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Wine and wine tourism experience: a theoretical and conceptual review

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide a theoretical and conceptual analysis of wine and wine tourism experiences evidencing the current state of the art and providing some directions for future research.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper provides an in-depth literature review and content analysis of prior work.

Findings – The experience focussed on wine and wine tourism requires further exploration. The boundaries of the wine and wine tourism experience were identified, together with highlights and strategic agenda for future actions.

Originality/value – Based on some key prior literature on the topic of wine and tourism experience, future research directions and approaches were proposed.

Keywords Wine experience, Wine tourism experience, Wine tourism, Wine tourist

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

This article aims to provide a state of the art review of the wine and wine tourism experience. The most relevant issue for this theoretical and conceptual analysis lies in the experience that wine and wine tourism provides to tourists. The paper is structured as follows: global review related to the experience construct, tourism experiences model and the wine tourism system; global analysis of the wine and wine tourism experience; characterization of the wine and wine tourism experience; conclusions, managerial and practical implications, and finally, directions for further research.

A global review – experience construct, tourism experiences model and the wine tourism system

Conceptualizing the experience construct

According to Walls *et al.* (2011), the concept of experience has been explored by various sciences such as consumption, tourism, economics and marketing, among others. In the present research, the set of main definitions of experience in various contexts was compiled

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and mentioned because of their relevance and contribution to the study of the theme over the years. Thereby, to Oh *et al.* (2007) experiences are enjoyable, engaging and memorable encounters for those consuming these events from a consumer's perspective. In line with Berry *et al.* (2002, p. 1), the experience means orchestrating all the "clues" that people pick up in the buying process. Lewis and Chambers (2000) define the experience construct as the total outcome to the customer from the combination of environment, goods and services purchased. Experiences are private events that are not self-generated but rather occur in response to some staged situation and involve the entire being (Schmitt, 1999). An experience occurs when a customer has any sensation or knowledge acquisition resulting from some level of interaction with different elements of a context created by a service provider (Gupta and Vijic, 1999). To Pine and Gilmore (1999), a distinct economic offering that is as different from services as services are from goods; successful experiences are those that the customer finds unique, memorable and sustainable over time, would want to repeat and build upon, and enthusiastically promotes via word of mouth. To complete the most commonly experience construct definitions, in perspective of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), the facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products. One of the most significant contributions of these authors was the classification of the experience according to several perspectives and the interaction of the client as the point common to all of them. These seven definitions above are considered as the most relevant because they are those that the authors of other studies use most in their research in the dominant literature.

From these definitions, an experience seems to have three key dimensions as follows: situational, knowledge decoding and emotional response. Therefore, we can synthetize that experience can be summarized as a response to a situation or environment where the consumer decodes cues and gains some extra knowledge that can provide an enjoyable, memorable or unique emotional response that can be transmitted to others.

The setting of the tourism experiences model

In the logical sequence that previously approached the experience to construct from a global and aggregate perspective, it is important to understand how the process of the experiences occurs. Pikkemaat *et al.* (2009) analysed the staging of experiences in the wine tourism context, specifically in the South Tyrolean wine route in Italy, applying Mueller and Scheurer's (2004) experience setting model. This model is focussed on the experience of visitors in a defined tourism setting, containing seven instruments and tools developed to stage experiences appropriately (Mueller and Scheurer, 2004): theme; concept of stating; visitors; guidance of visitors at the same level that; well-being; attractions/activities; and scenery, being also these last two at the same level.

One of the most recent findings on tourism experiences related to core processes of memorable trips is stated by Coelho, Gosling and Araújo (2018). The authors propose a theoretical framework by identifying the core processes that are sense-making and meaningful in a memorable tourism experience (MTE). The MTE has three dimensions as follows:

(1) Personal: the degree of perceived novelty, dreams and desires fulfilment, live emotions and also travel motivations;

(2) Relational: travel planning, travel companionship and interpersonal interaction; and

(3) Environmental: tourism attractions and cultural exchange.

It can be inferred that these nine variables, which appear to be crucial to memorable experiences, and that without all three simultaneously the experiences will not be totally memorable.

