The winery as an experiential stimulation: Differences between passage and proximity tourism

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Abstract

Faced with new challenges in an evolving world market, wineries reconsider strategic options and rediscover the opportunities of wine tourism. The aim of this research is to study the winery as a mediator of experience stimulation, to define the sense of the place and get an understanding of a collective representation of place identity perceived by the visitors. We identify how the winery's atmosphere and offers creates experiential value for the visitor. The research methodology based on cognitive mapping enables us to tackle a collective perception of the winery. Our results reveal differences between passage and proximity tourism: for the former, the experience is characterized by discovery and for the latter by friendliness and a pleasant experience.

Key words: wine tourism, place identity, relationship marketing, cognitive approach, mapping

Topic area: wine tourism and cellar door sales

Introduction

In the context of the commodity metaphor (Patterson 1992), the place is considered as a set of attributes necessary to support activities and satisfy the goals and needs of the visitor. The relationship partner metaphor (Brook et al, 2006) emphasises the emotional and symbolic qualities of a place, and place attachment focuses on social interactions between visitors (Heide and Gronhaug, 2006). The place extends beyond its physical characteristics: it encompasses what the visitors do and with whom; it is why we are place attached (Hammit et al. 2009). Emotional and symbolic meanings define the place identity, whereas functional meanings define how the place facilitates desired experiences such as place dependence (Kyle and Chick, 2007). The link between experiences and events strengthens visitors' place attachment.

The winery is an authentic place (Hall and Michael 2008, Getz 2000) with physical characteristics (the entry statement, the design concept, especially the cellar door) that define an ambiance and enhance visitors' winery experience (Alonso and Ogle 2008). Visitors to the winery frequently seek a unique relationship with the place as they "want to be enchanted by the stories that connect the land, the people and the wine" (Hall and Michael 2008). The consumption of wine during the winery tour makes it possible to interact with the winery staff, exchange with other consumers, and it facilitates communication through the sharing of common experiences (Groves et al. 2000), create the sensory stimulation for the winery visitor (Orth and Bourrain 2005). Discussions and wine consumption can be considered as an aesthetic experience (Charters and Pettigrew 2005).

A visitor does not have the same kind of experience on his/her first visit as on subsequent visits. The first time, the intention is mainly to discover a new taste and a new wine but also to "experience the atmosphere of the winery" (Alant and Bruwer 2004). For the first visit, the winery is included in a holiday trip and the diversity of the experience is crucial. If it is a repeat visit, the visitor expects to spend a pleasant moment with friends or family.

Wine tourism is experiential consumption

Wine consumption focuses more on symbolic, aesthetic and hedonistic dimensions (Charters and Pettigrew, 2005; Groves et al. 2000). It is not only a question of creating a unique experience during the visit, but this experience should be cultivated by creating post-visit strategies. The development of consumer loyalty encompasses the feeling of membership of a club (invitations to events, promotional offers, newsletters). Winery visiting experiences refer to social identity, social groups and the various cultures.

In developing wine tourism, it is important to consider the differences in each visitor's perception of a winery. While studies (Hall and Mitchell, 2008) tend to agree on the first two motivations for visiting a winery, to taste and buy wine, they diverge on the importance of other motivations as the need for relaxation, a place for socialization, a learning experience. The question that remains is whether a visitor is interested by the wine or if he/she is also attracted by tourist aspects of the place. Indeed, Johnson (1998) and Christensen et al. (2004) measure the difference between those who come for the wine and those who come for the tourist aspects. There are a number of differences relating to different countries, France in particular (Daniel 1994).

Wine tourism has another aspect distinguishing it from the classic wine industry offerings: an interactive and holistic consumer experience with wine and with its region of origin (cultural and natural dimensions), as well as with a wider temporal context (pre- and post-visit). It could largely exceed the wine-tasting experience (Ali-Knight and Pitt, 2001; Dodd and Gustafson, 1997; Mitchell et al. 2000; Mitchell and Hall, 2006) due to the interactions with the winery atmosphere, between the visitor and other visitors and with other experiences related to gastronomy, accommodation or wine festivals and other wineries. Ali-Knight and Pitt (2001) categorize wine tourism experiences along the 2 axes: active /passive and immerse/absorb. They define 4 types of experience: spectacle, education, aesthetics, escape. A winery can stimulate the visitor aesthetically being organized in terms of an experience "arena" (Westwood, 2006).

This experience arena can show a relationship with the sense of a place for a visitor. The objective of our research is to define this sense of place as it defines the perceived positioning of place. Differences in terms of wine purchasing have been revealed recently for an overseas' visitor and a local visitor (Mitchell and Hall 2004, Jarvis and Lockshin 2005). This finding suggests that overseas people visit the winery for an experience and not for purchasing wine. Moreover there are different reasons to visit a winery for an inbound visitor and a domestic one (Jaffe and Pasternak 2004). Having different reasons to visit a place leads to differences in a sense of the same place for different visitors (Hammit et al. 2009). This research aims to analyze the differences mentioned above – the differences between a local visitor (proximity tourism) and a non local visitor (passage tourism).

