

# **New Opportunities for Storytelling and Brand Image Creation Through Web3: Expert Perspectives from the French and German Wine Industries**

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## *Abstract*

*The potential uses of Web3 innovations to brand image creation and to reshape brand storytelling in the wine industry have hardly been explored to date. In addition, many wine professionals have a limited understanding of technologies such as blockchain and non-fungible tokens (NFTs), and an even more limited appreciation of the marketing opportunities they offer. To gain initial insights into the actual potential of Web3 innovations for branding, brand image creation, and storytelling this paper explores expert opinions from the wine industry. The wine industry is particularly suitable because the field of luxury wine marketing is a typical area of application for Web3 innovations.*

*Experts emphasize that NFTs can be used to convey narratives about the provenance, terroir and production method of the wine and digitally link them to the product. At the same time, new communication formats tailored to different customer groups can emerge. Younger, tech-savvy consumers may appreciate new, digital forms of storytelling and interaction, while NFTs serve as digital certificates of authenticity and traceability for established collectors, thereby strengthening wine's status as both a cultural product and an object of speculation and investment. From a branding perspective and with focus on the wine industry, Web3 applications enable the establishment and maintenance of direct B2C relationships, bypassing traditional intermediaries and allowing wineries to build communities of loyal brand ambassadors. NFTs can also serve as loyalty tools, granting rights to first purchase or access to exclusive experiences and events. Nevertheless, limitations remain: many current wine consumers are older and more conservative, raising doubts about the immediate appeal of Web3-based offerings. Overall, Web3 innovations offer complementary opportunities to present brands as innovative and authentic and to increase customer loyalty among younger target groups.*

**Key words:** Web3 marketing; NFT-based brand storytelling; digital consumer engagement; blockchain applications in marketing; wine marketing

## **INTRODUCTION**

Web3 technologies such as non-fungible tokens (NFTs) can not only change the way luxury products in particular, such as works of art or wine, are traded, but also influence how (luxury) brands are perceived in the digital space. Web3 technologies enable new options for brand image creation and storytelling, especially because the new technologies allow for much more direct interaction with customers or NFT holders (Li et al., 2025). Thus, the use of Web3 technologies can enable brands to build a stronger connection with their customers (Brouard, 2025; Colicev, 2023; Zhang & Phang, 2024).

Web3 describes the evolution of the internet from centralized to decentralized systems based on the usage of blockchain technology (Komalavalli et al., 2020; Morkunas et al., 2019). An important innovation in this area are NFTs, blockchain-based assets that can be used to document the ownership and authenticity of both digital and physical objects (Yilmaz et al., 2023).

Research on Web3 in the wine industry has mainly focused on supply chain transparency, anti-counterfeiting, and sustainability tracking (Adamashvili et al., 2024; Balcells et al., 2023; Benedetto & Bonaventura Forleo, 2023; Danese et al., 2021; Luzzani et al., 2021) with only limited attention to the technologies potential impact on branding and storytelling. However, the case of Chateau Edmus shows that Web3 applications offer a wide range of options for value creation and differentiation from the competition, particularly with regard to branding and communication (Florès & Lejealle, 2023). To generate more detailed knowledge in this field, this study explores how the usage of Web3 applications can support brand image creation and storytelling in luxury wine marketing.

Since the research topic is still very new, an exploratory analysis was conducted based on interviews with French and German industry experts (n = 6) to find out about the potential of Web3 innovations with regard to brand image creation and storytelling in the wine industry. The luxury wine industry is particularly well suited as example industry, as there are obvious applications for blockchain technology, such as certificates of authenticity, supply chain documentation, and storage history. This raises the question of how, for example, in the case of tokenized wine, the concept can also be used in a broader context to convey a certain brand image and engage in targeted storytelling with the owners of these tokenized wines.

