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Same Name, Different Truths: Brand Architecture and the Governance of Authenticity in Champagne

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Case Report

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Abstract

Collective territorial brands face a distinctive challenge: a shared designation must sustain recognition without making every producer communicate the same identity. This article examines four Champagne producers—Krug, Jacques Selosse, Egly-Ouriet, and Pierre Péters—and develops the concept of differentiated verification under shared territorial authorization. This refers to an arrangement in which a common geographical designation supplies institutional recognition while producers make their identities legible through different public evidentiary repertoires. Drawing on qualitative comparative documentary analysis, the article identifies four configurations: assemblage and continuity at Krug; producer interpretation of site through élevage at Selosse; release-specific technical disclosure at Egly-Ouriet; and named-site provenance organized through parcel vinification and blending at Pierre Péters. The comparison suggests that territorial coherence need not depend on a uniform producer narrative or a single hierarchy of authenticity signals. The article further distinguishes boundary governance, which establishes the conditions of designation use, from meaning governance, through which territorial significance is represented and contested. It contributes to place-brand theory by explaining how differentiated producer identities can coexist within a collective territorial brand, while identifying questions for future research on audience reception and institutional governance.

1. Introduction

A collective territorial brand must solve two problems at once. It must make a place recognizable across products and producers while preserving sufficient differentiation for individual producers to establish distinctive identities. If every producer communicates the territory in the same way, the collective brand risks flattening meaningful differences. If producer identities become detached from the common designation, the collective reputation may lose coherence. This tension is particularly visible in Champagne, where the geographical designation provides a shared basis of recognition while producers communicate different relationships among place, production, history, and style.

Place-brand research has moved beyond the idea that a place can be managed like a conventional corporate brand. Places have multiple stakeholders, overlapping identities, and meanings that are negotiated rather than simply transmitted by a central organization (Kavaratzis 2004; Kavaratzis and Hatch 2013; Kavaratzis and Kalandides 2015). Research on territorial brands and geographical indications (GIs), meanwhile, examines how collective reputation, product characteristics, and institutional recognition contribute to the value of products associated with particular places (Barham 2003; Charters, Menival, Senaux, and Serdukov 2013; Charters and Spielmann 2014; Menapace and Moschini 2024). A more specific question remains: how do individual producers make distinct authenticity claims legible while relying on the same territorial authorization?

This question matters because a collective designation does not make all producers interchangeable. Producers may invoke different forms of evidence to establish their relationship with place. One may foreground continuity and the management of numerous components across vintages; another may

emphasize the interpretation of particular sites through production decisions; another may make technical choices and extended ageing salient; and another may organize its identity around a named vineyard and its component parcels. These are not simply different marketing styles. They are different ways of presenting a producer's relationship with territory as credible and meaningful.

This article compares four Champagne producers: Krug, Jacques Selosse, Egly-Ouriet, and Pierre Péters. The cases are selected for analytical contrast rather than statistical representativeness. They allow comparison between different configurations of brand architecture and publicly foregrounded forms of evidence. The analysis does not assume that one producer is more authentic than another, nor does it treat organizational scale as a proxy for authenticity. Instead, it examines how each producer makes its claims intelligible within the common Champagne designation.

The article makes three contributions. First, it conceptualizes differentiated verification under shared territorial authorization as a mechanism through which a collective territorial brand can accommodate distinct producer identities. Second, it identifies four publicly presented evidentiary repertoires through which producers make their relationship with place legible. Third, it distinguishes boundary governance from meaning governance. The former concerns the institutional and geographical conditions under which a designation may be used; the latter concerns the distributed processes through which territorial significance is represented and contested. This distinction is proposed as an analytical framework, not as a claim that a single institution controls the meaning of Champagne.

2. Literature and conceptual framework

2.1 Place identity and collective territorial brands

Conventional brand architecture distinguishes a corporate or master brand from sub-brands and individual product identities (Aaker 1996; Keller 1993). In place branding, however, the relationship between shared identity and constituent actors is more complex. A place cannot be reduced to the communication strategy of one organization because its meaning is produced through interactions among institutions, residents, businesses, cultural practices, and external audiences (Kavaratzis and Hatch 2013; Kavaratzis and Kalandides 2015).

This complexity is particularly important for product-based territorial brands. Unlike a city brand that may encompass tourism, investment, residence, and public services, a product-based territorial brand is organized around a category of goods whose production and designation are connected to a geographical area. Territorial identity is communicated through products, producer practices, institutional rules, and market interpretation. The resulting brand architecture is neither wholly centralized nor simply a collection of independent corporate brands.

Stakeholders contribute different interests and interpretations to the construction of place identity, complicating the assumption that a place brand has one author or one uncontested meaning (Kavaratzis 2012). Champagne provides a useful setting in which to examine this issue because its territorial identity

is collectively recognized while its producers differ in production organization, product architecture, and public representation.

A collective territorial brand can therefore be understood as a layered arrangement. At one level, institutional and geographical rules establish the conditions under which products may claim the designation. At another, producers construct distinct identities within those conditions. At a third, audiences and intermediaries interpret the relationship between producer, product, and territory. These levels interact but should not be collapsed into one branding process.

