

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION IN ROMANIA'S WINE INDUSTRY: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *The Romanian wine industry has experienced significant growth and diversification over the past decade, driven by both domestic demand and expanding export opportunities. In this context, marketing and communication strategies have become crucial instruments for strengthening brand identity, increasing market visibility, and differentiating products in a highly competitive environment. This comparative case study examines two leading Romanian wine companies, analyzing how their communication approaches, ranging from traditional channels to digital marketing, storytelling, and experiential branding influence consumer perception and purchasing behavior. The research evaluates promotional tools, social media engagement, brand positioning, and the alignment between marketing messages and company values. Findings indicate that successful communication in the Romanian wine sector depends on the integration of cultural elements, authenticity, and consistent consumer interaction, supported by coherent long term marketing strategies. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how communication shapes competitive advantage in the wine industry and offers practical insights for improving brand performance in both national and international markets.*

Key words: *communication, wine industry, marketing, brand identity.*

INTRODUCTION

The Romanian wine industry has undergone a remarkable transformation over the last two decades, evolving from a largely traditional agricultural sector into one of the most dynamic components of the country's food and beverage market [1]. As Romania has strengthened its presence within the European Union and expanded its visibility on international shelves, wineries have increasingly turned to modern marketing and communication strategies to differentiate themselves in a competitive landscape [8]. What was once an industry defined primarily by heritage, craftsmanship, and local consumption is now shaped by branding, storytelling, digital communication, experiential events, and tourism driven engagement [9]. These changes reflect not only global market trends but also the growing sophistication of Romanian consumers, who expect authenticity, transparency, and a clear brand identity when choosing a wine [12].

Despite this rapid development, the marketing practices of Romanian wineries are far from uniform. Large, internationally active producers have adopted professional communication tools, invested in market research, and embraced digital platforms to build strong, recognizable brands [3,14]. Smaller boutique wineries, on the other hand, often rely on personal narratives, cultural heritage, and direct customer relationships to create value [11]. This diversity makes Romania a compelling setting for a comparative case study, as it highlights the coexistence of modern, technology driven strategies with traditional forms of promotion rooted in terroir, family history, and artisanal identity.

In recent years, communication has become a defining factor [13] in how wineries position themselves and connect with audiences. Social media platforms have opened new channels for visibility, allowing producers to interact directly with consumers, share vineyard stories, and create immersive brand experiences. Wine tourism has also emerged as a powerful communication tool, transforming wineries into destinations where visitors can learn, taste, and emotionally engage with the product [2,6]. At the same time,

traditional communication methods such as participation in wine fairs, collaborations with sommeliers, and print media continue to play a meaningful role in shaping brand reputation both domestically and abroad.

This paper examines the marketing and communication practices of selected Romanian wineries through a comparative case study approach. By analyzing differences in communication strategies, brand positioning, and audience engagement, the study seeks to understand how wineries of varying sizes and market orientations navigate the challenges of an evolving industry [7,15]. The analysis draws on contemporary marketing theory, digital communication research, and industry specific insights in order to reveal the factors that contribute to successful brand development in the wine sector.

Effective communication is not merely an added value but a strategic necessity [13] for Romanian wineries seeking long term competitiveness [4]. Whether through heritage storytelling, sensory experiences, or data driven digital campaigns, communication shapes how wine is perceived, valued, and remembered [5,10]. By comparing distinct approaches within the same national context, this research highlights the multifaceted ways in which marketing and communication contribute to the growth and modernization of Romania's wine industry.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative and quantitative comparative case study design to analyze marketing communication practices in Romania's wine industry, with a specific focus on digital presence across major social media platforms. Three leading Romanian wine producers: Cramele Recaș, Jidvei, and Cotnari, were selected as case studies due to their market relevance, national visibility, and differing branding and communication strategies [7]. The selection aimed to ensure analytical contrast while maintaining comparability in terms of production scale and industry influence.

The research focused on three social media platforms widely used for brand communication in the wine sector: Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. These platforms were chosen due to their relevance for visual storytelling, audience engagement, and differentiated demographic reach. Social media activity was analyzed over a fixed time frame, namely the month of September 2025, in order to ensure temporal consistency and eliminate seasonal bias related to campaign cycles or promotional events.