The study outlines Web3 applications in the wine industry, presents the research design and offers initial insights into their role in brand image creation and storytelling, along with scientific and practical implications.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Web3 Applications of Relevance to Branding and Storytelling**

Web3 technologies were initially applied mainly in digital contexts. Early use cases focused on the financial sector and the arts market, especially digital artworks and property rights (Komalavalli et al., 2020; Kramer et al., 2024). Over time, the broader potential of blockchain for marketing, branding and managing customer relationships has been recognized (Hakkarainen & Colicev, 2023; Morkunas et al., 2019; Tandon et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2024). Recent studies increasingly explore why consumers buy, hold, and sell NFTs (Chen et al., 2025; Xie et al., 2024; Yilmaz et al., 2023) and how NFTs can be used to establish new forms of loyalty programs and digital brand communities (Cho et al., 2024; Colicev, 2023; Deventer et al., 2024). Findings suggest NFT-based communities can strengthen customer engagement and purchase intentions (Brahmstaedt, 2025; Cho et al., 2024, 2025), while also enabling personalized and co-created customer experiences (Lee et al., 2024). However, further research

is needed to identify industry-specific success factors for the use of Web3 technologies with regard to brand image creation and storytelling.

### **Web3 Applications in the Wine Industry**

Research on Web3 applications in the wine industry has mainly examined the technologies' potential impact on supply chain management (Adamashvili et al., 2024; Brookbanks & Parry, 2022; Fani et al., 2025; Malisic et al., 2023), thereby addressing issues like counterfeiting (Danese et al., 2021; Tokkozhina et al., 2022), traceability, transparency, and certification mapping (Balcells et al., 2023; Benedetto & Bonaventura Forleo, 2023; Luzzani et al., 2021). Moreover, case-study based research has shown that NFTs can create customer value at multiple levels with potential implications for marketing and customer relationship management (Florès & Lejealle, 2023). Despite initial research, however, there are still no comprehensive findings on how Web3 innovations could be used to convey brand image and engage in new forms of brand storytelling in the wine industry. This is the aim of the present study, namely to identify possible applications and challenges in connection with the marketing-oriented use of Web3 applications in order to impact brand image and use the new technologies for brand storytelling.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This exploratory study was conducted to investigate how Web3 technologies can be used for brand image creation and brand storytelling in the wine industry. Based on expert opinions from France and Germany, the study generates first insights and also analyzes country-specific differences in the perception of Web3 technologies' potential with regard to branding and storytelling.

Between 2024 and 2025, six in-depth interviews were conducted with wine experts from France and Germany. Participants were selected to represent various roles within the wine industry, including winery owners, digital NFT trading platform providers and retail experts. A list of the participants can be found in the Appendix. Respondents were anonymized using initials to maintain confidentiality.

The semi-structured interview guide used covered the following seven areas of Web3 application potential within the wine industry: innovation and brand image; traceability and authenticity; customer engagement and loyalty; investment and collection; sales and distribution channels; cost reduction and optimization; and marketing and promotion. The results of this paper are primarily based on the evaluation of the questions related to Web3 potential with regard to 'innovation and brand image' and 'marketing and promotion' in particular. Some related aspects concerning 'customer engagement and loyalty' were also taken into account and integrated into the evaluations. The interview guide provided basic definitions of Web3, blockchain, and NFTs to ensure shared understanding. Interviews were conducted in person or via video conferencing, recorded with the participants' consent, and lasted from 29 to 81 minutes. Recordings were transcribed verbatim translated into English with automated translation tools, and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The analysis followed the topics of the interview guide deductively, but also incorporated inductive coding to gain insights from the interview data. Transcripts were read repeatedly, coded for recurring features, and the codes were then organized into themes and sub-themes that structured the final analysis.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Exploring Web3 Applications for Brand Image Creation and Communication**

Firstly, the interviewed experts emphasized that Web3 applications are only interesting for premium wines and that such technologies will be used in the future to prevent product

counterfeiting and provide customers with proof of authenticity, as well as information on the wine's supply chain and storage. Tokenizing wines and offering them as NFTs significantly contributes to building trust with end customers (e.g., EPC, ER), which can strongly and positively impact brand image. This is exemplified very well by the following quote: *"For me, a wine NFT is about authentication, history, traceability. It's a mark of trust"* (Statement ER).

Furthermore, by offering NFT wines, wineries demonstrate to the outside world that their positioning is digital and innovative (e.g., JB, SC), translating the latest developments directly into offers for their customers to create added value. This can make it easier to address new customer groups, such as "crypto-addicts" (e.g., RDN). These aspects are particularly important for luxury brands, as they need to build trust in the authenticity of their products while offering their customers additional benefits. Both can be achieved through the use of NFTs, as NFT owners not only receive a digital proof of authenticity, i.e., a digital twin of the original product, but ownership of the NFT can also be used as an entry ticket to exclusive clubs or special events, making it useful from a marketing perspective in several ways. Here, too, there are relevant implications for brand image: unique experiences can be created and exclusivity can be conveyed (e.g., EPC, RDN).