Conventional brand architecture theory maps relationships among a master brand, sub-brands, and product extensions, typically within a single corporate hierarchy (Aaker 1996; Keller 1993). A collective territorial brand does not fit this model neatly. The geographical designation is not owned by a single corporation, producers are not its subsidiaries, and the "brand architecture" that links them is produced partly through institutional rules and partly through distributed communication. What this article adds to that literature is an account of how producer-level differentiation operates within such a shared designation—not as a deviation from brand architecture, but as a recognizable and analyzable configuration of it.

2.2 Geographical indications and collective reputation

GIs institutionalize relationships between products and places. They do not merely communicate origin: they establish eligibility conditions and provide a framework through which collective reputation can be maintained. Such arrangements connect product characteristics, local knowledge, production conventions, and territorial narratives (Barham 2003; Gangjee 2012; Trubek 2008).

Collective reputation creates both an opportunity and a governance problem. Producers can benefit from recognition accumulated by the territory, but their actions and representations may also affect the reputation shared with other producers. The value of the designation is therefore partly collective, even when individual producers compete for attention and differentiation (Charters, Menival, Senaux, and Serdukov 2013; Charters and Spielmann 2014).

Institutional eligibility and perceived authenticity nevertheless remain distinct. A designation can authorize a product's territorial claim without determining how audiences interpret a producer's style, practices, or historical narrative. Conversely, a producer may communicate a persuasive account of craftsmanship or site without that account being equivalent to formal GI recognition. The institutional status of a claim and the public evidence through which it becomes meaningful must therefore be analyzed separately.

This distinction also limits what can be inferred from producer materials. A technical statement may document a stated production practice, but it does not independently establish that the practice is unique, that it produces a particular sensory outcome, or that audiences find it persuasive. Likewise, a producer's vineyard narrative can demonstrate how a relationship with place is represented, but cannot alone establish how audiences understand that narrative.

2.3 Authenticity as a claim supported by evidence

Authenticity is not a single property that can be inferred from one production characteristic. It may be associated with continuity, craftsmanship, provenance, historical legitimacy, distinctive practice, or a perceived connection to place. Beverland's work on luxury wine demonstrates how authenticity is constructed through combinations of production practices, heritage, and market representation (Beverland 2005, 2006). Grayson and Martinec (2004) distinguish between indexical cues, which suggest a direct connection to an object or origin, and iconic cues, which evoke resemblance or symbolic association. Authenticity judgments are also entangled with cultural capital and taste hierarchies, such that what counts as authentic is not independent of social position (Bourdieu 1984).

These perspectives help explain why different producers can present different kinds of evidence without necessarily making incompatible claims. A production date, vineyard location, or documented ageing period offers a different kind of evidence from a historical narrative or a claim about stylistic continuity. Neither automatically outranks the other in every context. Their relevance depends on the claim being made and the interpretive framework through which it is understood.

Authenticity is therefore approached here as a public claim supported by an evidentiary repertoire, not as a definitive ranking of producers. The term verification refers to the way a producer makes an identity claim assessable through publicly available information. It does not imply an independent audit or establish that audiences accept the claim. This formulation keeps the analysis focused on observable representations rather than inferred consumer beliefs.

2.4 Differentiated verification under shared territorial authorization

The central concept is differentiated verification under shared territorial authorization. It refers to an arrangement in which a common designation supplies institutional recognition while individual producers make their identities legible through different public evidentiary repertoires.

The concept has two components. Shared territorial authorization refers to the common institutional and geographical framework under which eligible products can claim the designation. Differentiated verification refers to the distinct forms of evidence producers foreground when presenting their identity and relationship with place. These may include assemblage, continuity, site interpretation, production technique, ageing, or parcel-level provenance.

The concept does not assume that producer narratives are independent of the collective designation. The common territory gives producer claims a shared frame of reference, while producer-level representations can contribute to the range of meanings associated with that territory. Nor does the concept assume that producers can freely redefine the designation: institutional rules establish conditions that individual representations cannot simply override.

Three propositions guide the comparison:

Proposition 1

A collective territorial brand provides common authorization within which producer identities can differentiate, rather than requiring a single unified producer narrative.

Proposition 2

Authenticity claims become publicly legible through different evidentiary repertoires; no single indicator constitutes a universal hierarchy of authenticity.

Proposition 3

The governance of a collective territorial brand involves both boundary governance, which establishes conditions for designation use, and meaning governance, through which territorial significance is represented and contested.

These propositions are analytical expectations developed through the comparison, not hypotheses tested against consumer outcomes.

3. Champagne as a collective territorial brand

Champagne is not simply a geographical reference attached to a product. It is an institutionally recognized designation associated with a delimited production area, specified production conditions, and a collective reputation. The designation was recognized as an appellation d'origine contrôlée in 1936, and the Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC) was established in 1941. These developments helped formalize the collective framework within which Champagne producers operate (Comité Champagne n.d.). The institutionalization of the appellation was a historically contested process rather than a natural development of terroir (Guy 2003).

