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The semiotics of wine. Analysis of wine-related cultural consensus in two Spanish wine-producing regions

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ABSTRACT

In this article we analysed wine-related sociocultural representations in two Spanish wine-producing regions: Logroño (La Rioja) and Tarragona (Catalonia). Our aim was to determine how stakeholders in the wine cycle (producers, distributors, wine consumers, non-wine consumers, oenologists, biotechnologists, biochemists, and healthcare professionals) construct, incorporate and reproduce categories and images related to wine. We conducted seven focus groups made up of consumers, non-consumers, wine experts, wine sellers, wine producers and healthcare professionals. We also used the free listing technique to obtain data (words or short phrases) study participants associated with the word 'wine'. These words and phrases were organized and analysed using ANTHROPAC software for analysing cultural domains. The results showed that wine is a complex referent that evokes potentially contradictory images while the context in which wine is consumed also has a value from which it cannot be separated. In the La Rioja region, aspects related to local traditions and identity abound (*Rioja wine, culture, land*), gastronomy (*good food*), relationships (*friends, family, celebrations*) and senses (*pleasure, aroma, taste*). In Tarragona, the most abundant aspects were relationships (*friends*) and gastronomy followed by senses (*aroma, pleasure, enjoyment, flavour*) and tradition (*wineries, family, culture*). By analysing the cultural consensus captured by the word 'wine' from the symbolic and cognitive paradigm, we can understand the complex vision and interpretation of wine in relation to relationships, gastronomy, culture and sensations. By providing these semantic maps with a solid context, we are also able to reflect on the current cultural significance of wine and wine consumption in this two regions in Spain.

1. Introduction

Wine is one of the most recognized Spanish cultural heritage products (Stanislawski, 1975; Cosgrove, 1984; Medina, 2006; Ribas, 2013) and symbols (Gracia, 1986; Roigé-Ventura, 1988; Roque, 1996). The meanings and interpretations evoked when we think of the word 'wine' include landscapes of vineyards, images of sunset tastings, meals partaken in good company, colours, aromas, enjoyment, multisensory pleasures, terroir, devotion and pairings that stimulate our senses.

However, wine is also a complex referent worldwide that evokes sometimes contradictory images, while the context in which wine is consumed also has a value from which it cannot be separated and that ranges, for example, from those who drink wine alone, to those who drink wine to forget (the 'comforting' wines), and those who drink wine to share, strengthen family ties, reinforce friendships, or enhance social

relationships (Poulain, 2019; López, 2021).

In symbolic anthropology, we study culture on the basis of symbols, the cultural significance of those symbols, rituals, and the role rituals play in maintaining social structure (Turner, 1970). We thus take into account not only the rituals' external peculiarities and observable characteristics but also the meanings and cultural maps they generate. In this context, the ritualization of wine consumption matches what López (2021) termed the *democratic revolution of wine*. According to this concept, although wine consumption per capita is lower than in previous years¹ (despite the recovery in consumption per capita during confinement), wine consumption is currently expanding to ever more people and within a broader range of social class and gender (Alonso and Parga, 2019; Barco, E., 2015). In light of this, we became interested to determine the cultural consensus that are associated with wine in two Spanish regions.

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¹ OeMv (2021) <https://www.oemv.es/analisis-del-consumo-de-vino-en-espana-primer-semester-2021>.

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The results presented in this article are part of an interdisciplinary research project entitled ‘Model-guided evolution for balanced attenuation of wine ethanol content by developing non-GMO yeast strains and communities’, also known as the *CoolWine* project.² Involved in the project are four countries (Spain, Norway, Sweden, and Germany) with a consortium comprising several universities, various research groups and a Spanish wine producer. From the biotechnological perspective, the project’s starting point is the development of GMO-free starters that are capable of reducing ethanol yield during wine fermentation. From the social anthropological perspective, we were responsible for aspects pertaining to the study’s social impact. By using an ethnographic approach, we analysed how ideas, beliefs, practices, attitudes and values on wine culture and wine consumption are constructed and which could be the response to innovations derived from *CoolWine*. Our main objectives, therefore, were to map the project’s potential impact in the community and identify stakeholders, maximize the positive impacts of *CoolWine* while minimizing the negative ones, and identify criteria for the acceptability of *CoolWine* products.

2. Material and methods

In this article we analyse wine-related sociocultural representations in two Spanish wine-producing regions: Logroño (La Rioja) and Tarragona (Catalonia) (Fig. 1) to determine how stakeholders in the cycle of wine (producers, distributors, wine consumers, non-wine consumers, oenologists, biotechnologists, biochemists and healthcare professionals) incorporate social meanings and construct and reproduce wine-related categories (Spradley, 1979; Muñoz et al., 2019; Roascio-Albistur et al., 2019).

By using cultural domains as a method for analysing social meanings, we can identify the terms or items that emerge in answers to the question: ‘What comes to your mind when someone says ‘wine’?’ We can also determine the system of relationships that, in order of appearance and importance, are identified in relation to wine.

