

A Research Proposal to Explore the Factors influencing Wine Tourist Satisfaction

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Abstract

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

Keywords: Winescape, attributes, wine tourist satisfaction

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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). This area of research 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 area is largely conceptual in nature, lacking in theoretical underpinning and empirical application (Carlsen, 2004; Mitchell and Hall, 2006).

A loosely used construct 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). Conclusions drawn from these studies 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, in the last 13 years, only a small body of empirical research has been accumulated in the literature, and where research does exist (e.g. Sparks, 2007), the scope of work tends to be limited. This is largely due to fragmented studies which have not integrated the extent of the attributes that constitute a winescape. For instance, some studies have examined localised attributes such as vineyards, wineries and wines (e.g. Peters, 1997), whereas others have examined regional elements such as wine festivals and wine attractions (e.g. Getz, 2000; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000). Yet others have examined aesthetics such as natural landscapes, heritage towns and architecture (e.g. Johnson and Bruwer, 2007), cultural and social elements (e.g. Getz and Brown, 2006), while the rest have examined people for their contribution to the winescape (e.g. O'Neill, Palmer and Charters, 2002). To date, little research exists that integrates all these winescape attributes and empirically tests their application in a model involving post visit purchase behaviours. Therefore, it is the main aim of this paper to integrate theoretical underpinnings from the services, tourism and wine tourism marketing literature and to conceptualise a winescape framework that can account for wine tourist satisfaction.

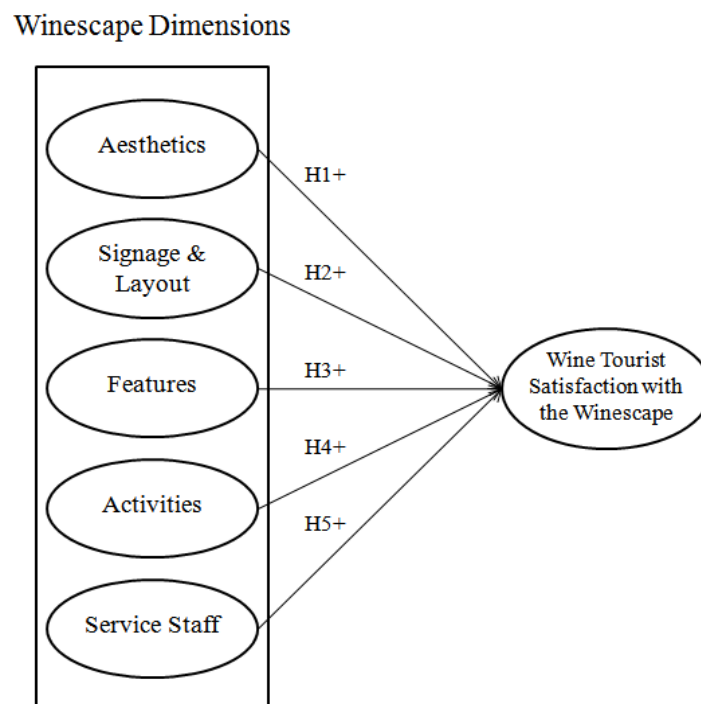
Relevant Literature, Theory and Hypotheses

Servicescape theory, which originates from services marketing, explains the effects the physical evidence in a service environment have on customer mood states and behavioural

intentions (Bitner, 1992). Three dimensions make up the servicescape, namely: (1) ambient conditions such as weather, temperature, music, air quality and scents; (2) 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; (3) signs, symbols and artefacts used to communicate and enhance mood and image and/or provide directional cues for customers. 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 or winescape.

The multi-attribute approach to destination marketing, which originates from tourism marketing, highlights the facilities and attractions of a destination as attributes that are most appealing to potential tourists (Pike, 2002). This approach guides destination marketers in their branding and image creation of a destination. In a winescape context, the approach is adopted to help identify relevant facilities and attractions that function as key attributes in creating an image for the wine region (e.g. Getz, 2000; Getz and Brown, 2006; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000). The winescape attributes can be seen in Figure 1. Winescape aesthetics as well as winescape layout and signage are derived from Bitner's (1992) servicescape theory, whereas winescape features, winescape activities and winescape service staff are additions to the proposed winescape framework, adapted from the services, tourism and wine tourism marketing literature. Each construct is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Figure 1: Proposed research model



Winescape aesthetics extends theory from servicescape aesthetics (Bitner, 1992) and facility aesthetics (Harris and Ezeh, 2008; Kim and Moon, 2009; Ryu and Juang, 2007; Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994, 1996, 1999), where visual elements of ambient conditions, tangible cues and physical evidence are used by consumers to judge

quality. In a servicescape setting, aesthetics refers to architectural design, building materials, types of colour schemes and décor, quality finishings and equipment used to create the service environment and communicate an image to the consumer. In the proposed winescape context, aesthetics refers to the architectural design of the town buildings in the wine region as well as the natural environment and scenery (Getz, 2000; Getz and Brown, 2006; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000; 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) observed that aesthetics in a leisure setting had a positive effect on patron satisfaction, while Ryu and Juang (2007) and Kim and Moon (2009) reported that restaurant aesthetics had a positive effect on customer pleasure, an attitude closely associated with satisfaction. Further, Lucas (2003) concluded that aesthetics created by interior decor had a positive effect on the satisfaction of casino visitors. 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 positively influence wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape

