EXPLORING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WINE TOURIST SATISFACTION – A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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2010004

MARKETING INSIGHTS
Working Paper Series
School of Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to conceptualise the commonly referred to 'winescape' in wine tourism literature and develop a scale to measure its effects on wine tourist satisfaction. Integrating theoretical underpinnings from services and tourism marketing into existing wine tourism literature a framework for the proposed winescape is presented and contains winescape aesthetics, winescape layout and signage, winescape features, winescape activities and winescape service staff. It is proposed that these constructs will all have a positive effect on wine tourist satisfaction with a wine region. Theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions of this study are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism is defined as the visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of the grape wine region are the primary motivators (Carlsen and Charters, 2006; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000). Wine tourism research, although in its infancy stage, is of growing importance to both the wine and tourism industries. Wine tourism creates better synergies with the development of regional economies (Carlsen, 2004; Gammack, 2006; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000), builds greater brand awareness and involvement (O'Neill and Charters, 2000) and increases post visit purchase behaviours (Johnson and Bruwer, 2007; Mitchell and Hall, 2006). However, the early body of research in the field is largely conceptual in nature, lacking in theoretical underpinning and empirical application (Carlsen, 2004; Mitchell and Hall, 2006).

A construct commonly used in wine tourism literature is the 'winescape' (e.g. Bruwer and Alant, 2009; Carmichael, 2005; Peters, 1997). Generally, the winescape refers to attributes of a grape wine region (Peters, 1997). Specifically, the winescape encapsulates the interplay of "vineyards, wineries and other physical structures, wines, natural landscape and setting, people and; heritage, towns and their architecture and artefacts within them" (Johnson and Bruwer, 2007, p.277). Findings suggest that the winescape is what primarily motivates and drives wine tourist behaviour (Carlsen and Charters, 2006; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell 2000).

The concept of a winescape was first proposed by Peters (1997) as a way of defining a wine region with elements such as the presence of vineyards, wine-making activities and wineries where wine is produced and stored. However, since it was first introduced, a small body of empirical research is present in the literature and where research does exist (e.g. Sparks 2007), the scope of work tends to be limited. This is due to several reasons. First, the wine tourism literature remains fragmented as previous studies have not integrated the extent of the elements that constitute a winescape. For instance, some researchers examined elements such as vineyards, wineries, wines (e.g. Peters 1997), restaurants, accommodation, wine festivals and attractions (e.g. Getz 2000; Hall et al. 2000). Other researchers explored aesthetics such as physical structures, natural landscape and setting, heritage, towns and buildings, architecture and artefacts (e.g. Johnson and Bruwer 2007), cultural and social elements (e.g. Getz and Brown 2006). Yet others, studied people for their contribution to the winescape (e.g. O'Neill, Palmer, Charters 2002). Secondly, little research exists that tests the winescape frameworks application in a buying context

involving customer satisfaction. Therefore it is the main aim of this study is to integrate theoretical underpinnings from services marketing and tourism to conceptualise the winescape construct.

RELEVANT LITERATURE, THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Servicescape theory works to explain the effects the physical evidence in a service environment have on customer mood states and behavioural intentions (Bitner, 1992). Since it is acknowledged that tourism destinations (Hu and Ritchie, 1993) and wine regions (Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000) are a combination of tourist facilities and services, a wine region is viewed as a context-specific service environment. Specifically the dimensions are identified as ambient conditions, such as weather, temperature, music, air quality and scents. Spatial functionality and layout, such as the arrangement of the machinery, equipment and furnishings and the ability of these items to facilitate performance goals and enjoyment. Signs, symbols and artefacts, such signage used to communicate and enhance mood and image and/or provide directional cues for customers.

The multi-attribute approach is a commonly used method within destination marketing to highlight the facilities and attractions of a destination as attributes that are most appealing to potential tourists (e.g. Pike 2002). Further, this guides destination marketers in their branding and image creation of a destination. For the purposes on the current study, it will help identify relevant facilities and attractions that function as key attributes in branding the wine region (e.g. Getz 2000; Hall et al. 2000; Getz and Brown 2006).