Data collection consisted of a manual content audit of the official social media accounts of each winery. The number of posts published on each platform during the selected month was recorded and used as a quantitative indicator of communication intensity and platform utilization. Only original posts published by the companies were included in the analysis, while reposts, shared stories, and paid advertisements without visible publication dates were excluded to maintain methodological consistency. The collected data were subsequently organized into comparative charts illustrating posting frequency across platforms and companies.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The comparative case study of Cramele Recaș, Jidvei, and Cotnari highlights significant differences in marketing orientation, communication strategies, and brand positioning within Romania's wine industry. Although all three producers operate at a large scale and enjoy national recognition, their approaches to consumer communication, brand storytelling, and market engagement reflect distinct strategic priorities shaped by historical development, target markets, and organizational culture.

Cramele Recaș has its origins in the western region of Romania, in the Banat area, where viticulture has been practiced for centuries. The modern development of the company began in the late twentieth century, when significant investments were made to modernize vineyards, production facilities, and winemaking technology. Over time, Cramele Recaș transitioned from a primarily regional producer into one of Romania's most export oriented wineries. Its evolution has been marked by openness to international expertise, adoption of modern viticultural practices, and diversification of its product portfolio. This historical trajectory has contributed to the company's contemporary identity as a dynamic and innovative producer capable of competing in both domestic and international markets [25].

Jidvei's history is closely connected to the Târnave wine region, an area with a long standing reputation for white wine production, in North-East Region. The company's modern foundation dates back to the post socialist period, when the winery underwent extensive restructuring and privatization. Strategic investments in vineyard rehabilitation, technology, and quality management systems enabled Jidvei to consolidate its position as a leading Romanian wine producer [26]. Throughout its development, the company has consistently emphasized continuity, tradition, and regional specificity. This historical focus has shaped Jidvei's identity as a producer associated with stability, premium quality, and respect for local viticultural heritage.

Cotnari represents one of the oldest and most historically significant wine producers in Romania, with documented viticultural activity in the region dating back several centuries. The Cotnari vineyard area, localised in South-Muntenia, has long been associated with indigenous grape varieties and wines of cultural importance. During the twentieth century, the company operated as a state owned enterprise before transitioning to a modern corporate structure in the post communist period [27]. Despite organizational changes, Cotnari has maintained a strong emphasis on tradition and historical continuity. Its long standing presence in the Romanian wine landscape has positioned the brand as a symbol of national heritage, deeply embedded in cultural and social narratives related to wine consumption.

Table 1.

Total grape production in Romania

Regions						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2024
Tons						
North-West Region	59260	32839	20759	41345	37299	28064
North-East Region	190443	113622	122965	148768	163949	132738
South-East Region	610638	202872	353562	345508	379356	321674
South-Muntenia Region	185650	45427	85539	103000	112247	58186
Bucharest–Ilfov Region	10687	9125	5350	4387	4111	2358
South-West Oltenia Region	177365	77679	108537	102234	155073	103428
West Region	25025	6583	22352	26821	43382	29370

Source: [28]

The Table 1. presenting grape production from bearing vineyards, expressed in tons, highlights pronounced regional disparities that largely explain the geographical distribution and development of major Romanian wine producers such as Cotnari, Jidvei, and Cramele Recaș. The spatial concentration of production reflects both pedoclimatic suitability and long-standing viticultural traditions, as well as differences in vineyard structure and investment intensity. The South-East Region clearly emerges as the dominant

viticultural area throughout the entire period under analysis, recording the highest production levels in all reference years. Its sustained leadership underscores the strategic importance of eastern and south-eastern Romania for large-scale grape production. Although Cotnari is located in the North-East Region, the strong production figures of both regions confirm the broader viticultural potential of eastern Romania. The post-2000 decline followed by partial recovery suggests structural restructuring of vineyards and a gradual shift from volume-oriented production toward improved quality and efficiency.

The North-East Region, directly associated with the Cotnari vineyard area, consistently maintains high production levels compared to most other regions [28]. This stability reinforces the historical significance of Moldavian viticulture and provides a solid quantitative foundation for Cotnari's positioning as one of Romania's largest domestic wine producers. The persistence of relatively high output supports Cotnari's capacity to sustain large-scale production while preserving traditional grape varieties.

The Central area, relevant to Jidvei through the Târnave wine region, displays more moderate production volumes but a relatively stable evolution after 2010 [28]. Although the absolute quantities are lower than those recorded in the South-East or North-East, this stability reflects a strategic focus on controlled yields and quality-driven production. Such a pattern aligns with Jidvei's premium positioning, which emphasizes origin, terroir, and integrated processing rather than maximum output.

