

DOI 10.20544/HORIZONS.A.23.2.18.P28
UDC: 339.174:663.2-057.187(497.5)
339.174:664-057.187(497.5)

WHO ARE THE WINE AND FOOD FESTIVAL VISITORS? CASE STUDY OF CROATIA¹

Suzana Marković

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija
suzanam@fthm.hr

Srđan Mitrović, PhD student

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija
mitrovic.srdan@gmail.com

Sandra Barač Miftarević, PhD Student

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija
sbaracmi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Wine festivals have become an integral part of the wine tourism experience and present an opportunity for wineries and wine destinations to promote and sell their products. The purpose of the research was to examine and compare the perceptions of experience quality, experience outcomes, and food and wine personality traits of festival visitors with regard to different demographic groups. Data were collected using an on-site questionnaire that measured perceptions of experience quality (entertainment, education, environment, service providers, functional benefits), experience outcomes (satisfaction, loyalty), wine and food personality traits (involvement, neophobia) and visitor demographics. Descriptive analysis and t-tests were conducted using data collected from visitors at the VINO COM wine and food festival on the 24th and 25th November 2017. The research findings reveal that, in general, visitors have similar perceptions of experience quality constructs, experience outcomes, and levels of food and wine involvement and neophobia with regard to their demographic characteristics.

KEY WORDS: wine tourism, wine festival, festival visitors, festival experience, food personality traits

¹Original scientific paper

INTRODUCTION

Wine consumers are in search of co-created experiences with hedonic and utilitarian components (Sandstrom et al., 2008) and will involve them in a service or a product intellectually, emotionally and physically (Walls, 2013). With the growth of wine tourism activities, it is becoming paramount to evaluate the effectiveness of wine festival experiences. Wineries need to ascertain who are the visitors and to identify consumer experiential priorities (Houghton 2008). The aim of this paper is to examine visitors' perceptions of wine festival experience quality and compare them with regard to selected demographic characteristics and to measure visitor personality traits with their demographics, as the researchers Cohen and Avieli (2004) have suggested that tourists taking gastronomic tours seem to show neophilic tendencies

Pine and Gilmore (1998) stated that there are four different types of economic offerings (commodities, goods, services, and experiences). The consumer experience has been recently viewed as a multidimensional evaluation, with some level of hedonic consumption (Gursoy, Spangenberg, & Rutherford, 2006). Much of the academic research on customer experiences remains sparse and scattered in a range of research fields (Hosany and Whitam, 2010; Jakkola et al., 2015; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). Notable is the lack of academic research on the measurement of customer experience and its underlying dimensions (Carù and Cova, 2003; Hosany and Whitam, 2010; Klaus and Maklan, 2012), which have not yet been extracted, only assumed (Kim et al., 2011). This is particularly true in contexts where experiences are the core of the product or service such as in tourism (Yuan and Wu, 2008), where a holistic approach is missing (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012). A complete tourism experience according to De Rojas and Camarero (2008) includes leisure, culture education and social interaction.

To provide a total wine tourism experience, however, we need to understand who the wine tourists are (Yuan et al., 2005), as researchers have found that no typical wine tourist exists and no markets are homogenous (Hall and Sharples, 2008; Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Bruwer, 2003; Dodd et al., 2006). Many studies have looked at the motivations and profiles of visitors to a festival, but fewer studies have focused specifically on wine festival visitors (Kruger et al., 2013).

Researchers (Pliner and Hobden, 1992) have defined food neophobia as the extent to which consumers are reluctant to try novel foods, including food

products, recipes, and cuisines. Their conclusion is that consumers with low levels of food neophobia will be more inclined towards new food experiences and usually possess a different taste physiology which enables them to experience food with more enjoyment. Food involvement is closely connected with neophobia and is defined by Bell and Marshall (2003) as the level of importance of food in a person's life, measuring the extent to which people will enjoy talking about food, think about food during the day, and engage in food-related activities. Only a handful of studies combining food-related personality with attitudes and behaviors towards wine and food festivals (Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Kim et al., 2009;).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research aimed to examine and compare visitors' perceptions of festival experience quality with regard to gender and client status. Additionally, the paper aims to explore the relationship between specific personality traits of the visitors, namely wine & food involvement and neophobia, and certain demographic characteristics of the visitors (client status, income level) to develop a better understanding of wine and food festival visitor profiles and interests.

