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School of Global Studies

To certify or not to certify:

**A qualitative investigation into producer sentiments surrounding sustainability
certifications in the Spanish wine industry**

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Abstract

As the popularity of sustainably-produced wines continues to grow, wine producers are seeking to market sustainable practices through certification schemes, in order to gain advantage in the competitive global wine industry. Though Spain contains the largest amount of land dedicated to vine growing globally and is home to over 4,300 wineries, the Spanish wine industry only has one industry-specific sustainability certification scheme, Wineries for Climate Protection, of which a mere 23 wineries are certified. In an attempt to explain this, as well as to contribute to the lacking literature on sustainability certifications in the wine industry, this paper introduces an investigation into the efficacy and producer comprehensibility of sustainability certifications. Through semi-structured interviews with eight professionals representing Spanish wineries both certified and non-certified through WfCP, this paper examines the factors that either encourage or inhibit producers from labelling their wines as sustainable, as well as questions the environmental commitment of certified wineries. The study found an emphasis on the financial benefits that certification can bring to a winery, with little priority given to a winery's environmental commitment. Additionally, the data suggested the exclusion of small-production wineries from the apparent benefits of certification. This paper argues the inadequacy of sustainability certification schemes in the Spanish wine industry and emphasizes the need for further research into the creation of environmentally-focused, equally-advantageous sustainability certification schemes in the global wine industry.

Key words: *wine industry, Spain, sustainability, certification, neoliberalism, Critical Sustainability Studies*

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Abbreviations

CSS: Critical Sustainability Studies

WfCP: Wineries for Climate Protection

EMS: environmental management system

UNCED: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

FEV: Federación Española del Vino (Spanish Wine Federation)

ISO: International Organization for Standardization

OIV: International Organization of Vine and Wine

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Introduction

As a result of the rapidly increasing media exposure and public awareness of climate change and subsequent environmental degradation, businesses globally are beginning to participate in the global trend of sustainable development. The global food and beverage industry, being comprised of aspects of agriculture, production, and manufacturing, is dramatically confronted with the consequences of climate change, such as water scarcity, soil degradation, and changing weather conditions (Gilinsky et al. 2016: 37). Additionally, this industry attracts a substantial amount of attention in terms of sustainable practices due to the disruption of plant and animal species by production (Pullman et al. 2010: 37). Specifically, the wine industry has been the target of scrutiny, as the winemaking process generally requires a large amount of chemical interventions, from the usage of pesticides during the growing process, to the hydrocarbon emissions emitted during the process of transporting the product from producer to consumer (Gázquez-Abad et al. 2015:107). Mitigating the effects of climate change while also appealing to the conscience of the consumer can often lead a producer to adopt sustainable production methods (Gilinsky et al. 2016: 37). The term “sustainable development” was first outlined in the Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Moscovici and Reed 2018:2). Sustainable practices in the food and beverage industry are often referred to as practices that employ the “triple bottom line.” This concept takes into account creating an atmosphere of social responsibility within the company, implementing practices that are environmentally friendly, and aligning the two concepts with a framework that financially benefits the company (Gilinsky et al. 2016: 38). Within the wine industry, this would entail the cultivation of grapes and making of wine in ways that are environmentally, socially, and economically sound (Pullman et al. 2010: 36). As the switch to sustainable practices often requires a significant amount of financial capital, it is important for the winery’s profitability that the attributes brought about by the adoption of sustainable practices are marketed to the consumer (Pullman et al. 2010: 36). The marketing of sustainable practices, often through product labelling and certification schemes, can allow a leg up in an ever-competitive market by appealing to the consumer’s sense of social responsibility (Gázquez-Abad et al. 2015: 107). However, though the global wine industry is leading the food and beverage industry in the adoption of sustainable practices, certification schemes for wineries are still very much underdeveloped and under-researched (Moscovici and Reed 2018:5). The OIV, in collaboration with the International Federation of

Wine and Spirits, have worked together to develop an international definition for sustainable production strategies in the industry, known as the Global Sector Sustainability Principles Project. However, few countries, including New Zealand, the United States (specific to California), South Africa, Australia, and Chile, have actually used them to develop nation-wide standards (ibid:6).

Though Spain contains the largest amount of land dedicated to vine growing (International Organization of Vine and Wine 2019) and claims itself to be the leading country in terms of amount of organic viticulture (Gilinsky et al. 2016: 42), the country has yet to establish a national certification scheme for sustainably produced wines. There is only one sustainable production certification scheme specific to the Spanish wine industry, Wineries for Climate Protection (WfCP), which was developed in 2011. However, though Spain is home to over 4,300 wineries (“El Sector en Cifras”) made up of over 969 thousand hectares of vine growing land (International Organization of Vine and Wine 2019), only 23 Spanish wineries have been certified under WfCP since its establishment (Wineries for Climate Protection 2019).

Despite the amount of research indicating the benefits surrounding certification, the question arises: Why are there so few Spanish wineries with sustainable certifications? Adopting a sustainable certification label on its products can work to benefit the producer financially, as a survey conducted by the Entorno Foundation, found that 47% of Spanish consumers were willing to pay more for a bottle of wine that was marketed as being sustainably produced (Brugarolas et al. 2005: 44). Sustainability strategies can manifest multiple other financial benefits, including cost reductions and a competitive advantage in global markets (Gilinsky et al. 2016: 43). Beyond economic goals, sustainability certifications can also be the result of converging social desires, such as a strong sentiment of it being the “right thing to do” and coinciding environmental goals, including reducing environmental impact of climate change (Moscovici and Reed 2018: 17). Factors that could potentially inhibit Spanish producers from adopting a sustainably certified label for their wines are often associated with the lack of a coherent definition of sustainability. Despite the goals outlined by the Brundtland Commission and the “triple bottom line,” unclear instructions on how to achieve them as well as ambiguous benefits of certification often work to discourage the adoption of sustainable practices (Gázquez-Abad et al. 2015: 111). Further issues invoking hesitance for certification often involve cost. The high costs often associated with certification through private schemes can often lead to the certification of only large

producers and be an impediment for small to medium-sized enterprises, of which the majority of the global wine industry is constituted (Moscovici and Reed 2018: 17).

That fact that Spain, the country leading the rest of the world in terms of vineyard area, only has one sustainability certification scheme, of which a mere 23 wineries are certified, begs an opportunity for further research. This study will attempt to close the gap in the research surrounding sustainability certifications in an effort to understand their efficacy and producer comprehensibility.

Aim & Research Questions

The aim of this study is to introduce an investigation into the factors and motivations that either encourage or inhibit Spanish wine producers from labelling their wines as “sustainable,” as well as raise the question of whether or not sustainability certifications are indicators of a higher degree of sustainable practices.

Through an array of semi-structured interviews with eight professionals working in the Spanish wine industry, this study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons that certain wine producers choose to certify their wineries as sustainable?
2. What factors discourage other wine producers from pursuing certification?
3. Does winery certification entail a deeper involvement or commitment to the adoption of sustainable practices in the winery?

Delimitations

Because a large portion of the data collected was done so via semi-structured interviews, it is necessary to mention that the integrity of this data relies solely on the accuracy and honesty of the interviewee’s responses. Because I was unable to locate and analyze business models and other official documents of the wineries presented, the analysis of the sustainable practices utilized by each winery is only a reflection of what the respondent chose to disclose to me. Additionally, because there were only eight professionals found that were willing and able to participate in the interviews, it is impossible to assert that this research is indicative of the Spanish viticulture industry as a whole. Contrarily, this study is meant only to understand and analyze sustainable practices and motivations or lack thereof for WfCP certification of a handful of wineries, and in no way should be applied to the entire Spanish winemaking industry.

Furthermore, given the small number of WfCP-certified wineries in comparison to non-certified wineries in Spain, only 30% of respondents represented the former. 90 wineries from all regions of Spain and of all sizes were asked via email and phone to participate in this study. Of that number, only 15 replied, of which only eight were willing and able to participate. Given the short time period and the low response rate of the wineries, it was necessary to take all interview opportunities possible, even if it meant a lower representation of certified wineries. Furthermore, the interview portion of the research took place when

restrictions concerning the Covid-19 outbreak in Spain were beginning to occur. Ten interviews were originally scheduled to occur, but given the Spanish government's lockdown policies, only eight of the interviews ensued.

Background

This section will give a brief history into the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development, as well as of sustainability certifications, paying specific interest to WfCP and its use of the ISO 14001 standard.

Sustainability and Sustainable Development

Though the terms *sustainability* and *sustainable development* are widely used today and serve as somewhat of “buzzwords,” it can often be difficult to comprehend what actually constitutes something as being “sustainable.” Though the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), defines the term as “capable of being maintained or continued at a certain rate or level,” the Dictionary of Ecology describes sustainable development as development that takes into account the environmental consequences of certain economic activities. However, from a business-focused perspective, sustainability is often defined as sustaining the environment with a focus on economic profit (Wikström 2010: 99). Prior to World War II, the term sustainability was primarily connected to avoiding social and economic turmoil. However, with the ecological disaster of the 1930’s Dust Bowl in the central United States and the subsequent introduction of the New Deal, the public linkages between the environment and sustainability were created (Vehkamäki 2005: 6). Sustainability remained a macro-level, abstract concept until 1987, with the occurrence of the Brundtland Commission. The resulting report defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission 1987: 41). The report’s definition marked the beginning of a conceptualization of sustainability as a current obligation to the public to anticipate how its actions will affect later generations. The commission allowed the general public a new perspective on environmentalism, of which the traditional goals focus on the “celebration, protection, and maintenance of non-human nature” (Robbins 2012:181). This new perspective stressed the global ramifications of climate change, as well as emphasized the connection between environmental conservation, economic gain, and social equality (Moscovici and Reed 2018: 2). The term sustainable development gained more popularity as a result of the 1992 UNCED in Rio De Janeiro. This conference decided on a number of agreements, most notably the Biodiversity Treaty and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, which proposed a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (Vehkamäki 2005:7). Though the concept of sustainability is one that is generally accepted as necessary in modern

development, there are often inconsistencies in the execution of sustainability policies due to the term's lack of public comprehensibility and competing market forces. Though the Brundtland Report paved the way for the adoption of sustainability initiatives worldwide, its definition of sustainability lacks greatly and requires consensus on what needs to be sustained and what needs to be developed in order to sustain it (Wikström 2010: 100).

Sustainability certifications

In the decade before the Brundtland Report, the 1973 OPEC oil embargo led to many nations enforcing their first “green” policies for global industries. The first of these policies was carried out by the construction industry in the United States and was comprised of a voluntary assessment scheme to determine levels of sustainability in respect to buildings. This scheme, managed by the U.S. Green Building Council, utilized a point system, with which the building would be awarded a level of certification based on the efficiency of their sustainability measures. The points system utilized by this scheme would go on to become the basis on which sustainability certifications globally would stand for decades to come (Moscovici and Reed 2018:3).

As the awareness and consequent demand of the implementation of sustainable practices grows, initiatives that certify that producers are committed to environmentally and socially-friendly production practices are correspondingly becoming more popular (Blackman and Rivera 2011: 1177). With the recent increase of globalization and subsequent decline of public regulation, the rise of these certification initiatives have been heavily promoted by non-governmental organizations as a way to reward products produced under favorable social and environmental conditions (Raynolds et al. 2007: 147). Through a range of practices, including auditing by third parties and product labelling, the products deemed favorable are verified and communicated to the global consumer. Marketing these certifications are most often demonstrated through “green” labelling, using green and blue colors, and “eco-imaging” – images of the earth, animals, and trees – on the product itself (Harris 2007: 50). Eco-friendly certification schemes, such as Rainforest Alliance, Demeter International, UTZ Certification, and Fair Trade Act, can often appeal to agricultural producers, based on their non-governmental, market-focused approach (Moscovici and Reed 2018: 4). Such schemes can offer both the producer and the consumer a plethora of benefits, as it responds to growing consumer demand for ethically and sustainably produced products and improves profitability of agro-production by allowing rural producers to market their

products (Higgins et al. 2008). Despite its seemingly faultless system, certification schemes often carry a number of unfavorable effects. Small scale producers are often excluded from certification schemes, due to high costs and the financial dominance of the powerful private actors who control the scheme. Additionally, though certification schemes intend to assist the consumer in choosing the “most sustainable” product, confusion and lack of understanding of the consumer in navigating many different certifications can negatively affect the profitability of the product and inconvenience the producer (ibid). Moreover, certification schemes can often serve as prime examples of greenwashing, or “the dissemination of false or incomplete information by an organization to present an environmentally responsible public image” (Furlow 2010:1). The term “sustainable” is regarded by some as “fluffy language” with no clear meaning (Delmas and Burbano 2011), as companies can market their product as such with no environmentally-friendly policies to back it, for the sole purpose of increasing the product’s profitability.

