

Rosé on Ice: Vinovalie's Bridge from French Terroir to Brazilian Taste

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Abstract. The case explores the unexpected success and ensuing strategic dilemma of Vinovalie, a French wine cooperative, in the promising yet complex Brazilian market. Facing declining European consumption, Vinovalie pursued international growth through its flagship product, Rosé Piscine, a rosé designed to be served over ice. Its lifestyle appeal drove rapid organic success, making it Brazil's best-selling imported rosé. However, the initially low-risk distribution partnership deteriorated as the local distributor pursued short-term gains and mismanaged pricing. Retail prices rose sharply, pushing the brand from "premium-accessible" toward luxury and alienating its core audience. Armand Dubois, Vinovalie's Export Manager, must tackle two intertwined challenges, the first related to the distribution channel - should Vinovalie retain the current distributor, find a new partner, or establish a local subsidiary? At the same time, how can Vinovalie preserve Rosé Piscine's premium lifestyle image while ensuring sustainable growth? Students evaluate four strategic scenarios and recommend an evidence-based course of action to Vinovalie's board.

Keywords: international distribution strategy, entry-mode, brand (re)positioning, retail pricing, internationalization strategy, country-of-origin image.

Case Note: This teaching case is based on an actual project and was developed using both primary and secondary data collected in collaboration with the focal company. Primary data include interviews, onsite observations, and point-of-sale observations. The company name is real; however, the identities of individual managers have been disguised to protect confidentiality. In addition, certain commercially sensitive financial data, particularly product pricing information, has been modified and presented as indicative ranges for confidentiality reasons. Nevertheless, the strategic context, key decisions, and operational, tax, logistics, and market information presented are authentic and provide a credible foundation for analysis.

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1. Introduction

Armand Dubois, Export Manager at Vinovallie, a French wine cooperative, sat in his office in southwest France staring at the latest domestic and international sales report. The numbers were clear: wine consumption in France continued to decline, reflecting broader shifts across Europe^{1 2}. With a rich heritage rooted in the Gaillac, Fronton, and Cahors appellations, Vinovallie had long relied on the domestic market to sustain its member winegrowers. But now, the cooperative was under pressure to expand beyond its borders and identify new growth avenues. Its board increasingly recognized international expansion as essential to sustaining long-term growth.

Among these, Brazil stood out as a promising yet complex opportunity due to its growing middle class and increasing interest in imported wines. The Brazilian wine market has climbed from 17th to 13th in the global consumption ranking, adding approximately 3 million new regular consumers between 2019 and 2023³. This growth has been accompanied by a trend toward premiumization, particularly in fine and sparkling imported wines, driven by evolving lifestyles, the rise of e-commerce, and the popularity of wine clubs.

To seize this opportunity, Rosé Piscine was introduced into the Brazilian market in 2014⁴ through export activities. For almost a decade, however, Brazil remained a secondary market with limited strategic focus. This changed in 2022, when the cooperative formalized a distribution partnership with a local distributor in São Paulo, marking a shift toward a more structured and growth-oriented approach. This strategic move quickly paid off. The cooperative's flagship product, Rosé Piscine, quickly gained traction in Brazil. Its distinctive identity and French origin resonated with younger consumers in social and leisure settings, helping the brand become a recognizable player in the imported rosé segment.

Over time, however, the relationship with the distributor deteriorated. The partner increasingly prioritized short-term sales and allowed retail prices to rise significantly, pushing Rosé Piscine away from its intended premium-accessible positioning. Although the brand continued to perform well commercially, tensions emerged between Vinovallie's long-term brand strategy and the distributor's market practice. Despite these challenges, the brand continued to perform well at the consumer level, enjoying buzz and visibility, particularly in leisure hotspots. Much of this success stemmed from its strategic price positioning, which allowed it to occupy a premium yet accessible segment in the Brazilian market. However, behind the scenes, tensions grew as Vinovallie

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