity fed and most tasks done by hand, aided by mini railway tracks and a turning mechanism for the crushing table. Temperature management was effected by lighting a fire under the fermenting tank or throwing water on fabric draped over it. It was noted that this was not a very controlled process.

From the museum we moved into the barrel hall where the current vintages are maturing in oak barrels. Information on the blend and maturation process were discussed, and the advice that one should wait at least 15 years before drinking Lynch-Bages. We then move to the bottling room where the discussion centred on anti-fraud labelling techniques.

After the tasting of Lynch-Bages 2004 and an Ormes-de-Pez from St. Estephe, we were left to ponder the wines of Lynch-Bages and the Cazes family, at the end of a tour that concentrated on history and people much more than quality.

My experience at Lynch-Bages was quite different from the other three wineries as I lived in the same community for several months. The town of Pauillac is quite small – approximately 5000 people – and the tiny Village of Bages is just 2 kilometres from the centre of Pauillac. Despite being home to three of the five 1<sup>st</sup> growths, it is not an affluent community, nor is it a pretty town. The Village of Bages however, is a beautifully renovated pedestrian village. The château wall creates one side of the village square while the rest consists of a café-restaurant, bakery-deli, home wares/book shop, wine school, cooking school, butcher shop and playground. As such, it is a pleasant place to spend time with family and friends. The week after I arrived in Pauillac, Lynch-Bages hosted a family day on Easter Monday. With Easter egg hunt, jumping castle, chocolate and Initiation to Tasting workshop for children, wine tastings and live music, my first real experience of Lynch-Bages was centred on family and community. The extended Cazes family and staff were present and involved, and more members of the Pauillac community than tourists attended.

I first met Jean-Michel Cazes that day as he was pouring wines for the tasting. Unusual in itself that the owner of one of Bordeaux's most famous château was pouring wine at a community event, he was also very welcoming, friendly and down-to-earth. This hospitality was to characterise all of my interactions with Lynch-Bages, from

requesting a trade pass to the En Primeur campaign, to dining at the two-star Cordeillan Bages restaurant, setting up interviews, or having a drink in the café.

JEAN-MICHEL CAZES, OWNER

Jean-Michel Cazes was born in 1935 into a family that had found success in the insurance business and owned several wineries in the Médoc. Nevertheless, he left the region to study engineering in Paris and America before serving in the French Air Force from 1960 to 1962. For the following ten years he worked for the computer company IBM, finally returning to Bordeaux in 1973 to help his father with the family business. He instigated the modernisation of Lynch-Bages and Ormes de Pez, and in 1987 created a wine investment portfolio for AXA Millésimes, which he managed until 2001. In 2001 the insurance business was sold and Jean-Michel concentrated on the development of the winery portfolio and the Village of Bages.

Jean-Michel has travelled extensively and continuously, promoting his wines and the wines of the Médoc and Bordeaux throughout the world. This strategy of personally taking his wines to new markets has paid off in the incredible success of Lynch-Bages, a reputation that is almost cult status. In an official capacity, Jean-Michel has worked a lot to promote Bordeaux wines and Médoc wines, as the Grand Maître de la Commanderie du Bontemps de Médoc, Graves, Sauternes & Barsac (of which his father was a founding member) and long-term President of the Pauillac Winemakers Association.

Since 2003 Jean-Michel has breathed life back into the Village of Bages, renovating the buildings and streets. Having spent his childhood in the village, he has a special connection to the place, and as well as solid commercial reasons for the project, he gives the impression of genuinely wanting to share his place with others. He is one of the few château owners who still lives at the winery and is often seen around the winery. He is very family oriented, honouring the past and respecting future generations, and while he is an astute businessman with a keen sense of commercial strategy, his interest in the world at large and people is what drives his actions,



witnessed by the many arts and cultural events at Bages, support for the local community and communities in developing countries, and international cultural liaisons. He is a warm, generous and humble man who dislikes arrogance, intolerance and snobbishness, and is aware of his modest origins.

MALOU LE SOMMER, SALES & MARKETING

Malou le Sommer was the commercial director at Lynch-Bages from 1985 until 2010. At the time of the interview she was working for the négociants Duclot Export but has since returned to work for the Société JM Cazes. She was happy to be interviewed, sharing her enthusiasm and passion for wine, particularly for Lynch-Bages. Her comments gave a broad market view of Bordeaux wine and the development of Lynch-Bages over the past 30 years in a global context. Her role in marketing and public relations is understated at a public level, and her humble yet enthusiastic personality appears to be entirely at the service of the wine. She spoke of the development of Lynch-Bages wines with a fondness akin to watching children grow up.

LAËTITIA SAINT-CRICQ, CELLAR DOOR

When I interviewed her, Laëtitia Saint Cricq was working as a tour guide and researching the history of Château Lynch-Bages for her masters thesis on the history of Château Lynch-Bages from 1632-1939. As a guide, she performed a very comprehensive, yet crafted tour of the Lynch-Bages facilities, appropriate for the particular clientele in the group, demonstrating an interest and engagement with her work and research. Laëtitia came across as a serious and intellectual person with a drive to do her job well. She has since moved on to work for other châteaux in the Bordeaux region.

#### 4.4. CHÂTEAU BEYCHEVELLE

*Beychevelle* comes from the old French term *baisse-voile*, to lower sails. Legend has it that it was the custom of ships passing the pre-viticultural estate to lower their sails in deference to its resident, the Duke d'Épernon, admiral of France. However, the name *Bayssevelle* existed well before the admiral's arrival, and the lowering of sails was probably a sailing technique associated with strong tides in the Gironde River.

Château Beychevelle has always been owned by powerful people, with its first incarnation built by François de Foix Candale in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was more "petite maison de plaisance" than château, but stood on the site of the current château and was among the first of its kind in the Médoc. After the death of Foix Candale, Beychevelle was inherited via marriage by the Duc D'Épernon, a favourite of Henry III and Marie de Medicis, and governor of numerous provinces. The domain stayed in this family until the last duke sold Beychevelle to a Bordeaux parliamentarian, Jean-Pierre Abadie, in 1701.

Abadie developed the vineyard somewhat, but the terrible freeze of 1708-9 devastated the vineyard and, no longer a young man, he was not inclined to replant. He died in 1717 leaving Beychevelle to his nephew Etienne-François de Brassier. Brassier carried out major works at Beychevelle: he rebuilt the château after a fire, purchased the manor house at Moulis, and acquired more land at Arcins and Saint-Laurent, creating for the first time at Beychevelle a viable estate for the production of quality wine. Geographically, the vineyard at this time was almost identical to the Beychevelle vineyard today. Brassier was arguably one of the Médoc's first true winemakers with a remarkably modern approach, making distinctions between different varieties, selecting for first and second wines, vin gris, and press wine. He represented the new generation of landowners in the Médoc who lived at the château and were therefore more involved in operations, planted vines on poor soil, and used technology to improve wine quality.

Etienne-François de Brassier died in 1740, leaving Beychevelle to his son, François-Armande, who managed it for the following 40 years. François-Armande renovated the château in Louis XV style, complete with impressive gates (a peculiarity of châteaux in

the Médoc), terrace and chapel, creating perhaps the first example of the classic Bordeaux château built for the comfort of its rich proprietor.

François-Armande died in 1787, leaving Beychevelle to his sister Delphine, who managed it until her death in 1792. It was eventually sold by her daughter in 1801, due to troubles with inheritance division and the Revolution, to Jacques Conte, a wealthy Bordeaux ship-owner. He was more interested in the sea than the land, and after neglecting Beychevelle for many years, sold it to his grand-nephew Pierre-François Guestier, of the influential négociant family from Bordeaux, in 1825. The Guestier family were experienced in the wine industry and the addition of the estate to their business went smoothly, with Pierre-François also involved in local politics. However, their fortunes fell in 1850 when odium destroyed three-quarters of Beychevelle's production. Despite this setback, Beychevelle was listed as a 4<sup>th</sup> growth in the 1855 classification. After Pierre-François' death, his many children, unable to divide Beychevelle, sold it in 1875 to Armand Heine, a wealthy Parisian banker.

Heine was responsible for a grand renovation of the château interior, exterior and garden. It was a difficult period in the wine industry, but Heine was not averse to trying new ideas in the vineyard and winery – he was one of the first in Bordeaux to experiment with American rootstock during the phylloxera crisis and to bottle his own wine. He died in 1883, leaving Beychevelle in the care of his wife, Marie-Amélie. As well as managing the domain, she built the crèche and dispensary at Beychevelle, restored the chapel, and carried out much charitable work in the community. She managed Beychevelle until her death in 1904.

Married to Marie-Amélie's daughter, Charles Achille-Fould took over management of Beychevelle after the death of his mother-in-law that. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were difficult times for wine production, but things began to improve after the First World War. Charles died in 1926, and once again Beychevelle was in female hands – his wife Marie-Louise, who remained at the helm until her death in 1940. The château was partially occupied by the German army during the Second World War, but production continued under the management of Armand Achille-Fould and his second wife, Lillette. The 1950s saw an increasing

modernisation and use of technology in the form of machinery in the vineyard and oenological advice from Emile Peynaud, who became an influential professor of oenology in Bordeaux. In 1970, Armand's middle son Aymar took over management, alongside his political career, and continued to make improvements in the vineyard and winery. Financial difficulties led to the sale of a 45% commercial interest in Beychevelle to Garantie Mutuelle des Fonctionnaires (GMF) in 1984. After Aymar's death in 1986, GMF and the Japanese drinks company Suntory bought Château Beychevelle. It is currently owned by Suntory and the Groupe Castel.

Château Beychevelle is known as the Versailles of the Médoc due to its magnificent 18<sup>th</sup> century architectural style and gardens with a view down to the Gironde. It is situated several kilometres from the town of St Julien on the main road through the Médoc, surrounded by vineyards. On the side road between the garden wall and the vineyard is the crèche and chapel constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the vineyard workers. The impressive architecture is only evident from the river side (not the road) from where the origin of its nickname is immediately evident. The garden is built on low-lying land unsuitable for viticulture with drainage on either side to cope with the marshy conditions. On other parts of the property unsuited to vineyard, cattle are raised, providing fertilizer for the vines.

The overall experience at Beychevelle is a very formal one: the official history, the grand château and formal gardens, formal tour and white tasting room. I had contacted the director, Philippe, by email before arriving in France and he seemed very happy to help with my research. Despite the formal ambiance of Beychevelle, Philippe gave me his mobile number in case I had an emergency, arranged for access to his library while he was away, and introduced me to a number of other contacts who were useful for my research.

I visited Beychevelle on a number of occasions, to conduct interviews and to do the official winery visit with Susan. The winery visit began in the purpose-built visitor reception room where we discussed the artist-designed label and art-related residencies that used to be a regular occurrence, but are no longer a feature due to cost. (At the time of writing, the interest in hosting art-related events seems to have

returned with the construction of the new winery and conversion of the château building into luxury accommodation.) We then moved through the winery – a mix of stainless steel and concrete fermentation vats, followed by American and French oak barrels. In these historic buildings, state-of-the-art technology is being used to improve the efficiency of the winemaking process and the quality of Beychevelle's wines. Susan mentioned that the capital investment required for this new infrastructure is an advantage of being company owned, where many of the family-owned wineries don't have access to equivalent funds. In the old cellars, which now only house the museum collection of bottled wine, she discussed the mould on the walls – it used to be red when wines in barrels were stored there, but is now black, which is not as pretty, but the move is in the best interests of the wines. The tour ended in the garden with a biting cold wind that did not invite us to linger there. We walked back to reception past the very neat vineyard with river stones under the vines to retain heat overnight. Beychevelle's emphasis is firmly on the constant improvement in the quality of the wines and reverence of a long, aristocratic history, embodied in the beautiful château buildings and garden.

Beychevelle owns 250 hectares of land, of which 92 hectares are planted with vines. Composed of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot and the vines are on average 30 years old. It is one of the largest vineyard holdings in the Médoc, producing 250 000 to 260 000 bottles (21 000 cases) per year.

PHILIPPE BLANC, MANAGER/WINEMAKER

Philippe Blanc's journey in the wine world began with a degree in Agricultural Engineering at the Institut Agronomique in Paris and Montpellier, specialising in viticulture and œnology. After graduating he worked in Champagne, followed by four years in Australia. He returned to France in 1993 and began working for Beychevelle in 1995. He is now Managing Director and sees no reason he will not remain at Beychevelle until retirement, as he says there are always new projects and his job is always interesting. During his time at Beychevelle Philippe has constantly searched for ways to improve the wine, the vineyards and the business. The most recent project has

been the renovation of the château including a new winemaking facility and cellar door.

He is a friendly and energetic man who gave much thought to the questions I asked during the interview. He has a global view of the wine industry and a keen sense of where Beychevelle is situated in the wine world, despite emphasising that the château is a wine producer that is not directly involved in commercialisation.

SUSAN GLIZE, CELLAR DOOR

Susan Glize is English, but has been working at Beychevelle for twenty-five years in reception and visitor services. Chance brought her to Beychevelle when she was looking for a job that would utilise her French and English language skills. Before starting the job she visited as many châteaux in the region as possible and has continued to build her knowledge through experience and educational courses. She is welcoming, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about Beychevelle and the Médoc, and her tour of the château was comprehensive and interesting.

LAURENT EHRMANN, NÉGOCIANT

Laurent Ehrmann did a degree in political science at the State University of New York College. An American, he arrived in Bordeaux at the age of 27, following his passion for wine. Two years later, in 1989, he started working at Barrière Frères where he has been ever since and is now director. Laurent is a well-dressed, confident man who seems very comfortable in his role at Barrière Frères. He has an ability to make things seem simple – even the Bordeaux wine trade – with his no-nonsense approach to the business of exporting wines internationally. Despite a very calm demeanour he smoked continuously throughout the first part of the interview, and was quite concerned that I might misquote him. On the day of the interview he was wearing a blue striped shirt with red scarf, which complemented the stylised interior and decoration of the Barrière Frères offices.

#### 4.5. OTHER INTERVIEWS:

SYLVIE CAZES

Sylvie Cazes is a former director of Château Pichon-Longueville Comtesse de Lalande and President of the Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux (UGCB). She is currently the President of the *La Cité du Vin*, Bordeaux's new wine museum, the wine representative on the Bordeaux Municipal Council, president of the supervisory board of the Cazes family business group, and directs her own bespoke wine tour agency, *Bordeaux Saveurs*. Sylvie was very professional yet relaxed when I interviewed at her office in central Bordeaux. Her wide-ranging, high-level experience in the Bordeaux wine world provided a rich context for the other Bordeaux interviews, connecting the many parts into a whole.

WAYNE MCCARTHY

Wayne McCarthy owns and manages the *Cave L'Avant Garde* wine shop in Margaux. An Australian, he stopped in Margaux to pick grapes in 1990 while touring the world with a surfboard, met his future wife and has been there ever since. The *Cave L'Avant Garde* is in a position in the centre of Margaux on the Route des Châteaux, the main road through the Médoc. As such it attracts a steady and varied clientele visiting the region, particularly international visitors with a serious interest in wine. I interviewed Wayne in the *Cave L'Avant Garde* surrounded by his comprehensive selection of Bordeaux wines. He was very friendly and open in conversation, giving a retail perspective on the world of the Grands Crus.

ALAIN CROHEM

Alain Crohem is the director of Château Grand-Puy Ducasse, a 5<sup>th</sup> growth in Pauillac, and CA Grands Crus (a group of six wineries owned by French banking group *Crédit Agricole*). I met Alain on a tour of Château Grand-Puy Ducasse during the *Weekend des*

*Grands Crus*, where his commentary was quite different from the other châteaux I had visited. He had worked in banking and finance for many years before moving into the wine industry, and his enthusiasm for the latter was evident in his dynamic conversation about the wine world.



## 5. CATEGORIES

The interviews were coded and analysed using a grounded theory approach that sorted the data into categories and ultimately led to the development of the theory presented in Chapter 6. The construction of the list of categories resulted from close reading and rereading of the interview transcripts and observational notes to determine the most important topics and themes. The process also drew upon the research area (the social setting of wine production), themes discussed in the existing literature, such as authenticity and image, and the questions posed in the interviews, considering the interviews individually and as a part of the group.

As I conducted and transcribed all the interviews myself, I had a detailed knowledge of their content when I began the coding process. Due to my familiarity with the material and the study size, all coding was done manually, without the aid of software. I began by rereading all the interviews and making an initial list of thematic areas that emerged as important to interviewees, based on depth and detail, and relevance to the research area. This catalogue of ideas was refined by cross-referencing the interviews, in an attempt to create category labels that could be applied to the interviews as a group. Using this list of codes, I coded the first interview, testing the relevance of the codes. Some adjustments were made before coding several more interviews, once again checking for relevance. This process of coding, cross-referencing and adjusting continued as per a grounded theory approach until all interviews had been coded and a refined list of categories was created.

After coding, the thirty-three categories that had emerged from all interviews were collated and sorted according to the frequency with which they appeared. Categories were sorted separately for each country and then compared and analysed to produce a list of the most frequent ones. I then went back to the interviews to look at the categories in terms of importance – the ideas that interviewees spoke about most frequently and in the most depth and detail. The most frequent categories were not necessarily the most important or interesting in terms of exploring winery image and identity, for example winemakers and viticulturists talked a lot about the production

process in a very descriptive manner. It was a comfortable way of easing into the interview (for the interviewee and for me as interviewer) and to a certain extent was necessary for me to understand the context of the rest of the discussion. However, it was a descriptive exercise rather than an analytical one, therefore was not particularly rich conceptually or necessarily relevant to the research. After sorting for frequency, the list was adjusted for relevance, producing a list of the most pertinent categories – eleven in total – that could be applied to the interviews as a group.

Once the list of categories had been established, quotes from the interviews were sorted into each category. Within the categories these ideas were sorted into thematic areas, permitting an integrated analysis of the four case studies in most instances. In a small number of categories (e.g. history, image, business) it was necessary to treat each winery separately in parts as the discussion related specifically to the individual winery. The analysis is based primarily on the interviews and supported by observations and published material. The categories provide the structure for the analysis that is presented in this chapter.

Throughout the whole process there was constant referral back to the interviews to refine the categories and to ensure that the labels assigned in early stages of coding were still applicable in the subsequent stages. This resulted in some changes of categories, subsuming some smaller categories into larger ones, and grouping several related categories together. The process produced a list of eleven categories, as defined below.

The categories are presented in a deliberate order that begins with fundamental themes – history, people, and story. This first group of categories contains many of the factual details that emerged from the interviews, such as historical dates, events and stories, and descriptions of processes and activities. The second group of categories explores more conceptual themes – quality philosophy, authenticity, and image – gathering more abstract ideas about the reasons behind processes, strategies and decisions, individual and company values, and aspirations regarding external perceptions of each winery. This is followed by a third group concerning relational themes – communication, education, business, and industry – exploring the

articulation and dissemination of ideas. These last four categories consider the interaction between the many people involved in the wine world, from producers to the trade through to consumers. It discusses the content, style and settings of interactions, roles and responsibilities, and the complex network of relationships.

## HISTORY

Throughout the interviews history played a large role, a role that was supported by winery websites, published material and observations. There were several layers of history, ranging from personal and winery histories, to regional and industry focused histories. Each interview began by asking the interviewee for a description of their personal history in the wine industry. While I did not ask specifically about the history of the winery, interviewees proffered this information throughout. In most cases, the history of the winery was discussed first, followed by that of the family owners and important individuals involved. In the process of discussing the winery history, the broader history of the region – in both vitivinicultural and socio-political terms – was explained by those who had been involved in wine production the longest, particularly Jean-Michel Cazes in Bordeaux and Viv Thomson in The Grampians. Interviewees wove into the discussion the wider history of the wine industry, locally and globally, as well as the development of the market over time, including branding, consumption habits, and œnotourism. As well as describing all of these historical details, the conversation revealed the influence of history on contemporary activities and decisions, and the way certain aspects are emphasised over others in crafting the winery image.

## PEOPLE

Every subject area that was discussed in the interviews referenced people to some extent – with lesser or greater emphasis depending on the topic. This category explores the integral role of people in the wine industry, and the numerous and varied actors involved in the production, promotion and consumption of wine: founders, directors, family members, vineyard and winery staff and contractors, distributors,

retailers, taste makers, journalists, and consumers. How these people first created the winery, brand, and image, how they continue to be part of the winery's story, and how they interact amongst themselves became key questions in these interviews. This section also discusses the merging of the characteristics of people and wine, the role of individuals in crafting the image, and the importance of relationships between everyone involved, within the winery, with contractors, the industry, trade, media, and consumers.

## STORY

This label was assigned to instances where interviewees spoke consciously of stories and storytelling, and where storytelling was used to illustrate a point in the interview. This discussion of story from the interviewees draws heavily on each winery's website and promotional material to illustrate the ideas that emerge. While the History category considers stories from an historical perspective, focusing on the content and facts, Story explores the act of storytelling and how it is employed by wineries. This category discusses the human desire to tell stories; the role of story in promotions and the image of the winery; storytelling as a method of communication with the industry and public; the power of stories to give meaning to the wines; wine as a vehicle for the story; the appropriation and transformation of stories as they are transmitted; and the format and crafting of stories.

## QUALITY

The notion of quality emerged most frequently in the interviews as a distinguishing feature when these producers of premium wine were comparing their product with non-premium sectors of the wine industry. For most interviewees, particularly in Bordeaux, the high quality of the wine itself seemed to be an assumption, and was remarkably absent from the conversation in favour of a more conceptual discussion of quality with relation to the brand, image and winery activities. As a result, this category begins with a discussion of quality control, attention to detail, consistency

and improvement, before moving on to the pursuit of a quality experience of the brand as a whole. Ideas such as quality over quantity, assurances of quality, price, hierarchy and social status, and the subjectivity of quality entered the conversation. This discussion of quality bridges the gap from the preceding concrete categories into the succeeding conceptual categories.

#### PHILOSOPHY

This category encompasses discussions about the philosophy of production, promotion, experience, knowledge and innovation. The conversation was centred on a respect for the people, place and history of the vineyard and winery, and it was made very clear at each of the four wineries that the pursuit of quality wine production is the underlying philosophy on which all activities stand. The discussion of vineyard techniques was more detailed in the Australian interviews, where interviews revealed each winery's philosophy of vineyard, winery and promotion practices, including attention to detail, perseverance, diligence, and innovation in the pursuit of quality improvements. Although most of the conversation concerned production, there was also an acknowledgement of the desire to provide consumer pleasure, through the wine itself and the experience of the winery and brand as a whole. This category explores underlying philosophies that guide actions, as expressed by interviewees.

#### AUTHENTICITY

While the word "authenticity" was not used by many interviewees, the concept appeared quite frequently as a justification and motivation for doing things in a particular way. This category explores interviewees' perceptions of authenticity and its importance, as well as ideas around tradition, terroir, vintage and balance. The discussion of authenticity centred on place, tradition, and communication: a desire to "do the right thing", to respect tradition and terroir, pursuing a balance in all aspects of the business, and having a genuine love of winemaking. Interviewees in all wineries spoke about consistency, persistence and integrity, and a conscious effort not to be

unduly influenced by the market or consumer fashions. There were also in-depth discussions of authenticity in communication, differentiating truth and reality from marketing spin, as well as notions of authentic consumption.

## IMAGE

One of the ten questions in the interview list asked about the winery's image – how interviewees perceived it at the time, what image the winery was trying to project, changes to reputation and factors contributing to change. While much of the discussion on image emerged in response to this question, notions of identity, uniqueness and difference materialised at other times. This category includes the broader discussions of the group image – the image of Bordeaux Grands Crus and Premium Australian wine – and an individual section on each winery. Interviewees talked about the development of the image over time, including the characteristics and elements that contribute to the winery image, focusing on production and crafting the image, key moments that have contributed to enhanced reputation, and the importance of image in selling wine. Image was discussed as an external representation of identity, therefore the second part of this category explores interviewees' conceptions of winery identity, and how the two ideas are intertwined.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication was spoken about at length in most interviews regarding how each winery communicates with the public, the industry and within the winery. This category includes discussions of marketing, promotions and creating a presence in an increasingly competitive global wine world, and the development of strategies to do this. It details different communication channels, and the content, language and style of published material and in-person interactions. Interviewees described events, activities and publications to illustrate these ideas, and many of these examples are also presented here. The power of communication to promote the winery image and consumer experience was emphasised by interviewees and is explored in this category.

## EDUCATION

Education was an unexpected category that emerged out of a focused interview question about stereotypes. The discussion of stereotypes was brief but interviewees listed a range of consumer perceptions of wine. To combat erroneous stereotypes, they clearly looked to education as the key. This led into a conversation about the role of education and efforts by each winery to educate their consumers and the trade. The scope and direction of ensuing discussion diverged, covering how education fits into the public relations strategy, formal and informal educational situations, the desire to enhance consumer knowledge and understanding thereby increasing appreciation, and the role of discovery in the wine experience. This category explores how, why and to whom the winery directs its educational efforts, and the perceived benefits and effects of educational activities, as these ideas emerged from the conversation.

## BUSINESS

This category details the business structure of each winery and business development over time. Despite many similarities, all four wineries are quite differently managed from a business perspective. This section begins by exploring each winery individually, before discussing broader themes, such as the relationship of business and lifestyle for individuals, focus and clarity, the way the winery operates in the commercial arena of the wine market, supply and demand, and everyday practicalities of operating a premium winery in the 21st century.

## INDUSTRY

The label “industry” covers a variety of conversations that relate to how the individual and the winery interact with and perceive the wine industry. As the industry is quite different in Australia and France, the first part of this category treats Bordeaux and The Grampians separately. Beginning with a discussion of the development of the Bordeaux market system and the current situation, it then explores the relationship

between the château and négociant. Next, the development and functioning of the Australian wine industry is discussed, before moving on to industry relations within the winery, region and trade. The importance of connections, relationships and different roles is explored here, shedding light on how the French, Australian and global wine industries function. It is important to note that much of the information here is derived from the interviews, demonstrating interviewees' desire to explain their industry – how it works – to an outsider.



## 5.1.HISTORY

*“Oui, je crois que quand un consommateur achète un Grand Cru il achète pas seulement le produit qui est dans la bouteille. Il achète forcément l’histoire, le côté romantique éventuellement – ou pas d’ailleurs, ça peut être l’inverse – mais en tout cas il achète une histoire certainement. Il achète un univers aussi. Il l’achète parce qu’il fait partie d’un univers qui lui fait rêver, qui lui donne envie.”* Sylvie

Throughout the interviews (and corroborated by winery websites) history played a large part – the history of the winery, the region, and of individuals was discussed at length by most interviewees. Each interview began with a description of the interviewee’s personal history in the wine industry. Further into the conversation historical elements were frequently raised: the importance of the history of the individual winery, individuals working there, social and political history, consumption history, and specific, significant moments or events, at a regional, national and global level.

The first question in the interviews asked interviewees about their history in the wine industry. There were two main reasons for this strategy: firstly, to start the conversation with a question that was easy to answer (no need for reflection; well-rehearsed answers) and secondly to ascertain the extent of their professional involvement in the industry and the particular winery. Most interviewees had worked in wine for many years, if not their whole working life, while cellar door staff tended to have the shortest history in the industry and at the winery.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The discussion of history can be broadly separated into the history of the vineyard and the history of the people. As there are many similarities in the way Best’s and Lynch-

Bages present the historical narrative, they are discussed together. Following that, Beychevelle and Langi are discussed individually.

#### BEST'S AND LYNCH-BAGES

Unsurprisingly, the conversation at Best's and Lynch-Bages, as family owned businesses focused more on family history of each winery. Viv began with his family's history – the Thomsons, as opposed to the winery founders, the Bests – going into some detail about the acquisition of the first vineyard by his great-grandfather, William Thomson. In doing so, he talked about William's personal situation and the social circumstances of the time. While the fact that William had been a postman and then a highly successful Melbourne baker is not of immediate import, it is perhaps relevant to note a family trait of having a number of irons in the fire. Best's is not just a winery, but a mixed farm as well and Ben has a grape harvesting business. This background diversity adds an individual and personal element to the story, demonstrating from the outset some of the qualities that are valued at Best's, such as work ethic, calculated risk taking, and riding out the highs and lows of life. In telling the Thomson family story, Viv also described the history of the region, the development of local viticulture, social and political history, and market history, revealing the historical context in the details. The broader history underpins the family history, explaining that, for example, Best's business fortunes declined in the 1920s as the federal government removed the export bounty; and that his great-grandfather's success as a baker could be measured by his appointment as one of the caterers at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880.

The narrative took centre stage over the facts in the historical description exposing the personality of the individuals in questions:

*... my father and grandfather went up to Lake Boga, which is up on the Murray. The story was that grandfather was a bit of a keen duck shooter so he used to go up the Murray to shoot ducks. And on the way up he missed the turn and went past a vineyard. And for my grandfather a vineyard was like honey to a*

*bee and he got to know the feller up there pretty well. And when things turned bad up here he then went up there.*

Viv's telling of the history constantly makes reference to his connection with it and current relevance, mentioning that the family who bought the original Thomson vineyard at Rhymney in 1927 still own it today. The facts provide markers in time and place on which to anchor the details and meaning of the historical narrative.

Jean-Michel took a similar approach in relating the history of Lynch-Bages, detailing the acquisition of Lynch-Bages by his grandfather in the 1930s, then focusing on the development of the business since then. Like Best's, Lynch-Bages has a rich history dating back several centuries, however this seems to be taken for granted. The facts are stated on the website history page, nevertheless the valorised history is that of the Cazes family over the last hundred years. When Jean-Michel spoke about history he focused on the market, beginning with the historical situation in the 1950s and detailing the developments that have occurred in that last 60 years. In many ways it is a history of wine tourism in Bordeaux, just as Viv's story presents a history of winemaking in The Grampians.

As Lynch-Bages purchased neighbouring vineyards, they were obliged to buy the old houses in the village as people left the region. The château eventually owned most of the Village of Bages – a collection of houses in a state of unoccupied disrepair – and Jean-Michel decided to renovate the village, creating what is effectively the only tourist destination in the Médoc. The purchase of Cordeillan-Bages in the 1980s was to provide accommodation for the increasing number of winery guests visiting Lynch-Bages as Jean-Michel's policy of personal connections attracted more people to Pauillac.

At both Best's and Lynch-Bages the focus of the visitor tour is the history. While a component of the tour at Lynch-Bages goes through the winery and discusses the winemaking process, and at Best's there is a brief tour of the vineyard, the focus is very firmly on the history. Lynch-Bages' museum with the old winery, complete with basket presses, mini-railway for moving grapes and juice, and gravity feed to the barrels, is one of the few remaining in the Médoc. Laetitia maintained that the focus

on the museum is quite deliberate, as it is something unique among the wineries in the region and presents an interesting perspective for wine professionals who are knowledgeable with regard to modern vinification techniques, but are not necessarily familiar with historical equipment and techniques. Aside from the large aerial drawing of Lynch-Bages in the visitor reception room there is very little mention of the vineyard: *“On a préféré axer sur le musée qui est vraiment un peu le trésor ici.”* The tour ends in the centre of the Village of Bages, a piece of living history, which provides the perfect complement to the winery museum.

At Best’s, the tour commences in the original building where visitors can see the hand-hewn beams supporting the cellar roof, Charles Best’s initials and the year 1897 carved into it, the old barrels, fermentation vats, and through locked grill, the cellar collection where dusty bottles date back more than a century. The vineyard tour focuses on the “old blocks” – the original vineyards planted in the late 1800s. As the face of cellar door, Steph was well-versed in the historical fact (regularly repeating the precise number of years – 147 – since the founding of the winery), however she presented the information in a very relaxed and casual manner. The ability to show me what she was talking about as we walked around added a certain weight and earthiness to the history. She was less clear on the historical details of the vineyard, but quick to refer questions back to Viv. The customer newsletter also draws on the history, recreating the visual style of an 1868 newspaper. Steph summed up the importance of history for Best’s: *“our brand is really about the history.”*

#### BEYCHEVELLE

As a company owned winery Beychevelle does not have such a strong link between contemporary staff and previous owners, and therefore draws more on the long and prestigious history of the château. When taking tours, Susan said that the amount of history included depends on the interest of the particular visitors. She noted that wine professionals generally are less focused on history, while tourists are very interested in the history of Beychevelle. She noted that *“everybody likes the history of the name – Beychevelle: lowering the sails,”* referring to the story that Beychevelle is a contraction

of “baisse la voile” and that ships were required to do this as they passed the Admiral’s residence (the original owner). Despite the dubiousness of the story – something that Beychevelle openly acknowledges – it continues to be recounted and appreciated. Philippe echoed this sentiment early in the interview, speaking about the old châteaux in the region:

*C’est des propriétés qui ont une antériorité très longue, une très longue existence, en centaines d’années – de cent, de cent cinquante, trois cent ans. Donc, ça c’est déjà quelque chose qui est très important ; qui est plus fort que nous. Et cette histoire [...] cette dimension historique est forcément très importante.*

Philippe also spoke briefly about Aymar Achille-Fould, the last generation of the Fould family to direct Beychevelle before it was sold to a company, and his influence in public relations and the development in recent years of Beychevelle’s reputation.

#### LANGI

Compared with the other three wineries, Langi has a relatively short history – it is only fifty years since the vineyard was planted and only thirty years since Trevor Mast purchased it and established the winery under the name Mount Langi Ghiran. As such, the history is intimately linked with Trevor as winemaker since the 1980s and Damien as viticulturist since the 1990s. In the absence of a long social history, the focus of Langi’s history, both published and in the interviews, is on the history of production – geology, climate, planting history and winery technology – the improvement of quality over the years, and the development of its reputation.

#### VITICULTURAL HISTORY

Damien talked briefly about the horticultural and timber milling history of the region. Prior to the vineyard plantings in the 1960s, the land was most likely used for sheep grazing, orchards, table grapes, and then pasture during the wool boom of the 1940s.

The Fratin Brothers probably sourced pre-phylloxera cuttings from Best's and Seppelts to plant the first vineyard in the 1960s, using "Australian Sprawl" style trellising. This style employs a single wire which trains very low vines, and some parts of the vineyard remain in this form today. The expansion of the vineyard is described on the website, and as the interview with Damien included a considerable amount of time in the vineyard, he also explained the history of planting and development of different techniques over time, such as the nets to reduce wind, moisture monitoring, and weed control. Damien also recalled particular vintages, such as 1989, which was a terrible season due to rain at harvest time: *"It was a wet vintage and a lot of people picked early to try and avoid the rain. Trevor hung on, picked late, and the rain didn't upset the fruit and he got riper fruit. The fruit, and the wine itself was outstanding."*

The agricultural history of the vineyard was also particularly prevalent in discussions with Viv and Ben at Best's. They both spoke about the long-term history of the vineyard since it was first planted in 1867 with reference to the natural environment – of the impact of phylloxera at the turn of the twentieth century, of droughts, bushfires and floods. While much of Ben's conversation centred on environmental issues in recent years (such as the drought in the 1990s and the 2010/11 floods) he seemed to accept that unfavourable weather is simply one of the many challenges involved in wine production that he is obliged to work with.

