

WINE TOURISM EXPERIENCE VIS-À-VIS WINE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A NETNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF NAMIBIAN WINERIES

Abstract

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Purpose – The overriding objective of this study is to analyse the visitors' experience via online reviews vis-a-vis the wine tourism development in Namibia. Therefore, the study identified critical elements influencing visitor experiences and their perceived destination image. *Methodology/Design/Approach* – This study adopted netnography as non-participant observation and is based on online reviews published on TripAdvisor (www.TripAdvisor.com) between 2013/2023. The study analysed the reviews to identify critical elements that the visitors highlighted as influencing their experiences and their perceived destination image. In the next step of data processing, NVivo 12.6.1 (3859) was used to identify themes/elements and determine the extent to which each factor influencing visitors' experiences at wineries was referenced. A relationship mapping was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0.2.0 to study the relationship between satisfaction/dissatisfaction and post-consumption behaviour (revisit intention & recommendation).

Findings – The study analysed the reviews to identify critical elements that the visitors highlighted as influencing their experiences and their perceived destination image. The final list comprises ten elements/themes: hospitality, wine quality and pricing, wine-related activities, service quality, ambience, family-friendly, food quality, and other facilities and activities. The relationship between satisfaction and recommendation was found to be not just significant, but a key factor in influencing visitor experiences and their perceived destination image.

Originality of the research – The paper aims to analyse wine tourism experience vis-à-vis wine tourism development. It underscores that wine tourism-related visitors' satisfaction, resulting from excellent experiences, can be presented as a compelling argument for developing a truly exclusive Namibian wine tourism experience. Despite not being perceived as a prominent wine destination, Namibia has the potential to transform into a genuinely unique and exclusive wine tourism destination with the collaboration of key stakeholders, a potential this research brings to light.

Keywords wineries, experiences, satisfaction, tourism, wine, wine-experiencescape

Original scientific paper

Received 09 November 2023

Revised 10 April 2024

08 June 2024

08 July 2024

Accepted 17 July 2024

<https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.31.1.4>

INTRODUCTION

Wine and food are elements of culture used in many destinations' branding strategies to promote brands and regions (Cristófol et al., 2021) and as assets for and means of product differentiation (Stalmirska, 2017). Combined with tourism, wine and food can provide a natural competitive advantage that is not easily replicated when specific to a location and culture (Mulcahy, 2015). Furthermore, as a complex, symbolic, and highly technical product, wine relies on a complex interaction of information sources and impressions to develop a brand image (Hall & Mitchell, 2008), making wine purchasing choice a relationship between personal preferences, past experiences and product stimulus. Tourism product stimulus results from marketing and promotion campaigns, creating certain expectations due to perceptions about a particular destination. Hence, wine is an essential source of marketable images and experiences for wine tourism and can significantly motivate visitors.

Namibia has a unique mix of wildlife, spectacular scenery, and diverse cultures. As such, those features are dominant in Namibia's marketing strategies. Namibian wine is produced in small quantities due to the semi-arid climate in Namibia, giving it the exclusivity characteristic. However, Namibian wines need a more national and international reputation; the lack of reputation can be attributed to low marketing and promotion efforts at the individual winery and national levels. Consequently, little effort has been invested in underpinning the concept of wine tourism, let alone its role in influencing tourism experiences and the destination image. An area for improvement in the existing wine tourism research is the scope of the area covered. It is mainly about the demand for wine tourism, the development of wine routes, and the wine industry in regions with more suitable climatic conditions, such as New Zealand (Baird et al., 2019), Thailand (Amarando et al., 2019), Serbia (Trišić et al., 2019), Spain (Alonso & Liu, 2012; Gázquez-Abad et al., 2015), Canada (Carmichael & Senese, 2012), to mention just a few. On the other hand, regions with less favourable climates are neglected, especially countries that are less known for wine production. Therefore, the study addresses that gap by examining wine experiences in a region less famous for producing wine. By identifying critical elements influencing visitor experiences in potential and unique wine regions, other upcoming destinations can use this study as a benchmark.

Furthermore, the existing research on wine tourism consumer behaviour deals with visitors' motives for wine event attendance (Van Zyl et al., 2023; Dixit, 2022), the wine experience dimensions (Mitrović, 2022), and wine consumers' perceptions (Yap & Chen, 2017). Little is written about the dissatisfaction elements at the point of contact where the wine tourism experience takes place (festivals, wineries, wine shops, and vineyards). This article fills that knowledge gap by highlighting dissatisfactory elements at the wine experience point of contact. Researching and addressing dissatisfaction shows commitment to customers and provides insights into areas needing improvement, consequently leading to the success and sustainability of wine tourism destinations.