### **Exploring Web3 Applications for Brand Story Telling**

Since there is the option of contacting NFT holders, all experts agree that new opportunities for direct interaction and communication with end consumers are emerging. The option for producers to actually contact end consumers seems particularly valuable in the wine industry, as this is often not possible today due to complex distribution structures and a large number of intermediaries. This enables new, more direct forms of brand-related communication to take place. Depending on the NFT's design, customers who already own the NFT can be informed at regular intervals about important production steps, storage conditions or the optimal time to open a bottle, even if the wine is still being stored at the winery (e.g., JB, SeS). This can enable a new level of interaction and intensify customer loyalty, creating true brand ambassadors (RDN). Thus, Web 3 applications, especially the tokenization of wines, can support new forms of brand storytelling as *"Blockchain gives access to the physical journey of the bottle."* (Statement LDL). It seems particularly sensible here to tailor communication to specific target groups, e.g., with regard to younger, tech-savvy target groups or even "crypto addicts", who might be interested in the special community experiences associated with NFTs, similar to BAYC (Brouard, 2025). On the other hand, traditional wine collectors should be taken into account, who will probably use NFTs as digital certificates of authenticity and for traceability, who value wine as a cultural product and at the same time as a speculative and investment object.

Since individual NFT wines can be combined in a customer's wallet to form a digital wine cellar and presented to the outside world, conveying the individual experiences and wine stories of each wine lover in digital form, wine brands must ensure that a NFT is more than just a photo of the wine bottle and explain to the customer what the NFT is useful for and how it expresses what the brand stands for. Overall, it can be said that brand storytelling can be facilitated by Web 3 applications and can also be used to arouse curiosity and interest, albeit only in a niche segment (ER). So NFTs can be used as *"something intangible that can still make for an interesting narrative"* (Statement ER). The digital twin generated through tokenization adds extra value to the wine as a product. It can be used to further enhance the brand story and brand image, and link unique and target group-specific information and experiences to the product. This makes it possible to appeal to young, tech-savvy customers in particular and draw their attention to wine as a luxury product (RDN, ER). NFTs can be used to intensify interaction with customers. From virtual immersive experiences with a gamification element to allocation rights

or access to exclusive clubs, offers can be developed in line with the desired brand image (ER, RDN, JB).

### **Barriers to the adoption and national differences in Web3 assessment**

Nevertheless, it must be noted that many of today's wine consumers are older and more conservative, and that the industry itself is not particularly digital in its business models, which stands in the way of the rapid spread of Web3 applications in the wine industry. Nevertheless, experts see the potential of Web3 technologies to transform the wine trade and communication patterns in the luxury wine sector in the long run (e.g., SeS, LDL). Overall, it can be said that German experts are somewhat more cautious in their assessment of the new Web3 technologies than their French counterparts. This can be explained, among other things, by the fact that the market for luxury wines in France is traditionally very large compared to Germany.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study provide compelling initial evidence that Web3 applications, particularly NFTs, extend beyond their functional roles as certificates of authenticity and ownership to become strategic instruments for brand building, storytelling, and consumer engagement in the luxury wine sector. By interviewing both French and German industry experts, the study captures nuanced, country-specific perspectives, allowing for a richer understanding of how market maturity and cultural attitudes influence perceptions of Web3 technologies. The findings suggest that NFTs can serve as powerful tools for embedding narratives about provenance, terroir, and production methods into digital assets, thereby enhancing brand storytelling and creating co-created, immersive consumer experiences, as suggested by Laurent David with Chateau Edmus (Florès & Lejealle, 2023).

Such narratives not only appeal to younger, tech-savvy consumers, but also confirm the authenticity and origin of wines to traditional wine collectors, reflecting the dual utility of these technologies across distinct consumer segments.