Philippe pointed out that his time as an individual at Beychevelle is just a drop in the ocean in the long history of Beychevelle. He explained that the long history means that particular highs and lows are less marked as the contour evens out over the centuries. Dan acknowledged the long history of many European wineries and vineyards, and spoke frankly about the comparatively short viticultural history of Australia and Langi.

Interestingly, the age of the vines was a key topic with Best's and Langi – Best's have some of the oldest vines in Australia, and in the world, as they were not affected by phylloxera; and interviewees at Langi spoke about the different ages of each of the blocks and the development of the vineyard over time. The topic of vine age was, in general, of stronger interest in the interviews in The Grampians than the interviews in

Bordeaux, which could be explained by the fact that phylloxera was not as widespread in Australia and consequently there are some very old vineyards.

#### BUSINESS HISTORY

Much of the historical discussion regarding vineyards in interviews with all four wineries traced the acquisition of vineyards by the winery. Perhaps because this is a quantifiable and verifiable story noted in the records, it is an aspect of the history that is easily recounted. The story of Lynch-Bages from its inception is detailed on their website, and Jean-Michel expanded on the twentieth century history by discussing the circumstances of vineyard acquisitions in the 1950s. Although the story was told in the context of the acquisition of houses in the Village of Bages, he described the financial difficulties that led to small vineyard owners selling their properties to Lynch-Bages. This enlargement of vineyard area was an integral part of the development of Lynch-Bages' wine production.

In Beychevelle's history, the key date is in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century at the point at which the vineyard reached the size it is today. Amidst a constantly fluctuating narrative of ownership and wine production, this unchanging fact over 200 years is highlighted, conferring legitimacy via tradition. In contrast to this, Viv and Ben explained the contours of success and failure through the acquisition and loss of vineyards, linked closely to societal fluctuations, such as changing drinking habits, economic issues such as the Great Depression and the exchange rate of the Australian dollar. The family's pioneering spirit emerged in the story of the bank repossession of the original Great Western vineyards in 1927. While it must have been devastating at the time, the event was presented as a catalyst for other adventures and a new beginning: the Thomsons negotiated with the bank (which quickly deemed the vineyard a "dead loss") and recovered the Great Western vineyard six months later, but their interest in Lake Boga continued. They eventually bought vineyards in the region, producing wines there until 2005.

When discussing the vineyard history, Langi and Best's emphasised the agricultural perspective whereas Lynch-Bages and Beychevelle focused on the business angle. All four wineries spoke about modern branding history. For Lynch-Bages this is a very linear trajectory, ascending from the dubious industry situation of the 1930s to what is now a cult wine label selling at a very high price. Best's brand history is also quite linear after the difficulties during the depression of the 1920s, slowly and constantly building the reputation for quality wine in a changing market. The story at Langi and Beychevelle has more contours. Dan spoke about Langi's business history from the perspective of production volume and sales. Following the Wine Spectator cover in 1996, production was increased to cope with demand from the US, however this was a short-lived spike in demand and according to Dan, the increase in production of Langi Shiraz and other projects ultimately led to a waning of the business and its acquisition by the Rathbone Wine Group: *"I think there was a lot of ill-conceived ideas back then about how much wine we could sell and how good things could possibly be. But it was a very optimistic moment."* Since then Langi has developed a strong brand identity with a focus on premium wine, and restructured the business. Dan singled out 2006 as a turning point:

*The 2005 Langi Shiraz had a really good run in the show circuit in 2006 and we had seven trophies, or something, at that time – it was the best Shiraz in all sorts of places – and that was tremendously encouraging for the sales guys, and the marketing guys, and the company internally, and not just here but with the greater Rathbone group because there was a new winemaker on the job and things were going well.*

Despite continual success since then, none of the interviewees at Langi suggested that the trajectory ahead would be free from challenges. This also emerged from interviews at Beychevelle. Conscious of highs and lows in the past, both wineries appear to be working extremely hard to ensure historical struggles are not repeated. They are also aware of the fickle nature of the consumer market and the need to anticipate changes while continuing to produce the wine they believe is the best wine from the vineyard.



## TECHNOLOGICAL HISTORY

Viv and Jean-Michel, having each spent more than fifty years working in their respective wineries, spoke at length and in detail about many of the broader societal issues that have influenced their wine business. The following two long quotes – one from Viv and one from Jean-Michel – describe the broader history throughout their lifetimes, and demonstrate the narrative style and voices of the two interviewees. For Best's, located in rural Victoria, major technological and connectivity improvements have occurred in that last half century that have radically changed the modus operandi. Viv talked about the first tractors, electricity being connected, a reliable phone line, and dedicated packaging:

*I mean, people have no understanding of how this industry evolved. I mean, now we sit down and we pick up a bottle of wine and it's got the alcohol on it, it's got a vintage on it, it's got a variety on it. In the old days you're be lucky to have a bloody label on it, you know. But really, it's quite incredible how things have changed. [...]*

*We used to fill our flagons along here. They'd bring their flagons along and we'd take them down the back and fill them up, send them back again. That's how it was done. We did that for a long time. And I remember in the 60s we used to go down the pub and get all the beer cartons. So if people came to buy wine here we had something to put the wine in. And if we were sending stuff away, we used to pack bottles into straw sleeves. [...] And we used to pack them in banana boxes. I think we used to get – I don't know how many bottles in a banana box – about 18 or something in a banana box and wire it up with a big wire strainer and get it all in. And take it down to the local railway and load it on the railway and they'd take it off to where it was going. There's a lot of changes, I can tell you.*

*And here, when I came home, we were still using horses in the vineyard. I think we bought our first tractor in that period. We had electricity at that stage. We had a phone line which used to go across here, straight across the road over there and pick up the main phone line. And I suppose three or four times a year*

*there'd be a big wind or something like that and the phones were all static and Dad would say, "Well, go and check the phone line," and you'd go along and find a branch across it or a bloody wire down or something like that. We had water about that period. So by 1960 we were pretty well set up – we had water, power, electricity and phone. So you know, nearly all the work was still done by hand in the cellar. I think we had electric pumps. The early pumps we used to work our power off batteries, but by the time it came to 1960 we were starting to get set up. And of course by the 70s things had changed dramatically.*

In three paragraphs, Viv gave an oral history of not just the winery and innovation born of necessity, but also traced the technological progress of rural Australia.

Jean-Michel talked more about marketing and tourism, but he captured the same pioneering spirit:

*Les gens ne venaient pas visiter les vignobles d'abord – c'était affreux. C'était dans un très mauvais état. Et puis tous les clients éventuels qui venaient à Bordeaux, ils s'arrêtaient à Bordeaux, ils allaient voir un négociant, mais ils venaient pas dans le vignoble.*

*On commençait avoir les premiers touristes dans les années soixante-dix et c'était les Américains. Parce que les Américains, ils venaient voir sur place. Bon. Très tôt, comme on avait pas de clients, je me suis dit que, bon, c'est une manière de trouver les clients, c'est de faire venir les touristes. Donc j'ai essayé de faire tous ce que j'ai pu pour accueillir les touristes correctement. Encore une fois le fait de parler anglais ça m'a aider beaucoup. Donc on a vu ce nombre de touristes augmenter beaucoup et de très peu – a trickle – au début, c'est devenu un nombre de personnes importantes. Vers la fin des années quatre-vingt, ma femme et moi recevaient à la maison pratiquement tous les jours. C'est fatiguant. Elle m'a dit qu'elle en avait assez d'avoir des gens qu'on connaissait pas au petit déjeuner et en pyjama, quoi.*

*Et donc, j'ai eu l'occasion d'acheter Cordeillan. J'en ai fait un restaurant et un hôtel. Il y avait rien de tout dans la région à l'époque. C'était le premier. Je*

*voulais faire quelque chose de correcte avec un restaurant correcte où on pourrait recevoir des gens, qui pourrait attirer les visiteurs, encore une fois dans l'idée que c'était les clients potentiels. Et j'ai recruté un garçon qui était un ancien sommelier à Paris pour diriger ça. Et on s'est dit, tiens, mais on va faire une école du vin quoi. Les gens quand ils viennent ici ils savent pas quoi faire, on va leur proposer de faire des cours de dégustation. C'est parti doucement – ça a pas eu beaucoup de succès au début et puis après ça a augmenté. Le nombre de visiteurs augmentait. Il y a une dizaine d'années on a eu l'idée de compléter ce qu'on faisait à Cordeillan par une rénovation du village et en profiter pour faire un point d'attraction pour les touristes. Et puis de développer aussi le côté éducatif avec notre école du vin qui est devenu Le Cercle de Lynch-Bages, etcetera. Et oui, c'est venu comme ça quoi, peu à peu.*

Jean-Michel traced the development of public relations at Lynch-Bages, and at the same time, the development of the American market and œnotourism in Bordeaux. His style of narrating this history places an emphasis on the gradual process – small steps borne of necessity – that have created the present situation.

Both patriarchs trace the development of a particular aspect of the winery's history from rudimentary beginnings to the contemporary success each one enjoys. It seemed very important for them to ground the current success in an historical perspective, and to remind others of the long process of development for the winery to become what it is today. The history is also intimately entwined with each man's personal history, the family history, regional, national and global history, illustrating how much the winery history is dependent on these other elements.

## CONCLUSION

All of these different elements of history – narrative, viticultural, business, technological – combine to form the foundation, whether longer or shorter term, of each winery's identity and image. History is used as an explanation and justification for the present situation, bringing together the technical and public relations sides of wine

production. Interviewees demonstrated clearly that history informs what they do, how they do it, and how they perceive themselves and the world around them. In remembering the difficulties of the past there is a sense of gratitude for modern conditions and good fortune. The recounting of history also serves as a way of chronicling change over the long-term.

The four wineries are drawing on the history of their individual establishment, and region, national and global histories. This shows that in order to understand the individual winery and contemporary story, there must be an understanding of the history. The historical publications brought together in Chapter 3 are essential tools for both producers and the market to create and understand the historical background of each winery. The emphasis on history in the fieldwork data supports the idea from consumer marketing research that linking the brand and the history adds 'further nuance to the brand's meaning' and that 'for consumers, an established heritage also indicated reliability' (Beverland 2006, p.253).

## 5.2. PEOPLE

*“On va parler de vin, bien évidemment, d’un produit merveilleux, mais on va parler d’homme.”*

Malou

*“Le métier de faire du vin, ça consiste à faire des amis.”*

Jean-Michel

The integral role of people in the wine business was discussed at length in every interview and each one emphasised particular aspects of people’s involvement. Interviewees talked about the owners and founders, current directors and families, staff, trade, media and consumers and their role in the production, business, marketing, image and identity of the winery. The very act of planting a vineyard ultimately necessitates connecting with people – to be successful there must be a consumer. Whether the founders of each winery were thinking of the consumer when they first planted a vineyard is difficult to ascertain. However, contemporary owners and staff are most definitely thinking of them when they talk about the winery, as evidenced in the interviews. In almost all cases, the people – founders, subsequent owners, vignerons and winemakers, staff, trade, consumers, journalists, critics and consumers – played a prominent role in the narratives that were recounted in the interviews and in published material.

Interviewees discussed the consumer perspective at length, describing the relationship between the winery and the people who are their ultimate customers. In most instances that relationship was presented as one based on the consumer desire to connect with the people behind the wine. Accordingly, interviewees discussed the visitor experience in detail, as well as the virtual connection with consumers.

In the History category, there was significant discussion of the role of people in the historical narrative of each winery, in addition to other historical factors. In this category, the discussion is centred on role, influence and connections of the people involved in the process of making and selling wine. The historical perspective is

explored to some extent here, but with an emphasis on the role of people in the narrative.

#### OWNERS AND DIRECTORS

Two families are central to Best's identity. From an historical perspective, the founders of the vineyard – Henry Best and his family – begin a tale of innovation and persistence. The contemporary owners are the Thompson family whose involvement in the Great Western wine industry goes back more than 140 years. Both families figure prominently on the website and in promotional material. The emphasis on the legacy of past owners and winemakers, and the current owners and winemaker, is realised by telling the personal and individual involvement and influence of these key people. The line of people can be traced through the different features of Best's image, from a fundamental naming perspective to the personal stories and informal style in which the narratives are presented.

The name Best's Great Western attaches the winery primarily to an individual – the founder Mr Henry Best. The apostrophe leaves no doubt that the winery was created by an individual and that the connection is important. A sense of familiarity with the actual person is engendered by referring to him by his first name in published material, for example when quoting from "Henry's journal". The familiar tone is found throughout Best's communication, epitomised in the in-house publication *Best's and the story of Great Western Shiraz* (Best's Great Western 2015), written in first person from the perspective of general manager, Ben Thomson. It reads as a personal account – "When my dad Viv started making Bin 0 decades ago..." – with many references to members of the Thomson family.

As is the case at Best's, the changes of ownership of Lynch-Bages is presented in the historical information on the website and other published material. However, emphasis is placed on the Cazes family which began in 1933 when the Lynch-Bages vineyard was first leased to Jean-Charles Cazes (senior), followed by the purchase of the property in 1939. The development of the business and the quality of the wines is

strongly linked to the Cazes family's ownership and direction. In both the published material and in the interviews, the tale that is articulated and valued by the retelling, is the Cazes' pioneering in business, marketing and winemaking. The people and the wines become intertwined to the point where Malou spoke of the difficulty in distinguishing the characteristics of the wines from those of Jean-Michel's personality.

At Langi the thread of people is very much centred on Trevor Mast, hailed as a legendary winemaker in the region. In contrast to Best's, Trevor's involvement does not feature prominently in published material, but was recounted repeatedly in the interviews. As Damien said, it was "*Trevor Mast who really put Langi on the map*" and the development of Langi's reputation in the 1990s was "*equal parts the quality and equal parts Trevor's personality.*" Aaron reiterated this idea, elaborating on Trevor's training in Europe and purchase of the Langi vineyard

*I mean, Trevor Mast discovered Langi. In terms of there was a grower growing grapes and selling them to Best's and Trevor was the winemaker at Best's. Now he, because of his experience in Europe, he loved that parcel of fruit coming in. So he went and approached them and bought it.*

At Beychevelle the people throughout history are linked to its reputation and commercial activities, such as building works and vineyard acquisition. The long line of well-connected, aristocratic families is clearly described in the historical material. Details of the expansion of the vineyard by individuals over the centuries is included, but there is little reference to the development of the wine itself. The improvement of the wines was attributed by interviewees to technological advances and capital investment in the winery. Philippe credited the last individual owner, Aymar Achille-Fould, with developing Beychevelle's reputation in the global market by serving the wines to many influential people.

The people in both Australian wineries are linked to pioneering and discovery, whereas in both Bordeaux wineries, the narrative around people in recent times focuses on leadership in public relations and business acumen. Clearly the emphasis on these particular qualities of the people relates to the history of the wineries and the region: The Grampians became a fine wine region thanks to people like Viv Thomson and

Trevor Mast; the Médoc became world famous for its fine wines because of the Grands Crus established by the 1855 classification followed by the appellation system in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but its current success is due to the global visions of people like Jean-Michel Cazes and Aymar Achille-Fould.

#### WINES NAMED AFTER PEOPLE

The naming of wines after people from the winery is another way that wineries value the people involved in its production. At Best's, wines from the "House Block" note a particular parcel of vines and allude to an everyday human involvement through the use of the word "house". In vintages when the flagship wine, the Thomson Family Shiraz, is made (only nine times in since its creation in 1993) Viv Thomson's signature graces the label, seemingly as a personal guarantee of quality and provenance. The EVT 51 Riesling celebrates Viv, using his initials and the 51 vintages he has worked there. Even the collaborative Champagne, made with French producer Huguenot-Tassin, highlights the involvement of Edouard Huguenot, manager of the family-owned house. At Langi, one wine is named in honour of a person, winemaker Trevor Mast. As head winemaker at Mount Langi Ghiran from 1978 until his retirement in 2006, the association is firmly cemented in the history of the winery. In Bordeaux the Grands Crus wines take the name of the château, however the second wine from Beychevelle is called "Amiral de Beychevelle", after the founder of the estate who built the first château there.

#### THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

All four wineries have a cellar door and tasting room at the winery. Lynch-Bages and Beychevelle receive significantly more visitors than Best's and Langi, due to being in a very accessible, famous wine region in France as opposed to a scarcely populated area of rural Australia. In Bordeaux, Lynch-Bages is the leader in wine tourism with tours and tastings available 363 days of the year, and the Village of Bages next to the winery. Tours and tastings are available to anyone who wishes to visit, professional or



otherwise, which is highly unusual for Grands Crus châteaux. Jean-Michel's policy of welcoming all people to Lynch-Bages with, as Laetitia said, the same smile and time for everyone, aligns with his desire to turn everyone who visits into an ambassador for the château. She said he often crosses the path of a tour at the winery and stops to chat with visitors, reinforcing the family-oriented and personal image of Lynch-Bages. Jean-Michel is very charismatic and seems very happy to talk to people, which Malou emphasised as part of the Lynch-Bages image: *"L'image de Lynch-Bages est intimement liée à la famille qui est là à présent, je dirais même à Jean-Michel."*

Laetitia talked about her awareness of being the first contact that many people have with Lynch-Bages and the ensuing responsibility that comes with that role – always having a smile and taking time with every visitor, professional or otherwise. Jean-Michel also raised the issue, saying that there is a frequent turnover of tour guides at Lynch-Bages because he is conscious that it is a repetitive job that becomes wearying, but the face of the château needs to be enthusiastic and engaged. Malou said personable nature of the family and staff at Lynch-Bages is a large part of the image – an idea was reiterated in other interviews – and described the way individuals at Lynch-Bages leave a lasting impression on visitors:

*Il m'est arrivée parfois mais vraiment souvent à l'autre bout du monde – Chine, Hong Kong, etcetera, aux Etats-Unis – de trouver quelqu'un qui a dit "Oui, j'étais à Lavinal. J'ai vu Céline. J'ai été reçu à Cordeillan. Que devient le chef?" etcetera. Donc, effectivement ça, au-delà du vin, ça projetait une image vers le client particulier qui, qui est, je crois, extrêmement importante.*

In contrast, the tour at Beychevelle is well-crafted but does not have the personal feel of Lynch-Bages. It is open to the general public, but must be booked in advance. Susan stated that the purpose of the tours is to make the wine more famous. A tasting is not included in the tour, which, combined with the grand opulence of the château buildings adds to the impression of exclusivity.

In The Grampians, the geographical isolation means visitor numbers are quite small. Nevertheless, care is taken at both Best's and Langi to ensure that the visitor experience is consistent with the brand image. People play a large role in this, which

can present practical problems – finding good staff to be the face of a premium winery is not an easy task in rural Australia and there is not enough work to employ someone permanently. In light of this, people are often greeted by the winemaker or viticulturist themselves, which often leaves a lasting and personal impression on their memory of the visit.

In various different contexts throughout the interviews, interviewees raised the idea of the blurring of the boundary between the people and the wine, indicating that the charisma of the owner, winemaker, or director is a large part of the perceived character of the wine. All of the interviewees at Langi spoke with admiration for Trevor Mast, the founder and winemaker. In addition to having a vision for the wines and vineyard, he had a charisma that is remembered by all who came into contact with him. Aaron described his impression of Trevor:

*He was one of these winemakers that not only made great wine but was charismatic and enthusiastic and would just travel and was eccentric and quirky and he was a personality that so many people come to cellar door still today and go “oh”. And you know, when Trevor died, unfortunately, last year and so many people still come and say “Is Trevor still here? I can remember...” Everyone remembers Trevor Mast whether they met him for a second or actually really did know him.*

This description echoes to some extent Malou’s account of visitors’ memories of their personal encounters with staff at Lynch-Bages.

At Langi, Damien is also an engaging and friendly person who carries on Trevor’s tradition of enthusiastic cellar door encounters. Although Dan contrasted his own character with Trevor’s – describing himself as grumpy – he was always amiable and charismatic when I encountered him. Despite their different personalities, Dan, Damien and other staff welcome visitors in a personable, open and memorable way.

Outside the winery, people are equally as important in presenting the image of the winery, according to interviewees. The success of Lynch-Bages was repeatedly attributed to Jean-Michel’s incessant travelling and networking internationally. During

the 1960s and 70s – a time when very few Bordeaux château owners spoke English – he was actively seeking new clients in the USA, and over time extended that network all over the world. Malou said that visits to the US with him were like being with a film star at the Cannes Film Festival. Everyone likes and admires him and his personal connection with individuals is remarkable, from those who work at Lynch-Bages in Pauillac to major buyers in New York. As Jean-Michel said: *“le métier de faire du vin, ça consiste à faire des amis.”* From his extensive discussion of people and relationships during the interview, it was clear that he considers people to be the heart of the wine world. Philippe also emphasised the role of people, and attributed much of Beychevelle’s notoriety to former owner Aymar Achille-Fould’s tasting efforts: *“Il donnait beaucoup de vin, offrait beaucoup de vin, servait beaucoup de vin à beaucoup d’endroits et la notoriété française en particulier de Beychevelle, à mon avis, a été très sérieusement mise en avant par Aymar Achille-Fould à cette époque-là.”*

The connection between individuals – the personal experience, word-of-mouth and in-person interaction – was considered by all interviewees to be much more effective in the premium wine world than advertising or other types of media communications.

Through descriptions of interpersonal encounters, there was also an acknowledgement of the individuals who drink these wines. All interviewees spoke of a desire to create a connection between the winery and individual consumers. In many cases, this connection was discussed in reference to storytelling – that consumers can tell their friends about meeting the winemaker, visiting the winery, or similar moments of interaction. According to Sylvie, the UGCB’s marketing strategy rests firmly on the individual tasting experience, where wine producer and consumer meet around a glass of wine. She cited this as the justification for continuing to organise tasting events in the traditional format where each winery has a table where the manager or winemaker presents their wine and attendees move from table to table, tasting and conversing.

Sylvie also noted that some wineries are seeking celebrity endorsement as a promotional tool. This attaches a famous identity to the brand and the celebrity is paid to be seen consuming their wine and to promote the wine. None of the four case

studies in this research are pursuing this route, however, they do not deny the benefit of occasions when famous people drink their wines. Dan at Langi mentioned U2 drinking Langi Shiraz at a restaurant in Melbourne when they were touring. They asked for the sommelier's recommendation, which was Langi Shiraz. Dan described the process, demonstrating how the chain of connections between people plays an integral role in selling wine: the Langi producers convey the quality of the wine to the sales people, the sales people convey it to the distributor, who influences the restaurant staff, who ultimately recommended the wine to the consumer. While this is not the same kind of official endorsement that some of the Bordeaux Grands Crus are seeking (a practice established by some of the Champagne brands), it adds celebrity kudos to the Langi brand.

#### STAFF

People working at the winery and in associated businesses are another extremely important group and discussed by all interviewees. At an individual winery level, Steph spoke about the importance of employing people who are a "good fit" with Best's. In the context of all the conversations at Best's, this means people who complement their culture, values, and aspirations. As an exclusively family business, the Thomsons employed their first external winemaker in 1975 – Trevor Mast. They sought someone with a similar philosophy to their own who could help improve the wines, and who could also merge seamlessly with the family team. Six winemakers later, this is still the case, and past winemakers are spoken about as though they are family.

At Langi, interviewees also spoke about teamwork and the collaborative spirit between the winery and viticulture teams, which they described as quite unusual in the industry. Both Damien and Dan talked about how rewarding this relationship is and that it contributes significantly to their ability to produce such high quality wines. Dan also talked about how important it is to have capable staff that he can trust because it means he is not obliged to be at the winery at all times. For example, during the harvest when the winery is working continually and many people in the industry work

sixteen hours per day, he no longer does those long hours because the team is efficient and capable.

Relationships with staff were also raised briefly in the interviews in Bordeaux. Susan at Beychevelle talked about the number of people involved in producing their wines, and the use of modern technology to make individual jobs less physically strenuous, demonstrating a caring attitude. At Lynch-Bages, Laetitia said she felt valued as an individual employee as Jean-Michel always takes the time to greet the staff by name. Other Lynch-Bages employees that I spoke to informally expressed the same feeling of being acknowledged as individuals as well as employees. According to Jean-Michel, this consideration of employees as individual people stems from being a family business, and is an integral part of Lynch-Bages ethos: *“Je crois aussi que le côté familial de la gestion de nos affaires joue un rôle dans notre politique.”*

#### TRADE

While most of Best's and Langi's wines are estate grown, some fruit that goes into the lower end range of wines is sourced from local growers. During the discussion of purchasing fruit, Damien talked about the need to have good relationships with the growers. These relationships have been developed over the long term and Damien works closely with some growers, guaranteeing a market for the fruit and ensuring Langi has access to excellent quality fruit. Managing this relationship is a considered task. Damien explained that in order to maintain a happy and productive working relationship it is imperative that growers understand why he asks them to do particular things in the vineyard – increased understanding between the winery and grower ultimately produces better wine.

The Australian interviewees in particular also spoke about the importance of collaboration with other wineries in the region and in the wine industry in general. As a pioneer of Australian wine production, Viv described his early years at the helm of Best's:

*I spent a lot of time in those early years visiting other wineries and talking to other winemakers. I had an enormous amount of assistance from the Australian Wine Research Institute... I mean, there weren't many of us in those days. We all sort of knew each other and knew of each other and if you had a problem, say you were going to buy a new machine, a new press. So you'd say to the bloke, "Who's got these?" "Well, he's got one and he's got one." So you ring him up and say, "What's that machine like?" And he might say, "Oh, it's bloody useless." So you ring up the other bloke and he says, "Oh, it's alright." And another bloke says, "Oh, it's fantastic." So somehow you have to make up your mind which one you're going to buy. But the thing is that people were very good and very helpful. And I guess this is the thing I really appreciate about the industry is this cooperation between each other.*

While the industry is certainly more competitive and less cooperative now than it was in the 1970s, wineries in The Grampians, particularly the larger producers, enjoy a collegiate relationship. The need to work together is no doubt more pronounced in The Grampians than in other regions due to the isolation of the region and the small number of producers. Dan cited the physical distance between wineries in region as an impediment to professional development. He had previously worked in the Yarra Valley, a much denser region, where winemakers regularly meet for professional and social occasions, something much less common in The Grampians. Since the interviews Dan has returned to the Yarra Valley a move that may have been influenced by the geographical isolation of Langi.

Developing good relationships with distributors, marketing, sales, retail and restaurant staff also emerged from the interviews as a part of strategic marketing activities. The quality of the wine is almost indisputable for these wineries, however, in order to sell in the increasingly competitive global wine market (and at increasingly higher prices) requires an enthusiastic chain of people in the trade and retail. In addition to positive everyday working interactions, wineries also host events for trade contacts to develop and maintain relationships. Anne used the example of a Langi marquee at the Dunkeld Races as one such event, designed to thank their regional restaurateurs and distributors.

One thing that became abundantly clear the further I delved into the Bordeaux fieldwork was that the Grands Crus market system is fundamentally about relationships: between château, courtier, négociant, retail, restaurants, and other buyers. The chain of people follows a linear progression according to the selling process, from château through to consumer. However, even though the sales process is linear, relationships do exist between all participants. In recent years this has expanded to include consumers. Interviewees, particularly at Lynch-Bages, discussed the way the market is becoming increasingly competitive, complex, and global, largely in terms of relationships between the many different players in the chain from producer to consumer.

Laurent explained that as a négociant one of the grand advantages of the system is that if his client doesn't like a particular wine he is able to offer them a range of other wines. Thus the relationship is not dependent on a single château, rather, it is developed over the long term and it includes room to adapt to changes in market from both the production and consumption ends. Just as Laurent was clear that he sells many different labels, Jean-Michel and Philippe reinforced several times that the château does not sell wine. Thus roles are clearly defined and separated in the Bordeaux wine trade system, e.g. the producer doesn't discuss prices because they don't sell the wine, that is the négociant's job, however each one is inherently dependent on the others to complete the chain. While the roles are less clearly defined and separated in Australia, the length and depth of the discussion of relationships throughout the whole chain from production to consumption demonstrated that the network is equally central to the functioning of the industry.

## CONCLUSION

All interviewees emphasised the importance of people in the wine business. From within the winery, the discussion explored the importance of individuals, families and staff throughout history and in the present. This included the way individuals shape the winery and wines, the difficulty in separating the identity of key people and wines, and the roles different people play. Looking externally, the discussion included

relationships between winery personnel and other people in the wine trade, including other wineries, contract growers, sales and marketing, retail and restaurant staff, and the media. Interviewees discussed the way these relationships function and the implications of good and bad relationships, on wine quality and market success. The most detail and depth, however, was devoted to the relationship with consumers – how interviewees perceived their desires and needs, how the winery operates to cater for this and craft a particular image, and the degree to which people are emphasised in public relations narratives. Taken as a whole, the discussion revealed that these professional relationships are highly valued and must be carefully maintained and developed in order to succeed in the contemporary marketplace.

It is interesting to note here that wine research around the role of people and relationships focuses on the consumer and consumer-producer relationships. The interviews showed clearly that for producers, people and the management of relationships play a key role at all levels of the industry. The fieldwork data supports the idea that relationships are a vital part of in the wine industry, and where ‘the interface between supply and demand does not exist as a given set of consistent rules and criteria, but flows as the result of the interaction among intermediaries and between them and the supply and demand sides of the market’ (Odorici and Corrado 2004).



### 5.3.STORY

*“Je crois qu’en fait, chacun a besoin de raconter sa propre histoire.”*

Sylvie

The interviews, observations and published material collected for this research clearly demonstrate the importance of stories by the depth of the discussion and frequency with which the topic was raised. Throughout the interviews, participants recounted stories as a way of conveying information or describing a situation, to illustrate a point and to express emotional involvement. While most participants spoke consciously of the role of storytelling at some point in the interview, even those who didn’t (in fact, particularly those who didn’t) told me many stories, ranging from historically based ones to specific anecdotes of small moments and experiences. The notion of a bottle of wine as the carrier of a story emerged frequently as did the movement of stories between people and places. As they travel through the world, stories are continually told and retold, shared, appropriated and shaped according to the needs and usages of the storytellers and audience. In the wine market, stories are employed to promote wine and as a means of differentiation in a competitive market. The increasing importance of credibility in a digital age where consumers can instantly verify the facts of a story was also raised, bringing with it a discussion of the need to carefully craft a story before communicating it to the outside world.

The discussion of the use and role of stories in this category differs from the *History* and *People* categories in that it is concerned with the medium rather than the content. While *History* and *People* treat the actual stories of the wineries and the people involved (owners, staff, trade, consumers), *Story* discusses the way the stories are used to communicate and develop the winery image.

## THE ACT OF STORYTELLING

The desire to tell stories and the expectation that stories will be told in particular situations emerged clearly from the interviews and can be seen in website and promotional material. Sylvie expressed very simply this need for people to tell their story with relation to the Grands Crus: *“Je crois qu’en fait, chacun a besoin de raconter sa propre histoire.”* All other participants illustrated the discussion during the interview with stories to varying degrees.

Dan’s interview was illustrated with many stories throughout and he clearly enjoyed telling them. He was conscious of the power of storytelling and the enjoyment for both the narrator and the audience. He described the pleasure in gaining the trust of customers through storytelling when working at the Melbourne wine bar, Jimmy Watson’s, prior to becoming a winemaker. This trust allowed him to serve riskier wines, thereby extending their wine experience:

*I did three or four years working in the restaurant at Jimmy Watson’s when they were trying to have a really fine dining restaurant. We were pouring some crazy wines there. And that was really good fun because you could lead people through it as an experience and if you could get their trust you could really get stuck into it. And it’s a very gratifying thing when you can tell people a story about a wine and why it’s interesting and have them love it.*

At the same time, he said that the obligation to tell entertaining stories at wine dinners is a much a less enjoyable activity, underlining the way different situations change the storytelling process. This suggests that the more the story is part of a constructed and official event, where the teller is required to adhere to a performative script and schedule and convey the official company line, the less enjoyable the experience. On the other hand, the more the storytelling is part of an open conversation where there is a two-way interaction, the more enjoyable and rewarding it is. The performative nature and sheer number of wine dinners that Dan presents no doubt impacts on how enjoyable the storytelling is for him. At the wine bar it was a casual interaction underpinned by the company ethos of having an extensive wine list designed to cater for a range of individual tastes at any given moment, whereas wine dinners serve a

fixed selection of wines to a group of people with little room to deviate according to individual interest.

The interview with Viv demonstrated unequivocally the desire to tell stories and the use of stories as a communicative tool. While he did not discuss the practice of storytelling, his response to many questions began with “*I’ll tell you a story...*” or a similar phrase. The entire interview was infused with stories and anecdotes about his experience, Best’s history, other relevant events and other people’s stories. Viv told too many stories to include them all in this section, but examples are included throughout this entire chapter as examples in various categories.

Consistent with Best’s patriarch’s love of stories, the brand itself is based on stories. Steph summed up the importance of stories:

*Best’s are big on stories [...] and Johnno has been, since day one, since I started, he’s all about story, story, story, story, story. Everything we do around here is story. It’s got to have something, it’s got to represent something, it’s got to be tied somewhere, it’s got to have something behind that people go, “That’s cool”, and remember that.*

The art of storytelling can also be seen on Best’s website, where much of the information is presented in story format. A significant marketing tool is the “*Best kept secrets*” line, used throughout published material, and used frequently in the eBook, presented in old-fashioned story book format.

The Beychevelle website opens with a fairy tale image of the mythical Beychevelle galleon and the words, “*Welcome to Beychevelle, a land of wine and legends.*” The first choice on the website menu is a page entitled “*A story of legends...to dream*” which presents visitors with eight different stories from Beychevelle’s history, prefaced with a statement that explicitly acknowledges the power of storytelling and drawing a parallel with wine:

*Legends start by being based on facts, and then evolve, becoming embellished over time, and repeated retelling.*

*They invite us to dream, transporting us for a moment, as they stir up powerful emotions deep within us.*

*Like a fine wine...*

The collection of short stories give an emotional impression rather than a factual account.