The winescape aesthetics construct adapts the facility aesthetics construct from the servicescape literature (Wakefield and Blodgett 1994; 96; 99; Wakefield and Baker 1998; Ryu and Juang 2007; Harris and Ezeh 2008; Kim and Moon 2009). It is an important construct that extends from Bitner's (1992) visual elements of ambient conditions and refers to the tangible cues and physical evidence that wine region visitors use to judge quality. In a servicescape setting, aesthetics refers to architectural design, the building materials used, the types of colour schemes employed, the types of decor and the quality finishings and equipment used to create the service environment and communicate image to the consumer. In the proposed winescape context, aesthetics refers to the architectural design of the wineries, vineyards and town buildings within the wine region as well as the natural environment and scenery (Getz 2000; Hall et al. 2000; Getz and Brown 2006; Sparks 2007). These elements communicate the quality and historical nature of the buildings through their architectural design. A number of studies suggest that aesthetics affects satisfaction. For instance, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) observe that aesthetics has a positive effect on patron satisfaction, while Ryu and Juang (2007) and Kim and Moon (2009) note that it has a positive effect on customer pleasure, an attitude closely associated to satisfaction. Further, Lucas (2003) reports that aesthetics associated with interior decor has a direct and positive effect on patron satisfaction. Finally, in both their studies, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) and Lucas (2003) suggest that cleanliness in sports stadiums and casino settings has a positive effect on satisfaction. This suggests that the aesthetics and visual ambience of a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that:
H1: Winescape aesthetics will have a positive impact on wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape

The winescape layout and signage construct adapts from the servicescape literature in elaborate service settings such as sports stadiums (Wakefield and Blodgett 1996), shopping malls (Wakefield and Baker 1998), casinos (Wakefield and Blodgett 1996; Lucas 2003) and hospital, universities and airport terminals (Newman 2007). Therefore they will be adapted to develop the winescape layout and signage construct. In a servicescape setting, layout includes issues of space and the arrangement of service equipment and amenities (Bitner 1992; Wakefield and Blodgett 1996; Newman 2007). Also in the servicescape setting, signage refers to signposting that is directional (Newman 2007), informational (Cockrill, Goode and Emberson 2008) and interpretive (Kerstetter, Confer, and Graefe 2001). In the winescape context, signage and layout are taken into account in the wine route concept, which identifies how attractions such as wineries, vineyards and restaurants are connected through an organised layout and communicated signage (Hall et al. 2000; Bruwer 2003). In the proposed winescape context, informational, directional and interpretive signage are identified as winescape elements that connect the wine region's attractions and communicate them to visitors. These studies suggest that layout and signage impact on satisfaction. For example, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) and Lucas (2003) report that layout accessibility and the use of electronic signage display have a positive effect on satisfaction. This suggests that the signage and layout of a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that: *H2: Winescape signage and layout will have a positive impact on wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape*

The winescape features construct is adapts from the services marketing, tourism marketing and wine literature. Winescape features refers to the variety of tangible elements within a wine region such as the wineries, vineyards, accommodation attractions including the wines produced in the region. In a servicescape setting, Wakefield and Baker (1998) examined shopping malls and found that the degree of variety amongst the retail outlets offered within the mall influenced patron excitement and re-patronage intentions. In a tourism context, a study by Kwortnik (2007) found that the variety of amenities on a cruise ship impacted on the attitudes and behaviours of patrons. While a shopping mall and cruise ship are not a wine region, there are similarities as all three occur in leisure service settings that offer a wide variety of services and amenities. In the proposed winescape context, features refer to the tangible amenities and attractions such as wineries, vineyards, the wines produced, the town sites and complimentary services such as accommodation, restaurants and cottage industries. These have all been identified applying the multi-attribute approach from tourism marketing (e.g. Pike 2002) to the existing exploratory wine tourism research which has developed a conceptual domain for a wine region (e.g. Getz 2000; Hall et al. 2000; Getz and Brown 2006). A few studies suggest that features affect satisfaction. For instance, Lee et al. (2008) examine an international mask dance festival and observe that features of the festivalscape such as the facilities, food and souvenirs have a direct and positive effect on visitor satisfaction with the festival. Kozak (2001), in his study on tourist satisfaction with holiday destinations like Turkey and Mallorca suggests that destination features such as the availability of accommodation services, facilities and activities have a positive effect on tourist satisfaction with a destination. This suggests that features of a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that: *H3: Winescape features will have a positive impact on wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape*