Wine tourism system

Hall *et al.* (2000) propose a framework – wine tourism system – with the aim of analysing the complex nature of wine tourism that integrates consumer demand for wine tourism and the wine tourism industry. The central point of the model is the wine tourism experience. This experience is happening when they come into contact with the elements and context of the wine tourism product, i.e. the experience that the wine tourists have had while in contact with the several elements that comprise the wine tourism products such as wines, wineries, vineyards, festivals and winescape. The wine tourism system integrates two sides to produce the wine tourism experience, namely, demand and supply. The consumer demand side of wine tourism comprises the perceptions, motivations and expectations of the wine tourist. The other side is the industry supply of wine tourism that includes all the resources used by wine tourists for the purpose of wine tourism and the businesses and institutions, which transform those resources into a wine tourism product.

Global analysis of the wine and wine tourism experience

The special interest in wine and wine tourism experience – context and relevance

Some prior studies established that visits to wine cellars by tourists, in a wine region, are still the main wine tourism activity, and consider that the wine region as a whole is the main wine tourism activity (Alant and Bruwer, 2010; Bruwer and Alant, 2009). The tasting room is, similarly, a tourist destination and "the places are places for tourism experiences" (Snepenger *et al.*, 2007, p. 310). Roberts and Sparks (2006) say that cellar visitors stated that the scenario had a crucial role in attracting and improving their experiences. Furthermore, the main destination includes resources such as attractive scenarios, enjoyable climate, lodging with affordable prices, easy to get information and wine paths, which are well signalled and a variety of things to see and do (Getz and Brown, 2006, p. 155).

The overall experience occurs in a context, which is known as the "winescape" (Hall *et al.*, 2000; Nowak and Newton, 2006). Johnson and Bruwer (2007, pp. 6-7) refer to the definition of "winescape" as an interaction between natural landscape and scenario; heritage architecture and artifacts in a wine cellar; the vineyards; the wine cellar door and wines; complimentary products and services; signs; and people in a wine cellar. There are three components that constitute a "winescape" as follows: presence of vineyards, wine production activity and wineries, where the wine is produced and stored (Telfer, 2001). In this sense, Getz and Brown (2006, p. 147) argue that:

> [. . .] wine tourism is, at the same time, a behavioural way of the consumer, a strategy from which destinations develop and commercialize attractions and images related to wine and a marketing opportunity for the cellars so as to educate and directly sell their products to consumers.

Therefore, wine tourism has to be seen as a system centred on wine tourism experiences and activities. Wine tourism activities are mainly based on wine tastings and visits to wine museums, wine houses and cellars. More recently and probably more in the future, wine tourism has to provide for the creation of unique and genuine tourism experiences, which must be more personalized and differentiated. These experiences are the result of what wine tourism destinations have to offer to attract and make loyal national and international wine tourists. Furthermore, these wine tourism experiences are memorable experiences and contribute, simultaneously, to optimizing the experience, making it more enriching and

stimulating. In so doing, it creates a memorable or unique emotional response that can be transmitted to others that we defined as a key consequence of experience.

Our special interest in wine experience and wine tourism arises from an ancient practice and old traditions of wine and vineyards, strongly linked to the local culture. Wine is, therefore, the central product of wine tourism, which on its own, has an experimental dimension based on the wine tourism experience, essentially related to the hedonic perspective, as it involves sensations, through the five senses, namely, taste, smell, touch, sight and hearing. After all, the wine experiences are the central core of all wine tourism activities and are crucial to the wine tourism offer, though always linked to the place (cellar, farm, manor, etc.) and landscape. Wine tourism experiences mean and express much more than only drinking wine and/or enjoying the experience of wine, as well as another set of benefits such as visiting the area, enjoying scenery and visiting other local attractions (Dodd, 1995; Charters and Ali-Knight, 2000; Hall *et al.*, 2000; Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Mitchell and Hall, 2004).

Setting again the wine tourism in the experiential context, the experience related to consumption comprises a period of time that can be divided into four major stages (Arnould *et al.*, 2002) as follows:

(1) pre-consumption experience (searching and planning);
(2) purchase experience (choice and encounter with the environment);
(3) core consumption experience (sensation); and
(4) remembered/nostalgia experience (reliving the past experience).

These four major stages have similarities with the new own definition of experience mentioned previously, thus it is possible to converge them with the three key dimensions (situational, knowledge decoding and emotional response). To Thomas *et al.* (2016, p. 1), when a tourist engages positively in wine attributes, "a favourable winery experience eventuates". Pivac (2012) attests that "total wine experience" includes 10 features as follows:

(1) wine tasting and buying;
(2) socializing with friends;
(3) enjoying the day outdoors;
(4) enjoying the rural environment and vineyards;
(5) becoming familiar with wine production;
(6) learning about wine;
(7) wine tasting in restaurants;
(8) tour of the winery;
(9) visitor experience of other attractions and activities; and
(10) relaxation.