The research instrument was divided into five parts, with four parts focusing on the main research constructs of experience quality (environment, education, service providers, entertainment, functional benefits), experience outcomes (satisfaction, loyalty), wine and food involvement, and wine and food neophobia, and the fifth part referring to demographic characteristics of the visitors. Items measuring environment experience were adapted from the work of Chung and Horng (2010) and the Consumer Experience Index model (Kim et al., 2011), which was also used for items in the functional benefits experience construct. Service providers experience items were drawn from the work of Chung and Horng (2010) and the Experience Quality scale (Klaus and Maklan, 2012). Entertainment and education experience items were adapted from Chung and Horng (2010). Satisfaction and loyalty experience outcomes were measured using two items adapted from Kim et al. (2010). Wine and food neophobia was measured using nine items from the adapted Food Neophobia Scale (Pilner and Hobden, 1992; Ritchey et al., 2003), while wine and food involvement items were adapted from the Food Involvement Scale (Bell and Marshall, 2003). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree"

to “strongly agree”. The fifth part of the instrument collect demographic characteristics of visitors: gender, age, client status, income, education, residency, marital status, employment, and accommodation.

Data were collected using an on-site survey during VinoCOM, in Zagreb on the 24th and 25th of November 2017. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to visitors.

Data Analysis was conducted using the statistical program SPSS 23 Both descriptive and bivariate statistical analyses were used to examine and describe the data; specifically, independent sample t-tests were used to determine significance of difference regarding the selected demographic characteristics of the festival visitors.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The sample consisted of 304 respondents, most of which were domestic (84.2%), and fairly evenly divided between residents of the area (46.7%) and non-residents (53.3%), and between female (54.8%) and male (45.2%) visitors. The approximate average age of the visitors was 33, with about half of them (56.9%) being single. Most visitors were currently employed (77.7%) and belonged to the average or higher income bracket (84.8%), and their educational level was mostly at the college level or above (66.5%). There were more return visitors (64.8%) than first-time visitors (36.2%).

Table 1. Comparison of visitor experience quality and experience outcome scores

Item	Mean	Gender			Visitor Status		
		Male	Female	T-value	First time	Return	T-value
Environment experience	6.29 (1.06)	6.21 (1.14)	6.34 (0.99)	-1.078	6.24 (1.58)	6.31 (1.001)	-0.524
The environment of the wine and food festival is enjoyable	6.38 (1.081)	6.28 (1.168)	6.47 (1.001)	-1.545	6.31 (1.168)	6.42 (1.001)	-0.797
The atmosphere of the wine and food festival has an impact on my state-of-mind.	6.19 (1.227)	6.15 (1.309)	6.22 (1.160)	-0.449	6.17 (1.309)	6.20 (1.160)	-0.202
Service providers experience	6.33 (0.92)	6.16 (1.04)	6.46 (0.78)	- 2.814*	6.32 (0.99)	6.33 (0.88)	-0.091
Service employees of the festival serve me	6.40 (1.029)	6.26 (1.176)	6.52 (0.879)	- 2.162*	6.38 (1.176)	6.41 (0.879)	- 0.226