Though viticulture leads the food and beverage industry in terms of adoption of sustainable practices, sustainable wine certification is still very much underdeveloped, as there are very few certification schemes and research concerning their efficiency in the industry (Pullman et al. 2010: 36). Certification schemes for wine can be perceived as a bit more complex than other products in the food and beverage industry, as they can entail certification for the winery, for the vineyard, for a specific product, or a combination of the three (Moscovici and Reed 2018:4). Wineries are often hindered in choosing an industry-specific certification scheme because of their diversity and broadness. For example, some certifications choose to focus on the final product, the wine, to certify, while others choose to focus on the winemaking process, including the food processing steps (Pullman et al. 2018: 38). The lack of sufficient research on sustainability certifications in the wine industry pose as an impediment to both the consumer and the producer, as well as beg the question: Should there be an industry-wide wine certification scheme?

ISO 14001

ISO 14001 was developed in the 1990’s as an attempt to connect the environmentally-friendly goals of many agricultural certification schemes, and has since become a standard on which many schemes are now based, including many in the global wine industry (Moscovici and Reed 2018:5). Following its creation in 1996, ISO 14001 was promoted as the standard that could potentially replace the copious and repetitive standards that industries globally

were utilizing as environmental management systems (EMS). Today, more than 320,000 organizations in all industries have adopted ISO 14001 to certify their EMS (Vilchez 2017:33). Contrary to its predecessors, this new standard focused more on the process of EMS, such as management and lowering of emissions, rather than only on the final outcome of reduced pollution, in order to provide efficient operation (Gilinsky et al 2016: 43). ISO 14001 was developed as a tool to assist managers in their efforts to reduce waste as well as cost by enveloping the following areas: auditing, labelling, efficiency assessment, and product standards (Melnik et al. 2003). ISO 14001's structural elements for an efficient EMS are as follows: commitment to pollution prevention, facilitation of monitoring to ensure policy follow-through, development of management commitment to the program and to environmentally-friendly goals, establishment of auditing team to regularly review the EMS, and maintaining communication with external parties to encourage subcontractors to also establish an EMS (ibid: 331). Despite the standard's seemingly efficient mechanism for ensuring the efficiency of an EMS, certain studies have shown that the adoption of ISO 14001 does not necessarily increase the firm's dedication to environmental management systems (Vilchez 2017:33). Though the original motivations for the standard were for the creation of efficient and law-compliant EMS, there have been many criticisms toward ISO 14001 claiming that it is only used by firms symbolically, or as a way to legitimize their "dedication" to the environment. Vilchez (2017) argues that the standard often merely serves as an institutional backing for the often inadequate environmental operations. Additionally, as the standard is internationally renowned, Vilchez asserts that many firms only choose to utilize ISO 14001 as a way to gain access into previously untapped global markets (ibid: 34). Moscovici and Reed (2018) argue that the voluntary scheme is often too costly for small-scale producers, and often does not encourage the publication of the EMS's efficiency results. Nevertheless, it has developed into the standard on which hundreds of thousands of certification schemes are based, including those in the global wine industry (ibid: 5).

WfCP

Though Spain contains the largest amount of land dedicated to vine growing (International Organization of Vine and Wine 2019), the country has yet to establish a national certification scheme for sustainably produced wines. WfCP is the first and only certification scheme for the Spanish wine industry. WfCP, a privately-owned scheme, was developed by more than 300 producers in the industry in order to support sustainability and environmental protection

for Spanish wines and is supported by the FEV, a private representative body for over 700 Spanish wine producers (“Quienes Somos”). Certification through WfCP, according to their website, is awarded to wineries who demonstrate their dedication to the reduction of greenhouse gases, water management, reduction of waste, and efficient energy use (“Wineries for Climate Protection”). The certification process entails three steps: initial verification, follow-up verification, and renewal verification. During initial verification, the winery submits a certification solicitation to the FEV. The winery is then reviewed by a third party auditing system¹ using ISO 14001. If the winery is accepted, it will receive its certificate within a month. After a year, the winery will have to go through a follow-up verification using the same auditing system. The follow-up verification takes place every odd year afterwards. Two years after certification, and every second year afterwards, the winery goes through a renewal certification auditing (Wineries for Climate Protection 2019). The certification has an annual fee, which depends on the size of the winery and FEV membership status. For FEV members, the annual cost is 90 euros for small producers (those with less than 30 employees) and 125 euros for large producers (those with more than 30 employees). For non-FEV members, the annual cost is 125 euros for small producers, and 175 euros for large producers (ibid). According to the scheme’s “Guia de Certificacion” (2019) or “Certification Guide”, the advantages for certifying are as follows:

1. The winery will demonstrate environmental commitment in a solid and quantifiable way.
2. The winery will have a sustainability seal recognized by national and international distribution.
3. The winery will gain a differential value, giving an advantage in global markets.
4. The winery will increase the efficiency of production processes through continuous improvement.
5. The winery will gain a competitive edge in the wine sector.

As of 2020, only 23 wineries in Spain hold WfCP certification (“Wineries for Climate Protection”).

¹ Third party auditing is carried out by verification agencies within the Spanish beverage manufacturing sector. These agencies, authorized by FEV, are the following: AENOR, Applus, Bureau Veritas Iberia, DNV GL Business Assurance, EQA, Kiwa España, Lloyd’s Register, and SGS (“Wineries for Climate Protection”).

Relevance to Global Studies

The term globalization is used to describe an interrelated world in terms of environments, societies, and economies. The multi-faceted and complex term can be defined as “a trans-planetary process or set of processes involving increasing liquidity and the growing multidirectional flows of people, objects, places, and information, as well as the structures they encounter and create that are barriers to, or, expedite those flows” (Ritzer and Atalay 2010:1). Concerning the environment, globalization produces negative effects, such as the overuse and decrease of natural resources, the accumulation of waste production, and the global movement of waste to countries with less binding environmental regulations (Agrawal and Lemos 2006: 299). As a result of the surmounting media coverage and growing public awareness of climate change, as well as the consequential increase of environmental disasters, sustainability has become a clear, non-negotiable goal within organizations globally (Moscovici and Reed 2018:2). However, the increase of global processes has analogously signaled a worldwide growth in neoliberal economic policy, most notably through tax cuts, privatization, and decentralization of the state (Agrawal and Lemos 2007: 37). Through the increase of these neoliberal economic and governmental initiatives, the capability and efficacy of the state in dealing with environmental issues and protection regulations has been called into question. As a response to this, the state’s decline in power has introduced a greater role for market-oriented actors and agencies (ibid: 43). With heightening popularity of sustainable initiatives in organizations, as well as the increase of the market’s involvement in environmental protection initiatives, corporate social responsibility has become a voluntary, new way of conducting business. Corporate social responsibility functions in a manner that not only signals a potential new and hopeful direction for environmental governance, but also attracts the socially-conscious consumer (ibid: 38). The global consumer’s expectations and “green preferences” work as incentive for global corporations to create environments of superior environmental governance in regards to their products (Agrawal and Lemos 2006: 308).

National and transnational non-governmental organizations are promoting a number of new, private governance initiatives in relation with corporate social responsibility in order to identify and award products produced under what are deemed environmentally and socially friendly conditions (Raynolds et al. 2007: 147). These private initiatives, of which certifications and labels are most common, are especially gaining popularity in the global agro-food production sector, and emerging as a new system of “transnational private

governance” in response to the declining power of the state. The power of these certification and labels derives not from state governance, but rather from support of the producer, consumer loyalty and satisfaction, market shares, and price premiums (ibid: 148).

Certification schemes are now being used as private ecological governance schemes in their appeal to the global consumer as a way to determine ethical practices in global business. The global wine industry, which has an expected value of over 420 billion USD by 2023 (Business Wire 2019), is no exception to the private governance schemes of certification and labelling. However, despite the prominence of the wine industry in the global arena and the importance of certification in environmental governance, certification of the industry is still in its early stages and research on the topic and its implications in relation to the wine industry is quite under-researched.

Previous Research

Despite the research gap in academia concerning sustainability certifications in the global wine industry, this section will summarize what useful research there currently is on the topic. The research covered will discuss and analyze the following: how sustainability initiatives in the wine industry differ from those in other sectors and how such initiatives impact performance outcomes; consumer perspectives on sustainability certifications and how such certifications affect consumer choice; and the efficiency of ISO 14001 as an environmental management system in firms that have employed the standard. Additionally, I will include a summary of a comparative analysis of different global wine sustainability certification schemes, from which much of the inspiration for this research project was acquired.

Impact of sustainability initiatives on performance outcomes

In order to address the shortage of research on thorough research on outcomes of sustainability agendas, Pullman, Maloni, and Dillard (2010) conducted a comparative study on the wine sector and the food production sector in the northwestern United States in regards to their adoption of sustainability initiatives and its relation to environmental and social performance outcomes (Pullman et al. 2010: 51). The authors sought to address these considerations comparatively, in order to test previous literature that states that wineries are ahead of other food producers in terms of the adoption of environmentally sustainable initiatives. The study served as an attempt to answer how wine supply chains are different from others in the food sector in relation to implementation of environmental and social sustainability systems, as well as if and how the adoptions of these systems impact performance outcomes for the producers (ibid: 41). Through interviews with wine industry professionals, the authors found that in regards to the wine industry, environmental practices include the reduced use of pesticides and herbicides, soil and water conservation, and protection of wildlife, while social practices included honest working conditions, proper work training, and right to negotiate salaries (ibid: 42). The results of the study indicated a noticeable difference between the wine and food industries in terms of the adoption of the sustainable initiatives and the perception of their outcomes (ibid: 46). The wine sector demonstrated higher rates of adoption of sustainability practices than the food sector, but respondents did not demonstrate a high level of improved environmental performance. The respondents from wineries with sustainable practices expressed a strong correlation between

the implementation of these practices and the quality of the wine. They also asserted that such initiatives are part of an “integrative system philosophy,” which is not necessarily expected to improve performance outcomes, but rather remain a part of the entire system and the *terroir*² of the wine produced. Furthermore, employee sustainability practices in the wineries studied were tied to the same philosophy and believed to lead to a greater product quality (ibid: 49). Respondents did not express an impression that sustainability initiatives impacted market performance, but attributed this to a lack of consumer understanding of sustainability. The authors concluded the study by communicating that wineries are, in fact, ahead of other food producers in the implementation of environmental and social sustainability practices, but there is a considerable need for more intensive research in order to assist producers with the adoption of such practices (ibid: 51).

Comparative study of global sustainable wine certifications

Moscovici and Reed’s study focuses specifically on different wine sustainability certifications globally (Moscovici and Reed 2018:1). The study is an analysis of certifications that have either been internationally recognized privately, through the wine industry, or publicly, through governments. The methodology consisted of a questionnaire of 24 questions sent to 12 wine-industry professionals representing 12 certification schemes with questions concerning the scheme’s establishment, participation, outcomes, logistics, and structure (ibid: 7). The respondents included professionals working with the wine industry, with positions of business managers, sustainability and environmental managers, and winemakers (ibid:8). The 12 schemes represented New Zealand, the United States, France, South Africa, Australia, Chile, Italy, and Austria (ibid: 16). The results of the survey noted that all certifications stressed education about sustainability and the use of technology in order to achieve environmental-related goals. The respondents indicated that the motivations for certification varied from economically based, socially-based, or environmentally-based. The authors also found that though the certifications market themselves using emotional language pertaining to the environment, they would be marketed to business professionals by strictly explaining the financial benefits of certification (ibid:17). The authors expressed the difficulty in comparing the selected certifications due to the differing qualification guidelines, and recommended that wine professionals remain adaptable with certifications in order to

² *Terroir* is a French concept used frequently in viticulture to describe the relationship between the sensory characteristics of a wine with the physical environment in which the grapes were grown (Van Leeuwen and Seguin 2005: 1).

maintain transferability. Moscovici and Reed conclude with an argument for a universal wine certification, specifically one that employs the ISO 14001 standard as the basis for a potential international scheme (ibid: 20).

