

## Padua 2017 Abstract Submission

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### Keywords

wine tourism, wine marketing, brand loyalty, consumer behavior, purchasing behavior

### Research Question

How does a visit to a winery influence consumers' attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty over time?

### Methods

An online survey was used to fulfill research objectives. The data were analyzed, descriptive statistics calculated and surveys assessed for validity. ANOVA were computed to test for differences between means.

### Results

Both attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty were found to be enduring over time following a winery visit. Purchasing behavior was moderated both by product availability and communication from the winery.

### Abstract

Brand loyalty and repeat purchase intentions are accepted as important and inextricably intertwined phenomena in contemporary marketing literature, with many studies pertaining to this area. In order to achieve customer loyalty, it is important for companies to create strong bonds between their products or brands and consumers. Wine producers have increasingly used wine tourism as a strategic marketing tool in an attempt to strengthen such bonds. While the assumption is that bonds between consumers and wine products/brands will be formed and/or strengthened by such visits, few empirical studies have been conducted to date that show this to indeed be the case, with no studies found to have conducted such research over time.

King and Morris (1999) studied visitors to Augusta/Margaret River wineries in Australia between 1996 and 1998 and showed that only 13% of visitors were found to have made a post-visit purchase of wine from the winery they had visited. However, this was attributed partly to the fact that the wines were not readily available from retail outlets, thereby suggesting that further study was needed. Mitchell and Hall (2004) used a New Zealand Winery Visitors' Survey given to visitors at 33 wineries for mailing back, with a follow-up survey mailed to respondents six to eight months after the visit. Nearly half the respondents reported a post-visit purchase of wine produced by the winery of survey, with an average of 1.6 places of purchase thus suggesting multiple purchases made by many respondents following their visit. Although it was found that post-visit purchases of wines produced by larger wineries was higher than purchases of wines produced by smaller wineries, this is unsurprising as wines from larger wineries tend to be more widely available beyond the cellar door than those from smaller wineries. The size of the winery is therefore seen to moderate wine availability, and thereby also post-visit purchasing ability, which in turn affects actual post-visit purchasing.

While Mitchell and Hall's (2004) study does suggest that King and Morris' (1999) concern that winery visits do not increase post-visiting purchasing behavior may be unwarranted, the time-frame spanned of a maximum of eight months after the visit took place is relatively short. Therefore, it does not necessarily show that winery visitation results in visitors increasing their long-term loyalty and purchasing behavior.

In a more recent study by Bruwer, et al. (2013), a strong positive correlation was found between the winery tasting room experience and brand loyalty. The authors conducted a survey using a brand loyalty scale in a winery tasting room at the time of the visit. While such a study measures the visitors' attitudes towards the product and/or brand induced by the experience at that moment in time, the temporal element cannot be taken into account and the measure is therefore of predicted loyalty rather than actual loyalty.

While purchase intentions to predict purchasing behavior have been widely used in both commercial and academic research, such studies have often ignored self-generated validity, whereby the act of measurement may itself increase the association between intention and behavior (Chandon, Morwitz, & Reinartz, 2005). It has also been found that intentions are more correlated with behavior in respect of durable goods rather than non-durable goods, and in the short-term rather than long-term (Morwitz, Steckel, & Gupta, 2007). A tourism study investigating intention to return, found no significant correlation between intention and actual repeat visitation, possibly due to consumers reporting "aspiration" as intention (McKercher & Tse, 2012). While Bruwer, et al. (2013) reported a strong positive correlation between the winery tasting room experience and brand loyalty, the authors nonetheless suggest that the best way to confirm intention to purchase would be through a longitudinal study in order to check whether the visitors had actually purchased the wine again following the visit.

The present research therefore surveys visitors to a single winery who have visited between one and six years previously and who made a purchase during their visit, in order to track and identify consumption and purchasing behavior as well as to gauge changes in perception of the product(s)/brand(s) and experience(s) following the winery visit. Results show attitudinal brand loyalty to be enduring following a winery visit, even six or more years after the visit, with visitors continuing to recommend these brands to others. Behavioral brand loyalty, operationalized through purchasing behavior is not found to be significantly different from customers of the same brands who have not engaged in a winery visit. However, purchasing behavior does not diminish over time following a positive winery visit, as had been expected, with consumers continuing to purchase at the same frequency a number of years after the visit. It is also shown that while winery visitors may indeed seek to purchase wines of the wineries they have visited following the visit, there is a limit to the extent to which such consumers will go to obtain these wines if they are not readily available. Visitors also reported "forgetting" about the wineries they have visited if the winery has not kept in touch with them following the visit.

With brand loyalty seemingly undiminished over the years following a positive winery visit, wineries should see wine tourism as important for gaining a loyal following, but should also ensure maintaining a visitor database and keeping in touch with former visitors, especially in aiding their ability to obtain the products more easily in cases of limited availability. Although winery visitors were shown to have similar purchasing behavior to non-winery consumers, maintaining a connection with winery visitors and actively directing marketing activities towards them should result in their purchasing behavior increasing beyond that of non-winery consumers, specially given that 90% of respondents reported they would purchase more of these brands if they were more easily available.

This paper makes important contributions to the wine tourism and wine marketing literature, as well as providing a contribution in the area of consumer behavior. The results of this research will also be of importance to the increasing number of wineries offering wine tastings and other visitor experiences, as it will allow them to identify how consumers are likely to respond in the longer term and to tailor the experiences offered and follow-up communications accordingly.

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