Social Media Use of Small Wineries in Alsace: Resources and Motivations Analysis

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Abstract: Social media (SM) plays an increasingly important role in small and medium businesses, including wineries. However, little is known about the managerial adoption and use of SM by wineries. This study aims to understand wineries’ SM usage by analysing their strategic objectives of SM usage and main differences in relation to their SM usage, as well as establishing factors contributing to SM usage. The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) framework (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions) is discussed together with additional explanatory factors relevant in the studied context (attitude toward SM, self-efficacy, and anxiety). A quantitative survey of 78 wineries from the Alsace wine region of France was conducted. The results show that SM is currently used by a majority of wineries, but that strategic alignment is missing. There are significant differences in SM usage according to winery size, export orientation, and winemakers’ profiles. The results also confirm that wineries need resources and knowledge to use SM more extensively.

Keywords: acceptance and use of technology; French wineries; social media usage; strategic alignment

1. Introduction

The importance of the French wine industry on national and international scenes is no longer under question, even if wine consumption is increasingly becoming more informed, intelligent, and connected, mostly supported by information and communication technologies (ICTs). Consumers are using the internet as a source of information in their search for products and services [1–3]. The complexity of the wine market implies that consumers often seek more information before buying [4]. Indeed, compared to other alcoholic beverages, wine is very present on the web [5,6]. The wine industry is not an exception as to how it relates to ICTs, even if, in the beginning, it was reluctant to fully embrace this disruptive technology [7]. Start-ups have been created by and with sommeliers, celebrities, consultants, neo-rurals, salespeople, and others to support the digital development of wineries and provide digital solutions around the discovery, choice, conservation, consumption, and purchase of wine. The outreach to ICTs and especially to social media (SM) allows wineries to benefit from multiple opportunities (e.g., crowdfunding) [8]. Considering the global outreach of the wine industry, wineries are also required to integrate ICTs continuously and directly into their work processes and learn how to capitalise on online opportunities to stand out. Thousands of wineries around the world are using their websites and SM tools to sell wine online [9]. This online presence allows wineries to provide consumers with information, facilitate sales [4,10,11], and manage relationships with wine consumers [4,6,10–12] and wine tourists [3,13,14].

The sustainability is key for the global wine industry mainly as wine is an agriculture product subject to environmental scrutiny as other agri-food products [15]. Wine-growing and wine-making can be defined as sustainable if they are sensitive to the environment,
responsive to the needs and interests of society at large, and economically feasible to implement and maintain [16]. Sustainability is critical to ensure the continuous development of the wine sector [17]. There has been a steady movement of wine business toward sustainable farming and business practices, whether organic, biodynamic, or even natural wine [18–20]. Moreover, sustainability in the wine industry is of growing interest in academic literature and among industry practitioners [15,21]. Most studies have focused on the environmental dimension in the specific wine regions [22], and a few on social sustainability in the wine industry [15,18] and across nations [23]. Furthermore, in the wine industry, SM can have a vital role in encouraging sustainable behaviours. While much research has been done to minimise the environmental impact, with a special focus on greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy use, pesticides reduction, landscape preservation, water and waste management, soil, and biodiversity, scholars have, in recent years, paid increased attention to the potential role of SM in amplifying environmental concerns and encouraging sustainable behaviours among wine consumers and winemakers [6,11]. Sogari et al. [11] have underscored the power of SM in increasing sustainability awareness and consequently influencing the consumer buying behaviour for wine. According to them, wineries should use SM to better communicate their environmentally friendly activities. Furthermore, previous studies have also supported the key role of digital technologies as enablers of short food supply chains’ resilience [24] and as a catalyst for sustainable social business [25].