To analyse the social impact of *CoolWine*’s technological innovation, we implemented an ethnographic approach comprising several qualitative research techniques (Fig. 2). For example, in Tarragona we conducted 15 in-depth interviews with wine experts, wine merchants, wine consumers, non-wine consumers, wine producers, a yeast producer, and a healthcare professional. Despite our intention to include heterogeneity

among the profiles, we realized that these categories are not closed compartments, since a producer may also be a wine expert, and among the consumers, there are wine experts. The selection of informants was carried out using the snowball technique (Taylor and Bogdan 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson 1994). The initial group was formed from the researchers’ social network and from contacts with our bio partners. We also conducted participant observation in a wine store to observe clients and identify criteria when choosing a bottle of wine, at a wine-tasting event to collect opinions concerning the organoleptic characteristics of a coolwine wine and created a total of seven focus groups made up of consumers, non-consumers, wine experts, wine sellers and healthcare professionals in Tarragona and of wine experts, wine producers and healthcare professionals in Logroño. Within the experts’ category, we find biotechnologists, biochemists, chemists, and oenologists. Within the producers’ category, there was a grape producer, a small wine producer, and representatives of five large wineries, as well as a dry yeasts producer. Among the distributors, there were four wine shop owners. Seven wine consumers and two non-consumers were interviewed. In the health professionals’ category, we incorporated nurses, physicians, social workers, lab technicians, biochemists, a psychologist, and a psychiatrist. We analysed the discourse of every single interview and focus group on itself.

With each focus group we used the free listing technique, whereby we provided all participants with a free listing form and asked them to answer to the following question: ‘What comes to your mind when one says ‘wine’?’ From these free lists, we obtained data in the form of words or short phrases participants associated with the word ‘wine’. Through the free listings, we obtained information that could be words or short phrases written by the focus group participants in relation to what the word wine evokes/elicits them. After collecting the lists, we grouped them by stakeholder category and region, without modifying or forcing categories that were not identified by the participants. We then organized and analysed these words or phrases using ANTHROPAC software³ for the quantitative analysis of qualitative data specifically in relation to cultural domains (Borgatti, 1996). Lastly, and to finish with the list of ethnographical techniques used during this research, we provided a questionnaire to all 16 participants on a wine tasting organized with volunteers, professors and university students in Tarragona, and that included an experimental *CoolWine* wine. The aim of this activity was to collect their opinions concerning the organoleptic characteristics of this product, when compared with other wines and to determine their ideas on wine, health, global warming, and biotechnological initiatives.

We will present the free listing in tables that show the frequency of each item in each region. When presenting our results, we will take into account only the most-cited items. Our analysis will also take into account ‘average rank’, i.e. the average position of an item or term in the list from all those informants who mentioned it (Muñoz et al., 2019). This was calculated by analysing the item’s position in the lists and the number of times it appeared. This combined measurement of frequency and order produces a ‘cultural or cognitive salience index’, which indicates the importance of a term as it was mentioned easily in the first positions. To know the salience index we divide $F/(N \cdot mP)$, where F is the frequency, N is the number of subjects and mP considers the weight of the mean position in which the term is named. The salience index ranges from 1 to 0. The salience index of the most ideally salient term is closer to 1. Terms that tend to be named last and with a low frequency, with 0.

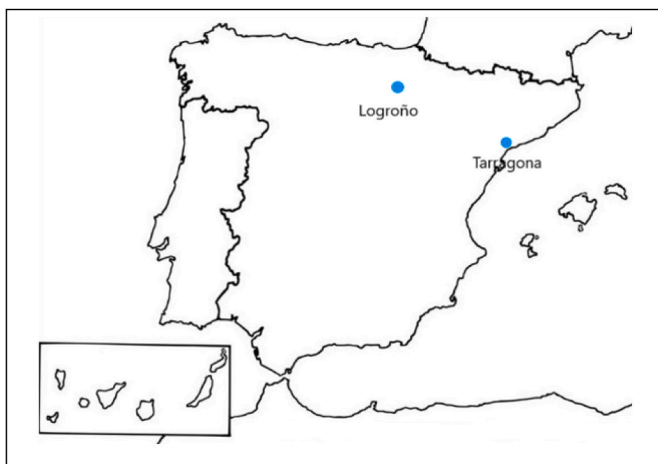


Fig. 1. Map showing the two regions where we carried out the fieldwork.

² PCI2018-092962 project funded by MCIN /AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and co-funded by the European Union (2017–2021).

³ Anthropac is a software for the quantitative analysis of qualitative data. In the analysis of free listings, the frequency is related to the number of times the word appears. The salience index (S) indicates the position it occupies in the list. <https://svisual-anthropac.software.informer.com>.

