Being different and being the same:

Multimodal image projection strategies for a legitimate distinctive identity

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Abstract

This paper examines how organizations claim legitimate distinctive identities in competitive groups by projecting multimodal—that is, visual and verbal—images. Through a qualitative empirical exploration of wineries' projected images in a regional cluster, this study identifies three projection strategies by which organizations combine collective and organizational identity markers to claim their legitimate distinctive identities. By examining legitimate distinctiveness as a multimodal discursive construct, this study advances the understanding of the link among collective and organizational identity, projected images, and legitimate distinctiveness, thereby contributing to theories of organizational positioning in established organizational categories. More broadly, this study contributes to discursive theories of legitimate distinctiveness by adding multimodal projection strategies to the array of linguistic rhetorical devices that organizations use to influence their stakeholders' perceptions.

Keywords: legitimate distinctiveness, multimodality, organizational identity, collective identity, projected images, wine industry

Introduction

This paper examines how organizations claim legitimate distinctive identities by projecting multimodal images. Legitimacy provides organizations the license to operate by making them understandable and appropriate in the eyes of their stakeholders (Suchman, 1995), whereas distinctiveness increases visibility among legitimate organizations (Deephouse and Carter, 2005). Organizations claim legitimate identities by self-categorizing into recognized social categories, such as industries, strategic groups, and business communities. At the same time, organizations claim uniqueness by emphasizing identity attributes that differentiate them from other organizations within the legitimate category (King and Whetten, 2008). The ability to find legitimate and distinctive identity positioning within categories leads to better performance (Deephouse, 1999; Deephouse and Carter, 2005), increases the likelihood that an organization will be chosen among direct competitors by external audiences (Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001), and is vital to the acquisition of resources for new ventures (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Navis and Glynn, 2011; Van Werven et al. 2015).

As Van Werven et al. (2015) argued, most existing studies on organizational positioning within social categories have treated legitimate distinctiveness as a state, conceptualized as the degree of similarity or deviance from the prototypical collective identity attributes of the legitimate category. This approach has led to the development of different theories of legitimate distinctiveness, explaining it as a "moderate level of strategic similarity" (Deephouse, 1999: 154) or as a two-step process (Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001) through which organizations claim full membership in a category before being able to deviate from accepted practices.

A different approach to legitimate distinctiveness has emerged from studies investigating the discursive strategies adopted by entrepreneurs and organizations to construct legitimate distinctiveness. Such studies have examined how entrepreneurs seek legitimate distinctiveness by analyzing how they try to persuade audiences through discursive strategies, narratives (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Navis and Glynn, 2011), linguistic frames and metaphors (Cornelissen et al. 2012; Navis and Glynn, 2010), rhetorical argumentation (Van Werven et al., 2015), and the combination of identities through projected images (Lamertz et al. 2005).

Indeed, these studies have nicely explained the linguistic work organizations use to persuade audiences of their legitimate distinctiveness. However, the literature has increasingly suggested that organizations actually handle different communication modes simultaneously (Cornelissen et al., 2012; Elsbach, 2003; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Meyer et al., 2013). Visuals and sound are in fact key modes in traditional advertising and online organizational texts, such as on websites and social media (Bell and Davison, 2013). Visuals are also increasingly present in corporate annual and social reports (Kamla and Roberts, 2010). Finally, physical artifacts have a relevant visual impact on

interpersonal interactions between organizations' members and stakeholders (Clarke, 2011). Thus, answering a recent call for increased attention to multimodality in organization studies (Cooren et al., 2011; Meyer et al., 2013), this paper addresses legitimate distinctiveness as a multimodal construct. In particular, we ask how organizations compose multimodal images in their efforts to combine collective and organizational identity markers to claim legitimate distinctive identities. Employing a qualitative empirical exploration of the projected images of wineries in a regional wine cluster, we identify three multimodal projection strategies that enable firms to claim legitimate distinctiveness by combining organizational and collective identities in different ways and with different purposes. Our study contributes to the theoretical debate on legitimate distinctiveness in two main ways. First, our study shows that, by playing with multiple modes, organizations can claim legitimate distinctiveness in different ways even if projecting very similar contents, thereby advancing current understandings of image management for positioning in organizational categories (King and Whetten 2008; Lamertz et al., 2005). Second, the development of a typology of multimodal projection strategies, as well as an understanding of their purpose, extends the array of discursive strategies organizations may use for legitimate distinctiveness construction (Van Werven et al., 2015). Finally, although this was not the main focus of our study, the comparison of multiple cases allowed us to better understand why organizational centrality in a mature category and managers' identification with the category identity may lead to the enactment of one multimodal projection strategy rather than another.

Theoretical Background

Projecting images for legitimate distinctive identities

Organizational identity, defined as members' beliefs and claims about central, distinctive, and enduring attributes of an organization, answers the basic question, "Who are we as an organization?" in contrast to the typical question raised by external audiences, "What kind of organization is this?" (Albert and Whetten, 1985: 269). Using this seminal definition as a starting point, scholars developed two main perspectives on the study of organizational identity: a social constructionist view addressing members' beliefs and identity construction processes (Corley and Gioia, 2004) and a social actor view investigating how organizations and the managers representing them claim their identity attributes to internal and external audiences (Whetten and Mackey 2002). Here, we draw on this second view, treating organizational identity as a self-descriptor, "invoked as a common frame of reference by 'member-agents' in the course of acting or speaking on behalf of their organization" (King and Whetten, 2008: 197). In particular, we examine identity claims as a means for linking the organization to its societal environment and influencing external audiences' perceptions of the organization (Whetten and Mackey, 2002).

Organizations claim membership in social categories in order to achieve legitimacy among their audiences (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). In particular, by self-categorizing into legitimate categories, organizations obtain cognitive legitimacy, which is based on the comprehensibility of the organization and its activities within society (Suchman, 1995). Failing to achieve cognitive legitimacy means eventually lacking the license to operate, not due to overt hostility, but simply because the organization falls out of audiences' categorical interpretations (Suchman, 1995: 582). On the contrary, unique identity claims aim to make the organization stand out from the crowd of direct competitors, thereby emphasizing differentiation and enhancing the likelihood of being noticed by audiences (King and Whetten, 2008). Organizations engage in identity claim making by projecting images (Gioia et al. 2000; Ravasi and Phillips, 2011). Gioia et al. (2000: 66) clearly defined projected images as internal conceptions crafted by organizational members and communicated to external audiences. In some instances, projected images could be a "bona fide attempt to represent essential features of organizational identity to others"; in most cases, however, projected images "convey a socially desirable, managed impression that emphasizes selected aspects of identity." Projected images are composed of different types of identity markers, such as logos, pictures, verbal accounts, and narratives (Elsbach, 2003), and also involve artifacts like objects of the corporate heritage (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2007). All of these markers may represent multiple identity attributes and make them more or less salient in line with various intents and different stakeholders (Foreman et al. 2012; Sillince, 2006).

Lamertz et al. (2005) studied how breweries routinely managed their projected images to find a legitimate distinctive positioning in the mature Canadian beer industry. They found that Canadian breweries claim legitimacy by emphasizing prototypical attributes of the national industry, but simultaneously claim distinctiveness by communicating attributes typical of smaller groups within the broader industry, such as artisan/specialist versus industrial producer. In addition, breweries claim distinctiveness by highlighting attributes that address the interest of unique stakeholders, thanks to their self-categorization into other external categories, such as perfectionist, aesthete, global company, merchant, and entertainer. Thus, by projecting images conveying different combinations of identity attributes borrowed from multiple social categories, Canadian breweries are able to manage their legitimate distinctive positioning in the national industry.

Although Lamertz et al. (2005) included in their study verbal, visual, and physical identity markers, their focus was on image content and how combinations of identity attributes borrowed from different collectives were used by breweries in order to find a legitimate distinctive positioning in their national industry. Taking inspiration from recent studies on the relevance of multimodality for new ventures' legitimacy (Cornelissen et al., 2012; Clarke, 2011), and acknowledging that visual projected images,

thanks to their sensory vividness, enhance organizational symbolic distinctiveness (Rindova, 2007), we incorporated modality—that is, visual/verbal interaction—into contents in our study of projected images. To better capture visual/verbal interaction, we focused our examination on organizational efforts to combine identity attributes from the local competitive group category—henceforth, collective identity attributes—with their own idiosyncratic identity attributes (Lerpold et al., 2007).

Multimodal projected images

According to social semiotics, language covers only a part of human expression, understanding, and meaning making (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). Other modes of expression, like visuals and sound, are equally relevant in human communication processes (Iedema, 2003). This is acknowledged in organization studies as well, although much more research has been devoted to understanding visual communications alone rather than how visual and verbal communications work in interaction (Bell and Davison, 2013; Meyer et al., 2013). As recently reviewed by Bell and Davison (2013: 14-15), Jewitt (2009) established four theoretical assumptions of multimodality. First, all forms of communication "draw on a multiplicity of modes, all of which have the potential to contribute equally to meaning." Second, each of these modes has different affordances, as they have different representational properties. Third, "people orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes." Finally, the meaning of a multimodal sign is indeed heavily reliant on the social context of creation. The first three assumptions are particularly relevant for this work. In fact, our study aims to illustrate how the selection and configuration of different modes by organizations contribute to shaping the meanings of legitimate distinctiveness, which might be different from those constructed only verbally. To this aim, we recognize in particular that verbal messages are usually linear and sequential and, thus, require a more rational effort of interpretation. Visuals instead are holistic and non-hierarchical, vivid and memorable. They are also received more immediately, implicitly, and emotionally than verbal messages (Bell and Davison, 2013; Meyer et al., 2013). Finally, we acknowledge that not only do visual and verbal modes function differently, but in most instances, they also interact in expression and meaning making (Bell and Davison, 2013; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001), forming a "whole which is greater than the sum of its parts" (Meyer et al., 2013: 499).

Recent organization studies have begun to investigate the interaction between visual and verbal modes for different aims. Cornelissen et al. (2012) studied the combination of individuals' speech and gestures for new ventures' legitimation; Cornelissen et al. (2014) explored how material and visual cues interact with verbal cues in the collective meaning construction of a social crisis; Floris et al. (2013), added visual discourse to the study of discursive struggles during mergers and acquisitions; and finally Lefsrud et al. (2014), applied multimodal rhetoric to study the construction

of illegitimate social categories. These studies argued that visual and verbal cues may interact by reinforcing or contradicting each other, with consistent effects on audiences' interpretations of projected messages (Cornelissen et al., 2014; Lefsrud et al., 2014). For these reasons, we argue that investigating multimodal projected images could add depth to our knowledge of the projection strategies organizations put in place to face the competition within established categories.