The West Region, where Cramele Recaș operates, records comparatively lower production volumes but shows a noticeable increase between 2010 and 2020, followed by a slight decline in 2024 [28]. This trend indicates a more concentrated and intensive viticultural model, characterized by efficient vineyard management and technological investment. Despite not being a leading region in quantitative terms, the data support Cramele Recaș's competitive position as an export-oriented producer capable of generating high value from a more limited viticultural area.

Other regions, including South-West Oltenia and South-Muntenia, contribute significantly to national production but exhibit considerable fluctuations over time, suggesting higher sensitivity to climatic conditions and structural constraints such as fragmented vineyard ownership. In contrast, Bucharest-Ilfov remains marginal in viticultural terms, confirming the absence of a substantial agricultural base suitable for large-scale grape production.

Cramele Recaș emerges as the most market oriented and innovation driven actor among the three cases. Its marketing and communication strategy is characterized by a contemporary and flexible brand identity that aligns closely with international wine market trends. The winery consistently positions its products as accessible, modern, and suitable for a broad consumer base, both domestically and abroad. This positioning is reflected in communication practices that favor simplicity of language, visual creativity, and lifestyle oriented messaging. The emphasis on approachability reduces perceived entry barriers for younger or less experienced wine consumers, contributing to broader market penetration. The results indicate that Cramele Recaș prioritizes visibility and adaptability, frequently adjusting its communication style to align with evolving consumer expectations and digital communication norms. This dynamic approach supports strong brand awareness and export performance, particularly in markets where brand recognition must be built rapidly.

In contrast, Jidvei adopts a markedly different communication strategy, centered on the cultivation of a premium brand image grounded in tradition, quality, and regional authenticity. The results show that Jidvei's marketing communication is deliberately restrained, emphasizing stability, consistency, and institutional credibility. The winery's messaging frequently highlights its geographical origin in the Târnave wine region,

controlled production processes, and long term investment in vineyards and technology. This approach reinforces consumer trust and positions Jidvei as a benchmark for quality within the Romanian wine sector. The communication tone remains formal and authoritative, which aligns with its target audience of consumers who value heritage and perceived excellence over experimentation. Although this strategy may limit immediate engagement with younger demographics, it strengthens long term brand equity and supports higher perceived value.

Cotnari represents a third strategic model, one that relies predominantly on historical legacy and cultural symbolism as core communication assets. The research findings indicate that Cotnari's marketing efforts are deeply rooted in its identity as one of the oldest wine producers in Romania, with a brand narrative that consistently references tradition, continuity, and national heritage. Communication materials often evoke familiarity and collective memory, reinforcing Cotnari's role as a culturally embedded brand rather than a trend driven market player. This positioning resonates strongly with domestic consumers, particularly those for whom wine consumption is associated with tradition and social rituals. However, the results also suggest that this strong reliance on historical reputation can limit the brand's perceived capacity for innovation, especially in international markets where heritage alone may be insufficient to attract new consumers. From a communication channel perspective, Cramele Recaș demonstrates the highest level of digital engagement and experimentation. Its use of social media, online campaigns, and visually distinctive branding contributes to higher levels of consumer interaction and brand recall. Jidvei's digital presence, while less frequent, is more controlled and strategically aligned with its premium positioning, ensuring message coherence and visual consistency. Cotnari's digital communication remains comparatively conservative, often replicating traditional messaging formats rather than fully leveraging interactive or experiential digital tools. This difference in digital communication intensity reflects broader strategic orientations, with Cramele Recaș prioritizing reach and engagement, Jidvei emphasizing brand integrity, and Cotnari focusing on continuity.

The comparative analysis further reveals differences in how the three wineries manage the relationship between marketing and consumer trust. Jidvei achieves high levels of trust through transparency, institutional messaging, and association with quality standards, while Cramele Recaș builds trust through familiarity, accessibility, and consistent brand presence across multiple markets. Cotnari relies primarily on its longstanding reputation, which continues to function as a trust mechanism for loyal consumers but may be less effective in attracting new segments unfamiliar with the brand's historical significance.