7 Focus groups	15 In-depth interviews	Other sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 in Tarragona • -4 wine consumers and non-consumers; • -3 wine experts (biotechnologist, biochemist, oenologist); • -2 wine sellers; • -8 health professionals (doctor, nurses, psychologist, psychiatrist, social educator, policeman). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 in Logroño • -7 wine experts (biotechnologists, biochemists, oenologists, chemists); • -4 wine producers; • -6 health professionals (doctors, laboratory technicians; R&D manager; biochemist). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 wine experts (biotechnologists, biochemists, environmental law expert); • 2 wine sellers; • 5 wine consumers and non-consumers; • 3 wine producers; • 1 yeast producer; • 1 health professional (nurse involved in prevention program). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 participant observations • -in a wine shop to observe criteria when choosing a wine; • -during a wine tasting that included a CoolWine wine. • Questionnaire completed by 16 wine tasting participants. • Free-listings completed by focus groups participants.

Fig. 2. Data collection techniques.

3. Results and discussion

Our research was multi-situated, since the focus groups were to be held in two different locations -Tarragona (Catalonia) and Logroño (La Rioja)-, both wine producing regions and home of universities and research institutes participating in the research. We will first present our results after the analyses of all joint free listings. Afterwards, we will present the results for the two regions combined, and then for La Rioja (Logroño) and Catalonia (Tarragona and Vilafranca del Penedès) separately. In total, there are 34 free listings.

We will also reinforce some of these results with fragments extracted from the focus groups in each region. Figs. 3 and 4 show the frequency and global salience index from the freelistings of these regions. The items that appear most often in the free listing are friends, gastronomy, culture, pleasure, aroma and family. These items encompass a whole series of positive values that reflect the importance of tradition (culture, land), gastronomy, relationships (friends, family, celebrations) senses

(aroma, taste) and sensations (pleasure).

With regard to the salience index (Fig. 4), which, as we mentioned earlier, measures not only the number of times the item is cited but also the position in the list where the item appears, we can see that friends occupies the first position (0.194), followed by family (0.172), gastronomy (0.159), culture (0.149), pleasure (0.141) and aroma (0.12).

3.1. La Rioja

Land and heritage in La Rioja are strongly identified with wine. This is especially illustrated by the frequency with which the term Rioja appears in the free lists. Friends, family, wineries, aroma and grape also appear in the first positions, which shows that the word 'wine' is also associated with relationships (friends, family), the region (wineries, grape), senses (aroma) and sensations (a glass of red wine).

However, 'Rioja' occupies the third place in the Salience index, where it is preceded by family and friends (0.22) and a glass of red wine

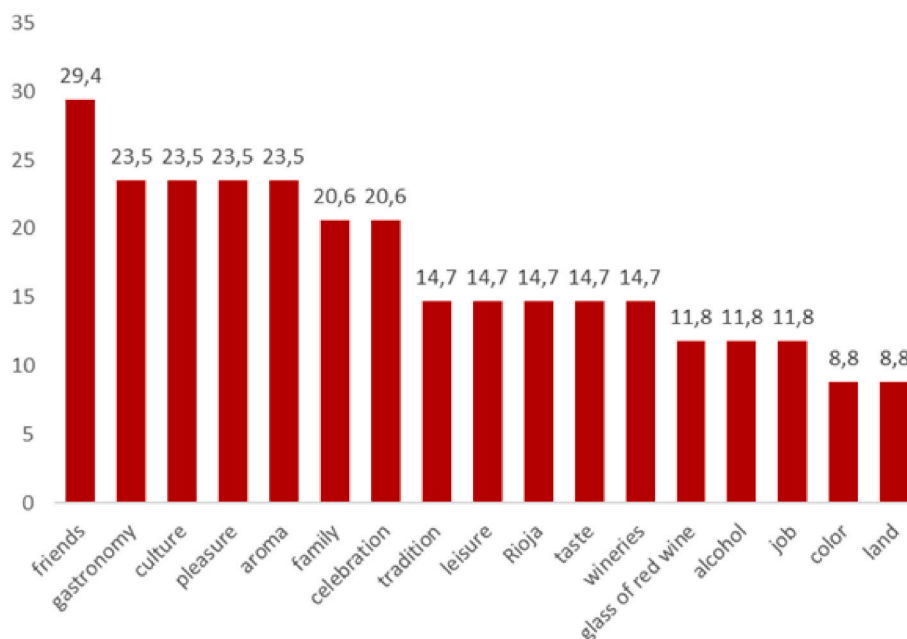


Fig. 3. Frequency. Stakeholders from La Rioja and Catalonia.