Methodology

Case study design

Considering the exploratory nature of our research question, we adopted a case study design in the wine industry context. We studied the case of a regional wine cluster in Franciacorta, Italy, using an embedded design (Yin, 2013), having selected Franciacorta wineries as the embedded cases and their projected images as our specific units of analysis. This design allowed us to balance the need for the contextual depth typical of inductive qualitative studies and the need for a comparison of different wineries' projected images against the background of the same collective identity. We selected a regional wine cluster as a revelatory case, providing both the relevance and visibility of the processes to be investigated for two main reasons. First, regional business clusters are contexts in which strong pressure to conform coexists with strong competition (Porac et al. 2011). This pressure is even more visible in the wine industry, where claiming membership in a collective identity is relevant, as it discloses an essential feature of regional wineries—that is, the link between the product and its *terroir*—and provides categorical status (Benjamin and Podolny, 1999). Second, claiming unique identities is relevant for wineries because of increasing competition, especially in the premium wine segment, and globalization (Voronov et al., 2013). The wine industry thus represents an ideal setting in which to study how organizations cope with the need to find legitimate distinctiveness, precisely because, as Voronov et al. (2013, p. 639) argued, "even when the pressure to conform is so strong, actors still find opportunities to pursue distinctiveness," sometimes in counterintuitive ways.

In the broader context of the regional wine cluster, we selected Franciacorta as an ideal case through which to answer our research question for a number of reasons. First, despite its short history, Franciacorta has a strong collective identity. In fact, Franciacorta is now considered "Italy's major production zone for top-quality Champagne-style wines" (Johnson, 2012: 121). In 1995, Franciacorta wine was awarded with the highest Italian denomination of controlled and guaranteed origin (DOCG). At the beginning of this study (2010), the trade association (henceforth, the Consorzio) included 206 members, of which 104 were bottled wine producers, corresponding to 97% of all producers. In 2010, approximately 10 million bottles of wine—mostly fine wines—were marketed, with a growth rate superior to the market average, despite the global recession. Second, the Franciacorta collective identity has been highly institutionalized and enforced by the Consorzio through a production

discipline, a collective trademark, collective value statements, and ceremonial events and publications. The production discipline regulates winegrowing and winemaking; only wineries conforming to the discipline may use the name Franciacorta. There are also rules in place regarding packaging in terms of bottle capacities, collective trademark on the back label, the Franciacorta name on the cork, and the DOCG wrap. For all of these reasons, collective identity markers are also easily recognizable by researchers. Finally, Franciacorta has grown extremely rapidly in the last 60 years, with an exponential growth rate in the 1990s and early 2000s, surging from 52 to 109 producers, thereby presenting the opportunity to observe a varied population of wineries.

Sampling

After extensive reading on the case and two non-structured interviews with an informant from the Franciacorta Consorzio, we decided to select our sample of wineries, drawing on a content analysis (Krippendorff, 2012) of all available Franciacorta wineries' websites (N=84) that had been previously conducted by the authors (Zamparini and Lurati, 2012). From that study, two groups of wineries emerged, based on the difference in the number of collective value statements projected on their websites. Counterintuitively, wineries projecting less collective value statements more often displayed the visual trademark of Franciacorta and vice versa. Based on these data, we adopted a purposeful sampling logic to select information-rich cases that could deepen our understanding of wineries' projected images and their intent for legitimate distinctiveness. In particular, we moved from a stratified purposeful logic, based on the content analysis results, to snowball logic (Patton, 1990) after entering the field. We started with a stratified purposeful sampling in order to maximize the variance of wineries' profiles in our sample and increase the robustness of our findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). First, we selected the most prototypical wineries of each group emerging from the website analyses. Second, as the propensity to conform to or deviate from collective identities is often explained in the literature in terms of variation of age, size, and status (Deephouse and Carter, 2005; Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001), we decided to use these variables to stratify our sample. This allowed us to compare and contrast a) cases with similar projected images but different characteristics (e.g., different size, similar identity projections) and b) cases with similar characteristics but different projected images (e.g., same size, but different identity projections). The first sample comprised 12 wineries. During the qualitative data collection, following the logic of a flexible design, which is more concerned with data saturation than with statistical representativeness, we moved to a snowball purposeful sampling and adjusted the sample accordingly. Three wineries were dropped because of non-availability and four were added, following the interviewees' suggestions and coherently with the qualitative logic of following up on unexpected emerging findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Table 1 illustrates the final sample of wineries.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Data collection

We collected data from selected wineries using a qualitative approach by employing semi-structured interviews; observations of the cellar, guided cellar tours, and tastings; and a document analysis of promotional materials. Table 2 provides an overview of all data sources, the type of data we collected, and their use in the analysis.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Interviews. We conducted four interviews with a key informant from the Consorzio. These non-structured and conversational interviews (Kvale, 2008) were reiterated at different stages of the field research with different specific purposes, but always with the intent to gain an internal view on our reflections (see Table 2). We conducted 22 semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 2008) with wineries' managers to collect oral identity narratives as well as understand the strategic intents behind projected images. We adopted purposeful sampling in the process of choosing whom to interview from each winery. The first round of semi-structured interviews started with broad open-ended questions, asking interviewees to describe first their wineries and the Franciacorta wine cluster. Then we asked interviewees what they communicated to external audiences about the winery in different situations and for what purposes. The interview then explored themes such as the structure of the winery, its history, and relationships with other wineries within the cluster. We broadly formulated all questions, and the interviewer asked probing questions to deepen emerging themes as well as achieve a better understanding of the concepts formulated by interviewees.

Observations. We observed the combination of the oral stories narrated to visitors and the visual impact of the winery's physical environment. We observed as participants (Gold, 1958) 12 cellar tours, each including presentations of the winery, its vineyards, wine production, and wine tasting. During the tours, we audio-recorded the guides' presentations and simultaneously took notes and pictures of the places visited. We extended our observations beyond the strict path of the tour to include offices, the estate, the entrance, and the winery's surroundings. We also conducted observations outside the winery estates in the Franciacorta territory, where we identified additional wineries' identity markers, such as street signs, vineyards boundary signals, and advertising. Finally, we visited Vinitaly, one of the main global trade exhibitions, and observed additional markers, such as exhibition stands.

Documents. We collected documents available on the web and from specialized wine press and guides to gather prior information on the Franciacorta wine cluster before accessing data from the field. In the first contacts with the Consorzio, we collected all of its promotional materials. We used these

documents, with the information gathered from the website, to distinguish collective and organizational identity markers. In addition to information from the websites, we collected all promotional documents from the selected wineries, including leaflets and brochures as well as occasionally press kits and, for bigger wineries, books.

Data analysis

Our analysis combined inductive coding (Gioia et al. 2013) informed by rhetorical multimodal analyses (Bateman, 2008; Kress and Van Leuween, 2001) with qualitative cross-case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Our analytical process developed in three main steps: inductive thematic coding, within-case analysis, and cross-case comparison. For the sake of clarity, we describe each step of the analysis in a linear order; however, the actual analytical process was iterative rather than linear. Data coding and tentative condensation into overarching dimensions began after the first days in the field and proceeded iteratively until all data were collected. Meanwhile, we continuously revised both within-case reports and cross-case analyses after the addition of data from new wineries.

Step 1. Inductive coding and rhetorical analysis. In a first round of analysis we identified units of text containing organizational or collective identity markers. We adopted a broad definition of identity marker inclusive of all visual, physical, and verbal projections expressing the self-definitions (Elsbach, 2003) of the winery or the Franciacorta cluster. We did not select a priori text units, such as sentences, paragraphs, or visual adverts, but rather drew on the concept of rhetorical clusters—that is, "a group of text elements designed to work together as a functional unit in a document" (Schriver, 1997, cited in Bateman, 2008: 33)—to select those text units relevant for our analysis. For instance, we considered text units' single words, documents such as wine labels, website pages, and corporate adverts as well as, more broadly, the architecture and overall décor of the winery, the winery's surroundings, and the route/experience of the cellar tour.

We initially conducted first-order coding (Gioia et al., 2013) on the selected text units by assigning a code label closely representing the data, such as collective logo on winery gate or the entrepreneur pioneer of Franciacorta history. After the first round of analysis, we started noting recursive patterns or similarities and differences among our first-order codes concerning the relationship between verbal and visual elements and the collective versus organizational identity markers they conveyed. In this particular phase of the analysis, we drew on a multimodal analysis (Bateman, 2008; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001) to label the emerging rhetorical interactions between visual and verbal identity markers and the rhetorical dominance of collective or organizational identity markers. In particular, for visual/verbal interaction, as suggested by Lefsrud et al. (2016), we used Schriver's (1997) categories of complementarity, where both modes contribute to the same meaning; supplementarity, in which one mode is dominant and the second elaborates; and juxtaposition, where different visual

and verbal meanings contribute to creating new meaning. We then coded the rhetorical dominance of collective identity markers versus organizational identity markers (either conforming or distinctive).[i] To this end, we used the definition of symmetry vs. asymmetry of the composition (Bateman, 2008). We observed asymmetry when we found one identity marker, either visual or verbal, as the rhetorical nucleus and all other elements maintaining a satellite relationship to it. When there was not one clear central identity marker, we observed symmetric relationships, "where all of the related units are considered equally important" (Bateman, 2008: 148). We use the concrete example of the wine bottle as a text unit to illustrate this step of our analysis. First, we analyzed the visual/verbal structure of the rhetorical composition; we observed how words on a label rhetorically related to label, bottle shape, and color. For instance, we found complementary multimodal relationships when dark glass *champenoise* bottles with traditional rectangular labels prominently displayed the name Franciacorta. At the opposite extreme, we found juxtaposition when bottles prominently displayed the name Franciacorta on non-traditional Franciacorta bottles, such as golden or a *bordelaise* shape, or labels, such as gothic styled or rhombus-shaped. Secondly, we analyzed the prominence of the collective identity marker Franciacorta compared to the name of the winery/estate or the proprietary name of the wine, based on size, centrality, and hierarchy within the space of the label. We followed the same procedure for more macro text units, such as the cellar tour route. In this case, for instance, we evaluated the interaction of modes and the rhetorical symmetry of identity markers based on macro textual elements, including the guide's storytelling and posters' verbal explanations and visual displays, cellar architecture, and artifacts in the cellar.

