Creating Brand “DNA” for the Wellington Wine District, 
South Africa

Nina Goosen, Karin Alant and Nick Vink
Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The Wellington Wine District (WWD), previously a wine ward of the larger Paarl Wine District was in 2012 separated and recognised independently from its former home. The fledgling wine tourism destination lies 72km to the north of Cape Town and face serious competition from well-established wine districts nearby. The Stellenbosch Wine District, which is arguably the premier wine tourist destination in the so-called Cape Winelands, is closer to the city (51km) and only 42km from the WWD. An exploratory study was undertaken to determine the cellar door visitor profile and gain a better understanding of the driving forces behind wine tourism in the WWD. The visitors’ perceptions of the wine district characteristics were utilised to clarify the elements of the destination Brand ‘DNA’ and provide links to relevant marketing strategies.

The study focussed on the wine tourism behaviour of visitors to selected Wellington Wine Route members’ cellar doors. The survey was executed by means of a self-administered, structured questionnaire, and the results were analysed in terms of first time visitors (FTV) and repeat visitors (RV). The findings show that a high percentage (93%) of visitors were repeat visitors; that most visitors live within a radius of 100km of the wine district; that visitors are younger people without children; and that word-of-mouth references and ‘enjoy a tasting experience’ were the main reasons for visiting the cellar door. These visitors overall have a good (self-assigned) knowledge of wine.

The 7 destination Brand ‘DNA’ elements which could be determined from the results are as follows:

1. Scenery that includes the natural vegetation, which is fynbos typical of the Cape Floral Kingdom, the mountains and the vineyards.
2. The Wellington Wine District is seen as rural and off-the-beaten-track.
3. The environment is untouched and unspoiled.
4. Wellington inhabitants are welcoming, friendly, decent and warm.
5. Wine quality is good, wine is affordable and there is a wide variety available.
6. Red wine is seen as excellent wine with great quality.
7. All year round, the weather in Wellington is acceptable.

This study contributes to the knowledge pool of information on wine tourist behaviour in South Africa. It has broadened the field of information on the wine marketing strategies that a developing wine district can implement based on the destination Brand ‘DNA’. The findings, however, are limited in that the study was exploratory in nature and undertaken in the low season. It is recommended that the study be repeated in the future as the wine district grows as a destination. Greater understanding of the specific leisure needs and expectations of the visitors is also required.

KEYWORDS: Wellington Wine District; wine tourism, wine marketing, cellar door; Brand “DNA”; first-time visitor; repeat visitor