

## Usefulness of Web Sites in Starting Up Wineries: A Comparative study of Canadian, Moroccan and American Small Firms

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**Abstract :** An exploratory study has been launched in 2013-2014 in the province of Quebec, the state of Vermont (USA) and the region of Zaer in Morocco. We have realized three first case studies in order to better understand the marketing strategies of starting up wineries, which are defined as having a maximum of five years of operations. The methodology used consisted of visiting the vineyards; conducting semi-directed interviews with owner-managers; visiting points-of-sale of the wines and analysing the web sites using an assessment grid. The results indicate many differences between the three firms in their use of their web sites. More precisely, we have noticed that: -The Quebec vineyard uses its web site in collaboration with the touristic actors of its region and the association of the wine makers of the province of Quebec. Positioning is as a touristic attraction. -In comparison, the Moroccan firm limits the content of the web site to itself and its activities and somehow to the wine industry. Positioning is as a wine specialist. -The American firm associated its web site more to farm markets actors and activities of the region. Positioning is as an agricultural actor. -The positionings of the three vineyards are very different from each others and will be discussed more thoroughly during the presentation to better understand the use of web sites, thus contributing to the «brand image». -Improvements to the three web sites have been identified and suggested by more than a hundred of persons using the same grid and comprising students of bachelor and MBA degrees from our university. In general, the web sites have been considered satisfying but requiring several improvements at different levels. Changes or updates have been observed for the Quebec winery web site but practically no changes have been made to the others in the last months. The assessment grid will be presented in more details as well as the global and the partial scores given by the respondents. In conclusion, we have noticed that only one winery is considered as a «heavy and strategic user» of its web site and of Facebook and Twitter.

**Keywords :** web site, wineries, marketing, positioning, starting up strategies

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