The overriding purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the visitors' wine experience and tourism development in Namibia. The study uses the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model to explore these three constructs, namely **Stimulus** (environmental input), Tangible and intangible elements of the wine-experiencescape, **Organism** (emotional status): satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and **Response** (post-consumption behaviour): revisit intention and recommendation. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, which has its roots in environmental psychology, postulates that different external factors act as stimuli (S) that interfere with their internal states (O) and eventually influence people's behavioural reactions (R) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Wine Tourism Experience

Wine, as a core product of wine tourism, has an experiential dimension, strongly connected with a hedonic perspective (Santos et al., 2019a) involving tasting wines and the appreciation of its main characteristics: the wine smell, taste, and look, therefore, activating those sensory stimuli (Santos et al., 2023b). Therefore, stimulating all visitors' senses is crucial for a holistic engagement when interacting with products and services (Walls et al., 2011) to provide memorable experiences that create competitive advantages for destinations (Brochado et al., 2021). Wine tourism as a holistic experience should be a new concept to differentiate the product in the minds of consumers, especially in a new wine region (das Neves Madeira, 2019; Festa et al., 2015). The previous sentiment is supported by several studies indicating that visitors crave a more holistic wine tourism experience (Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Dawson et al., 2011; Park et al., 2008; Dixit, 2019), with elements of surprise as part of the wine experience (Güzel & Gromova, 2016). Local food and wine pairing classes, information about the region's cultural heritage, picnics in the vineyard, and art expression are some surprising elements that enhance the winery experience. However, understanding wine tourist motivations and experience is indispensable to developing any wine tourism destination (Gu et al., 2020). Similarly, the reasons behind wine tourists' visits are regarded as crucial to the general comprehension of wine areas and wineries/cellar doors and of the needs and expectations of their customers (Hall et al., 2000; Bruwer, 2002; Charters & Ali-knight, 2002). Several researchers (Hall et al., 2000, p. 86; Charters & Ali Knight, 2002; Bruwer, 2002) have the most lucid delineation of "primary motivations" behind wine tourists, which are wine sampling and purchase, while the "secondary motivations" include wine education, entertainment, and socialising. Wine tourism destinations should remember that tourists want more than wine purchased during their visit. Therefore, wine tourists are predominantly wine consumers looking for pleasurable wine senses (Santos et al., 2023a) at wine-related destinations and territories of tourist attractiveness (Asero & Patti, 2011). Wine visitors are keen on engaging with the local wines and the terroir—the area's unique scenery, culture, and historical significance of the wine region (Bruwer & Alant, 2009).

Moreover, Bruwer (2003) and Carmichael (2005) underscore the winescape as a significant factor driving wine tourism consumption. Winescape is defined as "the attributes of a grape wine region (Peters, 1997, p. 4) that incorporate physical, cultural, natural or aesthetic attributes which are unique to each distinct destination (Alebaiki et al., 2022). However, it should be highlighted that the demand for wine tourism is greatly influenced by the allure and genuineness of the winescape (Kim & Bonn, 2016). This is because wine tourists seek to immerse themselves in both the wines of the region and the terroir where they are produced, as well as their landscape, cultural, and heritage attributes (Bruwer & Alant, 2009).

Therefore, identifying and studying the factors influencing wine tourism experiences is paramount in developing wine tourism. Furthermore, wine tourism experiences should be developed and promoted by offering diverse tourist experiences based on the unique attributes of destinations (Tassiopoulos & Haydam, 2006). According to O'Neill and Charters (2000), the services offered by wineries significantly impact the tourist experience. These services, also known as the "servicescape" (Newman, 2007), encompass the physical setting of external and internal services in wineries that contribute to a positive winery visit experience (Hall & Mitchell, 2008; McDonnell & Hall, 2008).

1.2. Research Questions Development & Proposed Model

1.2.1. Research Questions

Various elements characterise wine tourism destinations: the presence of vineyards, the winemaking activity and the wineries where the wine is produced and stored (Bruwer & Alant, 2009; das Neves Madeira, 2019), as well as supporting tourism services (wine-tasting venues, restaurants, hotels, function venues, art galleries) (Ferreira, 2020). As such, consumer purchase behaviour, satisfaction and the destination image formed are influenced by a number of elements, both tangible and intangible. Based on the literature review, (4) research questions were formulated to study, as demonstrated in the proposed research model.