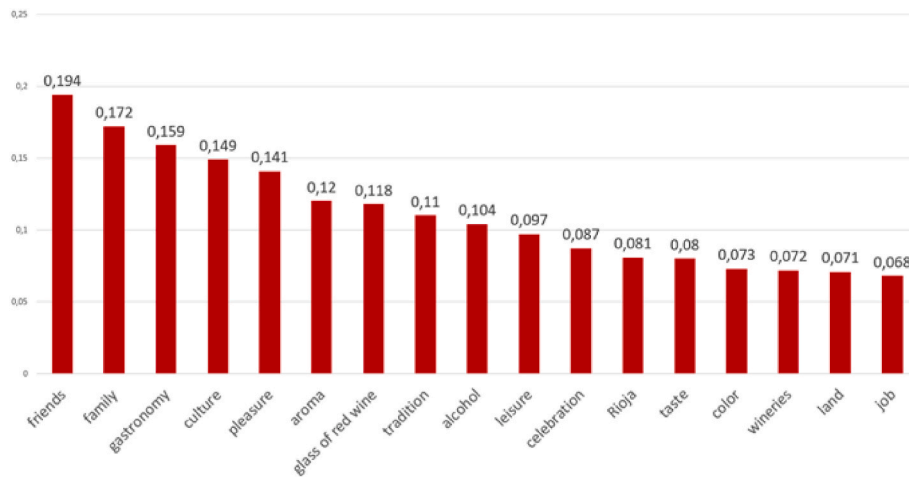


Fig. 4. Salience index. Stakeholders from La Rioja and Catalonia.

(0.176).

The regional issue (Alonso and Parga, 2019; Ribas, 2013) is clearly present in the free listing for La Rioja. This is due to a strong notion of identity since La Rioja is recognized as a unique wine-producing region with a specific seal of quality (see Table 1), one that is clearly recognized as a cultural domain by participants from this region.

We will reinforce some of these images with extracts from the focus groups in order to contextualize several ideas that appear in the free listings from La Rioja.

One of our questions during the focus groups was to define what makes a good wine. Below we reproduce various testimonies from oenologists and healthcare professionals in Logroño to consolidate several predominant images from the free listing technique (Figs. 4 and 5):

For me, a good wine is one that I like! There is no other wine. (...) Of all the wines I know, I like Rioja much more than the others. It's probably because these are the wines I'm used to drinking. So, naturally, when anyone offers me a Ribera del Duero, a French wine or any other type, well, it's just that I'm used to my Rioja Crianza, and I enjoy it! Those are the wines I like! (Female oenologist 1, Logroño)

Table 1
Free listing in La Rioja (n = 17).

Item	Frequency	Average Rank	Salience
Rioja	29.4	4.2	0.162
Friends	23.5	3.5	0.157
Family and friends	23.5	1.25	0.221
Wineries	23.5	4	0.106
Aroma	23.5	5	0.111
Grape	17.6	3.67	0.097
Glass of red wine	17.6	1	0.176
Wine-tasting	17.6	3.67	0.108
Celebration	17.6	4	.072
Gastronomy	17.6	3.67	0.092
Alcohol	17.6	2	0.15
Taste	11.8	5.5	0.048
Sampling	11.8	4.5	0.07
Culture	11.8	2.5	0.098
Pleasure	11.8	1.5	0.103
Family	11.8	2.5	0.094
Leisure and enjoyment	11.8	1.5	0.106
Joy	11.8	3.5	0.085
Tradition	11.8	2	0.103
Calmness	11.8	4.5	0.046

Note: Results from all the free lists (n = 17). The names of the items mentioned are at least 2 times included.

In relation to their preferences for the type, taste and organoleptic characteristics of wine and associated gastronomy, the members of this focus group told us:

I prefer wines that are not very astringent rather than those that feel like a cat's tongue; I don't like those wines if I'm not having a meal. With Reserva and Gran Reserva wines, for example, I always say 'this is a wine to be drunk with a T-bone steak' because they don't entice me to have another glass or to finish the bottle. So, although it does depend on which young wine it is (because there are some young wines I don't like), I do like the fruity flavour. But our Crianzas in La Rioja are characterized by a mild astringency as well as by the aromas and fruity flavours I enjoy, though, of course, I do also change my wines a lot and I do pay attention to the variety of wine and the variety of grape. (Female oenologist 2, Logroño)

I like wines with which you can perceive certain characteristics in the mouth, such as smoothness, yes, smoothness, these kind of notes. I don't know, for example, for me it's very nice if it has a certain velvety quality, I mean ... that feeling ... those sensations ... mmm ... actually, there is no real vocabulary to define those ... erm, sensations, but what I mean is you can perceive things but there is nothing that ... stands out too much (Female oenologist 3, Logroño)

We found very interesting answers of the expert group in relation to "what characteristics a good wine should have", we were surprised by the kind of vocabulary and adjectives they used: smoothness, velvet quality, balance in mouth, cat's tongue, astringency. Among others, a good wine is "the one I like"; "the one that gives me pleasure" (Barco, 2015; Gracia, 1986).