Based on this analysis, we collapsed 285 open codes into 30 first-order codes and seven summarizing first-order themes describing the recursive patterns of rhetorical relationships between verbal/visual and collective/organizational identity markers. We then grouped first-order themes into three second-order themes describing different multimodal projection strategies, which we named complementing, supplementing, and juxtaposing, according to the patterns that emerged in our data for each winery—namely, based on which rhetorical relationships appeared together within the corpus of texts produced by each winery.

In order to analyze the intent of projected images, we followed a similar inductive process. Starting from seven first-order themes, we identified three second-order themes: blending collective and organizational identity for legitimate distinctiveness (LD), signing the collective identity for LD, and counterbalancing collective and organizational identities for LD. We coded both declared intents emerging from interviews and cellar tour guides' narration and the rhetorical intents expressed by wineries' texts.[ii] We evaluated rhetorical intents using the rhetorical relationships identified within text units, particularly asymmetric relationships—namely, which identity markers are the rhetorical

nuclei of the text? We also coded categorizing claims (Elsbach, 2003), including those statements or visuals explicitly claiming the winery's similarities or differences compared to other wineries in Franciacorta.

We aggregated the previously mentioned second-order themes describing projected images and their intent under three aggregate dimensions illustrating how multimodal projection strategies enabled wineries to construct LD: blending by complementing, signing by supplementing, and counterbalancing by juxtaposing.

Finally, we assigned a code to all wineries' characteristics explicitly related to the choice of the projected images. In this phase, we identified 13 first-order themes that we collapsed into four second-order themes by comparing them with existing theories on antecedents of conformity and distinctiveness. In particular, the aggregate dimension of centrality in the cluster groups the themes related to the historical role of the winery and its active role in the Consorzio. Both strategy and organization studies have, in fact, acknowledged that central firms in organizational groups are usually older, bigger, and more active in trade associations and play a role in the formation and reproduction of the collective identity of the group (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Peteraf and Shanley, 1997; Wry et al., 2011). We later used these themes to compile a detailed profile of each winery and to compare profiles in the cross-case analysis.

The aggregate dimension identification with the cluster grouped the themes of cognitive identification and affective commitment. Cognitive identification grouped all codes referring to self-categorization as group members (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000), including wineries' self-descriptions being similar to their perception of Franciacorta prototypes, claimed membership to the wine cluster, description of their role as Franciacorta members, and identity overlap between the winery identity and the Franciacorta's collective identity. Affective commitment grouped all codes referring to emotional involvement (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000) toward the Franciacorta wine cluster, such as enthusiasm for being part of the group, love for the group and for the territory, pride of being part of the group, and finally personal involvement when the group is praised or criticized (Ashforth and Mael, 1996). Figure 1 shows a synthesis of our qualitative inductive process of analysis from first-order themes into aggregate dimensions. The dotted line in the figure separates themes and dimensions related to projection strategies for LD from themes and dimensions related to wineries' characteristics. Table 4 in the findings section provides related selected evidence.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Step 2. Within-case analysis. After the first phase of analytical induction, we worked with matrices and network displays (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to analyze each winery in the sample. We started

with conceptually clustered matrices, which allowed us to map the co-occurrence of a specific multimodal projection strategy with themes regarding the search for legitimacy and distinctiveness and themes regarding the winery's centrality in the cluster and identification with Franciacorta. For wineries' centrality, we corroborated self-reports with documentary data on actual age, size, and status. In particular, we drew on size to distinguish between central and semi-central wineries, with the historical role and the active role in the Consorzio being equal. We then drafted network displays when we found evidence in our data that allowed us to trace the type and direction of relationships both between wineries' centrality or identification level and multimodal projection strategies and between those strategies and the search for legitimate distinctiveness. Finally, we wrote a case narrative for each winery, comprising both the findings emerging from the first and second steps of the analysis. Within-case matrices and narratives provided the basis for the cross-case analysis.

Step 3. Cross-case comparison. In this final step, we systematically compared the findings emerging from the analysis of each winery. We worked first with comparative matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to elaborate qualitative clusters of wineries adopting similar multimodal projection strategies. Then, as a second step, we systematically compared within-case network displays. We drew on Hume's principle of constant conjunction—that is, where A is always B, as reported by Miles and Huberman (1994: 146)—to assess the replication of the association of multimodal projection strategies with intents for legitimacy and distinctiveness as well as the association between wineries' centrality and identification with the adoption of a specific multimodal projection strategy. After assessing the constant conjunction, we also checked for the replication of the direction of relationships between projection strategies and intents emerging from the within-case analysis.

To ensure the trustworthiness of our analyses, we adopted a number of measures for all three steps. At the practical level, we managed accuracy in handling our extensive database by working with Atlas.ti, a computer-assisted analysis software. On the analytical and conceptual levels, we triangulated (Denzin, 1978) evidence from different data sources, such as documents, observations, and interviews, and continuously discussed emerging findings and provisional conclusions with a third researcher acting as external challenger of our views. We also obtained feedback from the field by discussing findings at different steps of the analysis with our key informant of the Consorzio and during the second round of interviews with managers of 10 wineries from the sample, as shown in Table 2.

Findings

We identified three multimodal projection strategies—complementing, supplementing, and juxtaposing—that wineries adopt to compose their projected images. The three strategies differently enable legitimate distinctiveness. Furthermore, different degrees of wineries' centrality in the cluster

and managers' identification to the collective identity differentiated wineries enacting different strategies. Table 3 provides an overview of findings, and Table 4 offers additional evidence.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Complementing strategy

Rhetorical composition of projected images. The complementing projection strategy is characterized by images where visual and verbal identity markers interact complementarily to project an organizational identity conforming to the Franciacorta collective identity. Collective and organizational identity markers, both visual and verbal, are co-present and often intertwined via symmetric rhetorical composition, making it difficult at times to distinguish when wineries are projecting images about themselves from when they are projecting images of the wine cluster. This is further accentuated by the fact that organizational identity markers are highly conforming to the collective identity.

Six wineries in our sample—Wineries 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, and 13—adopted this strategy. We use the case of Winery 1 as a vignette providing illustrative evidence of how the complementing strategy works. Starting with the wine bottle, shown in Figure 2, we noted how the visual and verbal identity markers complement each other in the projection of an organizational identity conforming to Franciacorta. Bottles have the classical features of the standard champagne bottles, and labels conform to the Franciacorta and the broader *champenoise* tradition—namely, horizontal/rectangular and with natural colors. The word Franciacorta is prominent on all wine labels and, in some instances, even more prominent than the winery name, and it complements the conforming visual impact, thereby contributing to the creation of a coherent meaning. The same happens with the winery logo, where the name Franciacorta is an extension of the winery name, surmounted by a drawing of the winery, which in itself is a visual identity marker that projects both the collective identity and the organizational identity. In fact, most wineries employing this projection strategy were located in historical buildings that were typical Franciacorta farmsteads in the 19th century or even in ancient buildings belonging to the regional heritage. When entering the winery premises the visitor finds collective artifacts such as Franciacorta maps, Consorzio plaques, and brochures while the guide narrates the winery's history and current production techniques mobilizing collective narratives about the local winemaking development and the Franciacorta method. The Franciacorta glass, designed by Riedel Crystal at the Consorzio's request, is used during cellar tours and wine tastings, as shown in Figure 2. Similarly, pictures in documents conform to the Franciacorta imagery, and they complement

narratives about collective historical achievements, which are part of the same organizational history and achievements:

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

How the complementing strategy enables legitimate distinctiveness. In this strategy, complementary visual and verbal projections are mutually reinforcing in claiming collective identity markers and organizational conformity to the Franciacorta identity. Visual and verbal modes complementarily contribute to project an organizational identity that is blended with the collective one. The resulting high salience of collective identity is used to a) keep legitimizing the collective identity and b) claim an organizational identity that is distinctive in the white sparkling wine market, especially vis-á-vis champagne and prosecco.

Interviewees stressed the importance of giving prominence to collective visual identity markers because they sought to make Franciacorta more recognizable as a category, especially in those markets in which Franciacorta was barely known:

> People must remember the Franciacorta visual brand; it must be impressed in people's memory, like it happens for the Ferrari horse. […] We must do the same with the Franciacorta visual brand. (Winery 2, interview)

To the interviewees, increasing Franciacorta's cognitive legitimacy with visuals was much more relevant than working for differentiation from other Franciacorta competitors, and it satisfied their competitive positioning needs:

> The F [the collective logo]…, a clear identifier of Franciacorta, is extremely relevant, because at first sight it drives the choice on [our] bottle, rather than on another one. (Winery 2, interview)

Verbal projections worked toward the same aims. Interviewees stated that it was extremely important for all producers in the cluster to continue talking about Franciacorta first and in a consistent way, as the owner of Winery 1 explained:

> This is a moment in which we need to refocus on the original values of Franciacorta—a collective reflection on the collective identity, on the language we share—so that we are sure that we all communicate the same values, the same identity. (Winery 1, interview)

At the same time, talking about Franciacorta first also sought to achieve differentiation from wineries of other regional clusters. Guided cellar tours started in these wineries typically started as follows:

> [I will spend] half an hour to help you understand the difference between Franciacorta and other wines produced with different methods. (Winery 2, cellar tour)

Most differentiating projections, in fact, claimed the winery's distinctiveness by talking about—and visually showing—the difference between Franciacorta and other wine collective identities.

Supplementing strategy

Rhetorical composition of projected images. The supplementing projection strategy was characterized by the supplementary interaction of visual and verbal identity markers and by asymmetry in favor of organizational identity markers. Organizational visual identity markers in fact stood out in the rhetorical image composition via asymmetry in favor of organizational identity markers and supplemented verbal identity markers, including both collective and organizational conforming.