The institutional framework and the territory's public meaning should nevertheless be distinguished. Rules governing eligibility and designation use define important boundaries, but they do not exhaust the ways in which Champagne is represented. Producer communication, specialist wine writing, distribution, criticism, and market interpretation all contribute to how the territory becomes meaningful. This is not to deny the importance of collective institutions; it is to avoid treating institutional authority as equivalent to complete control over meaning.

Champagne is an especially informative case for this distinction because its institutional apparatus is unusually dense. The CIVC sets production rules, monitors yields, manages export promotion, and defends the designation internationally. Yet even within this strongly institutionalized setting, producers construct public identities that differ sharply in what they emphasize and how they ask audiences to read

their relationship to place. The density of boundary governance makes the existence of differentiated meaning governance more visible, not less.

Champagne's collective reputation creates the conditions for producer differentiation. Producers may invoke the same territorial designation while drawing attention to different aspects of their practices. The relevant analytical question is not whether their identities are wholly separate from the territory, but how their individual narratives select and organize evidence within a shared framework.

The four cases illuminate different ways of making that relationship legible. Krug presents identity through assemblage and continuity. Jacques Selosse foregrounds a producer's interpretation of site through production and élevage. Egly-Ouriet makes technical practice and release-specific parameters salient. Pierre Péters organizes part of its identity around the named lieu-dit Les Chétillons and the handling of its component parcels. These distinctions concern the evidence made publicly prominent; they do not imply that other producers lack the same practices or values.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design and case selection

The study uses an exploratory qualitative comparative documentary design. It examines publicly available producer materials and specialist trade-facing technical descriptions to identify how four Champagne producers represent their identities and relationships with place. Following Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2018), the cases were selected for theoretical contrast rather than statistical representativeness; each case is expected to illuminate a distinct configuration of the phenomenon under study.

The cases are Krug, where the published account of Grande Cuvée foregrounds assemblage and reserve wines; Jacques Selosse, where trade-facing descriptions highlight barrel management and the producer's interpretation of site and style; Egly-Ouriet, where technical descriptions of specific cuvées make barrel practice, lees ageing, and dosage salient; and Pierre Péters, where Les Chétillons connects a named vineyard site to parcel-level vinification and subsequent blending.

The comparison is designed to identify distinct public evidentiary repertoires. It is not a ranking of quality, authenticity, or commercial success.

4.2 Materials and analytical procedure

Materials include producer-published product and vineyard descriptions where available, alongside specialist trade-facing technical information for specific cuvées and releases. These materials were read comparatively for recurring identity claims, the evidence used to support those claims, and the relationship established between producer and territory.

The analysis proceeded in three steps. First, it identified the producer's main unit of identity representation: a multi-year assemblage, a producer's interpretation of site, technical practice, or a named vineyard and its parcels. Second, it recorded the forms of evidence made salient, such as vintage composition, reserve-wine use, barrel practice, ageing duration, dosage, or parcel structure. Third, it compared the role of that evidence across cases, asking how it supported a producer-level identity within the shared Champagne designation.

Documentary analysis is appropriate here because the research question concerns how producers publicly construct identity claims, not whether those claims are objectively true or how consumers receive them. The materials selected are precisely the ones producers themselves make available to buyers, critics, and enthusiasts; analyzing them reveals the public architecture of authenticity rather than the private production process behind it.

The analysis distinguishes between a documented technical statement and a broader interpretation. A release-specific lees-ageing figure, for example, is treated as evidence about that release, not as a general description of every wine produced by the estate. Similarly, an account of barrel use is treated as evidence of a publicly presented production practice, not proof that the practice is unique or produces a particular sensory outcome.

4.3 Scope and limitations of the evidence

The documentary corpus is selective. Producer and trade materials are not neutral accounts: they select information for particular communicative purposes. Trade descriptions may also simplify or reproduce information from other sources. Where evidence comes from a specialist retailer rather than the producer's own publication, this distinction is retained.

The study includes no interviews, consumer experiments, audience surveys, or systematic analysis of institutional decision-making. It therefore cannot establish whether consumers find one evidentiary repertoire more persuasive than another, whether the representations produce price premiums, or how the CIVC negotiates the internal governance of collective meaning. As an exploratory documentary analysis, this study maps the publicly available semiotic and institutional architectures through which producers construct their claims, setting the stage for future empirical reception studies.

5. Findings: four evidentiary repertoires

5.1 Comparative overview

The four cases differ in the unit through which their identities are most visibly organized and the evidence made prominent in public descriptions. Table 1 summarizes these differences. It compares identity architecture rather than ranking the cases by authenticity or quality.