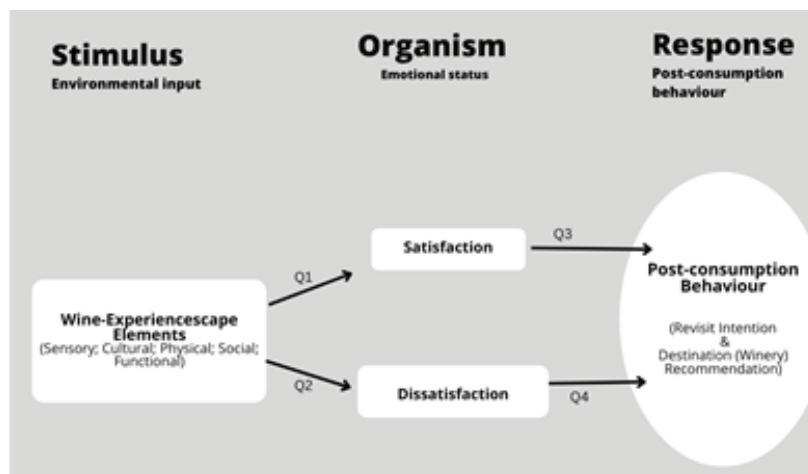
- Q1. What are the winery elements crucial for wine tourism experience satisfaction?
- Q2. What are the dissatisfactory elements of the wine experience?
- Q3. Does wine experience satisfaction positively influence a) revisit intention and b) recommendation?
- Q4. How does dissatisfaction influence post-consumption behaviour?

1.2.2. The theoretical model

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory is a valuable framework for understanding the relationships between environmental input (stimulus), emotional status (Organism), and post-consumption behaviour (response) (Surovaya et al., 2020). According to Han et al. (2022), the stimuli are external factors representing different contextual inputs. They can be both tangible and intangible (Housni et al., 2023) and are frequently interacting and competitive (Jacoby, 2002). According to Chang et al. (2011) and Suparno (2020), the term “organism” (O) refers to internal processes and structures such as perception, feeling, and thought that operate as a mediator between external inputs and the final actions taken. The final stage of the relationship between the three model elements is called the Response (R) (Karedza & Mike, 2017). It results from an individual’s response to stimuli and their environment, manifested as either a good or adverse action (Housni et al., 2023) post the interaction.

The theoretical model of this study, as shown in Fig. 1, on the left side comprises external factors, both tangible and intangible, related to wineries. The mid-section shows two internal factors, represented by consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction associated with the wine tourism experience. These internal factors are emotional responses that may arise from environmental cues. On the right side, the model includes the post-consumption behaviour, which can be positive or negative.

Figure 1: Study Model



Source: Authors

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data Collection

This study adopted a netnographic approach in the form of non-participant observation and is based on online reviews published on TripAdvisor (www.TripAdvisor.com), containing information about the role of wine tourism-related products and the wine tourism elements in enhancing tourists’ experiences and the destination image of Namibia. This approach was taken to avoid influencing the reviews in any way because the reviews are as natural as possible (Kozinets, 2010). Furthermore, the passive netnographic approach applied in this study supports a high personal and social distance between researchers and reviewers (Arsal et al., 2010). Kozinets (2010, p. 89) offers six criteria when selecting sites for netnographic research: they should be “relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous, and data-rich.” TripAdvisor, one of the largest travel community sites that provides

visitor-to-visitor communication, was chosen because it offers diverse communities and options for specifying search criteria. Data on the elements influencing the wine tourism experience at the wineries were retrieved. However, of the 179 reviews, only 121 reviews with comments (texts) were analysed (see Table 1). The wineries' reviews were posted between the years 2013- 2023.