The four wineries in our sample adopting this strategy—Wineries 8, 9, 11, and 12—made consistent investments in the development of their corporate visual identity systems, and each document and artifact was coherently branded. This made their organizational visual identity markers much more salient than verbal identity markers. In fact, collective visual identity markers were not completely absent; however, they practically disappeared before the grandeur and pervasiveness of organizational visual markers. We use Winery 9 as a vignette to provide illustrative evidence of how the supplementing strategy works. Pictures taken from physical artifacts like the bottle, the cellar, and the winery estate were the strongest visual identity markers of Winery 9. Contemporary art pieces, such as sculptures, paintings, or design artifacts, were the artifacts that visually represented the identity of Winery 9 to visitors, and they were also reproduced in most corporate documents, as shown in Figure 3. The bottle of the most sold wine included a slightly different interpretation of the classic champagne bottle, and the word Franciacorta was almost invisible on the label, as shown in Figure 4. Organizational identity markers were the rhetorical nucleus of verbal texts, but they were indeed highly conforming to collective verbal identity markers, resulting in asymmetry in favor of conforming organizational identity markers. The Franciacorta method was referred to as Winery 9's method, but its description highlighted the integrity of the territory and respect for tradition. The history of the pioneer entrepreneur, as an organizational identity marker, was narrated together with the evolution of the territory, which was the collective identity marker, as the following narrative taken from the website shows:

> In 1979 [name of entrepreneur] planted the first five rows of a vineyard having 10,000 vines per hectare (2.5 acres) and in Franciacorta initiated a type of grape-growing at the time considered rash and revolutionary: very dense, with minimal distance between the vines and extreme selectiveness. And this was only the beginning of a route that Franciacorta then ambitiously undertook: distinguishing itself with the severest production regulations in terms of selectivity and qualitative rules. (Winery 9, website)

Figure 4 shows how unique visuals representing the process of *remuage*, which was traditionally shown on wooden racks, were supplemented by verbal projections describing how Winery 9's production evolved in line with the tradition of the wine cluster. Similarly to the previous example, the bottom part of the figure shows how the bottle primed audiences with a unique impression, and the verbal description elaborated on the link with the collective Franciacorta identity. To summarize, visual identity markers were indeed unique, but they were stylish and contemporary reinterpretations of the classic Franciacorta imagery. The texts matched with these unique visuals were instead pretty similar to those projected by wineries adopting the first strategy. As the quotes and figures show, by analyzing only verbally projected images, one could hardly distinguish the projected images of these two groups of wineries.

<div align="center">

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

</div>

How the supplementing strategy enables legitimate distinctiveness. Wineries adopting this strategy primed audiences with a unique visual identity that acted like status-symbols signaling their distinctiveness from other Franciacorta wineries. These visual status symbols supplemented collective and organizational conforming identity markers and claimed an organizational identity prototypical and protagonist of the collective Franciacorta identity. By matching unique visuals with prototypical verbal projections, these wineries seemed to sign the collective identity of Franciacorta with their organizational identity.

The founder of Winery 9 stated the following while explaining how visuals are the main vehicles to project the uniqueness of the organizational identity:

> We tell how [the company] was born, which is to say its origins, but I have to say honestly that we don't give priority to words, but simply to images or to the tour like the one you did, because a walk here is enough to understand who we are, our mission. (Winery 9, interview)

He further added that: "Franciacorta is the table on which we set a nice tablecloth, which is ours and no one else's." The Franciacorta collective identity provided strong support that added value and acted as a safety net in those markets in which Winery 9's identity has not yet been made legitimate. Similarly, the managers of other wineries enacting the multimodal supplementing strategy acknowledged that their wineries should contribute to increasing Franciacorta's recognizability and acceptance by audiences. The legitimacy of Franciacorta is in fact a key supporting element for their organizational legitimacy. It may not be particularly relevant in those markets in which their organizational brand has already been established, but certainly it is in new, complex markets, as Winery 11's communication manager explained:

Unfortunately [the winery brand is stronger than the Franciacorta brand], and to me there should instead be a nice competition. […] In fact under an individualistic point of view you say "how nice," but it is a myopic perspective, it is a perspective that assumes that we only have to sell our product in Northern and Central Italy, and in this way you don't build a future. In the provision of future markets and sceneries it is a failing perspective and that could destroy a brand in few years, because champagne demonstrated it, today the name champagne is stronger than its wines' names and individual brands. (Winery 11, interview)

The legitimacy provided by the collective identity is an essential element to support wineries approaching their maturity phase, which was not as relevant in the organization's early decades but can become increasingly important, as noted by Winery 9's founder:

Piacenza hills have produced wine for ages, but they never perfected their production. If [name of firm] were in Piacenza, it probably would have had the same development until three, four or five years ago, then it would have stopped inevitably, both regarding dimensions and qualitative appreciations. Because Winery 9, in Piacenza, could not have the same power in the market without the support of this territory, which is increasingly strong and important. (Winery 9, interview)

Juxtaposing strategy
Rhetorical composition of projected images. This strategy is characterized by the juxtaposition of contrasting visual and verbal identity markers that together contribute to counterbalance conforming and distinctive identity markers. Projected images generally present asymmetry in favor of organizations' non-conforming identity markers and a selective use of those collective identity markers that are necessary to claim membership in Franciacorta. For each winery, we could see that juxtaposition works with two configurations: distinctive organizational visuals juxtaposed with collective verbal identity markers and vice versa. Three wineries (Wineries 4, 5, and 7) in the sample adopted this strategy, and each one of them presented each of the two configurations upon different instances.

Examples from Winery 7 and Winery 5 illustrate how their projected images counterbalanced the collective and deviating organizational identity markers in the juxtaposition of contrasting visual and verbal modes. Figure 5 shows a promotional poster in which Winery 7 displayed quite traditional Franciacorta bottles. However, the caption claims "Franciacorta as you've never seen it." Here we see how a visual impact of Franciacorta membership is counterbalanced by a strong verbal claim of organizational distinctiveness within the collective. Similarly, the winery architecture (Figure 5) is a typically collective identity marker (the typical Franciacorta farmstead), but the collective visual

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impact was juxtaposed with clearly differentiating verbal identity markers during the winery visit. Cellar tour guides and the oenologist emphasized the work of pushing the limits of the production discipline. As the oenologist explained:

> [We are] thinking of a heresy, […] a wine that makes Pinot blanc its principal ingredient, as a provocation [...] as something unorthodox. (Winery 7 oenologist, interview)

In this way, Winery 7's projected images exploit visuals to provide an immediate cue of categorical membership and a sense of place, juxtaposing them with distinctive verbal organizational identity markers, claiming distinctiveness within the category.

However, the winery logo encloses the verbal collective identity marker Franciacorta within a very atypical visual framework, which offers a non-conforming visual impact.

<center>[Insert Figure 5 about here]</center>

Winery 5 provided examples of even more extremely atypical visual identity markers for Franciacorta (Figure 6), not only for the shapes and colors, but also for the represented situation (clubbing and partying). Yet these visuals were consistently juxtaposed with the verbal winery logo "Winery 5 of Franciacorta" or with tightly conforming descriptions of the Franciacorta method.

<center>[Insert Figure 6 about here]</center>

How the juxtaposing strategy enables legitimate distinctiveness. Wineries adopting this strategy freely combined collective identity markers and non-conforming organizational identity markers to claim a distinctive organizational identity (internal distinctiveness), without renouncing clear signals of categorical membership. These wineries played with visual and verbal projections to make more immediately salient (with visuals) either distinctiveness or categorical membership, depending on the situation. In both cases, they counterbalanced the more immediate visual effect by juxtaposing contrasting verbal projections.

Collective visual identity markers are considered an important vehicle for wineries' market communications, but for these companies it is important to counterbalance immediate recognition with organizational uniqueness, as Winery 4's communication manager explained:

> Franciacortas are many, and we are aware that being [recognized as] Franciacorta is a plus […], but then we say how we are different from others within Franciacorta. And this is fundamental because you need to find a unique positioning that helps you selling your Franciacorta product. (Winery 4, feedback interview)

Winery 5's manager instead explained how they counterbalance a distinctive visual impact with conformity to the production rules:

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The choice of [our] image is daring, because usually wine has an austere and elegant image […] it's a product made for parties; therefore, I don't see why, when it's promoted, it has to be promoted with all that seriousness. This is the golden line [the bottle is covered by a golden film; see Figure 6]. In the bottle we have the Franciacorta brut. Some criticize it because they say: "you want to catch the client with packaging, because the product is not excellent." On the contrary, I believe that today the product must be good and beautiful. […] To allow for this packaging we use the pouring technique [instead of keeping wine in the same bottle after the second fermentation], which is indeed allowed by the Franciacorta method. (Winery 5, interview)

The director of Winery 7 explicitly recognized that, to him, the added value of being in the Consorzio is "the possibility to have a privileged exhibition in the Franciacorta collective space at Vinitaly [the most important Italian business to business wine exhibition]." He subsequently added that he would like the collective visual symbols of Franciacorta to be even more salient in the territory, because this would increase the added value of signaling categorical membership in Franciacorta. Concomitantly he explained how he tried to counterbalance immediate visual recognition with verbal elaborations on the distinctive values that characterize his winery:

I tried to avoid a number of redundancies in my communication that could be meant as [collective] values […] but that are not all differentiating and thus aren't useful to nurture, delineate and connote the organizational identity, of which I am and I want to be a supporter […]. Therefore, to draw one's own identity into a prominent, reassuring and shared message could mean entering a choir, and then nobody hears my voice anymore. Hence, playing the solo in the choir, having the chance and the numbers to do it, is something that we like to do. (Winery 7, interview)

Why wineries exploit multimodality in different ways for LD

The cross-case comparison showed that wineries enacting different multimodal projection strategies have different degrees of centrality in the cluster and their managers identify with the Franciacorta collective identity to different extents. Although our analysis does not allow us to claim causal relationships between centrality, identification and projection strategies, these emerging dimensions help to cast light on why wineries prefer, or are enabled, to build LD in different ways.

Centrality in the cluster. The most central wineries in Franciacorta "sign" the collective identity by supplementing collective/conforming narratives with their unique and outstanding visual identity markers. Semi-central wineries blend collective and organizational identities and create coherent and conforming images by complementing visual and verbal modes. Finally, peripheral wineries

counterbalance collective and organizational identities by juxtaposing contrasting identity markers in their projected images.