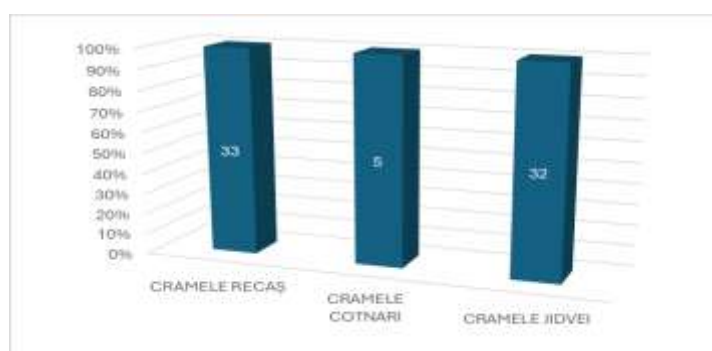


Figure 1. Instagram posting activity, in september 2025, of major Romanian wine producers in September 2025

Figure 1. compares monthly posting intensity across the three producers, during September 2025, used as a proxy indicator for digital communication cadence and campaign activity on Instagram. Accounts analyzed: @cramelerecaso, @jidveiromania, @cotnari.romania [17,20,23].

Marketing and communication effectiveness in Romania’s wine industry is not determined solely by production scale or market share, but by the strategic coherence between brand identity, communication style, and target audience [7]. Cramele Recaș illustrates the advantages of innovation oriented communication in achieving market expansion, Jidvei exemplifies the value of premium positioning grounded in authenticity and quality, and Cotnari highlights both the strengths and limitations of heritage based branding. These findings underscore the importance of aligning marketing communication strategies with broader organizational objectives and evolving consumer expectations in an increasingly competitive wine market.

Cramele Recaș recorded the highest level of activity with 33 posts, closely followed by Jidvei with 32 posts, while Cotnari exhibited significantly lower digital activity, publishing only 5 posts during the same period.

The results indicate a clear divergence in digital communication intensity among the three producers. Cramele Recaș and Jidvei demonstrate a highly active and sustained presence on Instagram, suggesting a strategic emphasis on continuous online engagement and audience visibility. In contrast, Cotnari’s limited posting frequency reflects a more conservative approach to social media communication, potentially prioritizing traditional brand recognition and offline reputation over regular digital interaction. This disparity highlights how marketing communication strategies vary considerably even among leading actors in Romania’s wine industry, with implications for audience reach, brand engagement, and adaptability to digital consumption trends.

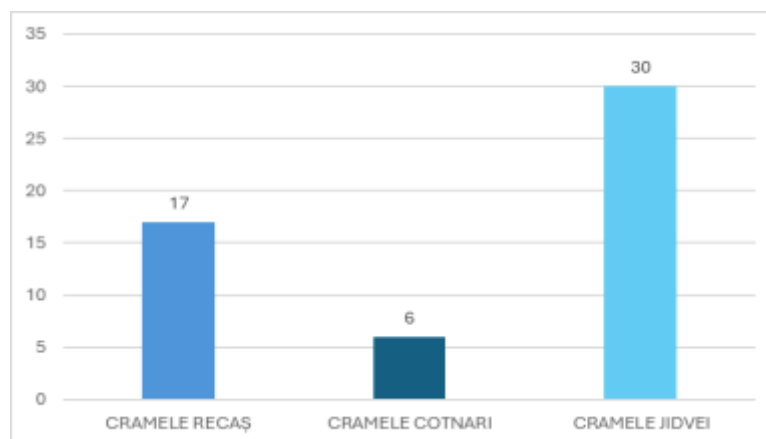


Figure 2. Facebook posting activity of Cramele Recaș, Cotnari, and Jidvei in September 2025

In the figure above is illustrated the number of Facebook posts published by the three selected Romanian wine producers during September 2025 [16,21,22]. Jidvei recorded the highest level of activity with 30 posts, followed by Cramele Recaș with 17 posts, while Cotnari maintained a comparatively low level of engagement with only 6 posts during the same period. The results reveal notable differences in Facebook communication strategies among the analyzed companies. Jidvei’s high posting frequency indicates a strong emphasis on sustained interaction with its online audience and suggests that Facebook remains a central channel within its digital marketing strategy. Cramele Recaș demonstrates a moderate but consistent level of activity, reflecting a balanced approach

between Facebook and other communication platforms. In contrast, Cotnari's limited posting frequency points to a more restrained use of Facebook, likely consistent with its broader reliance on traditional brand recognition and heritage-based communication. These findings confirm that even within the same industry segment, social media platform utilization varies significantly depending on brand positioning, target audience, and strategic communication priorities.