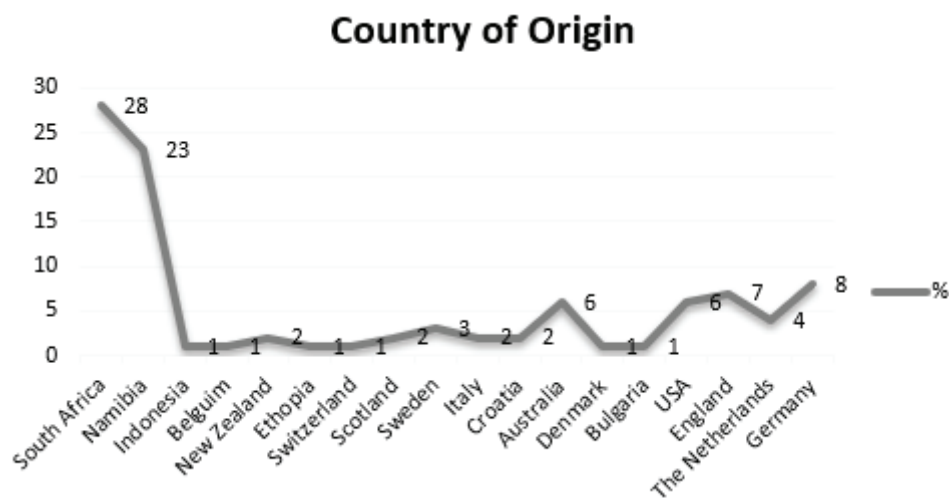
Table 1: Wineries' Total Reviews

Winery	Reviews with comments	Reviews without comments	Total winery reviews
Erongo Mountain Winery	60	29	89
Neuras N/a'anku se Wine & Wildlife Estate	39	19	58
Kristall Kellerie	18	12	30
Boshoff Family Wines	4	1	5
Total	121	61	182

Source: Authors

Of the visitors, 81% (99) disclosed their country of origin, whilst 18% (22) did not. South Africa emerged as the primary source market, accounting for 28% of all evaluations, closely followed by domestic visitors at 23%, as seen in Figure 2. The fact that tourists come from so many different places offers expanding wineries a great chance to pinpoint and target these varied markets for growth.

Figure. 2: Reviewers' Origin



Source: Authors

2.2. Data Analysis

The study analysed the reviews to identify critical elements that the visitors highlighted as influencing their experiences, their perceived destination image, and their post-purchase behaviour. In the next step of data processing, we used NVivo 12.6.1 (3859) to identify elements (tangible and intangible) and determine the extent to which each factor influencing visitors' experiences at wineries was referenced (see Table 2.). NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software used across diverse range of fields, including social sciences. Additionally, the relationship mapping was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0.2.0 (a computer software package used for statistical/quantitative data analysis), to study the relationship between the variables (satisfaction/dissatisfaction and post-consumption behaviour) to answer research questions 3 and 4.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Wine-experiencescape elements crucial for satisfaction

Table 2 underscores the dominance of wine-related activities, particularly wine tasting and winery/vineyard tours, which were referenced a staggering 87 times (23 %). This was closely followed by food quality, which garnered 66 references (17 %). The high frequency of these references is a testament to the significant influence of food and wine on the visitor experience, forming a strong food and wine confederation.

However, the family-friendly element was the least referenced (8 times, 2.1 %). The results also revealed that references to hospitality (36 times, 9.5 %), service quality (34 times, 9 %), other facilities and activities (29 times, 7.7 %). Furthermore, ambience (27 times, 7.1 %) is also of importance in influencing the winery experience.

Table 2: **Wine-experiencescape Elements Identification**

Theme/Element	Description	References
Ambience	The atmosphere and the setting of the winery	27
Authenticity	The uniqueness of the winery in terms of offerings	20
Family-friendly	The ability to accommodate family groups	8
Food Quality	The food quality in terms of taste, preparation and presentation	66
Hospitality	The receiving of visitors and the ability to meet their needs	36
Other Facilities & Activities	Entail other facilities and activities unique to the winery; which are offered as part of the winery experience ranging from accommodation to 4x4 drives as well as animal feeding	29
Sceneries	The scenic views and landscapes from the winery	20
Service Quality	The reliable and responsive service offered at the winery	34
Wine Quality & Pricing	The quality of the wines in relation to the pricing	50
Wine-related Activities (Tasting and Tours)	Entail wine tasting and winery/vineyard tours	87

Source: Authors

The final list of wine-experiencescape elements comprises hospitality, wine quality and pricing, wine-related activities, service quality, ambience, family-friendly, food quality, and other facilities and activities. A further step was taken to map the identified elements based on the SOR theory. The wine-experiencescape elements based on the SOR theory are identified as sensory, functional, social, physical (natural), and cultural dimensions (Pizam & Tasci, 2019; Gunasekar et al., 2021). As an extension of servicescape (Agapito et al., 2013), wine-experiencescape is the purposeful place where wine experiences are produced, staged, and consumed by diverse groups and connections are facilitated between companies and customers (Hall, 2008; Mossberg, 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). A rich wine experiencescape is an amalgam of various elements and settings, and it goes beyond wine tasting and purchasing.

