

Malene Wines: The Beginning of a Brand

A Senior Project

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### Introduction/Need for Innovation

Malene Wines is the most recently developing brand under the Crimson Wine Group. Currently, the brand is being produced and managed under Chamisal Vineyards. Malene Wines started off with one brand of rosé wine, that has only been available for purchase in the Chamisal tasting room or wholesale. This has caused confusion for the consumer in differentiating the two brands. To help begin the separation of the two brands, Malene Wines has recently received a modified airstream trailer to serve as a mobile tasting room.

Whereas Chamisal Vineyards is a brand focused on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir with small production of Rhone varietals, the long-term goal of Malene Wines is to be a rosé-centered brand. This goal proves to be promising as the popularity of rosé is rapidly increasing over the years (Kelly, J. 2016). As the brand grows, the availability of different Malene Wines' varietals and styles of rosé will grow with it. These wines are produced under the same roof, and managed by the same people, but there is a great need to develop communication strategies to help publicize the differences in the brands. As a young brand, Malene Wines is looking for strategies and recommendations to reach an audience that are more reflective of current and future wine consumers. This involves studying communications towards different generations (Sillani, Miccoli, & Nassivera 2017) and local versus more urban environments (St James, M., & Christodoulidou, N. 2011).

This project will research and experiment with expanding consumer awareness and retention rate of the brand amongst millennials and other generations through modern and traditional communication practices, while moving the public's eye view of Malene Wines away from the Chamisal Vineyards brand. This is to be accomplished through targeted marketing, improved social media interaction (Brown, D., & Fiorella, S. 2013), greater brand development, print communications, and engagement strategies with various audiences (Beverland, M., & Luxton, S. 2005).

### Methodology

To garner a better comprehension of how ways best to market and promote Malene Wines, an understanding of the target audience must be obtained in two primary ways: research of the market trends amongst certain generations, and in person evaluations of consumers' interest in the brand. The author researched communication strategies of millennials and their rosé consumption. Tasting room staff noted and shared testimonials from new and past customers of Chamisal Vineyards. Those findings have helped provide consumer opinions on the brand, thus helping shape how the local communication strategies will look.

However, to develop an understanding of what consumers are feeling in the moment, real-time conversions to evaluate their experience of the beginning stages of the brand development were conducted primarily by Andrea De Palo (Director of Consumer Sales) and myself, with help from other Chamisal Vineyards staff. Questions were targeted to the consumer's ideal needs such as, "What do you look for in a rosé," "Would you attend a local event that had a mobile wine tasting room," and "What kind of experience do you think of when tasting this rosé?"

When discussing the initial and future stages of the brand, the primary method to develop a bank of potential customers was to utilize the tasting room to capture consumer experiences and contact information (name, email address, and birthdate for legality of drinking age) on written forms. The development of this database helps Malene Wines see how many people enjoyed the first rosé during its temporary placement at the Chamisal Vineyards tasting room.

Additionally, the Malene Wines will use this database to communicate about the development of the experience that is Malene Wines.

### Results

The author estimates 300 consumers have been added to the Malene Wines database during his study of the brand. The Malene Wines wineclub developed through the author's time working on the brand opportunities of Malene Wines. Additional consumer outreach is being accomplished through farmers markets and mobile pouring setups. The author helped Malene Wines establish plans and implement a mobile wine trailer for events. The success of the "Malenescene" has led to its own hashtag on Instagram and a second mobile wine trailer is being developed for East Coast marketing. The Malenescene debuted at the Chamisal Vineyards and has since been to the Austin Food and Wine Festival, Pineridge Vineyards in Napa, and San Francisco as part of a Sunset Magazine feature.

Through all the events, planning meetings and data collected, the author utilized consumer research from customer interviews and published studies to determine how Malene Wines should move forward with brand recognition. The author developed a report with an overview, research, social media recommendation, event idea details, brand partnerships, and a conclusion section.

### Moving Forward

Malene Wines is a part of Crimson Wine Group, which has more power in determining the movement of the brand. This then creates some uncertainty with what might happen with the growth of the brand, even from week to week. To focus in, the author placed more attention on Malene Wines at the local level. This was accomplished through prior research and face-to-face interactions with customers. The best proven method of gathering information to move forward came from business-to-consumer conversations. Better than a study published elsewhere, this provided real, in the moment information about how consumers viewed the brand. With this, the author and Malene Wines can continue to develop an outline of what can be accomplished as the brand grows; taking into consideration the sudden changes that may come from Crimson Wine Group.

## Citations

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