Web3 applications also facilitate direct engagement with end consumers, enabling wineries to circumvent traditional distribution intermediaries and build dedicated digital brand communities. Tokenized wines allow producers to provide timely information about production processes, storage conditions, or the optimal time for consumption, thereby strengthening customer loyalty and promoting brand ambassadorship. This ability to digitally enrich physical products underscores the strategic potential of NFTs as tools for narrative design and co-creation, promoting exclusivity, and creating new types of customer experiences. This resonates with findings in the marketing literature that show NFTs potential to design co-created and immersive brand experiences (Brouard, 2025; Lee et al., 2024).

Moreover, the study reveals meaningful differences in national perspectives: French experts demonstrated a generally more optimistic outlook, consistent with the well-established luxury wine market, while German experts were more cautious, reflecting a smaller market size and more conservative consumer base. These differences underscore the importance of considering institutional, cultural, and market contexts when implementing Web3 strategies in the luxury wine sector.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the literature on digital luxury marketing by demonstrating that Web3 technologies are not merely functional tools but strategic instruments capable of reinforcing brand identity, engaging consumers in co-created experiences, and bridging physical and digital brand worlds. The findings complement existing research on NFT-driven loyalty programs and digital brand communities, while also highlighting the potential of Web3 to enhance narrative richness, personalization, and brand-consumer interaction in industries characterized by cultural heritage and luxury positioning.

From a managerial standpoint, the results suggest that wineries should view NFTs not only as certificates of authenticity, but as gateways to curated experiences, exclusive content, and immersive storytelling that can differentiate their brands while simultaneously enhancing perceived exclusivity and customer loyalty. Effective implementation requires segmenting audiences, tailoring content to both digitally savvy consumers and traditional collectors, and aligning technological innovations with the cultural and heritage values inherent in the wine industry.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that Web3 technologies, and particularly NFTs, offer novel opportunities for brand storytelling and brand image creation within the luxury wine industry. By tokenizing wines and linking NFTs to narratives of provenance, authenticity, and production heritage, wineries gain new opportunities to tell their brand story, allowing them to build deeper connections with consumers and create immersive, co-created brand experiences. Interviews with French and German experts show that, although timely adoption may be limited due to conservative consumer demographics and established industry practices, Web3 applications have significant long-term potential to enhance brand differentiation, increase customer engagement, and brand loyalty. These technologies allow luxury wineries to navigate the balance between tradition and innovation, offering digitally enriched experiences without compromising the authenticity or heritage that defines the sector.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. The exploratory design, relying on six in-depth interviews with French and German experts, limits the generalizability of the findings. The focus on the luxury segment restricts applicability to mass-market wine brands, and the nascent stage of Web3 adoption means that expert perspectives primarily reflect anticipated rather than observed consumer behavior. Additionally, the geographic scope of the study constrains insights to Western European markets, where cultural and institutional contexts may differ significantly from other wine-producing regions. Nevertheless, the methodological approach, with rigorous semi-structured interviews and cross-country comparison, provides valuable initial evidence for understanding the strategic potential of Web3 in the wine industry.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Future research could build upon this exploratory study by investigating consumer perceptions, motivations, and engagement with NFT-based wine experiences, thereby complementing expert-driven insights with empirical behavioral data. Comparative studies across multiple wine-producing regions could shed light on the influence of local market structures, cultural attitudes, and institutional frameworks on Web3 adoption. Longitudinal research would also be valuable to track how engagement with Web3 strategies evolves over time and how it impacts brand loyalty and purchase behavior. Moreover, exploring the integration of Web3 with other digital technologies, such as augmented reality, immersive metaverse experiences, and gamification, could reveal additional avenues for enhancing brand storytelling and consumer interaction. Finally, assessing the financial and operational feasibility of NFT-driven brand strategies for small and medium-sized wineries could inform practical implementation and strategic decision-making within the industry.

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## APPENDIX

### Overview of interview participants

Country	Interviewee initials	Role of interviewee	Company type	Length (min)
FRA	ER	CEO	Champagne house / wine producer	37
FRA	RDN	Founder	Retailer & NFT marketplace operator	81
FRA	LDL and SR	CEO	Provider of technology services for wine and spirits	79
GER	JB	Winery co-owner	Wine estate / winery	33
GER	SeS	Founder and CEO	Retailer & NFT marketplace operator	52
GER	SC	Winery co-owner	Wine estate / winery	29