Thus, as can be inferred, 10 features of "total wine experience" determine and enrich the potential of participation in the wine tourism experiences available in wine tourism destinations, benefiting future behaviour of wine tourists in terms of revisiting and recommendations.

Characterization of the wine and wine tourism experience

The experience with wine tourism is not limited to one place or a specific attraction because the complete experience has a positive and significant impact during the pre-visit, visit and

after a visit to a wine region (Hall, 1996). The wine tourism activity involves the participation of a certain group of people called wine tourists who look for experiences regarding wines and wineries, in wine tourism destinations (Yuan *et al.*, 2008). Wine tourists are mainly wine consumers (Brown and Getz, 2005), who look for pleasurable experiences (Pan *et al.*, 2008). It is widely accepted and used that there are five stages to the tourist experience, namely, pre-visit (anticipation), trip, destination/visit, trip in the place and after-visit (revisit) (Pearce, 1982).

Charters and Ali-Knight (2002, p. 312) consider that:

> [. . .] the wine tourism experience can be provided in many ways, the most notable being events and festivals, cultural heritage, cuisine, hospitality, education, tastings and cellars, wine sales at the cellars and winery walks.

Tourists who look for historical and cultural values in iconic places, who appreciate real and notable experiences, look for wine, wine harvests, vineyards, cellars and what the landscape has to offer (Bruwer and Alant, 2009; Bruwer and Reilly, 2006; Hall *et al.*, 2000). According to Hall *et al.* (2004), there is a bigger appreciation of wine as a differential and specialized element, making it a potential attraction to tourists who visit the wine regions. As such, wine can be tasted in many places (before, during and after the visit to wine tourism destinations) (Figure 1). Like many tourism experiences, the wine tourism experience is a multiphase paradigm that compromises the anticipation period, the trip experience, participation in the place, return trip and collection phases (Mitchell and Hall, 2003).

With regard to experimental studies, the temporal issue has a significant role and impact on wine tourism (Mitchell *et al.*, 2000). As mentioned before, according to the authors, seasonality is a factor that must be considered in the wine tourism regions. Mitchell and Hall (2003) concluded that visitors prefer the end of summer and the beginning of autumn to go on cellar visits (coinciding with wine harvest activities). Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) argue that the wine tourist's expectations differ from region to region, depending on a set of critical success factors that are applied in places such as specific geographical and cultural differences.

In regard to wine tourists' attitudes, behaviours and preferences, there are many authors that explore the factors, which contribute to the wine tourist experience as being significant

Stage of travel experience	*Wine experience*	*Opportunities*
Pre-visit (anticipation)	Wine from destination/winery at home, restaurant or wine club Previous experience at winery/wine region	Positive on-site experiences (past)
Travel to	Wine en route	
Destination/on-site visit	Winery experience Wine at hotel or restaurant in region	Positive winery experience
Travel from	Wine en route home	
Post-visit (reminiscence)	Wine from destination/winery at home, restaurant or wine club Previous experience at winery/wine region	Positive on-site experiences (past)

Future behaviour

Source: Adapted from Mitchell *et al*. (2000)

Figure 1.
Wine tourist experience trip stage

(Ali-Knight and Carlsen, 2003; Cohen *et al.*, 2013; Asero and Patti, 2009; Mitchell *et al.*, 2012; Ben-Nun and Cohen, 2008; Saayman and Merwe, 2015; Pikkemaat *et al.*, 2009).

As a matter of fact, according to the literature review regarding wine tourism experience studies, there are three essential aspects as follows: framework factors, influence factors and success factors (Figure 2).

Framework factors refer to wine tourism experience characteristics and their particularities. According to Getz (2000, p. 2), the wine tourism experience is a complete sensorial experience, where we can find the five senses as follows:

(1) *Taste*: wines and regional cuisine and fresh grapes and other regional products;

(2) *Smell*: the land and the grapes, the countryside's fresh air, wine fermentation, cellars where the wine ages, the cooking, and roses and herbs from the garden;

(3) *Touch*: from the interpretation of wine production processes, the bottle and glass, cooking with wine and grape catching;

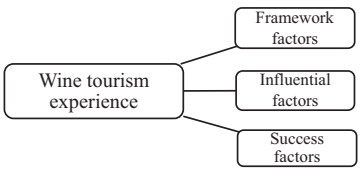
(4) *Sight*: the vineyards and the blue sky, unique regional architecture, the people having fun, traditional festivals and wine colours; and

(5) *Hearing*: bottling, opening a bottle of wine, festive music, wine production equipment's, and cooking and kitchen.