The central and semi-central wineries were all founded before the birth of the Consorzio, and they were active during the first years of Franciacorta (1960s and 1970s) or during the years of exponential growth (1980s). All of them have—or had, until recently—strategic positions in the Consorzio as members of the board or presidents, and some were even founding members (see Table 3). Both central and semi-central wineries have deemed it relevant for each winery to contribute to the projection of a coherent image of Franciacorta identity markers. Entrepreneurs and managers often referred to their historicity in Franciacorta and to their active role into the Consorzio to justify this:

> All those wineries, that historically or recently have been involved into the board of the Consorzio, that could understand with direct contact the positive aspects of having a common project for a territory, are convinced of the relevance of communicating a consistent Franciacorta identity. (Winery 9)

However, although semi-central wineries are satisfied with the differentiating potential given to them by the collective Franciacorta identity, central wineries—having more resources—put considerable efforts into standing out from the collective, without deviating from it. Owners and winemakers often use the argument of size and related resources in interviews and tours to illustrate the choice of sophisticated visual design and expensive magnificent physical artifacts. In particular, during cellar tours, they often stress the fact that they "can afford" [in contrast to other wineries] to invest in winery restructurings, design pieces, handmade packaging, etc. Interviewees from other wineries also attributed the unique visual impact of these wineries to their sheer size. When talking of communication tactics, one interviewee said, "They have the atomic bomb, we have the blowpipe" (Winery 7, interview). Indeed, central wineries have strong brands, and this could appear as a possible alternative explanation to centrality, particularly regarding the size/resources theme. However, our data supported the centrality explanation more than the brand strength explanation. In fact, we observed from both wine guides and interviews that some semi-central wineries (smaller, but historical and active in the trade association) also have renowned brands that are, in some cases, even stronger in market niches or among wine connoisseurs. This was further corroborated by feedback interviews and by documentary data on external status (Table 1). Yet semi-central wineries have fewer resources to dedicate to image management.

Peripheral wineries, unlike the other two groups, mainly concentrate their efforts on differentiating themselves from other Franciacorta wineries, thereby finding their distinctive positioning without losing membership:

The last generation of wineries was born in a saturated market. Franciacorta competitors were not 20 (as in the pioneering years), but 80/100. So it was not anymore enough to say "I am from Franciacorta," but we needed to say "I bring a new vision of Franciacorta" because this is how [being new] you have to answer to a market that asks do we really need you in Franciacorta? (Winery 7, feedback interview)

This was further corroborated by data in which peripheral wineries commented on the strategies of other young winemakers that now manage their family-owned historical wineries:

There are young winemakers that are 43, 44 years old (I am 31), that think like my grandpa because they grew in their old winery […] they still believe that saying Franciacorta means selling your wine. This is not enough anymore (Winery 5, feedback interview)

Peripheral wineries are members of the Consorzio, but do not hold strategic positions. Some of them explicitly stated that they do not even participate in collective meetings. Instead, they often expressed concern over the perceived "domination of an oligarchy of historical and powerful wineries" (Winery 7, interview). In the two years that passed between the first and second rounds of interviews, one of the wineries adopting the juxtaposing strategy entered the Consorzio's newly elected board. Its communication manager commented:

Surely the fact that I entered the Consorzio's board [sped up the process of integration], but I believe that in this industry, as in many others, some time to be accepted and integrated is fundamental. […] Now I see many wineries that entered Franciacorta after us, and yes… I think that probably we should find a limit to individual differentiation… and I'm aware that I see things from this perspective only since I am more active in the Consorzio. (Winery 4, interview)

Identification with Franciacorta. If centrality explains why wineries are habilitated or see it as more convenient to enact certain strategies, the identification dimension explains another facet of the story: Wineries enact those multimodal projection strategies that allow them to keep a more authentic self-perception. Indeed, more identified wineries reinforce the blending of collective and organizational identity markers with a multimodal complementing strategy, slightly less identified wineries try to keep their individuality by signing visually the collective, and least identified wineries play with multimodality to counterbalance membership with their innovative organizational identity.

All interviewees from wineries adopting a multimodal complementing strategy expressed a significant or complete identity overlap between the winery's and Franciacorta's identity (Table 8). Winery 1's owner stated:

> I believe there's a complete overlap between our winery's identity and the Franciacorta identity. Being born and grown together, we feel strongly identified with the territory and with the cluster. (Winery 1, interview)

This is why, according to the managers, it is natural to blend Franciacorta's and their wineries' identities:

> The original drive that made me start talking about Franciacorta is that I live here, I was born here, I was here as a kid. I saw it changing, I saw the birth of the Consorzio… that is, my life has all been here. Thus, this is a very strong identity, which is both organizational and personal. You see, I'm not somebody coming from Milan to become the manager here. (Winery 13, interview)

Owners and other winery members also showed a considerable affective commitment toward the regional cluster and the territory. They felt personally involved and became quite passionate when someone criticized or praised Franciacorta:

> I am very pleased when I hear from TV/radio or read one newspaper, "Franciacorta is the best expression of Italian bubbles." I am less pleased when I hear of attacks because somebody sees Franciacorta as a marketing product than an authentic value product…. (Winery 1, interview)

Wineries adopting the multimodal supplementing strategy showed a less strong identity overlap between the winery identity and the Franciacorta identity. The interviewees clearly differentiated the common ground they share with other wineries and their unique traits, which are not contrasting, but built on the collective Franciacorta identity:

> We tell of Franciacorta as the basis for all this. Without a table we could not eat, and Franciacorta is the table. Then our work is to furnish the table with good dishes and be well served. But if we did not have the table, eating on the floor would be uncomfortable. (Winery 9, interview)

Finally, interviewees from wineries adopting the multimodal juxtaposing strategy only identified with selected aspects of the Franciacorta identity, particularly *terroir*, and the excellence philosophy. In addition to the advantages of categorical membership in the market, the above mentioned attributes and values characterizing the Franciacorta identity have been self-defining for them. To the contrary, the typical images projected by the Consorzio and more central wineries have not been at all self-defining for them:

I don't deny the start. I believe that starting from there, one can find different directions of expression—maybe one is happy with the starting point while another always wants to push the limits. I belong to this second category. (Winery 7, interview)

Furthermore, these wineries' managers were not affectively attached to the Franciacorta collective identity:

They [other winemakers] tell me I am not aligned with the Franciacorta identity. This is not because I don't want to be, but I truly don't feel it strongly and I don't feel it is mine. (Winery 5, interview)

Discussion and conclusion

By approaching legitimate distinctiveness with a multimodal approach to projected images, our study showed that organizations are able not only to creatively combine identities by managing the content of their projected images, but also to play with their form. In particular, we found that even when verbal identity markers were quite similar, different ways of matching them with visual identity markers enabled organizations to claim legitimate distinctiveness in different ways and with different purposes. We found evidence that, in fact, by exploiting the immediate and holistic representational properties of visuals, the organizations tried to reinforce the impression of similarity by blending via complementing modes, to stand out without using deviating contents by signing via supplementing modes, or to contrast the impression of conformity and deviation that they provide verbally by counterbalancing via juxtaposing modes.

We argue that our study provides two main theoretical contributions. First, by adding modality to content management in organizational image composition, we advance the understanding of how different identities, both collective and organizational, have been used as discursive resources in the struggle for competitive positioning within organizational categories (King and Whetten, 2008; Lamertz et al., 2005). Second, our findings contribute to the growing literature on legitimate distinctiveness as a discursive construct by extending the array of discursive strategies available to organizations beyond the palette of linguistic rhetorical devices (Van Werven et al., 2015). We address these two points in the following subsection by discussing the implications of our findings about the affordances of multimodality for legitimate distinctiveness. Then, we discuss some implications of our findings about why organizations are prone to exploit multimodality in different ways to construct their legitimate distinctiveness.

The affordances of multimodality for legitimate distinctiveness

We identified three multimodal projection strategies, but rather than the strategies themselves, what we found to be relevant was that they facilitate appreciation of how organizations exploit the

affordances of different semiotic modes and their interaction (Bell and Davison, 2013; Kress and Van Leuween, 2001; Meyer et al., 2013) in order to claim legitimate distinctiveness. Previous studies on competitive positioning within organizational categories have posited that organizations project images for legitimate distinctiveness by conforming to different degrees (Deephouse, 1999; Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001), projecting unique configurations of collective identity markers (Lamertz et al., 2005), or combining collective and organizational identity markers (Lerpold et al., 2007; Navis and Glynn, 2010). Our findings showed not only the relevance of the type of combination of identity markers projected—that is, the content—but also of how it is projected—that is, the form or modality. Existing studies have recognized that linguistic rhetorical strategies are useful in understanding how projected images convey specific attributes of an organization's identity while downplaying other attributes which are less useful to a specific purpose (Pratt and Foreman, 2000; Sillince, 2006). Our findings added that exploiting the different affordances of semiotic modes increases the possible rhetorical configurations of projected images. Thus, a multimodal approach means not only considering both visual images and verbal projections, but also that the interaction of visual and verbal offers alternative strategies of meaning construction that multiply the possibilities of emphasizing or downplaying specific identity attributes when claiming legitimate distinctive identities. We now discuss how the three possibilities emerged from our findings thanks to the affordances of multimodality allow particular paths toward legitimate distinctiveness.

Holistic counterbalance. The juxtaposing strategy showed how wineries could claim an identity that was as different as legitimately possible—not by balancing their actual strategic similarity to the collective (Deephouse, 1999), but by playing with visual and verbal modes in projecting contrasting identity markers. Multimodality allowed us to appreciate how the two steps of legitimate distinctiveness (Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001; Navis and Glynn, 2010)—first securing legitimate membership, then working toward differentiation—can converge and become one holistic claim, which simultaneously signals conformity and distinctiveness within each single projected image. This also showed how composing multimodal images allowed organizations to easily enact a multivocal identity—that is, an identity that permits different interpretations by audiences (Pratt and Foreman, 2000)—without any explicit contradiction while easily maintaining ambiguity.

Standing out without deviating. Wineries signing the collective identity by using a supplementing multimodal strategy were able to stand out without deviating at all from the collective. Counterintuitively, in our case, these wineries seemed to give a first impression of distinctiveness whereas self-categorization to the collective was moved to the background. However, looking more in detail at how they were achieving this, we could see that these wineries claimed a celebrity identity (Rindova, Pollock, and Hayward, 2006) by using aesthetic communication (Rindova, 2007) in order

to build visual status symbols that became icons (Kress and Van Leuween, 2001) of the collective identity. Our approach did not allow us to explore if this strategy was actually used to construct these wineries' celebrity over time. They undoubtedly leveraged on the visual properties of vividness and memorability to keep standing out, even without needing to formulate deviating accounts, as expected by high-status organizations (Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001).