Winescape layout and signage extends theory from servicescape layout and signage (Bitner, 1992) in elaborate service settings such as a sports stadium (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996), shopping mall (Wakefield and Baker, 1998), casino (Lucas, 2003; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996), hospital, university and airport terminal (Newman, 2007). In a servicescape setting, layout includes issues of space and the arrangement of service equipment and amenities (Bitner, 1992; Newman, 2007; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). 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 proposed winescape context, signage and layout are considered from the perspective of a wine route. Wine routes identify attractions such as wineries, vineyards and restaurants that are connected through an organised layout and communicated through informational, directional and interpretive signage (Bruwer, 2003; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000). These studies suggest that layout and signage impact on satisfaction. For instance, Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) and Lucas (2003) reported that layout accessibility and the use of electronic signage displays had 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 positively influence wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape

Winescape features are adapted from the services, tourism and wine tourism marketing literature that explores leisure settings where a wide range of amenities are provided. In a servicescape setting, features include tangible elements such as food and souvenirs at a festival (Lee et al., 2008), retail outlet variety in shopping malls (Wakefield and Baker, 1998) and amenities provided on cruise ships (Kwortnik, 2007). In the proposed winescape context, features refer to the tangible amenities and attractions such as wineries, vineyards, wines, town sites, accommodation, restaurants and cottage industries (Getz, 2000; Getz and Brown, 2006; Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000). A few studies suggest that features affect satisfaction. For instance, Lee et al. (2008) examined an international mask dance festival and observed that features of the festivalscape such as the facilities, food and souvenirs had a positive effect on visitor satisfaction with the festival. Kozak's (2001) study on tourists'

attitudes toward holiday destinations like Turkey and Mallorca concluded that destination features such as the availability of accommodation services, facilities and activities had a positive effect on tourist satisfaction with a destination. This suggests that the features of a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H3: Winescape features will positively influence wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape

Winescape activities are adapted from tourism and wine tourism marketing research in leisure settings where activities constitute an integral part of the visitor experience (Correia, Oom do Valle and Moco, 2007; Ibrahim and Gill, 2005; Leisen, 2001), providing visitors with something to do that is unique to the destination (Weiermair and Fuchs, 1999). In a servicescape setting, activities include outdoor pursuits such as hiking and jet skiing (Danaher and Arweiler, 1996) and indoor pursuits such as shopping and dining (Weiermair and Fuchs, 1999) considered to be vital to the tourist experience. In the proposed winescape context, specific activities such as wine tasting, wine tours, restaurant dining and exploratory drives help shape the visitor experience. Findings suggest that activities affect satisfaction. For instance, Danaher and Arweiler (1996) reported that activities in New Zealand such as hiking, jet boating, white water rafting and bungee jumping had a positive effect on tourist satisfaction with the destination. Weiermair and Fuchs' (1999) study of an alpine ski resort setting concluded that activities such as skiing and shopping had a positive effect on visitor satisfaction with the destination. This suggests that activities in a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H4: Winescape activities will positively influence wine tourist satisfaction with the winescape

Winescape service staff is adapted from the services and wine tourism marketing literature that explores the input of frontline staff in the service delivery process. In the servicescape, staff members' inputs include the intangible service delivered by facility staff at a sports stadium (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1999), the quality of service delivered by cellar door staff (O'Neill, Palmer and Charters, 2002) and staff members' wine knowledge and wine experience (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002). In the proposed winescape context, winescape service staff refers to staff members' ability to deliver quality, prompt and genuine service through their extensive knowledge of the wine product and ability to communicate effectively with visitors (O'Neill, Palmer and Charters, 2002). A number of studies suggest that service staff affect satisfaction. For instance, Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) observed that the reliable, assuring, empathetic and responsive service delivered by staff had a positive effect on customer satisfaction. O'Neill, Palmer and Charters (2002) concluded that the quality of the service from cellar door staff had a positive effect on satisfaction. This suggests that service staff in a wine region will impact on visitor satisfaction. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H5: Winescape service staff will positively influence visitor satisfaction with the winescape

Satisfaction has been the subject of considerable research in the area of marketing with applications to both services marketing (e.g. Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996) and tourism marketing (e.g. Sparks, 2007; Weiermair and Fuchs, 1999; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). 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 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 consumer's preconceived expectations (Oliver, 1980; Spreng, MacKenzie and Olshavsky, 1996; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). 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.

Concluding Comments

This paper attempts to draw from the threads of services, tourism and wine tourism marketing research and conceptualise a theoretical framework that identifies the attributes of a winescape. It is clear from the preceding discussion that aesthetics, layout and signage, features, activities and service staff encapsulate the winescape and have the potential to impact on post visit purchase behaviour such as wine tourist satisfaction.

The research agenda for such a study will follow the qualitative and quantitative research methodology proposed by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2003). This will involve developing a scale which identifies all attributes that encapsulate the winescape. Qualitative research will involve conducting focus groups and consulting a panel of experts to generate and identify the scale items. Quantitative research will involve administering the instrument to various samples of the population to examine psychometric properties of reliability and validity. Finally, the scale will be integrated into a consumer buying model to test its ability to predict purchase and post purchase behaviours.

The study offers a number of significant contributions. Theoretically, it integrates the conceptual underpinnings from services, tourism and wine tourism marketing literature to develop a winescape framework, which until now remains generally exploratory in nature (Carlsen, 2004; Mitchell and Hall, 2006). It is envisaged that this framework will provide a significant methodological contribution to the research area of wine tourism. Practically, a winescape framework would be beneficial to practitioners in identifying critical attributes in the supply chain that can impact on purchase and post purchase behaviours. This could guide governments in making policies that enhance private industry investment, destination marketing organisations in creating branding and image as well as wine producers and operators in managing resources and service training.

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