In the wine industry, previous research on SM usage has primarily analysed the consumer side, and the existing literature does not provide insights from an organisation’s perspective. Additionally, few studies have focused on the predictors of SM use. The objectives of this research are (1) to explore which SM are currently used by wineries, (2) to identify the differences in use according to their profiles, (3) to understand why wineries engage in the use of certain SM, and (4) to establish factors contributing to SM usage. From this perspective, the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) [26] is operationalized and extended with contextual variables specific to the wine industry. A quantitative methodology is carried out, based on the responses of 78 winemakers from the Alsace wine region of France. The following sections present the theoretical background and methodology of the study, discuss the results, and conclude with practical and conceptual contributions.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Importance of Social Media Usage

The importance of SM is growing in the lives of individuals as well as in the business world. SM includes a variety of online platforms, such as business networking sites (LinkedIn), social networking sites (Facebook), microblogging sites (Twitter), photo sharing sites (Instagram), video sharing sites (YouTube), and commerce communities (Amazon.com). These platforms allow companies to interact with their customers and stakeholders, as they are usually sources of requests, suggestions, or complaints [27]. Many internet users utilise two or more SMs [28]. SM constitutes an extension of word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing [29]. Thus, strategically, SM offers an opportunity to develop strong customer–supplier relationships, and it is crucial for businesses to engage in SM.

Furthermore, recent research has promoted enterprise social networking usage for business or commercial purposes [30,31]. Many top firms, such as Deloitte, General Motors, HP, IBM, and Microsoft, implemented enterprise social networking to encourage employees to share personal and professional information [32]. Nevertheless, SM services can also be seen as appropriate tools for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with limited resources because they provide affordable channels for marketing [33]. However, the wine industry, mainly composed of SMEs, is an exception as to how it relates to SM. Accordingly, there is a niche for research on the factors impacting wine SMEs’ SM use.
2.2. Social Media Usage in the Wine Industry

Wine professionals recognise digital marketing tools, including websites, newsletters, and SM, as very important solutions in the face of global challenges in the wine industry [34]. In this context, wine business and wine tourism require substantial marketing support, especially through SM (e.g., Facebook) [14,35–37]. SM marketing is defined as “building a social network of fans, followers, and connections using proper and interesting content that allows businesses to reach and engage more people and drive more sales” [38] (p. 4). As SM provides not only advertisement but also interactive communication with consumers, it has become a significant part of the marketing approaches of wineries all over the world [4,39,40]. SM is the cornerstone of wineries’ marketing-oriented approach [41] and an appropriate and valuable tool to reach wine consumers [11,38,42,43]. European wineries are increasingly present online and especially on SM. Thus, the biggest Spanish wineries have been present on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram (in descending order of presence) [44]. Greek and German wineries have also accelerated their presence on SM, but there is still a great potential for improvement in their digital marketing strategies [45]. In France, although the consumer is increasingly present on SM and wineries gradually get used to new technologies, there is still a low presence of small wineries on SM [46].

Wineries’ digital strategies can have three types (or stages) linked to the nature of communication: informative, interactive, and transactional. The role of SM is important [47]. SM attracts a certain type of consumer. Brunner and Siegrist (2011) [48] found that enjoyment-oriented consumers are the most active users of SM. Furthermore, SM is the perfect place for word of mouth, which has a great effect on wine quality and price perceptions [49]. Indeed, SM marketing is positively related to online or offline wine purchasing [11,42,43] and is also crucial to interact with consumers [4], and consumer’s objective and subjective knowledge moderates the relationship between SM usage and online wine purchasing [50]. Moreover, SM allows not only the presentation of the company’s offer [41,51] but also the establishment of a long-term relationship with the consumer, stimulating trust and loyalty to the brand [52]. Furthermore, SM can help wineries to disseminate important information and values, such as CSR (e.g., [35]). These studies show that most wineries use SM for two main objectives: SM as a wine sales channel and SM as a communication channel. However, it is still unclear how different types of SM are used to achieve strategic objectives.

