

Enhancing Winery Brands and Influences
through Local Culture and Tourism:
A Case Study of Yunnan Shangri-La

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Abstract

Motivation for choosing this topic

As a wine tourism practitioner and passionate observer of China's emerging regions, I was drawn to Yunnan's Shangri-La for its unique convergence of high-altitude terroir, diverse ethnic heritage, and growing viticultural activity. While global wine regions often rely on the synergy between tourism, local culture, and branding, little is known about how these elements interact in developing Chinese contexts. This project was motivated by the desire to explore whether international models of wine tourism and cultural branding are applicable to Shangri-La—and how its wineries are creating their own path.

Problem / Objective

The study investigates the evolving relationship between winery development, local culture, and tourism in Shangri-La. It asks: How are wineries in this region using tourism and cultural storytelling to shape their brand identity? What models are currently being adopted, and what opportunities exist to deepen the interaction between place, people, and wine? The objective is to identify emerging strategies that integrate cultural experience with wine branding and evaluate their potential for future development.

Methodology

This study adopts a field-based qualitative research approach. Primary data were collected through two phases of investigation:

- **January 2025:** remote interviews with Ao Yun, Duomu Jun, and Simang
- **June 2025:** on-site visits and in-depth dialogues with Xiaoling, Shangri-La Winery, Nizong Ami, Yidong, and Zhashi

Data were triangulated through observation, informal conversations, and brand material analysis. The findings were synthesized into comparative profiles across winery types, brand strategies, and cultural-touristic engagement models.

Content

The literature review bridges global and Chinese research on wine tourism, destination branding, cultural terroir, and consumer psychology. It categorizes existing wineries into three models:

1. Premium brands with low tourism access (e.g., Ao Yun, Xiaoling)
2. State-backed wineries exploring tourism channels (e.g., Shangri-La Winery)

3. Grassroots innovators blending culture and tourism (e.g., Simang, Yidong, Duomu)

Each model offers insights into how local culture, narrative, and visitor experience can be integrated differently. For instance, premium brands use symbolism and exclusivity, while grassroots producers rely on emotional connection, authenticity, and experiential engagement. State wineries serve as transitional models, balancing accessibility with scale and policy orientation.

Conclusion

The case of Shangri-La demonstrates that cultural tourism is not just a supplement but a vital catalyst for brand development. Wineries that embed local traditions, engage visitors, and co-create experiences are crafting strong, resonant brand identities—even without scale. Meanwhile, high-end wineries must find a balance between exclusivity and openness, and state players should evolve into cultural hubs, not just production sites.

Key recommendations include:

- Integrate tourism early in brand building, especially in nascent regions
- Foster regional collaboration for shared narratives and visitor routes
- Balance authenticity with growth to avoid commodification

Shangri-La thus emerges as a compelling case of “cultural terroir” in action—a model for wine regions in China and beyond. Each bottle becomes a portal into landscape, heritage, and human story. As one put it, “the Shangri-La dream is not about a place—it is about a way of being.”

Keywords: wine tourism, winery branding, local culture, Shangri-La, boutique wineries, China, emotional branding, sustainable tourism, community engagement