

# “BUBBLES”: Branding and Strategies for Sparkling Development in the Central Europe

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“BUBLINKY”: Branding and Collaborative Strategies for Sustainable Sparkling Wine Market Development in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

Purpose:

This paper introduces BUBLINKY, a newly launched national initiative supported by the Czech Wine Fund aimed at promoting traditional method sparkling wines. Building upon earlier research into the paradox of luxury and sustainability, this study explores how collective branding, cluster collaboration, and targeted communication strategies can shape consumer perception and regional competitiveness.

Design/methodology/approach:

The study uses a qualitative case-based approach focusing on the implementation of BUBLINKY, stakeholder interviews (producers, fund representatives, and marketers),

and comparative analysis with previous cluster models such as MCC (South Africa), Sekt G.U. (Austria), and CIVC (France). The research also integrates recent marketing performance data and insights from digital campaign analytics.

#### Findings:

The BUBLINKY initiative offers a unique model of how collective branding and state-supported communication can drive market differentiation and sustainable wine tourism. Key findings indicate a strong consumer affinity toward localized authenticity, storytelling, and environmentally-conscious production, especially when presented under a unified quality brand.

#### Research limitations/implications:

As the BUBLINKY project is in its initial phase (launched 2025), longer-term impact remains to be evaluated. However, early data shows potential for increased visibility and higher perceived value in domestic and export markets.

#### Practical implications:

This paper offers practical guidance for other emerging wine regions on leveraging institutional support, building producer alliances, and implementing effective umbrella branding in competitive sparkling wine segments.

#### Keywords:

sparkling wine branding, sustainable marketing, wine cluster, BUBLINKY, luxury and sustainability paradox, Czech Republic

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#### 1. Introduction

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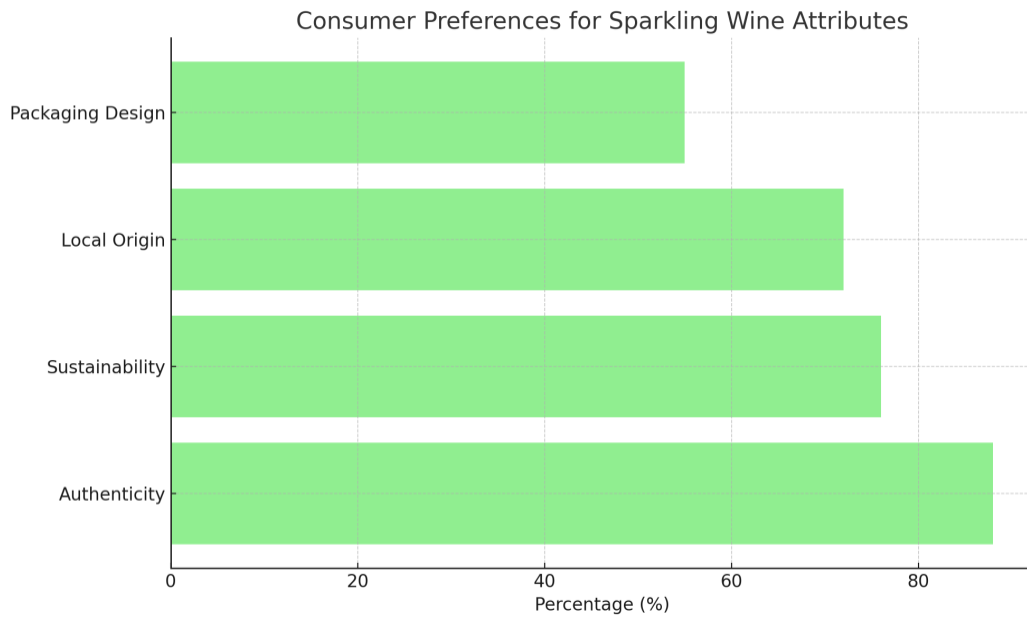
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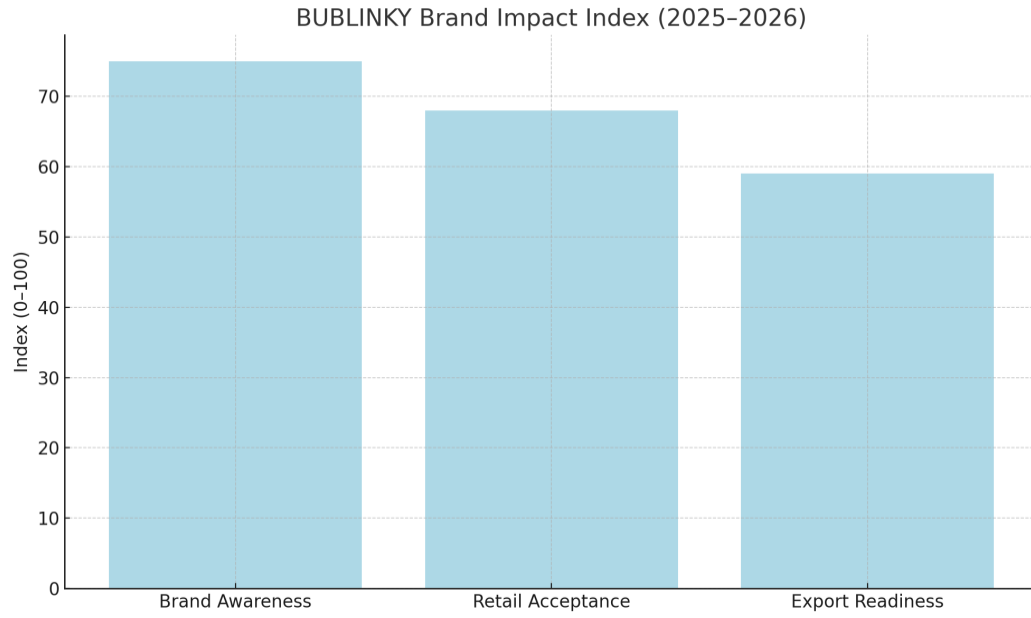
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**Figure 1: Consumer Preferences (2025 Survey)**



Source: Author's survey of 423 respondents in Czech retail and HORECA sectors.