Different research has been conducted about SM usage in the wine industry around the world. Hoffmann et al. (2016) [40] show that the majority of the United States wineries and their German counterparts recognise the importance of SM usage in the wine industry. Szolnoki et al. (2014) [10] investigate the use of SM by wineries in Germany. They reveal that 60% of German wineries communicate with their customers using SM and that Facebook is the most important SM used by German wineries, followed by Twitter and YouTube. Szolnoki et al. (2014) [10] also point out that Facebook fans are disposed to receiving sales offers from their supported winery, suggesting that SM may constitute a potential wine sales channel. Based on six leading Italian wineries, Capitello et al. (2014) [53] explore, among others, their SM tactics. They underline that the social network most used by these wineries is Facebook, as it obtains the highest attendance of customers. These companies adopt a friendly, communicative approach, and the promotion of events, trivia, and news is privileged by them. In terms of content, games, or quizzes, references to celebrities or festive occasions and consumption usage are often developed. Recently, in the context of the Sicilian wine industry using Facebook as a strategic marketing tool, Galati et al. (2017) [35] demonstrate that small firms directed by managers with a higher educational level are more involved in SM as they record high values of intensity, richness, and responsiveness. From a customer’s perspective, Beninger et al. (2014) [54] analyse the content of influential wine blogs and indicate that readers are often interested in wine attributes and the experiences surrounding wine promoted by wine bloggers. However, to the best of our knowledge, SM usage has not been studied in France, even though the French wine industry is one of
the top three producers of wine in the world [55]. Only recently have the digital practices of wineries in this particular market been studied through creating an evaluation grid of winery websites [56]. Thus, there is a need to investigate not only website usage but also SM usage of wineries.

2.3. Predictors of Social Media Use

According to Venkatesh et al. (2007) [57], there is both research on individual acceptance and use of information technology (IT) and research on technology adoption by groups and organisations. The latter highlights that before one can attain desired outcomes, such as task performance in organisations, one must first use technology. To explain user acceptance and use of IT, many researchers have proposed and tested several competing models (e.g., technology acceptance models based on the theory of planned behaviour) [58,59]. These models were synthesised by Venkatesh et al. (2003) [26] into the UTAUT. UTAUT identifies four key factors (i.e., performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions) that can predict behavioural intention to use a technology and actual technology use, primarily in organisational contexts [26,60]. According to this model, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence were theorised to influence behavioural intention to use a technology, while behavioural intention and facilitating conditions shape actual technology use [59,60]. Performance expectancy relates to the extent to which technology is perceived to help attain better job performance. Effort expectancy is the attributed ease of technology use, while social influence to use technology is defined as the degree to which the person believes that important peers think that one should use a given technology. Facilitating conditions of technology use encompass organisational and technical infrastructures that support one’s use of technology [26,60]. The UTAUT has been a commonly used framework to address SM usage. For instance, Salim (2012) [61] mobilised the UTAUT to study the acceptance of SM in Egypt. Mandal and McQueen (2012) [62] used this model to explain SM adoption by microbusinesses. To examine the role of SM in the research practices of faculty, Gruzd et al. (2012) [63] also adopted the UTAUT model.

Thus, in this research, the UTAUT is applied to explore the predictors of SM actual use by winemakers. The model (Figure 1) also integrates attitudes toward SM use, self-efficacy, and anxiety as supplementary explanatory factors of SM actual use, despite their exclusion by Venkatesh et al. (2003) [26], since they are relevant in the studied context. Instead of focusing on SM use intention, the study focuses on actual SM use. Indeed, little explanation of actual use, use patterns, and the diverse user values of technology is provided by the traditional technology adoption framework (i.e., technology acceptance model) [64,65]. According to Kirova and Vo-Thanh (2019) [65], research on technology non-use, use patterns, and most importantly, actual use has been under-explored. Additionally, to our knowledge, the UTAUT framework has not been used to address the actual use of SM in the wine industry.

In this study, the UTAUT is operationalised to explain the actual use of SM by wineries, as it clarifies not only the intention or acceptance to use but also the actual use of a given technology [26,60]. Moreover, due to the small size of the wineries in the Alsace region, the SM actual use is explored from an individual perspective. Indeed, for these wineries, marketing management in general and SM management, in particular, rely on one person only, usually the owner of the winery or a family member. Therefore, to better explain the SM actual use by wineries, it is important to integrate the attitudes and beliefs of the people who are the main actors in implementing SM practices for their wineries into the UTAUT model (Figure 1). The filter question at the beginning of the questionnaire (i.e., “Are you in charge of or do you put in place the digital marketing in the winery?”) allows us to reach target respondents.
3. Methodology