It is a culturally authentic experience in an ideal scenario, involving lifestyles that are connected to wine and food; romantic, settled on the notion that wine, food and an attractive atmosphere promote romance; funny; educational, as consumers search to learn the wine culture and the local culture (Getz, 2000, p. 3; Getz and Brown, 2006, p. 156). The wine tourism experience is not only the visit to cellars and wine tastings but also experiencing unique experiences linked to local culture and focussing on authentic (and therefore, unique) experience often grounded in the culture of a region or place.

In summary, the wine tourism experience is total and unique, according to the key framework factors pointed out by Carlsen and Charters (2006) and Inácio (2010) as follows:

- *Authenticity*: observe and have the opportunity to participate in a productive process of a product, which has a very high social value – the authentic one;
- *Money value*: the attributed value is higher than the money value spent in buying and consuming this product;
- *Service interaction*: interdependence of all involved agents and actors at the destination place and tourist emission place;
- *Surrounding scenario and atmosphere*: landscape and surrounding scenario where it happens;



Source: Adapted from Hall *et al.* (2000), Inácio (2010), Getz and Brown (2006)

Figure 2. Wine tourism experience analysis aspects

- *Product offers, goods and services conceptions*: which is sold and promised to the tourist;
- *Information dissemination*: dissemination of these products and contexts and their effective difference;
- *Personal growth*: provided by the learning experience; and
- *Lifestyle*: connected to a healthy, elitist lifestyle, with good taste and a cultured class.

Contextualizing and analysing the previous factors, the total and unique wine tourism experience demonstrates and implies an equal synergy between all, e.g. implies a series of players, stakeholders, actors and sectors that contribute to it and that also benefit from it (exceptional wine tourism experience). To reinforce this, it is valid both for the person who does it, who manages it and who participates in this concept of experience.

In the study and development of wine tourism experiences, it is fundamental to know their influential factors, as wine tourism experience can result in an increase in wine sales, increase in the number of visitors and what is spent in the region (Saayman and Merwe, 2015, p. 373). The wine tourism experience is also a result of the personal characteristics of the consumer; the characteristics of the visited place (location, architecture, decor and hygiene); the visit's dynamic (socializing with wine personalities, producers and winemakers, other visitors, wine cellar employees, service and developed activities); interaction with other elements of the experience such as hospitality and lodging; characteristics of the visited region (landscape, cultural heritage, festivals and events and other local attractions) (Hall *et al.*, 2000, p. 130; Pikkemaat *et al.*, 2009, p. 239; Cohen *et al.*, 2013, p. 3).