While Lynch-Bages' website presents a brief and factual, black and white (figuratively, and also literally with black text on a white background) story of the château and the Cazes family, the 2013 book *Lynch-Bages & Co. – a family, a wine & 52 recipes* is a sumptuous publication that tells the story of Lynch-Bages, Pauillac, Bordeaux and the Cazes family. It employs visual storytelling with many double page photographs; a familiar tone to recount the historical narrative; an interview format for the family story; and a story with each recipe. The many photographs of individuals and specific places combined with the personal and familiar tone lend it an air of adult storybook.

All four wineries are actively telling their story in a carefully crafted way and acknowledge the importance and power of stories. Drawing on historical, traditional, and personal elements, they each present their story in their own way, consistent with the particular approach of the winery.

#### WINES WITH A STORY

In addition to the stories of the winery and the people, the notion of wines carrying a story emerged as a strong theme in many of the interviews. At Best's, the Concongella Collection is a range of wines grouped together specifically because they all have a particular story behind them. The wines in this collection are not produced every year and each one has a story, whether from a production perspective (e.g. EVT 51 labelled to celebrated Viv's 51 vintages at Best's) or a specific vineyard parcel (e.g. Nursery Block Red, made from 15 different varieties) or an historical link (e.g. Sparkling Shiraz, a specialty of Great Western). At Langi, Dan spoke about the unique personality of the

vineyard giving the wines their personality, which is *“in itself something that’s a nice story and the wines are really charming because they taste like Mount Langi.”*

These wines carry their story out into the market, imbuing each bottle with meaning and connection greater than the liquid in the bottle. Steph also explained that the story behind a bottle helps to promote and sell the wines, as different stories appeal to different people. She described how the stories behind the three different Rieslings in the Concongella Collection appeal to different people, and that restaurants, therefore, will choose the story they believe is most suited to their customers.

The concept of a bottle of wine carrying a story was also raised by Dan, Sylvie and Jean-Michel. The latter spoke of his dislike for the American habit of presenting tasting events where 25 to 30 wines are served with the aim of finding the “best” wine. He likened this to a horse race that does not account for the subjective nature of wine tasting. He prefers to organise a dinner with three to five wines, where there is time and space to tell the story of each wine. In this sense, the occasion where the bottle of wine is opened is a physical trigger for sharing stories. When describing the importance of tasting events where the owner or winemaker is face-to-face with the consumer, Sylvie also maintained that the meeting around a bottle of wine allows the producer to tell the winery’s story and subsequently for the consumer can tell the story of meeting the producer. In this way, *“ils créent une histoire autour de la bouteille.”*

#### THE CULT OF THE WINEMAKER

In Australia, the story of the winemaker has gained increasing importance since the 1980s. This is particularly evident in the story and success of Mount Langi Ghiran. Much like the creation of celebrity chefs in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cult of the winemaker emerged in the 1980s. Dan described the concept:

*... there was this cult of the winemaker thing going on. And you know, to look at the big companies where – if you crush a heap of grapes from all around Australia, get them into a big winery, and then have lots and lots of different*

*batches. And then you decide you're going to blend up a wine that is your best ever. And then you do that blend and you bottle it. And then you get high scores from wine writers and trophies at wine shows or whatever. And it becomes rare and sells for expensive money and – that's a product of winemaking in a winery. And so, if you're really good at that then you're a legend winemaker. And that's a very narcissistic process.*

At the same time as the Australian wine media was creating the cult of the winemaker by crediting individual winemakers with the quality of premium wines, Trevor Mast bought the Langi vineyard. The story of the 1989 vintage at Langi could not have been better for journalists hungering for their next article on winemaker genius. It was a particularly difficult vintage in The Grampians and Trevor's decision to take a risk and pick later than other vineyards paid off, producing an excellent wine. Damien described how the press jumped on this story and gave it a lot of coverage, telling it as a tale of natural instinct and winemaker genius. Success against the odds combined with a charismatic personality presented the perfect ingredients for a great cult winemaker story, which was exactly what the wine media was looking for. Damien noted that a story like this can't be invented – all of the details are correct – but the volume and style of media coverage created an almost mythical status for that vintage and Trevor's instinct. The continued focus on people in the story of Langi builds on the success of this story and maintains a common thread from the past into the present.

#### CRAFTING THE STORY

The crafting and telling of the story was discussed as a conscious act in most of the interviewees in Australia. At Best's the history is a focus because, as Steph said, *"that is where the story started."* She also underlined the value Best's places on the communication of that historical story: *"our whole brand and our whole focus and with our wines, it's really about ensuring that people understand that story."* At Langi, Damien also highlighted the conscious effort to craft the story: *"what we do is lead with that story and make it very, very clear... but what we have done is consciously discussed and worked out what is the story."* The Langi story, according to Aaron, has

two parts. On one hand, the story of the wine itself is about a very European focused style that is dictated by the vineyard; and on the other hand it is the story of people: how Trevor discovered Langi, that Dan went to Langi for the exceptional fruit and the wine style, and the subsequent success and continual improvement of Langi wines.

#### CONSUMER DESIRE FOR STORY

The consumer's desire to hear the story also emerged as a central part of the relationship between producers and the market. Sylvie described the particular importance of stories as part of wine consumption:

*Parce que les gens ont besoin de s'approprier une histoire. Enfin, un vin, on déguste pas un vin comme on va déguster un jus d'orange, même si le jus d'orange est d'une extrême qualité. Un vin, on a besoin de qu'il nous raconte quelque chose. Qu'il nous raconte un lieu et un homme, en fait, c'est ça. C'est un lieu avec tous ses composants géographiques et un homme. Avec toutes ces composantes à la fois de caractère, de personnalité, de travail, etcetera.*

And if consumers want a story, they also want a particular story. Damien discussed his perception of the story consumers desire: *"the consumer likes to hear that we're really passionate and dedicated people who are trying to do our best."* Dan also stated that the "humble" small winery is a more desirable story than a big corporate company. Likewise, the connection to a particular place, and hence the publicity emphasis on Langi's estate grown wines. That connection to place and an idealised perception of vineyard activity is something Damien raised, stating that the story people like is one that supports an idealised production process where people work by hand in the vineyard, despite the fact that most of the work is now done with tractors and other machinery. Dan also talked about the different elements of the story – Langi wines are often described as a reflection of the unique Australian soil, and also as European style. Dan said he did not think these seemingly opposing characteristics pose a problem for consumers: *"they don't mind the duality of a story that says this is a uniquely Australian place that's quite a lot like the Rhône Valley."*

## RETELLING THE STORY

The trajectory of the story as it moves from producer through distribution, wholesale, and retail to consumers is central to the power of storytelling. Ben explained how stories are retold by consumers at the moment of consumption, and that the story becomes a vehicle for social interaction:

*I think people want to know more general information. Because I think it's a talking point too. Like when you go out for dinner, if you can tell the story of where, "Oh gee, I went to cellar door and I bought this bottle of wine." And they learn a bit about it so they can speak to their friends about it – wine knowledge. And I think that happens with food too. Food knowledge. I think people are showing generally more interest in what they're eating and drinking and where it comes from.*

In this sense the act of wine consumption is a much broader experience than simply imbibing the liquid in the bottle.

To illustrate the lifespan of a story and the birth of new stories, Dan told the story of Langi Shiraz at the Melbourne restaurant Cutler & Co. as the wine of choice of pop band U2 during their tour to Melbourne:

*Last year we had this cool experience where Sally Humble, who's a sommelier – she was at Cutler & Co in Melbourne – and this is a nice example. So Sally had tasted the '08 Langi Shiraz and when it was time for release the sales rep visited her and said "How much do you want?" and she said "Oh, as much as I can have." So she bought ten cases on the spot. And I went in there and poured a bottle for their staff and they poured it all summer and it was their most successful wine and they banged through ten cases in no time flat. And the really cool bit was when U2 were touring they went to Cutler & Co. for dinner and they were drinking Langi Shiraz that night because it was the staff's top pick for the rock stars in the place.*

The story began at the winery with the Langi Shiraz and all it represents. From there the wine itself carried the story to the restaurant. When Dan visited the restaurant to



host a tasting for the staff he recounted the story of the wine to the staff. The extra dimension of that the story adds to the wine, bringing meaning and context via experience and storytelling. This encourages and makes it easy for them to recommend the wine to customers, including the famous rock band. Then a new story is born – that of U2 drinking Langi Shiraz at Cutler & Co in Melbourne – and recounted by restaurant staff back to Langi staff, trade and consumers.

With advances in technology, the ability to communicate stories in scenarios such as the above is greatly increased. The ease with which information can be disseminated means that the tale of U2 drinking Langi Shiraz in Melbourne can become a global story with very little effort and involvement on the part of the winery. The potential to develop stories in the modern world via technology was reinforced by Philippe at Beychevelle. He also discussed the way intensity can be created by continually retelling a story. He talked about the now internationally famous blind tastings in Bordeaux in the 1950s, and maintained that the tastings were not so well known at the time. Over time and with the constant retelling of the story to the media, visitors and trade, it has developed into something of much greater intensity and celebrity – there has even been a Hollywood movie made about it.

The importance of individuals telling the story of a winery, wine or wine related experience was also raised by Sylvie in relation to the Grands Crus in Bordeaux. She talked about the benefits of celebrity endorsement of wine as this provides a point of connection between consumers and the château. These people are trend setters, therefore their role begins with the endorsement of the wine, and extends to telling the story of their involvement with the wine or a particular experience to others. These others then tell the story of their interaction with the ambassador through the wine, which allows the story to grow of its own accord, without further input by the winery.

#### CREDIBILITY

Consumer and stakeholder involvement in the storytelling process also makes it a collaborative process, a key factor in successful storytelling. Dan spoke about

credibility with regard to story content – the need for signposts in the story that verify and justify the wine’s provenance and history – citing as an example very clearly defined regions such as Central Otago Pinot Noir, and the international success of Langi wines signifying quality for Australian consumers. The legitimacy of these signposts must also be unquestionable as consumers are able to instantly verify and critique stories with the aid of the internet. Aaron spoke emphatically about the modern consumer’s quest for the truth: *“I think so many more consumers are cynical like that. So more than ever, we want truth. And we want authenticity. And we want a story [...] We’ve always liked stories, but now we’ve got the ability to, I guess, critique and to validate whether it’s true or not.”* Sylvie echoed the awareness of key factors in successful stories when she said, *“quand son histoire est bien vécue elle fonctionne bien en général.”*

#### STORIES AS PART OF THE SALES PROCESS

From a financial perspective, the goal is always to sell wine at increasingly higher prices. Stories have their part to play in the marketing and sales of wines from cellar door through to restaurants. While the story helps to sell wine in Victoria and Bordeaux, the way it functions is quite different in each region. At Best’s, Steph spoke about how the different stories that accompany each of the Concongella Collection wines assist in marketing them. She said it is simply a matter of telling the story, highlighting what makes them special. This differentiates the collection and each wine individually, and provides continual opportunity for conversation as the wines in the collection change regularly. Dan spoke about stories generating enthusiasm in the sales team as they take the story out to retailers and restaurants. The story facilitates communication and transmits enthusiasm, assisting sales in the trade, and at the point-of-sale when the story is told once again.

There was little discussion of selling wines during interviews in the Bordeaux châteaux as they are not directly involved in sales. However, for négociants dealing in the Bordeaux Grands Crus market, storytelling has its role. Laurent explained the way

storytelling keeps sales moving throughout the year and described the sales cycle after the En Primeur campaign:

*The thing about Bordeaux is that we're talking about it – we keep the subject alive 12 months out of the year. There's the En Primeur campaign which takes two months. But then what do you think we do the rest of the ten months? I don't know, you take any of the 1<sup>st</sup> growths – Margaux or Latour, Haut-Brion, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, Beychevelle, Giscours, Lynch-Bages – all the hundred or so classified growths. Ok? Now we put back in the drawer the 2012 vintage primeur, but hop, here come the 2011s. Tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, 2011s. Which are going to be bottled in June. Which are going to be shippable soon. There are some people who bought it en primeur, but tonnes of other markets who did not buy it en primeur [...] I start saying, listen you guys, you, Patron, and your staff, on a handful of wines you should really start looking at 2011. Why? Because the stocks of all the other vintages are very low. [...] It's not literally everyone talks about Pétrus or Margaux or Beychevelle every day, but it's a subject that we can, which is available every day.*

Thus the story of the wine is kept alive during the years after it has been sold but before bottling. This fuels the conversation while the wine ages, helping to maintain its relevance in the present and keeping sales consistent.

## CONCLUSION

Interviewees and published material indicate that stories play a vital role in the communication about wine at many different levels, echoing the findings of Flint and Golobic's study of the winery experience (2015). Stories facilitate interactions within the wine trade, provide content for conversations and increase enthusiasm, easing the pathway from producers to distributors, retail, restaurants, and consumers. Stories and storytelling were discussed consciously as a means of communicating the winery image, and at other times subconsciously as a way of illustrating a point in the conversation. The varied and nuanced content and delivery creates 'rich brand stories'

(Beverland 2006) that contribute to an authentic winery image. Stories and wine intersect in different ways – wine as a vehicle for the story, story as a differentiating factor for a wine – adapting to the situation, the storyteller and audience.

## 5.4.QUALITY

*“En général, alors, je pense que les grands crus souhaitent avant tout, bien sûr, donner une image de qualité du produit.”*

Sylvie

Ideas around wine quality and the winery’s pursuit of it were discussed by some of the interviewees in fine detail, indicating that it is a high priority in their activities. Others did not mention it specifically, however, that was not to imply that quality is not a consideration, rather, that their focus is on other aspects, most of which impact significantly on quality production. In Bordeaux the high quality of the wine seems almost taken for granted, as it has been formalised and codified by the 1855 classification, the authority on quality for a century and a half. In Australia, where the history and reputation of wine production is much shorter and less formal, people in the wine industry seem very conscious of quality considerations as they pursue success as new world producers in a competitive local and global market, trying to compete with well-established old world producers. The concept of quality was primarily linked to winemaking and production, price and competition, but also emerged in the discussion of marketing, visitor experience and events.

### PURSUIT OF QUALITY WINE

Throughout the interviews it was clear that pursuit of quality is the driving force at Mount Langi Ghiran. This idea emerged in every interview from a number of different angles. Damien spoke about the attention to detail in the vineyard: *“We do put a lot of work into the vines and attention to detail. That does stretch us in terms of efficiency or productivity.”* That ideal is consistent with the parent company, the Rathbone Wine Group, and their overarching focus on quality. The practical nature of ensuring quality control is a priority for Mount Langi Ghiran at all levels of production, extending right up to the moment of consumption. Damien spoke at length about quality in the vineyard: viticultural techniques for producing the best fruit from the Langi vineyard;

working closely with growers to ensure their fruit is high quality; directions for pickers to obtain the best fruit; and the ability of certain vineyards to produce higher quality fruit than others. Damien described the Old Block, which produces fruit for the flagship “Langi Shiraz” as: *“our best block and we put a lot of effort into getting this right but also making sure that we’re guaranteed very good parcels no matter what happens.”* He made a clear distinction between “high quality” and “outstanding” fruit, stating that they are seeking the latter.

Dan also talked extensively about improving and ensuring quality in the winery using a combination of traditional methods and new technology. His focus was on consistency and maintaining quality right through to consumption, as he explained measures to control spoilage throughout the wine production process, e.g. steam cleaning barrels, sterile filtering before bottling and using screw cap closures. He linked this to guaranteeing market perceptions and Langi’s reputation: *“We don’t need the market to get any anxiety about our wine quality.”*

While the discussion of wine quality was minimal in the interviews at Lynch-Bages, quality from a business perspective was discussed in detail. From producing a very high quality wine – it is classified a 5<sup>th</sup> growth, but has a reputation to rival the best 2<sup>nd</sup> growths – to the visitor experience at the Village de Bages, down to the detail of high quality goods in the boutique, to Cordeillan Bages’ hospitality, and extending to the tasting experience at international dinners, the pursuit of a quality experience underpinned all of Jean-Michel’s conversation.

Philippe at Beychevelle discussed the continual efforts to improve the wines and their success in the market as a result of this. Much of this improvement is due to long term investments in winery infrastructure and more rigorous quality control of fruit and wines. According to Alain, an almost identical process is happening at Grand-Puy Ducasse, a 5<sup>th</sup> growth in Pauillac, demonstrating Beychevelle’s quality strategy as a model for emulation. Mount Langi Ghiran has seen similar quality improvements with significant investment in resources since its acquisition by the Rathbone Wine Group.

Quality was not spoken about directly at Best’s, nevertheless the discussion of the practical elements of wine production demonstrated that the pursuit of quality and

constant improvement are driving forces. For example, the *Thomson Family Shiraz* is only made in years when the quality of the fruit is exceptional, indicating a quest for quality. The restructuring of the business since 2005, which involved ceasing bulk wine production in order to focus on premium wine production under the Best's label is also a very strong indicator of the pursuit of quality. This decision was financially driven as competition with large companies in the bulk wine market became unprofitable. Following this shift, efforts have gone into improvements in the winery and new vineyards in Great Western that are producing high quality wines.

#### THE QUALITY-PRICE RELATIONSHIP

Much of the discussion around improvements in quality referred to money. Quality and investment appear to be inextricably linked, creating a cycle of improvement or the reverse. Money invested in the winery improves the quality, and thus the price the wine fetches in the market increases. Increased revenue from sales then allows more investment in the winery, which in turn further increases the quality and subsequently the price of the wine. This cycle is seen regularly in wineries around the world, and particularly in the extremely expensive world of Bordeaux Grands Crus. The opposite is also true, and demonstrated in the oft repeated tale – including Château Lynch-Bages in the 1930s and Château Margaux in the 1970s – of the decline in quality of a Grand Cru château brought about by the financial difficulties (in most cases due to other, non-wine business issues) of the owner. The lack of investment compromises quality and brings into question the château's right to the classification. At a certain point the château is sold to a new owner with investment capabilities. The new investment improves the quality and reinvigorates the winery, triggering the improvement cycle outlined above.

Until external factors, such as market crashes or financial difficulties in the company's other interests, interrupt the process, this quality cycle continues. This logic underpins the 1855 classification whereby high prices have allowed investment in the winery and thus improved the quality of the wine over a century and a half. This investment-quality connection was also cited by Wayne at the Cave L'Avant Garde as one of the

benefits of Robert Parker's wine ratings and subsequent price increases for Bordeaux wines.

The connection between quality and price was raised by many of the interviewees. Jean-Michel and Viv both expressed concern that although they enjoy the success of their wines and business, they would like their wines to remain at an accessible price. Affordability, and thus accessibility, seemed to be an ideological issue particularly for the older generation who found it difficult to resolve. They discussed the dichotomy of higher prices versus accessibility. On the one hand, price increase is a major indicator of success and highly desirable from a business perspective, and on the other hand, they expressed a concern that the price would make the wine inaccessible for many consumers, leading to a situation where the price becomes more important than the wine itself. Jean-Michel made a distinction between comfort and luxury:

*Je me sens très éloigné d'une idée qui est souvent développée aujourd'hui qui est le vin de qualité en tant que produit de luxe. Je déteste le luxe. J'aime le confort. C'est pas la même chose... Mais le luxe, c'est-à-dire où le prix joue un rôle important dans la satisfaction. Ça c'est pas trop my cup of tea.*

This concern did not develop into a discussion of value for money, as all four case studies enjoy an excellent reputation. Philippe was quite direct when this idea was raised, saying that there are more than enough consumers who can afford to buy wines at the price of Beychevelle and therefore it is not something they need to consider. In contrast, Alain, director of Grand-Puy Ducasse, a little-known 5<sup>th</sup> growth in Pauillac, said he was quite aware of the need to provide value for money because the château does not have such a reputation. From an external perspective, value for money was not discussed with relation to the four wineries, except for the suggestion that Beychevelle was possibly slightly overpriced. This indicates that the quality of these four premium wineries is recognised unequivocally by the market. The question of price, then, is highly nuanced. In the premium market, for wineries with excellent reputations, as all four case studies have, it is an indicator of quality and market success, but can extend into a luxury goods ideal when price becomes more important than the product itself.



## HIERARCHY

The hierarchy of wineries, particularly in Bordeaux, was raised as both an indicator and restrictor of actual and perceived quality. Despite the international reputation of Beychevelle, Philippe described the hierarchy of the Grands Crus in the local appellation, demonstrating that he is very aware of Beychevelle's position. Located in Saint-Julien, "*une très petite appellation ... de très haut niveau,*" Philippe presented the situation pragmatically. He stated that Beychevelle is not the best wine in Saint-Julien, nor is it the worst, however, they are constantly trying to improve the quality.

Jean-Michel at Lynch-Bages was also very conscious of the competition in Pauillac – three out of five 1<sup>st</sup> growths are in the appellation – but with a mischievous twinkle in his eye told me that while some say that Lynch-Bages is the poor man's Mouton Rothschild, he prefers to say that Mouton Rothschild is the rich man's Lynch-Bages. He is evidently very comfortable with Lynch-Bages' position in the hierarchy and is to a certain extent staying true to his ideal of accessibility: "*Ce qu'on essaie de maintenir c'est la qualité d'un Premier Cru avec le prix abordable.*" Malou stated, from the négociant's perspective, that the quality not the classification determined the price, but the 1<sup>st</sup> growths operate in a category of their own, with prices significantly higher than any other wines.

The hierarchy in Australia is much less evident, although there are certain prizes and media coverage that elevate a winery to a higher level, such as the Jimmy Watson Trophy and James Halliday's Top 100 wines. Nonetheless, both premium Australian wines and Bordeaux Grands Crus have created a reputation that includes an expectation of quality.

## QUALITY IN MARKETING

The notion of quality as part of the winery image and its importance for consumers was also discussed by interviewees. Dan at Langi raised the idea that consumers like to identify with quality and refinement – *I am what I drink*. It follows then, that a winery that produces quality wines and has an image of quality will appeal to the consumer

seeking to reinforce his or her self-image. This is also where the distinction between “high quality” and “luxury” becomes important: the case studies in this research all expressed a desire to remain accessible to a clientele who appreciate the wine more than its price. An image of quality, expertise and artisanal production helps the winery connect with a consumer who appreciates these characteristics. From the opposite direction, the same image helps the consumer to choose a wine that appeals to her/his sense of self:

*So, given that you pour the wine and they like the wine, they like to be told that they're quite sophisticated people because they've got good taste. So, you say that, you know, this is not something for yobbos, you need people with refinement like you who can really appreciate the quality of this and they say “yes, yes, I'm very refined. That's right, that makes sense.” So identifying their aspirational values with what you're telling them.*

Dan also spoke about quality as a promotional tool – that it makes the wine easier to sell if it is high quality and has a quality image. Sylvie cited the idea of quality in public relations for the Grands Crus, presenting it as the foundation on which all marketing and communications are built.

Aaron at Langi placed the notion of quality in a global context when he lamented the fact that Australia does not have a reputation for producing quality wines. Following the extraordinarily successful 1996 strategic plan for the Australian wine industry, *Strategy 2025*, wine sales at the lower price points have grown exponentially, but the adverse effect has been to create a reputation that Australia only produces cheap, bulk wine. Aaron said this is a substantial hurdle for premium Australian wine producers and they are actively seeking ways to change this image in international markets.

#### THE SUBJECTIVITY OF QUALITY

Interestingly, the acknowledgement of quality as a very subjective perception emerged in the Australian interviews but was largely absent from the interviews in Bordeaux. Laurent at Barrière Frères was the exception and he was quick to point out that it is

not his job to make quality judgements. As a négociant he sells to expert buyers who know their wines and their clients' tastes. Laurent stated clearly that the style of different vintages may vary, but the quality would not. He was the only interviewee in France who raised the question of subjective perceptions of quality. However, throughout many of the interviews and observations there was an underlying assumption of high quality. This suggests that the prestigious position of French wine production in general and particularly the Bordeaux Grands Crus affords a confidence stemming from the idea that quality has an absolute value – no doubt engendered by the codification of the 1855 classification – and that they sit at the top of the hierarchy.

#### CONCLUSION

Notions of quality emerged from the interviews in relation to wine quality, the relationship between quality and price, and the perception of quality from industry and marketing perspectives. All four wineries enjoy an excellent reputation in local and global markets, and to a large extent there is an unquestioned acceptance of the high standard of the wines. Despite this, interviewees discussed improvements at length, indicating that continual improvement is a very high priority. The importance of quality experiences around the wine was discussed as an integral part of marketing and public relations, following the logic that to confirm the perception of quality of the wine, everything else associated with the winery must be of equally high quality. This attitude to overarching quality supports the premise that the 'commitment to quality represent[s] both a quest to continually make great wines, and a commitment to their consumers' (Beverland 2006). Lastly, the subjective nature of quality was raised as a reason for each winery to remain faithful to its individual style and terroir.

## 5.5. PHILOSOPHY

*“We just want to make wines that reflect our region, our soils, everything.”* Ben

This category discusses the philosophy of each winery – the motivations and justifications for approaches, strategies, decisions and activities. With a focus on the reasons why they do things in particular ways, the discussion encompasses the philosophy of production (vineyard management, winery practices) and promotion, ideas about the development of experience and knowledge, and how that influences winery philosophy. Conversation topics include environmental care, wine quality, sustainability, constraints and experimentation. Much of the discussion centred on the notion of attention to detail – in the vineyard, winery, cellar door, marketing and public relations – and representing place in the truest way possible. Philosophy was expressed through ideas of quality and production. Interviewees revealed the winery’s philosophy both implicitly and explicitly when describing these processes. As might be expected for boutique, premium producers, there was an emphasis on quality, care and terroir as interviewees talked about why they do things the way they do, what they would like the wine to represent, and how they would like the wine to be received by the market and consumer.

### RESPECT FOR PLACE, PEOPLE, HISTORY

Each winery has its own philosophy that underpins all activities. The reasons for making wine and the governing principles of individuals, wineries and regions featured heavily in the interviews. The overriding principle was one of respect for place, people and history. This philosophy is beautifully expressed in Best’s Nursery Block Red and Concongella Blanc, made from the original 1860s vineyards that comprise more than 15 varieties each. Each wine represents the history of winegrowing in the region. At Best’s, from the personal investment of founder, Henry Best, to the subsequent care

by the present day owners, the Thomson family, there is a clear and continuing philosophy of valuing old vines and the land on which they are grown.

At Langi, a similar ethos is represented in the wines, clearly honouring the people and places with wines such as the Trevor Mast Shiraz and Cliff Edge Shiraz. Damien referred to this as a “*production driven mentality*”, contrasting it with the consumption focused motivation of bulk wine and other consumer goods. Dan described this philosophy in some detail:

*... so instead you try to flip that idea over and say, “Well this is what we’ve got and how can we do something really special with that?” And take that to the market and get a bunch of people to follow us and like it. And using old world referencing and on top of that getting a feel for what people like in terms of style and how you can be in a leadership position with that. It’s a very difficult and nebulous idea but that’s what we try to do. It’s challenging – it’s not easy to pin down.*

Although the team at Langi appear to be keenly aware of the market – competition and consumer desires – production is the driver. Likewise, at Best’s interviewees expressed a desire to adapt the marketing to sell the wines they produce rather than changing production to suit consumer trends.

The well-established production norms and regulations in Bordeaux mean that there are few changes to the range of wines produced by Beychevelle and Lynch-Bages. This is part of a philosophy that values and actively promotes the long tradition of winemaking in the region, the vineyards that produce the fruit, and the people who have directed the châteaux. Just as the website, promotional material and general publicity and writing on the Grands Crus *assumes* exceptional vineyards and wine quality, the Bordeaux interviews did not contain an explicit discussion of production philosophy – it is implicit and understood, and therefore unnecessary to articulate. Arguably there exists a production driven mentality and the wines do not change according to market trends, but continue a longstanding tradition codified in deeply entrenched production regulations. However, in conversation, marketing appears to

occupy significant space in the consciousness of the team as they develop strategies to sell wine in a rapidly evolving global market.

#### WINES THAT REFLECT PLACE

The respect for place is evident in the desire to produce a wine that reflects each winery's particular vineyards. This was addressed (overtly) by the Australian interviewees but not by the French ones. The word *terroir* encapsulates this idea, and as an entrenched notion in French winemaking, the lack of discussion suggests that, like the quality of Grands Crus wines, it is an assumed attribute rather than an irrelevant one. Much of the published material and marketing narrative uses phrases such as "exceptional terroir". For example, the official Bordeaux wine website (CIVB 2016): *"The principle of crus classés (classified growths) serves to succinctly illustrate the typical characteristics of an exceptional terroir and winemakers' savoir-faire."* In the Australian interviews the concept of wines coming from a place and reflecting that place was discussed often and in detail. Ben summarised Best's philosophy in this regard: *"We just want to make wines that reflect our region, our soils, everything. [...] And we don't want to make wines like other people. We want to make wines that reflect ours here. [...] Let the juice in the wine talk for itself really. Let it do its own thing, don't manipulate it."* Viv presented a detailed and overarching perspective on the issue, demonstrating a deliberate philosophy of avoiding global quality comparisons in favour of place:

*And I get a little bit annoyed at Australia always comparing our wines to European wines. We don't have to do that. In Bordeaux they make the greatest Bordeaux wines in the world and we make the greatest Great Western wines in the world right here. They don't make them in Bordeaux and we don't make Bordeaux wines here either. And I think we've got to have enormous pride in what we're doing. I've always had a lot of pride in, I guess, well our philosophy – you mention philosophy there – is to convert the vine to the table with minimum fuss and as less interference as possible. I mean, the wines don't make themselves. You've got to look after them on the way. But I've never, I*

*don't think we've ever tried to make wines which were not part of the area. [...] We're not trying to make Coonawarra wines because Coonawarra wines are made in Coonawarra. And I just think we've got to be true to ourselves. And I think that's our philosophy. That's what we want to do.*

Philosophy is expressed through production and is firmly grounded in trying to produce the finest wines possible from their particular vineyards, rather than competing with other producers and regions.

The discussion with Dan and Damien was based on the same respect for the specific geographical place where Langi is situated. Throughout publicity material and interviews there is constant reference to the unique vineyard and incredible site. In addition the place and people, Dan also mentioned vintage variation, explaining that they are currently treating the wines extra-delicately because this year the vintage conditions have made them more fragile than usual. This attention to detail and adaption of techniques illustrates Dan's philosophy that the wine in the bottle should be an annual representation of a particular time and place: *"What we're doing here is taking a beautiful place with an iconic vineyard on it that's managed carefully with the forty years' experience and trying to get an annual snapshot of what that place tastes like into the bottle."*

The taste of the wine also emerged as an important aspect of the underlying philosophy. As well as an annual snapshot, Dan was very clear that he makes wines for drinking not investment. Of all interviewees, he spoke the most about tasting as an integral part of wine production: *"the third part of my work is the taste-style-art side and so to keep myself current and to be demanding of my palate, I do as much judging as I can find the time for."* His philosophy of constant improvement, attention to detail and hard work came through when discussing tasting, stating that it is imperative to taste extensively in order to be able to recognise quality: *"it's not something that's a gift. I think you can learn it, you just need the exposure and to work hard at it."* Dan described the ultimate goal of this philosophy of expressing place and time in taste as a desire for the wine to be a wonderful experience for the consumer:

*And I want to make wines that have that same wow factor. So when people open a bottle of my wines they go “oh wow, I didn’t know these wines were that good”. And so that’s the aspiration and that’s going to take a long time to get to that point, but I think gradually, gradually we’re getting there.*

*And so you want, and to go back to that idea of what really monumentally great wine is when you pour – particularly great Pinot Noir – when you pour it and you smell it and you just can’t get your nose out of the glass because it smells so sexy. That’s what we want to do with Langi.*

This comment demonstrates a broad understanding of not only what wine can be – a high quality representation of time and place – but also the effect wine can have on consumers.

#### A PHILOSOPHY OF CARE AND SIMPLICITY

A philosophy that emerged clearly from the interviews in Australia and more subtly from the interviews in Bordeaux, was the notion of minimal fuss in the winery and maximum care in the vineyard, coupled with attention to details. All participants shared a strong belief in the quality of the vineyard and a desire to express that in the wine. These elements combine to provide evidence of a philosophy of care and simplicity. The notion of simplicity was foremost in Ben’s description of his approach to growing grapes:

*Don’t worry about things that you don’t [need to] worry about. And make it pretty simple if you can. Don’t overcomplicate it. I think things these days get a little bit overcomplicated. Growing grapes is all good fun but it can be quite simple if you want to make it quite simple or you make it as technical as you like, you know. I do the right thing and everything, but I don’t believe in overcomplicating. You start complicating it and Mother Nature will come along and change her mind anyway.*



Both Viv and Ben's experience of growing grapes in Western Victoria means they have a keen sense of the power of nature, having lived through many difficult periods, which they described in the interviews.

Ben and Viv's approach to wine production is one of experience and keen observation in the vineyard and winery. They both emphasised simplicity and trying not to complicate the process too much. The discussion of vineyard and winery care at Langi focused more on the new technologies that are employed to improve grape and wine quality. However, while the observational methods may be different (technology versus a hands-on approach) the aim and outcome at both Best's and Langi is to improve and ensure quality in the most efficient way, using the least amount of chemicals possible.

Damien described the approach at Langi in terms of care and attention to detail resulting in quality, stating that *"the vineyard version of the hands off approach is hands on."* He did not use the term simplicity, instead talking a lot about understanding the fine details:

*But our general approach is, we're not interested in just using the standard methods of viticulture here. We want to be looking at novel ways to produce what we're doing. Where the pursuit is for excellent fruit. It's not just paying lip service to quality, but to really get it down to fine detail and getting the best out of our blocks.*

In the vineyard this detail includes practices such as soil moisture monitoring to know when and where irrigation is necessary; biological control of insects; canopy management and cane pruning to reduce congestion and therefore disease and the use of chemicals:

*So we have a scientific approach to what we do. And we use science to develop a better understanding of what goes on at the detailed level, in the vine as well. So all of that overlays the fact that we generally try to do things without using lots of chemicals or having high inputs of chemicals.*

During harvest Langi draws a flavour map of the vineyard and pockets of each block are harvested individually at optimum ripeness; the vineyard is largely handpicked with pickers instructed only to pick only bunches that they would be “*happy to put in their mouth.*”

Damien presented a clear correlation between attention to detail and wine quality:

*Because to me in what we do, what that means is spending lots of time in the vineyard getting it perfect – you’ve got to try and pursue an ideal so that you have, so that your leaves aren’t being chewed up by insects, don’t have spots on them and, you know, that they’re perfect. So you don’t lose them because you haven’t got your irrigation right. So that the fruit is in proportion to the amount of leaf that’s there, but you don’t have more than you should have. But there’s that fine tuning.*

The pursuit of quality is the driving force behind Langi production decisions, as Damien described:

*So it means we don’t try to look for the easy options or the sort of modern technology options necessarily. We’re just looking for the ... whatever options give us the best fruit. So that means that some of our practices are modern, some of them are old fashioned. So it just means whatever it takes.*

Damien also described Trevor and Dan’s winemaking philosophy in terms of attention to detail in the pursuit of quality. He said that Dan is taking the wine in a new direction, but the philosophy of quality remains the same. Dan described the Langi ideal in similar terms: “*a lot of what I think makes better quality wine, and Damien agrees with me, is paying as much attention to detail as you can and that often means lots of hard work at certain times.*” He also gave the example of bottling under screwcap because it is much more reliable than cork. He said he does not want to compromise or risk the quality or consistency of Langi wines. Damien acknowledged that the attention to detail and “whatever it takes” attitude pushes the winery’s financial constraints. Nevertheless, everyone at Langi described the business as being in a sustainable position.