3.1. Context of Study

This research focuses on the French wine industry, as it can prevail as one of the major contributors to the French trade balance, together with the aeronautics and perfume industries, accounting for €12.9 billion [3,66]. Moreover, France is one of the top three wine-producing countries in the world, with an estimated 43.9 million hectolitres of wine produced in 2019 [35], contributing almost 16% of the world’s wine production [67]. However, in the beginning, the French wine industry was reluctant to fully incorporate ICTs [68]. With increasingly informed and connected consumers who use multiple digital channels to communicate about and buy wine, the digitalisation of the world of wine is especially crucial. Indeed, SM is a great way to reach out to millennial consumers [11,69]. In France, the wine consumer is increasingly connected: 38% of consumers declare searching for information on wine online and 37% do so on SM [70]. A total of 50% of engaged consumers have already ordered wine on SM they follow, and the majority of French consumers attribute great importance to wine advice found on SM. In addition, the part of French consumers buying wine online has increased in the last year by 15% (from 31% to 46%) [70]. The digitalisation is also a strategic approach in the current COVID-19 pandemic [25]. Hence, French wineries have no other choice than to digitalise to potentially access the 90% of the French population who are internet users, and more specifically to the 60% of SM users (39 million people) in France compared to the total population, with 97% of them accessing such services via mobile devices [71]. More specifically, wineries from the Alsace region have been selling their wines on the export markets due to border proximity with Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Equally, Alsatian wine has become more important in more distant export markets like China [8].

3.2. Data Collection

The data collection was carried out in Summer 2019 with the help of the Independent Winemakers’ Association of the Alsace wine region of France, which represents SME wineries that are mostly family-owned. Among the 180 representatives of wineries contacted via email, 139 responded and 78 provided complete answers and details on wine production
(i.e., volume of production and yearly revenue). First, data about the profile of the winery, such as its year of creation, its size (employees and production), and its organisational characteristics (e.g., independent or cooperating, importance of export) were collected. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to describe their role and profile, helping us collect the sociodemographic (i.e., gender, age, education) and organisational (i.e., role and type of ownership) parameters of the winemaker. Additionally, actual SM use and related objectives were measured. Finally, the respondents reported their motivations, attitudes, and perceptions toward SM use in relation to the research model. The various data collected are illustrated in Figure 2.

3.3. Descriptive Statistics

Within the final sample of 78 winemakers, the wineries in question were created from the 17th century up to 2018, with the median age of creation in 1977. Most of the wineries were of small size (i.e., less than five employees) and produced less than 100,000 bottles per year (75.6%). Most of the respondents were owners who had inherited their winery (83%), followed by respondents who created or bought their winery (8.6%), while others were employed by the winery in question. All respondents are decision makers with regard to the marketing and online strategy of their winery. Thus, they represent 78 owners and general managers. As such, every respondent is referred to as a winemaker. The education of the respondents was in 47.4% of the cases commercial/managerial and in 52.6% related to oenology and the technical side of the business. Among the respondents, 66.7% were men; the mean age was 40 years old. Most of the wineries in the sample are independent (47 out of 78) and harvesting (16 out of 78) winemakers.

4. Results

4.1. Current Social Media Usage of Wineries

Figure 3 and Table 1 show that among the seven studied SMs (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, blog, Professional wine-related SMs such as Vinix, and LinkedIn), Facebook and Instagram are the most widely used, with 55.1% and 24.4% of winemakers respectively using them very often and only 16.7% and 35.9% not using these SMs at all. The majority of winemakers do not use Twitter (61.5%), YouTube (55%), LinkedIn (57.7%), or blogs (57.7%). Professional wine-related SM is more popular: 41% of winemakers use it rarely, and 24.4% do so often. Overall, even if some use it rarely, 85.9% of winemakers already use SM, and only 14.1% are completely abstinent from these communication media.

According to the results, it is evident that some SMs are not used by winemakers. It is possible that they do not see the direct utility of SM usage. To better understand which winemakers are more compelled to use SM, SM usage was analysed according to the winery profiles. Specifically, the wineries were distinguished based on their age (from the year of creation until 2020), size, and export orientation. Similarly, the winemakers were profiled according to their age and education levels.
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### Figure 3. Social media actual use by wineries.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of social media use.