Sustainability certifications equals market advantage?

In discussing motivations for adoption of sustainability certifications, the role of the market and consumer preference is often a large motivator for producers in the wine industry. WfCP (2019) lists both international and Spanish market differentiation as a main advantage of becoming certified via their scheme (“Guía de Certificación”). According to the Italian Wine Union (2016), when buying a wine labelled “sustainable,” 56.6% of consumers expect the wine to be environmentally friendly. However, as noted in previous research, lack of consumer understanding of sustainability practices and labels can often negatively affect a producer's ability to implement price premiums and generate a larger profit (Pullman et al. 2010). A survey conducted by the European Commission discovered 129 public and private sustainability-related schemes in Europe with the objective of informing the consumer of sustainable practices in order to empower them to make more ethical decisions in regards to food and drink consumption. (Grunert et al 2014: 177). Although little research has been conducted to investigate the importance of environmental and ethical sustainability in consumer’s food choices, certain previous studies suggest the translation from sustainable consumer motivation to actual consumption is quite difficult (ibid: 178). Grunert, Heike, and Wills (2014) conducted a study in an attempt to close the research gap in the European context. The study consisted of an online questionnaire sent to consumers in the UK, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden, and Poland, designed to indicate their motive, comprehension, and utilization of sustainability information on food and beverage products (ibid: 179). The results published revealed a sharp contrast to the marketing claims of many sustainability schemes globally; the majority of respondents were not concerned about sustainability, and of the minority that expressed concern, even less would consider it a motivation to seek out sustainably produced products. Most respondents portrayed a low level of comprehension of the meanings of multiple sustainability labels (ibid: 183). The authors concluded the study by stressing the need for more public education of sustainability initiatives, as they cited lack of public awareness as being the main determinant for low levels of consumer motivation and utilization (ibid: 188).

Critical research of ISO 14001 implementation

Despite the fact that multiple studies propose ISO 14001 as the standard on which environmental management systems should be based, as well as the standard for a potential universal sustainability certification scheme (Moscovici and Reed 2018, Pullman et al. 2010, Melnyk et al. 2003, Curkovic and Sroufe 2011), recent criticisms have questioned its efficacy at reducing the environmental impact of a firm's production. Critics argue that the standard is not sufficiently correlated with performance, as registration does not call for firms' compliance or satisfaction of the firm's stakeholders. Moreover, ISO 14001 is viewed by many as a mere document-driven, bureaucratic process (Curkovic and Sroufe 2011). A study by Vilchez (2017), aimed to analyze whether facilities utilizing ISO 14001 do so merely for symbolic legitimacy, rather than for a commitment to environmentally-friendly production systems. The study used data from a survey conducted from the OECD and was sent to 1,961 facilities in multiple production sectors in Germany, Canada, the US, France, Hungary, Japan, and Norway (ibid: 34). The respondents were the environmental managers for the firms, which were also certified through ISO 14001 (ibid: 35). The results of the survey indicated that the probability of using the standard was 1.691 times more likely when symbolic behavior, i.e. the public promotion of the firm's environmental commitment, was also present. Additionally, the employment of ISO 14001 increases by more than 60% when symbolic behavior was existent (ibid: 37). The results of this study bring into question not only the motivations of firms in implementing ISO 14001 as an environmental management system, but also the legitimacy of the standard itself.

Despite recent surmounting criticism on the standard, Curkovic and Sroufe (2011) published a study that argued the opposite. Using a qualitative case study approach of the global automotive industry, the authors of the study sought to test the environmental efficiency of firms that utilized the standard versus those that didn't (ibid: 78). Using structured interviews of environmental managers from both plants with ISO 14001 and without, respondents were asked to give information at the plant level regarding the standard. The information requested was on the basis of the following categories: costs, management, exposure, and competition (ibid: 80). The results of the study indicated a positive outcome for ISO 14001, as the respondents from the plants that had adopted the standard shown to have higher levels of performance, sustainability, customer service, waste reduction, cost efficiency, and decreased levels of employee health and safety issues (ibid 82). The authors conclude by contradicting the critics of ISO 14001, arguing that when utilized effectively,

using that standard as an EMS can greatly improve a firm's efficiency, cost reduction, and environmental performance.

While there seems to be research in the field of sustainable development concerning consumer comprehension and efficiency, or lack thereof, of certain EMS, the research available seems to be lacking in many areas. Firstly, while there may be research on the effectiveness of sustainability certifications in general, there is little to no application of this effectiveness to the global wine industry. There seems to be research on sustainable initiatives, including certifications schemes, in the context of some major wine producing countries, but Spain is often excluded from this research. Furthermore, there are many arguments as to motivations why wine producers would potentially want to sustainably certify their wineries, but there is no research on the actual sentiments of the producers themselves concerning the motivations or deterrents of sustainability certifications. This study will attempt to close the gap on which the current research on the topic thus far has fallen short.

Key concepts defined

Sustainable, organic, or biodynamic?

For this research study I have chosen to concentrate specifically on certifications that label themselves as “sustainable,” rather than organic or biodynamic. While organic and biodynamic certifications are much more well-known and internationally recognized, they do contain a much smaller focus than a certification that is labelled as “sustainable.” The guidelines of organic viticulture prohibit the use of artificial additives to the growing process, such as pesticides or fertilizers, and chooses rather to augment soils with natural methods of fertilizer or pest restriction. Biodynamic viticulture contains many similarities to organic farming, but an addition to organic regulations, farmers will choose to add specific herbal and fermented compositions in to enhance the natural qualities of the soil in order to produce high quality yields (Carpenter-Boggs et al. 2001: 1651). According to Moscovici and Reed (2018), organic and biodynamic certification can often be realized with little sustainable management in other areas (4). Organic and biodynamic certification focus directly on the certification of a specific product, while many sustainability certification schemes aim to certify the entire vineyard or winery, which includes agriculture, processing, and transporting processes (ibid). Additionally, I have chosen to concentrate solely on sustainability certifications due to their indefinite nature. Organic viticulture follows a hierarchical, state governed accreditation scheme, as it has been regulated in Spain through the European Union since 1998, and biodynamic certification must follow specific guidelines set by Demeter International (Fabeiro et al. 2007). Sustainability certifications are governed much more flexibly, often through third-party accreditation systems that require differing protocols for different schemes. Sustainability certifications are profoundly less represented and less regulated, which begs the opportunity for higher levels of research. This study will attempt to add to the minimal research on sustainability certification, an area where organic and biodynamic certifications are not lacking.

Theoretical Framework

In this section I will put forth a critique of the term sustainability and the objectives of modern-day sustainable development. In framing the theory in relation to Critical Sustainability Studies (CSS), I offer up that current sustainable development goals are both underlined and inhibited by the neoliberal agendas of the global economy, and that sustainability certification schemes, including WfCP, are directly influenced by these agendas.

CSS argue that sustainability is a standardized concept that makes claims on which natural or human processes are worthy and deserving of being sustained. In utilizing a critical interdisciplinary lens, CSS may focus on the following environments as being portrayed as deserving of sustaining in modernity: natural environments of biological ecosystems, cultural environments of human experience, political or economic environments of the relationships between class and power, and the market-driven environment of capital (Greenberg 2014: 57). The theoretical framework used in this study will focus on the final environment listed by Greenberg and portray modern sustainability initiatives as favoring market-driven capitalist processes, namely fueled by neoliberalism. CSS argues sustainability as a disagreeable construct rooted in modernization and development discourses, allowing profit and economic growth to be supplemented to the term's meaning. CSS is offered as an alternative to the term's involvement with neoliberalism, one which refuses to accept the supremacy of economy over ecology and asserts the premise that the strive economic gain is responsible for the belittlement and depreciation of ecological processes (Cachelin et al. 2015:1128). The following paragraphs will explain the ideas of CSS in relation to the environment of economic gain, its connection to sustainability certifications.

The terms 'sustainability' and the modern societal practice of it, 'sustainable development,' have become overwhelmingly overused words to describe some notion of an effort towards an environmentally friendly way of life. The vagueness and confusion that often surround the term have resulted in its seamless assimilation into neoliberal policies. As of 2014, the term had become one of the most commonly used words in policy programs and copyright claims globally (Greenberg 2014: 63). Additionally, the discourse surrounding sustainability has gained rapid popularity among "urban growth machines" or affiliations of developers and business executives who view natural space in capitalist terms of economic growth (ibid). The term 'sustainability,' now often regarded as more of a slogan than a systematic concept, allows environmentalism to be rid of any political context in exchange

for its involvement in market activities, and therefore defines ecological degradation merely as a public concern, rather than a struggle of global importance (Cock 2011:48). In 2012, The UN Rio +20 Summit in Brazil pushed participating governments to create a number of sustainable development goals that would advance the concept of sustainability into the spotlight of development (Kumi et al. 2014: 540). The summit outcomes, which aimed to “renew [the] commitment to sustainable development and to ensuring the promotion of economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable future” (United Nations General Assembly 2012: 1), largely focused on the promotion of economically-beneficial development. The report stressed the importance of “changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development” and “promoting sustained, inclusive, and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all” (ibid: 2).

The term ‘sustainability’, as exemplified through the assembly report, has referred directly to the economic sectors of its advocating countries, specifically in relation to the accumulation of capital. (Medovi 2010:112). Past and present solutions to environmental problems have been governed by the whims of free market instruments, which serve as the pillars of neoliberal economic theory. Neoliberalism is an ideology of economics and politics that directs focus on imposing capitalist market devices on social and environmental affairs. Such devices take the forms of privatization, state decentralization, and minimal government intervention (Kumi et al. 2014: 540). Though neoliberalism can be applied to a number of different sectors, this study will use the definition of Cachelin et al. (2015: 1128), which defines the ideology as one that “extend[s] market discipline, competition and commodification throughout all sectors of society.” The ideology became globally preeminent during the eras of Thatcher and Reagan, served as the guideline for the Washington Consensus, and was promoted by the Bretton Woods organizations as the development standard for underdeveloped or developing countries. The main ideology of neoliberalism is based on Keynesianism, which highlights market gain as well as the argument that the self-governing market is the means for assigning goods and services through the process of commodification (ibid: 541). Though neoliberalism is presented using its popular catch phrase of *laissez-faire*, its economic policy is actually more active and controlling than how it is normatively perceived, as it asserts the “rational market” as the guiding force behind all societal interaction (Cachalin et al. 2015: 1127). In neoliberalism, economic reason is perceived as the attendant to ecological reason and therefore is able to

project its own governance as being the solution to current environmental problems (Söderbaum and Sörensen 2012). Advocates of neoliberal policy stress the claim that policies based on the market promote economic efficiency and environmental stabilization, specifically through increasing the role of trade and raising income levels (Kumi et al. 542). However, studies have shown that supposedly environmentally-friendly sustainable development based on neoliberal policies have the opposite effect, as increased competition as a result of free market devices can incite producers to adopt unsustainable environmental practices. Furthermore, structural adjustment programs, a key part of the neoliberal development agenda, can worsen environmental conditions through the excessive downsizing of environmental protection budgets (ibid: 456).

While the current discourse on sustainability is an improvement from earlier definitions that only focused on human welfare, the topic is now most often marked by business-motivated attempts to link ecological externalities to the market (Cock 2011: 48). A direct outcome of the neoliberal response to environmental issues has come to be known as “sustainable capitalism” or more commonly, “green capitalism.” This term refers to the use of the terms ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainable development’ as a way to increase profitability or add value to companies (Medovi 2010: 113). The main concerns of corporations that utilize green capitalism is creating a profit, and while they remain aware that reducing involvement in natural resources can inhibit profitability, the adoption of environmentally-friendly policies can improve a corporation’s public image (Cock 2011: 46). Lee Scott, the previous CEO of Walmart, named sustainability the “single biggest business opportunity of the 21st century and the next main source of competitive advantage” (ibid: 47). A prime example of “sustainable” capitalism can be demonstrated through the creation and widespread implementation of the “triple bottom line,” concept first outlined in 1994. The concept, which has become extremely popular in the global wine industry, calls for companies to treat natural and ecological resources as elements of capitalist processes (Medovi 2010: 112). Sustainability in the wine industry has been widely known to seek the incorporation of the triple bottom line through the creation of company policies and consequent actions. The concept names social, environmental, and financial stewardship as main pillars to achieve sustainability in the vineyard, but gives special attention to the final of the three. The economic aspect of sustainability is given most attention as it works to “align [the other two] concepts with an overarching framework that financially capitalizes on the positive benefits realized” (Gilinsky Jr. et al. 2016: 38).