Also important is the moment in which the wine is consumed (Poulain, 2019; Skinner, 2020). The consumption patterns of M and A (healthcare professionals), for example, have changed over the years. Below they discuss consumption linked to the time of day they can relax and when wine enables them to disconnect:

What I want to say is that, before, my alcohol consumption was every day, for dinner, and now it's not so much every day or during a meal. At least, not for our generation, right? I think that's changed a lot. Now, when you feel like a drink, you want to go out and have a good wine because it's your time to relax. So you don't drink, I don't want to drink six pints. I want to drink a glass of wine, and I mean a good one. (Female healthcare professional 1, Logroño)

And it has to taste good and to keep me company. But that's at our age. Because when you're 20 something, that's not the way you think, is it? (Female healthcare professional 2, Logroño)

On considering wine as a food in days gone by to considering wine as

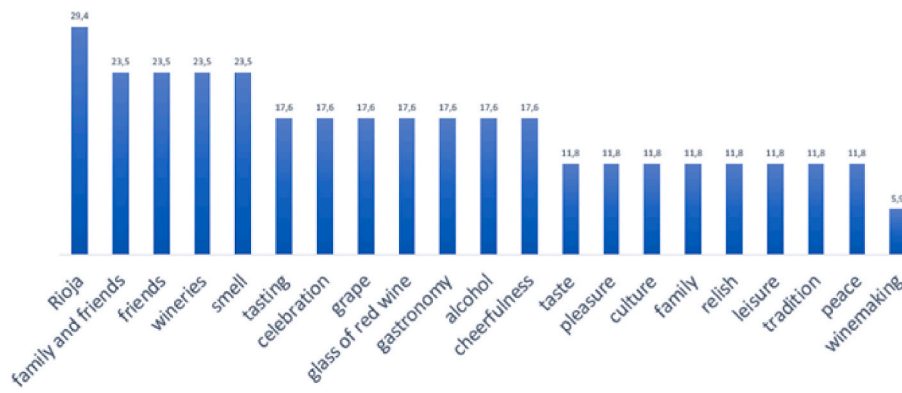


Fig. 5. Frequency. Logroño.

a complement to food with its own identity in gastronomic terms, one healthcare professional in Logroño stated:

Initially it was a staple food. Why? Because it provided calories and was satiating, that's just how it was. What's happened is that it's become, and we see the hedonistic aspect because our basic food needs are amply covered. (Female healthcare professional 1, Logroño)

3.2. Tarragona

In Tarragona the domain most frequently associated with the word 'wine' is *friends* (29.4%), followed by *gastronomy*, *aroma*, *pleasure*, and *culture* (23.5% each) (Table 2). Also in Tarragona, the cultural domains of social ties (*friends*, *celebrations*) and good food (*gastronomy*) are combined with those of senses (*aroma*, *pleasure*, *enjoyment*, *taste*) and tradition (*wineries*, *family*, *culture*).

The salience index (Fig. 8) shows there is a very prominent link between wine as an instrument for creating and maintaining social relationships (*friends*, *sharing*, *consumption*) and wine as an instrument for enjoyment (*gastronomy*, *celebration*, *pleasure*) and territorial identification (*culture*, *tradition*, *nature*, *designation of origin*).

Below there are several extracts from distributors, wine consumers, non-wine consumers, and healthcare professionals in focus groups from the Tarragona region. Asked what characteristics a good wine should have, wine consumers and non-wine consumers replied:

Table 2

Free listing in Tarragona (n = 17).

Item	Frequency	Average Rank	Salience
Friends	29.4	3.6	0.194
Gastronomy	23.5	2.88	0.159
Aroma	23.5	4.63	0.12
Pleasure	23.5	4.5	0.141
Culture	23.5	3.75	0.149
Celebration	20.6	4.86	0.087
Family	20.6	2.43	0.172
Wineries	14.7	3.6	.072
Tradition	14.7	3	0.11
Leisure and enjoyment	14.7	3.6	0.097
Taste	14.7	4.6	0.08
Rioja	14.7	4.2	0.081
Work	11.8	3	0.068
Glass of red wine	11.8	1	0.118
Alcohol	11.8	1.75	0.104
Colour	8.8	3	0.073
Land	8.8	2	0.071
Wine-tasting	8.8	3.67	0.054
Consumption	8.8	7.33	0.029

Note: Results from all the free lists (n = 17). The names of the items mentioned are at least 2 times included.