Langi's philosophy of attention to detail extends to marketing and communications. Damien, Dan, Aaron and Anne discussed wine dinners, one-on-one work with the trade, and knowing who their customers are, and how the philosophy of attention to detail extends to winery image, brand development, and communication. The ultimate aim is to be able to continue producing excellent wines in the long term, as Dan described:

*And with brands like this, like this is a long term proposition. You'd hope it was here in a hundred years' time so you can't have that same death of the brand. So you have to renew it and work on what's sustainable. And the idea of incremental growth I don't believe is necessarily the answer to that. I think if you can just be sustainable and keep going. And that's my personal philosophy about environmentalism and economics as well. I think the end point for humans, if we're going to survive at all, is not about economic growth.*

That long term view was phrased very poetically by Viv as he drew parallels between people and wine:

*But, I've always believed that wine and people are very similar and they go through different stages. When they're being crushed and pressed, this is probably the baby stage where they're pretty messy and pretty horrible and there's lots of smells and things you don't really want and all this thing. And they grow up to young children and then they become young adults and they develop and then you get sort of, I suppose, if you're a young adult it's like drinking a wine that's the same – 2010, something like that. I mean, it's still got a lot of vibrancy in it, it's got a lot of go in it and there's a lot of potential there. And then you go through another few years and you get the sort of middle aged, where they settle down a bit and this sort of thing. And then you get to old age. And old age, I think, at that stage, this is where respect comes in. I mean, if you've got a wine which is say, 20 or 30 years old, they're still looking pretty good. You probably would've enjoyed it better 10 years ago or 20 years ago but a wine to be that good at that age deserves a lot of respect. And that's where I think the older wines are coming off and they're not as vibrant. I don't*

*quite know what people expect. But the thing is they've aged so well, so graciously over that period of time that they have a lot of respect. And then of course you get the geriatric wines and then the next thing you get the senile. So the idea is you drink the wines when they're old age not when they're geriatric or senile.*

The philosophy of care during production is thus extended to the entire life of the wine until it has been consumed.

## CONCLUSION

The consistent emphasis by all interviewees on care, attention to detail and respect for place, people and history indicate a shared philosophy between the four wineries. Although the circumstances differ in location – from Australia to France – business structure – family or company – the underlying philosophy of the pursuit of quality emerged strongly from the discussions. The juxtaposition of economics and respect for the terroir emerged as a complex relationship as producers try to balance needs and wants, sustainability and quality. There was a very strong sense that all interviewees believe in what the winery is doing – producing a quality wine that respects the terroir – and hope that it is destined for a consumer who appreciates and understands the efforts that have gone into making the wine.

The discussion of quality for the four wineries in this study was consistent with Beverland's findings on luxury branding process in the wine industry. He used the term 'Product Integrity' (2004), and found it to be one six major parts of developing and maintaining a luxury wine brand. As the international wine industry becomes more competitive, producers seek ways of differentiating themselves while consumers seek increasingly higher status products (Banks and Overton 2010). Attention to detail, respect for people, place and history, and techniques motivated by care and simplicity all contribute to the winery's reputation and integrity.

## 5.6.AUTHENTICITY

*“On ne fait bien que les choses qu’on comprend.”*

Jean-Michel

Authenticity is used to denote the discussion of respect for tradition and the terroir, creating wines from a place, pursuing a balance in all aspects of the business, and having a genuine love of winemaking. It also extends to communications with consumers as interviewees expressed a desire to communicate their authenticity to the outside world, particularly with consumers who share their appreciation for fine wines that represent a place. Marketing authenticity was discussed in detail from the producer’s perspective of being honest about their practices and also recognising a consumer desire for authenticity in a mass-produced world.

### PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY

Ben used three words to describe Best’s: *“Reliable. Honest. Integrity.”* These three ideas emerged as important values in all interviews and for all four wineries. In addition, the importance of being a family-owned company was something that was highlighted at Lynch-Bages, Best’s and Langi. Anne described her experience in cellar door and what “family-owned” represents for consumers:

*We are still perceived as boutique. I have to say that it’s a big thing for consumers if we are still a boutique and family owned winery. And we get asked that a lot in the cellar door [...] It’s the perception of the public and not necessarily loving the big companies, and people love the fact that it’s still family owned and love the fact that it’s a boutique. A lot of care goes into the product that we serve.*

Laetitia also described the visitor pleasure in knowing that Lynch-Bages is one of the rare Grands Crus that is still owned and run by a French family, and that the house of the owner and his family share walls with the château. The presence of the family at

the château was also noted as an important demonstration – in deed, not just words – of the human connection that is implied by the “family-owned” label: *“Combien de fois pendant les visites, on les a croisés, a croisé Monsieur Cazes ou son fils, et ils avaient toujours un mot. Toujours un mot, voilà, dire bonjour aux gens, prendre un temps.”* She went on to tell the story of Jean-Michel picking up visitors from the tourist information centre one rainy day to save them walking all the way to Lynch-Bages. This personal consideration of individuals reinforces the company image of ordinary people making excellent wine. The notion of authenticity extends to being welcoming to everyone who arrives at the château, as Laetitia described: *“On accueille tout le monde avec le sourire et on prend toujours autant de temps que ce soit avec une personne en claquette, enfin, en tongs et short qu’avec la personne en costume.”*

Dan described the concept of authenticity in wine as a meeting of place, nature and scientific expertise. He described taking visitors on tours of Langi, showing them the vineyard and barrels, but also the scientific laboratory and new technology that are used to produce Langi wines: *“They want to understand that it’s a natural process and it’s a wine from a place and it’s an authentic product. But they also want to understand and feel confident that you really do know what you’re doing.”* This idea that authenticity is about producing the best wine that expresses a particular vineyard rather than being traditionalist or old-fashioned, was supported by interviewees at all four wineries. It also indicates that the well-informed premium wine consumer has a certain understanding of the process of wine production, and as Dan explained, suggests a more general consumer trend towards products of origin:

*So that’s, I think, a shift that’s happened in Australian winemaking in the last, sort of ten, fifteen years, but it brings with it authenticity. And it, it follows a global trend away from multinational, brand-based, consumer goods into the idea of stuff that has a point of origin with some authenticity and integrity. And, so if you look at, you know, food consumption patterns, then the big trend towards farmers’ markets and organics, people want to know where it came from.*

He extrapolated this idea, consistent with Demossier's findings (2010) on wine drinking in France: *"I think it speaks to a piece of human desire to get in touch with the natural thing. [...] They're looking for this thing that is this raw, you know, and the same with the food and wine and everything you consume. There are people looking for this untouched ideal."* According to Dan, while consumers may be seeking authenticity and connection, it is nevertheless difficult to communicate authenticity in a world where most consumer purchases are entirely divorced from production:

*And so the idea that wine comes from a place and has this amount of rigour to it is at times almost surprising for them. And then they don't trust anything. [...] And so that's why I get back to this idea of authenticity, because you have to be behaving with enough integrity to take that to the market and stand behind it and say, "What we do is for real".*

From this perspective the integrity of production makes it possible to present the wine to the outside world with a strong and credible claim of authenticity.

Aaron contrasted boutique premium wineries with the large retailers that have a range of wines under different labels that look like they come from somewhere, but in fact are mass-produced wines without any connection to a place. He suggested that consumers are not impressed with the obfuscation that this kind of packaging presents: *"So [...] more than ever, we want truth. And we want authenticity. And we want a story."* In a certain segment of the market, then, there are advantages for the boutique winery with a clear and genuine story to tell. This discussion highlighted and contrasted the two different sides of wine production and consumption – mass-produced and boutique.

#### AUTHENTICITY OF PLACE

A large part of the "real" side of winemaking is the place where the grapes are grown. In The Grampians as in Bordeaux, the belief that each winery's vineyards are of exceptionally high quality was discussed and, to a certain extent, assumed. The assumption of quality and the link with the vineyard and history is particularly

pertinent in Bordeaux where, as Sylvie described, winemakers have spent centuries working out where the best vineyards are. In addition, there is a belief that the vineyard has a particular character, and as winemakers, there was a sense that they are responsible for expressing that character in the wine. Deviation from this principle would be considered inauthentic. Viv and Philippe talked about the influence of wine critic Robert Parker, and while they acknowledged that there could be temporary marketing and financial benefits in adjusting the wine to his style, under no circumstances would they do that as they feel a responsibility to stay true to the vineyard. In Philippe's words: *"Non, si on arrive à faire un bon vin qui plait aux consommateurs et qui plait à Parker, c'est mieux. [...] On peut faire des choses pour un goût peut-être, mais nous, c'est pas notre politique."* Viv also reinforced the idea that stylistic consistency is a significant part of wine's authenticity: *"Anyway, the point I'm getting at, good areas don't change their styles. I mean, they can vary them and it goes up, but you don't change your style. It's what the area is that dictates, and your season dictates, and your soil dictates."* Aaron described the challenge and rewards of being true to the vineyard:

*So I think you've got to do that through being true to the product and true to the style and a more informed ... You know, it is being progressive in tasting widely and being more informed, trying to get the best out of the vineyard. And it's hard at first but, you know, I remember, as I was saying to you, four or five years ago with distributors saying. "Oh, it needs more weight. It needs more grunt. People don't get it." And it would have been so easy at that point to add a bit of tannin extract, to let the grapes hang a little bit longer and get riper, and use a bit more American oak rather than French oak. There are ways that you beef up the wine. But, you know, fortunately we didn't go that path and we stayed the cause and it's paying off. So there's not anything apart from sticking to our knitting and trying to talk to as many people and get the third party endorsement. That's the only way for us, really.*

Thus, the concept of authenticity for interviewees was also about having the conviction to continue what they believe is the right way of doing things even if this is contrary to current trends and fashion.



## AUTHENTICITY OF PROCESS

Interviewees at Lynch-Bages, Langi and Best's spoke strongly about how connection to the vineyard and the production process is a part of authenticity. Being present and involved at the winery and vineyard is an integral element for Viv: *"So I guess that we've always been very much hands on and closely connected to what we're doing"* and also Jean-Michel: *"Moi, je veux pas être viticulteur hors sol. Je veux être viticulteur implanté dans la région, dans le pays."* Anne also described the connection between producer and consumers being grounded at cellar door: *"So cellar door, we are absolutely the face and the home of the brand."* The relationship between people, vineyard and process was presented as an important ingredient in the idea of authenticity. It is this concept of connection and a deep understanding of the vineyard, according to Damien, that created the legendary status of Trevor Mast at Langi following the particularly difficult 1989 vintage: *"... it built his legendary status up because he was able to use his incredible intuition and pick on the right day. [...] the truth to that's probably a little bit different to the myth, but it got a lot of mileage in the press."* Both the media and consumers appreciate the story of a winemaker who is so attuned to the vineyard he can succeed in unfavourable conditions. The story has the essential ingredients of authenticity – an individual, time and specific place that are deeply connected and together create a representative product.

## AUTHENTICITY VIA TRADITION

Tradition is also a key factor in notions of authenticity, particularly physical and tangible representations of history. At Best's and Lynch-Bages the physical tradition of the museum and cellar are highly valued, as a place to visit and as a record and homage to each winery's history. On the tour of Best's, the rough-hewn beams, dusty old bottles and disused fermenting tank in the cellar are key elements. The tour at Lynch-Bages begins with the museum, which is actually the old winery, a complete two-story building with much of the original equipment. Laetitia described some of the physical details at Lynch-Bages that maintain tradition:

*Autant par rapport au musée que dans, par exemple, vous avez aussi le côté tradition dans le chai à barriques. Nous, on va utiliser les bondes en bois, des gués de bondes silicone, le châtaignier, la planche de port. Des choses qu'on ne retrouve pas forcément, systématiquement dans les autres domaines viticoles."*

The Village of Bages demonstrates very clearly that tradition is valued, the physical representation suggesting that traditional ideals are also respected. As an entire village with bakery, butcher, café and other shops, it values general French traditions as much as the traditions connected to Lynch-Bages and winemaking in the region.

At Beychevelle, Susan talked about modern techniques that improve the wines, particularly the second wine, however she emphasised the importance of following traditions for the flagship wine: *"People ask why we don't do the same thing for the Beychevelle, and the answer is always "We stick to tradition" and when we're draining out the wine with the glass and the candle we're going right down to the last little drop and not wasting anything."*

During the tour of Langi with Damien, he indicated with reverence the old blocks that have the original, traditional low trellis called the "Australian sprawl". Once again the physical and tangible elements of the vineyard and winery provide proof of authenticity and tradition.

At a group level, upholding tradition is of vital importance to the UGCB whose promotions are entirely based on tradition as a marker of authenticity. Even the format of tasting events sticks deliberately to tradition, according to Sylvie. This is not surprising as the very existence of the Grands Crus is due to the 1855 classification. Its validity and influence would be diminished if tradition were not so highly valued or if its authenticity was questionable. Jean-Michel spoke about the benefits of the historical classification as a distinguishing marker that does not place any restrictions on the châteaux:

*N'y touchons pas. Parce que, si on y touche, qui était le cas – on a voulu toucher. J'ai bossé là-dessus. Il y avait plusieurs tentatives de changement. Tout changement apporterait des contraintes qui seraient préjudiciables à notre*

*activité. Aujourd'hui la beauté du classement 1855, c'est qu'il n'y a sorti d'aucune contrainte de la part des gens qui y figurent. C'est-à-dire que c'est pas des vignobles qui sont classés ce sont des marques commerciales. Donc, c'est une marque commerciale qui est distinguées parmi d'autres. Et ça, c'est très important."*

Tradition provides proof of authenticity via physical markers, such as buildings, materials and vineyards, documents such as the 1855 classification, photographs, inventories, family documents, and the format of events and activities.

Interviewees at all four wineries held resolutely to the belief the wine should not be influenced by fashion, critics or market demands, otherwise the winery's authenticity is questionable. They acknowledged that new trends in wine styles are constantly emerging – Robert Parker's taste for high alcohol, blockbuster wines is an obvious example – and that some of them are highly influential, however, everyone discussed the importance of remaining faithful to the vineyard and tradition. Steph described Best's approach: *"Best's hasn't deviated a lot in terms of winemaking trends or marketing trends over that 147 years. Like, the family has been very aware that, you know, if you stay on course and stick to who you are as a winery and as a brand that people will respect that over time."* She also talked about Viv maintaining the traditional values:

*He doesn't follow trends and he's not somebody who will jump on a bandwagon because he's got this new product out or the new way that's going to revolutionise the wine industry. He stays very true to the way he's done things for his father's time and his time and he'll talk to you about that. About the fads that happen and people were quick to jump on them because that's what the world wanted at that time and then it all falls apart.*

Damien spoke about the current trend for organics and biodynamics, questioning the underlying reasons for some producers implementing those methods. His attitude is that all strategies should come from the desire to care for the vineyard and surrounding environment in the best way possible. He talked about the different motivations for change in production processes:

*In good faith they've probably approached what they're doing by saying, "Oh, come on guys, you know, everyone else is doing it, we've got to become organic, you know, we've got to start". Whereas to me that's back to front. I would have thought that you'd have to say, "Oh, I own this land or I'm part of this and I want to do the right thing". I reckon that's the better, that's the more sincere and credible approach. Because even saying, "We've got to start doing this because everyone else is", that's like a marketing response.*

The idea that authenticity is determined by winery philosophy and derived from production emerged clearly from the interviews, mostly expressed as a contrast to market-driven wine businesses. From a marketing perspective, Aaron discussed the difference between fast-moving consumer goods and the long term approach required to produce premium wine, stating that Langi has reaped the rewards of the latter:

*Langi's always been in a good position, but momentum has continued to build and through sticking to, doing justice to the vineyard and continuing to progress the style, but just that focus on quality has meant that eventually everyone comes around. And I think that probably from a pure marketing, academic perspective, I think that gives us everything. There is always a life cycle, but I think if you can build it slowly and in the right way then you've got more chance of staying relevant in the future. Where I find too many marketers and too many brands and products come from an FMCG [fast-moving consumer goods] mentality where you throw a lot of money at it, a lot of promotions and the thing just spikes and then the next thing comes along that you throw a lot of money in and it's all about innovation. Where I'm not interested in innovation. I'm interested in authenticity and history and consistency.*

In the Australian interviews there was quite a lot of discussion of the actions of the large, bulk wine companies and the way their success has damaged the export market for premium wines. For both Best's and Langi, this has forced a change in production priorities, with both wineries focusing on the production of premium wine and improving quality. This has arguably been beneficial to each winery's image, however it is still challenging in a highly competitive market. Aaron acknowledged the huge

success of the “*low value, critter, unauthentic*” wine, but also explained that this “*inauthentic*” production and communication has created a reputation for all Australian wines that is a hindrance for premium producers.

#### COMMUNICATING AUTHENTICITY

Being truthful and honest in communications with the outside world also emerged frequently in the interviews in the discussion of authenticity. Damien linked integrity and honesty when he described the marketing approach at Langi: “*I think we’re trying to be intelligent. Hopefully we are intelligent about the way we’re approaching what we’re doing and being honest.*” A broad distaste for marketing hype was expressed by many of the interviewees, particularly candidly by Dan: “*the disparity that you see as a winemaker between the bullshit they tell the customers and the way they actually make the wine is quite frightening at times.*”

Many interviewees also contrasted their practices with those of the large drinks companies. Dan talked about distinguishing premium small producers from large companies in the way they communicate: “*and promotion, when you’re selling a wine brand that’s supposedly made by humble people out in the farm, you know, and big TV advertisements – like Yalumba on trams – just smells of marketing.*” He went on to explain why the quest to communicate authenticity means Langi does not do large-scale advertising: “*So you don’t want to be perceived as being corporate in any way because we’re selling a much more humble story and that authenticity idea has to come from that.*”

A strong focus on honestly representing the wine and the vineyard in a genuine manner emerged. Steph talked about the history at Best’s and the goal to successfully communicate authenticity:

*Our brand is really about the history. Like it’s, this is where the story started. And it started 147 years ago. And you can’t make that, you can’t replicate it, you can’t, you know, make it up in a marketing office. It’s something you earn*

*over time. So that's what our whole brand and our whole focus and with our wines, it's really about ensuring that people understand that story.*

There is no doubt at Best's that their identity is authentic, however, there is also an understanding that the outside world doesn't necessarily know that. In order to ensure that authenticity is projected, Best's is carefully crafting the story to share with the outside world. The emotional response that the history brings was explained by Dan:

*We really trade on our forty plus years of history here and all the accolades and all the reviews. And everyone who comes to the property remembers it's a beautiful place and la, la, la – you have to make bit of an effort to come here. That brings another level of emotional attachment for Langi buyers.*

While Langi does not have the longevity of the other three wineries, its marketing narrative draws heavily on place, where the vineyard and natural environment construct a striking image of impressive geographical history. The link that Dan described between authenticity and emotion underlines the significance of wine consumption as a means of connection with producers and nature, shaping feelings and memory.

Similar to the attitude towards advertising, individual behaviour was described in the interviews as an important conveyor of authenticity and an influence on communications activities. The personality of the owners and directors plays a pivotal role in the style of communication and public relations. Viv, much more a farmer than a businessman, said:

*The thing is that I'm not a salesman, but I reckon maybe if I'm doing a sell it's a soft sell. I don't want to go and tell that we're making the greatest bloody wines in the world and da, da, da, da, da and da, da, da, da, da. I just tell them how it is, you know. And I think people respect that.*

Just like his father, Ben voiced the same view in different words: *"I don't believe in big noting myself or anything, so our product speaks for itself, and your reputation, I think if you've got a good reputation you don't need to say anything or put yourself out there. People know you're there if you do a good job and make a good product."* There

was no suggestion that this might be the easiest way to sell wine, rather that each winery is reflection of the beliefs and values held by its people. Sylvie mentioned the need for producers to tell their story and that if the truth is expressed authentically – in content and style – it works well from a marketing perspective:

*Chacun a besoin de raconter sa propre histoire. Et quand son histoire est bien vécue elle fonctionne bien en général. Il devait bien diffuser aussi. Donc, c'est un talent de savoir communiquer et de savoir communiquer quelle que soit la philosophie qu'on a. Après il y a la façon de la mettre en œuvre, si vous voulez, quelle que soit la stratégie de communication qu'on met en place ou la stratégie d'ouverture ou la stratégie d'exclusivité, en fait ça réussit bien quand à côté il y a une communication qui est adaptée et la mise en œuvre, et que la mise en œuvre est professionnelle et authentique aussi.*

Authentic communication helps to build strong relationships with consumers, something all four wineries are seeking to do. Jean-Michel described it almost in terms of a friendship between consumers and the winery: *“on essaie d'établir une relation loyale et fidèle sur une longue période. Voilà. Avec les gens qui nous font confiance.”* And that for the consumers, Lynch-Bages represents: *“un ami ancien, fidèle, qui a une politique qui a toujours été la même pendant cinquante ans. Ah, reliable, voilà.”*

Long term relationships emerged as a defining feature of the discussion of consumer interactions, with an appreciation of the importance of long term clients. The respect for tradition by producers and consumers influences winery activities, and provides a solid ground for the relationship. Dan summarised his philosophy on consumer relations very succinctly: *“so to be as authentic and real as you can is the only way you can gain their trust.”* Damien also spoke about Langi consumers having a shared interest with the winery: *“things like the Langi Shiraz, they really only appeal to a very, very small percentage of the wine buying public, and the wine buying public's not a great percentage of the public anyway. And so people that just have a deep interest for wine the same as we do. It's a sincere interest.”*

This reveals a shared quest for authenticity where producers and consumers are both searching for quality and the “real thing” despite approaching from opposite

directions. The pursuit of authentic consumers for these authentic wines, was also discussed by Jean-Michel, in the context of Bordeaux Grands Crus becoming investment wines: *“Donc, nous voulons que notre clientèle reste des buveurs de vin et pas des opérateurs financiers. Voilà, dans la qualité, être à la portée du consommateur, rester à la portée du consommateur, et typique de notre région.”*

The concern that high prices make it difficult for the loyal, genuine consumers was of concern to others as well. Viv seemed to be uneasy about recent price increases of Best's wines:

*And the other thing about our wines, they've always been good value for money. Now I'm beginning to doubt that a bit now because we've got a salesman on the job our prices are going up and up. And I get horrified when I see what price we're charging for our wine, but I see what other people are charging for their wine too. But I think that we've always been very honest. I've always tried to encourage honesty, integrity. We've never been people to blow our trumpet.*

It appeared that high prices were contrary to his notion of winery and personal identity, but were congruent with the quality of the wine.

In Bordeaux, while extremely high prices are an integral part of the image and reputation of Grands Crus wines, the limitations price places on authentic consumers in favour of investors was raised as a concern. The elevated prices, driven recently by fashion and investment from growing Asian markets has injected a level of unpredictability into the global market, according to Laurent:

*Now that the Chinese market is trying to digest what they've consumed, not consumed, what they've purchased in the last five years, that massive, perhaps excess, buying has calmed down a bit. So the question is, in the coming two or three years, what will be the normal level of purchasing of China on Beychevelle. Will it drop to zero? Or will it go back to what it was two years ago? Or will it be as it is currently? You know, at what level – what is that balance point, or that equilibrium? Where is it?*



From a global and long-term perspective, however, he explained that it is crucial to maintain balance and restraint in the face of increases driven by new markets:

*So, inevitably that pisses off some clients because some clients, usually European profile, say, "Well, you know I'm used to paying 100, why do I have to pay 130?" Well, you're paying 130 because of the quality of the wine, the media press that's there, and that's the price that the market will bear. The question is to stay within the price bracket and not go overboard. It's another delicate balance. It's not because someone says I'll pay any price, because there is a price where it doesn't work.*

From all angles the business of premium wine appears to be a very delicate balance of price and market potential versus authentic production and consumption. For both Viv and Jean-Michel, the deeper concern seemed to be losing authentic consumers.

## CONCLUSION

The notion of authenticity emerged as a very important consideration in all aspect of the wine business for these four premium wineries, consistent with other studies (Beverland 2005, 2006, Demossier 2011, Garcia-Parpet 2008 ). Honesty and integrity emerged as the most highly valued principles in all interviews, expressed in the desire to do justice to the vineyard by producing wines that reflect its unique character; in vineyard management, labelling and communications; and in consumer relationships. From the business perspective, authenticity was cited as a way of differentiating the winery as a premium, boutique producer in an industry dominated by large corporations. It was clear that interviewees had no doubts regarding the authenticity of their practices and wines, but were very conscious that the market perception is not as evident. Nevertheless, the issues raised in the interviews suggest that their ideas of authenticity are similar to consumer measures of authenticity (Spielmann and Charters 2013, Napoli et al. 2014). Interviewees expressed a strong desire that the outside world understands the integrity of their work as wine producers and individuals, and are trying to communicate their authenticity with others.

## 5.7. IMAGE

*“Il y a une image et il y a une émotion. Il y a une image qui est très forte, oui, qui est le vin plus quelque chose de nouveau.”* Malou

The label “image” was given to instances where interviewees described the winery and wines in the contemporary context. The discussion explored how interviewees perceive the winery, their ideas of how the market perceives it, and what they would like the image to be. I asked specifically about key moments that had contributed to the enhancement of their reputation, and at other times the discussion of image was connected to notions of, values, uniqueness and identity.

The more deeply involved in the winery the interviewee was, the more they expressed a difficulty in describing the image of the winery. Cellar door staff tended to give a simple and concise response, while at the other end of the scale, owners and directors offered a reflective and drawn out answer. This suggests that the more involved an individual is in the winery, the more complex and nuanced the conception of image is. The more involved interviewees responded to the question of image by saying they could not give an objective description of the external perception of the winery, but could only describe what they would like the image to be.

The discussion of image was directly related to each individual winery, therefore this category presents each winery separately. Best’s and Langi are discussed first, followed by an exploration of the group image of cool-climate Shiraz producers in Australia. This is then contrasted with Lynch-Bages and Beychevelle, followed by the group image of the Grands Crus Châteaux in Bordeaux. The category concludes with an integrated discussion of image development and identity for all four wineries.

## BEST'S

When I asked Viv to describe the image of Best's, he responded by referring to the words of a wine journalist: *"I reckon that probably our image is best summed up by Halliday in one of his books, saying that we're one of the great secrets. In other words, we're not up front."* In doing so, he placed a personality trait at the forefront of the winery image – both Viv and Ben used the phrase *"not up front"* on multiple occasions to describe themselves, the family and the winery. Best's is family owned and the Thomson family are reserved people who are not comfortable with the idea of proclaiming their greatness to the world. From the very beginning of the interview, it was clear that the image of Best's is closely intertwined with the image of the people.

In a similar manner, Ben's response to the question of image was centred on the people and the company ethos rather than the wines:

*I'd just like people to think we're truthful, honest, respectable, hard-working, honest people. That's all. That's all, I think. That's all I really expect. And like I said, if people don't like your wines, they don't like your wines, but as long as they still like the company as a company – just because you don't like their wines doesn't mean you dislike the company. The people we employ, I think, are good, honest, people that have got good hearts and all that, and integrity. I think integrity is a big thing.*

On the other hand, Steph, a less involved employee, spoke a lot about the history of Best's – tangible facts and stories – as the image of the brand. Much of this information is centred around the people involved, but with more emphasis on the events and historical timeline than the values that Ben and Viv expressed.

## LANGI

A similar descriptive pattern occurred in the interviews at Langi. Anne described with certitude the image of Langi as a high quality, cool-climate, boutique winery, constantly recognised in the top ten of cool-climate Shiraz: *"That's exactly what our*

*brand image is and that's what we aspire to."* Langi's appearance on the cover of Wine Spectator in 1996 alongside Penfold's Grange and Henschke Mount Edelstone cemented its reputation for quality, placing it on the international stage as one of Australia's best red wines. It is interesting to note that Langi is perceived as a boutique winery, even though the volume of wine produced is quite substantial compared with most boutique wineries.

Anne also described the physical setting of the cellar door among the vines and mountains as the face and image of the brand: *"And every single customer who has never been here before just walks in and looks out at the view and says 'Oh. My. God. This view's amazing.'"* Dan confirmed the notion of cellar door as the home of brand, but with much more depth to his explanation, describing the underlying psychological reasons: *"And in fact there's a very satisfying thing to look out at a vineyard and it's a monoculture growing, a non-indigenous monoculture, growing in straight lines. And this whole order-from-chaos thing about straight lines in agriculture is massively gratifying to the human eye."* Damien's description of Langi was primarily about the wine, but also about the people and values: *"It's Australian. It's iconic. It's Shiraz, spicy shiraz, peppery shiraz. We're definitely in the pursuit of excellence, but we're not overly uptight."*

From a company perspective Langi's focus is on the vineyard, however Damien talked about the danger of the cult of the winemaker, which creates a perceived separation between viticulturist and winemaker. He said they are conscious of ensure that the *"intrinsic importance of growing grapes"* is not overlooked in conveying the Langi image. The emphasis on cellar door as the image of the brand supports this. There is no question that Langi's image rests on the vineyard and the flagship Langi Shiraz, but Damien also placed value on the human part of the process:

*And everything else falls in behind and basks in the glory of Langi Shiraz. If we can get them to understand what is so unique and incredible about this wine and then part of that story is about the amount of effort and experience we have at our disposal to pour into what we're doing.*

Similar to the perceived image of Best's, Dan described Langi's image as a well-kept secret:

*So we really project ourselves in a more discreet, low-key kind of way as being one of Victoria's best kept secrets and for people who know wine, they know that Langi wines are really good. And in the Melbourne white-collar world of professionals, there's a big following in upper-middle class people who collect our wines and buy our wines and that they're sort of in the know about it, you know.*

This image as a wine for people "in the know" seems to be deliberate fostered and is used as a way of differentiating Langi from larger, corporate wineries.

Dan also talked about the challenges of the traditional image of Langi for younger consumers:

*So it's a little bit more challenging to present Langi as a young face. We've got a bit of a, even the blue stripe label has a sense of a, you know, "what my dad likes" sort of thing. And I'm not suggesting we change that because it's good and it has that institutional, old-school feel about it but in terms of the younger demographic, we don't want to seem too fuddy-duddy and we don't want to seem too old-school and boring if they're looking for excitement."*

The juxtaposition of two seemingly opposing traits is not limited to traditional and modern. Aaron's description of Langi drew parallels between the Langi environment and France's Rhône Valley:

*But, you know, you've got this amazing site – Langi Ghiran is an isolated granite outcrop and not part of any other geological feature in the region. And so that's been eroded over 400 million years and so we've got this beautiful granitic sand. And granite and syrah or shiraz in the Rhône has got a long history and then, you know, the Rhône is a similar – it's actually even warmer than Langi, but really similar kind of climatic events in terms of that diurnal variation.*

He also said that the Langi image includes attention to the finer details of wine production and international success, conferring credibility on the brand. Explaining the details of production is part of his desire to remove the mystique of winemaking and “*keep it as real as possible*” for the trade and consumers. Dan wants people to know that the reality of Langi is a beautiful vineyard that uses scientific processes to obtain consistent quality. Langi’s image is based on authenticity, reality and a pragmatic approach, right down to the clean lines of the label design.

#### COOL-CLIMATE SHIRAZ

In the discussions at both Best’s and Langi, “cool-climate shiraz” was discussed frequently and in detail, with serious implications for the image of the winery and wines. Aaron enthused: “*We’re absolutely intoxicated with perfume. We love it. We’re addicted to it.*” Viv described the style of Shiraz being produced in The Grampians as “alternative”, contrasting it with the more widely known style of Australian Shiraz from warmer regions:

*Barossa Shiraz – they’re well known and they’re great wines, fabulous wines, but they’re big and they’re rich and we’re an alternative. We’re much finer – I won’t say delicate – much more structured wines. Where theirs are, you know, what are called Dolly Parton wines. Do you know what I mean?*

Aaron expressed a similar idea:

*So when you look at our Shiraz versus Barossa or McLaren Vale it’s unashamedly medium-bodied. And that’s a style that we like to pursue as well. Where those guys are making big, ripe, fat, massive, alcoholic wines. Where our wines, we’re really trying to keep a lid on alcohols, and really retain acidity.*

He described the cool-climate Shiraz produced as: “*beautiful, restrained, aromatic*”, “*non-mainstream*”, “*a more challenging wine style*”, “*a more progressive wine style*”, and “*not what the mass market expect.*” Dan defined it as “*a more delicate and perfumed, aromatic, [...] more delicate and finely structured style of Shiraz.*” Ben linked

the wine style with the people: *“We think we make wines that are approachable and drinkable and reflect us as people as well. Not just the region, but as people as well.”*

Aaron pronounced the stereotype of Australian wine as *“alcoholic, big, South Australian Barossan shiraz”* as an enormous problem for premium producers, but suggested it can be changed:

*I think the biggest problem is the global stereotype of what is Australian wine. And we’ve got to challenge that. And it’s going to take – again, there is no magic bullet – it’s going to take years of getting people into markets and focusing on the right influences and, you know, one event won’t change it. But if you encourage a lot of people to go to the market and you get new listings then you can change it.*

He believes there is a market that can be developed in sophisticated cities such as New York and London for cool-climate Australian wines: *“They already understand beautiful, restrained, aromatic wine styles because they’ve been drinking them from Europe for many, many years. What they don’t understand is that we do that. And that’s where we’ve got to change the perception.”*

Producing a style of wine that is not the norm has developed a stronger identity for premium producers in the region, according to Dan: *“one Yarra Valley Pinot is another Yarra Valley Pinot is, or whatever, you know, DeBortoli’s, Coldstream. They’re all good, no problem there. Where here we have a much clearer, unique selling point, and a much stronger identity.”* Both Best’s and Langi would like to project an image of elegant, aromatic, cool-climate Shiraz that is made by honest and passionate people.

