



PROJECT TITLE
VINA LAGUNA RE-BRANDING

CATEGORY
PACKAGING

SUB CATEGORY
4.2 BRANDED - DRINK

CLIENT COMPANY
AGROKOR VINA

DESIGN CONSULTANCY
LEWIS MOBERLY

CURRENT DATE
06.07.12

FOR PUBLICATION

"This shift and the sales growth already achieved would simply not have happened without the re-branding. What the design has done is capture the story of Istria in a dramatic new way..."

Sasa Zec,
AGROKOR Vina Marketing Director

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VINA LAGUNA RE-BRANDING

This is a true story of how outstanding design, at the behest of inspired private enterprise, helped re-brand a diffuse, undervalued, volume brand of Croatian wine and take it from "socialist era behemoth" which the client company inherited to a magical embodiment of modern Istria – overnight.

The Vina Laguna identity is based on an icon created for the brand – "Spirit of Istria" – inspired by the legend of the blithe spirits who built the ancient amphitheatre of Pula. It represents the lightness of Istria that you sense in the wine, the air, and the Istrian way of life.

In the process, the Vina Laguna brand identity and packaging has helped unify stakeholders behind its new brand story, justify improved pricing (eg +30% for the Select wines) in the face of recession and private label market strength, and deliver immediate year-on-year volume growth of 63% for the first re-branded Select wines, even before the impact of relaunch advertising.

The brand's reputation grows every day: a competitor said "every single day someone asks me 'what is going on at Vina Laguna?' – they have really upped their game" and the President of Istria, himself a qualified sommelier, applauded the impact of the relaunch on the winery. Throughout the region, people enjoy a new toast, to lightness – "lakoća" – as they clink glasses to life in Istria.

Total design costs were covered by year-on-year sales increases in the first five months of 2012 – 7 times over. As a result, the brand owner, AGROKOR, is pressing ahead with brand optimisation in other Croatian wine regions and with exports for Vina Laguna at the vanguard of *Vina Croatia*.

(271 words)



SHOWN LEFT
THE IDENTITY

3.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

3.1 OUTLINE OF PROJECT BRIEF

The business objective:

- Brand optimisation to compete with premium Istrian wines more effectively at home and prepare for export growth.

The challenge:

- To create a relaunch brand identity and packaging, with a new overall brand name and three tiers of quality, that captures the spirit of place: "*the lightness of being Istria*".

3.2 DESCRIPTION

Wine has been a cultural pillar of what is now Croatia for two and a half thousand years but only in the past decade has there been a return to the vineyards in a quest for quality: in the vanguard are the winemakers of Istria, the green and mystical Adriatic peninsula opposite Venice.

The highest volume wine production in Istria is under the aegis of the pre-eminent Croatian private enterprise, AGROKOR, which since 2005 has invested significantly in vineyards and technology to improve wine quality and match the smaller, owner-driver winemakers. Only in 2011 did its wine arm, AGROKOR Vina, judge the time was right to invest in brand optimisation: to dispel socialist-era, bulk wine associations, justify premium pricing for its higher quality wines, and prepare for international markets.

Its brand strategy consulting firm, *brandstory*, proposed Lewis Moberly to implement the agreed brand strategy. Complex and disparate names, labels and wine types were to be harmonised within a 3 tier brand architecture, an over-arching brand – Vina Laguna – and a brand story that captured its sense of place: "*the lightness of being Istria*" ("*lakoća postojanja u Istri*").

3.3 OVERVIEW OF THE MARKET

In Croatia, recessionary market conditions have recently favoured private label and bulk wines (in 1 to 30 litre units). Only leading independent winemakers held share at premium prices through 2011, whilst AGROKOR Vina has had to promote constantly to maintain volume and motivate trade support beyond its core supermarket listings.

Outside Croatia, in key export markets such as the UK, little is yet known of the country's heritage, let alone its wines or destinations like Istria. Yet wine explorers thirst for knowledge of new wine origins as much as new taste sensations. In both markets, the hero Istrian wine is the indigenous Malvasia, rated by leading wine experts like Oz Clarke as a genuine, more drinkable alternative to Sauvignon Blanc.

3.4 PROJECT LAUNCH DATE

Stage I: Four initial, mid-tier Select wines (whites and rosé) were introduced in December 2011, with a minimal pre-Christmas seeding campaign to promote listings.

Stage II: Remaining tiers (Classic and Premium) and varieties launched from April 2012 with full marketing support.

3.5 SIZE OF DESIGN BUDGET

Confidential.