WC. 1. I have to like it and it has to have a good temperature. And, at that moment, it has to match what I'm eating. For example, if I'm eating, er, cheese, well, I'm a big fan of red wine. I'm not so keen on white wine or rosé wine. So, if I can choose, it's always red for me. And well, at that moment, it has to have the right temperature and I have to like it. Because, really, when it comes to palate, so much ... Since I'm not really a connoisseur, I can't give you a better explanation. For me, it has to be good, and I have to like it. The right temperature and a wine that I like. (Male wine consumer, Tarragona) NWC 1 (...) Personally, I don't like the taste of wine and yet there it is. Sometimes I'd like to enjoy wine because the image of a glass of wine is VERY nice. I mean, I like the visual image of wine. (Female non-wine consumer, Tarragona)

WC 2: The first thing I expect of a wine is ... the lack of defects. Then, erm, yes, but that's just ... yes, some ... but that may just be *déformation professionnelle* on my part. So, it must not have certain defects because then ... I mean, without really wanting to, I analyse it, it's just intrinsic in me to make a ... to taste it and to analyse it while I taste it. Basically, what I demand is equilibrium. I think a wine is ... in each category, maybe, of wine, we can find a well-balanced wine. I mean, we can find a well-balanced wine of high strength, and, erm, of medium strength and of low strength, it appears to me, and balanced with the other ... Wine is a set of ... from the chemical perspective, it's a set of ... families of substances that each play a sensory role. And then, yes, if they are in equilibrium, these substances, the sensory role, ah, ah, it's well-balanced and you perceive that's like a nice wine and, and so I like it, right? (Male expert wine consumer, Tarragona)

Another interesting aspect was the concept of 'wine culture'. Although, broadly speaking, our work in social and cultural anthropology involves studying culture, we asked ourselves, and indeed our informants, how to define 'wine culture', since this concept was in the second most mentioned category by frequency (Fig. 6) and the third by position (Fig. 7).

According to wine distributors in Tarragona, the region does not have a consolidated wine culture, which they associate with local knowledge about the specificities of wine (grape varieties, designation of origin, types of wine, etc.). We wonder, therefore, whether a 'wine culture' exists at all? How can it be described if indeed it cannot be defined?

IP 1: Because here we are talking about wine, but ... let's see if you agree with me: in Tarragona wine culture does not exist. (Male wine producer 1, Tarragona)

IP 2: No [categorically]. (Male wine producer 2, Tarragona)

Interviewer: What do you mean when you say 'wine culture' [Informant 2 laughs]

IP2: It's, er ...

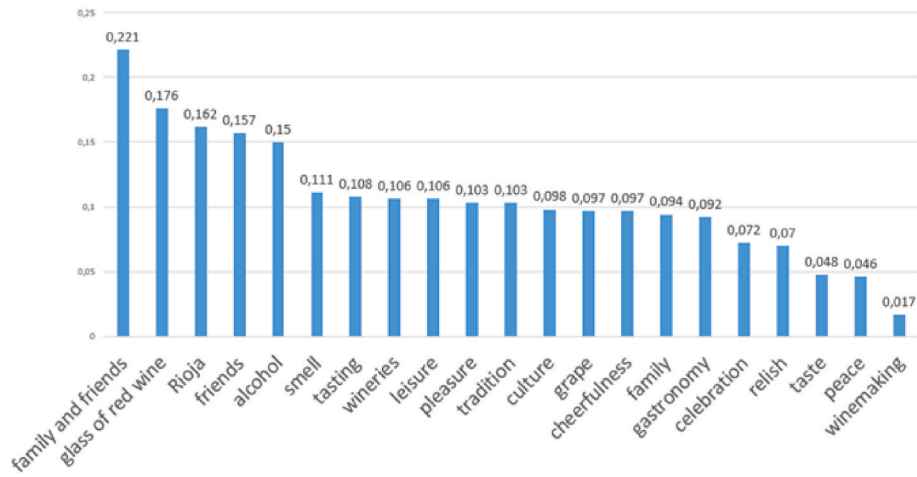


Fig. 6. Salience index. Logroño.

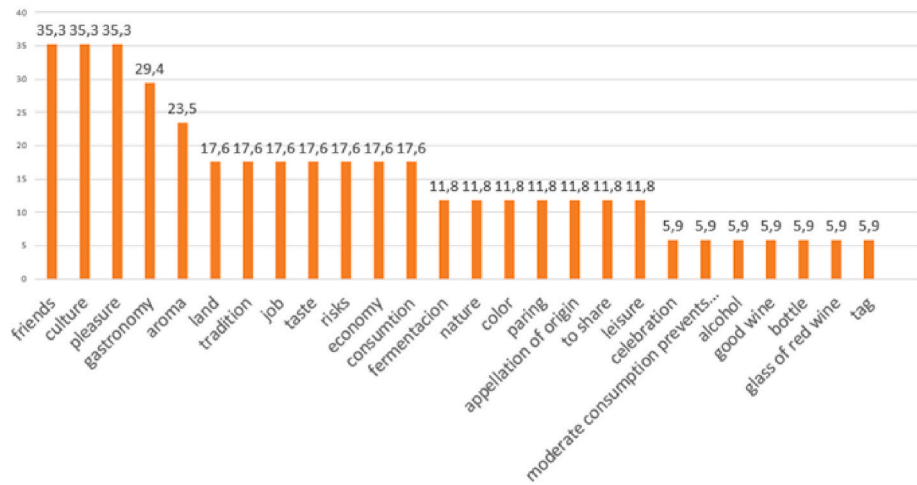


Fig. 7. Frequency. All stakeholders in Tarragona.