Activities are an important part of a tourist experience as they provide the visitor with something to do that is unique to the destination that they are travelling to (Weiermair and Fuchs 1999). The winescape activities construct adapts from the tourism marketing and wine literature and refers to the specific activities that visitors undertake while in a wine region. In a tourism setting, some researchers, identify activities within the destination as an important part of the destination experience (eg. Leisen 2001; Ibrahim and Gill 2005; Correia, Oom do Valle and Moco 2007; Weiermair and Fuchs 1999). For example, when visiting an alpine ski resort, activities such as skiing and outdoor sports activities as well as shopping and dining will be vital to the tourist experience. While these studies look at tourism in a general sense it is applicable to a wine region setting as wine tourism offers activities that are unique to wine tourism destination and attract visitors. Adopting the same approach as winescape features, using the multi-attribute approach (Pike 2002) it would be possible to identify what activities wine region visitors are looking for. Once again wine literature (eg. Getz 2000; Hall et al. 2000; Getz and Brown 2006; Sparks 2007) will provide a strong basis to apply this approach. Therefore, in the proposed winescape context, specific activities such as wine tasting, wine tours, restaurant dining, exploratory drives help shape the visitor experience. A few studies suggest that activities affect satisfaction. For instance, in examining New Zealand as a tourist destination, Danaher and Arweiler (1996) reported that activities unique to the destination such as hiking, jet boating, white water rafting and bungy jumping had a positive impact on tourist satisfaction with the destination. Weiermair and Fuchs' (1999) study of an alpine ski resort setting suggests that activities such as skiing and shopping have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction with the destination. This suggests that activities on offer within a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that:
H4: Winescape activities will have a positive impact on wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape
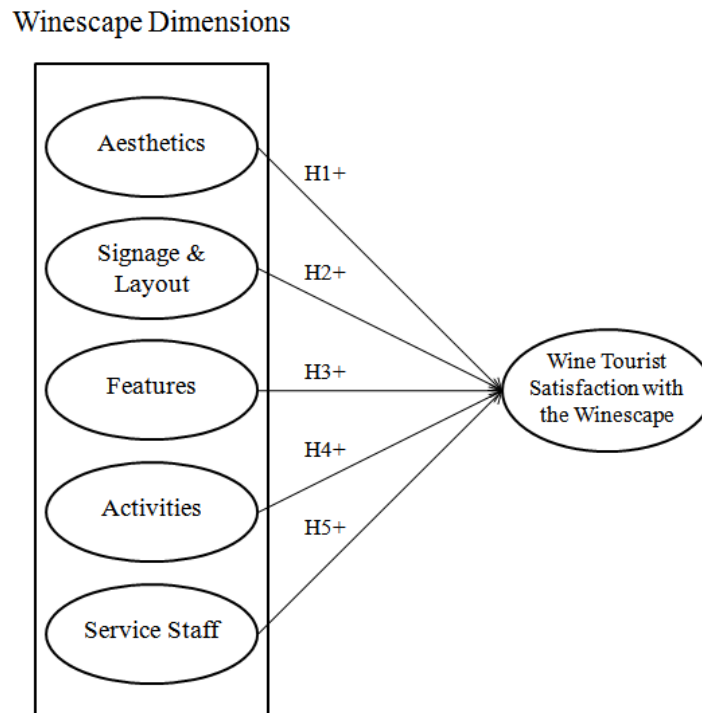
The winescape service staff construct adapts from the services marketing literature. Service staff refers to the quality of the service encounters that contribute to the overall wine region tourism experience. Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1988; 1991) developed the SERVQUAL scale as a way of measuring service quality which has been used extensively in services research (e.g. Wakefield and Blodgett 1999; Harris and Ezeh 2008). In a servicescape setting such as a sports stadium, Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) found that intangible service delivered by facility staff complimented the service experience created by the tangible environment and impacted upon patron attitudes and intentions to revisit. In a winescape context, service was rated highly by visitors' to a wine region (e.g. Jago and Issaverdis 2001; Charters and Ali-Knight 2002; O'Neill, Palmer and Charters 2002; Sparks 2007). O'Neill, Palmer and Charters' (2002) research finding even suggest that the service quality delivered by cellar door staff will greatly influence customer repurchase and revisit intentions. Specifically, elements cited in the service experience include quality of service delivered by cellar door staff (O'Neill, Palmer and Charters' 2002), staffs' wine knowledge and wine experience (Charters and Ali-Knight 2002). In the proposed winescape context, service experience refers to the quality, promptness, genuine nature of the service as well as the staff having extensive knowledge of the wine product and the ability to communicate effectively to the visitor (O'Neill, Palmer and Charters' 2002). A number of studies suggest that service staff affects visitor satisfaction. For example, O'Neill, Palmer and Charters (2002) in a study on service quality at winery cellar doors reports that the quality of the service delivery