The emergence of green capitalism, which argues that the market will solve environmental problems as long as it is commodified, also initiates a merit or payment system to corporations for the implementation of environmentally-friendly policies (Kumi et al. 2014: 543). These market-based systems, such as certification schemes and private standards, hail the market and other private initiatives as main regulatory instruments of environmental policy and governance (Higgins et al. 2008: 18). These systems, which most commonly take the image of certification and product labelling, are directly correlated to the rise of neoliberal sustainability as they highlight the regulatory power of private institutions rather than of the state, and work to create a “transnational private governance” (Raynolds et al. 2007: 148). As certifications have emerged as a shape of neoliberal governance, they are largely governed by the self-regulating market and of consumerist society (Conway 2012: 442). Proponents of market-based environmental approaches argue their advantages as being sources of initiative and conservation financing instruments, as well as being attractive to corporations for their claim to balance environmentally sustainable initiatives with economic improvement (Kumi et al. 2014: 547). WfCP acts as one of many certification schemes bought into this logic, as they are marketed more strongly in relation to economic and market-related benefits, rather than in relation to environmental protection (“Guía para la certificación”). Despite the positive claims surrounding market-based environmental methods, Conway’s (2012) study on private firewood certification schemes in Chile found that though the schemes did work to prevent pollution and ecological deterioration, the benefits of the certification were not distributed equally among producers, and largely favored large producers over smallholders. This is often characteristic of neoliberal attempts at sustainability, specifically market-based conservation programs, as lower income producers and smallholders are left vulnerable to the grace of the free market, while larger producers are able to navigate market fluctuations with greater ease (ibid: 456).

This section has aimed to provide an analysis of the discourse surrounding current attempts at sustainable development in using the lens of CSS. Sustainable practices are largely influenced by neoliberal practices; as often environmental conservation is seen as a means to achieving the ultimate goal of economic sustainability. The involvement of neoliberalism in the discussion surrounding sustainability allows the entry of green capitalism, in which sustainable practices are viewed as a way to achieve profitability or success in the market by corporations. Literature shows that market-based sustainability practices, such as certification schemes, are aspects of green capitalism, and while may be

somewhat successful in certain environmental protection goals, are largely negligent and disadvantageous towards smallholders.

Methodology

In order to investigate sustainability certifications and their relation to Spanish wine producers, I have chosen to elect semi-structured interviews the data collection method on which this research will be based. In this section, I will explain the methods utilized in order to collect data for the research, explain the analytical methods used to interpret the data collected, as well as explain any ethical issues that arose during the process.

Selection of respondent base

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via phone call, video call, or via email messaging with eight professionals representing eight wineries in multiple areas in Spain. The interviews conducted via phone or video call ranged in duration from 30 to 45 minutes. The respondents were found via literature review, internet searches, and suggestions from the interviewees themselves. There were a total of 83 wineries contacted from 23 provinces in Spain. 19 of the wineries contacted were certified via WfCP, as that was the total amount certified at the time of the research, and the remaining 64 contacted did not hold WfCP certification. I utilized a purposive sampling (Bryman 2016) in the selection of potential respondents, as I intended to include a wide range of respondents in order to represent the larger population of wine producers in Spain. I diversified the interviewee base based on the inclusion of wineries certified in WfCP, as well as those who were not. In addition to this, I was sure to include wineries of large and small producer sizes. In order to distinguish which wineries were to be considered large or small, I utilized the definition portrayed by Gilinsky, Newton, and Fuentes, which defines the criteria as employment of more or less than 30 personnel (Gilinsky et al 2016). This was critical to my research, as the size of the winery itself can often give insight into the motivations or inhibitions of electing sustainability certifications. Large production wineries are often hierarchically constrained, sometimes having to answer to an executive board demanding goals based on financial growth rather than those based on sustainability. Small to medium sized wineries are most often family-owned and operated and their goals can entail leaving the land in better condition for future generations of family members (ibid: 38). In addition to winery size, I chose to diversify the potential respondent base based on the amount of time that the winery had been in operation. Younger businesses have been shown to demonstrate more aptness to invest in new technologies and innovations geared toward sustainability objectives, while more producers that have been operating longer can often be more likely to resist such

initiatives due to fear of dismantling existing product quality and profitability (ibid). I utilize Robb's definition which states that firms in production longer than 25 years are to be considered old, while those with less than 25 years are to be considered young (Robb 2002: 47). The wineries were sent an initial email, in Spanish, that entailed an introduction of myself and my studies, a summary of my research and what the research would intend to discover, as well as a request for their involvement in the study via phone or skype call. If the winery was certified via WfCP, the email included a request for information based on their involvement with the scheme, and the emails for those not certified did not include information on WfCP. A month after the initial email petition, a follow up email was sent with the same information as the first email, but shorter in length. 18 wineries sent responses to the email petitions, of those, three wineries declined participation and 15 expressed interest in participation. Despite the 15 that expressed interest in the research, only eight followed through and were willing to participate in an interview. The interviews were conducted via phone call, video call, or via email messaging. Of the eight that participated in the study, two respondents agreed to only participating through email. Because of the small percentage of response collected from contacted wineries, I agreed to conduct the interviews for these respondents via email messaging. For these interviews, I sent the respondents the interview guide with open ended questions, in order to receive the greatest amount of detail possible. The respondents comprised the following positions in their respective wineries: Head of Quality and Environment, Director of Environment, Head of Resource and Development, Agronomist, Consultant Specialist in Sustainability, CEO, General Oenologist, Director of Quality.

Interview process

I chose to conduct semi-structured rather than structured interviews due to the diverse nature of my respondent base (Bryman 2016: 470). With semi-structured interviews, questions are pre-planned before the interview is conducted, but the interviewer gives the respondent the opportunity to expand on the particular issues presented in the questions via the inclusion of open-ended questions (Alsaawi 2014: 151). Conducting the interviews via phone or video chat allowed my access to a wider variety of producers from different areas and situations, as opposed to, perhaps, field work. Due to the limited time in which this study was conducted, electing a field-work approach would have inhibited the amount of respondents I would have had access to. Similarly, conducting interviews allows less

intrusive and less time-constraining data collection than participant observation via field work (ibid: 496). Electing semi-structured interviews as the main data collection of this study allowed the inclusion of the respondent's thoughts and sentiments, which was necessary due to the study's research while giving them more dominance in the data collection process by allowing them the choice of what to disclose to me. However, electing to conduct semi-structured interviews as the data collection method in some ways hindered my ability to gain access to information. It is likely that many of the wine professionals contacted declined participation due to fears of breaches of confidentiality. Many of the respondents who agreed to participate were skeptical of giving me information, in fears it may cost them their job, and asked multiple times about the anonymity of their responses. I feel that this especially hindered my ability to gain access to more information from WfCP wineries, as speaking about opinions on certification potentially could cost a respondent their job. Due to this hindrance, I felt it was necessary to conduct the majority of the interviews in Spanish. Though Spanish is not my first language and required a larger amount of time in preparing, transcribing, and translating the interviews, it allowed my access to a larger percentage of the Spanish winemaking community.

I based the interview guide on a literature review of similar studies, as well as on expert opinion. The first three interviews were closed with the inclusion of pilot questions, in which I asked the respondent questions concerning the nature of the interview, if there were any unnecessary questions or if there were topics lacking. Based on the responses to these pilot questions, I adjusted the interview guide for the remaining interviews. In choosing the structure of the interview guide, I took inspiration from Robson's (2011) guide of five phases of an interview (ibid: 84). The first phases consisted of an introduction, in which I introduced myself, my studies, and my research. I then disclosed to the respondent that this study was not financed by any institution nor was it to be published in any academic journal. I then asked the respondent if the interview could be recorded, specifying their name and the name of the winery would remain anonymous. Robson's guide describes the second phase of the interview as the "warm up" period, where easier questions would be asked in order to ease the respondent into the interview. During this period, I asked the respondent questions concerning the demographics of the winery, including winery size, years in production, and the position of the interviewee within the company. The third phase is described by Robson as the main body of the interview, where the questions more focused on the research are asked. I divided the main body of the interview into two parts. In the first part I asked about

the sustainability practices of the winery. I took inspiration from a study by Pullman et al (2010) in order to gauge the level of involvement with sustainable practices in the respondent wineries. In this section of the interview, I asked the respondent if the winery they represented participated in practices of the following four categories: land environmental practice, conservation practices, recycling practices, and social practices. Land environmental practices in this context refers to the protection of wildlife in the vineyard area, as well as little to no use of artificial pesticides or herbicides in the growing process, in order to protect the soil composition. Conservation practices refers to the reduced usage of energy and water in the winery. Recycling practices refers to recycling of packaging waste and the use of compost of organic waste. Social practices refer to the fair treatment of the employees of the winery, which includes non-hazardous working conditions, just compensation, and opportunity for skill development among employees (Pullman et al. 2010: 45). The second section of the third phase of the interview dealt with the opinions of the respondent towards sustainable practices and certification. The questions focused on the respondent's impressions of the sustainable practices in the winery and the reasons for implementation. For those that were certified through WfCP, I inquired about the motivations behind the certification, and if the respondent believed that it was beneficial and necessary for the winery. For the respondents that represented a winery non certified through WfCP, I questioned the reasoning behind the decision to not certify, as well as the respondent's opinion on certification in the Spanish wine industry. Robson (2011) describes the fourth phase of the interview as the "cool off" section, where the questions are less focused and simpler in nature (ibid: 84). During this section I asked very open-ended questions to the respondent concerning if they had any other opinions or information they would like to share. Additionally, I asked if the interviewee would be willing to recommend other wineries that would potentially be willing to participate in the study. During the fifth and last portion of the interview, I thanked the interviewee for their contribution to the research and ended the interview.

Transcription and data analysis

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed the recordings that were recorded on my mobile device with the permission of the respondent. According to Bryman (2008), recording and transcribing interviews can be very useful in interview based data collection, as it works to lessen human error. Because seven of the eight interviews were conducted in Spanish, after the transcription of the recordings, I then translated the findings to English. Because Spanish

is not my first language, recording the interviews was imperative in order for me to fully understand the answers of the respondents. Furthermore, recording and transcribing interviews can often allow a deeper analysis, as it allows multiple listens and analyses (ibid: 473). Having unlimited access to the recordings allowed me to re-listen to the interviews and clear any misunderstandings that I had while conducting the interview. It also assisted greatly in the coding process, as the ability to re-listen multiple times allowed me to uncover new themes and interpretations of the data that I may have missed during the initial conversations.

Due to the small nature of the number of interviews that were conducted, I elected to utilize a manual-coding method as the main form of data analysis. I used Robson's (2011) technique of thematic coding in order to organize and analyze the data given through the interviews. According to Robson, thematic coding consists of organizing the data in a way that it is possible to locate prominent themes (2011:476). The first phase of this method of coding involves a familiarization with the data. To complete this phase, I organized the data based on the demographics of the interviewee and the winery that they represent. The next step employs a generation of the basic code, which in this case involved key words from the main research questions of the study, paying close attention to the 'why's' and 'how's' of sustainability and certification as explained in the interviews. After multiple themes were identified, based on these codes, networks connecting the themes were constructed. The final step of the thematic coding process exercised a phase of integration of the thematic networks created into the initial research problem and thematic framework of the study.