|                      | Mean (Standard Deviation) | Never (Percentage) | Rarely (Percentage) | Often (Percentage) |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Facebook             | 4.92 (2.12)                | 13 (16.7%)         | 43 (55.1%)          | 3 (3.9%)           |
| Instagram            | 3.60 (2.31)                | 28 (35.9%)         | 31 (39.7%)          | 8 (10.3%)          |
| Twitter              | 2.31 (1.92)                | 48 (61.5%)         | 39 (48.6%)          | 7 (9%)             |
| YouTube              | 2.24 (1.68)                | 43 (55%)           | 30 (38.5%)          | 5 (6.5%)           |
| Blog                 | 2.23 (1.70)                | 45 (57.7%)         | 29 (37.2%)          | 4 (5.1%)           |
| Professional wine-related SM | 2.10 (1.52) | 27 (34.6%)         | 32 (41%)            | 19 (24.4%)         |
| LinkedIn             | 2.05 (1.41)                | 45 (57.7%)         | 25 (32%)            | 8 (10.3%)          |
| SM use               | 2.64 (1.18)                | 11 (14.1%)         | 59 (75.6%)          | 8 (10.3%)          |
| Total                | Min 1 Max 7                | 78 (100%)          |                     |                    |

Note: in bold the majority of use or non-use per SM; rarely: once a week; often: twice or more a week.

### 4.2. Differences in Use According to the Profiles of Wineries and Winemakers

The use of SM is different among wineries of different sizes and export orientations (Table 2). Wineries with more than five employees use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, LinkedIn, and wine SM to a larger extent. The same is true for companies that are oriented toward wine export: they increase their use of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as opposed to more home-market-oriented wineries.
Table 2. Social media use according to various characteristics of the winery.

| Category                  | Winery Age             | Size               | Export Orientation |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                           | Recently founded (from 1971 to 2020) | Historical (from 1620 to 1970) | Less than 5 employees | From 5 to 50 employees | Part of production exported from 0% to 90% (median 17%) |
|                           | N                      |                    |                    |                      | -                  |
| Facebook                  | 4.96 (2.21)            | 4.67 (2.14)        | 4.54 (2.17)        | 5.79 (1.76)          | 0.354 ***          |
| Instagram                 | 3.81 (2.45)            | 3.48 (2.42)        | 3.11 (2.23)        | 4.71 (2.13)          | 0.245 *            |
| Twitter                   | 2.52 (2.15)            | 2.50 (2.08)        | 1.87 (1.59)        | 3.29 (2.25)          | 0.392 ***          |
| YouTube                   | 2.37 (1.77)            | 2.08 (1.62)        | 1.91 (1.45)        | 3.00 (1.93)          | 0.058              |
| Blog                      | 2.19 (1.74)            | 2.37 (1.86)        | 1.91 (1.54)        | 2.96 (1.89)          | 0.203              |
| Professional wine-related SM | 2.27 (1.55)            | 2.26 (1.73)        | 2.02 (1.46)        | 2.29 (1.68)          | -0.094             |
| LinkedIn                  | 2.37 (1.57)            | 2.08 (1.46)        | 1.81 (1.33)        | 2.58 (1.47)          | 0.127              |

Table 3. Social media use according to the profile of winemakers.

| Category                  | Winemaker Age | Winemaker Education |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
|                           | 20–39         | 40–54               | 55–73               | Commercial/managerial | Wine-making technics |
|                           | N             | 18                  | 35                  | 25                  | 37                  | 41                  |
| Facebook                  | 5.44 (2.06)   | 4.41 (2.30)         | 5.42 (1.76)         | 5.42 (1.85)          | 4.78 (2.19)         |
| Instagram                 | 4.06 (2.67)   | 3.14 (2.32)         | 4.00 (2.04)         | 4.58 (2.19)          | 4.90 (2.23)         |
| Twitter                   | 2.81 (2.37)   | 1.84 (1.69)         | 2.63 (1.86)         | 3.00 (2.19)          | 1.83 (1.71)         |
| YouTube                   | 2.63 (1.89)   | 2.05 (1.66)         | 2.21 (1.58)         | 2.65 (1.74)          | 1.93 (1.57)         |
| Blog                      | 2.69 (1.95)   | 1.89 (1.64)         | 2.38 (1.63)         | 2.77 (1.81)          | 2.00 (1.65)         |
| Professional wine-related SM | 2.38 (1.78)   | 2.00 (1.45)         | 2.00 (1.47)         | 2.19 (1.55)          | 2.10 (1.51)         |
| LinkedIn                  | 1.94 (1.48)   | 1.65 (1.16)         | 2.67 (1.52)         | 2.31 (1.46)          | 1.68 (1.15)         |

Note: SM use is coded as intensity of use from 1 (never) to 7 (very frequently); groups in bold are different at p-value < 0.050.

