The Drivers of Regionality: The Case of the Australian Wine Industry
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Regionality is a measure of the reputation a region enjoys for its wines. Wine regions generally supposed to possess this magical ingredient (Chablis for instance) are indeed regarded as fortunate. But, whilst customer awareness and recall of regionality are often measured, the causes of regionality in the first place are poorly understood and hardly ever measured.

Brian Croser thinks France has too much regionality and Australia too little. Many leading wine figures in Australia believe that Australia must begin to establish stronger regional identities in its key export markets if it is to resist the downward pressure on prices.

To do that it is necessary to understand the drivers of regionality, the purpose of this article.

The first step involved a search of the authoritative literatures on some of the wine regions generally acknowledged to have strong regionality (Chablis, Rioja,..) to abstract possible drivers.

The second step was to collect the reactions of leading players in the Australian wine industry to these drivers. A total of 29 Australian wine industry experts were interviewed face-to-face. All participants had already given the matter of regionality serious consideration in their professional lives. They were drawn from a wide range of leading Australian wine regions, large and small (Barossa Valley, Clare Valley, McLaren Vale, Coonawarra, Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula, Pyrenees, Sunbury, Ballarat, Grampians, Margaret River, Pemberton, Mount Barker).

This confirmed the relevance of many of the initially identified drivers but also added some uniquely Australian ones.

This preliminary qualitative work has been followed up with a full-scale survey of Australian wine producers resulting in a sample of over 450 cases.

All wine producing countries must address the topic of regionality. Without strong regional profiles, wine can easily descend into commodity-like status.