Table 1
Producer-level brand architecture and territorial legibility

Producer	Identity emphasis	Product or narrative architecture	How place becomes legible
Krug	Assemblage and continuity	Grande Cuvée as a multi-year composition; reserve wines; edition-based identity	Place represented through continuity of house expertise and cross-vintage composition
Jacques Selosse	Producer interpretation of site	Producer-led style communicated through élevage and maturation decisions	Place interpreted through choices shaping how the producer presents its wines
Egly-Ouriet	Technical practice and release-specific parameters	Cuvée-level information on barrel practice, lees ageing, and dosage	Place legible through stated interaction of origin, production choices, and maturation
Pierre Péters	Named vineyard and parcel structure	Les Chétillons as a single-vineyard vintage cuvée from separately vinified parcels	Place articulated through a named lieu-dit, its parcels, and the final cuvée

Source: Author's comparative analysis of producer-published and specialist trade-facing materials.

5.2 Krug: assemblage as continuity

Krug's Grande Cuvée presents a model of identity in which continuity is achieved through composition rather than through a single vineyard or vintage. The producer's published description of the 172ème Édition identifies a blend built around the 2016 harvest, comprising 146 wines from 11 different years. Reserve wines account for 42 percent of the blend; the stated grape proportions are 44 percent Pinot Noir, 36 percent Chardonnay, and 20 percent Meunier. The wine is reported to spend approximately seven years in the cellars before release (Krug n.d.).

These details matter because they make assemblage itself an evidentiary repertoire. The identity claim does not rest primarily on the idea that a single site or vintage expresses the producer's essence. Instead, the published composition presents the producer's ability to combine wines from different years as a defining practice. The edition number provides a repeatable identity structure, while the component details make the composition visible and discussable.

The role of reserve wines is particularly important to this public account. They are not merely an invisible technical resource; their stated proportion and range of years help explain how the producer represents continuity across harvests. The annual edition can be understood as a recurring product identity whose continuity is produced through changing components. Continuity does not require an identical blend from one release to the next. It is represented through the producer's capacity to reproduce a recognizable approach while altering its composition.

This is a distinctive form of territorial legibility. Place is not made salient solely through a named vineyard. It also becomes legible through the producer's relationship with a wider supply of wines and the expertise presented as necessary to assemble them. This interpretation does not imply that Krug's identity is detached from Champagne's vineyards. Rather, the publicly foregrounded evidence connects territorial resources to the producer's compositional practice.

5.3 Jacques Selosse: site interpretation through élevage

Jacques Selosse foregrounds a different relationship between producer and place. Trade-facing descriptions of the estate draw attention to the role of barrel management in its style. One specialist producer profile reports that approximately 16 percent of new barrels are added to the barrel rotation annually (Natural Wine Co. n.d.). This figure refers to the annual addition of new barrels to the rotation; it should not be misread as meaning that 16 percent of the wine is aged in new oak.

The distinction matters because barrel management is not simply a generic sign of craftsmanship. It is part of the production framework through which the producer's interpretation of the wines is communicated. In this case, place becomes legible through a relationship between vineyard origin and decisions made during maturation. The evidence foregrounds the producer as an interpretive actor rather than presenting the site as if it determined the finished wine without mediation.

This account should not be framed as a contrast between a supposedly authentic grower and an allegedly less authentic house producer. Selosse's repertoire differs from Krug's, but difference is not a hierarchy. Krug's assemblage is also a form of interpretation, while Selosse's production decisions are not independent of the material conditions and territorial framework of Champagne. The cases differ in what they make most visible, not in whether human decisions intervene between place and product.

Nor does the documentary evidence establish that barrel practice is unique to Selosse or that it guarantees a particular sensory result. Its relevance is representational: the producer's style is made intelligible through the stated importance of élevage and barrel management. The evidence connects the producer's identity to the decisions through which site is interpreted, while leaving consumer reception and comparative sensory effects outside the scope of the study.

5.4 Egly-Ouriet: technical practice and release-specific evidence

Egly-Ouriet illustrates a repertoire in which technical information can make production and maturation choices central to the producer's public identity. Specialist wine-trade materials associate the estate's style with barrel vinification and ageing, while listings for individual cuvées provide specific parameters that allow claims to be examined at release level.

A technical listing for Egly-Ouriet Grand Cru Millésime 2014, disgorged in July 2023, reports 96 months on lees and a dosage of 1 g/L. It also describes the wine as composed of 70 percent Pinot Noir and 30 percent Chardonnay, sourced from old vines in Ambonnay, and aged entirely in barrel (Bibendum Wine

Co. n.d.-a). These figures make production and maturation visible as part of the wine's public description.

A specialist listing for the 2008 Grand Cru Brut Millésimé reports approximately ten years on lees and a dosage of 5 g/L for a release disgorged in July 2019 (K&L Wine Merchants n.d.). A separate listing for the 2008 wine identifies a second bottling disgorged in April 2020, after 129 months on lees (Edinburgh Cellars n.d.). The two reports concern different releases of the same vintage; their figures should not be collapsed into one release history.

These details matter because they show why technical statements must remain attached to their specific cuvées and disgorgement dates. The 2014 wine's 96 months on lees and 1 g/L dosage are not directly interchangeable with the reported parameters of the 2008 releases. Nor should any of these figures be treated as a general technical profile for the estate's entire range.

