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**An investigation of wine involvement among travelers in New Zealand**

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In the last decades the construct of involvement and different measurements introduced to assess this dimension have been extensively researched. However, information on the usefulness of some involvement measurements continues to be limited in several areas. In this study, the Consumer Involvement Profile (CIP) is used to investigate wine involvement among travelers to the South Island of New Zealand from a sample of 399 individuals. Travelers' involvement with the wine product is also studied in terms of their weekly wine consumption, winery visitation, and reasons for drinking wine. The CIP contributed to identifying the importance travelers place on winery consumption for hedonic purposes. This finding, added to respondents' wine consumption/purchase patterns and to their mild involvement in winery visitation suggest potential opportunities for wineries and wine tourism in the form of more traveler visitation, purchases and/or consumption.

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## **Introduction**

A large body of literature presents the construct of involvement in different forms. Dodd (2000) identifies product involvement as “the degree to which a consumer considers a particular product to be important in their life” (p. 141). For Lockshin and Spawton (2001) “highly involved people relate to a product category as part of their lifestyle and it holds an important place in their daily existence” (p. 73). These individuals, although not necessarily experts, seek information about a product; those experiencing low involvement, on the other hand, may still enjoy the product category, but do not process information cognitively (Lockshin & Spawton, 2001). This outcome illustrates differences in the length individuals from both groups may be prepared to go to gain knowledge about a product, including looking for written information about it. In fact, “higher involvement consumers utilise more information and are interested in learning more, while low involvement consumers simplify their choices and use risk reduction strategies” (Lockshin, Jarvis, d’Hauteville, & Perrouty, 2006, p. 169).

Studies also present and discuss involvement with the wine product. For example, Bloch (1986, in Goldsmith, d’Hauteville & Flynn, 1998, p. 341) conceptualizes wine involvement as the excitement, interest, and enthusiasm that consumers demonstrate towards the product category. Zaichkowsky (1985) reports high and low scales to measure individuals’ involvement with red wine. Quester and Smart (1996, 1998) investigate wine involvement among wine purchasers in retail outlets, using price, wine region, wine variety, and wine style as attributes. Lockshin, Spawton and Macintosh (1997) propose a model based on three dimensions of wine involvement: product, brand decision, and purchasing. Further, d’Hauteville (2003) employs a household survey to measure wine involvement, personal values, and perceptions of wine attributes, including price and taste for wine. Lockshin,

Quester and Spawton (2001), and Aurifeille, Quester, Lockshin and Spawton (2002) study wine shoppers using average price paid for a bottle of wine as a dependent variable. Finally, Lockshin and Spawton (2001) discuss brand equity theories and wine buyers' high and low product involvement, and emphasize how these concepts can help develop wine tourism strategies. Wine tourism is a concept that features visitation of vineyards and tasting the wine product (O'Neill, Palmer, Charters & Fitz, 2001; O'Neill, Palmer & Charters, 2002), and it is gaining adepts in New Zealand. Reports indicate a six-fold increase of wine trail and vineyard visitors among international tourists, namely, from 30,998 in 1998 to 185,784 in 2006 (Ministry of Tourism, 2007).

While a large body of research on product or wine or wine involvement exists, information about wine involvement among groups of travelers to rural areas, that is, people who may not necessarily be winery visitors, is limited. Further, little is known about the usefulness of measurements to identify elements or antecedents of travelers' involvement with the wine product. This dimension is examined in this study using both the CIP scale (Kapferer-Laurent, 1985a, 1985b), and travelers' relationship with the wine product in other forms, including their consumption, winery visitation frequency, or wine purchases. The CIP measures "selected antecedents of involvement" (Rodgers & Schneider, 1993, p. 334) that include interest, pleasure, sign, risk probability and risk importance. Atkin, Garcia, and Lockshin (2005) identify some of these antecedents, namely, interest and pleasure, as part of the wine involvement dimension. The CIP incorporates a 5-point scale for respondents to measure item statements, where 1= totally disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, and 5= totally agree.

## Methods

During the months of November and December of 2006, people traveling by ferry from the city of Wellington to Picton in the South Island of New Zealand were approached and invited to participate in this study completing a one-page questionnaire. Participants were provided a pre-paid envelope to return the completed questionnaire by mail. The main criteria to participate in the study were that respondents be: a) 18 years of age or older and b) wine consumers. According to the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (2005) while no minimum legal drinking age exists in New Zealand, there is however a minimum age, that is, 18 years of age, to purchase alcoholic beverages; thus the decision to only select individuals who are 18 years old or older for this study. In total, 748 questionnaires were distributed; this effort resulted in 399 responses obtained, a 53.3% response rate.

## Findings

Table 1 shows that the highest level of agreement in the CIP scale regards the hedonic or pleasure seeking component of wine consumption, demonstrated in participants' mean scores (4.07) for the item 'having wine is a pleasure for me', followed by 'it would give me pleasure to purchase wine for myself' (3.74). Hedonism has been identified as a critical component in winery visitors' experience at the winery (Alant & Bruwer, 2004; Dodd & Gustafson, 1997). Further, respondents disagree with the statement 'wine leaves me totally indifferent' (2.01), suggesting a rather strong attachment to the wine product. The means of the items 'it certainly is annoying to purchase wine that doesn't meet my needs' (3.52), 'when you buy wine, it is a bit like giving a gift to yourself' (3.35), and 'wine interests me a lot' (3.23) illustrate some level of attachment between respondents and the wine product.