The mapping of the wine-experiencescape elements to each dimension was at two levels. First, the literature validated the items that relate to each dimension. Then, both researchers independently manually pinned them under each dimension (shown in Table 3), and together, they verified the mapping. In answering Q2 of the study, the winery elements crucial for wine tourism experience satisfaction and a positive destination image were identified and are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3: **Wine-experiencescape Elements**

Dimension	Description	Tangible/Intangible Elements
Sensory	Wine experience through sensation or feeling by tourists, perceived through specific sense modes, such as touch, smell, taste, sight, hearing or the sense of balance (Santos et al., 2021)	-Food Quality -Wine Quality -Ambience -Wine Tasting
Cultural	Gaining knowledge such as learning about history, understanding different countries and authentic experience related to new and unique experiences McIntosh, et al (1995)	-Authenticity (uniqueness)
Physical	Related to physical settings, spatial characteristics and geographical features influencing tourist experience (Seaton & Bennett, 1997)	-Sceneries
Social	Refers to the various social influences which can be present during tourist experiences including social settings, interactions with personnel and with other tourists (Cutler & Carmicheal, 2010)	-Hospitality -Service Quality -Family Friendly

Functional	The functional dimension of the experiencescape comprises space presentation, route, signage (Vo-Thanh & Kirova, 2018), access to destination (Chiodo et al., 2020), winery and vineyard tours, and wine tasting (Brochado et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2019b), auxiliary elements, and value for money (Williams & Soutar, 2000; Zong et al., 2023).	-Other Facilities & Activities (Accommodation, Sundowners, Cheetah Feeding, 4 x 4 Drives, Accessibility) -Wine Price -Wine Tour
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Source: Authors

The wine-experiencescape elements were compared to those of a different geographic location (Spain) to examine the similarities and contrasts. Cruz-Ruiz et al. (2020) compiled a model of the elements to be considered for a wine destination in Spain, comprising traditional architecture, gastronomy/food, wine/traditional festivities, landscape/wine landscape, and wineries/cellars. Compared to the Namibian features, the Spanish elements highlight wine and traditional festivities, which are currently absent in Namibia. The absence could be attributed to Namibia being less famous for wine-making. As such, there is still a long way to go in grasping the crucial elements for successful wine tourism development. Though research indicates that elements are specific and unique to the destination, some similarities exist, such as the impact that gastronomy/food has on experience outcome.

Further studies from various regions, South Africa (Bruwer & Alant, 2009), Australia (Sassenberg et al., 2022) and Portuguese (Carvalho et al., 2021), underscore the significant impacts of tangible elements, like architecture/monuments and intangible elements, like traditions and events on the wine experience. However, one crucial element, 'culture', is notably absent in the Namibian wine context. This observation can be attributed to the lack of collaboration among the wine tourism stakeholders. At present, there is no wine route that connects the existing wineries in Namibia and showcases the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage, a potential area for development and improvement.

3.2. Dissatisfactory elements of the wine experience

Given the low number of wineries' reviews, the researchers had an opportunity to peruse each review for an in-depth analysis of the narratives to interpret their meaning. Additionally, the reviews were divided according to their rating classification (1 to 5). This was done to analyse the negative comments in order to understand what was least satisfactory in the visit and thus measure satisfaction/dissatisfaction as a response to Q2 of the study. Satisfaction is seen as the balance between reality and expectation (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Whereas dissatisfaction is influenced by service encounter failure and perceptions of service quality (Haverila et al., 2020). Wine experience satisfaction has a positive impact on repurchase intentions, purchasing behaviour, wine sales and the overall success of the winery operations (Huang, 2011; Gomez & Kelley, 2013; O'Neill & Charters, 2000). It is pivotal to study wine experience dissatisfaction, as dissatisfiers, such as waiting time and employee performance, can lead to a competitive disadvantage (Haverila et al., 2020).