Success factors of the wine tourism experience

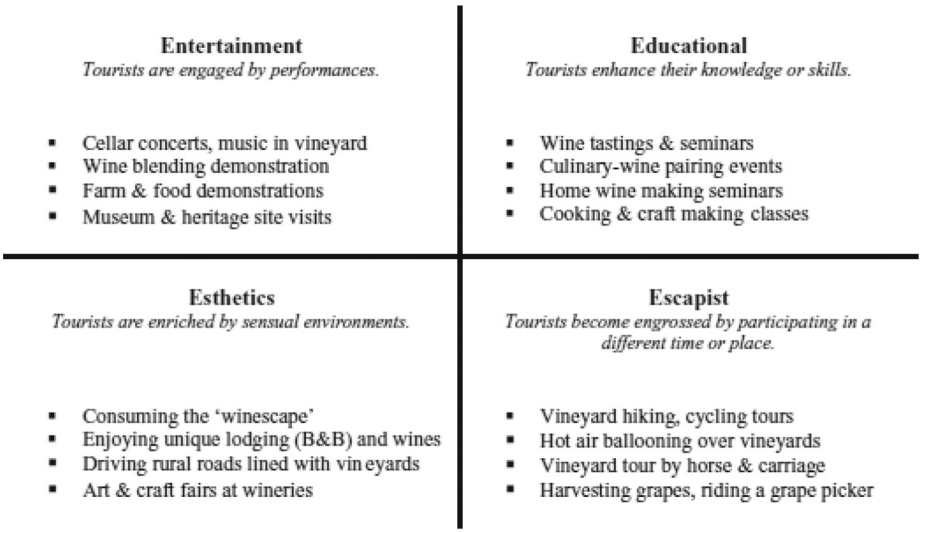
Concerning the success factors of the wine tourism experience, after reviewing the work of many authors, Ali-Knight and Carlsen (2003, p. 5), describe some indispensable conditions to offer extraordinary wine tourism experiences such as: memorable experiences that involve the visitor and is an excellent opportunity to increase wine sales; novelty value; provide exceptional experiences, in addition to the wine tastings, for example, visiting the region in a limousine, travelling in a helicopter or hot air balloon above the vineyards; grand events, which will involve and entertain the visitor, attracting different market segments, with different events in the wine region. Including events and festivals in marketing, brand and promotion of wine regions has become quite important, and nowadays, all wine regions have wine festivals or wine tourism events; free wine tastings opportunity, providing an excellent opportunity to build relationships with clients; sensorial experiences, as the tasting becomes a complete sensorial and educational experience too, and the visitor has a positive connection to the place and the wines; include emotion, fun and participation because of customer loyalty.

Getz and Brown (2006) examined the critical success factors for wine tourism regions and concluded that the success of the wine tourism experience results from the combination of three core components and their adjacent dimensions as follows: core wine product, core destination appeal; and the cultural product. In their research, specific attention was given to the importance attached by wine consumers to various destination and trip attributes when deciding upon a wine tourism experience. According to their analysis of these critical success factors, it is possible to infer that the success of wine tourism results from the combination of three nuclear components and their adjacent dimensions.

Correia and Brito (2016) promote the idea of wine tourism as a territorial experience, composed of tangible and intangible components. The traditions, authenticity, atmosphere, culture and interaction were described as the intangible components. As tangible components, the authors consider the producers, wine cellars, restaurants, landscapes and tourism operators. Summarizing, the intangible components, which are linked to each region are essentially connected to cultural and social roots, as well as the atmosphere. Intangible components > traditions > culture > authenticity > interactions > tangible components > producers > landscapes > wine cellars > operators > tourist restaurants from each region. Regarding tangible components, these are directly linked to the stakeholders of the wine tourism activity, such as producers, wine cellars, restaurants, among others. Though there is this division between tangible and intangible, they conclude that one component alone is not enough for wine tourism to be successful. Thus, to create positive dynamics in territories where this activity happens, it is necessary for the two components to be intertwined, so that wine tourism is dependent on cooperative success strategies.

Experiential marketing in wine tourism

Schmitt (1999) was the pioneer of experiential marketing and the experience model, which covers five strategic experiential modules that marketers can create for customers to offer distinguished experiences as follows: sensory experiences (Sense); affective experiences (Feel); creative cognitive experiences (Think); physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles (Act); and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (Relate). Pine and Gilmore (1999) support the "Economy of Experience" theory, which covers four domains or four E's of the model as follows: entertainment, education, aesthetics and escapist, as in Figure 3, regarding wine tourism activities. Getz (2000) highlights the hedonic perspective and approach, enhancing its particular characteristics because of the fact that it potentiates the elevated involvement of all senses as follows: taste, smell, touch, sight and hearing. According to Getz (2000), wine tourism is intimately related



Source: Adapted from Pine and Gilmore (1999)

Figure 3. 4E model of the economy of experience in wine tourism activities

to cuisine and the local experience where it happens. Cohen and Ben-Nun (2009) point out that the main attribute of the wine tourism experience is the wine tasting and production of wine. Wine tourists understand the quality of the service that is experienced while visiting a wine cellar (O'Neil and Charters, 2000).

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), the creation of wine and cuisine experiences implies that wine producers, from a certain wine region or wine tourism destination, should articulate their services as if they were on a theatre stage, and their products are prompts, so as to involve tourists individually, and therefore, create the conditions for a memorable event. The visit to a wine cellar is a holistic experience that can include an aesthetic appreciation of the natural atmosphere, the wine cellar, the cultural and historical context of the wine region, production methods, the search for education and diversity, a sense of belonging to the cellar and the search for authenticity (Charters *et al.*, 2009).

