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Exploring the links between winery visitation, psychographics, and hedonism: The New Zealand case

As the concept of wine tourism continues to develop and gain in popularity in wine producing regions, it is also attracting the attention of an increasing number of researchers. As a result, new dimensions of the winery experience are being investigated. This study from a sample of New Zealand winery visitors explores areas related to the winery visitation that include the links of wine tourism with psychographics, hedonism and hedonic consumption. For example, the importance that alternative activities have among winery visitors when they travel to wineries is investigated. Comparisons are made between these areas and male / female as well as between domestic / international winery visitors. The overall findings confirm the importance that winery visitors place on traveling for pleasure, and the linkage of this dimension with wine and food consumption, two of respondents' most pleasurable activities when traveling.

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Introduction

Psychographics

The wine tourism literature studies visitors' experiences from different perspectives. One such perspective is the profiling of winery visitors to identify their psychographic characteristics, including their attitudes, lifestyles and values (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002).

The concept of psychographics, introduced by Plog (1977, in Ryan, 1995), refers to personality and psychological characteristics of two types of travelers. The first, the psychocentric, focus their thoughts or concerns on the small problems of their daily lives (Plog, 1991). These individuals prefer safety and security, and tend to travel to places they feel more comfortable and familiar with (Neal, 2003). The second group, allocentric travelers, are self-confident, extroverted individuals who seek variety when traveling. Individuals in this group have different, rich interest patterns, and focus these interests on a variety of challenges and pursuits (Plog, 1991).

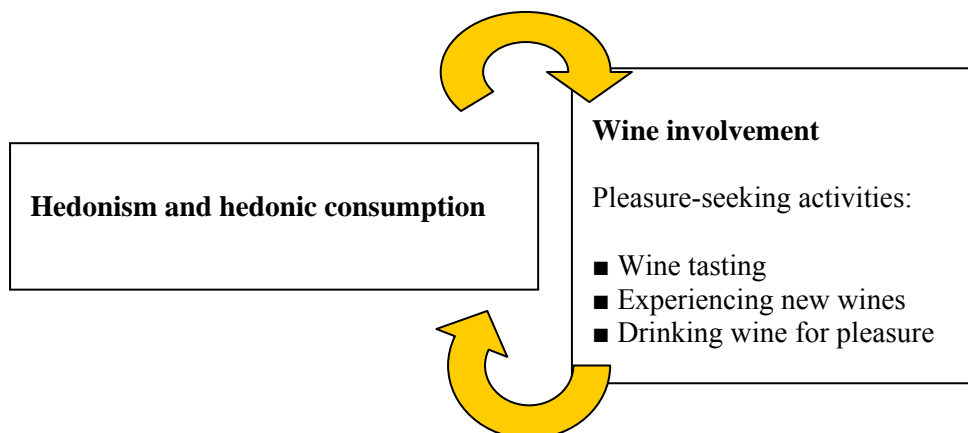
The concept of psychographics appears to fit into the wine tourism dimension. For example, Dodd (2000) discusses psychographics while investigating visitors' product and purchase involvement at the winery. Mitchell, Hall and McIntosh (2000) explore winery visitors' psychographic profile based on studies from the mid and late 1990s by a number of researchers (see for example Dodd & Gustafson, 1997). However, despite these studies, researchers recognize the limited amount of information in the literature on the psychographic profile of winery visitors (Mitchell, Hall & McIntosh, 2000; Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002).

Hedonism and hedonic consumption

Ryan (2002) explains that tourists have a particular state of mind, and look for alternatives in new places, for such reasons as intellectual, self-fulfillment, or hedonistic, a term associated

to pleasure seeking (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999; Horner & Swarbrooke, 2004). According to Hirschman and Holbrook (in Holbrook, 1995), hedonic consumption is an open-ended hedonic gratification that is part of recreational pastimes, and aesthetic experience. Thus individuals may seek pleasure by being involved in leisure experiences. In the context of wine tourism, a concept that includes visitation of vineyards to taste the wine product (O'Neill, Palmer, Charters & Fitz, 2001; O'Neill, Palmer & Charters, 2002), Alant and Bruwer (2004) note that “Wine tourist behaviour has an inherent element of hedonism” (p. 29). Moreover, some wine tourism studies focus on the experiential view, an element that recognizes the particular nature of products and services with hedonic components, including wine (Dodd & Gustafson, 1997). In this respect, Dodd (1995) emphasizes wine’s properties as a product “associated with relaxation, communing with others, learning about new things, and hospitality” (p. 5). Hence, as shown in Figure 1, visitors with hedonistic tendencies may be more involved with wine, and this involvement might be in the form of winery visitation for tasting, or for purchasing new wines. At the same time, it could also be argued that visitors’ involvement with the wine product may lead to hedonism or hedonic consumption, thus making the relationship between these two dimensions a two-way relationship, where either one can lead to the other.