Table 4: Unsatisfactory Elements of the Wine Experience

Rating	No of Reviews	Unsatisfactory Elements
1 °	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor quality accommodation ● High priced accommodation ● No amenities e.g. towels in accommodation
2 °°	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorrect billing ● Lack of authenticity (Imported grapes) ● Unavailability of listed wines ● Poor food quality ● Poor wine quality ● Highly priced wines ● Not family friendly (no baby cots) ● Uncleanliness of the premises
3 °°°	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expensive accommodation ● Poor quality accommodation ● Poor quality wine ● Expensive wines ● No amenities e.g. fridge air conditioning in accommodation ● No flexibility to upgrade accommodation booking ● Online pictures and marketing do not match the reality ● Lack of staff supervision

Rating	No of Reviews	Unsatisfactory Elements
4 ○○○○	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No balance between price and quantity (wine tasting) ● High priced wines ● Bad customer service ● Staff lacks wine knowledge ● Poor wine quality
5 ○○○○○	81	
Total	121	

Source: Authors

Table 4 above shows the unsatisfactory elements of the wine experience, with poor quality and highly-priced wines across most ratings. The ‘cost’ has also been identified as a dissatisfier across 524 wineries in Spain (Shin & Nicolau, 2022). Similarly, increased wine prices and decreased wine quality were associated with dissatisfaction by tourists visiting wine units in Portugal (Meneses et al., 2023). The above results indicate that visitors are generally willing to pay for high-quality wines and make recommendations; however, those who perceive the quality to be low would be dissatisfied and claim the price to be too high for the quality of the wine. Some end up rating the winery low and not recommending it.

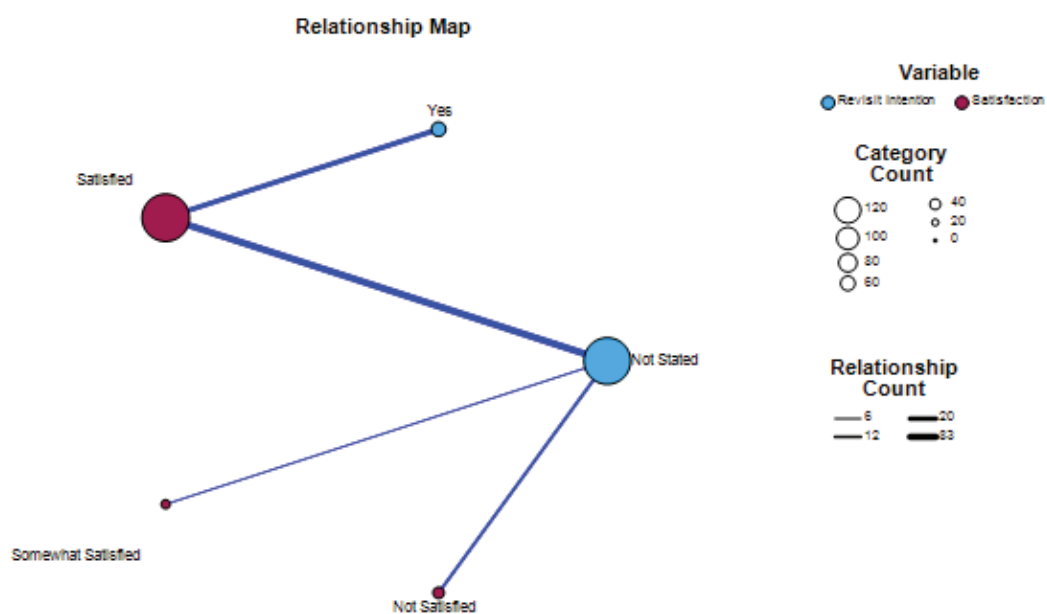
An unsatisfactory wine experience in Namibia could have various effects, including negative impacts on tourism and the local wine industry. Dissatisfied visitors may share their experiences, affecting the destination’s image and discouraging potential tourists. Local wineries might face reduced sales and need help with brand perception, potentially leading to economic challenges for the industry. Additionally, the potential influence of poor reviews on consumer perceptions both domestically and internationally could significantly hinder the growth of Namibian wines in the global market.

3.3. Wine experience satisfaction/dissatisfaction and post-consumption behaviour (revisit intention and destination recommendation)

Satisfaction can be significantly impacted by a number of contextual aspects, including hospitality, wine quality, food quality, and service quality. A such a top-notch winery experience is essential for a positive post-consumption behaviour.

Figure 3 below shows the relationship between satisfaction/ dissatisfaction and post-consumption behaviour (revisit intention). 103 [85%] customers indicated that they were satisfied with the winery experience; however, 83 [80%] made no reference to the revisit intention, whereas only 20 [20%] indicated they would revisit. Those somewhat satisfied (they are partly satisfied with the encounter) did not state a revisit intention. The 12 [10%] dissatisfied customers also did not indicate a revisit intention. The results show that not every satisfactory service encounter would result in a revisit intention.