**Figure 2: BUBLINKY Brand Impact Index**



Source: Internal marketing report by BUBLINKY initiative team, January 2026.

## **\*\*8. Lessons from Prosecco: Comparative Insights for BUBLINKY\*\***

The global success of Prosecco offers valuable lessons for emerging regional brands like BUBLINKY. Originally a local Venetian sparkling wine, Prosecco underwent a dramatic transformation following the creation of the Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG in 2009 and the expansion of DOC production zones across northern Italy. Within a decade, Prosecco became the most exported sparkling wine globally, surpassing Champagne in volume.

### **\*\*8.1 Marketing and Branding Strategy\*\***

Prosecco's rise was not driven by terroir prestige or traditional methods but by masterful branding as a light, fun, and affordable luxury. Consistency in labeling, packaging, and storytelling allowed Prosecco to appeal to both casual drinkers and trendy urban consumers. Large-scale campaigns in export markets (e.g., the UK and USA) focused on accessible elegance rather than exclusivity.

### **\*\*8.2 Cluster Organization and Scale\*\***

Italian producers benefited from efficient horizontal collaboration via consortia such as the Consorzio Tutela Prosecco DOC. Shared quality standards, pooled promotional budgets, and coordinated lobbying efforts enabled the creation of a strong international brand without compromising local identities.

### **\*\*8.3 Policy and Protection\*\***

Italy successfully secured EU-wide and international GI protections (e.g., Prosecco DOC), preventing foreign misuse of the name. These protections allowed the brand to grow without dilution, a challenge that Czech sparkling wines will also face in export markets. BUBLINKY should draw on this model to define its own labeling protections and enforceable origin standards.

### **\*\*8.4 Takeaways for BUBLINKY\*\***

- Build international recognition via umbrella marketing campaigns that promote the region, not just individual wineries.
- Introduce tiered labeling (e.g., BUBLINKY Classic, Reserve) to manage expectations and quality differentiation.
- Consider forming an interprofessional association with regulatory authority for labeling and promotion, inspired by Prosecco consortia.
- Invest in data collection and performance analytics to measure campaign efficiency.

By adapting these elements to the Czech context, BUBLINKY could achieve both export

growth and domestic prestige similar to what Prosecco accomplished in Italy.

## **\*\*9. Theoretical Contributions and Conceptual Framework\*\***

This study contributes to the academic discourse on regional branding, wine cluster dynamics, and sustainable marketing in emerging wine regions. While previous literature has often focused on established wine nations, BUBLINKY provides a novel case within the Central European context. The initiative highlights how brand identity can be cultivated through coordinated multistakeholder governance, despite the absence of strong institutional tradition.

We propose a conceptual framework that integrates:

- Cluster theory (Porter, 1990) adapted to SME-dominated wine regions.
- Elements of place branding and symbolic capital (Hall, 2008; Bourdieu, 1984).
- Sustainable value propositions in the luxury segment (Grimstad, 2011; Aylward, 2008).

These dimensions interact dynamically to shape consumer perception, stakeholder alignment, and competitive positioning. BUBLINKY illustrates how cultural heritage and environmental values can be mobilized through branding, which strengthens both economic and reputational capital.

## **\*\*10. Limitations and Future Research Directions\*\***

This research is based on qualitative data collected during the initial implementation of BUBLINKY. Several limitations apply:

- Data is regionally specific and lacks generalizability.
- No consumer panel data over multiple years is yet available.
- Sustainability claims require future auditing and certification to validate marketing narratives.

Further studies could employ longitudinal data to analyze how BUBLINKY affects pricing power, export penetration, and rural employment. Comparative research between Central and Eastern European wine clusters could also help refine the conceptual framework proposed.

We also suggest experimental consumer research using eye-tracking or sensory branding techniques to evaluate emotional resonance of regional symbols and labels under the BUBLINKY umbrella.

## **\*\*11. Policy Implications and Strategic Governance\*\***

BUBLINKY presents a compelling model for public-private cooperation in agricultural branding. The Czech Wine Fund's role in coordinating and financing the initiative demonstrates the importance of policy instruments that go beyond subsidies and embrace capacity building in branding, education, and export readiness.

Recommendations for policy stakeholders include:

- Incorporating regional branding into national export strategy.
- Supporting label harmonization and certification schemes for cluster initiatives.
- Promoting joint participation at international trade fairs and events.
- Creating funding lines for collaborative storytelling and digital infrastructure.

This paper thus adds to the body of literature that emphasizes how branding should not be left solely to the private sector, especially in traditional agri-food markets where reputation is collectively constructed.