from cellar door staff has a positive effect on satisfaction. Wakefield and Blodgett's (1999) observes that the reliable, assuring, empathetic and responsive service, delivered by staff had a positive effect on customer satisfaction. This suggests that service staff within a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed   that:
H5: Service staff will have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction with the winescape

Satisfaction is a construct that has been the subject of considerable research in the area of marketing with applications to both services (e.g. Cronin and Taylor 1994; Wakefield and Blodgett 1996) and tourism (e.g. Weiermair and Fuchs 1999; Yoon and Uysal 2005; Sparks 2007). While there are some varying views on how to define and measure satisfaction, it is widely accepted that it is a post-consumption emotion, or attitude that that is internally experienced by the consumer after the purchase and consumption of products and services (Westbrook and Oliver 1991). The construct is rooted in the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm in which consumer satisfaction is based upon the service or product performance against the consumers' preconceived expectations (Oliver 1980; Westbrook and Oliver 1991; Spreng, MacKenzie and Olshavsky 1996). If the product or service performance meets or exceeds the consumer's expectations, it will result in satisfaction whereas if the performance does not meet the expectations, dissatisfaction will result.

Figure 1: Proposed research model

Winescape Dimensions

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The preceding discussion provides a sound theoretical framework for the proposed winescape constructs (winescape aesthetics, winescape layout and signage, winescape features, winescape activities and winescape service staff) effects on wine tourist satisfaction.

The study offers a number of significant contributions. Theoretically, it introduces theoretical underpinnings from marketing, services marketing and tourism to develop a framework in which to examine insights from existing exploratory wine tourism research, something that has been lacking from past wine tourism research (Carlsen 2004; Mitchell and Hall 2006). Taking a services marketing perspective it will extend and test the applicability of Bitner's (1992) servicescape framework in a wine region setting. One of the main objectives of the study will be to develop and validate a measurement scale for the winescape. This will provide a significant methodological contribution to the field of wine tourism. Scales to measure the remaining constructs will be adopted from existing literature to ensure that reliability and validity is ensured. From a managerial perspective, quantifying supply related attributes and showing their effect on tourist attitude and intention will help guide wine region development by destination marketing organisations, provide a grounding for government policy making to enhance private industry investment, identify winescape factors that wine producers and operators can manage better, i.e service training and finally, provide insight into wine region branding and promotional campaigns.

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