Architectural ostentation and brand value in the field of wine tourism

The paper explores the role of architecture and tourism in the assertion of brand values in the global wine industry. Drawing on cases from France (left bank Bordeaux), the US (Napa), China (Ningxia province; ChangYu) and Portugal (Alentejo), it questions the pervasiveness of certain architectural features and their apparent capacity to mediate brand values to wine consumers. Despite marked differences in structure and style, several common tendencies can be observed, related to the relative grandeur of buildings, the types of materials used, the light, colour, sound and ambience design of visitor spaces, and the selection of specific aspects and spaces of the winery made visible, versus those that remain hidden. The study hence allows a meta-analysis of the architecture of what one could infer as a wider socially held “wine world imaginary”, which articulates elements of social and political ostentation, consumer gift-giving in form of social prestige and sensuous epiphanies, and of course expected reciprocity in form of brand loyalty and eventual wine acquisition by consumers. I will argue that architecture follows here several functions at once that range from the provision of a technical local to produce wine in an economically efficient way to the provision of a material metaphor embodying the essential qualities and values that a company wishes to associate with its brand.

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