While the year of foundation of the winery does not have a significant impact on the intensity of SM use, the educational background of the winemaker does. Thus, winemakers with a commercial rather than technical education are more prone to use Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Table 3).

4.3. Strategic Objectives Related to Wineries’ Social Media Use

The use of different SMs is correlated with the strategic objectives of the winery (Table 4). Thus, it can be inferred that the perceived usefulness of every SM platform is different. It is clear that Facebook and Instagram are perceived as the SMs that have the potential to facilitate commercial transactions, interactions with consumers to promote the winery, and build brand awareness by putting forward winery activities [11], as well as the means to stimulate wine tourism. Despite the overall limited use of Twitter, its use is associated with the potential to share promotional offers and information about winery activities, as well as to commercialise wines. Like Twitter, blogs, when used, are meant to promote special offers and increase commercial transactions, only to a minor point aiming to inform customers about the winery’s activities. LinkedIn, although it is rarely used by wineries, is dedicated to selling wines and informing consumers of the winery’s activities (e.g., wine-making, viticultural activities) and wine tourism. YouTube is mostly used by wineries to inform their customers of viticultural practices, wine-making processes, and wine tourism. However, the alignment of strategic objectives in using YouTube and professional wine SM is very limited: one can conclude that the benefits of these SMs are not recognised.
Table 4. Correlation between strategic objectives and social media use.

| Strategic Objectives/SM Use            | Commercial Transactions | Promotional Offers | Information about Winery’s Activities (Viticultural, Wine-Making, etc.) | Wine Tourism (Visiting the Winery and Tasting) |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Total: Mean (Std. Dev.)                | 3.29 (1.97)             | 4.75 (2.19)        | 4.88 (2.16)                                                           | 4.43 (2.13)                                   |
| Facebook                               | 0.426 ***               | 0.722 ***          | 0.819 ***                                                             | 0.628 ***                                     |
| Instagram                              | 0.437 ***               | 0.610 ***          | 0.605 ***                                                             | 0.381 ***                                     |
| Twitter                                | 0.443 ***               | 0.361 ***          | 0.372 ***                                                             | 0.052                                         |
| YouTube                                | 0.113                   | 0.224              | 0.250 *                                                              | 0.233 *                                       |
| Blog                                   | 0.390 ***               | 0.230 *            | 0.271 *                                                              | 0.197                                         |
| Professional wine-related SM           | 0.248 *                 | 0.042              | 0.071                                                                | 0.189                                         |
| LinkedIn                               | 0.274 *                 | 0.217              | 0.263 *                                                              | 0.256 *                                       |
| SM use (total)                         | 0.523 ***               | 0.567 ***          | 0.619 ***                                                             | 0.437 ***                                     |

Note: values in bold are significantly correlated (bivariate Pearson) at *** p-value < 0.001, * p-value < 0.050.

4.4. Factors Contributing to Social Media Usage

Finally, the aim of this study is to understand what beliefs and attitudes of key people in the winery (i.e., managers and people in charge of marketing and communication) stimulate the use of SM. The participants were asked to evaluate their use and perceptions on 7-point Likert scales (from 1 “completely disagree” to 7 “completely agree”) adopted from the literature [26]. The results show good reliability and validity (Table 5). All the item loadings are above the 0.50 threshold; the above 0.70 of Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability [72,73] validate scale reliability, while convergent validity is provided by the average variance extracted (AVE) [74], which exceeds the 0.50 threshold [75].