friendly and kindly							
The exhibitors at the wine and food festival have good interpersonal skills	6.26 (0.995)	6.07 (1.119)	6.41 (0.853)	- 2.957*	6.26 (1.119)	6.25 (0.853)	0.066
Education experience	5.93 (1.19)	5.81 (1.28)	6.03 (1.11)	-1.648	5.98 (1.17)	5.9 (1.21)	0.560
The guides and brochures available help me to learn and understand the topics	6.05 (1.173)	5.91 (1.245)	6.17 (1.101)	- 1.945	5.96 (1.245)	6.10 (1.101)	- 0.986
I've learned something new about wine and food after visiting this festival	5.81 (1.626)	5.70 (1.682)	5.89 (1.584)	- 1.015	6.00 (1.682)	5.70 (1.584)	1.638
Entertainment experience	6.47 (0.985)	6.34 (1.16)	6.58 (0.80)	- 2.062*	6.42 (1.06)	6.5 (1.94)	-0.693
This is a festival where people can enjoy themselves	6.47 (0.985)	6.34 (1.16)	6.58 (0.803)	- 2.062*	6.42 (1.16)	6.50 (0.803)	-0.693
Functional benefits experience	6.23 (0.98)	6.14 (1.08)	6.30 (0.88)	-1.439	6.21 (1.07)	6.24 (0.93)	-0.219
The festival offer is tailored to the visitors	6.34 (0.968)	6.24 (1.102)	6.42 (0.84)	- 1.527	6.30 (1.102)	6.35 (0.84)	-0.360
The festival is well organized	6.12 (1.232)	6.04 (1.274)	6.19 (1.199)	- 1.055	6.11 (1.274)	6.12 (1.199)	- 0.065
Loyalty	6.49 (0.99)	6.5 (1)	6.48 (0.98)	0.126	6.3 (1.18)	6.59 (0.85)	- 2.278*
I would consider visiting this wine festival again	6.49 (0.988)	6.50 (1.001)	6.48 (0.983)	0.126	6.30 (1.001)	6.60 (0.983)	- 2.278*
I would recommend the wine festival to someone who seeks my advice	6.44 (1.023)	6.37 (1.105)	6.49 (0.952)	- 0.979	6.33 (1.105)	6.50 (0.952)	- 1.271
Satisfaction	6.27 (0.99)	6.16 (1.09)	6.37 (0.89)	-1.874	6.24 (1.08)	6.29 (0.94)	-0.411
I am satisfied with the food and wine provided at this festival	6.39 (0.962)	6.26 (1.098)	6.50 (0.822)	- 2.155*	6.31 (1.098)	6.43 (0.822)	- 1.066
I am satisfied with this festival as I expected to be	6.16 (1.209)	6.06 (1.241)	6.24 (1.182)	- 1.308	6.18 (1.241)	6.15 (1.182)	0.174

Note: values in parentheses are standard deviations; $p < 0.05$

Source: Research results

Table 1 reports significance of difference between male and female visitors, and first-time and return visitors, to the festival with regard to festival experience quality and experience outcomes.

Mean scores for experience quality items, ranged from 5.70 to 6.50 for male visitors and 5.89 to 6.52 for female visitors. Results show significant differences for male and female visitors in only four items, where the mean scores for female visitors are higher in both items regarding service provider experience (“Service employees of the festival serve me friendly and kindly”, “The exhibitors at the wine and food festival have good interpersonal skills”), one item regarding entertainment experience quality (“This is a festival where people can enjoy themselves”) and one item regarding the satisfaction experience outcome (“I’m satisfied with the food and wine provided at this festival”). Female visitors had a significantly higher mean score for the service providers experience construct and the entertainment experience construct. While some of the items were scored higher by males and females, respectively, with regard to satisfaction and loyalty experience outcomes, no significant difference in constructs as a whole has been found. Mean scores for first-time and return visitors show only one significant difference in one item of the loyalty experience outcome (“I would consider visiting this wine festival again”), which was also the item with the highest mean score of return visitors to the festival. First-time visitors gave the highest rating to an item in the service providers experience construct (“Service employees of the festival serve me friendly and kindly”). The lowest mean score for an item, 5.96, for first-time visitors was in the education experience construct (“The guides and brochures available help me to learn and understand the topics”). The lowest mean score for repeat visitors was also for an item that was part of the same construct (“I’ve learned something new about wine and food after visiting this festival”).