The wine tourism experience embraces many characteristics, including a lifestyle experience, education, interaction with art, wine and food, wine tastings and sales at the cellar, walks through the cellars, association with the tourist destination image and a marketing opportunity, which improves the development of economical, social and cultural values of a territory (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002). Wine routes are a fundamental engine to link wine tourism, activities and traditions, working as a privileged tool to disseminate and promote regional tourism (Getz, 2000).

According to Schmitt (2003), the holistic experience lived by the tourist should also be analysed taking into account the convergence between cuisine, wine and tourism. That experience is the result of the interaction between sensorial (senses), affectionate (sensation), cognitive (thoughts), behaviours (actions) and social (relations) experiences. The genuine, endogenous food and wine that represent a place of origin, as well as the landscape and cultural places, are essential elements to build a wine and cuisine experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Finally, it is important to determine the key attributes of the wine tourism experience to understand the behavioural intentions that result in choosing the wine region (Williams, 2001).

Conclusions, managerial and practical implications

Transversal analysis: from management to research

To provide an original, unique and memorable experience, managers, marketers, operators and stakeholders should create a reasonable number of activities related to the most significant and related aspects. In those activities, they must consider the factors, characteristics, dimensions and attributes of wine and wine tourism according to the cellars, cellar doors, vineyards, wineries, wine routes, wine festivals/events, wine hotels, wine museums and wine estates, during the visits.

The experiences that emerge from wine tourism activities consist mainly of wine tastings and visits to cellars, wine cellars and wine museums. Nowadays, and probably more so in the future, wine tourism has provided and driven the creation of authentic and genuine, increasingly differentiated and personalized experiences. These experiences alone result from the offer of wine tourism destinations that contribute strategically and effectively to the constant and growing attraction and retention of national and international wine tourism operators. In addition, these wine tourism experiences are memorable for wine tourists and contribute simultaneously to the optimization of the experience, making it more enriching and stimulating.

There is no doubt that wine is the core product of wine tourism, which is in itself an experiential dimension, therefore, intimately related to the basis of the wine tourism experience, essentially related to the hedonic perspective, insofar as it involves sensations through all of the five senses as follows: taste, smell, touch, sight and hearing. Together, hedonic experience has been highlighted over time by some researchers. After all, wine

experiences form the central point of all wine tourism activity and are crucial in the wine tourism supply and the local culture and food connections are enhanced. The knowledge also gained on the visits is relevant, and some of it can be enhanced by certification or at a lower level organizing quizzes for visitors about the wines and the territory.

Research on consumer experiences is still rather limited, despite some recent advances in this area and wine tourism is a good example of this limitation. In practice, wine tourism is seen as a system essentially centred on the wine tourism experience. The potential of wine and wine tourism to create experiences has no limits or barriers. Some new experiences like creating own blends or making personalized labels could help to improve the experience, namely, in terms of enhancing the positive and memorable experiences that could be shared with future visitors.

Further directions for research

Leading the way for wine and wine tourism experience development: what kind of new scientific approach or tool is needed for the future?

Wine and wine tourism experience is not a new phenomenon, but measurement research requires further development. Recent research shows gaps in the scope of measurement scales and so more appropriate instruments, applied to the wine touristic activity could be developed. Further, the scales that exist in the literature were not constructed with the specific purpose of measuring wine experience in a wine tourism context. In fact, the main measurement scales for wine and wine tourism experience basically focus on the: customer experience index (Kim *et al.*, 2011; Knutson *et al.*, 2007); service experience quality (Klaus and Maklan, 2012); service experience quality (Chang and Horng, 2010); marketing experience scale (Tsaur *et al.*, 2006; Schmitt, 1999, 2003); economic experience model (Pine and Gilmore, 1999); and wine involvement scale (Brown *et al.*, 2006); winescape scale (Thomas *et al.*, 2016); and sensory tourist experience (Agapito *et al.*, 2017). This demonstrates the need to develop a measurement scale for wine experience in the context of wine tourism activity, as a specific measurement scale is needed. Further, a new measuring tool for wine experience in the wine tourism industry could draw on eight dimensions/attributes as follows:

- cultural experience;
- exciting experience;
- sensory appeal/experience;
- winescape;
- wine storytelling; and
- wine product/activity involvement.

These dimensions/attributes for a new wine tourism experience measurement tool are supported by the literature and such a tool would be a useful resource in support of wine tourism activity.

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