The analytical point is not that extended lees ageing or barrel vinification proves authenticity. Rather, technical parameters provide an explicit evidentiary route through which a producer's identity can be communicated. They allow a reader to assess claims about maturation, composition, and dosage without reducing the producer's identity to a general narrative of tradition or craftsmanship.

5.5 Pierre Péters: Les Chétillons and parcel-level provenance

Pierre Péters provides a fourth configuration, organized around a named vineyard site. The producer's description of Les Chétillons identifies it as a single-vineyard vintage cuvée from Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, made from three parcels that are vinified separately before being blended into one wine. The producer reports that the cuvée has been made since 1971; the estate cultivates just over 19 hectares (Champagne Pierre Péters n.d.).

The distinction between parcels and bottlings is important. Les Chétillons is not presented here as three separate parcel bottlings. Rather, the three parcels provide differentiated components for one single-vineyard cuvée. The identity architecture connects a named lieu-dit to the internal structure of the final wine. The site is therefore made legible not only through a geographical name but also through the way its component parcels are handled.

This structure differs from Krug's multi-year assemblage, although both cases involve blending. In Krug's public account, the key compositional principle is the combination of wines across years. In Les Chétillons, the salient relationship is between a named site, its component parcels, and a vintage cuvée. Blending is present in both cases, but it plays a different role in each identity architecture.

The site-based repertoire makes territorial specificity prominent without claiming that the finished wine is an unmediated expression of geography. Separate vinification and subsequent blending are human practices through which the site is represented in the final cuvée. The producer's public account thus links provenance to a process of selection and composition. This case also cautions against treating

single-vineyard identity as the absence of production decisions: the named site provides a territorial anchor, but its public meaning depends partly on how the producer defines the unit of production and explains the relationship between parcels and the finished wine.

5.6 Comparing the evidentiary repertoires

The four cases demonstrate different routes through which producer identities become publicly legible. Table 2 summarizes the forms of evidence foregrounded and the analytical contribution of each case. It does not treat those forms of evidence as independently verified measures of authenticity.

Table 2
Public evidentiary repertoires and limits of inference

Producer	Evidentiary repertoire foregrounded	Analytical contribution	Limit of inference
Krug	Edition-based composition; number of component wines; range of years; reserve-wine proportion; grape composition; cellar ageing	Shows how continuity can be represented through management of variation	Published composition does not establish sensory superiority or audience response
Jacques Selosse	Producer interpretation through élevage and barrel management	Shows how production decisions can make a relationship with site legible	Trade descriptions do not establish uniqueness or prove sensory effects
Egly-Ouriet	Cuvée-specific barrel practice; lees-ageing duration; dosage; composition	Shows how technical disclosure can support a producer-level identity	Technical figures apply to specified releases, not automatically to the entire range
Pierre Péters	Named lieu-dit; three separately vinified parcels; subsequent blending; vintage-cuvée continuity	Shows how parcel structure can connect geographical specificity to the final wine	Producer-published provenance does not establish how audiences interpret the site

Source: Author's comparative analysis. Evidence records publicly presented claims; it is not an independent authenticity audit.

The comparison reveals a common structure beneath the differences. Each producer's identity is supported by information that makes certain aspects of its relationship with place more visible. The information differs, but all four cases rely on the combination of a shared territorial designation and a more specific producer-level account. The evidence does not collapse into one standard of authenticity, nor does the shared designation eliminate the need for differentiation.

What is striking is not that the four producers say different things, but that their different claims remain addressable within the same institutional framework. Krug's assemblage, Selosse's élevage, Egly-Ouriet's release parameters, and Pierre Péters's parcel structure do not contradict one another. They occupy different positions within the same territorial vocabulary. This is what makes the arrangement more than

a loose collection of brands sharing a label: the producers are engaged in a shared (if distributed) representational field, even as they construct distinct identities within it.

6. Discussion

6.1 A collective brand does not require a unified producer narrative

The first proposition is supported at the level of public representation. Champagne provides a common territorial authorization, but the four producers foreground different ways of connecting identity and place. This pattern complicates a simple master-brand/sub-brand model. The collective designation does not function merely as a central message repeated by subordinate producers. Nor are the producer identities entirely independent brands that happen to share a geographical label. The relationship is layered: the designation supplies a shared institutional basis, while producer-level architectures select and organize different evidence.

This finding is consistent with place-brand scholarship that treats identity as relational and negotiated rather than as a message controlled by a single organization (Kavaratzis and Hatch 2013; Kavaratzis and Kalandides 2015). It also extends the discussion of territorial brand strength by focusing on the practical means through which producer-level differences become legible within a collective reputation (Charters and Spielmann 2014). The point is not that every producer necessarily benefits equally from the designation or that collective and individual interests never conflict. The present evidence cannot establish those outcomes. It shows instead that a shared designation can coexist with multiple public architectures of producer identity.

6.2 Differentiated verification and the public justification of authenticity

The second proposition concerns how authenticity claims become assessable. Across the cases, authenticity is not communicated through one universal cue. Different producers foreground different kinds of evidence because they present different relationships between identity and place. These are distinct forms of public justification: each offers a different evidentiary route through which a producer invites its identity claim to be understood.