Reinforcing conformity to be different. Our findings showed how multimodality was also used to emphasize prototypicality in a very different way compared to the celebrities described above. Indeed, the complementing strategy illustrated how visual/verbal interaction was used to reinforce impressions of prototypicality and the blending between organizational and collective identities. Our findings showed that this multimodal reinforcement of conformity was not only exploited to secure membership, but also to increase both organizational legitimacy and organizational distinctiveness. A commonly held assumption tends to equate collective identities to conformity and organizational identities to distinctiveness (Lerpold et al., 2007; Whetten and Mackey, 2002; Wry et al., 2011). The identity-differentiating role of social category membership (Brewer, 1993) has received less attention from studies on competitive positioning (cf. Lamertz et al., 2005) compared to organizational and category identity formation (Navis and Glynn, 2010). Our findings suggest the value of reconsidering this general issue and provide insights on how visual identity markers are reproduced consistently to increase the recognition of the collective, which is subsequently leveraged as a differential element on the market.

The influence of the collective's social environment on the enactment of different projection strategies
The comparison of wineries provided interesting insights on the conditions that enabled certain wineries to enact particular strategies and on why some wineries preferred to use one strategy among different possibilities. In particular, we would like to discuss some aspects of the cluster social environment—namely, the co-evolution of collective and organizational identities, social identification and power in collective identity construction—which might complement the typical structural characteristics of network positions, size, and external status considered in the literature of legitimate distinctive positioning in organizational categories and that might be especially useful when considering legitimate distinctiveness a discursive construct, rather than a conformity/deviance degree.

Coevolution of collective and organizational identities. Our findings have highlighted that wineries whose identities coevolved with the collective identity of the cluster enacted strategies offering ways to find distinctiveness without deviating from the collective identity, particularly via blending by complementing modes and signing by supplementing modes. Indeed, historical wineries contributed over the years to creating and legitimizing the cluster's collective identity. Thus, their own

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organizational identity has been, since the very beginning, highly intermingled with the collective Franciacorta identity, as often happens with pioneering firms (Fiol and Romanelli, 2012). By reproducing collective identity markers, they stayed true to their own central, distinctive, and enduring identity beliefs. Therefore, they used the collective identity to claim their own organizational identity. These findings show that central wineries in organizational categories reproduce collective identities not only because this favors their positioning interest (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006), but also because they strategically reproduce their history (Anteby and Molnar, 2012; Suddaby, Foster, and Trank, 2010) when claiming authentic membership to a category.

Social identification. Our data showed that managers' higher levels of identification with the collective identity correlated with less deviating multimodal projection strategies. This finding has implications for theories of social identification in collectives of organizations (Anand, Joshi, and O'Leary-Kelly, 2012; Staber, 2010) by suggesting that the relationships predicted between identification and identity expression at the organizational level of analysis (Ashforth and Mael, 1996) might be relevant at a superior level of analysis—namely, between organizations and their supra-organizational groups. Theories on cognitive competitive groups' identity (Fiol and Romanelli, 2012; Peteraf and Shanley, 1997) have tangentially mentioned this possibility. To our knowledge, ours is the first study to illustrate this link empirically and, although far from testing the link, it provides details on how identification explains certain types of expressions. Interestingly, our data also suggested the role of affective commitment to Franciacorta in influencing the adoption of the complementing strategy, described in particular as a commitment to project collective identity markers, given the strong attachment to the territory and to the pioneering group of wineries. Although this emerging insight requires further investigation, it corroborates the claim of recent studies advocating for the relevance of a focus on emotional aspects to explain collective identity reproduction (Howard-Grenville, Metzger, and Meyer, 2013; Voronov and Vince, 2012).

Power in collective identity construction. Active participation in the trade association also emerged as a relevant condition for the enactment of different multimodal projection strategies. Organizations holding strategic roles in the boardrooms of collective associations actually have the power to influence the definition and redefinition of collective identities (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Beyond acknowledging this type of power in our setting, we could also see how multimodality enabled less powerful organizations to innovate, without rejecting categorical membership, thanks to the juxtaposition of contrasting visual and verbal modes that enabled the conveyance of new legitimate meanings. Although our focus of analysis remained at the organizational level, this finding offered implications for theories of discursive collective identity maintenance and translation as well (Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy, 2004) by showing how juxtaposing multimodal strategies might

allow leaders to steer a slow collective identity change, initiated from the bottom up by innovative, yet legitimate organizational projected images.

Interestingly, our findings also indicated that young wineries tended to align their projected images to the collective identity upon entering the association's decision-making rooms. However, beyond the power given by influence over regulations and the craft of both visual and verbal collective identity markers, our findings showed that feelings of integration and understanding of collective motives were relevant to the change of organizational image management. Thus, again, when organizational and collective identities start to co-evolve, organizations may shift from juxtaposition to more conforming ways, such as blending and signing, to find legitimate distinctiveness.

Having outlined initial suggestions for understanding why organizations exploit multimodality in certain ways and not others, the following section discusses the boundary conditions imposed by our methodological approach and empirical context and then proposes directions for further research.

Boundary conditions and further research

As is the nature of qualitative inductive research, our findings need replication and testing. Concerning the transferability of our findings to other contexts, we acknowledge that the wine industry is a context in which categorical identities are particularly relevant, because of both the link between the product and the territory and the relevance of appellations for wineries' rankings (Benjamin and Podolny, 1999). These aspects limit the transferability of our findings to contexts in which the local identity is less relevant for commercial and promotional purposes, such as manufacturing and service industries. However, in many other industries, such as agro-food, tourism and hospitality, and traditional local industries, strong local identities are also fundamental for the product itself; therefore, contextual conditions similar to those of our case study may apply.

Guided by a theory-building approach based on comparison within the same context, our cross-sectional approach did not allow us to understand how organizations develop multimodal projection strategies over time or how they might switch from one to another during their lifecycle or during the lifecycle of the category. Therefore, further studies employing a longitudinal process approach to this phenomenon (Langley, 1999) could significantly contribute to the understanding of how organizations play with multiple modes in projected images to claim their identities over time and to better unveil how the social structure in which they are embedded and their identification with collective identities influence the adoption of different strategies. In particular, one could argue that both the historical role and an active role in trade associations might actually influence managers' identification with the cluster collective identity over time, as the literature on social identification in organizational contexts suggests (Dutton et al., 1994). Our case was not the best suited to appreciate these relationships as leading roles in the trade association are mainly held by historical wineries, but

this might not be the case in contexts with longer histories and greater social mobility. Thus, future research could further investigate the interaction among historicity, active role in collective associations, and social identification in influencing discursive strategies for legitimate distinctiveness. Furthermore, in our case, all of the big wineries were also historical. It would be interesting to see how big, non-historical organizations, such as multinationals acquiring small organizations in local clusters, handle conformity and deviation from collective identities using their multimodal projection strategies. A context like this would probably also allow researchers to further address the alternative explanation of brand strength versus centrality in greater detail.

In addition, although we explored how multimodal projection strategies relate to different purposes regarding legitimation and distinctiveness, we did not specify whether and how wineries tailor different multimodal images to different stakeholders, which is indeed a relevant question worth investigating. Answering this question would probably benefit from distinguishing how visual and verbal interactions in texts are produced for different media (Kress and Van Leuween, 2001).

To conclude, despite the identified limitations, this research has facilitated a view of the phenomenon of organizational positioning within social categories through new lenses by broadening the focus from strategic similarity or contents to multimodal projected images. By doing so, our study helped take a further step in considering the visual in organizational phenomena (Meyer et al., 2013) and extended the understanding of how organizational identity claims work through the interplay of different modes of expression (Clarke, 2011; Cornelissen et al., 2012).

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[i] Organizational identity markers are not, in fact, distinctive by definition. Some of them conform to the collective identity markers projected by the Consorzio, even though they are not the same markers. In other words, wine labels are organizational identity markers. However, a label having a traditional *champenoise* rectangular shape is in conformance to the collective identity, while one with a rhomboidal shape is distinctive. Therefore, we coded both organizational conforming and organizational distinctive identity markers.

[ii] The aim of the analysis was to identify the discursive effort to obtain legitimate distinctiveness and not the actual evaluation given by stakeholders. This is why we analyzed intent as emerging from interviewees' declarations and the rhetorical intent of text, which we could infer from the analysis of relationships among textual elements in the composition of texts.

1st order Themes   **2nd order Themes**   **Aggregate Dimensions**

Complementary visual/verbal interaction
Symmetry coll. and org. identity markers (visual and verbal)

Complementing Multimodal projections

Nurturing collective identity legitimacy
Collective identity used to claim org. distinctiveness from the outgroup

Blending coll. and org. identity for LD

Blending by complementing

Supplementary visual/verbal interaction
Asymmetry in favor of org. identity markers

Supplementing multimodal projections

Nurturing collective identity legitimacy
Claiming a protagonist role in Franciacorta
Use of org. visual identity markers as status symbols

Signing the collective identity for LD

Signing by supplementing

Juxtaposing visual/verbal interaction
Asymmetry in favor of distinctive org. identity markers (visual and verbal)
Asymmetry in favor of selected collective identity markers (visual and verbal)

Juxtaposing multimodal projections

Use of selected collective identity markers to signal categorical membership
Claiming distinctiveness from other Franciacorta wineries

Counterbalancing coll. and org. identities for LD

Counterbalancing by juxtaposing

- -

Being pioneer Franciacorta producers
Active role in the request of the DOC and DOCG and in the founding of the Consorzio
Being the last arrived in the cluster (negative)

Historical role

Being on the Consorzio's board
Being president/past president of the Consorzio
Feeling dominated by the Consorzio (negative)

Active role in the trade association

Centrality

Use of *we* when talking of the cluster
Declared overlap with Franciacorta identity
Being similar to the Franciacorta prototype

Cognitive identification with the collective

Enthusiasm of being part of the cluster
Pride of being part of the cluster
Love for Franciacorta territory
Feeling upset when Franciacorta is criticized

Affective identification with the collective

Identification

Figure 1. Data structure

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Wine: Art and Experience

several cycles, which yields three fractions of must, each of different quality. These lots are then fermented separately, at controlled temperatures, either in small oak barrels or in steel fermenters, depending on each lot's ageing potential.

During maturation, the wines, all subdivided according the grape variety, vineyard, and press fraction, remain in contact with their own spent yeast, or fine lees. In the spring, the wines undergo a lengthy series of careful tastings and are then blended, in varying proportions, into the various stylistic versions of Franciacorta. They will then be given a second fermentation in the bottle, a procedure known as the Metodo Franciacorta. This natural process transforms sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide, which remains trapped in the bottle and is gradually absorbed into the wine, forming the characteristic effervescence.

Resting in the striking and romantic atmosphere of our winery cellars, the wines mature a minimum of two years in contact with the yeast, which encourages the development of the wine's famously fragrant bouquet, lingering mousse, and those inimitable aromas, so distinctive to Franciacorta.