#### BEYCHEVELLE

Beychevelle’s long and aristocratic history is the basis of its image. Susan described it very concisely: *“It’s a very popular château with lots of history and it’s a very famous wine and we just want to make it more famous and people appreciate it.”* She added

that the combination of tradition and modern technology is also part of the image, associated with improvements in quality:

*Well the history we do at the end of the visit when they're in the gardens and they can see the chartreuse and the Gironde. So it's a little bit apart but I think they like to see that we do work traditionally for the Beychevelle, with the barrels, the racking, the fining of the wines, and I think they quite appreciate the fact that that was a long time ago and it was difficult to do that a long time ago. So although we're doing it for the Beychevelle it's nice to progress and use the modern methods for the Amiral and the Brûlières, the Haut-Médoc wine.*

In recent years, Beychevelle has been enjoying extraordinary success in the Asian markets, particularly in China. Philippe described the image:

*Beychevelle a une image très, très forte, très ... C'est un vin très connu. C'est un vin connu partout. Alors, aujourd'hui, on est dans une dynamique qui est bien compliquée; qui est une dynamique d'importance toujours plus grande du marché chinois, du marché asiatique et chinois.*

This success is often attributed to the label which carries an engraving of a medieval sailing boat with a griffon head. Chinese consumers are enamoured with the label and hence the wine, as it closely resembles a Chinese Dragon Boat, a symbol of good luck. In addition to the “dragon boat” on the label, Philippe suggested that not having a château on the label, as most Grands Crus do, makes it more easily recognisable. Laurent proposed two reasons – the label and public relations efforts – for the enhanced image (and subsequent increase in demand and price) of Beychevelle in China:

*Beychevelle was already considered to be a sound institutional, international brand and with the arrival of mainland China, perhaps because of the dragon boats, perhaps also because of the various PR work which was done by the managing director of the group – wine dinners and things like that. Like some twenty or so wineries, there was a huge demand for those wines in China, which boosted the prices or the trading prices, if you will, of Beychevelle.”*



The rise in prices has its own effect on the image, according to Philippe: *“souvent les gens, de manière plus ou moins juste, associent une image, plus c’est cher, plus ils associent une image positive. [...] Donc l’image, je pense, évolue favorablement, mais en même temps on fait pas beaucoup, [...] de publicité.”* Thus the reputation is evolving positively without the need to put huge resources into cultivating the image overtly via advertising.

#### LYNCH-BAGES

The overriding concepts used to describe the image of Lynch-Bages were “openness” and “the Cazes family”. Laetitia said this image is expressed by being open for visits seven days a week, all year, to all types of people, professionals and tourists. Malou described the image of Lynch-Bages as a personal, happy experience for visiting people: *“Il y a une image et il y a une émotion. Il y a une image qui est très forte, oui, qui est le vin plus quelque chose de nouveau.”* In much the same way as Viv at Best’s, this happy experience is attributed due to the presence of the Cazes family, Jean-Michel in particular. Malou summed up the importance of the family in the image of Lynch-Bages and the difficulty in separating the wine from the people:

*L’image de Lynch-Bages est intimement liée à la famille qui est là à présente, je dirais même à Jean-Michel. Sans doute à son fils Jean-Charles aujourd’hui. A Sylvie. Enfin, je dirais, mais c’est à la famille Cazes. Pour moi, c’est peut-être le vignoble ou ... On va parler de vin, bien évidemment, d’un produit merveilleux, mais on va parler d’homme. [...]*

*Des qualités que j’attribuerais à Jean-Michel, c’est-à-dire effectivement, ouverture, générosité, accueil, transmission. Vous voyez ? Dans ce côté-là et on va parler de Lynch-Bages, mais on parle vraiment, intimement de la famille Cazes aussi. Voilà. [...] Le vin ? Oui. Parce que le vin, quand on va parler du vin de Lynch-Bages, je vais y trouver les mêmes qualités.*

Laetitia said that Jean-Michel’s warm personality is a delight for staff and visitors, and creates the tone at the winery.

There is also an aspect of luxury, prestige and elitism to the Lynch-Bages image, created by the wine quality and price, presentation of the guides, and buildings, however the sense of welcome softens what in some other Grands Crus manifests as an image of extreme snobbery. Lynch-Bages' reputation is also closely aligned with the œnotouristic activities in the Village of Bages.

Although other interviewees presented the image of Lynch-Bages as closely linked to the Cazes family and the village, Jean-Michel himself was completely focused on the wine quality and value. His response, common to all owner/directors, was that he was not sure of the image:

*Ce que je peux dire c'est quelle est l'image que nous souhaitons projeter, et j'espère que c'est comme ça que nous sommes perçues. Je pense que c'est vrai – on est, c'est souvent ce qu'on nous dit aussi – nous sommes, je crois, considérés comme un vin de qualité, très typique des vins de cette région de Pauillac. Donc du vin en réalité de Cabernet Sauvignon, vers un vieillissement, etcetera.*

*Je crois aussi que grâce à plusieurs causes, mais surtout grâce à une politique commerciale qui a été constante pendant très longtemps, pendant plusieurs décennies, nous avons une image de "good value", comme on dit en anglais. C'est-à-dire que, on est perçu comme, je crois, comme un vin qui est abordable qui reste dans la, qui est moins spéculatif que d'autres marques.*

He attributed this image of quality to the many tasting events hosted by Alexis Lichine in the 1950s: *"Il propageait cette image là au sujet de Lynch-Bages. Il faisait beaucoup de dégustations et des choses comme ça ou nos vins apparaissaient toujours au très très bon niveau. Mais, lui, il promouvait cette image de Lynch-Bages, vin de grande qualité mais accessible."* This combination of quality and accessibility is still the image he wishes to project. Malou attested to the success of that image, saying that Lynch-Bages is considered much superior than its classification as a 5th growth:

*C'est une autre caractéristique de Lynch-Bages, c'est que Lynch-Bages est l'une des seules propriétés d'avoir transgressé ce classement 1855 et il se vend comme un second. [...] On ne dit pas que c'est un cinquième cru classé, Lynch-*

*Bages. C'est l'équivalent d'un second. On ne le met pas dans sa catégorie, ce qui est extrêmement rare.*

## GRANDS CRUS

In Bordeaux, the Grands Crus image is based on a long history, cemented in 1855 with the classification. Jean-Michel talked about the image associated with the classification. He explained that as a simple and unchanging list, it is valuable to consumers and therefore powerful. He compared it with the unsuccessful Saint-Emilion classification, which is relatively new (created in 1955), changes every ten years and is therefore confusing for consumers. The other significant historical factor in the image of the Grands Crus is the longevity of many of the châteaux, as Philippe pointed out:

*C'est des propriétés qui ont une antériorité très longue, une très longue existence, en centaines d'années – de cent, de cent cinquante, trois cent ans. Donc, ça c'est déjà quelque chose qui est très importante; qui est plus forte que nous. Et cette histoire, dans la perception des consommateurs, ce que vous cherchez, cette dimension historique est forcément très importante.*

The historical background for a culture of wine production and consumption is an aspect the UGCB emphasises, according to Sylvie:

*C'est-à-dire ce que l'on cherche à donner, c'est une image du vin qui est une image culturelle, au-delà d'une boisson, on cherche à prouver qu'il y a une vraie culture du vin; qu'il y un vrai art de vivre autour du vin; que ça fait partie de notre patrimoine que nous avons en commun avec un certain nombre de pays; et qu'il faut le développer et le promouvoir dans ce sens-là.*

At the same time, the historical image of the drinking culture surrounding the Grands Crus is one that Jean-Michel is trying to dispel: *“on a voulu se débarrasser de l'image du vin de Bordeaux, d'un Grand Cru de Bordeaux qui était bu par des gentlemen anglais*

*en smoking le soir, les tâches sur le gilet, comme ça, comme ça. On a voulu abandonner cette image là et être beaucoup plus moderne.”*

The perception of quality is also an important part of the Grands Crus image, as for any artisanal or luxury good. Sylvie explained the way quality is combined with history to craft the image:

*Je pense qu'ils veulent donner une image de qualité du produit fait sur un mode artisanal de luxe, c'est-à-dire, avec une précision, avec un soin apporté, à l'élaboration qui est extrêmement précis, extrêmement compliqué, extrêmement recherché, qui a fait le fruit, qui a été le fruit d'une recherche longue, ou pas très longue, mais ça dépend des crus mais souvent très longue, de manière à optimiser à arriver à vraiment tirer la quintessence d'un sol qui au départ a été présélectionné, qui a été sélectionné grâce à des années d'expérience. Donc, ça c'est le cœur.*

She concluded that this creates an “*international image of elegance*” for the wine itself and everything associated with it.

History, classification, quality and culture all combine to generate a very powerful image for the Grands Crus. The strength of the Grands Crus image and the sizable production volume of many châteaux, including Lynch-Bages, reduces their dependence on the media and vulnerability to unfavourable comments and other market volatilities, said Jean-Michel: “*Tandis que les grandes propriétés du Médoc, ils sont implantés dans le monde entier et disponible partout avec des volumes raisonnables sans être très importants, mais plus importants. Ils peuvent survivre à l'avis d'un journaliste.*” The image fuels demand and increases prices, but it also a stabilising force in a potentially volatile market.

#### IMAGE DEVELOPMENT

Although each winery's image has its own character and has developed in a unique way over time, all four recognised that the image requires careful crafting and

maintenance. Tastings, and international and national public relations were cited as the most important factor for all four wineries. Particularly at Lynch-Bages and Beychevelle, extensive tastings for influential people have developed their global reputation. Malou and Laurent talked about the way every year the vintage is a grand event for the Grands Crus, something that no other wine region in the world does. The En Primeur campaign, held in April each year, presents a tasting of barrel samples of the newest vintage to the wine trade even though the wine will not be bottled for two years. Journalists, critics and buyers from all over the world spend a week in Bordeaux at the tastings, held in a number of different châteaux, after which opinions are given and prices set. The events themselves include sumptuous lunches accompanied by Bordeaux wines, with music and elaborate decorations. The En Primeur campaign unites the premium wine world once a year, presenting an exclusive, luxury image commensurate with the Grands Crus image. This is the basis for image maintenance and creates renewed international interest each year.

Although in Australia there is not a defined and regulated style deriving from an embedded culture of wine production and consumption, in response to an increasingly competitive global market, Langi and Best's have both recently made changes to focus their business and image. At Best's this has meant concentrating on producing premium wines in Great Western and communicating the historical story of the winery. This has been a deliberate and strategic process, with the appointment of a marketing manager, and a strategy written into what Steph called "*content pillars*" that describe "*who we are, what we are, where we are.*"

A similar process has occurred at Langi since the acquisition by the Rathbone Wine Group and the appointment of Aaron as brand manager. Anne said this process has: "*tightened up the brand image and really refined what we want to be known for.*" Damien described the resulting clarity: "*we're more structured now about what we're doing. It actually makes us feel better about what we're doing – to be very clear that that's the volume we should be producing here of Shiraz; that's our most important product; that's what people know and expect from us so yeah ok, we're right to focus on that.*" According to Dan, it took some time to "*figure out what we were doing*", but there is now "*a sense of clarity about what the brand's doing and where we can sell it*

*and how we can sustain that. And not wanting too vigorous growth, and keeping the profit side of the business relatively healthy and sustainable and not being seen to sell out or gone commercial.”*

Practical measures are in place to ensure that the image of quality wine is upheld. Viv explained that at Best’s, the flagship Thomson Family Shiraz is only produced in good years, and high standards are applied to the rest of the range: *“anything that’s not up to the mark just doesn’t get the label on it. It’s as simple as that.”* Dan explained that they bottle under screwcap rather than cork at Langi, to reduce the risk of damaging the reputation through spoilage:

*And for a consumer, if they get a corky wine that’s got a taint from the cork in it they don’t like it. Or they may not know, but if the wine’s not at its best then they think, “Oh, this – don’t like the brand, don’t like the restaurant, don’t like the bottle shop.” There’s a lot of disappointment before they blame the Portuguese bark guys.*

This is consistent with his philosophy of blending tradition and technology to produce consistently excellent wine, part of the image that Langi projects:

*I have the personal idea that art and science are not diametrically opposed things and that’s a false dichotomy and so it’s possible to have an Arts degree and a Science degree and live in the same body and be at peace with yourself. And it’s possible to use both of those attributes to make better wine. And so, by having a lab and some biochemistry knowledge and world class filtration doesn’t detract from the artistry of what we do. And a lot of people really like that because it makes them feel comfortable again because it’s not putting your hands in the world of mystique.*

A similar approach is followed at Beychevelle where tradition and modernity are deliberately presented side by side; for example, the new winery building next to the old château, and modern barrel rotation systems but emptying the barrels using a candle and glass.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations at all levels are vitally important in crafting and maintaining the winery image. From the cellar door atmosphere to tasting events, media coverage to restaurant wine lists, each interaction, its style and content, with the trade and consumers influences the image, positively or negatively. As Steph said: *“You can’t afford to compromise that. Brand is an intangible thing that once it’s damaged it takes a long time to build it back.”*

For each winery there have been some key moments that have enhanced their image. The development of the Chinese market and the success of the “dragon boat” wine has certainly enhanced Beychevelle’s image in recent years. Wayne described the ascent: *“China’s really big on it and the prices have doubled in the last few years. 30 euro wines have become 60 euro wines on the marketplace, and even further. It’s incredible.”* The raised profile of Beychevelle in the Chinese market and subsequently elevated prices have also increased Beychevelle’s visibility in the French market, particularly within the industry.

Philippe did not identify any specific moments that have impacted on the image of Beychevelle, referring to the very long history of Beychevelle and that individual moments are less significant than the overall trajectory. Nonetheless, he spoke about the positive effect of extensive public relations efforts by the previous owner (tastings and dinners, etc.), and activities such as the art studios of the 1990s and the Marathon du Médoc. He said there is no direct line between these latter activities and increased sales, however he said he believes they help to augment the recognition of Beychevelle and its wines. He noted that specific tasting tours, individually or with the UGCB, and enormous amount of information and commentary online give Beychevelle *“une notoriété qui est très forte.”*

Historically, tasting events have been very influential in developing the image. The first blind tasting events during the 1950s were very significant for Lynch-Bages, according to Jean-Michel: *“et Lynch Bages en cinquante-trois, cinquante-cinq, est sorti premier dans ces dégustations. Ça a été un coup de tonnerre un peu. Ça a été très important parce que ça a placé Lynch-Bages au centre du of the picture.”* He also said that

although it was less of a spectacle, Lynch-Bages being served in first class Cathay Pacific flights from 1989 onwards was just as important for the image. It associated Lynch-Bages with quality and presented an opportunity to taste in a relaxed atmosphere. Anne talked about Langi being served on Qantas flights having a positive effect on their image for similar reasons. This was explained in terms of people associating the positive feelings of travel, holidays and adventure with the wine they drink on the plane. The ambiance of tasting events and other activities was mentioned by Sylvie as a critical factor in defining the château image, giving the example of UGCB tastings where an individual from château serves wine: *“ça donne une image conviviale de la propriété.”*

In Australia, success at wine shows was cited as an image enhancer. For Best's, winning Australia's most coveted award, the Jimmy Watson Trophy, in 2012 for the Bin 1 Shiraz raised the profile of the winery instantly. Ben and Viv both said that winning this trophy was fantastic for Best's reputation (although Ben said his personal satisfaction was in seeing his parents rewarded for all their hard work). What the 1996 Wine Spectator cover did for Langi, and the 1855 classification for Beychevelle and Lynch Bages, the Jimmy Watson trophy did for Best's. For the consumer it contextualised Best's in a very simple and unambiguous way as one of the highest quality wines produced in Australia. Damien agreed that wine shows are important, particularly the National Wine Show where a wine must have won a gold medal in another show to be eligible, but said that shows do not produce results like the mainstream media:

*So getting wine shows and getting trophies, they're really great but they don't go as far. Whereas the 2008 got Wine of the Year in The Age Good Wine Guide and it just went huge. So it's just funny, I mean, you'd think getting accolades from wine shows would carry heaps of weight and it does but something like that really pushed us.*

After face-to-face contact, and direct, online communication, wine journalism has a substantial influence on winery image, offering an external opinion. Dan described the process and the effect on sales:



*The journalists and media and blog world are a really good exposure point and a really good reference point. So, the third party endorsement system, if you like, helps people buy in, because it's not enough for me to stand and spruik the wines. They need to be told it's good. Particularly in Asia, but also, even at the gap between me and say our brand managers. I can pour them the new release wines and freshly bottled wines and until the media's seen them mostly they trust that they're good, but it helps them and it helps anyone who's buying and selling the wine to feel confident if it's got some points from James Halliday or Nick Stock, or Jane Faulkner wrote it up in The Age or something. [...] So, you know, if Nick Stock gives us 98 points, 97 points in his new book and then we release the wine and everyone wants it because it's in the book, and then it sells out really quickly then people are putting their name down for next year, and that feeds itself. That's quite a satisfactory situation we've got going at the moment.*

Wine Spectator magazine appears to be the most influential publication for premium wines. Damien described the power of association in relation to the 1996 cover: *“that's such a powerful message [...] that our wine is at the same level as those two wines. [...] And that's massive. So it's that sort of endorsement people really like to have that to give them certainty that they're making a good purchase.”* Dan described the Wine Spectator cover as *“a real tipping point for the brand,”* that prompted serious investment in the winery. The Wine Spectator was also significant for Lynch-Bages, as Jean-Michel noted, when the 1985 vintage was crowned number one in the magazine's Top 100 wine list.

Although interviewees spoke of the positive moments of wine journalism, Aaron pointed out that it also carries the risk of an unfavourable opinion, and this must be taken into consideration:

*The 2010s were very aromatic and whole bunchy and incredibly polarising, but they won three trophies at Sydney – best Wine of Show, and lots of gold medals. And also you know we had huge wine scores – reviews from people like Huon Hooke and Nick Stock who gave it 97 points – and it was the highest scores that*

*they'd ever – for Huon especially – that we'd ever received. But then, on the opposite side, James Halliday gave it the lowest score we've ever seen from him. He gave it 93 points. [...] And Dan and I always had a conversation about when do we stop sending the wine in? Because it's almost like you've got too much to risk because there's no question anymore that the wine's always wonderful. There's that history and that pedigree. So we're probably a little bit more picky with what events and what media and things we do and the context that, because it is, you know, it's a cult brand. You know, there's people who are almost fanatical about how they follow it.*

This concept also emerged in the interviews with Philippe and Jean-Michel in Bordeaux, who were both fairly off-hand about the influence of journalists. They both implied that the potential positive outcomes of journalistic reviews was balanced by an equally negative risk and therefore it was not a reliable enough avenue to expend resources on. Both châteaux, however, have a highly designed website and modest social media presence – platforms where they control the content. While Viv said Best's has always been well known in the industry, they have made a concerted effort in recent years to increase public relations:

*I guess the only difference there is Jono on board. He's giving us the PR, he's giving the exposure. I mean, we're getting write-ups from magazines, we're on facebook, we're on twitter. All this sort of stuff. And that's giving us a lot more image than what we ever had before.*

Part of the strategy is consistency, as Steph explained:

*So whether it's online, whether it's printed communication, the whole lot. I want to make sure that it's consistent, that it's on brand, that it's got those key messages that we keep putting out, that you're using the logo correctly, that it's got the right colours and the right messaging – making sure that all of those things are consistent.*

Consistency has had benefits for Langi as well, according to Dan:

*So the 05 Langi Shiraz was a really good tipping point in terms of everyone's confidence that things were up on the upswing for Mount Langi. And yeah, I suppose the recent successes have been a continuation of that. So we've been able to have consistency and building on that success in terms of accolade and our reputation.*

All interviewees agreed that a positive and well-known image makes the wine easier to sell and increases prices. Alain described the process neatly:

*Si ce château a une notoriété plus importante il va être plus acheté. Il va être plus acheté par le client final, donc, le distributeur va plus le demander au négociant et donc le négociant il va être plus enclin de demander plus d'allocation ou d'accepter une augmentation de prix. Toute action marketing du propriétaire est un investissement pour permettre l'évolution de la notoriété et donc l'évolution à terme du prix de nos vins.*

From the négociant perspective Laurent said a strong image makes a wine much easier to sell. He talked about the top tier of wine brands, saying there are:

*... twenty-five to fifty institutional and internationally recognised brands. Which means that, sous-entendu, for your own sales, and sales people, in that category of wines, normally it's going to be easier for you to sell it rather than maybe another label that doesn't have an international reputation.*

Across the board there was recognition that the image must be carefully crafted to have a positive effect. Dan gave the example of Billi Billi Shiraz: *"I think it does well in Australia because it's not perceived as overly commercial."* Viv was quite sanguine about the image-price relationship stating that after a certain point price is no longer a reflection of wine quality but how powerful the image is: *"They've got to be bloody good and then they're probably worth \$200 a bottle but if you can get five or \$800 a bottle well good on you. That's where the image comes in."*

## IDENTITY

In order to craft a clear winery image, there must be a clear sense of identity. The interviews revealed that individual identity is intricately linked with winery identity and that the characteristics of individual people (owners and managers) also impacts on business decisions and approaches. This particularly evident at the two family-owned wineries, Best's and Lynch-Bages, and to a certain degree with Damien at Langi. Ben described the reason behind Best's late uptake on marketing in terms of personalities: *"I think when the big change came we sat back, because we're all workers, you know. Dad's a worker. Grandpa was a worker. We're not sales people."* On the other hand, Lynch-Bages' focus on global communication is a direct reflection of Jean-Michel's extroverted character.

## IDENTITY THROUGH DIFFERENCE

A central part of the discussion on winery and individual identity was difference and uniqueness. In Australia this difference was centred in viticulture and winemaking, whereas in Bordeaux it was based in communications and tourism at Lynch-Bages and history at Beychevelle. Interviewees at Langi often referred to the "unique vineyard", and the cool-climate style being very different from expectations of Australian Shiraz. The idea of difference extended to the vineyard, with Damien describing some of the methods used that are unusual in Australia, such as nets for wind control and cane pruning. He explained that these methods stem from the desire to find the best way of doing things rather than following the standard route. This desire for innovation and efficiency underpins the specific Langi vineyard management strategy and Damien believes it differentiates Langi from other wineries. Anne also mentioned grape varieties as markers of non-standard approach to wine production: *"Pinot Gris, which is a great sort of, a little bit of an answer to the Sav Blanc craze"* and Sangiovese, which is *"not a huge focus for the brand team, but at cellar door it's a good seller because it's something a bit different."* This was also true at Best's, one of the few Australian wineries producing a red Pinot Meunier. Ben spoke about his love of the variety and his personal preference for wines that are different and interesting:

*For me, I like something with a bit of, wow, bit of zing, bit of zang, you know. I like that. And I know I'm supposed to say Shiraz, but Pinot Meunier would be my favourite red. [...] I can't really describe it – they make everything mellow and I just absolutely love them. I absolutely love them. Just love them. They're beautiful. Even the young ones, but the old ones are just superb. Superb.*

The notion of the wines reflecting the people who make them and being out of the ordinary came through strongly in the discussion with Viv and Ben.

The emphasis on difference emerged as a strong part of both the winery identity and individual identity. Even in Bordeaux where the group image and identity is well known and very favourable, differentiation is highly desirable. Lynch-Bages is clearly distinguished from the rest of the Grands Crus by the œnotouristic offerings of the Village of Bages, by the long term public relations strategy, and by extension, being regarded as 2nd growth quality despite being a 5<sup>th</sup> growth. The company would like to be recognised for innovation and not being afraid to do things differently, which is also demonstrated in events. Malou spoke with pride about the Lynch-Bages' celebrations for the Fête de la Fleur in 1989. Each year one of the Grands Crus hosts what was until that point a quite traditional event. Lynch-Bages did something completely different and created a Jules Verne theme with festival feel:

*C'était génial pendant – la fête était au mois de juin, depuis le début de mois de mai donc on a vécu dans un joyeux bazar avec les gens qui chantaient, qui répétaient ; les costumiers. C'était très drôle quoi, on a eu vraiment un moment fabuleux vraiment, vraiment. Donc, c'était ça qui était rigolo. Donc pour moi c'était ça parce que c'était un style différent. On s'est montré différent des autres déjà.*

The notion of a different style appeared in all of the Lynch-Bages interviews as a desirable and positive attribute of the château as a whole and the individuals involved.

## CONCLUSION

The image of the winery was discussed in detail and at length in the interviews, demonstrating that it is a complex notion with great significance. The two Australian wineries expressed similar aspirations in terms of being known for cool-climate, elegant Shiraz, while the two Bordeaux wineries identified tradition, history and high prices as key elements. The development of the image was discussed as the result of long-term, consistent efforts, aided by particular events and media coverage. The importance of third party endorsement (Schamel and Anderson 2003, Odorici and Corrado 2004) was emphasised, albeit with some wariness of the variability of ratings. All interviewees acknowledged that the image must be strategically maintained to retain and improve the reputation of the winery. They demonstrated 'an intuitive understanding of marketing while rejecting traditional definitions of marketing' (Beverland 2004), projecting an image that represents their individual aspirations and values.

## 5.8.COMMUNICATION

*“You just want one beautiful, simple message.”*

Anne

Communication was spoken about at length in most interviews exploring the ways in which the winery communicates with the outside world – the industry and the market. The discussion covered the formal communications strategy and informal communication, and the increasing importance of interactions in the modern wine world. In addition to exploring each winery’s marketing and promotions activities, there was also discussion of consumer relations and market demographics, the style, content and channels of communication, and the importance of these aspects for business success. Most interviews also described the development of communications over time, particularly in recent years as it has become critical in an increasingly competitive market and a digitally connected world.

### COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

For all four producers, the move from little or no real communication plan to a conscious communication strategy was at the forefront of the discussion. The timing differs from winery to winery but all have gone through the change. Lynch-Bages was the first to focus on communications in the 1970s when Jean-Michel began working for his family’s winery. From this time on he travelled extensively internationally to developing markets (eg. USA, Asia) to actively seek new consumers. The next to focus on communication was Aymar Achille-Fould at Beychevelle during the last decades of the twentieth century. Both Philippe and Laurent mentioned that although Beychevelle was already considered a reputable, international brand, the many tastings and dinners organised by Achille-Fould in the 1980s and 1990s significantly enhanced its reputation. Langi was next to follow with a strategic marketing and communications approach when the Rathbone Wine Group acquired the winery in 2002.

At Best's, the move from informal to formal marketing is quite recent, with the appointment of the first marketing manager in 2008. Viv explained the situation:

*My wife and I, we used to do all the marketing. Well, we didn't do marketing, we just sort of sold bloody wine occasionally and would write to a few people. [...] I mean I'd never done marketing, you understand, but we'd built up a great collection of people who sold our wine. But they never sold much of it, that was the trouble.*

When Ben took over as the new manager he realised they needed to change their approach in order to keep up with the industry and market:

*We're not sales people. And I think we just got left on the back foot and we didn't realise what was happening and all of a sudden you go out there and you go, "My god. There's 20 wineries in there. There's 100 wineries. There's 150 then there's 200," and we sort of got caught behind. So we had to make some changes and that's when we put Jono on as our marketing manager.*

Steph was then employed in 2012 in the new role of Customer Relationship Manager, managing customer relations, database, and transactions, and keeping pace with the changing business environment of the wine industry. Best's now also have a formal communications strategy in place.

The development of marketing and public relations strategies is a response to the changing wine marketplace associated with increased production and consumption, and significant developments in communications technology over the past thirty years. For all wineries communication falls broadly into two distinct types: official published communication (such as advertising, website, and media coverage) and the less formal, experience-based communication (such as at events, at cellar door, and on social media). All participants acknowledged the need for both of these approaches, however the emphasis was clearly on the latter. As Sylvie described:

*Ils accueillent des visiteurs chez-eux et ils leur font partager le vin et son univers. Ou ils peuvent faire partager de la même façon cette expérience en allant sur les marchés et en organisant des dîners ou en répondant à des dîners avec des*



*consommateurs et en échangeant avec – ça, c'est vraiment le type de manifestation que font les Grands Crus.*

In many ways it appears that the official, published communications material functions as a support structure for an experience-based connection with trade and consumers.

For the Grands Crus in Bordeaux, most of the communication is with professionals in the wine trade, and events reflect this, for example, the En Primeur tasting week, and dinners. Increasingly, as the châteaux recognise the importance of individual consumers, events are being staged for consumers to create a direct link, such as Bordeaux Fête Le Vin, and the Grands Crus Weekend. By and large these events are organised by the UGCB, representing all the Grands Crus châteaux or a smaller group of châteaux. However, individual promotions also occur. Lynch-Bages is clearly a leader in this respect, most notably with the Village of Bages and daily tours of the château. In The Grampians (and the Australian wine industry in general) where the number and density of wineries is much less than in Bordeaux, activities are mostly organised by individual wineries. There are some collective events such as The Grampians Grape Escape weekend and Simply Shiraz tasting evening, but in the main each winery operates independently.

#### CONSUMER SEGMENTS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

At Best's, Langi and Lynch-Bages, interviewees discussed how communications are tailored to the needs and expectations of different consumer segments. This did not emerge in interviews at Beychevelle, probably because there is much less direct contact with consumers – there is little tourist-oriented infrastructure, sales or contact with the end consumer.

According to Steph, the detailed consumer information in Best's recently developed database allows customised communication based on geographical and socio-economic factors:

*So we can tailor our communications based on the data we can now get out of this system. So you can really tailor the packages and even the way that you talk to them, you know, based on where they are geographically. So you can target now where the more affluent suburbs are, and say, the inner Melbourne and CBD and those type of things and go to them with something that's maybe a little bit more higher class than what you would offer somebody say, in Great Western. And that's not meaning to be disrespectful to either people in those groups. It's just more that you can now go to them and talk their language and give them things that they're really interested in, rather than going out with a blanket effect. Because the blanket effect, as you would know, no longer works.*

The need for differentiated communication styles and content was a reason interviewees gave to explain why none of the four wineries advertise. The team at Langi have a clear idea of their consumer demographic. Damien said that they are pitching at new consumers in that demographic, but are not actively trying to attract other segments, e.g. Generation Y. Consideration for the consumer is at the heart of Jean-Michel's communication approach. His aim is to develop friendly relationships between Lynch-Bages and clients: *"On cherche à avoir une relation d'amitié avec nos clients."* Jean-Michel said that the many years of talking to people in markets around the world means he has a conscious awareness of the way the consumer perceives a Lynch-Bages wine, from the moment it lands in the market.

#### COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- ON-SITE COMMUNICATION

In terms of visits to Lynch-Bages, the format is reasonably structured with the objective to discover the wine, vineyard, process and tasting, however, Laetitia reiterated several times that it is tailored according to individual visitor interest. This was also mentioned by Susan at Beychevelle. At Best's the tour is self-guided with a pamphlet, and is augmented by staff interaction. When I visited, I was given a guided tour by Steph which appeared to be something she was quite used to doing,

suggesting that while it is not offered to consumer visitors or tourists, it is standard practice for trade visitors. Langi does not have an official tour, but any member of staff is happy to show visitors, trade or tourist, around. As such it is very much tailored to the individual. Of the four wineries, Best's and Lynch-Bages actively promote an openness to amateur visitors, whereas Beychevelle and Langi are not so focused on this aspect of communications.

- EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

While visits to the winery form a part of the communications strategy for each winery, they are by no means the most important. The geographical isolation of The Grampians – a 2 hour drive from Melbourne in rural Victoria – and relative isolation of the Médoc – a 45 minute drive from Bordeaux, itself a 3 hour fast train ride from Paris – and the global market necessitate a broader approach. This is effected through a variety of different channels: website, email, phone, social media, media, in-person and word-of-mouth. The multi-channel communication strategy permits the winery to communicate with the same client in a number of different ways, heightening interest and connection. Steph said they plan for different information on each channel to maintain interest and to align content with style.

- WEBSITE

Each winery has a comprehensive website, which serves as an information repository, and in Australia as a sales platform. Steph said although web sales may have peaks and troughs, general traffic on the Best's website is steady, as brand loyalty develops and clients actively seek information. The information presented on all four websites is very formal and detailed, covering wines, vineyards, history and people; the official website of each winery appears first in an internet search. Visitors may also be directed from other sites. Both Lynch-Bages and Beychevelle have a QR code on the bottles that links to the website so customers have instant mobile access to information. As an initial point of information for each winery, the website is a necessary and useful communications tool, that in all cases is carefully constructed.

- EMAIL, PHONE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Somewhat more personal, the mailing list keeps consumers up-to-date on winery activity. This can be tailored to different segments of the list, although only Best's appears to be doing this. Likewise, the use of direct phone calls from the wineries to consumers seems to be limited. Interviewees in Australia mentioned that consumers calling the winery is a quite common means of communication.

For more interactive and tailored communications, social media is increasingly used. Anne at Langi stated that she was not sure how beneficial social media is, but recognised that it is important to have a presence in that space. Steph at Best's (the youngest interviewee) did not question its utility, and pointed out that it is suited to certain types of content more than others, e.g. communicating winemaking processes, and information on new releases. As such, it seems to be most effective when there is a story involved. Aaron discussed the ability to receive feedback from consumers via social media, and presented it as a positive experience forcing wineries to *"be a bit more on your game and a bit more progressive."*

Interviewees at Beychevelle and Lynch-Bages did not discuss these channels. They both have social media accounts but unlike the Australian wineries do not have an online newsletter or actively encourage contact.

- MEDIA

The media was also cited in most interviews as a key communication channel. At Lynch-Bages a bound book of collated international media coverage from the preceding year sits in the reception area for visitors to browse. There are no doubt other copies for staff use. Everyone at Langi felt it is invaluable to have a high profile with journalists writing for prominent newspapers, wine guides, food and wine magazines. Anne talked about the surge in visitors after the publication of a newspaper article about Langi. As well as prompting visits to the winery, articles and reviews by well-known wine writers increase sales, as they give credibility to the wine. Philippe also referred to journalists and the media as the easiest channel to get a message to consumers, particularly of an educational nature. He was clear to point out

that they do not try to influence journalists, or entice them to write articles, but they are always happy to provide tours of the château and provide tastings. He said that there are more wine writers than ever before and their influence is growing as they have become the main guide for consumers:

*Après, les notes, les journalistes, c'est toujours agréable d'avoir des commentaires positifs. Ça fait plaisir à tout le monde. Je dis souvent en rigolant: "On préfère une caresse qu'un coup de pied aux fesses." Donc, c'est mieux d'avoir une caresse et ça fait plaisir aux gens qui travaillent, aux gens qui le font, aux gens qui le vendent, aux gens partout dans le monde, aux gens qui achètent. [...] Tout le monde préfère être félicité qu'être insulté.*

The media poses certain problems, according to Aaron, when they give different opinions. Particularly at Langi, where the style of cool-climate Shiraz is not what is expected of Australian shiraz, one journalist might give a wine a trophy while another calls it light and insipid. This highlights the need for clear and careful communication with journalists, in order to receive positive coverage.