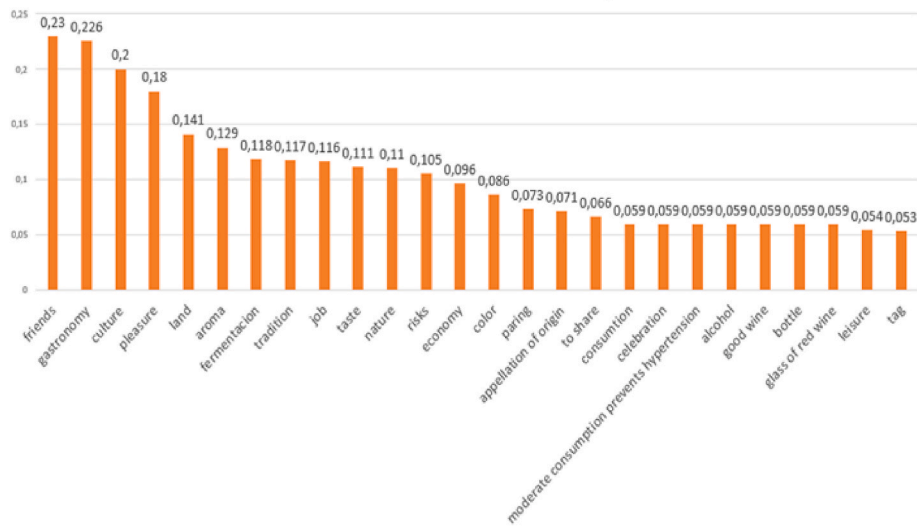


Fig. 8. Salience index. Tarragona.

IP1: Wine culture means knowing what you're drinking. That's wine culture, knowing what you're drinking.

IP2: That's an interesting question, though. What is wine culture?? Because it's ... Culture is the price, culture ... ? Or is it the amount?

The group of oenologists broaden the focus a little more by explaining that wine is a food component of the Mediterranean diet.

Young people don't binge drink on wine, erm, I mean, alcoholics usually use a different type of drink, not wine. So we can't treat wine as if it were just another alcoholic drink. We asked the EU, and the regulations of most traditionally wine producer's countries, the first thing they do, that Spanish wine law states is that wine is a food! And that it's a component of the Mediterranean diet! So, ok, it contain\`s alcohol, but it's not the same. It's a food, not an alcoholic drink! (Female oenologist 1, Tarragona)

This group also speaks of wine production as an intuitive, fascinating, and captivating art form:

It's true that the world of wine gets you hooked. If you like it, it's a great world to be in because it's a mixture of technique, knowledge, art, intuition, and another component you can never fully control. That's also fascinating, isn't it? In the world of wine it's like starting from scratch every year. That sort of thing appeals to me! I like it, do you know what I mean? (Male oenologist 1, Tarragona)

Behind every vineyard is the wine (...) So it's a project ... a nice, collective project for your region! A project that aims to showcase a whole region! (Male oenologist 2, Tarragona)

Therefore, wine culture is also one's region. It is also changeable, not static.

On the issue of wine and its association with gastronomy and celebrations, the healthcare professionals in Tarragona commented the following:

Wine has a gastronomic connotation. Being able to drink it is also an issue. At weekends, but not on weekdays, eating a good meal without

a drop of wine, well, that wouldn't be easy! (Female healthcare professional 1, Tarragona)

Well, we associate wine with the food sector, right? We associate it with *tapas*, for example, and meals in general, right? (Male healthcare professional 1, Tarragona)

And with sharing, and company, and celebrations, etc. (Female healthcare professional 2, Tarragona)