The concept of differentiated verification captures this variation without turning the evidence into a league table. The information made visible by Krug is not necessarily the appropriate standard for evaluating Selosse, and a named vineyard does not automatically constitute a more authentic claim than an assemblage. The evidence must be interpreted in relation to the specific claim it supports.

This argument develops authenticity research by shifting attention from whether a producer is authentic to how a producer makes authenticity claims publicly assessable. Beverland (2005, 2006) demonstrates the importance of heritage, craftsmanship, and market representation in luxury wine. Grayson and

Martinec (2004) show why different kinds of cues can contribute to authenticity judgments. The present comparison identifies a further distinction: producers within one collective territorial brand can foreground different evidentiary repertoires without necessarily disputing the legitimacy of the common designation.

The term verification remains deliberately limited. The study identifies publicly presented evidence, not independent verification of every claim. Nor does it demonstrate that consumers recognize, trust, or reward the different repertoires. Those questions require audience research. The contribution is to identify the structure of the claims before assuming their reception.

6.3 Boundary governance and meaning governance

The third proposition distinguishes two dimensions of collective territorial governance. Boundary governance concerns the institutional and geographical conditions under which a designation can be used. It includes the rules and procedures that define eligibility and protect the designation. Meaning governance concerns the distributed processes—producer communication, collective representation, market interpretation, and critical reception—through which the territory's significance is represented and contested.

The distinction matters because the two processes are connected but not identical. Boundary governance provides a common basis for territorial authorization. It can enable producer claims by making the designation recognizable, while also constraining which products may use it and under what conditions. Meaning governance is more dispersed: producer narratives, technical descriptions, trade writing, and audience interpretations contribute to how the territory is understood, without any single actor necessarily controlling the result.

This is an analytical implication rather than an empirical finding about the internal operations of the CIVC. The study does not systematically analyze institutional decision-making, conflicts over specifications, or the distribution of authority among Champagne stakeholders. The distinction between boundary governance and meaning governance should be treated as a framework for future empirical investigation, not as a claim that the CIVC is the sole manager of Champagne's brand or its meaning.

The distinction also helps explain why strengthening boundary rules alone may not resolve disputes over what a designation means. A producer can comply fully with appellation regulations while still advancing a public narrative that emphasizes aspects of the territory other than those foregrounded by the collective body. Boundary governance and meaning governance operate on different objects: the first regulates who may use the name and under what conditions; the second shapes what audiences understand the name to signify. Institutional reforms that address only the former are unlikely to settle the latter.

6.4 Organizational scale is not a reliable proxy for authenticity

The comparison challenges any assumption that authenticity follows a simple organizational hierarchy. Krug's assemblage-based approach makes continuity and compositional expertise salient; Selosse foregrounds interpretation through élevage; Egly-Ouriet communicates through release-specific technical information; and Pierre Péters connects a named vineyard to parcel-level vinification and blending. That architecture offers a different route to authenticity claims from a single-vineyard cuvée, but it is not inherently less connected to territory. Both approaches select and organize evidence through which a producer's relationship with Champagne becomes legible.

This is not an argument that organizational scale, ownership, or production structure never matters. Those factors may shape resources, practices, and communication. The narrower claim is that scale alone cannot determine whether an identity claim is credible. Authenticity must be analyzed through the evidence and the claim being made, rather than inferred from a binary distinction between large houses and growers.

This point carries weight beyond Champagne. In many wine regions, a persistent ideological opposition frames large négociant houses as commercially oriented and domaines as authentically artisanal. The present comparison suggests that such a binary is analytically inadequate: both Krug's assemblage practice and Pierre Péters's parcel-level vinification make specific, assessable claims about their relationship to territory, and neither type of organization has a monopoly on credible authenticity. What varies is not authenticity itself but the evidentiary route through which it is publicly constructed.

6.5 Theoretical contribution

The article contributes to place-brand theory in three ways. First, it specifies the relationship between collective territorial authorization and producer-level identity. Rather than treating the collective designation as either a unified master brand or a passive label, the analysis shows how it can provide common recognition within which multiple producer architectures operate.

Second, differentiated verification clarifies how producer identity claims become publicly legible. It directs analysis toward the evidence producers foreground, while distinguishing that evidence from independent verification and audience acceptance. This provides a more precise analytical unit than a general appeal to authenticity or storytelling.

Third, the distinction between boundary governance and meaning governance separates institutional eligibility from the distributed production of territorial significance. It helps avoid the assumption that formal rules and collective reputation are managed through the same mechanisms, and provides a framework for future research on how institutional rules, producer communication, and audience interpretation interact.

These contributions are deliberately bounded. The study does not estimate the commercial effects of different repertoires, establish causal links between technical practices and perceived authenticity, or generalize from four producers to all of Champagne. Its contribution is conceptual and comparative: it identifies a mechanism and a set of observable differences that can guide further empirical research.