Wineries with a less well-established reputation run marketing and advertising campaigns in the media in order to build their profile and notoriety. The four case studies presented here, however, enjoy a solid reputation and high profile, and do not advertise. Aaron remarked on the lack of efficiency in advertising, while Dan went so far as to say that advertising can actually be detrimental to the perceived authenticity of a brand that is trying to present as a boutique winery with a humble story. However, many of the interviewees talked about the fickle nature of the media and expressed a dislike for media hype. As a result they do not invest heavily in seeking media coverage, but enjoy good press when it happens.

- IN -PERSON

Of all the communication channels discussed during the interviews, face-to-face contact and word-of-mouth are considered the most important for all four wineries. Interviewees said that the opinions of friends, family and respected people are highly influential on wine buying choices. Therefore, the more people who are enjoying the

wine, the more people will recommend it, potentially increasing consumption exponentially. To this end, direct contact with consumers is a very high priority for Best's, Langi and Lynch-Bages. Jean-Michel has travelled extensively in order to meet people all over the world and introduce them to his wines. This face-to-face strategy emerged very strongly as the main reason for the success of Lynch-Bages over the past forty years. At Best's, the concept was presented very simply by Steph when she said: *"We're all about people. The actual direct, in your face people contact."* Aaron also underlined the communicative possibilities of direct contact, opening a conversation about the wine and increasing understanding:

*The one thing that we find is, the more we do one-on-one, the more opportunities we have to get out there and talk to people about the style and to set people up before they even taste it and say, "This is not what you are expecting from Australian shiraz. This is ... smell it. Spend more time smelling it than drinking. Get those florals and those aromatics." We could go out with a media and PR campaign that says, "This wine is different." But, you know, people wouldn't read that. So you have to do it in that one-on-one context. It's saying, you know, "This is different and this is why it's special. And hopefully you like it." And people, they love it.*

This concept is very similar to Jean-Michel's approach of building personal networks in new markets. He has repeated this strategy in various countries in Asia and continues to build new markets for Lynch-Bages through personal contact.

#### COMMUNICATION WITH TRADE

While everyone agreed that face-to-face contact is the most important communication channel, there was also an acknowledgement that it is impossible for winery staff to meet all consumers. Therefore, the in-person contact that is a key factor in developing and maintaining winery reputation extends to communication with people in the wine trade. Dan explained:

*Well, the real key to success is through distributors and trade. I can't meet all the consumers that we hope to have and they may not like me anyway. But the real trick is if you've got a sales team that are individually really fired up about your wines, then they can take that and take the story and take their excitement to the trade – retailers and restaurant guys. And if they can communicate that to the retailers and restaurant guys, because they're the people who deal with the consumers who drink the wine.*

Reiterating the idea again later, Dan said that they try to use *“all the trade and sales team as the voice of Mount Langi.”* This communication strategy is perfectly illustrated in the story of U2 drinking Langi Shiraz at Melbourne restaurant Cutler & Co as described earlier.

All interviewees talked about communication with the aim of developing understanding, rather than pursuing proof of quality in a competitive sense. Interviewees at Best's and Langi spoke about creating an enthusiasm for their wines focusing on wine character and stories. Laurent also favoured understanding over competition when he explained the négociant's role in the process: *“our job is not to tell them what's best – which is actually one of the reasons why I'm probably still doing this is because actually, you don't like Château Palmer or Beychevelle? Fine, you know, we're not forced to plug corporately like a Robert Mondavi salesperson.”* He went on to explain that his job is to help the client find the most suitable wine for his or her purpose.

In the Grands Crus market, communication with trade is paramount as the châteaux themselves are not responsible for sales. While the division between winery and sales is not so clear in Australia, interviewees spoke about the importance of good communication with all of the trade.

#### ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

All wineries are involved in a range of activities designed to communicate with the trade and consumers: dinners, tastings, cultural events, international tours. Given the

rural nature of wine production, most of these events are in major cities where large numbers of existing and potential clients are located. All four wineries are increasing the number of events they participate in as they try to build their customer base globally, taking their wines to consumer because very few actually go to the winery itself. Some events are winery specific, whereas others are as part of a regional or association group. Philippe said that Beychevelle does not do any advertising, but on the other hand is doing more promotional activities than ever before: *“On fait plus de déplacements, et de dégustations, et de manifestations, et de participation à des évènements et des dîners qu’on a jamais fait.”* From large dinners and events in the beautiful surrounds of Beychevelle to tasting events in China and consumer tasting events in Bordeaux, all occasions are designed to facilitate communication with clients around wine. Tasting events, including wine shows, were continuously described by interviewees as excellent opportunities to get feedback on the wines themselves from consumers and professionals.

All of these activities build on the idea of direct communication and *“really getting [the wine] into people’s mouths,”* as Aaron phrased it. According to Dan, at the time of the interviews, Langi was hosting 20-30 wine dinners a year in Melbourne, Sydney, UK and Asia, in addition to dedicated tasting events. Being served on high profile airlines (eg. Lynch-Bages on Cathay Pacific, Langi on Qantas) has also had tangible benefits for both wineries as more people taste their wines in different corners of the world.

Involvement and sponsorship of arts and cultural events also ranked highly among important communication activities for all four wineries. Rathbone Wine Group wines are served exclusively at bars in the Arts Centre, Melbourne’s official theatre and music performance complex; Lynch-Bages hosts several visual art exhibitions in the Village of Bages each year; in the 1990s Beychevelle hosted an international contemporary art centre and although this no longer occurs they host art events, classical music concerts, and the château is involved in the Marathon du Médoc. Philippe said these activities are purely to add to notoriety and reputation: *“C’est plus un faisceau d’action et l’approche qui maintient ou qui tente d’augmenter doucement la notoriété et la connaissance des vins.”* The association with art and culture



communicates a sophisticated and refined air, which may appeal to consumers seeking to foreground these aspects of their identity and self-perception.

## CONTENT

Different channels are integral to communication, and equally so the content. Each winery has a particular basis for their communications. At Lynch-Bages it is a pioneering story of the Cazes family, the development of quality wines, and oenotourism. At Beychevelle the focus is on history, tradition and consistency. Best's is centred on the history of pioneering winemaking, the Thomson family and the land. At Langi, it is all about the terroir and the pursuit of quality.

<p><b>Château Lynch-Bages</b></p> <p>Family</p> <p>Marketing / Tourism pioneer</p> <p>Recent story</p> <p>Personal Connections with trade and consumers</p>	<p><b>Château Beychevelle</b></p> <p>Corporate</p> <p>Aristocratic history / Pedigree</p> <p>Old story</p> <p>consistency</p>
<p><b>Best's Great Western</b></p> <p>Family</p> <p>Growing pioneer</p> <p>Old story</p> <p>Continuous personal connection with land</p>	<p><b>Mount Langi Ghiran</b></p> <p>Corporate</p> <p>Terroir / Wine</p> <p>Recent story</p> <p>Pursuit of quality</p>

This simple message underpinning all communications is designed to be easily understood and remembered. Anne summarised it succinctly: “You don’t want to confuse people. You just want one beautiful, simple message.” Dan discussed learning by experience with regard to communications and content, describing Langi’s effort to emphasize the single vineyard idea, but in actual fact complicating the message:

*The point that we see here that’s different to say Burgundy, where if you look at a great Burgundian producer like Domaine Rousseau or something and they’ve got six or eight different vineyards and four of them have got a Grand Cru and they’re making this wide range of different vineyard wines. If you’re setting up a wine list in a Melbourne restaurant and you want to have Domaine Rousseau on, you don’t care if it’s Mazis-Chambertin or Charmes-Chambertin because it’s going to be Domaine Rousseau. And you put it on the list at six-hundred bucks and it’s going to be your best Pinot.*

*But if you’ve got Nowhere Creek Shiraz from Mount Langi or Moyston Hills Shiraz from Mount Langi people will push them apart and say “I like that one. I don’t like that one.” And so you get this, “Oh, that’s the one I like” kind of mentality. So if you run out of Moyston Hills they don’t swap in the other one. They don’t say, “I’ve run out of a single vineyard wine from Mount Langi so I’ll take what I can get.” And they say, “Oh, I’ll look back at the big wide world and what I think is trendy right now.” So you don’t gain customers that way, you just, you just gain opinion, one way or another.*

*It gives you stuff to talk about at dinners and at tastings which is useful and it gives you more range to show people if you’ve got a five course dinner to get through and you need all sorts of wines to push it’s useful to have different ones. But beyond that I don’t think for consumers it’s very useful at all. And I think a lot of people are learning that slowly. That if you break down your product mix to too fine a detail people get all blurry with it and lose interest.*

This demonstrates a very detailed understanding of the consumer and that communication strategies need to be appropriate for both the consumer and the product. While one strategy might be successful for a Burgundian brand in Australia, it does not necessarily work for an Australian brand in the same market. Dan's comment also explains the way the consumption setting effects communication – differing between the social, restaurant experience and the more engaged, learning environment of a tasting dinner.

The content of Langi communication is clearly about the vineyard, helped by Damien's long-standing role as viticulturist and general manager. Logically then, they discuss topics such as sustainability, environment, weather, grapes, and winemaking techniques. Damien says he chooses to tell the truth about biodynamics and organics, but is careful to explain why Langi takes the approach it does in the vineyard – seeking to care for the vineyard and whole property in an environmentally sustainable and efficient manner – believing that the discourse must be founded in experience and knowledge: *“We did toy with the idea of being organic back in the eighties and into the nineties. So it's something we've actually had a lot of experience with and feel like we're pretty well informed to be able to make comment on.”* In the winery Dan said he makes a point of showing people the laboratory to demystify the romantic image of winemaking, and increasing the knowledge of visitors. At the same time, he acknowledged a certain freedom to be selective with the information they present: *“we also have the opportunity to make gross changes and blame it on the weather.”* The liberty to alter the stylistic character of the wine through changes in viticultural or winemaking techniques, but cite the weather as the reason for the change avoids complicating communication with consumers. It allows them to do what they think is best in terms of production without risking negative responses from consumers who do not necessarily understand the complexities of winemaking. Damien said this tactic is common in the wine industry and referenced Champagne production:

*The demand has been climbing the last couple of years and so they're just growing more grapes. They've changed the regulations in Champagne to allow the growers to grow more grapes. But the way they explain that is actually,*

*they don't say that we're trying to fulfil demand, just that the season is demanding that we grow more grapes.*

Emphasising the influence of nature and the seasons is a communications strategy that reinforces the idea of wine as a natural product. In this case it is a simple explanation for change that suggest that the human involvement in wine production is a direct response to the environment.

At Best's, the stories of the Thomson and Best families figure prominently on the website and in promotional material. Communications material constantly refers to the history of the people involved and historical details. The emphasis on the legacy of past and current owners and winemakers is realized by telling the personal and individual stories of these key people.

Beychevelle's content is also heavily based on history and tradition, telling the story of the château and vineyard over time. Value is placed on continuity, with particular reference to the vineyard footprint remaining unchanged since the early eighteenth century, and the château buildings and gardens dating from the same era. The 1855 classification adds to this strong, historical narrative. Philippe described its contemporary value as a guide for consumers: *"des gens ont besoin de guide. Quand on veut découvrir quelque chose, on prend un guide."*

At Lynch-Bages much of the communication content is about the Cazes family and the Village of Bages. During winery visits, the focus is on the museum, a unique resource in the Médoc, the winery and the village. This is a conscious decision based on what they have to offer and what other châteaux in the region offer. On social media, a lot of the content is associated with food, social events and experiences linked to Lynch-Bages' varied activity-based offerings.

From a general perspective, Laurent spoke about the way the Bordeaux market system keeps the conversation going all year long. After the intense activity of the En Primeur campaign, the conversation with clients maintains momentum via the latest bottling, older vintages, the current growing season speculation, suggestions for wise purchasing, etc.: *"It's not literally everyone talks about Pétrus or Margaux or*

*Beychevelle every day, but it's a subject that we can, which is available every day, which keeps the sort of commercial PR ... but we're here to sell the animal alive on a permanent basis."* Although a particular wine may not be purchased every day, it facilitates the broader conversation between négociants and clients. At the same time, by talking about these luxury wines on a regular basis, it keeps the brand at the forefront of people's minds, ensuring demand, sales and high prices.

Sylvie also described the importance of a broad conversation in wine communication:

*Le vin consommé avec modération c'est très bien et bénéfique pour la santé. Donc, après, justement le fait de faire du vin un produit culturel, fin, de parler du vin comme un produit – il est déjà un produit culturel – mais, de parler du vin comme un produit culturel issu d'un artisanat universel, qualitatif, est certainement un élément qui va dans le sens de la promotion du vin comme une boisson que l'on doit avoir comme une boisson régulière et qui est bénéfique pour la santé.*

In this example, health and culture are the aspects that maintain the conversation, illustrating that broadening the topic to more than just the wine itself allows for more discussion and richer communication.

Thus, while the communication content is focused on wine, it also extends to history, people, heritage, vineyards, winemaking, tourism, arts and culture. The latter opens the conversation to reflect the identity of both the producers and consumers. The idea that wine can represent and communicate identity emerged in several of the interviews. Dan talked about the way consumers of premium wines are often seeking confirmation of a sophisticated identity via the wine they consume. In addition to producing premium, or "fine" wine, Langi has partnerships with The Arts Centre and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra that support some consumers' personal aspirations for refinement and sophistication. Susan also commented on this in the context of Beychevelle's art-related endeavours, stating that the perception of art as a refined and cultural activity conveys a message of sophistication and good taste that appeals to the consumer's desired self-image.

## LANGUAGE

The language used in winery communication is also of interest. In terms of communicating with a broader market, Jean-Michel's ability to speak English fluently at a time when most Bordeaux château owners did not, gave him an advantage in the American market. According to him the language was a key factor, also facilitating cultural understanding and thus the ability to travel to the United States: *"D'abord à parler l'anglais – dans les années soixante à quatre-vingt-dix il y avait pas beaucoup de propriétaires qui parlaient anglais et il y avait aucun qui voyageait, quoi. Et aucun qui connaissait les Etats-Unis"* He also talked about the fact that the name "Château Lynch-Bages" is easy for English speakers to pronounce makes it easier to sell in Anglophone countries, drawing a comparison with the impossibly difficult Saint-Emilion winery "Château Grand Barrail Lamarzelle Figeac". The importance of language no doubt influenced the decision to change the name of Lynch-Bages' second wine from "Haut Bages Averous" to "Echo de Lynch-Bages" in 2008. This makes it entirely clear that it is a Lynch-Bages wine, removing any doubt that it might be from a different château. Lynch-Bages' white wine was created in 1990 and is called "Blanc de Lynch-Bages", the simple language unmistakably links it with the château and identifies the wine.

The simplicity of labelling was also raised by Ben at Best's. He would prefer the label to look like it is handwritten in white chalk on the bottle with the bare minimum of information – variety and year – but regulations and market expectations require it to be more complex. The simplicity of language in communication, both verbally and in print was discussed by several interviewees. Laetitia talked about the language when taking tours, in order to convey the content well and help to create a good visitor experience: *"il faut essayez de trouver des mots simples, clairs, tout en expliquant correctement."*

The vocabulary of the wine tasting was mentioned by Dan as a hurdle to efficient communication and understanding. He travels extensively and does a considerable amount of wine show judging and said that a large part of recognising quality in wine is understanding the vocabulary: *"It's a communication puzzle as much as anything,*

*because we talk in terms of descriptors and you see it when you travel globally that different places have different vocabularies.”* He explained that without the appropriate vocabulary it is difficult to identify characteristics in wines and compare them. Without a shared vocabulary it is very difficult to discuss wines with others. The language used to speak about wine is also frequently used as a tool to express exclusivity, which I observed on many occasions in many different contexts.

## STYLE

The style of communication also impacts on the message. As Sylvie stated, each winery has its own style of communication and chooses to talk about different facets of the business. As discussed above, the focus of each of the four wineries is different, and just as the content varies accordingly, so does the style.

Much of Best’s printed communication material is designed with an old-fashioned aesthetic, for example, the newsletter formatted like a 19<sup>th</sup> century newspaper; e-book designed like an old leather notebook; wine labels bearing the Best’s crest and copperplate font in a simple design; and texts written in a familiar tone. This style of communication is consistent with their emphasis on history and heritage, and down-to-earth farming identity.

The emphasis on history and an aristocratic ownership dictates the style of communication at Beychevelle. The label is an old engraving, black on a white background, repeated on the website and in promotional material. The opening photographs on the website create a fairy-tale aesthetic – the boat on the label superimposed on a view of the château from the river, complete with clouds of mist. In contrast, the style of the tour and texts is very factual.

At Langi, where the focus is on the terroir and fruit, the style of communications is consistent with this approach – the website is dominated by photos of the vineyard, and to a lesser extent the winery; the label is modern and clean with the signature Langi blue colour. Overall it projects a sense of pragmatism – the winery is getting on with the business of making excellent wine with minimal fuss.

In contrast, at Lynch-Bages there is an openness and accessibility for all visitors. The focus on the Cazes family and the ambiance of the village influence the style of communication – it is friendly and includes many parts of the “good life.” The village itself communicates this ideal, as Jean-Michel described:

*Donc, ce qu’on veut, c’est faire un village qui soit à la fois vivant où on puisse parler du vin, parler de l’art de vivre, parler des bonnes choses – la bonne viande, les bonnes épices, des bons pastas ou, comme toi, à boire un café ou manger correctement où il y a une bonne ambiance.*

The website, published material and events take this ambiance and extend it to the wider world.

The communication style influences the experiences each winery creates, for both staff and clients. For Laetitia, taking tours around Lynch-Bages can be enjoyable for the guides as well as visitors:

*... et puis c’est un plaisir. C’est vraiment ça. C’est le mot, c’est le plaisir, je crois. Donc, quand vous repartez, qu’on a des gens intéressés, qui vous posent des questions, qu’on peut avoir le temps de le faire. C’est un partage aussi dans le sens où les visiteurs peuvent vous aussi apprendre des choses.*

Most of the interviewees, however, discussed in more detail the consumer experience they are trying to create. Good communication creates good experiences, which in turn creates loyal customers, as Aaron explained:

*You go to a good restaurant you expect ... and you know, if the sommelier comes over and says, you know, “You want to try this with your lamb. You should have this Langi Shiraz.” Then if you have a wonderful experience, it’s a wonderful night and the wine goes beautifully, you’re going to be an advocate for Langi from then on.*

Jean-Michel expressed a similar sentiment with regard to the Lynch-Bages and Village experience, and wanting each visitor to become an ambassador for the brand. Good experiences at the winery translate into word-of-mouth recommendations, recognised



by all four wineries as one of the chief communication channels. It was also cited as important in retail by Wayne at the Cave L'Avant Garde. He said he hosts regular tastings for visitors, many of whom stop at his wine shop in Margaux because he and his staff speak English and are knowledgeable about the wines. It is not enough to simply stock the wines or have tastings available – good communication and tasting experiences are imperative.

#### EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION

The effects of communication, positive and negative, are also evident within the winery business. This was a topic that was discussed at length in the interviews at Langi. According to Damien and Dan, easy communication between the growing, winemaking and marketing teams is unusual in the wine industry. They both said that the communication at Langi is very open and harmonious, contributing to the success of the wines. Damien described the everyday practicalities: *“We would have meetings where the winemakers would sit down, I would be sitting down, the marketer would be sitting down and talking about, each of us talking about what was going on.”* He said that the distance has increased somewhat between production and marketing teams now that Langi is part of a larger company. Although Dan has a higher profile as the winemaker, Damien is still involved in visits, launches and similar activities.

Damien also talked about the importance of good communication with the growers who sell fruit to Langi. The story he told of asking growers to drop fruit or hand pick is an example of where a lack of communication and understanding resulted in less than ideal outcomes:

*There were a lot of growers being asked to drop fruit on the ground and maybe not necessarily understanding why they had to do that. Probably being suspicious of why they were being asked to drop fruit because they're paid per tonne.[...] Because as a grower, if you're being asked to drop fruit, it's going to raise a doubt in your mind. You know, “Am I being asked to drop fruit so they can pay me less per tonne or, why are they asking me to do that?”*

*I've asked growers to – an example – I asked a grower to pick a little parcel of fruit by hand, because it was of outstanding quality. And we paid them an extra \$200 per tonne to do the hand picking on top of their rate. And they did it, but I think that after doing the exercise they decided that it wasn't worthwhile. And that could be how we managed it as well, you know. Maybe we needed to, maybe give them some of that wine back that they could have as proof or involve them more in the outcome of the product.*

This statement indicates that communication affects all levels of winery activities, including production, and is something that requires conscious management.

## CONCLUSION

In terms of communication with consumers, there is a large difference between the highly formalised system that separates producers from wine buying and selling in the Bordeaux Grands Crus market and the less formal system of the Australian market. It would appear that Australian wineries are much more involved in communicating directly with the market than Bordeaux Grands Crus, however, in reality the châteaux are responsible for most of the promotions and communication for the brand (including cost) but activities occur in conjunction with the négociant. For all four wineries, the notion of direct, face-to-face communication with all involved people emerged as the strongest theme. Although much of the conversation was centred on communication with consumers, the interviews revealed that good communication throughout the whole network – with growers, distributors, wholesale, retail and on-premise staff, and journalists – is imperative to produce the highest quality wine and achieve maximum success in business. There was a general awareness of the many different aspects of communication – content, style, setting, channels – and the need to carefully manage them all for the best outcome, highlighting the importance of 'the mechanisms and actors through which information is produced, made available, and consumed' (Odorici and Corrado 2004).

## 5.9. EDUCATION

*“How does one go about building a sensitive palate? The question may be pretentious, but not the answer. ‘Simple,’ he smiles, ‘buy a corkscrew and use it.’”*

Alexis Lichine (quoted in Goodman 1975)

The role of education and the ways in which each winery attempts to educate their sales people and consumers was a direct question in the interviews. The responses covered specific business policies and activities, informal educational moments and the perception of consumer desires and needs. This category examines stereotypes and generalisations about wine, regions, and drinkers as a point from which to consider educational objectives. Included in the analysis are discussions of how, why and to whom the winery directs its educational efforts, and the perceived benefits and effects of educational activities, as these ideas emerged from the interviews.

### STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes, generalisations, misconceptions, and preconceived ideas abound in the wine world. They relate to the wines themselves, wineries, particular segments (e.g. Premium, or Grands Crus), region, country, production techniques, and consumers. The interviews produced a colourful list of examples:

- all Australian Shiraz is big, alcoholic and fruity (Dan, Aaron, Damien, Viv, Ben) (a pressing issue for Langi and Best’s, as cool-climate producers.)
- white wine should only be drunk in summer with salads (Steph)
- men refuse to drink or even taste rosé (Steph)
- *“Les rouges du Médoc on peut pas boire avant vingt ans. ”* (Alain)
- *“the women and sauvignon blanc thing which is a consumer category unto itself.”* (Dan)
- *“the caricature of the big, red, wine-drinking Aussie bloke”* (Dan)

- the “*lord lunch-a-lots-with*” (Damien)
- “*I like Pinot Noir. That’s what I like. The I’m-sophisticated-and-cultured people.*” (Dan)
- “*I’ve got enough money to know what I like and I don’t mind paying for good wine*” (Dan)
- “*people with cellars, and that’s a little segment. They’re small, but they count for a lot because they’re opinion leaders.*” (Dan)
- “*people who are much more open to experimentation and they like funky things.*” (Dan)
- “*And particularly in the sommelier world there are people who are into exotica. And so, if it’s rare, hard to get and hard to pronounce and you’re the first to have it, that’s kind of cool.*” (Dan)

These stereotypes are examples of the ideas that wineries hear from people in the trade and consumers, that have positive and negative effects. All Australian interviewees raised the issue of trying to promote cool-climate, delicate Shiraz in a country where big, fruity, high-alcohol Shiraz is the norm. They are continually fighting this perception and trying to spread the message that Shiraz can be different. While most of the discussion from the Australian wineries centred on trying to correct misconceptions, Dan recounted an experience where the stereotype, while not true of Langi wines, worked in its favour:

*So, I was sitting on a plane on the way home from London recently and they were pouring Cliff Edge Shiraz on the plane and the bloke next to me asked for a glass of red wine and the steward poured the wine and said, “Gee, that looks really rich and lovely, doesn’t it?” and walked off. And I thought, “I don’t know that I want our wine to be considered rich and lovely”, but he was nodding his head and smiling and looking like that was a good thing. So, you know, the stereotype was sort of, she was just doing her banter thing and he was nodding and smiling and that was sort of working in our favour that Australian Shiraz was going to be rich and lovely, where actually, if you talk about what we’re trying to do here, rich and lovely – well, lovely, nice enough, that’s a bland enough word – but rich is not part of it at all. So he had two glasses, and it was*

*all going well for them. So I just let it be, but I thought, "Oh well, if we can slipstream on that when it suits us, then that's not a bad thing."*

This suggests that as a small producer of a less common style, Langi needs to be flexible enough not to denounce the stereotype when it is beneficial. This approach is consistent with the production philosophy of using a range of techniques to make the best wine possible. In this case, it is using a range of marketing approaches to achieve the best result.

In Bordeaux, the prevailing stereotype is that the wines are not ready to drink until they have aged for twenty years. Some producers would certainly argue that they are better after that length of time, however, most Bordeaux wines can certainly be drunk much earlier. Laetitia maintained that it is a particular problem for the Grands Crus in a changing society where many consumers now like to purchase wines to drink immediately rather than ageing.

Alain at Grand-Puy Ducasse extrapolated on the perception of aging and the stereotype of Grands Crus reds:

*Les rouges du Médoc on peut pas boire avant vingt ans. Donc, qu'un Pauillac est très puissant. Déjà, si vous voulez, globalement c'est vrai que c'est un stéréotype qui est quand même pas mal évolué depuis 2000. Peut-être que dans les années 80, 90, le type de vinification ne permettait pas de présenter avant 10 ans, 15 ans des vins ouverts. Je pense qu'aujourd'hui on déguste des vins de plus en plus jeunes. Il y a aussi un goût qui a évolué et je pense que les nouveaux consommateurs n'aiment plus forcément les goûts des vieux millésimes, vieux vins qui tournent un peu sur des dynamiques de cuire, de sous-bois, et autres. Je pense que le nouveau consommateur préfère rester sur des dynamiques de fruits. Et depuis 2000 je pense que c'est un peu cette dynamique qui revient. Et je pense que le mode de vinification fait qu'aujourd'hui, on n'a plus besoin d'attendre vingt ans donc pour déguster un Pauillac.*

The question of aged wines was also raised by Viv. He said that many consumers do not like the taste of aged wines and believes it is largely due to a lack of exposure:

*We had our Grampians Gourmet weekend and I sat at a table with a couple of women there and I think Seppelts put on a – was it a 95 Shiraz or 85 Shiraz? It must have been 95. Anyway it was a bit tawny, it was very good, you know, lovely wine, but the woman next door to me said, “Oh, what’s wrong with this wine?” Because she’d never seen an old wine before. And there’s a lot of people, I mean we keep at how long do you keep the wine for but very few people have drunk old wine. So I guess that’s one gap in people’s education. They’re so used to drinking young wines that my concern is when you say, “Well, put it away for 10 or 20 years,” if they do, they won’t know what they’ve got. Maybe in 20 years they will have learnt about old wines, but I think that is certainly a gap with people, is their lack of knowledge of old wines because they’ve never seen them.*

There is arguably a greater tradition of aging wines in Bordeaux than in Victoria, however, a glance around retail shelves suggests that the average consumer in the global market does not have much opportunity to taste or drink aged wines.

More specific stereotypes were also mentioned, such as the ranking of a winery in a particular group. This can be positive, for example Lynch-Bages enjoys a reputation much greater than its 5<sup>th</sup> growth classification. On the other hand, Philippe expressed his concern that Beychevelle’s wines are often considered the lowest quality in Saint Julien, even before tasting:

*Bien qu’on fasse, je crois tous des bons vins, il y a des gens qui sont très forts qui font des vins très chers et de très grande qualité et la concurrence est difficile. Et donc, le stéréotype souvent, c’est de mettre Beychevelle dernier, et puis avant de commencer. Et moi, mon objectif c’est qu’on soit pas dernier. Mais je n’ai pas l’objectif qu’on soit premier.*

All interviewees were conscious of the effect of preconceived ideas on the subjective activity of wine tasting. They talked about how price, reputation, the company and context in which the wine is consumed, accompanying food and ambiance all affect the way a wine is perceived.

## UNDERSTANDING

Faced with these stereotypes, generalizations and misconceptions, all interviewees indicated that they would like to increase people's understanding of wine and make sure its truths are told. Most interviewees spoke about education, in its many forms, as a positive and important way of doing this. I was surprised that Ben at Best's did not speak about education. In hindsight however, it is consistent with his reserved nature – he stated that he does not enjoy the spotlight or too much contact with the consumers: *"I'm not a PR person and I've never professed to be. I'd rather be seen and not heard sort of thing."* This raises the issue of the apparent expectation that everyone in the wine business is charismatic and likes talking to people. While this is definitely an advantage for selling wine, it is almost at odds with an industry that requires viticulturists and winemakers to live and work in isolated, rural areas, spending time with plants, tractors, barrels and wine. Nevertheless, all wineries consider education to be an important part of their communications, connected with an underlying desire to be understood and respected as premium winemakers.

## CONTENT

In terms of the content of educational activities and interactions, the topics that emerged from the interviews as the most important in Australia were a desire to demystify production methods, cool-climate style, and geography. Interviewees noted that most people do not know where The Grampians or Great Western are, with many people thinking it is a sparkling wine not a place, via association with the once popular Seppelt Great Western Sparkling Shiraz. Dan lamented the common belief held by city dwellers that any region outside Melbourne, apart from the Yarra Valley and the Mornington Peninsula (both regions less than one hour's drive from Melbourne's CBD) is *"somewhere near Bendigo"*. Individual wineries, The Grampians Winemakers association, and Grampians Tourism board are all working together to lessen the geographical barrier through education.

At Langi, both Dan and Damien spoke about trying to educate consumers and demystify production techniques, particular with relation to organics and biodynamics. Langi does not adhere to either of these classifications, but has a philosophy of sustainable environmental management of the whole property. This management strategy also considers sustainable business practices, allowing the company to function well. Despite understanding that consumers like an image of “traditional” wine production, Damien prefers to educate consumers about reality:

*I think to a large extent the industry tries to gloss over the mechanical stuff. The marketing really prefers it if you do as much by hand and as much traditionally as possible. And to have a bit of credibility you’ve sort of got to, I mean we do do a lot of stuff by hand so yeah, ok, we can say that, but we’ve decided that we’re going to put our hand up and say “you know, we do use science”.*

Dan supported this idea of helping consumers understand how wine is really made: *“we’re trying to change and modify consumer perceptions and wine culture along some lines to demystify and take some of the bullshit out of the marketing.”* They both talked about being an alternate voice to the biodynamic, organic and natural wine marketing that they believe is not always grounded in science or good reasoning. Both believe that it is important for consumers to be well-informed. Dan then went on to discuss terroir as a useful concept, particularly for Langi, where the vineyard is the defining feature, but only if the term is defined. Again, helping to increase consumer understanding and knowledge of wine is the key aim.

For both Best’s and Langi the main focus of educational efforts is getting professionals and consumers to understand cool-climate Shiraz style, and interviewees talked about it at length. Dan said: *“We’re trying to help consumers understand about diversity in Australian Shiraz and help consumers feel supported in a move towards more delicate wine.”* This is also important internationally, as Aaron described: *“And so the intention is to go to key influencing markets, like London, New York, Hong Kong even, and go to these markets and challenge the status quo and the perception of Australian wine as alcoholic, big, South Australian Barossan shiraz.”*



In Bordeaux, educational content also focused on increasing consumer understanding of wine style, as well as the history of the region and château, the quality and uniqueness of the terroir, and authenticity. In light of a significant market in counterfeit Grands Crus wines, both Lynch-Bages and Beychevelle have introduced reactive measures (such as QR codes for digital verification of individual bottles) and are trying to educate their consumers in this area (including explanatory youtube videos on the QR code). The wine style also receives attention as Grands Crus producers are trying to appeal to new consumers and educate them, particularly with regard to when the wines are ready to drink.

Interviewees had a clear idea of who their consumers and visitors are and that they have a wide range of knowledge about wine, from very little to a professional level. Steph told the story of a couple who visited cellar door with almost no wine knowledge or experience:

*We had a couple about 12 months ago and I served them in cellar door. And they were from Adelaide and they were passing through. And they came in and said, "It's actually the first cellar door we've ever visited." [...] And they had no idea about what they wanted to try, what the wines sort of were kind of thing. [...] And they went through the whole process and they were here for 45 minutes and they had a great time. [...] And they visited the region again in May – so it must have been 12 months before that, I think – and they came up and they told us that they had been out to the Yarra Valley and they had gone to a number of cellar doors and they were having a great time.*

She described the experience with pride – for herself and Best's – as the experience had opened the door to the wine world for this uninitiated couple: *"We gave them the information that they needed to go and have some fun; go and drink some wines and see what happens."* Viv also described cellar door as based in education. When I asked him about visitor knowledge of wine from The Grampians, he replied:

*I believe most people here who come in are fairly well-educated but probably not that well-educated. I mean, they can talk a bit of sense. They know what a Cabernet is, they know what Shiraz is. Although I had a lady in the other day*

*and she asked me whether Cabernet Sauvignon was a blend or not. Well, I mean, these things happen. It's fair enough. And that's something else, when I'm out here I try and – I don't do much work behind the cellar door – but I like to educate people. I try and explain things to them. Just simple things, like, well, Cabernet Sauvignon isn't two varieties, actually that's the name of the variety. And you go through that and talk about Cabernet Franc being another distinct variety. And so, I'm not sure that people coming in here know much about the style we make here, but I think they know it's lighter. See I always maintain our wines, I talk about our wines here being quite light, which is quite wrong. They're not light, they're just not as... They're different.*

One of the underlying principles of all four cellar doors is to educate visitors about the particular wine produced and about wine in general. The history of the vineyard, region, and winemaking feature strongly alongside the individual wines and general wine production information. Whether informally – explaining the wine to people who come in – or formally – in tasting sessions and workshops – the objective is to increase knowledge.