Ethical considerations

All research methods, quantitative or qualitative, are subject to containing ethical issues, as the research process creates a strain between creating generalizations and the right of the research's participants to privacy (Orb et al. 2000: 93). Qualitative research methods, specifically interview-based data collection, relies on interactions between researchers and participants. According to Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wyanden (2000), a main concern in the ethical considerations of interviews deals with the autonomy of the respondent. The concept of autonomy refers to constant informed consent of the interviewee, in which participants exercise their rights by voluntarily accepting or refusing participation in the research study (ibid: 95). In order to avoid ethical issues in relation to respondent autonomy, consent of the interviewee was sought after during multiple times in the interview preparation and the

interview itself. During the email solicitation, I asked the potential respondent if they would be willing to participate. If the potential respondent agreed to participate, I asked once more if they would be willing to do a phone or video call interview. Once the participant accepted, I asked once more in the initial phases of the interview if they were okay with their interview being used in the research, and as well if they were willing to allow me to record the interview, for personal use only.

In addition to the informed consent of the interviewee, collecting qualitative data via a method based on interviews is often associated with the demand for respondent privacy and confidentiality (Orb et al. 2000: 94). Confidentiality is key due to the potential conflicts of interest that could arise as a result of the research study. I was very aware of this during the interview process, as I realized that the respondent represented directly their employer, in this case the winery, and their responses to my questions could potentially have negative effects on their position and the company itself. Additionally, multiple respondents represented wineries that were certified under WfCP, and their answers could potentially affect that membership. In order to avoid these potential negative consequences, I opted to keep the names of the respondents and the names of the wineries they represent confidential. This was communicated during the first phase of the interview, in which I introduced myself and the subject of the research, in order to allow the interviewee more comfortability and less reluctance to provide the most honest and detailed responses possible.

Results and Analysis

In this section I will display the results of my findings, and concurrently conduct an analysis based on each theme that has been presented. In the first section of this chapter, which I label as “Results 1 and Analysis,” I will portray and analyze the demographic information of each winery as communicated to me by the respondents in the interviews, as well as the sustainable practices of the winery. In the second portion of the chapter, which is labelled as “Results 2 and Analysis,” I will convey the remaining data disclosed to me in the interviews, which includes the respondents’ perceptions of sustainability initiatives and certification schemes. I organize this data based on the themes that were revealed in the coding process as well as analyze them in regards to the larger scholarly fields of sustainability and certifications.

Results 1 and analysis

The information presented here will be comprised of the winery’s age, size, the autonomous community³ in which it is located, its status of certification with WfCP, as well as a summary of the sustainable practices as communicated to me by the respondents. For ethical reasons as stated in the previous chapter, I will be referring to each winery using a numerical format, and any references to the respondents will be referred to using the numerical equivalent (i.e. Respondent 1 represents Winery 1). I will be using the definitions outlined in the previous chapter for the evaluation of winery age and size. For the gauging of sustainability practices, I will be implementing the guide utilized by Pullman et al (2010), which concentrates on four categories: land environmental practices, conservation practices, recycling practices, and social practices.

Winery 1 is located in the community of Castilla-La Mancha in Central Spain. The winery employs 32 personnel, making it a large-scale winery, and has been in production for 40 years, which classifies it as an old business. Winery 1 is certified by WfCP and has been since 2017. In regards to sustainability practices, Respondent 1 communicated to me in the interview that Winery 1 employs practices from all four pillars of the sustainability guide. For land environmental practices, the respondent explained the winery’s lack of use of pesticides and herbicides in the growing process. In regards to conservation practices, the respondent

³ Autonomous communities are Spain’s decentralized administrative areas with varying levels of autonomy. There are 17 autonomous communities in Spain made up of 50 provinces (Grant 2019).

explained the winery's participation in an annual water savings plan which practices monthly monitoring of water meters to avoid losses, the use of nozzles in the floor cleaning hoses, and the purification of all residual water in the winery for the irrigation of the adjoining vineyard. As for energy conservation, the winery closely monitors consumption and uses LED luminaires. The respondent communicated that since 2014, the winery's energy consumption has been reduced by 13% and that 100% of its electricity consumed corresponds to rights to generate renewable energy. For recycling practices, the winery recycles more than 90% of their waste, including cardboard boxes, glass bottles, and the cleaning solution used in the tanks. Regarding social practices, Respondent 1 communicated that the employees at Winery 1 have access to protective equipment and opportunities for skill development within the winery.

Winery 2 is located in the region of Castille and Leon, in the north-eastern portion of Spain. The winery employs 7 personnel and has been in production 17 years, which classifies it, based on definition, as a young and small-production winery. Winery 2 is not certified under WfCP nor any other sustainability certification scheme. Respondent 2 disclosed that Winery 2 actively practices sustainability measures that would fall into three of the four pillars of the sustainability guide utilized for this study; land environmental practices, conservation practices, and recycling practices. With regards to land environmental practices, the winery cultivates its plants without any external contributions such as pesticides or herbicides. Respondent 2 explained to me that with respect to conservation practices, the winery utilizes compost organic waste with native animal excrement in order to create a fertilizer for the plants. For recycling practices, Respondent 2 communicated that the winery recycles packaging waste such as glass from bottles. When asked about the socially sustainable practices implemented in Winery 2, Respondent 2 was unable to provide any information.

Winery 3 is located in Catalonia, the north-eastern most part of Spain. The winery is the youngest and the smallest of the wineries presented in this study, with 2.5 years in production and 2 employees. Winery 3 is not certified under WfCP. Respondent 3 could only speak to the land environmental practices of the winery, in that the winery forgoes the use of pesticides and herbicides in the growing process, as well as only adding organic material to the soil, such as specific microorganisms. When asked to explain other sustainable practices

concerning conservation practices, recycling practices, and social practices, Respondent 3 was unable to give any information.

Winery 4 is also located in the Spanish autonomous region of Catalonia. The winery employs 420 staff members and has been in production for 106 years, classifying it as a winery both of old age and of large production. Winery 4 is certified under WfCP and has been since 2017. The sustainability practices of Winery 4, as explained by Respondent 4, fall into each of the four measuring categories. Regarding land environmental practices, the winery prohibits the use of pesticides and herbicides in the growing process, and has purchased and maintained a 300,000 m² portion of forest land close to the vineyard. Winery 4 also periodically hires a biologist to study the flora and fauna in the vineyard and its adjoining lands, in order to ensure the sustainability of their cultivation methods. With regards to conservation practices, Respondent 4 explained the winery's reduction of water and energy consumption using measuring machinery for optimization, as well as the reuse of drinking water. Additionally, the winery utilizes specific technologies to avoid using unnecessary water on the bottle-cleaning production lines, and has replaced all automotive diesel forklifts with LPG trucks. For recycling practices, Respondent 4 explained that the 99.2% of the winery's waste is reused, that wine residues are collected and managed by an alcohol distillery, and that the winery is increasingly switching from single-use plastics to reusable packaging. With respect to socially sustainable practices of the winery, Respondent 4 listed the following which are practiced in Winery 4: safe working conditions for employees, payment of schools and nurseries for families, help for family members with disabilities, permanence bonuses, and regular team-building workshops.

Winery 5 is located in Murcia, a region on the south-eastern coast of the country. The winery employs 50 personnel, and has been in production since 2005, classifying it as a young winery with large-scale production. Winery 5 is not certified under WfCP. Respondent 5 communicated that Winery 5 implements sustainable practices that fall under three of the four pillars: land environmental practices, conservation practices, and recycling practices. For land environmental practices, Respondent 5 explained the winery's prohibition of pesticides and herbicides in the growing process. For conservation practices, the respondent indicated that the winery participates in water conservation, but could not give any concrete examples. In regards to recycling practices, Respondent 5 communicated the winery's use of organic

waste to compost as a fertilizer for the plants. When asked about social practices in the winery, Respondent 5 did not give any information.

Winery 6 is located in the autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha. The winery is a young, large scale winery, as it staffs 55 employees and has been in production 18 years. Winery 6 is not certified under WfCP. Winery 6, as described by Respondent 6, has implemented sustainable practices that fall under all four categories. Respondent 6 explained that in regards to land environmental practices, the winery has removed all use of herbicides and pesticides. For conservation practices, the winery utilizes what the respondent refers to as “hydratic stress,” in which the vintners are able to “trick” the plant into needing less water through a series of agricultural practices. Additionally, the winery purposefully has made the weight of their bottles less than what the EU requires, to lessen energy waste from transportation for recycling practices, Respondent 6 asserted that the winery never burns organic waste, but rather uses it for fertilizer. When asked about social practices in the winery, Respondent 6 explained that while there is not inherent danger for the employees, the winery allows the employees to work only 5 hours a day in the summer, to avoid being in the sun for too long. Respondent 6 stated, “In Spain, this is not the norm, it is not common to work 5 hours a day in the summer and 10 hours a day in the winter, but we do it anyway. My employees find it important and like it very much.” Furthermore, the respondent indicated that the winery gives housing to every employee working in the vineyard during the harvest season.

Winery 7 is located in the region of Catalonia in Spain. The winery employs more than 500 staff members, and has been in production for 97 years, classifying it as both old and of large size. Winery 7 is certified under WfCP and has been since 2017. The information that was given by Respondent 7 about the sustainable practices can fall under three of the four sustainability-measuring pillars: conservation practices, recycling practices, and social practices. In regards to conservation practices, Respondent 7 communicated the winery’s heavy vigilance of carbon emissions and consumption. The winery has worked to change the types of registrations of carbon emissions by sectoring the winery into parts. Each part contains meters that calculate the amount of emissions produced and will shut down production when consumption is not necessary. The respondent explained that the same method is applied to conserving water. Regarding recycling practices, Respondent 7 described that the winery uses recycled water from production to wash the wine bottles

before they are filled. For social practices, Respondent 7 stated that all of the administrators in the company, as well as the laborers who work directly with the wine, are trained to work in any area of the company. The respondent explained that this allows for more employee time-off and sick leave. The respondent continued, “In Spain this is not normal, but we have been working really hard for the past eight years to finally achieve this.”

Winery 8 is located in La Rioja, a community that is located in the Northeastern part of the country. The winery is old in age and large in size, employing 33 employees and having been in production since 1987. Winery 8 is not certified under WfCP. When asked about the sustainable practices of the winery, Respondent 8 expressed that the winery employs all of the “culturally typical practices.” The respondent reported practices that fall into two of the four categories; recycling practices and land environmental practices. Respondent 8 explained that in regards to land environmental practices, the winery refuses to use pesticides or herbicides in the vineyards, and looks instead to natural additives, such as chamomile, to assist in the growing process. The respondent asserted that regarding recycling practices, the winery tries to recycle all recyclable waste, and gave the example of recycling glass from empty wine bottles. When asked about the conservation practices and social practices of the winery, Respondent 8 was unable to provide any information.

Based on the results of the data displayed in this section, it is apparent that all of the wineries presented, regardless of certification status, amount of employees, or years in production, have implemented sustainability measures to some extent. In order to compare the wineries in term of sustainable practices, I will be implementing a rating system based on the amount of pillars that the winery’s practices can be classified as. These pillars, inspired by the guide utilized by Pullman et al. (2010), are land environmental practices, conservation practices, recycling practices, and social practices. The average rating for all wineries presented in this study, measured using the four pillars, is 3 out of 4. However, there was a noticeable difference in the ratings of sustainable practices between large and small wineries as well as between young and old wineries. The large wineries in this study had an average of 3.3 out of 4, while the average rating of the wineries classified as small was 2 out of 4. Wineries in production longer than 25 years had a rating of implementing practices that fall into, on average, 3.3 out of 4 of the sustainable pillars, while younger wineries, those in production less than 25 years, had an average rating of 2.8 out of 4. Furthermore, there was an apparent distinction in the ratings between wineries certified by WfCP and wineries that

are not certified. The average rating of the certified wineries is 3.7 out of four, making it the highest scoring group, while the presented wineries that are not certified scored an average of 2.6 out of 4.

It is interesting to note the differences in scores based on winery size and years in production, especially because the data shown here seems to contradict other literature on the topic. Previous research shows that business size and age does have an impact on the willingness of the company to implement sustainable business strategies. This previous research proves contrary to the data presented in this paper, which shows larger and older businesses to implement more sustainability strategies than their younger and smaller counterparts. The data shown in this paper has shown that larger and more established companies tend to resist the adoption of such practices due to fear of diminishing already existing profit, while younger and smaller companies often show more willingness to invest in new technologies that could complement more sustainable business practices (Gilinsky et al. 2016: 38).