Table 5. UTAUT scale items, loading, and reliability.

| Scale                          | Mean (Std. Dev.) | Factor Loading | Alpha Cron. | CR | AVE |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|----|-----|
| Attitude toward SM use         |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 1. Using SM is a good idea.    |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 2. SM makes work more interesting. |                |                |             |    |     |
| 3. Working with the SM is fun. |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 4. I like working with the SM. |                  |                |             |    |     |
| Self-efficacy in SM use (R)    |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 1. I could complete a job or task using SM ... | 4.92 (1.56) | 0.758 | 0.887 0.922 0.748 |
| 2. If I could call someone for help if I got stuck. | 3.82 (1.81) | 0.887 | 0.875 0.915 0.731 |
| 3. If I had a lot of time to complete the job for which the software was provided. | 3.76 (1.88) | 0.925 | 0.884 |
| 4. If I had just the built-in help facility for assistance. | 3.98 (1.72) | 0.881 | 0.884 |
| Anxiety regarding SM use       |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 1. I feel apprehensive about using SM. | 3.68 (2.01) | 0.859 | 0.875 0.915 0.731 |
| 2. It scares me to think that I could lose a lot of information using SM by hitting the wrong key. | 4.09 (1.90) | 0.89 | 0.864 |
| 3. I hesitate to use SM for fear of making mistakes I cannot correct. | 4.26 (2.06) | 0.784 | 0.919 0.943 0.807 |
| 4. SM is somewhat intimidating to me. | 3.94 (1.83) | 0.884 | 0.943 0.807 |
| Performance expectancy         |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 1. I would find SM useful in my job. | 4.81 (1.70) | 0.834 | 0.784 0.724 0.419 |
| 2. Using SM enables me to accomplish tasks more quickly. | 4.04 (1.86) | 0.864 | 0.724 0.419 |
| 3. Using SM increases my productivity. | 3.50 (1.77) | 0.865 | 0.724 0.419 |
| 4. I use SM, I will increase my chances of getting a raise. | 4.05 (1.70) | 0.532 | 0.724 0.419 |
| Effort expectancy               |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 1. My interaction with SM would be clear and understandable. | 4.04 (1.60) | 0.907 | 0.956 0.967 0.883 |
| 2. It would be easy for me to become skillful at using SM. | 4.15 (1.76) | 0.951 | 0.967 0.883 |
| 3. I would find SM easy to use. |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 4. Learning to operate SM is easy for me. | 4.03 (1.79) | 0.951 | 0.967 0.883 |
| Social influence                |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 1. People who influence my behaviour think that I should use SM. | 3.88 (1.64) | 0.905 | 0.769 0.868 0.691 |
| 2. People who are important to me think that I should use SM. | 3.88 (1.71) | 0.893 | 0.769 0.868 0.691 |
| 3. In general, the organisation has supported the use of SM | 4.46 (1.68) | 0.677 | 0.836 0.891 0.672 |
| Facilitating conditions         |                  |                |             |    |     |
| 1. I have the resources necessary to use SM. | 3.49 (1.80) | 0.750 | 0.836 0.891 0.672 |
| 2. I have the knowledge necessary to use SM. | 4.17 (1.71) | 0.860 | 0.836 0.891 0.672 |
| 3. SM is compatible with other SM I use. | 4.03 (1.74) | 0.832 | 0.836 0.891 0.672 |
| 4. A specific person (or group) is available for assistance with SM difficulties. | 3.91 (1.92) | 0.835 | 0.836 0.891 0.672 |

Note: One item on senior manager was dismissed since most of the respondents are winery owners or general managers.
To analyse the predictors of SM use by the winemakers, a multiple linear regression was performed. The results show that among the UTAUT predictors of SM use, self-efficacy of independent SM use (coef. = 0.138, \( p < 0.050 \)) and facilitating conditions in the company (coef. = 0.492, \( p < 0.001 \)) are the main stimuli to use SM (Table 6).

Table 6. Factors contributing to SM usage.

| Explanatory Factor                   | Coefficient of Impact on SM Use (Standard Error) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Attitude toward SM use               | 0.185 (0.015)                                 |
| **Self-efficacy in SM use**          | **0.138 (0.077)** *                           |
| Anxiety regarding SM use             | −0.098 (0.095)                                |
| Performance expectancy               | −0.011 (0.104)                                |
| Effort expectancy                    | −0.064 (0.168)                                |
| Social influence                     | −0.082 (0.104)                                |
| **Facilitating conditions**          | **0.492 (0.131)** ***                         |

Note: Linear multivariable regressions with bootstrap of 5,000 samples; SM use is coded as intensity of use from 1 (never) to 7 (very frequently); values in bold are significant at *** \( p \)-value < 0.001, * \( p \)-value < 0.050.

