



## 'It's a small, yappy dog': The British idea of terroir

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### Abstract

**Aims:** Most consumer research about terroir has focused on wine, particularly with French or other European wine drinkers, rather than those in the Anglo-Saxon world. In Europe, whilst there is no agreement amongst consumers as to what terroir actually is, there is a general recognition of the word and an acceptance that it represents something important. There is no certainty that this is the case elsewhere. This paper helps to fill that gap focusing on British consumers in the context of a project mainly exploring food and terroir.

**Methods and Results:** This study forms much of a larger transnational study applying discrete choice experiments. As part of the data collection respondents (who had not been presented with the word 'terroir' in any previous questions) were asked what 'terroir' meant to them, responding with a single word or short phrase; there was a quota sample of 552. Qualitative analysis of responses emerged in three forms:

1. A basic categorisation which split comments into four groups based on the respondent's apparent knowledge including non- or incorrect responses.
2. A thematic categorisation which placed all words into one of eleven groups linked directly to the content of the response (e.g., environment, territory, France, wine).
3. A 'word cloud' to reveal visually the relative strength of words used.

Using the basic categorisation the single largest class of response was 'don't know' (49.64%). The second largest group gave a response that bore some (limited) relationship to traditional definitions of terroir. This class (30.25%) might use a term like soil, terrain, climate, or environment. Some also made a link to crops or grapes. Another class (9.06%) made a much more complex link suggesting not just an ecosystem but that the environment directly shaped a resulting product. The third largest group (11.05%) offered an entirely wrong definition. Some just implied that it meant 'good'; nine suggested that it was a (small) dog (terrier) and 21 that it was to do with horror.

The second categorisation grouped respondents given a 'correct' definition. This group (n=217) included a few who defined terroir as 'natural', or to do with nature and five who just mentioned a crop or product. The rest tended to focus on a place, area or territory (n=60) or a climate, environment or ecosystem (n=59). Another group talked about earth, soil or land (n=79), which could relate either to place generally or ecosystem more specifically.

**Conclusion:** This is a qualitative analysis but the analysis shows the gulf limited recognition of the word terroir in one Anglo-Saxon country. Beyond the mere descriptive it also forms a useful starting point for seeing how the British may define the word in terms of place and/or environment.

**Significance and Impact of the Study:** The study is the starting point for a comparative consideration of consumers' ideas about and definitions of terroir across a range of countries as well as what the limits for the popular recognition of the idea may be in the UK.

**Keywords:** Food terroir, United Kingdom