Figure 1: The role of hedonism and hedonic consumption.



These elements appear to be present in the wine tourism experience. Moreover, individuals visiting wineries may do so for hedonistic reasons, such as experiencing the wine product, or a winery tour. The apparent association of these elements with wine tourism merits a more in-depth investigation, particularly with regard to winery visitors.

Methodology

A predominantly quantitative approach is used in this study, using a questionnaire to collect data from winery visitors. However, open-ended questions and space for comments provide the questionnaire, if only partly, with a qualitative component. Among other areas, the questionnaire seeks to investigate visitors' demographic and psychographic characteristics, as well as their involvement with tourism. Between December 2003 and April 2004 a total of 2,458 questionnaires were sent to 43 wineries located in all wine regions of New Zealand. These businesses had been contacted and invited to participate in this study previously. In all, 609 usable responses were received, or a 24.8% response rate.

Findings

A first area compares winery visitors' travel for pleasure and for work related reasons. The findings indicate that pleasure is clearly the most common reason for traveling, with 490 (80.5%) respondents traveling for this reason at least once a month. Only 171 (28.1%) indicated traveling for work reasons, while 122 (20%) traveled at least once per month for other reasons. While these results do not necessarily confirm that the majority of respondents are pleasure seekers, the fact that at least 16% travel three or more times per month for pleasure suggests a certain level of hedonism among them. Of those individuals who indicated traveling for pleasure at least once a month, 112 (22.9%) were retired, and 22

(4.5%) were students. These two groups of respondents may have more time to travel than those working fulltime.

Visitors were also asked to rate themselves when traveling for pleasure, by using the list of items reported in Table 1. The range of the mean scores indicates distinct differences regarding respondents’ preferences. Those items that were above a four in a 7-point interval scale, or ‘neither very much like me nor not like me at all,’ further confirm a tendency for hedonic consumption referred to by Holbrook (1995), and O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy (2002). This appears to be particularly true for the item ‘pleasure seeking is my main reason for traveling.’ Other items, such as ‘I like to travel frequently,’ and ‘I tend to be very active when I travel’ appear to be in line with allocentric characteristics discussed by Plog (1991).

Table 1: Level of agreement about activities when traveling for pleasure.

Activities	Males		Females		Domestic		International		Overall	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
I like to travel frequently	269	4.90	307	5.26	362	4.94	208	5.40	587	5.07
Pleasure seeking is my main reason for traveling	265	4.91	305	5.19	359	5.12	205	4.96	581	5.05
I tend to be very active when I travel	266	4.48	308	4.67	361	4.33	208	5.04	585	4.57
I am an adventurous	26	4.23	30	4.25	36	4.10	208	4.55	585	4.24

traveler	6		8		1					
I prefer to invest my income on travel	26 5	3.54	30 6	3.97	35 9	3.54	207	4.22	582	3.76
I tend to keep a tight budget when traveling	26 9	3.80	30 6	3.64	36 2	3.69	207	3.75	586	3.73
I consider myself a demanding traveler	26 6	3.12	30 6	2.76	35 9	2.74	207	3.27	583	2.92
I like to go to the same travel destination every time	26 7	1.91	30 8	2.00	36 2	2.10	207	1.70	586	1.97

Note: using a 7-point interval scale, where 1= not like me at all, 3= neutral or neither like me nor unlike me, and 7= very much like me.

Notably, the items ‘I like to go to the same destination every time’ (1.97), and ‘I consider myself a demanding traveler’ (2.92) suggest that respondents seek variety and have a relaxed attitude about what they experience. Of course, respondents may simply not wish to portray themselves in a negative way as demanding travelers, or by admitting that they travel to the same destination. A further reason may be that respondents are unlikely to repeat the same destination. However, the data do not allow more insight into these issues.