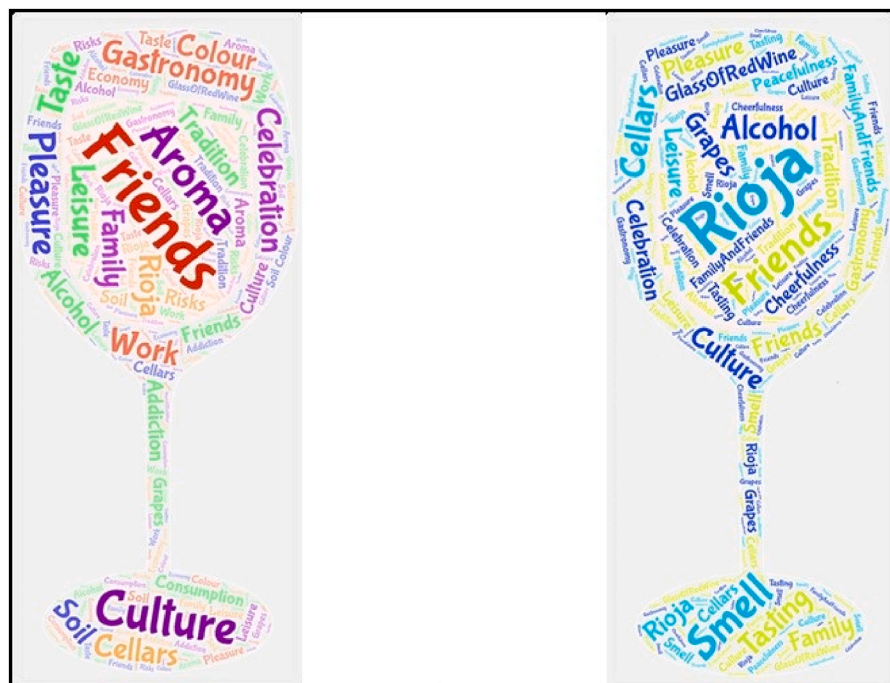
From all these narratives and our analyses of the free listings, we make special mention of wine-related cultural representations in these two Spanish wine-producing regions. Our results help to determine the meanings our participants associate with the word 'wine' and to identify useful elements for delimiting cultural domains and semantic connections between relationships. These elements are mainly associated with relationships (*friends, family*), gastronomy (*food, celebrations*), culture (*vineyards, land, identity, designation of origin*) and sensations (*pleasure, aroma and colour*) (Fig. 9).

One limitation of this study concerns our method for selecting the participants who completed the free listings and joined the focus groups. However, while we are aware that the participants do not represent the whole population, their attitudes and beliefs enable us to develop maps that we believe make up some of the imaginaries captured by the word 'wine' in these two Spanish wine-producing regions.

4. Conclusion

By using free listing as a research technique, we have analysed the sociocultural representations associated with the word 'wine'. Our results show that these cultural associations are multiple and varied depending on the context and include aspects ranging from health, traditions, feasts and celebrations to economics, heritage, and hedonism.

Taking symbolic and cognitive anthropology as a reference framework, we observe from an analytical approach that, by considering these associations from the territory, identity and culture perspectives as well as from the relationship, pleasure and sociability standpoints, we are



Tarragona (Catalonia)

Logroño (La Rioja)

Fig. 9. Representation of visual free listings.

able to determine the meanings and interpretations captured by the word 'wine'.

The relationship between wine and Spanish culture and society is undeniable. Proof of this relationship lies in the presence of wine as a gastronomic complement and its links to Spanish culinary habits and social occasions. Wine is perceived as 'not as dangerous' as other alcoholic beverages and even 'healthy when consumed in moderation' by some stakeholders. The idea of wine as food is not questioned (Gracia, 1986; Roigé-Ventura, 1988), and there is a 'magic', an 'art' (Alonso and Parga, 2019) associated with the world of wine, due to annual climatic variations and the vagaries of winemaking. In both locations the hedonistic criterion of the good wine is 'the one I like' predominates. Regarding the changes in consumption reported, stakeholders realized that there is a large drop in wine consumption: from a part of daily diet to a product for special social occasions and more production of 'organic', 'natural' wines (López, 2021; Skinner, 2020).

Although we are talking about two regions that have followed their own trajectory and recognition as wine producing and distributing areas, and although the question of identity linked to the Rioja region is clearly recognized in our analysis, we see that the sphere of relationships, sharing, facilitating the word, pleasure and gastronomy are a common thread in both areas. By analysing the maps captured by the word 'wine' from a perspective that combines the symbolic with the cognitive and the quantitative (free listing) with the qualitative (focus groups), we are able to understand the complex opinions and interpretations behind wine (Cosgrove, 1984; Barco, 2015) in two different but, as we have seen, culturally close geographical regions.

Implications for gastronomy

Wine is one of the recognized elements of the Mediterranean food triad which also shapes the symbolic landscape of collective imaginaries impregnated with tradition, senses, emotions and the terroir. On this basis, in this paper we analysed wine-related sociocultural representations in two Spanish wine-producing regions, La Rioja and Catalunya. Our results could be interesting for the gastronomy sector, as we highlighted the strong association among wine and gastronomy, social events, friends, and commensality. When comparing the two regions, we detected a stronger territorial identification in La Rioja, while in Catalunya "friends", "pleasure", and "culture" shared the first position. The value of gastronomy when travellers select their destination is well known by the tourist sector, since the brand image is perceived as an added value, and turnover. The agents assure that culinary experiences are a determining factor in their clients' travel choices and that they have an influence on the destination's perception. Therefore, the ideas emerging from our research could give us some hints to improve gastronomy tourism development in these two Spanish wine-producing regions, since wine is a key factor when speaking of La Rioja or Catalunya.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Lina Casadó-Marín: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Data curation, Writing – original draft, preparation, reviewing. **Verónica Anzil:** Data curation, Methodology, Validation, reviewing, editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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