The demographic data presented here also demonstrates a strong lack of socially sustainable practices as indicated by the respondents. Of the wineries with sustainable practices that did not fall into each of the four categories, the majority were lacking social practices. Four out of the five wineries that failed to reach a score of four out of four, as indicated by Respondents from Wineries 2, 3, 5, and 8, were unable to give any examples of social sustainable measures implemented. Despite that fact that social practices are included in the mainstream definitions of sustainability as indicated by the Brundtland Report and the triple bottom line concept (Gilinsky Jr. et al. 2016, Brundtland Commission 1987), socially sustainable practices are largely underdeveloped and underused in sustainability agendas (Vallance et al. 2011). In a previous research report on the wine and food supply chains, the data demonstrated that for wineries, environmental sustainability and economic survival were believed by wine professionals as being the most important pillars of sustainability in their business, the majority did not view sustainability as being related to social employee practices in any sense (Pullman et al. 2010: 38).

Results 2 and analysis

In this section I will display the second set of results collected in the interviews, which derives from the questions concerning the respondents' opinions on sustainable practices and

sustainability certifications. Differing from the anterior section which presented the demographic information of the wineries involved, this portion of the chapter will focus on the themes presented by the opinions of the respondents concerning sustainability initiatives and certification schemes. The data in this section will be presented thematically, with an analysis following each theme demonstrated.

Factors promoting sustainability initiatives

All of the participating wineries in this study expressed a participation in sustainability initiatives within their business, regardless of certification status, winery size, or winery age. When the respondents were asked about reasons or motivation behind the winery's sustainable practices, the following themes arose: betterment of plant and wine quality, environmental awareness, market differentiation, and social responsibility.

Betterment of plant and wine quality was the most popular response to this question, with 4 out of 8 wineries listing it as a motivation for the winery to implement sustainable practices. Both Respondent 2 and Respondent 5 named the main motivation for the implementation of such initiatives to be the possibility of creating the best wine possible. Respondent 2 elaborated: “[Winery 2] decided to implement sustainable initiatives firstly for the ‘question of quality’ and respect for the quality of the plants.” Respondent 2 believed that the greatest benefit from the implementation of such sustainable practices to be the improvement of the quality of the vines. The respondent explained that without the use of external contributions to the soil, the plants have been able to survive and thrive in the dry environment in which they are grown, and therefore the quality of the grapes have improved as well. Similarly, the first response from Respondent 8 when asked this question was “without a doubt with the objective of creating the best possible wine we can.” Respondent 6 answered this question with an anecdote of the history of the winery. The respondent explained that in 2007, the winery had serious problems with the soil, as it didn't have “sitting earth,” or enough rock in the soil. For this reason, the plant and the quality of the product decreased significantly. The respondent explained that the reason for the lack of quality soil was the intense use of herbicides and pesticides that the vintners were using, and since that since then, such mistreatment of the plants has been removed from the winery. Respondent 6 continued in saying that after many years, the winery is beginning to notice the improvement of the plant itself.” According to the respondent, “The soil has life, and if you take care of the soil's life, the better treatment it will give you in the product it produces.”

Environmental awareness was another of the more common responses in regards to the motivation behind the implementation of sustainability initiatives, however, only three of the eight wineries listed it as a reason. Respondent 1 explained that environmental awareness is a concept that is inherent in this field of work:

“The implementation and monitoring of the practices I’ve mentioned are mainly carried out by environmental awareness, we are an industry whose main and raw material comes from the field and that is committed to the conservation of the native vineyard, using the technology that is within our reach but always respecting the traditional method.”

Respondent 8 named environmental awareness to be the second reason for the use of sustainable practices, after the improved quality of the wine. The respondent specified environmental awareness to signify, “to preserve the flora and fauna, to create an environment that is the least invasive, and to leave the environment better than we find it.” Respondent 2 answered the question in a similar way, explaining that the implementation of these initiatives was done firstly for the question of quality, and secondly “in order to be respectful of the environment.”

Another theme presented in multiple interviews was the utilization of sustainable practices in order to achieve market differentiation. Respondent 1 explained that while environmental awareness and “respecting the traditional method” is the main reason for the implementation and monitoring of such practices, this reason also is what “differentiates [Winery 1] and gives [Winery 1] identity and character.” Respondent 7 revealed the main reason for the Winery 7’s commitment to sustainability as being a way to keep up with international markets. The respondent explained that the winery’s former president was originally taught about the winemaking industry in France. The former president noticed that France was ahead of Spain in terms of sustainable winemaking and decided to bring it back and implement the sustainable practices taught in France to Winery 7. Respondent 7 explains that by using French sustainable methods as an inspiration, the winery’s product is able to appeal to the larger global market. Respondent 5 explained that it is a very recent phenomenon that the Spanish consumer has begun to demand sustainably-produced wines. The respondent claimed sustainable practices to be “quite costly and demand more labor, more initiatives, and more technology,” but that such practices are necessary in order to survive in the modern Spanish wine industry.

The final theme presented in the motivations behind the utilization of sustainable practices in the wineries studied refers to social responsibility. I mark social responsibility as a different theme than environmental awareness, as the latter refers to desire to lessen environmental impact. In contrast to this, I will define social responsibility here as being rooted in historical and cultural responsibility and significance. Respondent 6 referred multiple times to the historical impact of sustainability on Winery 6. “Let’s say that we are pioneers in this area, as we have been implementing sustainable practices long before it was popular,” the respondent claimed. Respondent 6 that such practices have a very deep historical and familial meaning for the winery, and the maintenance of sustainable practices are very important for the winery’s legacy. The respondent continued, “The sustainable practices, what my family and I do in the winery, is the key to everything.” Similarly, Respondent 8 touched on the cultural significance of the utilization of sustainable practices in the winery. The respondent stated that the “culturally typical” sustainable practices, which the respondent referred to as recycling and prohibition of herbicides and pesticides, have become a pillar in the Spanish winemaking culture. The respondent explained that there is increasingly a “large tendency towards respecting the environment” in Spanish winemaking culture, and that the implementation of this in the winery is an ode to such culture.

It is apparent from this section of answers the respondents gave concerning their respective wineries, the majority of motivations behind sustainable initiatives come from a desire for an improved aspect of the wine production. The answer which most respondents gave to this question dealt with the idea that sustainable initiatives improve wine quality. Improved wine quality can benefit a winery greatly, as in turn can lead to price premiums, better ratings from critics, and an increase in sales in both domestic and international markets (Gilinsky Jr. et al 2016: 43). In addition to this, market differentiation was a topic mentioned by a number of respondents as a motivation for the implementation of the practices described in the previous chapter. Respondents 1, 5, and 7 all regarded sustainability in the winery as imperative in order to be profitable in the international market. It was made clear by these respondents that though the Spanish consumer is just beginning to demand more sustainable wines (Gázquez-Abad et al. 2015), the wineries have had to take inspiration from other countries, such as France, in which such practices have been developed and elaborated. The answers of the respondents could agree that winery sustainability is non-negotiable in order to stand a chance in international markets, as, in their opinions, many wine-producing countries are years ahead of Spain in regards to this.

Despite the fact the premise of sustainability, as explained by the Brundtland Commission and the 1992 UNCED (Brundtland Commission 1987:41, Vehkamäki 2005:7), as well as demonstrated by the WfCP certification guide (“Wineries for Climate Protection”), is founded upon an awareness of environment and an ambition to lessen environmental impact, environmental awareness was a motivation not discussed as in depth as other others by the respondents. The majority of respondents did not list environmental awareness as a motivation behind sustainable practices in the winery. Of the three respondents that did mention it, the lengths of response dedicated to environmental awareness were significantly shorter than the responses dedicated to other themes, such as market differentiation and wine quality. These responses merely referred to environmental awareness, or a “respect towards the environment,” as described by Respondent 2, using one or two sentences, which is significantly less than the other motivations listed.

Factors promoting certification

This data presented in this section deals with the answers from respondents representing both wineries that are certified through WfCP and those who are not. The respondents representing certified wineries were asked for the motivations behind certification through WfCP, while those representing non-certified wineries were asked to explain the reasons why a winery would choose to be certified. The answers of the respondents fell into the following categories: market differentiation, which also includes positive sales growth and consumer favor; and participation in the creation of the certification scheme.

The second most popular answer to this question was given only by the respondents representing wineries that are already certified. Two of the three respondents from certified wineries that participated in this study named the main reason for certification through WfCP as the winery’s involvement in the creation of the scheme. Respondent 7 explained that the only reason why Winery 7 has certification status with WfCP is due to the fact that the winery’s head winemaker was present in the group of the 300 producers that created the certification in 2011. Respondent 7 expressed disdain towards the certification, explaining that were the winery not been “grandfathered ” into the certification scheme, it would likely not have occurred. Similarly, Respondent 4 disclosed that Winery 4 was in the first group of wineries to be certified in 2017, and the reason for that being that the organization from which Winery 4 is managed was a part of the initial creation phase of the certification.

Similar to the data presented in the previous section, market differentiation was the most popular answer among the respondents regarding motivations behind the certification of the wineries they represent. Respondent 1's answer to this question was quite straightforward when asked why the winery they represent chose to become certified, "[Winery 1] chose to become certified through WfCP as a way to gain a tool for differentiation from our competitors." Respondent 1 also gave insight into the importance of labelling in appealing to the consumer and gaining success in the market. "Becoming certified has a great impact on sales, as when the logo is indicated on the label, the consumer recognizes it and is more likely to purchase our wines." Respondent 4 gave a similar response, explaining that "in order to keep relevant in a market as demanding as ours, it is necessary to find a way to stand out from the competition." Multiple respondents specifically touched on the international acknowledgement that certification often brings. Though representing a winery that is not certified, Respondent 6 gave the following answer when asked if Winery 6 would desire certification: "The only reason that I would like to be allowed into this club is because of the international recognition. I have been contacted by countries with [alcohol] monopolies, such as Sweden and Finland, to sell by wine, but because I do not have certification, I gain less points with them⁴." Respondent 5, also representing a non-certified winery, explained that "having such a certification allows a sort of power in the global market." The respondent continued in revealing that "many international clients look for the logo and ask about the sustainable practices rather than about the wine itself."

WfCP is advertised via the FEV's website as a certification scheme which defines its criteria as such that "a sustainable winery should meet in its environmental sense" ("Wineries for Climate Protection"). Moreover, the webpage describes the motivation for the scheme's creation as "the concern shown by different institutions and wineries that see the need to act in the face of a new climate reality" (ibid). Despite the schemes seemingly environmentally-focused incentives, not one of the respondents named environmental awareness as a motivating factor for obtaining certification status. Rather, great importance was given to the marketing benefits of the certification or the fact that the winery has been grandfathered into the certification after being part of the initial creation of the scheme. This process of "grandfathering in" can often work to portray the certification scheme in a negative light, as it emphasizes the increased dominance of specific powerful, private actors in certification

⁴ When asked to clarify what "gain less points" meant, the respondent explained that it means to "lose favor" with international clients.

activities. This dominance can, in turn, create an uneven playing field, where smallholders with less power, or those who were not present in the creation of the scheme, will have to invest much more in order to gain the formal certification (Higgins et al. 2008).

Additionally, each of the responses to the question regarding the factors that promote certification emphasized the benefit that the certification held for the winery itself, rather than the environment. These benefits, as explained by the respondents, included market differentiation, international recognition, and consumer support, all of which lead to higher sales and profit margins (Raynolds et al. 2017). Labels are inherent to the benefits acquired through certification. According to the Italian Wine Union, the label on the wine is the second most important feature that influences the consumer in choosing a wine (Unione Italiana Vini 2016). Labels, such as the one awarded by WfCP, work to facilitate transactions between the producer and the consumer, providing the consumer awareness of the “level of sustainability” of the wine producer. The award of label as granted by certification schemes can serve as the main, and often the only, incentive for wineries to aspire for certification, as demonstrated by the respondents in this section.

Factors inhibiting certification

The data presented in this section deals with the responses of interviewees that represent wineries both certified and not certified through WfCP. The data is indicative of the answers the respondents gave when asked questions concerning the factors that motivated the winery’s decision not to become certified, as well as the opinions of the respondents regarding certification in general. Though the majority of responses in this section come from respondents representing wineries that are not certified, one respondent from a certified winery also gave opinions on the factors that inhibit certification. The main themes that the responses can be categorized as are the following: the long and expensive process of certification, the lack of information about the scheme, elitist mentality of certification schemes, and the less than optimal requirements of the scheme in terms of sustainability.