Education is an integral part of the Bages experience, informally and formally at the wine school, *Le Cercle de Lynch-Bages*, which Jean-Michel said was a strategically planned part of the village:

*Il y a une dizaine d'années on a eu l'idée de compléter ce qu'on faisait à Cordeillan par une rénovation du village et en profiter pour faire un point d'attraction pour les touristes et puis de développer aussi le côté éducatif avec notre école du vin qui est devenu Le Cercle de Lynch-Bages.*

Laetitia echoed this valuing of education from a personal perspective: *“Enfin, moi je sais qu'au niveau de mes visites, la pédagogie est hyper-importante.”* Susan explained the importance of education in a pragmatic business context:

*... because we're not here for tasting because there's not enough wine. And so we want to get across to those people that a great wine is not just a cheap wine that was sort of harvested by machine. A great wine is worked on and is*

*appreciated when it's tasted, and for many years as well, because they're not just wines for drinking in the next year or so.*

Interviewees emphasised the role of education in the cellar door and brand experience. Anne at Langi was clear that education and discovering new things makes for a good cellar door experience: *"I like to spend time explaining and imparting knowledge onto our customers with all our wines because they need to be able to walk out with a fantastic experience."* The concept of discovery was also raised by Laetitia:

*Donc, au niveau amateur, ça va être vraiment de leur faire découvrir le travail du vin. On peut partir vraiment de la base et de leur faire découvrir autant le travail de la vigne, du vin et les bases de la dégustation. Un professionnel, ça va être un peu plus lui faire découvrir les installations, parce que souvent il connaît déjà le vin.*

For cellar door staff, there was an obvious pleasure in facilitating the discovery of new wines. Anne described enthusiastically that Riesling is the "turnaround" wine: people expect to hate it but when they try it they discover they love it.

Thus informally and formally each winery is attempting to increase the wine knowledge of consumers and professionals through the cellar door experience, in an attempt to correct stereotypes and misconceptions and as a way of creating an engaging and memorable visit.

#### EVENTS AND ONLINE

In addition to the educational experience at cellar door, wineries are designing events and online communications with education in mind. All four wineries co-host regular wine dinners with restaurants in major cities, nationally and internationally. According to Damien, this is a small, niche market and most people who attend dinners are reasonably well-educated about wine. Anne said that wine dinners with Dan always sell out as consumers increasingly seek educational experiences: *"And wine dinners are fabulous for people that are hungry for knowledge, that love wine but want to know*

*more about it.” There was a general consensus that dinners and workshops provide a different and richer experience than the traditional tasting event. Aaron described some of the ideas for future events, based on education: “getting that a little bit more out of the standard and more into a, whether it’s a food and wine sort of casual masterclass or however it is, but trying to break it down and break down the barriers from a guy standing on the other side of a table pouring wines.”*

These new event formats are all designed to increase interaction between winery staff and clients, allowing more time and context to share knowledge. This focus on education is also vital in wine retail, as Wayne described:

*If people want to be educated we definitely help them in wine in the shop. It’s quite fun with a client going through and giving a little bit of information and education and they actually become more interested in buying wines as well. Basically that’s a good part of the job – is informing. My main part, I think, these days as a salesperson in a shop is informing people more than pushing people to buy anything. I inform them of wines and tell them what we’ve got and what I think about them, and if you know your business and you’re quite passionate about it, there’s the sales part done.*

Laurent explained that there is also a place for education in wholesale negotiations. He described a strategy he sometimes uses with buyers:

*Ok. Fine, but are you sure? Why don’t you like Beychevelle? Well, because 20 years ago I tasted it and I didn’t like it. Well, come on, I mean, here, let’s do a mini vertical tasting so that you can get up to speed. So then yes, we do, we can occasionally sort of educate or educate, quote unquote, or have an educational role or let’s go have lunch at Beychevelle, or lunch at Giscours so that you can meet the people there.*

The interviews revealed a strong belief that increased understanding leads to increased appreciation for the wines.

Online, educational material is becoming increasingly common, and all four wineries have a series of videos explaining different parts of wine production. Best’s and Langi

produce their own short videos with a particular focus. Best's videos are highly produced vignettes, focusing on one topic while Langi's have more of a casual, webcam feel about them. Lynch-Bages and Beychevelle have a smaller online presence, but a number of videos can be found on various media websites. In addition to formal written information on each winery's website, videos present an opportunity to educate consumers in a shorter, more casual style on topics that are relevant to them. Steph explained the power of videos:

*Through like a two minute or a minute education video with Viv, or with Justin talking about that particular myth or question or misconception. Because there's a few of them out there these days. Like decanting – we always get asked in cellar door whether we should decant, whether they should decant their older wines, because we sometimes have them for sale in cellar door as well.*

Given that the vast majority of consumers are not likely to visit the winery in person, online education is a practical and wide-reaching method of reaching consumers around the globe.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the wine sales chain, from producer to consumer, any educational activities are beneficial to all parties. The importance of face-to-face interaction at workshops, dinners and tastings with professionals and consumers is considered the most effective educational strategy. Aaron summarised it neatly: *“And so it's getting this messaging out there. And the only way you can really do that is spend more and more time tasting with people and doing more consumer facing as well as education programs for our sommeliers and for our trade.”* Helping the trade and consumers to taste the wine, understand production processes, and identify different styles is seen as a way of developing more appreciation for the wines. This leads to more consumers who are engaged and likely to be loyal, and perhaps most importantly, consumers who share an appreciation for boutique, premium wines.

## 5.10. BUSINESS

*“So you’re not trying make these wines and those wines and get that two thirds right and this one two thirds right. Get this one 100% right and 100% focused and I think that’s probably one of our big things that have changed our business.”* Ben

This category discusses the business of wine production, marketing and sales. It explores business structures, philosophies, strategies, concerns, decisions and influences as raised by interviewees. Aspects of winery activities – from a business perspective – are examined here, including specific changes that have been implemented to focus winery activities on premium production, improve quality, and sell more wine at higher prices.

All four wineries are in some way part of a larger business structure. One could argue that Best’s stands separately from the others in this regard, as it is a family-owned business without any other wine brands. Best’s does, however, have other business interests, including farming livestock, vineyards in the north of Victoria (currently leased out), and Ben operates a harvesting business.

Lynch-Bages is a family owned winery, but sits under the banner of the larger company “JM Cazes Selections” which owns Lynch-Bages, Ormes de Pez, Villa Bel-Air, and Michel Lynch (grand distribution) in Bordeaux, L’Ostal Cazes in the Languedoc, Domaine des Sénéchaux in Châteauneuf du Pape, Roquette e Cazes in Portugal, and Tappanappa, a partnership with Bollinger and Brian Croser in Australia.

Langi is part of a small wine company, the Rathbone Wine Group, which also owns Yering Station and Yarrabank (a collaboration with Champagne Devaux) in the Yarra Valley, and Xanadu in Margaret River. Doug Rathbone was able to acquire Mount Langi Ghiran and fund improvements to his wine portfolio with financial backing from his large agricultural chemical company. The Rathbone Wine Group is now directed by his son Darren Rathbone.

Beychevelle has the most commercial feel of the four wineries, with a very polished image and business-like approach. The insurance company Grands Millésimes de France (GMF) was brought on as a partner in the 1980s, gradually increasing its share and partnering in turn with Japanese drinks company Suntory (which owns an extensive range of food, beverage, wine, beer and spirit brands). In 2011, Suntory took over Beychevelle in equal partnership with the Groupe Castel, a major French wine company. Despite each winery being part of a large corporate entity, there is a remarkable separation between the premium wine brand and the company's other brands and commercial activities. Within the industry, the business background is well known, but there is no obvious connection in the image presented to consumers.

#### BEST'S

Viv and Ben talked about Best's business structure, particularly with reference to changes in recent years. It is, and has always been, family owned and organised, but changes in the wine world and the business world in general, including communications technology, have necessitated change. When the general management of the business was transferred from Viv to Ben, an enormous amount of work was added to Ben's load in addition to his role as viticulturist. This prompted a major overhaul in how the business was run, particularly with regard to administration and employees:

*We put on a commercial manager last year and that was a big step for us because I said I'd have a go at managing the business. But business is a lot harder now than what it used to be and you've got to be on top of it. And I just found I couldn't, I personally couldn't do the vineyard, couldn't do the harvesting thing, I couldn't do books, and HR and all that, I just couldn't. I couldn't do everything, so we put on a commercial manager. That's been a big change and that for us [...] I'm still managing,[...] but Anthony looks after the general running of the whole business which has just made a massive relief off me and I think Dad's quite pleased with it too because things are ticking along.*

The engagement of a commercial manager occurred only four years after the appointment of the first Sales and Marketing Manager in 2008. In a very short time Best's has gone from a family business where family members managed the whole business, aided by employees in the vineyard, winery and cellar door, to a more commercial structure where some of the key management and administrative tasks are the responsibility of employees.

#### LANGI

Langi has the feel of a small winery, run by a group of passionate and invested individuals. This was the situation until 2002 when it was purchased by the Rathbone Wine Group (RWG), by which time Langi's ethos was already ingrained. Throughout the business structure transition, the continuity of viticulturist (and General Manager for some time), Damien Sheehan, with his down-to-earth and warm character, no doubt helped to keep the original atmosphere alive. Even though Langi is part of a larger company, from an administrative perspective it still operates as a small winery. Anne described it as a contained unit within the larger company: *"We need to be able to stand on our own two feet and generate a profit. So we're a small business within a big business."*

Langi's business life has not always been smooth sailing, as Dan pointed out. From a business perspective, Langi was waning by the time of the RWG purchase in 2002. As previously mentioned, the 1996 Wine Spectator cover featuring a Langi Shiraz, Penfolds Grange and Henschke's Mount Edelstone Shiraz, according to Dan, set the *"benchmark for Australian cool-climate Shiraz"* and *"secured Langi's place in the wine industry."* This prompted significant investment in the business, including the construction of the new winery building and equipment. However, the volume of sales generated by this publicity was not sufficient to justify the financial investment. Dan described it as an optimistic moment, which in actual fact led to a decline for the business and the sale to RWG. As is common in the wine industry, the new owners arrived with significant financial capital and enthusiasm, which allowed them to propel Langi into the next phase. At the time of the interview in 2011 Aaron described the



current situation as very favourable: *“We’re in a really exciting phase of the business where we’ve got incredible momentum. Langi’s been growing at more than 20% a year for the last three years and the wine industry has been in negative growth.”* He said demand was greater than supply, which is a fortunate position for any winery. Aaron described the details:

*And the distributors never get, the international distributors never get as much as they like. You know, they put in a request for x amount of cases and we give them a quarter of the quantity. They ring up and say, “Can we have 100 cases?” and we say, “We can give you 20.” So we’re really fortunate to be at that position and I wouldn’t say when I started, it certainly wasn’t in that position. Langi’s always been in a good position, but momentum has continued to build and through sticking to doing justice to the vineyard and continuing to progress the style, but just that focus on quality has meant that eventually everyone comes around. And I think that probably from a pure marketing, academic perspective, I think that gives us everything. There is always a life cycle, but I think if you can build it slowly and in the right way then you’ve got more chance of staying relevant in the future.*

In many ways, this is a very similar situation to the global market situation of many Grands Crus of Bordeaux, where demand outstrips supply. While Langi’s situation is currently very positive in a commercial sense, Aaron brought the discussion back to direction and motivation always originating from the vineyard: *“I think the site has always dictated the direction, and we’ve just got to make sure as a business, as a commercial entity, that we’re true to that.”*

#### BEYCHEVELLE

Philippe at Beychevelle also spoke about trying to find a balance between the business and production sides of the business. He spoke of the enormous amount of public relations done by the previous owner Achille-Fould, but that it was, to some degree, at the expense of investment in wine quality improvement:

*C'est une période où il y avait des bons côtés. Ça [la notoriété de Beychevelle], c'est le bon côté et on va pas parler de tous les mauvais côtés qui étaient peut-être de très peu d'investissement, peut-être d'un inattention, assez bien inférieures à ce qu'elles sont aujourd'hui. Une attention technique, une maîtrise technique très, très inférieure à aujourd'hui, etcetera.*

When Beychevelle was purchased by GMF and Suntory in 1986, financial investment was made to improve the wine quality, which is a process that continues to this day. Since carrying out my fieldwork, Beychevelle have invested in a new winery and visitor reception centre, opened in 2016.

#### LYNCH-BAGES

In terms of business structure, Lynch-Bages has again shown itself to be ahead of the times. While the other wineries have undergone considerable transformation more recently, Lynch-Bages' period of significant change and growth was during the 1960s-1980s. Since that time, the business structure has remained fairly static, and the development of existing parts of the company has been the focus, rather than new ventures. Just as Best's saw Viv hand over management to his son Ben, management has shifted from Jean-Michel to his son Jean-Charles, however this has not prompted business restructuring. The development of the Village of Bages and the experiences it offers are perhaps the most notable business activity. From its humble beginnings with the bakery, café, butcher and gift shop, Bages now includes tasting school "Le Cercle de Lynch-Bages", VINIV where individuals can make their own wine, and a bicycle hire shop. In 2016, works began on a large-scale renovation of winery facilities, a project that will take two and a half years to complete.

#### MONEY, QUALITY AND LIFESTYLE

Many interviewees, particularly owners and directors, contrasted either directly or indirectly money with lifestyle. They spoke about the tensions between business and

the quest for a wine that reflects the terroir in the truest way possible. Viv offered a pragmatic, long-term view of the business and life of winemaking:

*And your business is, rather than making money, is more a way of life. Now providing you're not losing then you can continue on that way. We're changing now that we now employ a sales manager, so he's got to be supported. We've now got a chap who looks after our finances, so he's got to be supported. Plus ourselves. But the thing is, I think with bigger companies and with shareholders, they expect to see the bottom line all the time and so the bigger companies probably have more knee-jerk reactions. And we've been there, we've done that and we'll say, "Well things aren't too good this year but you know, we've still got a few bob in the bank and we've still got this and we've still got that. So all right, it's a bit tough this year, but with a bit of luck it will come good next year. So we're still waiting for it to rain, that's all.*

Ben also spoke with a sense of balancing the accounts over time, describing the differing bank balance according to the time of year:

*First half is vintage. Second half is you're paying for your fruit purchases, your bottles, your caps, labels, and all that. So generally the first half of the year is not so big on your expenses, but your second half is quite large because that's when you do all your actual manufacturing and purchasing of bottles and labels and all that sort of stuff. So you see two B-doubles of glass come in and you go, yep, that's 50K.*

*Then you get sales – it's just business. It's knowing when those bits are and how to manage it and because we've done it for a while we know when they're coming and we just know that... Everyone says, "Oh, no, no," but yes, we will. We're going to be all right.*

Damien situated the finance-quality balance in terms of the wine's selling price and finding a balance between what is commercially viable in terms of the intensity of manual labour and how much chemical and artificial control is required:

*If we were just a grower and not using our own grapes for making wine, and we had to sell our grapes to a buyer, the economics of cane pruning – you'd have to really look at that quite hard and make sure it was worth your while, but we're value adding to our own product and that gives us room to manage all of our crops to the best that we can to achieve that.*

He then continued to talk about experimentation in the vineyard and winery, stating that he and Dan would like to experiment more, but it is not commercially viable. He appreciated the working in a team where production and administration-sales balance each other:

*We do need someone there at the other end saying, "Look, hang on guys, let's just grow what you can grow and what you can sell and maybe don't dabble in a variety that only has one percent interest from the market." So we do dabble, but it's dabbling. We do experiment with different varieties, and Dan experiments with different techniques, and that's important, you do have to do that, but you've just got to keep it in balance.*

Susan at Beychevelle justified the use of American oak in the second wine in terms of the end price for consumers: *"Even the price – if we're using new oak barrels from America it's so that we can improve the wine but keep the prices stable for the second wine. There's no point in bringing the prices really high and then not being able to sell the wines."* Finding a balance between producing the best wine from the vineyard and financial viability was described as an imperative yet complex goal that necessitates consideration of all the different aspects of a wine producing business.

## Focus

For each of these wineries, all of the business changes over the past twenty years have been focused on refining their offerings and improving their quality. This is largely seen as the best way of remaining competitive in a global market that is dominated by giant drinks companies. At Best's, there has been a focus on premium wines. Ben described the commercial motivation for this:

*But as to one thing, Bin 1 has been a big thing for us. That's been going a number of years now. And I think that's been one of our sort of things we've concentrated on. We've stopped making Lake Boga wines, which was a big decision for me and Dad to make because it's been a family business and all that. But we couldn't compete with the big boys in that – you know, De Bortolis and these fellers which are doing millions of litres and we're doing 15,000 cases from up there and trying to compete in the \$10 market. Their bottles were costing them probably 50% of what our bottles were. Just through pure volume of purchasing. So I think that has been a big, defining thing for us to stop making Lake Boga wines and purely concentrating on Great Western wines and get it exactly right. So you're not trying make these wines and those wines and get that two thirds right and this one two thirds right. Get this one 100% right and 100% focused and I think that's probably one of our big things that have changed our business.*

Damien spoke about refining and clarifying the Langi production goals – premium Shiraz – and that this has increased confidence in what they are making.

Philippe was clear about Beychevelle's position in the hierarchy of the Saint Julien appellation. He said that while Beychevelle is not over-performing, the wines are definitely improving, a consistent trend among Grands Crus producers. The large investment in the new winery has been presented to the media entirely as a project to improve wine quality, however, the new visitor area suggests other aspects of the business are also being considered.

Lynch-Bages' focus has been less explicitly on wine quality – that appears to be a given, backed up by the prices it is currently fetching – and more on the Village of Bages. They have honed the experience, catering for high end visitors who dine and stay at Cordeillan-Bages and make wine at VINIV, as well as keeping it accessible to the wider audience who appreciates the emphasis on authenticity and simplicity. It is unclear if the village is financially sustainable as a separate entity, but the expansion of activities and renovations suggest it plays an important role in the business.

## MARKET ORIENTATION

Selling wine has been the most difficult and variable part of wine producing over the years for all wineries. Jean-Michel has been extremely active in developing sales since he stepped into the family business in the 1960s. As previously mentioned, his business strategy is one of developing networks of people and personal contact with Lynch-Bages. Talking about the early days, he said it was a business decision to welcome visitors to Lynch-Bages, at a time when they needed more clients. Jean-Michel's extensive travel and the deal with Cathay Pacific in 1989 took Lynch-Bages out to clients. This two-directional approach demonstrates that Lynch-Bages is a very globally focused business.

The renovation of the Village of Bages was part of this philosophy of welcoming people to Lynch-Bages. Despite the impression that it is not a commercial endeavour and Jean-Michel said it is not designed to drive sales, Laetitia noted that there is a commercial underpinning for all the activities at Bages:

*Après, bon, le but effectivement – il faut pas le cacher aussi – il devait avoir de la vente derrière. Donc, c'est proposer une visite qui, même si c'est, on est sur un vin qui a sa réputation, qui n'a pas forcément besoin d'avoir plus de clientèle. Malgré tout, on veut essayer d'être ouvert à tout type de population, on veut dire, et en même temps ça permet, enfin, il y a un but lucratif aussi. Il faut pas le cacher. Il y a autant de but œnotouristique que lucratif.*

From a marketing perspective the creation and development of Bages is a very considered business activity, representing the only wine related destination in the Medoc, as Jean-Michel described:

*Et puis les cours de dégustation, ça marche pas mal. On a à peu près mille personnes par an là-dedans. Et puis, alors, tout ce qui est boutique et village, et le restaurant, on fait le café, tout ça, ça marche aussi très bien. Et pratiquement presque tous les touristes qui viennent au Médoc s'arrêtent là quoi.*

As such, the business of Bages itself has a guaranteed clientele, due to the absence of any competition in the region, and the wine and heritage focus of what is on offer.

If Lynch-Bages is focused on the œnotouristic side of selling, Langi's emphasis, while also about place, is on the vineyard site. Dan stated it very clearly: *"This is a unique vineyard, and that gives us a wine that has unique personalities. So that gives us a nice value proposition from a sales point of view."* Aaron supported this stance, by explaining how the detail in the vineyard and wines helps the sales process as it creates a unique point of difference. Given that Langi's marketing is, according to Aaron, *"more than 80% globally focused on restaurants"*, which is the opposite of the Australian wine industry norm, interest from the trade is paramount. Langi seems very clear of its intended market and consumption contexts, as Aaron pointed out:

*So for us, we're focusing on that restaurant market. Mainly because the wine has got incredible balance and acidity and it goes well with food. But it's also in the premium segment where we play. You know, I mean the average price point in Australia for a bottle of wine is somewhere around 12 dollars. And we don't play in that market. I mean when I look at our segment of the market even in the retail space, it's very small.*

The interviews at Beychevelle also presented a very clear understanding of the target markets and prices. Laurent gave a summary of Beychevelle's position in the global market and the rise of its reputation in China, but questioned its ability to continue to command such high prices:

*Now that the Chinese market is trying to digest what they've purchased in the last five years, that massive, perhaps excess buying has calmed down a bit. So the question is, in the coming two or three years, what will be the normal level of purchasing of China on Beychevelle. Will it drop to zero? Or will it go back to what it was two years ago? Or will it be as it is currently? You know, at what level – what is that balance point, or that equilibrium.*

On the other hand, Philippe was confident that they will find consumers who can afford to pay the price of a bottle of Beychevelle. The cultural significance of the Beychevelle label for the Chinese plays a large part in this. Philippe described the increased demand in the Asian and Chinese markets and the significance of the label: *"Donc, ça veut dire que c'est l'ouverture de ce marché, et puis à la prise en compte*

*favorablement d'une étiquette, d'un logo, qui n'est pas du tout inventé pour ça. Pour les Chinois, ils appellent ça 'le bateau du dragon' et donc ils veulent du bateau du dragon."* At the same time Philippe acknowledged the château's role in excluding a certain number of clients by raising prices, and being careful to manage different markets:

*On a notre rôle aussi. On a, par exemple, un positionnement prix qui fait qu'on élimine un certain nombre de clients avec des prix élevés, et qu'aujourd'hui – jusqu'à quand je sais pas, mais aujourd'hui – il y a des acheteurs et que les acheteurs sont en Chine. Donc, on a, malgré tout, une responsabilité et un rôle. Je peux dire 'je ne vends pas des Chinois' mais si je vendais à moitié prix j'aurais peut-être plus de clients en France ou en Belgique qu'en Chine. Voilà.*

But this kind of prestige and selling at such elevated prices brings with it certain problems, most notably of fraud, particularly in the large Asian and Chinese market. On the day of the interview, a counterfeit bottle of Beychevelle sat on Philippe's desk, illustrating the pressing problem fraud presents when prices are so high.

At Best's, the changing business world has been one of the greatest challenges of the last twenty years, and one that does not seem to sit well with either Ben or Viv. They both believe that the quality of the wine should be enough to sell the wine, as Ben said: *"People know you're there if you do a good job and make a good product."* However, he also acknowledged that the market has changed and the equation has been reversed:

*I think what happened was, back in the 60s, 70s, probably early 80s, before the wine glut, we didn't have to sell wine because there was only 20 odd or so Victorian wineries. [...] There wasn't so much emphasis on selling wine, you know. Now it's a complete opposite. It's more like: sell the wine, grow it, make the wine. Sort of make the wine now is nearly third in the list where it used to be second in the list. Now it's really: sell the wine, or market it, get your name out there, market it, grow it, then make it, sort of thing.*



Steph also talked about the brand being of paramount importance, stating that they can not afford to compromise on brand at any stage. Therefore, serious consideration is given to whether events and activities are consistent with the branding, including checking that third parties, such as retailers, are “on brand” in the way they represent Best’s.

## CONCLUSION

The business side of wine, including company structure, sales and marketing, financial management and branding, has become a key concern for all four wineries in recent times. Whereas previously, the main focus was on growing grapes and producing wine, they are now forced to take into account the changing and increasingly competitive market in order to maintain success and create sustainable future prospects. This is a key concern for producers worldwide, where the challenge is ‘to understand the fundamental motivation behind consumer choice and to produce wines of enhanced attractiveness while simultaneously developing and implementing sustainable production practices for both grape growing and wine making’ (Bisson et al. 2002). In response, each winery is becoming much more focused on premium offerings, in terms of the wines and the experiences they produce. Interviewees presented these changes as a challenging but positive process that enables them to continue doing what they believe in – producing quality wine that represents the people and place who make it, with integrity and authenticity.

## 5.11. INDUSTRY

*“C’est un monde très traditionnel mais avec beaucoup d’imagination.”*

Malou

This last category explores the way the wine industry functions at a local and global level. It begins with an investigation of the way the Bordeaux Grands Crus market operates, followed by the Australian industry. It discusses the way individuals perceive and interact with the industry, and connections and collaborations between people and sectors. This provides an opportunity to understand the role and influence of relationships in the wine industry and the way the network has evolved.

Before beginning a discussion of the wine industry, it is important to note that for most people, the choice to work in this industry is driven by a sincere interest and passion for wine. Some of the interviewees were born into it, others made deliberate career changes to arrive in their jobs. Whereas from the outside, winemaking may appear romantic and glamorous, in many cases it necessitates living in a rural setting, being at the mercy of the seasons and the market, without any guarantee of large profits. As Viv explained: *“being in the industry is not so much a matter of making money, it’s a matter of existing and having a lifestyle, which we’ve done up until now.”* Within the industry there is a feeling that at certain levels it is a big club of people with membership based on an in-depth understanding and love of wine. This is even evident in drinking choices, as Aaron pointed out: *“I love Riesling, but it’s a wine industry wine. It’s people in the industry – winemakers absolutely adore Riesling and can’t stand, would never drink Sauvignon Blanc.”* All interviewees expressed a genuine fondness for the winery and wines throughout the discussion. They revealed that working in the wine industry, for most people, is more than just a job. Interviewees shared an enthusiasm and interest in their job, wine production, the industry and the market.

The operation of the Bordeaux Grands Crus market was discussed in some interviews at length, as I endeavoured to understand a very complex and often illogical (to the outsider) system, and as interviewees wanted to explain the intricacies of their world. The Grands Crus industry is indeed a very peculiar part of the wine industry, even in Bordeaux, as it relates to a very small number of wineries – only sixty-one red wine producers, all but one in the Médoc, in a region of over seven thousand producers. The two cases in this study are highly regarded wines at the upper end of the Grands Crus scale. The market system is unique, stemming from centuries old practices and regulations, which means wine travels on a formal and prescribed commercial route from producer to consumer:

*château → courtier → négociant → retail/on-premise & export → consumer*

This system is unique to Bordeaux and is based on supply, demand and rarefication. As Malou explained, the demand is greater than the offer, and the negotiations are a careful balancing act between producers and négociants: *“A Bordeaux il y a une demande qui est supérieure à l’offre et on essaie de trouver un point de rupture entre cette demande et cette offre. Et on est toujours en relation tendue.”* In recent years, demand has drastically outstripped supply and prices have escalated. According to Wayne, négociant and retailer in Margaux, the price increases mean that the châteaux are enjoying increasing profits but négociants are struggling as buyers’ willingness to pay is not entirely commensurate with these higher prices. However, at the same time, prices do reflect what the market will bear. Wayne said high demand in the Asian market has made Beychevelle quite expensive and one must buy it En Primeur before prices escalate. This is in the first step of the commercial process where the négociant buys the wine before it is bottled, via the courtier. The courtiers, who are responsible for facilitating the transaction for a fee of 2% of the sale price, were only mentioned in passing as a step in the process. A number of people told me in informal conversations that the courtier nearly always sells the wine the same day he buys it. This could imply that their role is limited, or alternatively that it is a very discreet role that is highly organised and efficient.

The benefits of the Bordeaux system for the châteaux are numerous. In the first instance, it ensures a level of predictability – the wine is sold on paper the year it is made, and although it will not be bottled for another two years, there is a guaranteed sale and a guaranteed price. The yearly cycle means that funds are received every year, allowing the château to (re)invest in the business and to plan ahead. This initial sale is entirely via the trade in Bordeaux, eliminating the need for an international sales team. As Philippe at Beychevelle stated: *“On est des producteurs, donc je vends pas de bouteilles à des Chinois. Je ne vends que des bouteilles à des Bordelais.”* Marketing and sales are the responsibility of the négociant and retailers. Alain summarised the benefits of this process in terms of improving wine quality rather than spending on marketing and sales: *“il y a un système de promotion et distribution qui permet à chaque château de concentrer sa valeur ajoutée, ses marges vraiment sur la qualité des vins et non pas de rémunérer une force commerciale qui pourrait être développée dans chaque château.”*

Phillipe, having worked for a number of years in Australia, explained the difference compared with other market systems:

*Ce qu’il faut comprendre aussi, c’est pas forcément évident pour quelqu’un qui visite les châteaux comme ça, c’est qu’on n’est pas des structures réellement marchandes. C’est très différent de, on a des organisations qui sont très différentes de ce que peuvent avoir des propriétés en Australie, qu’elles soient très, très grosses ou boutique winery. Mais il y a une structuration des crus classés, sur tous les crus classés à Bordeaux qui est assez spéciale et atypique. Ce qui fait qu’on est, pour essayer de faire simple, on est des producteurs et on n’est pas des commerçants. On vend à des commerçants qui s’appellent les négociants.*

According to Malou, négociants have been remarkably successful in finding new markets for Bordeaux wines and, defying the logic and restrictions of an arcane system, it continues to work:

*Et ça marche, je dirais, et à chaque fois, dans toutes les étapes-là, les négociants ont trouvé des nouveaux marchés. Ils ont trouvé la grande*

*distribution à un moment donné dans les années quatre-vingts. Ils ont trouvé ensuite – bon, les Etats-Unis, c'était un petit peu avant – ensuite ils sont allés au Japon, à Taiwan. Ils sont allés en Chine maintenant. Ils vont au Brésil. Ils trouvent des petits marchés. Ils ont inventé des nouvelles méthodes de vente à travers Internet, à travers ... Donc, c'est pas un monde figé, c'est un monde très traditionnel mais avec beaucoup d'imagination, en fait. Donc, qui se... comme il y a beaucoup d'interlocuteurs des tailles différentes, etcetera, pour la propriété c'est extraordinaire parce qu'il y a toujours un négociant qui va avoir une réponse sur un marché ou un secteur ou un segment de marché.*

Despite sales remaining exclusively through the négociants, the châteaux are becoming increasingly involved in marketing activities, independently and in conjunction with négociants and the UGCB. Malou explained that communicating with the global market is a recent phenomenon for Bordeaux châteaux owners, and that prior to that it was very insular: *“ça ne s'intéressait qu'aux courtiers ou négociants de Bordeaux. Donc le petit monde de Bordeaux – qu'on connaît tous son cousin, beau-frère, machin, ça c'est le vin.”* Not surprisingly, Jean-Michel spoke of the importance of the relationship between the château and the négociant:

*... et en plus il y a une chose qui est, qui est très importante, c'est que le succès de nos vins ici, il dépend, de mon point de vue, d'une coopération efficace avec le négoce. Si vous y réfléchissez, le partenariat production-négoce entre le Médoc et Bordeaux est unique au monde. Ça existe nulle part.*

Alain also talked about how the Bordeaux system influences the way marketing is shaped: *“Le marketing des châteaux doit être, ici, doit être considéré et doit être positionné dans l'environnement de la distribution.”* He also noted that the château has an obligation to help the négociants sell their wine: *“Néanmoins, à partir d'un moment où on ne vendait pas en direct au client final, vous devez quelque part faire en sorte que tous vos négociants qui sont allocataires de vos vins, vous devez faire en sorte de faciliter leur job pour que le vin soit demandé par le marché.”* Thus, while the château and négociant are both trying to get the best deal from each other, they are also working towards a common goal and have a very interdependent relationship.

The ability of Bordeaux négociants to export globally was attributed by Jean-Michel to the production volumes afforded by the comparatively large size of most Grands Crus vineyards (many own more than 100 hectares). He said that the production volume allows a significant presence in a number of different markets around the world, making it possible to sustain their reputation. Nevertheless, the quantity is always limited, retaining the image of an artisanal, luxury product, where the négociant has more control than the buyer. Laurent described the process:

*Which means that we can be in a scenario where, because we're talking about a finite product, right. When you only have 100 cases left, or 1000 cases left, you have someone coming and say "I'll buy 1000 cases of whatever you have left of Beychevelle. And I'll even pay more for it." We'll probably say no. "We'll pay more than regular market price." We'll probably say no. Why? To be able to keep some merchandise. So, depending on the client, we may say, on the basis of 100, we say "ok, 25", or "ok, 50". Maybe 75, but never will we sell all of it.*

Malou emphasised the complicated nature of the Bordeaux system, and the implications for négociants and their clients. There is financial stress associated with carrying large volumes of stock – they are obliged to purchase their yearly allocation or risk losing allocation privileges in the future – and an ensuing risk for clients who have paid for wine in advance if the négociant business fails. The question of when to buy is paramount for négociants and clients at all times.

Spreading the business risk is therefore an important consideration for négociants. Laurent said at Barrière they are *"trying to distribute the wine in as many different corners of the world as possible"* to ensure trade continues even if one market collapses. He described the rise and fall of the various Asian markets over the last twenty years to illustrate the risks:

*It was Taiwan, who discovered it in 1997. It was Taiwan who discovered the French paradox, the virtues of red wine. Specifically red Bordeaux wine. They bought wildly and irrationally and then one year later they disappeared because they had bought stupidly. So if we had put all of our eggs in the same basket we would have had a very hard time to rediscover old friends or old customers.*

*It happened in Japan the following year. Slightly different market, but the Japanese started buying madly and irrationally. Same scenario. We didn't throw all the sales people into Japan. And China. And while you can't go against the grain, or against the ... of course, we've never sold as much into China in the last three years as we have in the past two decades, but you still have a staff and wines that we keep available for all of the Americas, all of the old European continent, all of Eastern Europe, all of the Middle East, all of, eventually, Africa. And the other Asian, south-east Asia. So it's diversifying risk.*

The high prices, large volumes and volatile markets mean there is much discussion of how to spread risk and make prudent purchasing decisions. The system is a complex web of interdependency and competition that functions remarkably successfully.

#### THE AUSTRALIAN WINE INDUSTRY

The Australian wine industry, on the other hand, does not have a formal system, and relies on a combination of direct sales and distributors to sell wine. Viv described the booms and busts of the Australian wine industry throughout the interview, presented as crucial information to understand the current situation. The wine industry began to boom around 1960, however for a long time prior, it was a difficult period for the Australian wine industry, with very little interest nationally: *"I was not interested in wine at all. I mean, in those days why would want to be interested in wine? It's a bit like farming rabbits. Nobody wanted to know you."* He returned home from agricultural college in 1960 and *"from that time onwards the industry just went off like a rocket."* Viv talked about the export success of the 1980s facilitated by the low Australian dollar and the demand for "clean" wine in Sweden and the UK in the wake of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Exuberant planting due to this success resulted in a surplus that is still problematic thirty years later. Viv stated clearly that the influence of the supermarkets, who can set prices as they choose, and the strong Australian dollar have rendered the market difficult once again for Australian wine. Having spent over fifty years working in the wine industry, he said that the industry is constantly changing and at present is driven by the overseas market.