Respondents also rated the importance of a number of aspects when they traveled for pleasure. The mean scores in Table 2 indicate some clear preferences among the various choices. Five of the mean scores are above a four in a seven-point interval scale, or ‘neither extremely important nor totally unimportant’: sightseeing, the local foods, taste the area’s wines, for peace and quiet, and learn about the area I am visiting. The positive rating for

‘peace and quiet’ supports wine tourists’ lifestyle characteristics noted by the Commonwealth Department of Tourism (1994, in Getz, 1998), and McRae-Williams (2004). More importantly, it could be argued that the four highest rated activities: sightseeing, the local foods, taste the area’s wines and for peace and quiet are strongly associated with the winery experience. Females favor the local foods as their most important activity, while domestic respondents chose ‘taste the area’s wines’ and the local foods as their most important activities when traveling for pleasure.

Table 2: Importance of activities when traveling for pleasure.

Activities	Males		Females		Domestic		International		Overall	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Sightseeing	267	5.12	307	5.20	359	4.91	209	5.63	585	5.17
The local foods	269	4.94	307	5.28	361	5.00	208	5.31	588	5.12
Taste the area’s wines	267	4.90	305	4.96	359	5.02	207	4.77	584	4.94
For peace and quiet	266	4.55	302	4.93	355	4.76	207	4.71	580	4.75
Learn about area I am visiting	268	4.46	304	4.79	357	4.34	209	5.15	584	4.63
Meet the local people	265	4.10	304	4.07	359	3.77	205	4.66	580	4.09

Practice my favorite hobby	264	3.98	29 9	4.12	35 2	4.01	205	4.11	574	4.06
Attend events	264	3.50	30 6	3.62	35 5	3.72	208	3.26	581	3.57
Adventure tourism	264	2.96	30 0	3.24	35 2	2.84	206	3.61	574	3.12
Buy local souvenirs	261	2.45	30 1	2.68	35 3	2.36	204	2.96	573	2.59
Enjoy nightlife	257	2.37	30 0	2.63	35 0	2.55	201	2.46	568	2.52

Note: using a 7-point interval scale, where 1= totally unimportant, 3= neither important nor unimportant, and 7= extremely important.

In addition, the activities ‘sightseeing’ and ‘learn about the area I am visiting’ appear to be in line with Ryan’s view of tourists “seeking alternatives in new places” (2002, p. 3). Other activities, such as the local foods, and ‘taste the area’s wines’ seem to fit the dimension on hedonism and hedonic consumption, as part of the argument by Holbrook (1995) and O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy (2002). The item ‘learn about the area I am visiting’ also suggests respondents’ allocentric nature; this is particularly true among international visitors who may be more interested than their domestic counterparts in exploring a new travel destination. At the low end, the item ‘enjoy nightlife’ scored the lowest mean, with 2.52, suggesting very low interest among respondents for this activity. One possible reason for this finding is that respondents in this study may have traveled to rural areas in search for activities that, such as wine tourism, may ‘connect’ them with the rural / natural environment they are visiting. Another reason may be the distant location of many wineries that respondents visited from towns or cities with nightlife offerings. In addition, many winery

visitors may not stay overnight in rural areas but instead continue their travel after their winery visit without exploring the area's nightlife opportunities.

Conclusions

This study explores the areas of psychographics, hedonism and hedonic consumption in the context of the winery visitation. While it could be argued that these areas are not directly related to visitors' consumption at the winery, the findings demonstrate the link between winery visitation and allocentric and pleasure-seeking travelers. Furthermore, the results confirm that the majority of winery visitors in this study not only travel frequently for pleasure, but pleasure-seeking is only second to 'I like to travel frequently' as their most important reason for traveling.

The links between pleasure-seeking and wine consumption noticed in several wine tourism studies provide further support for the importance of hedonism among winery visitors. In this study, respondents indicated three fundamental hedonistic components when they travel for pleasure: sightseeing, the local foods and tasting the area's wines. These components highlight the important role wineries play in this context, namely, as providers of the physical facilities of the winery, the surroundings in the form of the vineyards and the landscape, the food and the wine product.

While wineries may not have a direct impact on visitors' psychographic characteristics or on their level of hedonism, winery operators should nevertheless be aware of the importance that such elements as sightseeing, food and wine have for many travelers, including pleasure seekers.

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