The first and most popular response concerning the factors inhibiting certification, according to the respondents representing Wineries 7, 2, 8, and 5, was the long and expensive process that certification entails. Though representing a certified winery, Respondent 7 argued that “certification schemes today are simply not beneficial to wineries, economically speaking.” The respondent continued in stating that, “there is a high cost association with

WfCP certification, it is a process that is expensive to certify, especially for smaller wineries.” Multiple respondents explained that certification schemes can actually be harmful to the profitability of a winery, as was the case for Winery 2, a small-production winery. Respondent 2 valued certification schemes to be neither necessary nor beneficial to Winery 2, and believed that “the high costs associated with certification schemes are too high and will be harmful to the winery’s profits.” Respondent 8 spoke along similar lines, but stressed the long process not only to obtain certification, but also to maintain it. “It is simply a bureaucratic process with streams of never-ending paperwork and [certification] is simply not worth it for [Winery 8].” Though Respondent 5 explained that Winery 5 contemplated applying for certification status through WfCP, the long and demanding process certification entails was not worth the argued benefits. “It’s a very difficult process to become certified, it is as if they have to control every aspect of the winemaking process and that is sometimes not realistic for a winery.”

As WfCP is the only sustainable certification scheme specific wine industry in Spain, and only has certified 23 wineries, multiple respondents stressed the difficulty at locating in-depth information about the scheme. Though Winery 2 is not currently certified under any sustainable certification scheme, Respondent 2 described that the winery attempted to search for a scheme from the years 2003-2005, to no avail. “We eventually realized that the time trying to find a certification scheme and the money associated with finding a certification would not be profitable for the winery in the end.” When asked about the winery’s knowledge of WfCP, the respondent explained that, “by the time [the certification scheme] came to be, we didn’t feel like certification would be beneficial for us.” Respondent 5 asserted that Winery 5 is still on the search for a certification scheme that would best fit the winery. “We have been looking for a sustainability certification for many years, but we cannot find one that does not demand so much. WfCP acts as a monopoly in Spain, and is the only one available, but it simply demands too much and doesn’t fit with a winery like ours.”

As described by Respondent 5, because WfCP is the only industry-specific certification scheme in Spain, it acts as a “monopoly” in the sustainable wine industry. Due to this, many respondents described their aversion to the certification’s sense of elitism. Though Respondent 8 considered certification potentially beneficial in terms of image and branding, the respondent referred to the scheme as involving “nepotism.” “It is a game of favorites that is difficult to enter into.” Similarly, Respondent 6 expressed a sense of contempt toward both

the elitist nature of both WfCP and certification schemes in general. “[WfCP] is a club that I am not allowed into because of my ideas on certification, that is completely unnecessary.” The respondent continued, “I refer to it as a club, because in reality it is a private association. It is not institutional. It is a secret society that demands a series of unattainable sustainable intentions.” Both the elitist, “club”- like nature of the certification scheme as well as the fact that it is a completely privately-owned association proved to bring a sentiment of distrust from the respondents toward WfCP.

The final category of responses that the respondents gave, answering the prompt of the inhibiting factors toward certification, dealt with the opinion that the sustainability requirements of WfCP do not include all aspects of the winemaking industry. Winery 2, as stated by Respondent 2, looked into certification through WfCP when the winery began production two and a half years prior to the interview, but was not satisfied. Respondent 2 explained, “I feel like certification schemes are good in theory, but I looked into WfCP and I do not think that the scheme covers all areas of sustainability, for example transportation, which is a very crucial and large part of the winery’s activities.” Respondent 6 asserted the idea of having one certification scheme for the entire country as unproductive;

“The concept of certifying sustainable wine is stupid, there is no way a person in an office somewhere has the ability to determine whether a winery in Rioja and a winery in Madrid both contain the same level of sustainability. You need a level of knowledge of agriculture in order to measure it ... For me, sustainability is a way of life. I grew up in the countryside, and we have been implementing sustainability measures our entire lives.”

Respondent 8 expressed a similar feeling of disappointment towards the demands of the certification scheme, “It is something that has the potential to be very useful and beneficial, but certifications in general have a long way to go and need to be changed and optimized.” Despite the intense and costly process of certification as described by the respondents, their sentiments reveal discontent towards the effectiveness of sustainable certifications in the wine industry, specifically WfCP.

The data presented in this section gives a sense of the sentiments and opinion of wine professionals toward both WfCP and sustainable certification schemes in general. Though the benefits as presented in the previous section entail higher success rates in the market, many

of the respondents expressed an aversion towards applying for certification, due to bureaucratic processes and the high costs expected in order to achieve and maintain status. All of the small production wineries in this study are not certified through WfCP, which is explained by the respondents as lack of financial incentive. Many of the downfalls associated with sustainability certification schemes in any industry impact mainly smallholders. Certification often entails a process in which any financial benefits from the scheme are often eroded by the increase of extra labor and resources required of the producer. This effect can be detrimental to small production wineries, which are reliant on profitability much more than larger producers (Higgins et al. 2008: 18).

Sustainability certifications, including WfCP, are often underpinned by private, non-state arrangements (Raynolds et al 2007: 147). These private initiatives may have the ability to exhibit characteristics that can prove beneficial to producers, specifically through the regulatory power gained not from the state but from the ability to amass consumer support and higher success rates in the market (ibid: 148). However, the private nature of certification schemes, as demonstrated by the respondents of this study, can bring a sense of producer distrust toward the scheme. Many of the respondents indicated the desire for more efficient sustainability measures within WfCP, as well as a distrust of the legitimacy of the scheme's standards. Due to the fact that WfCP is a voluntary standard developed by a large firm, in this case the FEV, the standards it sets do not contain the same level of legitimacy and regulation associated with government processes (Castka and Corbett 2016: 5). Lack of state regulation can also allow for the elitism of the scheme as criticized by the respondents in this section. This absence of government intervention allows for the monopolistic nature of certifications such as WfCP, in turn allowing the scheme to set its own selection processes and auditing guidelines with no accountability to higher authorities (Rametsteiner 2002). It is evident that contributing respondents in this section can agree that the inhibiting factors, which include the scheme's monopolistic, private, and elitist nature, strongly outweigh the motivating factors of certification. This fact is only further advanced through the responses of Respondent 7, the only interviewee representing a certified winery to contribute to this section. Though Winery 7 is certified under WfCP and the respondent expressed the reception of its perceived benefits, Respondent 7 maintained a highly critical angle on both WfCP and sustainability certification standards in general.

Discussion

This section will provide a further discussion on the data analyses given in the previous chapter. This chapter will not only revisit the analyses of the collected data, but also portray them in relation to both the research questions of this study and the theory discussed in the chapter labelled, 'Theoretical Framework.' Each of the research questions presented once again below will be discussed firstly in relation to a specific set of data and secondly in relation to the theory. Through an array of semi-structured interviews with eight professionals working in the Spanish wine industry, this study has sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons that certain wine producers choose to certify their wineries as sustainable?
2. What factors discourage other wine producers from pursuing certification?
3. Does winery certification entail a deeper involvement or commitment to the adoption of sustainable practices in the winery?

The first set of data analyzed in the section labelled 'Results 1 and Analysis' dealt with the information on the winery's age, size, location, certification status, as well as a summary of the sustainable practices as communicated by the respondents. The data presented in this section corresponds directly with the third research question, which enquires into the level of winery involvement with sustainable practices based on certification status. Based on the results of the data collected, it is apparent that every winery presented in this study has implemented some level of sustainable practices, regardless of certification status, winery size, or winery age. However, based on the rating system implemented, WfCP certified wineries gained an average higher rating than the non-certified wineries. However, the data suggests that a large portion of wineries studied, as indicated by Respondents 2, 3, 5, and 8, failed to submit practices that dealt with the social aspect of sustainability. Though the Brundtland Report attempted to connect policies promoting environmental, social, and economic sustainability as the pillars of sustainable development (Brundtland Commission 1987), social sustainability is a section of the definition that is largely debated and lacks an actual definition. Certain social scientific communities focus on social sustainability is addressing basic human needs, while others focus their concerns with the advocacy of stronger environmental ethics. Some social scientists concentrate on the protection of specific

socio-cultural traditions, which often do not line up with the goals of environmental sustainability (Vallance et al. 2011: 342). One of the main arguments presented CSS asserts that the concept of sustainability is a disagreeable construct rooted in societal modernization, which allows for the introduction and emphasis of market-based goals in sustainability narratives over bio-physical sustainable objectives (Cachelin et al. 2015: 1128). This emphasis is not only visible through the goals of the UN Rio +20 Summit, which focused on the promotion of economically-beneficial development (United Nations General Assembly 2012), but also through the dialogues of this study's respondents, which were much more focused on the economic benefits such practices bring rather than the implementation of social sustainable practices in the winery.

Though the data suggests that each of the wineries in this study have implemented sustainable practices to a certain extent, it is apparent, based on the rating system utilized, that the wineries with WfCP certification had a higher average rating than the non-certified wineries. It is important to note, however, that each of the certified wineries operate under large scale production methods, and likely have the capital needed to implement practices that fell under more of the four pillars of the rating system. Despite certified wineries gaining a higher average rating than non-certified wineries, the motivations behind the implementation of these practices, as indicated by the respondents, were regarded not as beneficial to the environment, but rather as beneficial to the profitability of the winery itself. These benefits, as presented by the respondents, are listed in the section labelled 'Factors Promoting Sustainability Initiatives.' Despite the fact that the main premise upon which the concepts sustainability and sustainable development are based is an awareness of environmental degradation and an ambition to lessen ecological impact, the responses from this section of questions made it very clear that the main benefits as indicated by the respondents dealt with the improvement of winery profitability and product quality. The most popular answer to the question, 'What are the winery's motivations behind the implementation of sustainable initiatives?', was the increased quality of the wine that a winery's involvement with sustainable practices can produce. The respondents ultimately regarded sustainable practices in their corresponding vineyards as something financially beneficial, as an increased quality of wine allows for price premiums and sales increases in the market (Gilinsky et al. 2016: 43). Furthermore, respondents stressed the importance of market differentiation via sustainable practices, particularly in the international market. While environmental awareness was named by a few respondents as a motivation for the

corresponding winery's sustainable involvement, the majority of answers attended to winery financial gain and profitability. These responses agree with and can be explained by the assertion of CSS that the fragility of the concept of sustainability allows for the introduction and emphasis of market gain and financial profitability within the goals and motivations behind sustainable practice implementation. The fact that the current discourse on sustainability is centered on profit-motivated attempts to link ecological protection to the market allows for the introduction of "green capitalism" (Cock 2011), or the use of sustainable practices within a company to increase profitability (Medovi 2010). Sustainability in the modern era, underlined by neoliberal ideologies, has been described as the "single biggest business opportunity of the 21st century and the next main source of competitive advantage" (Cock 2011: 46). This quote is accentuated by the responses of the respondents in this section, as they hail the implementation of sustainable practices not only as something that produced market gain, but also as something completely necessary in order to succeed in the market, specifically international markets. Respondents 1, 5 and 7, all attributed their corresponding winery's motivation behind sustainable practices to appeal to the demand of the international consumer. This appeal is often met through a system of labelling, referred to in this sense as certifications, which are discussed in the next paragraph.