It is interesting to note that Viv was the only one who spoke about the history of the industry in any detail and emphasised the importance of understanding the development of production, consumption, marketing and regulations in Australia and the global market in order to understand the current situation and future direction:

*I mean, people have no understanding of how this industry evolved. I mean, now we sit down and we pick up a bottle of wine and it's got the alcohol on it, it's got a vintage on it, it's got a variety on it. In the old days you're be lucky to have a bloody label on it, you know. But really, it's quite incredible how things have changed.*

The apparent lack of interest in the development of the industry in the Australian interviews was a stark contrast to Bordeaux, where everyone seemed keenly aware of the evolution of the wine industry. Aaron referenced the history of the industry in passing when talking about the many fashion-driven phases in Australian wine, but really only discussed the past twenty years:

*The Australian wine industry, it's 150 years old, but it's still very young. We're evolving and we've gone from sort of fad to next fad and so I think there's been a lot of, if you look back the last 20 years, a lot of big, high alcohol wines that were doing really well in the US, and a lot of really big over-oaked Chardonnays that no-one could really drink. And these kind of wines, they were made for critics who were seen as big influencers, but they really did a lot of harm to general reputation of the industry.*

He expanded this idea, saying that Australia has a reputation for large volume, “critter” label wine and is not “*relevant in terms of a global, quality player.*” While many wait for industry associations and government assistance to improve Australia’s positioning, he believes it is up to small groups of quality producers to change the status quo with careful promotion. Aaron went on to talk about various attitudes and powers in the Australian wine industry, most notably the influence of large wine businesses on the activities of Wine Australia, the peak marketing body: “*Wine Australia – the bills get paid by the big companies and it's only fair that they have the biggest voice.*” However, for the many small, premium wineries in Australia, including Best’s and Langi, Wine



Australia does not necessarily promote their style. Aaron also talked about the need for wine industry in Australia to broaden its perspective in a global sense, saying that a lot of the industry is patriotic and inward looking with a general lack of awareness and understanding of international wines. He believes more tasting and education about wines from all over the world is necessary to open the collective mind and improve Australian wine: *“And I think, you know, you start believing your own hype. And I think that doesn’t allow for progressiveness in our industry and we need it.”*

Observations during fieldwork indicated that the patriotic attitude is less prevalent the more engaged a person is in quality wine. For example, cellar door staff in both Australia and France tended to claim the wines from their country and/or region were the pinnacle, while owners, senior winemakers and people who had generally been in the industry longer acknowledged the differences between regions and wines in a more objective, interested and positive sense.

#### INTER-PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Relationships between châteaux and négociants emerged as an important theme in the Bordeaux interviews, however in Australia, relationships between producers were more central to the discussion. No doubt the differences in commercial processes are largely responsible, however the age of the industry is also an important factor. Compared with Bordeaux, where the modern industry traces its roots back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and wine has been produced for 2000 years, the Australian wine industry is relatively new – 150 years. Viv talked about the cooperation between producers in the sixties, seventies and eighties: *“people were very good and very helpful. And I guess this is the thing I really appreciate about the industry is this cooperation between each other.”* After a lifetime making wine at Best’s, he spoke with a genuine fondness and respect for the industry in general, but particularly the period before the exponential growth of the 1990s: *“The industry has been very good to me and there’s some great people in it.”* As a one of Australia’s oldest, continuously producing wineries, Viv said that Best’s has always been well known in the industry, however Ben suggested that to a certain extent that status is in decline with the sheer number of wineries now: *“I*

*think we're well known in the industry and with the older people who were around in the 60s, 70s, 80s and remember there only being 20 wineries."*

These relationships and connections within the winery, region and industry was presented as a particularly important by interviewees at Best's and Lynch-Bages. Viv spoke about that connection in an historical sense, but also in the present everyday situation: *"with a place like ours you've got to have that family connection. You've got to have hands on. I mean, I walk around the place and say, "How are you going, mate? And what's that hoe doing over there?"* Despite being in semi-retirement, he feels it is important to be present at the winery and connected with the everyday operations and staff. He told a contrasting story of one of their staff member's experience:

*We had a young feller here working a few years. He'd worked in California and he said their winemakers had their office over there. I think the car park was here. Their office was over there. And the winery was in the middle. And he said they never went through the winery. They always walked round the other side. And that all of the instructions came through via email. Now, I dunno, it doesn't seem right. But I think that happens in a lot of places now. Especially the bigger places. I mean, the bigger places can't get round there much, but I still think that you've got to have a feel for what's going on round the place".*

The way in which Viv told this story indicates that he believes good relationships are a key to good business practices. Jean-Michel spoke with a similar sentiment about living at Bages and being present at the winery: *"Je fais pas de la viticulture hors-sol. On est implanté dans le terrain. On est citoyen du pays. On participe à la vie locale. Donc, je pense que c'est important pour moi intellectuellement, c'est important de faciliter l'existence d'une vie locale."* He was clear that his connection and a desire to encourage the local community connection to Lynch-Bages was a large reason for investing in the renovation of the village and gave the impression that it was much more of a personal philosophical decision than a business decision.

The connection of individuals with the place and with other people was also presented by interviewees as an important factor in the way the industry functions. Trevor Mast, responsible for developing Langi, was originally the winemaker at Best's. His

knowledge of and connection to the Langi vineyard (as consultant winemaker) led him to purchase Langi and develop the winery. In turn, Damien's connection to Trevor was the reason he moved to The Grampians to work at Langi. The individual connections exert their influence on the direction of wineries and regions.

#### INTER-WINERY CONNECTIONS

The connection between wineries in the same region emerged much more strongly from the interviews and observations in Australia than in Bordeaux. In Bordeaux the connection is official, codified and entrenched through the CIVB. There are examples in other categories of cooperative marketing activities as a group, but there was no discussion of inter-winery connections between individual châteaux. Australian interviewees discussed in some detail the sharing of technical expertise and knowledge. As a newer and less prestigious region, collaboration and cooperation helps all wineries involved. As a cool-climate region producing a Shiraz that is quite different from the typical Australian style from warmer regions, a combined effort to promote the style makes sense. In particular Best's, Seppelts and Langi, seem to have a practical and productive working relationship, as Ben noted: *"So I think our wine is quite approachable and they reflect our region too. You know, Mount Langi's wines are quite a bit like our style. Seppelts and those wines, they reflect our style. You know, they're not Barossa or McLaren Vale wines or anything like that."* He spoke about the collegiality between winemakers in the region to compensate for the isolated nature of the work and avoid "cellar-palate" (when a winemaker becomes too accustomed to his or her own wines): *"they have winemakers days where they get a few across and have a bit of a tasting of each other's. It's good, just helps to bounce ideas off each other."* Ben went on to talk about how regional cooperation helps everybody:

*I'd like to think so because we want to rub off their back and we want them to rub off ours, you know, we want to grow the region together. So I'm hoping that what they do reflects on us and what we do reflects on them. You know, if they're winning awards or Langi's winning awards or anyone really, it's good for the region because it gets people thinking, "Oh, The Grampians. Where's that?"*

*All of sudden they realise, “Oh, hang on, there’s Best’s there, there’s Seppelts there, and Langi and a few others.” So I think it all helps.*

He suggested that things like recent cellar door renovations at Best’s and awards for Seppelts wine have helped to improve the overall image and awareness of the region.

#### WINERY-GROWER CONNECTIONS

Industry cooperation extends to the growers in the region also, as both Best’s and Langi buy fruit to supplement their own vineyards. The degree of collaboration varies according to the market situation and grower interest. Damien said that Langi used to be much more involved with growers’ vineyard practices, but that the instability of the industry has reduced that. As they are not pursuing long-term contracts he feels they can’t be too demanding as they may not buy fruit next year. In a similar vein to the cooperation between Best’s and Langi, both premium producers, Damien said he has more contact with growers who have a premium mindset. Those who are, or employ, professional viticulturists as they are more likely to understand what Langi are seeking. He gave several examples (discussed in detail in *Communication*) where the disparity between Langi and grower quality standards caused difficulties for both parties. He noted that the better the relationship between Langi and the grower, the better quality the fruit tends to be.

#### TRADE CONNECTIONS

In all the interviews there was an overwhelming sense that the relationship with the trade, be they négociants, growers, other wineries, distributors or sommeliers, is paramount. Jean-Michel talked about the need to develop good relations with négociants, distributors and associations in new markets, believing that connection with the chain breeds success. Dan said simply: *“the real key to success is through distributors and trade.”* Sylvie made it clear that the UGCB strategy is based in trade relations: *“C’est plutôt avec les professionnels puisque c’est une mission historique de*

*l'Union depuis 1973 de travailler sur les marchés avec les professionnels.*" If the relationship with the trade is good, selling wine becomes a much easier and more lucrative exercise for both parties.

#### INDUSTRY FEEDBACK

The Bordeaux interviewees did not discuss the quality or style of the wines. The quality of the Grands Crus seems to be taken for granted, and the style is dictated and monitored by the AOC regulations of each appellation. Without the stylistic restrictions imposed from the regulatory bodies and long standing reputation afforded by a classification, in the Australian interviews feedback from the industry was a topic that arose, in particular, wine shows and feedback from other winemakers. The benefits were discussed as useful benchmarking in what is a fairly isolated profession. Ben described the situation:

*The shows are nice because, it's more about getting your wines out there and if you win a few things along the way, you know you're sort of on the right track. And a lot of these wine judges are judging all around the world and all around Australia and different judges are coming in. And they're seeing a lot of different wines and if they pick yours, well, you know you're on the right track. You know you're sort of up there with the rest of what people are looking for. So it's a bit of a recognition to say, "Yeah, we're winning a few, so our wines are still pretty good." And it always helps with sales a bit too. [...] It's just nice to know that you're up there, whether you get a bronze, silver or high in the points. It's another way of feedback for how you're actually travelling. You know, what people are looking for, what people are liking and all that sort of stuff. I think it's just a bit of a guideline.*

*We use a consultant here to come in every couple of months and just look at our wines. Because you tend to, you look at your own wines all the time and you start to get a bit of cellar palate. So it's nice to come in and look at them and say, "Well, this is looking really good," or maybe "It needs a bit of this," or*

*something like that. We actually use Ian McKenzie who used to be winemaker over at Seppelts, so he's a good friend of Dad's, he's seen our wines a lot. And it's just nice to, especially for Justin, to bounce a few ideas off him and he'll say, "Yeah, no, that looks really good." Because I think sometimes you start second guessing yourself. You go, "Oh, this is really good." Is it really good? Or is it just me that thinks it's really good? Does anyone else think this is really good?*

Dan also talked about the benefits of judging at shows and the importance of tasting wines as a way of staying connected with the industry:

*If you go and judge at a show and you're tasting 180 wines a day for three or four days, you come back feeling quite sharp and objective and it gives you a new perspective on what you're doing and what everyone else is doing. It's a way to see, particularly at the capital city shows [...] You get a look at the Australian wine industry and that's a sort of snapshot of the wines that are coming up and what people are doing and what trends there are or what wines are successful and what the other judges are rewarding and that sort of gives you an indication of where things are going. And so it's useful to be a part of all of that because otherwise that can pass you by if you get stuck in your own little groove.*

These comment highlight the importance of maintaining good relationships with the local and national industry to progress as wine producers.

## CONCLUSION

Despite significant differences in the way the Bordeaux and Australian industries operate, good relationships within the industry emerged from the interviews as an essential ingredient for market success, locally and globally. Connections and collaborations with wineries and growers in the region were talked about in detail in the Australian interviews, whereas interviewees in Bordeaux talked more about their connections with négociants. Regardless of the differences, the importance of cooperation emerged strongly, demonstrating the benefits of regional identity

branding (Charters and Spielmann 2014). The discussion also raised the notion of owner/director presence at the winery and the importance of being connected to daily operations and interacting with staff. As a group, the interviewees all expressed a strong engagement with and respect for the industry.

## 6. THE GROUNDED THEORY: WINERIES RESPONDING TO A CHANGING MARKET

### INTRODUCTION

The eleven categories – history, people, story, quality, philosophy, authenticity, image, communication, education, business, industry – each explored particular themes as they related to wineries, regions, individuals, and the four case studies as a group. The analysis revealed how interviewees conceptualise and perceive various aspects of the wine world, and that there are many similarities and differences between the four wineries, sometimes regionally influenced, but more often due to historical and business factors, and individual characters. In the process of exploring the eleven different thematic categories, the analysis has also explored winery identity from a range of different perspectives, looking at the way history, geography, production, motivations, aspirations and interactions combine to form a unique winery identity.

Three ideas of particular significance appeared consistently throughout the categories: relationships, context and change. Interviews revealed that the functioning of the wine industry depends entirely on the relationships between the many people involved, and that understanding the context in which they are situated, from many angles, is a critical factor in defining their identity. The rapidly changing global market was also an issue of great concern to producers.

The significance of relationships to all parts of the wine industry emerged strikingly across all interviews, in The Grampians and Bordeaux, and regardless of different roles. Whether interviewees were talking about history or production, sales or consumption, the relationships between the people involved were frequently at the heart of the discussion, revealing that it is these interactions between producers, staff, contractors, marketers, distributors, journalists, critics, sommeliers, waiters and consumers that underpin all activities and enable the industry to function. The frequency and detail with which the concept of understanding the context in which each winery operates and where they fit in the wine world indicated that it is of significance. The discussion of context related to a number of areas, including geography (local, regional, national



and global), production (grape varieties, methods), quality and consumption, and revealing its complex and nuanced nature. Likewise, the changing modes of operation in the wine world were discussed in detail throughout the interviews and are evidently of great concern to producers – how do they continue to produce authentic, quality wine while adapting to globalisation, fierce competition, new modes of communication and changing consumer desires? This is not a surprising question if we consider the history of both regions and the international wine industry, and the rapid changes that have occurred in the last thirty to fifty years (see Chapter 3). Other research has posed related questions into the changing nature of consumption (Demossier 2010), the social dynamics of production (Ulin 1996), and the changing social context of the global wine world (Charters 2006). The answer to question raised by this study is the grounded theory that was generated from the fieldwork: to continue to produce quality wine and retain their identity in an increasingly competitive global market, premium, boutique wine producers have had to define their identity, craft their image and tell their story. The theory is explained in this chapter.

#### RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships were talked about frequently and in depth by all interviewees. The emphasis in the interviews was on the ways in which people interact and the implications of those interactions. It was clear from the interviews that relationships are a vital part of the wine world, which is consistent with the extant literature: the benefits of wine clusters to enhance a regions reputation internationally (McIntyre et al. 2013), cross-border cooperation (Contò et al. 2014), and winery cooperation (Woodfield and Nel 2015). There was some discussion about the relationship between producers and the environment, which, although relevant to a broader discussion of wine growing and the notion of terroir, will not be examined here as it diverges from the primary concern of the current research – people. Interviewees told stories of people in the past and present, explaining as they did how human interaction has created, developed and maintains the wine world.

Interviewees described relationships throughout the entire industry: from a production perspective, good relationships with staff and contractors ensure efficient management practices and quality fruit and wine; this is extended by collegial connections with other professionals and wineries, mostly within the region, sharing knowledge, expertise and avoiding “cellar palate”. Once the wine is in the bottle, good relationships with the sales and marketing team within the company in Australia, and with *négociants* in Bordeaux, are necessary to take the wine successfully into the marketplace, increasing demand and commanding higher prices. Similarly, at the interface of sales and consumers, a good understanding between producer and on-premise/retail staff generates enthusiasm for the wine and encourages recommendations. At the end of the sales chain the relationship between the consumer and server at the point of purchase was described as a critical influence on purchasing decisions. Ulin maintains that circulation and consumption in the wine market is driven by intermediaries (2013, p.79), while Demossier highlights the interactive nature of the wine world when she states that there is a ‘general craze for contact with the producer’ (2010, p.147). No matter where they are in the network, these connections require care and maintenance, and when well-managed facilitate both the minutiae of daily activities and the larger scale endeavours of all involved.

#### UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT

As interviewees talked about relationships, it became apparent that this was part of a process of trying to determine their place in the wine world, as individuals, as a winery and as a region. Establishing the context of wine production and where they fit into the wine world in relation to others is a key part of defining their identity. By acknowledging closeness and similarities with some, and distance and differences with others, they are able to define themselves. The push to express identity is perhaps a response to an increasingly globalised and homogenised world where the loss of identity prompts ‘an aggressive rearticulation of insides and outsides’ (Clifford 2003, p.60).

All interviewees defined the winery activities and identity in the broader context, revealing where they perceive the winery fits into the wine world, locally and internationally. Each interviewee demonstrated an awareness of context commensurate with his or her involvement in the winery and wine industry. Those in director or owner roles revealed a sophisticated understanding of the regional, national and global context of being in the wine business, while cellar door staff were much more focused on the local and individual winery setting. The temporal context was also significant, as the contemporary situation was often described in the context of the past and future.

Context was discussed from a number of perspectives. The production context was raised frequently as interviewees expressed an awareness of other wineries' practices. They described the style of their wine in terms of similarities and differences with other wines from the same region or made from the same variety. Tasting widely to understand where their wine fits into the global production context was mentioned by interviewees as an essential exercise. Dan articulated succinctly the significance of identifying a position in terms of production: "*we have to find our place in the world of Shiraz in Australia.*"

Understanding the local social context also emerged as a key concern in defining identity. Again, interviewees described and justified their winery and actions with relation to others. They demonstrated a keen awareness of what other wineries offer to tourists and trade, what events others are involved in, and the ownership and management of other wineries (e.g. company or family, business structure). The analysis revealed that interviewees have an acute understanding and awareness of how each winery fits into the local area and region from a social perspective. Interviewees also remarked on the consumption context – understanding where they fit with relation to their consumers. Just as the wine a consumer drinks is part of his or her identity, consumers are part of a winery's identity. As such, 'wine as an object of production, circulation, and consumption never operates independently from specific historical, cultural, and political contexts' (Black and Ulin 2013, p.182). All four wineries have a deep understanding of the local and global contexts of production and

consumption, and how increased contextual understanding helps them to define who they are and what they do.




## CHANGE

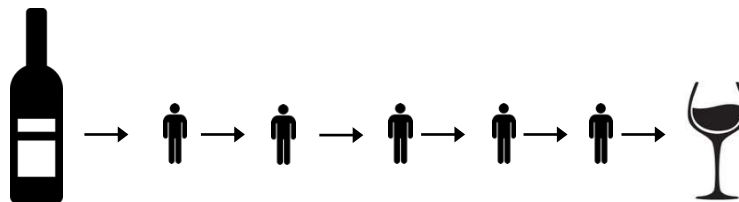
Changes in the wine world emerged from the interviews as a significant theme, validating the idea that there is a complex shift towards 'integration, industrialisation and sameness' and at the same time 'a continuation and even expansion of place-specific artisanal production of premium wines' (Banks and Overton 2010). Although production changes were discussed and have made significant changes to the industry, this would have been a more pertinent topic of conversation in the 1970s and 1980s. Technical changes in winemaking and viticulture are considerably less marked now, and current concerns are based in changes in the industry and market, during the last fifty years for Lynch-Bages, twenty years for Best's, and over a less defined but similar period for Beychevelle and Langi.

The most obvious change in the world wine industry during this period is the sharp increase in the number of wineries and volume of wine produced (see Chaptre 3). The increase in the number of wineries in established regions, and the growth of the new regions, particularly in the New World, has created fierce local and global competition in the marketplace. Consumption habits have also changed as the busy pace, mobility and health concerns of the modern lifestyle have altered perceptions of wine. Consumption is being increasingly studied and documented in consumer research and the anthropology of drinking.

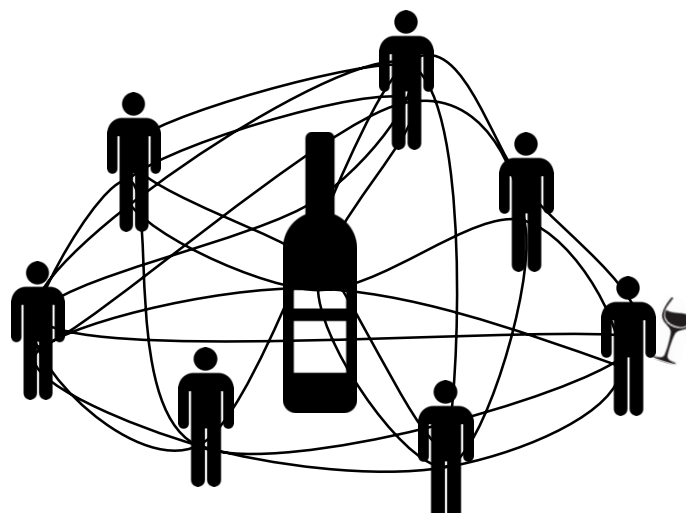
According to the data analysis, however, the most influential change in the wine world in the last twenty years has been in communications. Advances in communications technology has completely transformed the way people interact. More than ever before people have access to information thanks to the internet. More information is available, in more detail, it can be very easily disseminated and retrieved almost instantly. Connections between people have become simple, accessible and rapid, regardless of geography. New communications technology has made it much easier to

disseminate information, but more importantly has facilitated interactions between a wide range of people all over the world. This ease of communication has moved from predominantly one-way communication from winery to consumer, to multi-directional communication between many parties, favouring storytelling as the mode for its flexibility and adaptability (Flint and Golicic 2015). Significantly, during the last decades of the twentieth century, communication with consumers changed from talking only about wine to crafting an image and experience. Lynch-Bages has been a leader in this area, actively seeking new markets creating new events and experiences, and investing in relationships. All four wineries have been responding to the changing communication landscape in their own way, conscious of the fact that it is crucial for their continuing success.

The changes in competition, consumer habits and desires, communications technology and globalisation have resulted in a marked transformation in the line of communication (and thus relationships) from the linear one of the past – which moved in sequential steps from producer (  ) to consumer (  ), and where wineries had contact with only the trade (  ) at the start of the chain:



to a complex and highly interational web where all actors in the wine world are intertwined:



Whereas in the old model, wineries primarily had contact with distributors or négociants – for wine sales – the interface between the winery and the world is now denser and thicker with many more points of contact. Although actual sales are still exclusively through négociants for Grands Crus in Bordeaux and mainly through distributors in Australia, the demand and generation of interest comes from the entire network. The new model highlights the increased interaction between all actors and the importance of relationships throughout the network. Odorici and Corrado (2004) touch on this idea of the flow of interaction in their study of wine guide evaluations. Everyone is now connected to a greater or lesser extent, and what the diagram cannot illustrate is the movement in the network. At different times, some relationships will move closer together while others become more distant, and the whole network is in a constant state of motion.

Better relationships create more interest and connection with the particular winery, and foster demand for the wine. As the network of relationships becomes increasingly crucial in the quest for success, wineries are investing more resources – time and finance – into their interaction with the outside world. With such high competition, the evolving market demands that the relationships throughout the whole network are more detailed and nuanced than ever before, creating a smooth conduit for communication and connection, and consequentially, sales.

Interviews and observations revealed that changing market is of great concern to the boutique, premium wine producers in this study. All four wineries are making deliberate efforts to develop and maintain relationships in order to stay relevant in the contemporary market and consumption world, and into the future. By strengthening and developing relationships they are cultivating loyalty from trade and consumers as it has become apparent that connection is a significant advantage in the market and perhaps the key to longevity.

All four wineries are grappling with the complex balancing act of maintaining tradition and respecting history, while at the same time effecting change in the quest to improve quality and public relations. The rapidly changing market has prompted many of the marketing changes and continues to do so. Whether in regard to production or

business, interviewees emphasized the need to restrain change to a comfortable pace, keeping activities manageable from the winery perspective and appropriate for the market situation and consumer needs. Langi and Lynch-Bages both presented an image of instigating change and innovation, while Best's and Beychevelle seem to be responding to change. For all four, change was presented as both inevitable and necessary.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE

Having ascertained that there is a new model of interaction between producers and the wine world, and that relationships are of increasing importance, two questions arise: what are the practical implications of these changes? and what motivates wine producers to respond in the way they do?

To answer these questions, we must first look at what wine producers want – how they define success and their aspirations for the future. The analysis revealed that all four wineries have three shared aspirations: primarily to continue producing premium wine that represents the place and people who made it while retaining integrity and authenticity. Secondly, they wish to increase the demand and price of their wines in order to be financially sustainable – meeting production costs and investing in the business to improve quality. Thirdly, they also expressed a desire that others (trade and consumers) understand who they are and what they do. Interviewees all described the future in terms of sustainably continuing to produce fine wine and being respected for their craft, rather than in terms of financial profit.

In order to achieve these three aims, wineries need to be able to articulate in detail what they do and who they are – they must define their identity. This is necessary to know what it is that they want to continue doing, and in light of the increasing importance of relationships, to communicate well with others. Although each of the four case studies has a unique identity, the characteristics they used to describe their identity were very similar: they defined who they are by describing where they see themselves in a broader context; they talked about what the winery values – its

philosophy, ethos and story; they discussed the evolution of the business and the increasing focus on quality; they drew on history to describe where they come from; and they explained what they want in the future – for the business, winery, brand, and family/staff; they presented as humble people doing something they sincerely and passionately believe in and wanting others to understand that.

There was also a shared recognition that as boutique, premium wine producers they offer consumers individuality, authenticity and connection, differentiating themselves in a market dominated by giant international drinks companies. By not surrendering to market pressures, fashions and trends, and by retaining their identity, interviewees believe the winery has better long-term prospects. To take advantage of their point of difference as boutique premium producers requires communicating their identity (individual and authentic) throughout the network (connection). In order to do this, they must first define their identity, then from that identity craft an image that can be communicated to the outside world. This is consistent with the definition of *image* as the communicable representation of *identity*, where *identity* is private and *image* is public.

The image, then, is a selective amalgamation of different parts of identity, carefully crafted into a concrete representation of the winery. As boutique, premium producers, this is a deliberate process that must convey their authenticity. In a saturated marketplace, ripe with marketing spin, interviewees were conscious of the need to be perceived by consumers as genuine. Thus, to communicate successfully with the industry and market they must express themselves with honesty and integrity, not only with regard to content, but also in the way the information is communicated.

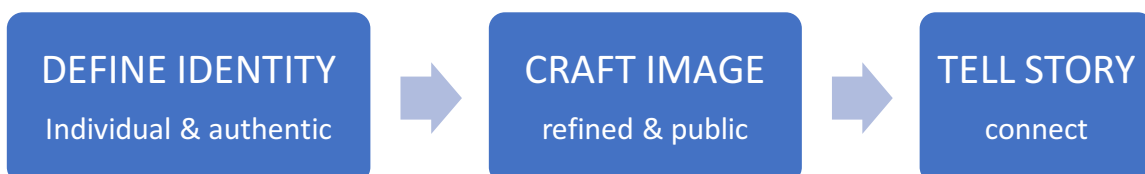
Storytelling emerged as the most significant means of communicating the winery image to the outside world. Whether verbally, visually, in-person or via publications, telling the winery's stories – as opposed to advertising or corporate marketing – conveys authenticity and uniqueness. The crafted image allows the winery to tell their story and also for others to tell the story (Beverland 2005), or parts of the story, in a consistent and coherent way. As the number of people involved in communicating the story has increased, the need to consciously define and craft the image has also



augmented to ensure consistency. The style and format of communication must also be carefully crafted to support the image and carry the story smoothly throughout the network. While the stories are crafted and consistent, there is also the flexibility to adapt to individual situations – choosing the most appropriate story, format and style. In one situation, a formal, historical story in print may be the most suitable, while in another, an informal, verbal account of the development of a particular wine is best. Regardless of the content and style, if it is well-crafted, the winery's image is conveyed through the philosophy and values presented in the story.

Storytelling also facilitates relationships by making it easy to talk about the winery and wine throughout the network. The analysis revealed that the basis of most interactions is, in fact, storytelling – about the wine, winery, people, and history. For producers, storytelling is a way of expressing their identity and sharing what they do. Storytelling allows personalities to emerge, and for the unique image of each winery to be articulated. While there may be many similar wineries (in terms of size, age, production, wine style), the stories are unique to each one. For the trade, storytelling helps move the wine from producer to the point of sale. For consumers, the stories are a way to connect with production even if they do not encounter the winery in person. Hence, stories are a way of connecting and developing understanding throughout the network, which strengthens relationships. The better the relationships between all involved parties, the more the winery identity is understood; and vice versa – the better the story is understood, the better the relationship. Good relationships then, make the production and sales process more efficient and rewarding, both fiscally and ideologically, and are increasingly significant in a heavily competitive market.

Identity, image and storytelling are part of process of communication:



When the process is successful, it results in validation for the winery via financial success, recognition of their identity and respect for their craft. In a best case scenario,

this becomes a focused spiral where validation and investment result in quality improvements; which in turn increases validation and investment, resulting in further improvements.

In conclusion, while for most of the history of winemaking, production has been the primary concern, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been characterised in Bordeaux and The Grampians by rapid changes in the market. Significant increases in competition on a global scale and revolutions in communications technology have resulted in new modes of interaction between the winery and the wine world, and an increased importance of relationships throughout the network. In order to survive in this new environment, boutique, premium wine producers have had to rethink the way they operate. The analysis of the fieldwork data generated the grounded theory explaining that to continue to produce quality wine and retain their identity in an increasingly competitive global market, premium, boutique wineries have had to define their identity, craft their image and tell their story. This strengthens their relationships in the wine world, leading to success in the modern wine world.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The world of wine production is a complex and continuously changing network of human interaction. The route from the producer to the consumer involves many people, each with their own motivations, aspirations, and roles to play. The aim of this study was to understand wine producers – how they perceive themselves and the world in which they operate. It sought to explore their motivations and reasons for action – where they have come from and how history influences the contemporary situation; where they are now; and where they hope to be in the future. Using a grounded theory approach, the primary aim was to explore and understand what is of concern to individual wine producers. In the process of this exploration the broader context of local, regional and global wine production was investigated, revealing how the wine world functions from the producer's perspective.

In light of the very limited research on wine producers in anthropology and other related disciplines, an exploratory approach was used to gather data directly from producers via four case studies of two Grands Crus châteaux in Bordeaux – Château Lynch-Bages and Château Beychevelle – and two premium wineries in The Grampians – Best's Great Western and Mount Langi Ghiran. An ethnographical grounded theory methodology directed the data collection and analysis. The grounded theory process of coding organised the fieldwork data into eleven thematic categories. These categories brought together ideas from all interviewees into fundamental, conceptual and abstract themes, revealing that there were many similarities between the four wineries in both regions. Despite seemingly extensive differences based on history and geography – one a prestigious, old world, region, and the other a lesser known, new world region – in fact, the four wineries share challenges and aspirations, and are all motivated by a desire to produce extremely high quality wine. The exploratory approach revealed that relationships, context and change are key concerns for contemporary wine producers in Bordeaux and Victoria. The research generated a grounded theory of the way wine producers define their identity, craft their image and tell their story in response to the rapidly changing global market.

The first step in understanding the contemporary setting of the four case studies was to establish the historical context of the wine in the global setting and in the two regions. The historical chapters collate information from historical publications detailing the progress of wine production and the relevant social occurrences – such as wars, fashions, consumption habits, and trade – that have influenced wine. Outlining the social development of wine production over time provides a contextual foundation for understanding the current circumstances and factors that have led to the present situation.

Interviewees built on the idea of contextual understanding as they emphasised the importance of recognising their place in the wine world. A number of key contextual perspectives emerged from the analysis: time, geography, and production. Understanding the temporal context and the connection between the past, present and future emerged strongly. Interviewees emphasised that one must understand the past in order to understand the present, and to create future success for the winery. The geographical context was also raised frequently, highlighting the need to understand where the winery sits with relation to the local, regional, national and global. Production emerged as the other significant consideration, placing the wine in a technical and stylistic context relative to other wines.

Context was frequently discussed in terms of relationships, revealing the significance of connections between people in the wine world. The research revealed that relationships enable, influence and control nearly every step of wine production, from the quality of fruit and label on the bottle to the sale price and consumer experience. As the market becomes more competitive and communications technology evolves, cultivating good relationships is becoming an increasingly critical factor for winery success.

The histories and ethnographies established very clearly that the global wine market is complex, competitive, and constantly in flux. Historical narratives of wine, both formal and informal, predominantly record and describe change, charting the development of regions, the industry, and wineries. Understanding history allows people to learn from previous difficulties, paving the way for positive growth in the future. The way wineries respond to change was discussed with a sense of responsibility – to the people, events

and stories that made the past, and to the future success of the winery. Each winery's principal aspiration is long-term success, and across the four case studies success was defined as the ability to continue producing quality wine with integrity and authenticity. Financial success is necessary for the winery to improve and continue as a viable business, and respect for the craft is integral to a sense of personal success. Faced with a rapidly changing market and the increasing importance of relationships, the way each case study interacts with the wine world has evolved. The data analysis revealed unequivocally the need for each winery to define their image and tell their story. While the way this is being put into practice is unique to each winery, the underlying motivations are the same, and based on strengthening connections with the wine network.

Consequently, considering the individual voices of the case studies and the group as a whole, the research has generated a broader theory of winery identity in the current market. In order to survive the competition from other similar wineries and large international drinks companies, wineries have had to define what they do and who they are, and communicate that to the outside world. To define their identity they must articulate their values, aspirations and production focus. Once this has been done, they are able to craft their image so that it represents their identity and can be shared successfully with the outside world. The image is carried into the world via storytelling – by the producers themselves and by the people they are connected with. In this way, their identity as authentic, premium wine producers is conveyed, and relationships are developed throughout the trade and with consumers, ensuring demand and increasing prices. This in turn allows the winery to increase the quality of its offerings, further strengthening the connection with the network and creating a cycle of improvement at all levels.

This theory of the way premium wine producers are responding to the changing market was generated from the research on the four case studies – Château Beychevelle, Château Lynch-Bages, Best's Great Western and Mount Langi Ghiran. Further studies could test the theory on different wineries, regions and extend to other luxury goods industries, particularly food and beverages. As it is presented here, the thesis offers a new perspective and deeper understanding of wine producers in

France and Australia, exploring the interaction between relationships, image, story, and identity.

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