3.6 OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

The Vina Laguna identity is based on an icon created for the brand – “Spirit of Istria” – inspired by the legends of this magical land and, in particular, the blithe spirits who built the ancient amphitheatre of Pula, by night. It represents the lightness of Istria that you sense in the wine, the air, and the Istrian way of life. Each bottle on the Vina Laguna ladder features an interpretation of the icon that reflects relative pricing and gift appeal:

- For the Classic tier (table wine), the icon is shown photographically on 1 litre bottles
- For Select tier (quality wine), this core retail interpretation is in silver on 75ml bottles
- At the Festigia tier (premium level), the icon is in gold for fine dining presentation

Each tier is further defined, as we move up the ladder, by:

- Copy elaborating more at each tier on the richness of each wine’s provenance
- Label background: from pearlised white to silver to black, up the ladder
- Capsule colour treatment: from varietal coding to constant crown and capsule at the top

However all labels share the same text on the brand’s Istrian origins and its unchanging story – “the lightness of being Istria” or “lakoća postojanja u Istri” as is now Croatian currency. This theme and the brand’s icon integrate all Vina Laguna marketing activities, from instore to internet, from advertising to vineyard experiences, most prominently via the hero Malvasia varietal, with a new clear bottle displaying its trademark lightness, of both colour and character, at every opportunity.

(258 words)



SHOWN LEFT
TIERING SOLUTION SHOWN
FOR MALVASIA VARIETAL

The hero wine, Malvasia Select 75cl, clearly lead the way with +53% volume growth in just five months, despite +33% increase in list price.

4.0 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This is a classic example of strong design at the leading edge of the marketing mix, providing the prime vehicle for a new brand story and unifying imagery for all those involved in telling that story, inside and outside the client organisations. The new brand identity has lead the way forward to brand optimisation – improved product projected by improved presentation and pricing – for key brands across both the client's portfolio and the Croatian market.

4.1 INCREASE IN SALES

Within a recessionary retail market where private label share consistently grew, Vina Laguna significantly bucked that trend: whilst its bulk wine sales (unaffected by re-branding) were flat, its redesigned Select and Premium wine sales – measured in litres not value – drove the brand's resurgence with +26% growth versus a year ago. The hero wine, Malvasia Select 75cl, clearly lead the way with +53% volume growth in just five months, despite +33% increase in list price.

It might be argued that the brand's mainstream re-launch advertising helped deliver this upsurge but when we analyse brand sales for the first three months of 2012 we find that, **before this advertising broke**, the four Select wines that were re-branded first were already leading the way: total Vina Laguna volume was up +9% but those wines in new brand livery were up +63% by volume, again lead by Malvasia Select (76% of sales).

There can be no other explanation than that the Vina Laguna re-branding, based on its new brand story and visual identity, drove the brand's growth:

- Distribution levels were unchanged, as new packs replaced old throughout the period measured
- Display levels improved throughout the period but only to reflect the new brand identity, via the hero Malvasia Select featured in all materials.
- Vina Laguna pricing actually increased, with the first four wines introduced at +30% retail price and varying levels of higher pricing across the whole range later in the period
- Only market movements were counter-productive, favouring bulk and private label "value" purchasing, rather than the higher priced lead lines from Vina Laguna
- Whilst 2011 was a good vintage, this was true across Istrian estates and varietals and has not yet resulted in significant market growth to affect the overall picture.

4.2 BRAND REPUTATION

Word has spread quickly. At a vineyard celebration in May, a leading actress dressed as the "Spirit of Istria" shared the story live to the wine and tourism leaders of the region. A leading competitor exclaimed: "every single day someone asks me 'what is going on at Vina Laguna?' – they have really upped their game". The President of Istria, himself a qualified sommelier, applauded the impact of the relaunch on a winery where his own father had worked, whilst the winery CEO thanked those responsible for the re-branding. Throughout the region, people enjoy a new toast, to lightness – "lakoća" – as they clink glasses to life in Istria.

4.3 EXPORT POTENTIAL

On the back of its new design, Vina Laguna has made its first foray into the UK market at leading London wine merchant Lea & Sandeman, where "our staff absolutely love it", with support from leading wine critics who had previously expressed scepticism on prospects.

4.4 FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

AGROKOR Vina is already implementing a similar re-branding strategy on its second major brand, based again on *brandstory* and Lewis Moberly collaboration, whilst the re-branding of all Croatian wines for export is also now under way.

*Throughout the region, people enjoy a new toast,
to lightness – "lakoća" – as they clink
glasses to life in Istria.*