The argument also carries a specific methodological implication. Studies of place brands and GIs often treat the designation as either a source of collective reputation to be measured econometrically or a discourse to be interpreted qualitatively. The Champagne cases suggest that both moves miss something: the architectural level at which producers organize their public claims. A producer's choice of evidentiary repertoire—whether assemblage, élevage, technical disclosure, or parcel provenance—is neither purely economic nor purely discursive. It is a way of structuring the relationship between a shared territorial authorization and an individual product identity. This level of analysis may prove useful beyond Champagne, in sectors where a collective designation coexists with highly visible producer differentiation, such as Parmigiano-Reggiano, Scotch whisky, or Napa Valley Cabernet.

7. Implications for place-brand practice

The findings suggest three practical implications for managers and institutions involved in collective territorial brands.

First, collective communication can foreground the designation's institutional basis without prescribing one producer narrative. A collective body can clarify what the designation represents and the conditions under which it applies while allowing producers to communicate distinct identities. Uniformity of basic territorial information need not imply uniformity of producer storytelling.

Second, collective communication should distinguish shared guarantees from producer-specific claims. Institutional recognition and producer-level evidence serve different purposes. Making this distinction explicit can reduce the risk that audiences interpret one producer's technical or historical narrative as the definition of the entire territory. It can also help prevent individual claims from being mistaken for formal properties of the designation.

Third, governance should consider both boundary conditions and the circulation of territorial meaning. Protecting eligibility rules remains essential, but public understanding of a territorial brand also develops through producers, intermediaries, critics, and audiences. This does not imply that a collective body should control all these actors. It suggests that governance research and practice should pay attention to how different representations complement or complicate the shared territorial identity.

For collective bodies managing appellations, the practical message is not to standardize producer communication but to protect the space in which differentiated claims remain legible under a shared name. Attempts to impose a uniform territorial narrative may reduce rather than strengthen the designation's credibility, because they remove the very variety of evidence through which different audiences recognize the territory's depth.

These implications are propositions for practice rather than demonstrated performance effects. The study does not test whether any particular communication strategy increases recognition, trust, or willingness to pay. Such outcomes require separate evaluation.

8. Limitations and future research

Four limitations define the scope of the findings. First, the study is based on a selective documentary corpus. Producer-published and specialist trade-facing materials reveal public representations but may omit practices, disagreements, or information that is not useful for communication. The findings should not be interpreted as a complete account of each estate's production system.

Second, the cases were selected for analytical contrast rather than statistical representativeness. Other Champagne producers may employ overlapping or different evidentiary repertoires. The comparison identifies possible configurations, not an exhaustive typology.

Third, the study does not measure audience reception. It cannot determine whether consumers recognize the distinctions described, which forms of evidence they trust, or whether different repertoires influence perceived authenticity, price expectations, or purchase behavior. Interviews, consumer experiments, and analyses of expert and non-expert discourse could examine these questions.

Fourth, the governance argument remains conceptual. The study does not trace formal decisions within the CIVC or analyze disputes over the designation's rules. Research using institutional documents, interviews, and historical records could investigate how boundary governance and meaning governance interact in practice.

These limitations also define a research agenda. Comparative studies could test differentiated verification across other GIs and collective product brands. Reception studies could examine whether audiences respond differently to evidence based on assemblage, technical practice, or named-site provenance. Governance research could trace how collective institutions accommodate producer differentiation while protecting the shared designation.

Three specific questions follow. First, do expert audiences (critics, buyers, sommeliers) and non-expert consumers weight different evidentiary repertoires differently? Second, does the presence of multiple repertoires within one designation strengthen or dilute collective reputation over time? Third, how do boundary governance rules interact with the production of meaning—for example, when a technical disclosure from one producer becomes influential enough to shape buyer expectations across the appellation? Answering these questions would move the analysis from a conceptual mapping of public representations toward an empirical account of how collective territorial brands actually work.

9. Conclusion

Champagne illustrates how a collective territorial brand can sustain a shared designation without requiring producers to communicate one uniform identity. Krug, Jacques Selosse, Egly-Ouriet, and Pierre Péters foreground different forms of evidence through which their relationship with place becomes publicly legible: assemblage and continuity, producer interpretation through élevage, release-specific

technical disclosure, and named-site provenance organized through parcel-level vinification and blending.

The distinction between boundary governance and meaning governance further clarifies why formal designation rules and territorial significance should not be treated as the same process. The former establishes conditions of use; the latter develops through distributed representations and interpretations. For place-brand theory, the central implication is that collective coherence need not depend on a single narrative. It may instead depend on the coexistence of shared authorization and differentiated, publicly legible producer identities.

Figure 1. Shared territorial authorization and differentiated producer claims in Champagne. The figure synthesizes the comparative analysis of four producer-level brand configurations within a shared territorial designation. The upper layer represents the common institutional basis of the Champagne appellation; the central layer distinguishes four evidentiary repertoires identified in publicly available producer and trade-facing materials; and the lower layer represents differentiated ways of making producer identity and territorial relationships publicly assessable. The dashed outer frame denotes boundary governance, concerning the eligibility conditions and rules governing use of the designation. The right-hand label denotes meaning governance, the distributed processes through which territorial significance is represented and contested. Solid arrows indicate analytical relationships supported by the comparative framework; the dashed feedback arrow indicates a theoretical implication not directly tested by this study. The figure does not represent measured consumer responses, causal effects on willingness to pay, or a verified account of the internal decision-making processes of the Comité Champagne.

