

**Sample: This is an article I wrote while working at AndesWines Media in Santiago, Chile, analyzing Chile's national brand. I often translated and/or edited the work of other employees as well.**

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**Bottling a Culture: Drinking, identity and the mystery of selling Chile**

*What does Chile have to offer as a national brand?*

By Erin Becker

The fashion industry tells us “you are what you wear.” But we all know, instinctively, that identity goes deeper. Now research is proving it: identity is not just skin deep. It's *stomach* deep. More than what we wear, and, now, even more than what we eat, research is showing that we are what we *drink*.

In an *Anthropology of Food* article titled “Globalization, differentiation and drinking cultures, an anthropological perspective” (<http://aof.revues.org/index261.html>), Thomas Wilson argues:

*“[...] drinking alcohol has been an extremely important feature in the production and reproduction of ethnic, national, class, gender and local community identities historically, and there is little prospect that this will change. In many societies, perhaps the majority, drinking alcohol is a key practice in the expression of identity, an element in the construction and dissemination of national and other cultures.”*

In this way, drinking — and even not drinking—is inherently a cultural statement.

A panama hat and a Cuban mojito; a keg and red cups in a frat-house basement; a rich Italian red, pasta on the side; a rowdy post-rugby pint in Oxford.

Each of these images is integral to our vision of life in a particular society. I say Ireland, and you say pub. I say France, you say fine wine. These cultural-practices-turned-stereotypes have become a crucial part of what marketing reps call “branding.”

But how can we apply this, as a country looking to attract tourism dollars?

The market is competitive, and locales and alcohols with a strong positive association in the traveler's mind have a distinct advantage. Wilson calls it “the construction and dissemination of national and other cultures.” A marketing expert would simply call it good branding.

In his book “The Significance of Branding Within German Beer Culture,” Benjamin Marienfeld reports that a large portion of citizens of Germany's neighboring countries answered the question “What is German?” with the simple reply: “Beer.” And the

reputation isn't undeserved; Germany has by far the most breweries of any country worldwide, including 75% of the total breweries in the EU.

Even Chilean companies are making the most of any Germanic associations. We see Austral emphasizing its German roots by publicizing the story of immigrant founder José Fischer, and Kunstmann playing up its German-ness with a yearly "Bierfest" in Valdivia and its slogan "Das gute Bier."

But it begs the question: if the country is capitalizing on Germany's long-held association with good brewing, what does Chile itself have to offer as a "brand?"

In their article "Country Image in National Umbrella Branding" (<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/display.asp?id=11338>), Nina Iversen and Leif Heim explain how "country image" really functions. They believe it is a widely-held "structure of knowledge" that can include stereotypes, facts, and misconceptions. It deeply affects a consumer's response to that country's exports. For example, a Swiss watch is perceived as higher-quality than an Australian watch -- even if they're secretly the same. (A Chinese town has responded to this by renaming itself "Switzerland." But that's another story for another day.)

For countries like Chile, with small populations, relative global anonymity and a penchant for exporting raw materials rather than final consumer goods, creating a country image can be difficult.

Yet more difficult does not mean impossible. A developing reputation as a solid New World wine producer, as well as an accidental leap to notoriety with a non-fatal mining accident (as some say, any press is good press) means that people worldwide have been talking about Chile.

ProChile's slogan "All Ways Surprising" is imperfect, but at least tries to capitalize on that "unknown" element of this country dangling on the map's edge.

Yet the fact is: people simply don't know that much about Chile. Without an equivalent to Argentina's tango and beef or Peru's Machu Picchu, Chile must resort instead to what it does best: geographical diversity and a sense of exploration.

Wineries would do well to market themselves internationally with stunts like 2005's Carmenere Adventure, where Chilean wine lover Cristián Muñoz took a 21,000-mile motorcycle trip from Santiago to New York City, three-liter bottle of Carmenere in hand.

Unlike German beer, Russian vodka and Swiss chocolate, Chilean wine has to fend for itself. Chile must earn a loyal consumer base with quality and, yes, a little bit of branding. With the right angle, however, Chile can do it well: a country stretching from the Atacama Desert to the Torres del Paine has a lot to offer in the way of that ancient allure of adventure. We at AndesWines look forward to seeing where this journey takes us.