Figure 3: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction and Revisit Intention



Source: Authors

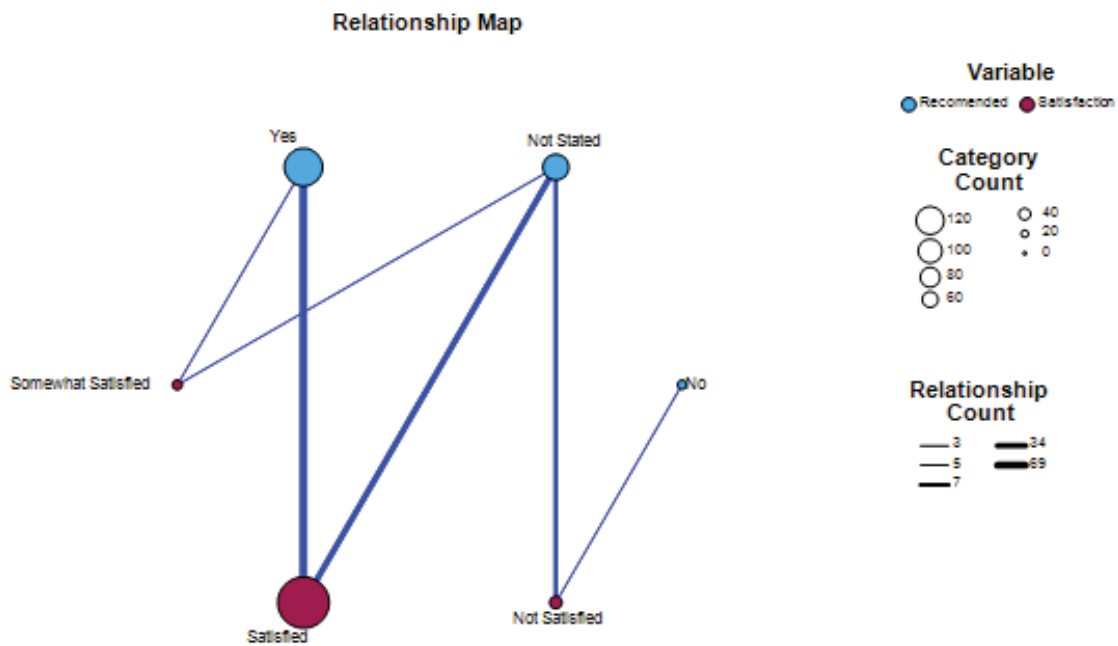
Below are some the reviews highlighting what stood out from their positive winery encounter and and indication of revisit intention.

[...]The fact that they make use of local products to make Namibia's own unique wine gives them 100/100 in my books. [...] I will definitely recommend, and I will be back.

I would recommend it to anyone! We were welcomed with friendly staff. [...] The atmosphere is very relaxing, and I will be back for another sundowner!

Figure 4 below shows the relationship between satisfaction/ dissatisfaction and post-consumption behaviour (recommendation). 103 [85%] customers indicated that they were satisfied with the winery experience. However, 69 indicated they would recommend the winery they visited, whereas 34 [33%] did not reference the recommendation, regardless of the satisfactory encounter. Seven of the 12 [10%] dissatisfied customers indicated that they would not recommend the wineries they visited, whereas five made no mention of recommendation at all. The results show a strong relationship between satisfaction and recommendation.

Figure 4: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction and Recommendation



Source: Authors

Below are some the reviews highlighting what was dissatisfactory/ satisfactory from the winery encounters and the post-purchase action (recommend or not recommending).

[...] The wine was overpriced, and the quality was poor. The food overpriced and nothing special. The entrance looks shambled. [...] I would not recommend this place. And there are much better Namibian wines available.

[...]The food overpriced and nothing special. [...] I would not recommend this place. And there are much better Namibian wines available.

Wow, what an experience! [...]beautiful views, spotless. Don't drive through [...] without giving this place a visit, you'll be sorry.[...]

[...] They also distil quite a variety of one-of-a-kind spirits [...] Definitely take the time to visit this unique place in Namibia.

[...] very high quality, unexpected wines and spirits!

The winery is unique, with a variety of wines which are very good. [...] The fact that you can only get the wine in Namibia makes it worth the while to visit.