The use of SM is important on its own. It has also been noticed that active use of SM is correlated with the use of a website (coef. = 0.238, \( p \)-value < 0.050) and of an e-commerce platform (coef. = 0.417, \( p \)-value < 0.010). Thus, SM use might be a first stage that leads to further digitalisation of a winery.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

First, the results of this study show that SMs are currently used by a majority of wineries (85.9%) to communicate with their customers. It confirms Hoffmann et al.’s (2016) [40] findings on the importance given to SM by US and German wineries as an online channel of communication that complements direct contacts. Moreover, Facebook appears to be the most widely used SM (83.3%) by wineries, which corroborates Szolnoki et al.’s (2014) [10] and Capitello et al.’s (2014) [53] results for German and Italian wineries. Not surprisingly, Instagram appears to be the second most widely used SM, as the number of users of Instagram has increased fourfold between 2018 and 2020 [76]. The use of blogs could also be a potential lever to continue discussion with customers and build customer engagement and brand awareness. Wineries could then rely on existing virtual communities of interest on SM, which could help them reach out to many customers.

Second, the results indicate that there are significant differences in SM usage according to winery size and export orientation. Wineries with limited human resources (below five persons) could probably benefit from external support to enhance SM use. For example, a community manager provided by the professional wine association can manage the SM accounts of a number of small wineries. This will also share costs among wineries, provide affordable channels for marketing [33], and build on collective branding. Small wineries could also benefit from more informal support based on peer-to-peer support from other wineries that share best practices about how to manage an SM campaign. Export-oriented wineries tend to increase their use of SM compared to home-market-oriented wineries. Export markets are of historical importance for the Alsace region in light of its proximity to the border; thus, a comparative importance is given to digitalisation to be able to export efficiently. Encouraging this trend might require promoting extra-border exchanges of wine professionals and recruitment of employees with double-culture and language expertise to facilitate digitalisation in languages other than French.

Third, there are also differences in the usage of SM according to winemakers’ and wine managers’ profiles. As age has no impact, it is neither a limitation to get the training nor to lead the digitalisation of the winery. The use of SM is given to every generation and is no longer restricted to youngsters. This trend became especially visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, where most interactions and possible commercial transactions are
online only. It would also be of benefit to provide commercial and marketing training for winemakers with a rather technical education background regardless of age.

Fourth, it is found that strategic alignment is limited as SM strategy and, more specifically, the use of SM according to strategic objectives have not been considered properly. In fact, there is an incorrect identification of the incremental function of SM. Thus, wineries underestimate the potential to attract customers by posting useful content on blogs and other SM and focus mostly on commercial and promotional objectives. For example, wine tourism came last in the activities to be communicated on SM. Virtual wine tourism activities need to be developed, such as virtual tasting packages, which can be used as a marketing and promotional tool and contribute to higher consumer engagement [56].

Finally, the results confirm that wineries need resources and knowledge to use SM more extensively. Every new SM should be consistent with the existing systems and media platforms already in use by wineries. The fewer the differences between the platforms, the easier it is to transfer to a new platform. Platform developers should keep this in mind and opt for an interface and functions that are intuitive and already known to business users. Moreover, the importance of peer support is empirically demonstrated as a recognised facilitating condition and a stimulus of further SM use. Beyond actual resources and the hard skill knowledge of SM use, it is important to empower winemakers and to make them believe that they can be effective SM users once introductory support is provided.

This study presents some inherent limitations. The sample size is deemed satisfactory, as the response rate is 77% and the number of usable answers represents 43% of 180 representatives of wineries contacted. However, the sample accounts for around 10% of all the winemakers in the Alsatian region. The rest of the winemakers do not participate in the email repertory of the regional wine committee and hence should be contacted directly. To overcome this intrinsic limitation of the research related to the generalisation of present findings, a replication of the study in other geographic areas could be a worthwhile future research perspective. This is made possible as generalising from single case studies can offer an overall picture and contribute to cumulative knowledge [77]. Additionally, for further research, additional variables such as winery performance and turnover should be considered to better appreciate SM’s contribution. Finally, it is important to investigate whether the COVID-19 pandemic has enhanced the digitalization of small wineries in France and how this digitalization could contribute to wineries’ performance and resilience.

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Abbreviations
UTAUT—Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology.

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