**Table 1:** The Consumer Involvement Profile Scale (adapted from Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a, 1985b, in Rodgers and Schneider, 1993).

<b>Interest</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Mean **</b>
Wine interests me a lot	388	3.23
I attach great importance to wine	395	3.01
* Wine leaves me totally indifferent	388	2.01
<b>Pleasure</b>		
Having wine is a pleasure for me	397	4.07
It would give me pleasure to purchase wine for myself	391	3.74
When you buy wine, it is a bit like giving a gift to yourself	387	3.35
<b>Sign</b>		
The wine you buy tells a little bit about you	386	3.18
You can tell something about a person by the wine (s)he picks out	378	3.09
The wine I buy shows what type of man / woman I am	378	2.70
<b>Risk probability</b>		
Choosing wine is rather complicated	389	2.98
When I can select from several wines, I always feel a bit at a loss in making my choice	392	2.96
When you purchase wine, you are never certain you made the right choice	394	2.87
Whenever you buy wine, you never really know whether it is the one you should have bought	385	2.84
<b>Risk importance</b>		
It certainly is annoying to purchase wine that doesn't meet my needs	382	3.52
I would be really upset if, after I bought some wines I found I had made a poor choice	390	2.98
* When you choose a wine, it is not a big deal if you make a mistake	397	2.46

Note: f= frequency or number of responses. \* These items are negatively worded, and are reverse scored.

\*\* Respondents were asked to measure item statements using a 5-point scale, where 1= totally disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, and 5= totally agree.

The level of disagreement regarding the item ‘when you choose a wine, it is not a big deal if you make a mistake’ (2.46) suggests that respondents are rather conscious about the type of wine they purchase. In addition, the mean scores in the antecedent of risk probability indicate respondents’ disagreement with the statements of this dimension. At the same time, this finding provides evidence about respondents’ confidence in their purchase decisions. Moreover, this view is illustrated in the mean scores of the statement ‘whenever you buy wine, you never really know whether it is the one you should have bought’ (2.84), and in that

of ‘when you purchase wine, you are never certain you made the right choice’ (2.87).

Arguably, while the overall mean scores are modest, the CIP scale contributes to identifying the pleasure dimension as the strongest link between respondents and the wine product.

### **Travelers’ wine involvement in other areas**

When respondents were asked about their weekly wine consumption in glasses, it is reported that the largest group (229 or 57.4%) consumes between one to five glasses, 105 (26.3%) participants consume between six and ten glasses, and 52 (13%) consume eleven or more glasses. Regarding respondents’ monthly purchases of wine in bottles, the largest group (265, 66.4%) purchase between one and five bottles of wine per month, and 122 (30.6%) six or more bottles of wine per month. The majority of respondents (235, 58.9%) pay between \$NZ 11 and \$NZ 16 per bottle of wine, 107 (26.9%) \$NZ 17 or more, while 55 (13.8%) pay between \$NZ 5 and \$NZ 10 per bottle of wine. Winery visitation in the past year is indicated by 227 (56.9%) respondents, suggesting potential opportunities for wineries to attract travelers to rural areas that, as in this study, may not necessarily be wine tourists. A total of 239 (59.9%) participants have a cellar or rack with bottles of wine in their homes, 131 (32.8%) either read about wines in their spare time or own books on wine, and only 5.5% subscribe to wine magazines. Additional areas of respondents’ potential involvement with wine are explored using the following statements: ‘I drink wine simply for pleasure,’ I drink wine to enhance a meal,’ ‘information about wine (e.g., written, provided by staff) would help me choose which wine to buy,’ and ‘wine tasting notes (e.g., written, provided by staff) would help me choose which wine to buy’. A total of 359 (90%) respondents agree with the hedonic (pleasure-seeking) component of wine consumption, or ‘I drink wine simply for pleasure,’ while 331 (83%) agree with the statement ‘I drink wine to enhance a meal’, 283 (70.9%) with ‘information about wine (e.g., written, provided by staff) would help me choose

which wine to buy,' while 237 (59.4%) agree with the usefulness of wine tasting notes to choose which wine to buy.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigates the level of wine involvement among travelers in New Zealand using the CIP scale, and other forms of travelers' involvement with the wine product, including respondents' consumption and purchase patterns. The findings demonstrate the usefulness of the CIP scale in identifying hedonism or pleasure seeking as the most critical in travelers' involvement with wine. This particular finding is in line with what is presented in some wine tourism studies, namely, the importance of hedonism as an important part of wine tourists' consumption experience at wineries. Other findings indicate that the level of travelers' wine consumption, wine purchases, and winery visitation represent opportunities for wineries and the wine tourism industry. That almost 60% of travelers have a cellar or rack with bottles of wine at home offers additional evidence of such opportunities. Implications of the findings include the importance for wineries and wine regions to promote themselves, and to inform/educate travelers about their offerings, history and processes. These promotional/educational efforts may result in attracting travelers who not only may be hedonic wine consumers, but also individuals interested in experiencing and learning about local wines and foods.

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