The findings suggest that the overriding success of wine tourism development is based on visitor satisfaction as a result of the actual experiences at the destination. The results suggest that satisfactory experiences are essential for positive post-consumption actions, namely revisit intention and winery recommendation. A similar netnographic study (Kastenholz et al., 2022) also revealed the association between satisfaction and destination loyalty.

The above sentiments are supported by Pine & Gilmore (2011), who revealed the correlation between satisfaction and recommendation. Regardless of geographical location, understanding the relationship between experience dimensions and post-consumption actions is paramount to the successful development of wine tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest that—in addition to wine as the core product—other aspects play an essential role in influencing visitors' wine tourism experiences, destination image and destination development.

The positive wine tourism experience has several effects on helping the growth of the destination and the individual winery's image, such as increased bookings for wine tours and wine tasting and positive media coverage (electronic word of mouth). The positive reviews posted thus contribute to developing a wine tourism destination.

The study concludes that the influencing power of past winery experiences is significant for consumer decision-making. Several contextual aspects, including hospitality, wine, food, and service quality, can significantly impact the winery experience. The likelihood of returning to the wineries and favourably recommending them is significantly predicted by satisfaction. Hence, authentic quality wine experiences have a competitive impact on increasing winery recommendations, as seen in the reviews that most visitors who had satisfactory experiences made recommendations. The study further concluded that wine experience dissatisfiers can negatively impact a winery's image, such as poor wine quality. As such continuous improvement of wine tourism offering is critical for the growth of the industry.

The results from the study not only suggest that, though currently, Namibia is not perceived as a prominent wine destination, but also highlight the potential for the country to become a genuinely unique and exclusive wine tourism destination with the collaboration of key stakeholders. Even so, there is a need for cooperation amongst destination planners and other wine tourism stakeholders to take advantage of the existing positive perceptions and integrate the Namibian wine tourism experiences into its marketing campaigns. Additionally, the absence of cultural heritage in the Namibian wine context is a potential area for development and improvement.

Ultimately, the quality of the wine and the pricing, ambience, food, customer service, authenticity (uniqueness), sceneries (surroundings), wine-related activities such as wine tasting, and wine/winery tours are significant determinants of a destination image and the most significant predictors of visitor perceived value. Additionally, the findings reinforced that visitor perceived value is a significant determinant of visitor satisfaction, and visitor satisfaction, once published in media, is a significant predictor of the destination's image and development.

IMPLICATIONS

The study proposes a framework that not only identifies vital wine tourism experience elements but also dissatisfaction elements. It's crucial for wineries to have strategies in place to address these dissatisfaction elements, which can lead to negative reviews and tarnish the winery's image. By taking proactive steps to resolve these issues, wineries can empower themselves to shape a more positive perception among their visitors. This study is a pioneer for wine tourism investigation in Namibia. Other researchers are encouraged to use the findings of this study to investigate the complexities of wine tourism and its broader implications, providing valuable insights for the stakeholders and fostering a collaborative research environment in the industry.

From a practical standpoint, the onus is on wine operators to design a diverse range of activities that reflect the winery's unique terroir. While wine tasting, purchasing, and education remain the primary reasons for winery visits, visitors are increasingly drawn to unique and personalised experiences. Therefore, the creation of these distinctive activities by wine operators can significantly enhance the visitors' experiences, leading to more fulfilling and memorable visits, thereby empowering wine operators with the responsibility to shape these experiences.

Moreover, the potential for growth and success in the wine tourism industry is immense, and collaboration among stakeholders is the key to unlocking it. By pooling their collective efforts, stakeholders cannot only ensure the industry's resilience but also pave the way for its prosperous future.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is not without limitations; the data used was from online reviews, some of which were posted more than ten years ago. Future research could use current and empirical data to study the status quo of wine experience in Namibia. Moreover, the lack of representativeness of the sample of TripAdvisor reviews is a major limitation of the current study. However, electronic word of mouth significantly influences other potential visitors in their destination choice and should be addressed by winery operators and destination developers. Additionally, it would be interesting to know if any other variables, such as age, gender, and perceived wine expertise, might differentiate the wine experience expectations.

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Please cite this article as:

Hindjou, E.V. & Dixit, S.K. (2025). Wine Tourism Experience Vis-À-Vis Wine Tourism Development: A Netnographic Analysis of Namibian Wineries. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 31(1), 49-59, <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.31.1.4>



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