Table 2: Comparison of wine & food personality traits scores

Item	Mean	Client Status			Income		
		First time	Return	T-value	Average and above	Below average	T-value
Wine & Food Involvement	5.38 (0.934)	5.18 (0.992)	5.48 (0.885)	- 2.671*	5.44 (0.946)	5.01 (0.768)	2.919*
Wine & Food Neophobia	5.97 (0.783)	5.82 (0.854)	6.06 (0.729)	- 2.640*	6.00 (0.784)	5.84 (0.769)	1.260

Note: values in parentheses are standard deviations; $p < 0.05$

Source: Research results

Table 2 reports significance between first-time and repeat visitors, and between visitors of different income levels, with regard to their wine and food involvement and neophobia.

The mean scores were significantly higher for return visitors with regard to both wine and food involvement and neophobia. Two items within the wine and food neophobia construct had significantly higher mean scores from return visitors of the festival. Those two items were: “If I don’t know what the food is I won’t try it” ($t = -4.534$, $df = 155.4$, $p < 0.05$) and “I seek out unconventional wines” ($t = -3.244$, $df = 302$, $p < 0.05$). The wine and food involvement construct also had two items that had significantly higher mean scores from return visitors to the festival. These were: “When I travel I try to visit as many wineries as possible” ($t = -5.727$, $df = 302$, $p < 0.05$) and “I don’t think a lot about the wine I’m going to pair to food” ($t = -3.723$, $df = 188.59$, $p < 0.05$).

Data showed that visitors with average and above-average income had a significantly higher mean score regarding wine and food involvement, with three items scoring significantly higher with return festival visitors: “When I travel I try to visit as many wineries as possible” ($t = -4.489$, $df = 302$, $p < 0.05$), “I don’t think a lot about the wine I am going to pair with food” ($t = -2.410$, $df = 302$, $p < 0.05$), and “I do most or all of my food and wine shopping” ($t = -3.419$, $df = 302$, $p < 0.05$) but showed only one significantly higher mean score within the items of the wine and food neophobia construct (“If I don’t know what the food is I won’t try it” $t = -2.042$, $df = 302$, $p < 0.05$). No significantly higher mean score for the neophobia construct was found between the two income groups.

CONCLUSION

The results show that with regard to experience quality female visitors rated service providers and entertainment significantly higher than did male visitors. There are no significant differences in the scores of other constructs of experience quality and experience outcomes. With regard to first-time and return visitors, the only significantly higher-scored construct is loyalty, as expected. Repeat visitors, do not have a significantly higher score than first-time visitors with regard to spreading positive word of mouth about the festival. First-time and return visitors show significantly different scores with regard to wine and food involvement and neophobia, with return visitors showing significantly

higher mean scores for both constructs. Additionally, visitors with average or higher income show a higher wine and food involvement mean score but not a significantly higher neophobia score.

Lower scores for the quality of the education experience, and higher scores for the quality of the entertainment experience and the service providers experience, point to the fact that visitors, female visitors in particular, attend the festival more for social interaction and entertainment and less for the educational component that usually is quite pronounced in wine festival programs and activities. There is no significant difference in education experience quality for both first-time and repeat visitors to the festival, when it would be reasonable to expect first-time visitors to have a much higher perception of education experience quality. The findings of this research indicate to festival organizers and exhibitors the need to invest in developing the entertainment part of the festival experience and continue investing in service providers, as satisfaction with the festival seems relatively high as does the intention to return from already loyal visitors. By focusing on these experience constructs it could be possible to develop higher loyalty levels within the group of new visitors who may have come to the festival for the reasons the research suggests and who, according to the data, have shown a significantly lower score in the loyalty outcome. Additionally, higher levels of wine and food involvement and neophobia of repeat visitors with higher income indicate their strong interest in and knowledge of wine and food, which further adds to the notion that wine and food festival visitors are more focused on the social and fun aspects of wine and food festivals rather than on learning about wines, producers, labels, etc.