Declarations

Author Contribution

As the sole author, Enkang Hu was responsible for all aspects of this research and manuscript preparation. Specifically, the author fulfilled the following roles:Conceptualization: Formulated the research question, developed the theoretical framework of "differentiated verification under shared territorial authorization," and designed the comparative case study.Methodology: Designed the exploratory qualitative documentary analysis approach, developed the analytical coding framework, and established the evidentiary boundaries for evaluating producer materials.Investigation and Data Curation: Identified, collected, and synthesized publicly available producer materials, institutional documents, and specialist trade-facing technical descriptions for Krug, Jacques Selosse, Egly-Ouriet, and Pierre Péters.Formal Analysis: Conducted the comparative analysis of the four cases, interpreted the different evidentiary repertoires, and derived the three theoretical propositions regarding place-brand governance.Writing – Original Draft: Drafted the complete manuscript, including the literature review, methodology, findings, and discussion.Visualization: Designed and created Table 1, Table 2, and the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1.Writing – Review & Editing: Reviewed, revised, and

approved the final version of the manuscript for submission.The author confirms being the sole contributor to this work, takes full responsibility for its accuracy and integrity, and approves this version for publication.

Data Availability

The data analyzed during the current study consist of publicly available documentary materials, including producer-published technical descriptions, institutional documents, and specialist trade-facing materials. All relevant materials and sources analyzed in this study are cited and listed in the References section of the manuscript. No new primary datasets were generated or archived in a public repository.

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Figures

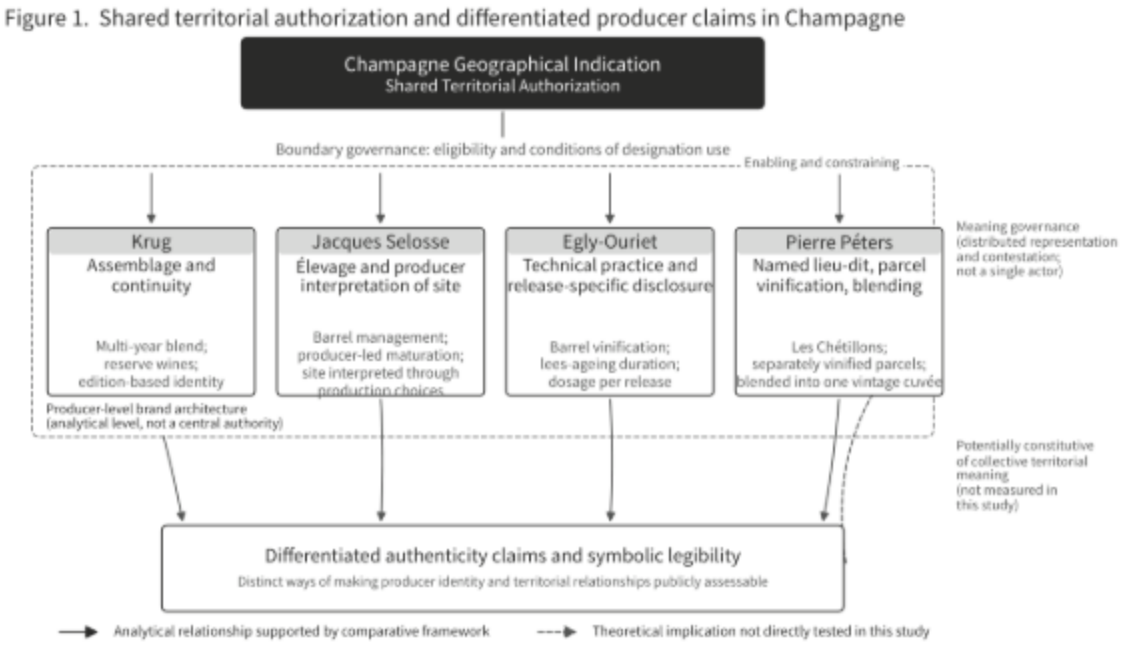


Figure 1

Shared territorial authorization and differentiated producer claims in Champagne. The figure synthesizes the comparative analysis of four producer-level brand configurations within a shared territorial designation. The upper layer represents the common institutional basis of the Champagne appellation; the central layer distinguishes four evidentiary repertoires identified in publicly available producer and trade-facing materials; and the lower layer represents differentiated ways of making producer identity and territorial relationships publicly assessable. The dashed outer frame denotes boundary governance, concerning the eligibility conditions and rules governing use of the designation. The right-hand label denotes meaning governance, the distributed processes through which territorial significance is represented and contested. Solid arrows indicate analytical relationships supported by the comparative framework; the dashed feedback arrow indicates a theoretical implication not directly tested by this study. The figure does not represent measured consumer responses, causal effects on willingness to pay, or a verified account of the internal decision-making processes of the Comité Champagne.