The following section of data refers to the answers of the respondents in regards to the factors that have motivated or might motivate a winery to seek accreditation through sustainability certifications. The data as given by the respondents in this section answers directly the first of the research questions; "What are the reasons that certain wine producers choose to certify their wineries as sustainable?" While involvement in the creation of WfCP was a common answer among respondents representing certified wineries, the majority of those who chose to answer this question, certified or not, listed motivation as market differentiation. Respondent 1 claimed that certification is merely a way to "gain a tool for differentiation from our competitors." The main way that this differentiation occurs is through labelling, an incentive of certification through WfCP as indicated through their website ("Wineries for Climate Protection"). The label that sustainable certifications, namely WfCP, award to wine producers is explained by Respondent 1 as "having a great impact on sales" as the consumer is more likely to purchase the winery's wines after seeing the WfCP label printed on the bottle. Furthermore, multiple respondents spoke on the necessity of a sustainable certification label for success in the international market. Respondent 5 represented a winery that is not currently certified sustainably, but explained that Winery 5

desires certification as it “allows a sort of power in the global market” as “many international clients look for the logo” when purchasing wines. The neoliberal emphasis on sustainability, emphasized through the introduction of green capitalism, has allowed for a merit system for corporations implementing “environmentally-friendly” policies (Kumi et al. 2014). These merit systems often materialize as certification schemes and emphasize the power of the market and other private initiatives as regulatory instruments of environmental governance. (Higgins et al. 2008). Product labelling, a fundamental part of certification schemes, act as a sort of “transnational private governance” (ibid: 18), in that the regulatory power of the state in creating standards for sustainability is replaced with the authority of private corporations through the market and consumerist society (Raynolds et al. 2007). The answers of the respondents which indicated a strong importance on product labelling as motivation for electing to become certified is analogous with previous critical research on certification schemes. These schemes have been criticized in previous literature as merely a way for firms to add legitimacy to their environmental performance, regardless if the level of environmental commitment is less than significant (Vilchez 2017). Such research has indicated that certain producers may elect to become sustainably certified merely for preferential access to international markets without necessarily a desire to improve environmental performance (ibid: 37). The portrayal of environmental symbolic behavior as emphasized in literature criticizing certification schemes, is also existent in the data presented by the respondents in this study. Said respondents gave no indication that the motivations behind becoming certified dealt with a desire to improve environmental performance, but rather for the legitimacy such a certification would bring in domestic and international markets.

The following set of data as given by the interviewees is in response to the question concerning the factors inhibiting certification, and corresponds directly with the second research question, which asks, “What factors discourage wine producers from pursuing certification?” The main responses in regards to this question dealt with the respondents’ sentiments that certification systems, specifically WfCP, have unnecessarily high costs, long processes, and are examples of private, non-state arrangements, which many of the respondents found to be questionable. Multiple respondents explained that obtaining a sustainable certification can actually be harmful to the profitability of wineries, specifically small-production wineries, both in costs and time. Respondent 7 asserted that certification schemes are “simply not beneficial to wineries, economically speaking,” as “there is a high cost associated with [certification] ... especially for smaller wineries.” Respondent 8’s

sentiments agreed, in stressing the needlessly long process certification, as well as its maintenance, entails; “It is simply a bureaucratic process with streams of never-ending paperwork and is simply not worth it.” Despite the arguments outlined by certain respondents in the previous paragraph that stress the financial benefits and legitimacy that certification can bring to a producer, these benefits often do not apply to smallholders. Certification schemes, including WfCP, are examples of market-based environmental approaches and are often marketed to producers in relation to financial and market-related benefits. However, despite its proponents’ claims of being advantageous financing instruments, market-based environmental approaches are not beneficial to all producers (Kumi et al. 2014). Conway (2012) argues that the benefits of sustainable certification schemes are not equally distributed among producers of different sizes, and largely favor large producers. Because certification schemes are market-based tools of neoliberal attempts at environmental protection, the producers are largely left to the graces of the temperamental free market. While large producers have the necessary capital to withstand the market’s often changing winds, smaller producers are left vulnerable and often less-than profitable (ibid: 456). The data in this section agrees with Conway’s claim, as the wineries differ demographically based on certification status. The entirety of the group of wineries that are certified in this study are large-scale producers with the majority proponents of WfCP, while all of the small-scale producers argue in this section against the certification scheme, outlining its preferential treatment of larger producers.

Another common response in regards to the factors inhibiting certification attended to the scheme’s sense of elitism. WfCP is the only sustainable certification scheme specific to the wine industry in Spain, and so was it regarded as a “monopoly,” by Respondent 5. Many respondents stressed their apprehension to seeking out certification due to the sense that the scheme operates as an elite club, which Respondent 7 argues was full of “nepotism.” Respondent 6 expressed distrust towards the private nature of the scheme, and argued that it is a “private association,” that is able to exclude and include wineries regardless of commitment to the environment. The respondent continued in saying that the scheme is “not institutional,” and acts as a “secret society that demands a series of unattainable sustainable intentions.” The distrust of the scheme as expressed by the respondents is due to the WfCP monopolistic, privately-owned, elitist nature. These attributes, however, are not specific to WfCP, as sustainability certifications are most often founded on non-state arrangements (Raynolds et al. 2007). Lack of state regulation, as indicative of neoliberal environmental

practices, allows for the monopolistic and elitist sense of WfCP. Additionally, the certification scheme was founded by FEV, a private association with no government intervention. The private nature of these schemes also foster a sense of distrust among certain producers regarding the legitimacy of the scheme's requirements. Lack of government regulation, national or otherwise, allows the scheme's full control in its selection process and auditing guidelines with little to no accountability (Rametsteiner 2002). Respondents in this section stressed their doubts towards WfCP, not only due to its alleged elitist nature, but also towards the legitimacy of the scheme in actually improving the environmental performance of the wineries it certifies.

Conclusion

The global wine industry does not serve as a deviation from the growing trend of sustainability. Its multiple elements of agriculture, production, and manufacturing are confronted directly by the effects of climate change, which can be detrimental to production and producer profitability (Gilinsky Jr. et al. 2016: 37). The winemaking process also is subjected to a host of sustainably-minded criticisms, due to its inherent disruption of plant and animal ecosystems, its use of agricultural chemical interventions, and the high levels of carbon emissions emitted during product transportation (Gázquez-Abad et al. 2015). In order to alleviate the consequences of climate change and pressures from environmentally-conscious consumers, wine producers are beginning to implement more sustainably-minded practices in the winemaking processes. As the switch to implementing sustainable practices often requires a large financial commitment, it is necessary for the profitability of the winery that such practices are marketed to the consumer, which can lead to higher sales in an incredible competitive market (ibid: 107). This marketing takes the place of bottle-labelling granted by sustainability certification schemes. Though the global wine industry is one of the leading industries in terms of the adoption of sustainable practices, certification schemes for wineries are few in number and under-developed (Moscovici and Reed 2018). Though some wine-producing countries have nation-wide certification standards, Spain, which is home to the largest amount of vine-growing land in the world (International Organization of Vine and Wine 2019), does not hold such a standard. There is only one sustainability certification scheme specific to the Spanish wine industry, Wineries for Climate Protection. WfCP is a non-governmental, privately-owned certification scheme, developed in 2011 by a group of winemakers representing the Spanish Wine Federation. However, despite Spain containing more than 4,300 wineries, as of 2020, only 23 are certified through WfCP (“El Sector en Cifras”). Such a small ratio of certified wineries to non-certified wineries in Spain begs an opportunity for research on the subject.

In an attempt to close the research gap surrounding sustainability certifications in the Spanish wine industry, this study has introduced an investigation into the factors and motivations that either encourage or inhibit Spanish wine producers from labelling their wines as “sustainable,” while also questioning whether such a certification entails a deeper level of commitment to sustainable production methods. Through an array of semi-structured interviews with eight wine professionals representing eight wineries of all sizes, ages, and locations in Spain, this study has answered such questions. This data, as presented by the

respondents, indicates a strong connection between sustainability certifications and neoliberal, market-based sustainability agendas. The definition of sustainability, as argued by CSS, defines the term to be disagreeable, allowing its alignment with neoliberal ideology, specifically market-driven discourses. In conjunction with CSS, the data collected through the interviews has shown that producer sentiments toward certification standards in the Spanish wine industry are largely fueled by market-based incentives. Based on the answers given by the respondents representing their respective wineries, the data has shown that certification via WfCP can indicate a higher level of environmental commitment, at least based on the four pillars of sustainability as utilized in the data analysis. The certified wineries represented in this study were more likely to indicate practices of the four pillars of analysis relating to land environmental practices, conservation practices, recycling practices, and social practices, than the non-certified wineries. However, it is interesting to note that while the certified wineries portrayed a higher level of sustainable practice implementation, the motivations behind the employment of such practices did not necessarily indicate an immense environmental commitment. When asked questions concerning the motivations behind the choice to implement more sustainable production methods, the most popular response among the respondents dealt with winery financial improvement, most noticeably through increased profitability as a result of a higher quality of wine, as well as the market differentiation that was believed by the respondents to accompany the implementation of sustainable practices in the winery. Similarly, when the respondents representing certified wineries were asked about the motivations behind soliciting certification through WfCP, the most popular answers did not include an aspect of environmental awareness, but rather were, once again, focused on the economic benefit that accompanies certification, through consumer recognition and increased success in international markets. Respondents representing wineries that did not hold any certification also expressed their interest in certification, as it was believed as something necessary in order to succeed in the competitive global wine market.

In returning to the initial premise of this investigation, which inquired into the reason for such a small amount of certified wineries in Spain, a potential answer was revealed when the respondents were asked questions regarding the factors inhibiting certification. Respondents representing both certified wineries and non-certified wineries were willing to provide insight into this inquiry by first explaining the long and expensive process that certification often entails. As indicated by the respondents, certification through WfCP is

regarded in the Spanish winemaking community as a luxury reserved for large production, lucrative wineries. Certification through WfCP requires a great deal of time and resources not only in gaining the initial certification, but also in the bi-annual auditing of each certified winery. Small production wineries often do not have the residual capital needed in order to meet WfCP's standards, and certification can often cause a loss of profitability for wineries in this situation. As the majority of wineries in Spain are considered to be of small size (International Organization of Vine and Wine 2019), it is evident that the lack of cost-effectiveness of sustainable certifications serves as a major factor in a winery's decision to pursue certification. A second common answer in response to the inhibiting factors of pursuing certification, many respondents expressed a distrust in the private nature of WfCP. Because the majority of sustainability certifications worldwide operate outside of state authority (Raynolds et al. 2007), these schemes are able to function using regulatory power gained not from governments, but rather from the private initiatives that underpin them. This often gives certification schemes complete control over selection processes and certification requirements, with no higher accountability. Many respondents revealed their skepticism towards WfCP's actual commitment to environmental sustainability, given that the scheme does not have to answer to regional or national authorities on the effectiveness of their guidelines. The private nature of WfCP also allows its monopolistic and subsequent elitist nature. The respondents relayed their feelings that WfCP was more of an elite club than a certification scheme, one that utilizes favoritism and "nepotism" in their selection processes.

The data shown is in agreement with the common assertion in CSS that current sustainable agendas are underpinned by neoliberal arrangements, made possible by the inadequate explanation of what it means to be 'sustainable,' and of what 'sustainable development' actually consists of. As evident in the data collected, the discourse surrounding modern attempts at sustainable development is encompassed by profit-motivated attempts to link environmental goals with those based in finance. Furthermore, these market-fueled attempts at sustainability illustrate the neoliberal stress on free-market power, made evident through the non-state regulatory power of these certification schemes. Though these schemes' reliance on the regulatory power of the market and the consumer are marketed as a way to benefit producers, the forgoing of government regulation often works against small producers while favoring larger producers with already lucrative positions in the market.

This investigation has provided valuable insights into the inadequacy of sustainable certification standards in the Spanish wine industry, and potentially the global wine industry

at large. Because of the increasing awareness of the devastating effects of climate change and the consequent, intensifying consumer demand for environmentally sustainably-made products, it is unlikely that sustainable certifications will decrease in popularity. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the trend of sustainable certifications will decrease in the global wine industry, as its expected value by 2023 is placed at over 420 billion USD (Business Wire 2019). While current sustainable certification schemes in this industry may prove to be quite beneficial for some wineries, i.e., large, well-established producers, it is evident that the majority of the Spanish winemaking industry are excluded from these benefits. The data shown in this study has proven to not be in agreement with the popular claim that there need be one universal certification scheme that covers the entire global wine industry. Such a scheme would not be able to meet the needs of such a wide array of winery sizes and capabilities, as demonstrated through the small, homogenous group of WfCP certified wineries. Rather, this study could propose the possibility and potential efficacy of multiple certification schemes in one wine-producing area. Further research opportunities are necessary in order to determine the potential effectiveness of multiple schemes in comparison to the shortcomings of one, monopolistic certification scheme as demonstrated through WfCP.

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