...the Metodo Franciacorta...

...inimitable aromas, so distinctive to Franciacorta
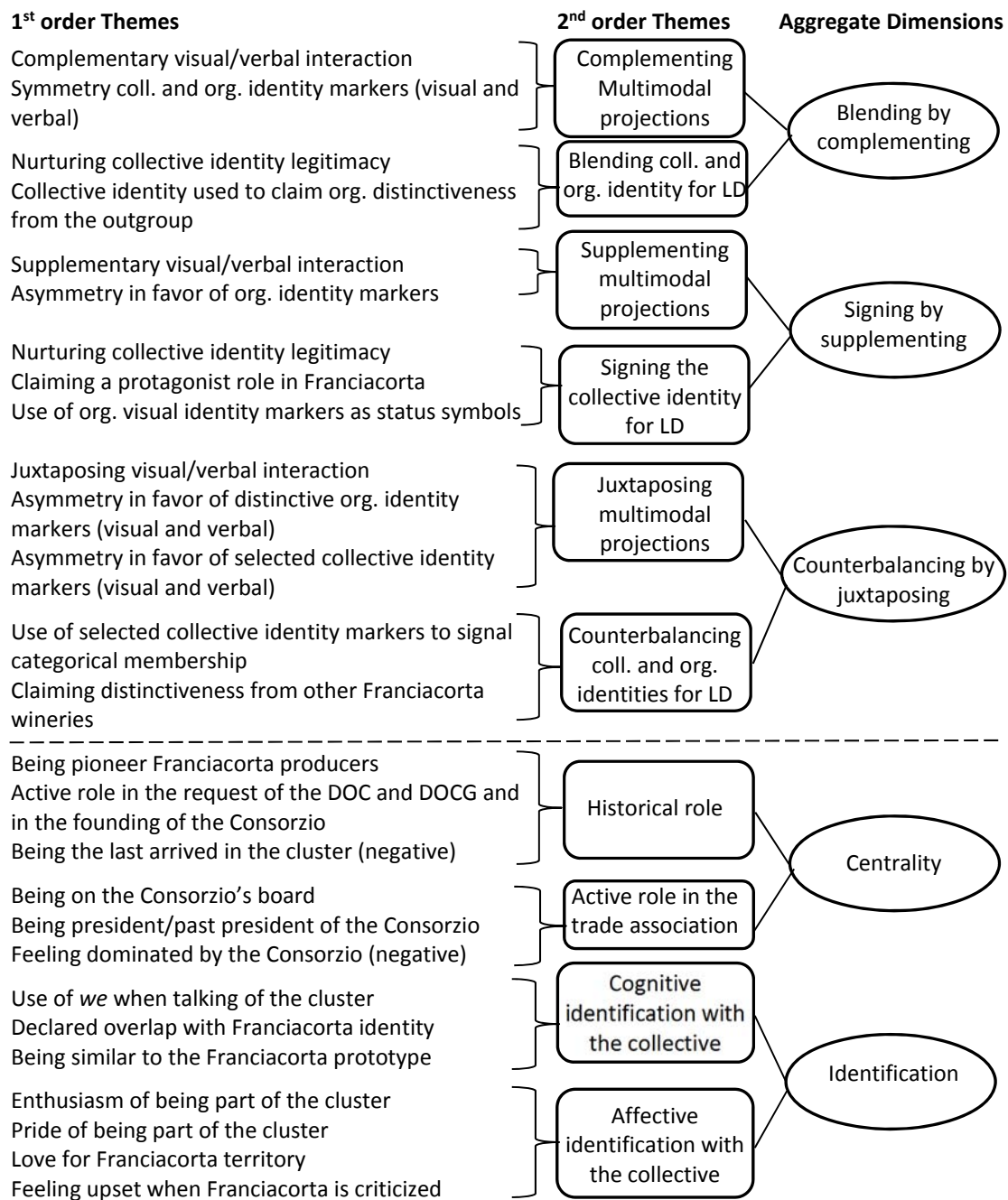
Figure 2. Complementary visual/verbal interaction and symmetry of collective and organizational conforming identity markers in Winery 1 (source: Winery 1's website)

Figure 3. Physical artifacts become visual identity markers at Winery 9 (source: authors' photographs and Winery 9's website)

Figure 4. Unique visual identity markers supplement verbal conforming identity markers in Winery 9's projected images (source: Winery 9's website)
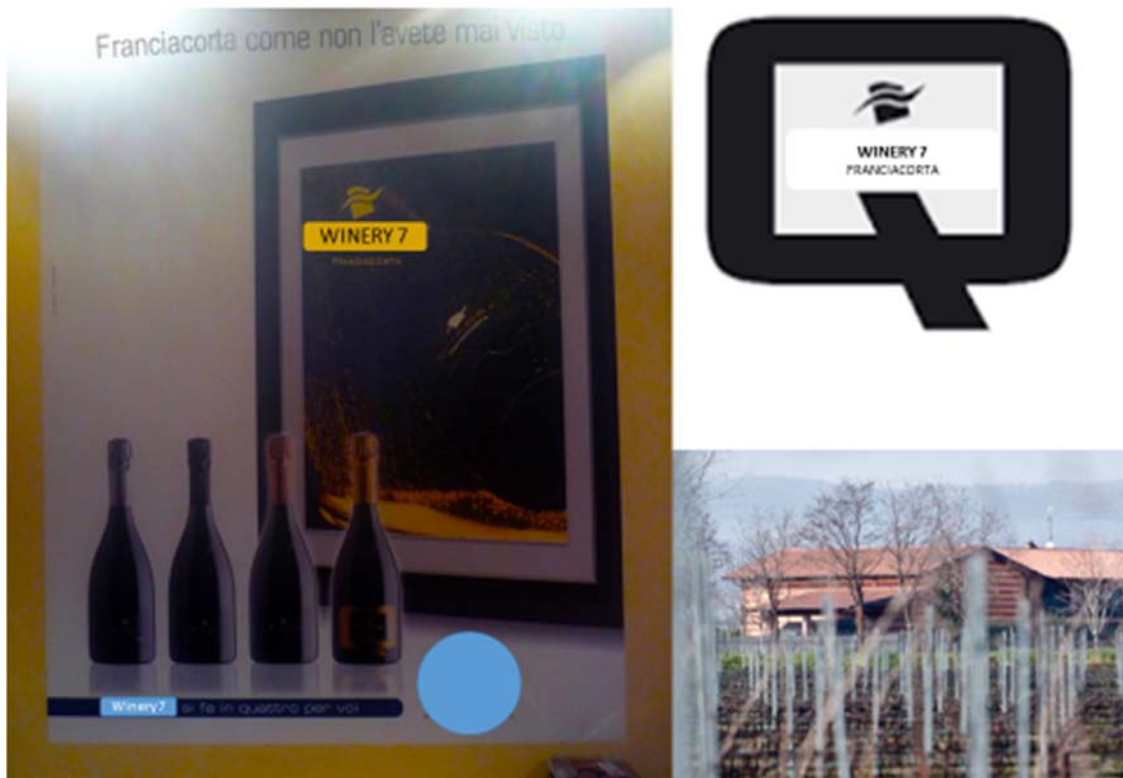
Figure 5. Winery 7's projected images. From left to right clockwise: juxtaposed conforming visuals with distinctive verbal claim in promotional poster; non-conforming organizational visual logo with encapsulated collective name; conforming winery architecture. (source: authors' photographs and Winery 7's website)
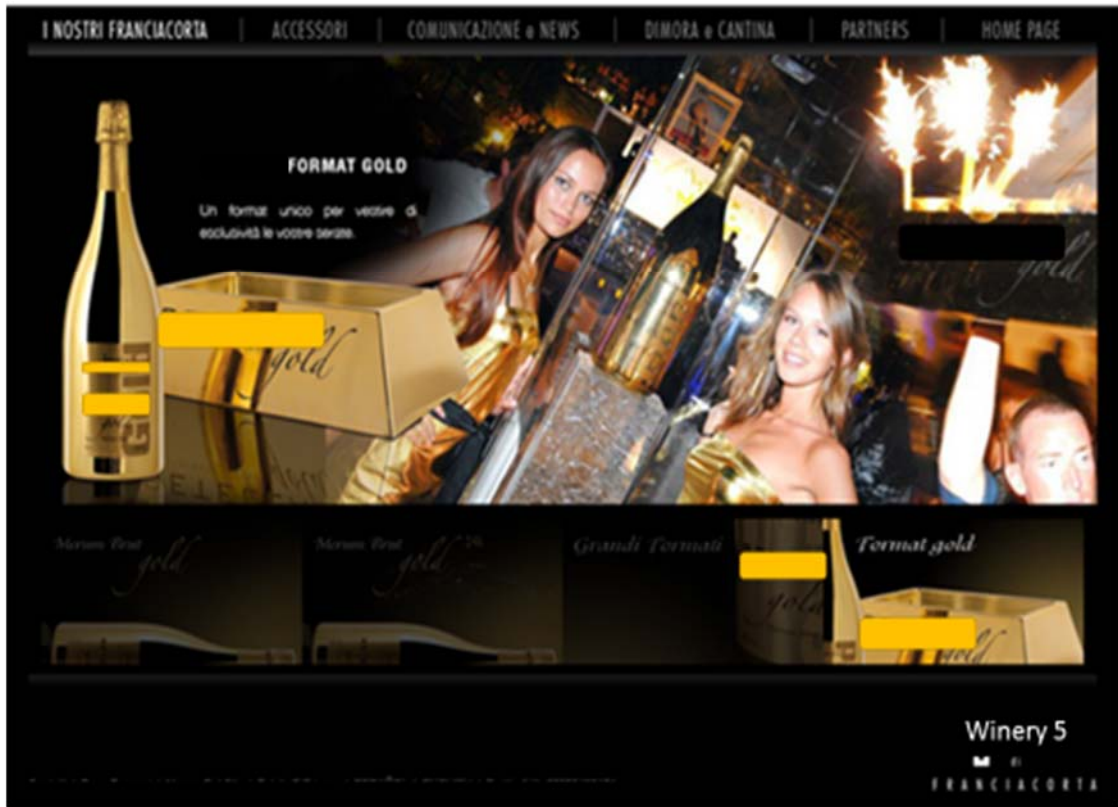
Figure 6. Winery 5's projected image: Non-conforming visuals juxtaposed to winery logo signaling belongingness to Franciacorta (source: Winery 5's website)

Table 1. Final sample (*indicates wineries added with snowball sampling)