Acknowledgement - This paper is the result of the scientific project “*New Approaches to Measuring Visitor Experience in the Tourist Destination*”, which is supported by the University of Rijeka (project ZP UNIRI 3/17).

REFERENCES

1. Bell, R., Marshall, D. (2003). The construct of food involvement in behavioral research: Scale development and validation. *Appetite*, 40 (3), 235-44.
2. Charters, S., Ali-Knight, J. (2002). Who is the wine tourist? *Tourism Management*, 23 (3), 311-9.

3. Carù, A., Cova, B. (2003). Revisiting consumption experience: a more humble but complete view of the concept. *Mark. Theory*, 3 (2), 267–86.
4. Chang, T., Horng, S. (2010). Conceptualizing and measuring experience quality: the customer's perspective. *The Service Industries Journal*, 30 (14), 2401-19.
5. Cohen, E., Avieli, N. (2004). Food in tourism: attraction and impediment. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31 (4), 755–78.
6. De Rojas, C., Camarero, C. (2008). Visitors' experience, mood and satisfaction in a heritage context: Evidence from an interpretation center. *Tourism Management*, 29 (3), 1–13.
7. Dodd, T. H., Yuan, J., Adams, C., Kolesnikova, N. (2006). Motivations of young people for visiting wine festivals. *Event Management*, 10 (1), 23–33.
8. Gursoy, D., Spangenberg, E., Rutherford, D. (2006). The hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of attendees' attitudes toward festivals. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 30 (3), 279---94.
9. Hall, C. M., Sharples, L., Cambourne, B., Macionis, N. (2000). *Wine tourism around the world*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
10. Houghton M. (2008). Classifying wine festival customers: Comparing an inductive typology with Hall's wine tourist classification, *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 2 (1), 67-76.
11. Hosany, S., Whitam, M. (2010). Dimensions of cruisers' experiences, satisfaction and intention to recommend. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49 (3), 351–64.
12. Jakkola, E., Helkkula, A., Aarikka-Stenroos, L. (2015). Understanding and advancing service experience co-creation. *Journal of Service Management*, 26 (2), 1.
13. Kim, Y. G., Suh, B. W., Eves, A. (2010). The relationships between food-related personality traits, satisfaction, and loyalty among visitors attending food events and festivals. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 29 (2), 216-26.
14. Kim, S., Knutson, B., Beck, J. (2011). Development and testing of the Consumer Experience Index (CEI). *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 21 (2), 112-32.

15. Kim, J., Ritchie, J., McCormick, B. (2012). Development of a scale to measure memorable tourist experiences. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51 (1), 12-25.
16. Klaus, P., Maklan, S. (2012). EXQ: a multiple-item scale for assessing service experience *Journal of Service Management*, 23(1), 5-33.
17. Kruger, S., Rootenber, C., Ellis, S. (2012). Examining the Influence of the Wine Festival Experience on Tourists' Quality of Life. *Social indicators research*, 111(2), 435-52.
18. Pliner, P., Hobden, K. (1992). Development of a scale to measure the trait of food neophobia in humans. *Appetite*, 19 (2), 105–20.
19. Quadri-Felitti, D., Fiore, A. (2012). Experience economy constructs as a framework for understanding wine tourism. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18 (1), 3-15.
20. Ritchey, P.N., Frank, R.A., Hursti, U., Tuorila, H. (2003). Validation and cross-national comparison of the food neophobia scale (FNS) using confirmatory factor analysis. *Appetite*, 40 (2), 163–73.
21. Sandstrom, S., Edvardsson, B., Kristensson, P., Magnusson, P. (2008). Value-in-use through through service experience. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 18(2), 112-26.
22. Steyn, S., Saayman, M., Nienaber, A. (2004). The impact of tourist and travel activities on facets of psychological well-being. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 26 (1), 97–106.
23. Walls, R. (2013). A cross-sectional examination of hotel consumer experience and relative effects on consumer values. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 32, 179-92.
24. Yuan, Y., Wu, C. (2008). Relationships among experiential marketing, experiential value and customer satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 32 (3), 387-410.