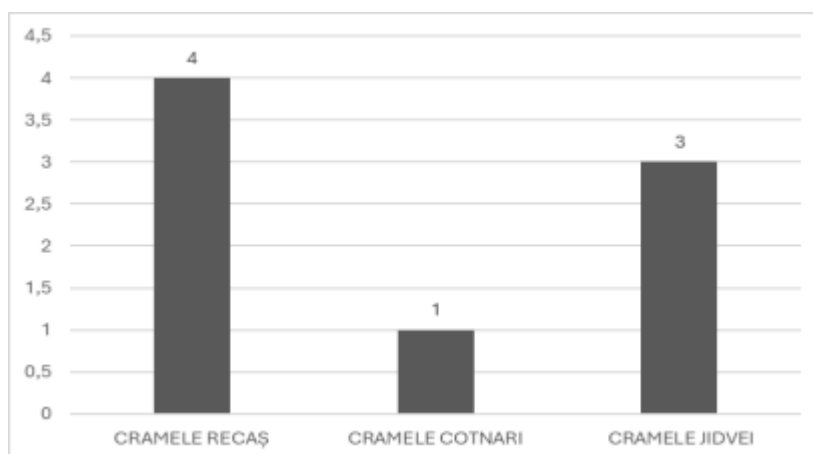


Figure 3. TikTok posting activity of Cramele Recaș, Cotnari, and Jidvei in September 2025

On Tik Tok, Cramele Recaș recorded the highest level of activity with four posts, followed by Jidvei with three posts, while Cotnari showed minimal presence on the platform, publishing only one post [18,19,24] (Figure 3). The results indicate that TikTok remains a marginal communication channel for all three producers when compared to Instagram and Facebook. Nevertheless, the relatively higher activity of Cramele Recaș and Jidvei suggests an emerging strategic interest in short-form video content and younger audience segments. Cotnari's limited engagement reinforces its more conservative digital communication profile and lower emphasis on trend-driven platforms. Overall, the findings highlight an uneven adoption of TikTok within Romania's wine industry, reflecting differences in brand positioning, risk tolerance, and openness to innovative digital marketing formats.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined marketing and communication practices in Romania's wine industry through a comparative case analysis of Cramele Recaș, Jidvei, and Cotnari, with particular attention to digital communication across Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. The findings demonstrate that even among leading producers operating within the same national market, marketing strategies and platform utilization differ substantially, reflecting distinct brand identities, target audiences, and strategic priorities.

The results indicate that Cramele Recaș and Jidvei adopt more active and diversified digital communication strategies, particularly on Instagram and Facebook, where consistent posting suggests a deliberate effort to maintain visibility and audience engagement. Their higher activity levels on these platforms signal an awareness of the importance of continuous digital presence in reinforcing brand recognition and supporting competitive positioning. In contrast, Cotnari's comparatively limited social media activity

highlights a more conservative communication approach, strongly rooted in heritage and established brand reputation rather than frequent digital interaction.

Across all three cases, TikTok emerged as a secondary communication channel with relatively low levels of activity, suggesting that short-form video platforms are still in an exploratory phase within Romania's wine industry. Nevertheless, the presence of Cramele Recaș and Jidvei on TikTok indicates a gradual openness toward engaging younger and digitally oriented audiences, while Cotnari's minimal activity reinforces its preference for traditional branding and established consumer segments.

Overall, the study confirms that digital marketing communication is increasingly becoming a strategic differentiator in the wine sector. Posting frequency, while not a direct measure of effectiveness, provides valuable insight into organizational priorities and communication intensity. The comparative analysis reveals that producers balancing tradition with digital adaptability are better positioned to respond to changing consumer behaviors and market dynamics.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that Romanian wine producers may benefit from more integrated and platform-specific digital strategies that align content formats with audience expectations. For more traditional brands, increased digital engagement could enhance visibility without compromising brand heritage, while for innovation-oriented producers, continued experimentation with emerging platforms may strengthen long-term competitiveness.

Finally, the study is subject to certain limitations, including the focus on a single month of activity and the exclusive use of posting frequency as a quantitative indicator. Future research could expand the temporal scope, incorporate engagement and conversion metrics, and explore the relationship between digital communication intensity and consumer purchasing behavior. Despite these limitations, the research contributes to a clearer understanding of how marketing and communication practices shape competitive positioning in Romania's evolving wine industry.

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