Winery	Group from content analysis	Size (bottles produced per year)	Founding year	Status HJ: Huge Johnson's Pocket Wine Book; Esp: I Vini d'Italia, L'Espresso, year 2012
1	2	250,000	1836 (Franciacorta as of 1968)	HIGH
2	2	450,000	1979	MEDIUM
3	2	450,000	1985	MEDIUM
4	2	350,000	1999	LOW
5*	2	150,000	2000	LOW
6	2	400,000	1967	LOW
7*	2	130,000	2003	LOW
8	2	4,700,000	1958	HIGH
9	1	1,500,000	1968	HIGH
10	1	250,000	1960	MEDIUM
11	1	1,300,000	1977	HIGH
12*	1	900,000	1987	MEDIUM
13*	n/a	250,000	1968	HIGH

Table 2. Data sources and use in analysis

Data source	Type of data	Use in the analysis
Non-structured interviews	5 interviews (2010–2013) with the key informant of the Consorzio (approx. 1–2 hours).	Beginning: get acquainted with the case, check its revelatory characteristics, negotiate access, discuss sampling. During data analysis: get insider feedback on findings.
Semi-structured interviews	22 interviews with wineries' entrepreneurs or communication managers (all members of the entrepreneurial family, except one case). 1 to 3 hours. All transcribed. First round: 2011–2012, 12* interviews, 1 per winery. Second round: 2013, 1 interview per winery, 10 wineries. *two wineries have the same communication manager (we then conducted two separate observations for these two wineries)	Gather data on managers' verbal projected images. Gather data about strategic intents regarding legitimacy and distinctiveness seeking. Gather data about winery profile. Second round: discuss emerging findings. Triangulate with document analysis and observations.
Observations	• 12* observations of cellar guided tours (1 to 2 hours each, 2011–2012) • Observation of 13 wineries' physical environment (approx. 60 hours 2011–2013) • Observation of the physical landscape of the Franciacorta territory (approx. 15 hours 2010–2013). • 1-day observation at Vinitaly 2012 (March 2012) * one winery seldom organizes cellar tours; therefore, it was not possible to observe it within the timeframe of data collection.	Gather data on oral narrations to clients. Gather data on physical artifacts displayed in the wineries (e.g., furniture, machinery and winemaking tools, maps, art pieces, bottles and label collections, glasses, winery surroundings, estate gates). Gather data on collective and organizational physical artifacts displayed in the territory (e.g., street signs, arrangement of vineyards boundaries, advertising). Gather data on physical appearance of wineries' exhibition stands, physical location in the exhibition (e.g., Franciacorta building versus other buildings; distance from the Consorzio's stand). Triangulate with document analysis and interview data.
Qualitative document analysis	All websites (13), brochures, press kits, flyers, posters, corporate books, and other promotional material of the wineries in the sample (total: approx. 2388 pages).	Gather data on projected images (verbal and visual) in online/printed materials. Triangulate with interview data and observations.

Table 3. Multimodal projection strategies, how they enable LD, and wineries' profiles

Multimodal projection strategy	Image composition		How the strategy enables LD	Wineries' profiles
	Multimodality	**Identity markers**		
Complementing	Visual and verbal identity markers complement each other and contribute to constructing a coherent meaning	• Symmetric or moderately asymmetric in favor of collective identity markers—organizational identity markers conform to collective identity markers	By blending collective and organizational identity markers.	6 wineries (1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 13) Semi-central wineries (small to medium size; historical; Consorzio's board members) Strong identification to Franciacorta (cognitive and affective)
Supplementing	Visual identity markers supplement verbal identity markers	• Asymmetric in favor of organizational identity markers • Unique and prominent visual organizational identity markers supplement collective and organizational conforming verbal identity markers	By signing the collective identity with organizational visual identity markers.	4 wineries (8, 9, 11, 12) Central wineries (big size; historical wineries; Consorzio's board members) Strong/moderate identification to Franciacorta (cognitive)
Juxtaposing	Visual and verbal identity markers juxtapose contrasting meanings to construct new meaning	• Asymmetric in favor of organizational identity markers. • Visual collective identity markers are juxtaposed to organizational non-conforming verbal identity markers and vice versa.	By counterbalancing collective and organizational identity markers.	3 wineries (4, 5, 7) Peripheral wineries (small; late entrants; out of the Consorzio's board) Moderate/low identification (cognitive)

Table 4. Selected additional evidence

Second-order themes	First-order Themes	Selected evidence
Complementing modes enable blending identities for LD		
Complementing multimodal projections	• Complementary visual/verbal interaction	• Franciacorta salient on traditionally shaped labels and bottles
		• Display of collective artifacts in winery typical of local heritage
		• Collective artifacts and collective narratives in the cellar tour
	• Symmetry coll. and org. identity markers (visual and verbal)	• Collective logo and collective narratives in documents
		• Franciacorta and winery name included in winery logos
		• Frequent reference to regulations to explain own production
		• Winery history framed in collective history
		• Collective and organizational achievements claimed together
Blending coll. and org. identity for LD	• Nurturing collective identity legitimacy	• Communicate Franciacorta first
		• Foster Franciacorta recognition through salience of collective visual identity markers
	• Collective identity used to claim org. distinctiveness from the outgroup	• Relevance of maintaining collective identity consistency
		• Our winery is different because the Franciacorta method is different from all the others
		• Our winery is different because of the Franciacorta terroir

Table 4. Continued

Second-order themes	First-order themes	Selected evidence
Supplementing modes enable signing collective identity for LD		
Supplementing multimodal projections	• Supplementary visual/verbal interaction • Asymmetry toward org. identity markers	• Sophisticated visual org. identity markers matched with conforming verbal identity markers • Salient visual corporate identity systems • Reinterpretation of typical bottle shape, label and packaging • Unique winery architecture (often contemporary design style) with contemporary art/design artifacts
Signing the collective identity for LD	• Nurturing collective identity legitimacy • Claiming a protagonist role in Franciacorta • Use org. visual identity markers as status symbols	• Relevance of maintaining collective identity consistency • Collective identity is a safety net • Visuals used as signatures on prototypical collective verbal identity markers • Reproduction of magnificent physical artifacts in most projected images
Juxtaposing modes enables counterbalancing identities for LD		
Juxtaposing multimodal projections	• Juxtaposing visual/verbal interaction • Asymmetry toward distinctive org. identity markers (visual and verbal) • Asymmetry toward selected collective identity markers (visual and verbal)	• Distinctive logos, labels, packaging with prominent Franciacorta name • Conforming visuals matched with distinctive narratives • Non-conforming eye-catching visuals • Unique method interpretations at the limits of regulations • Distinctive organizational histories, leaders, values and visions • Imitation of Franciacorta architectural heritage • Emphasis on respect of rules
Counterbalancing coll. and org. identity for LD	• Signaling membership • Claiming distinctiveness from other Franciacorta wineries	• Selected collective identity markers are prominent to clearly appear as a Franciacorta winery • Distinctive organizational identity markers always match collective identity markers to appear as a different Franciacorta winery

Table 4. Continued

Second-order themes	First-order themes	Selected evidence
Centrality in the cluster		
Historical role	Being a pioneer among Franciacorta producers	"Since my grandpa, who belonged to the group of pioneers, we started believing in a product different from red wine, to believe in a group. We have belonged to the Consorzio since ever" (Winery 10, interview). Similar evidence from Wineries 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 13
	Active role in the request of the DOC/DOCG and in the founding of the Consorzio	"Our mother decided to give up production with the Charmat method in favor of the collective, to allow the achievement of the DOCG" (Winery 1, interview). Similar evidence from Wineries 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13.
	Being the last arrived in the cluster (negative)	"Now Franciacorta exists, it is strong, it is a running train, and fundamentally I'm the last to arrive. I have arrived and I'm benefiting from their image." (Winery 5, interview) Similar evidence from Wineries 7 and 4.
Active role in the trade association	Being on the Consorzio's board	"I am on the board of directors [of the Consorzio], so we are very active in the Consorzio; we strongly believe in its activity." (Winery 1, interview). Similar evidence from Wineries 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.
	Being president/past president of the Consorzio	"In 1990 [name of entrepreneur] with other enlightened producers of Franciacorta founded the Consorzio Volontario di Franciacorta, in which he had also played the role of president." (Winery 13, website). Similar evidence from Wineries 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, and 11.
	Feeling dominated by the Consorzio (negative)	"I'm honest and I respect rules, but you Consorzio, you put me into trouble. If I have to write the degorging date every month, I can't afford it… you kill me!" (Winery 5, Interview). Similar evidence from Winery 7.

Table 4. Continued

Second-order themes	First-order themes	Selected evidence
Identification		
Cognitive identification with the collective	Use of *we* when talking of the cluster	"When the Consorzio was born, the smartest thing we did as producers was to sign the most restrictive regulations in the world" (Winery 3, cellar tour). Similar evidence from Wineries 1, 2, 6, 10, and 13.
	Declared overlap with Franciacorta identity	"If I talked badly of a [Franciacorta] company, it would be like talking badly of myself, because we have this common denominator, which is the territory." (Winery 3, interview). Similar evidence from Wineries 1, 2, 6, 10, and 13.
	Being similar to Franciacorta prototype	"Some wineries are a prototypical example, like [name of her winery] is a prototypical example because the quality of our wines resembles the quality of wines we taste from other [Franciacorta] wineries for a comparison" (Winery 10, Interview). Similar evidence from Wineries 1, 2, 3, 6, and 13.
Affective commitment to the collective	Enthusiasm/pride of being part of the cluster	"It is the Franciacorta pride, as we producers call it; first of all, there is the Franciacorta pride, the pride of being in Franciacorta and of producing Franciacorta." (Winery 2, interview). Similar evidence from Wineries 1, 3, 6, 10, and 13.
	Love for Franciacorta territory	"There are many families of producers in Franciacorta. When you come from the same territory, even if from different small centers, traditions are the same. And when you love the territory, you love it at Monticelli as you love it at Erbusco. There are many things that bond us together" (Winery 3, interview). Similar evidence also from Wineries 6, 10, and 13
	Feeling upset when Franciacorta is criticized	"[When someone criticizes Franciacorta] I heat up… I know what Franciacorta, the Consorzio, and all of us have done to get here, with great effort and professionalism […] I'm pissed off when they say we are sly… we are not sly we knew what we wanted and we got it with great humility" (Winery 3, interview). Similar evidence also from Wineries 1, 2, 6, 10, and 13

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