Cognitive Mapping Approach to Elaborate Winery's Positioning
There are several research papers using the cognitive approach which have inspired our study. Recently, it has proven invaluable in tourism applications (Ryan and Cave, 2005; Cave, 2005) studying the underlying dimensions of visitors' knowledge and familiarity with the place, its nature, relaxation versus frustration or threat based on the maps. In a wine context, a cognitive mapping has been used to analyze strategic development of small and medium size wineries in the Bordeaux region (Bouzdine-Chameeva, 2006). To our knowledge the cognitive approach has not yet been used in the wine tourism context. We implement it basing on the construction of a collective causal map of a group, which is developed in the course of several interviews.

The cognitive map is an organized representation of the way in which a person believes a problem has come about. It is natural that different members of a group have different individual maps as they have different visions on the particular subject. The construction of a collective map of a group is based on the results of the comparative analysis of ideas and links represented in individual maps. The comparison of causal maps helps to identify the similarities and differences between individuals, develops an instrument for measuring the agreement between individuals. The inherent heterogeneity of the individual cognitive structures leads sometimes to situations where unanimity maps do not exist as the individuals do not have a homogeneous representation. The collective maps of majority have proven to be the most comprehensive as they contain the issues which are most important for each participant and are selected by the majority. This approach (Eden et Ackermann, 1998; Bouzdine, 2006) is use to build perceived positioning.We use this cognitive mapping approach to build the perceived positioning of a winery in the Bordeaux area (see Exhibit 1). La Winery, a 26 ha wine tourism complex in a contemporaneous architectural style, boasts exhibition areas, parkland and picnic areas with water features, an amphitheatre, restaurant, tasting rooms and 1,000 square meters of retail space The current positioning of a winery is centered on art, food and wine.

We organize three focus groups (two in Bordeaux on proximity tourism and one in Paris on passage tourism). The sample size is 29 people: 45% are men. Under 25's represent 28%. A further 28% are between 25 and 35 years old. Finally, 28% are between 35 and 50 years old. 24% drink wine regularly. There is no gender or age difference between Bordeaux and Paris participants (Sex: Chi²=0.14, p=0.7; Age: Chi²=0.14, p=0.7).

There are 37 concepts suggested by the groups for place identity (see Exhibit 2 for the list of concepts). Central concepts are shared by all the participants to define the positioning of the winery as shown in figure 1:
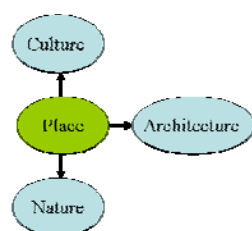

Figure 1: global positioning of the winery

The winery is defined as landscape (nature, architecture), as attractive scenery (Carmichael, 2005) in which culture (art, wine, gastronomy, etc.) is represented as a global experience. Here, the landscape is not in relation to the region (Mitchell et al. 2000) but to the origin of the winery.

In figure 2, we present the collective perception of the winery for tourists living in Bordeaux (proximity tourism) and those that pass through Bordeaux. Passage tourism is characterized by the holistic vision of the experience, while proximity tourism is defined by a fragmented vision.
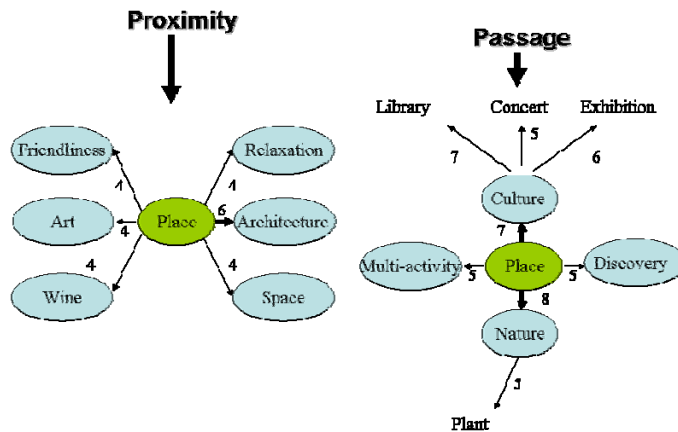

Figure 2: perceived positioning of the winery: differences between passage tourism and proximity tour.

From the proximity map, we can see that proximity visitors associate the place with "relaxation" and "user-friendliness" as recreational motivations (Alant and Bruwer, 2004; Carmichael, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2000). For them, it is a place to spend a pleasant time associating "art" and "wine": those living in Bordeaux are aware of the original positioning. They do not associate the place with culture (exhibitions, concerts, etc.), but perceive it as an artistic object. The words "spaces", "architecture" and "wine" are also associated with this place. This is a traditional vision in the Bordeaux area because most wineries combine architecture or "terroir" in local terms, and wine: the winery will be seen as a monument, living history or as heritage (Getz, 2000).

Passage visitors no longer associate the place directly with wine (the concept "Wine" doesn't appear in the passage map). It is thought of more as an arts center ("exhibition", "concert" and "library") inside a park ("nature" and "plant") with several landscapes. It is the originality of the concept which is attractive for the visitors. Architecture does not appear as a dimension of the positioning, so the building is not so important to draw in passage tourists. Also, it is a global experience, and the visitors wish to discover ("discovery") all the activities for themselves ("multi-activity"); this dimension does not appear for the proximity visitors. Also, the concept of the wine "library", which appears here, shows that visitors want to discover novelty in wine-tasting (Alant and Bruwer, 2004) which contributes to a pleasant experience. Indeed, it seems that these visitors need a certain interactivity and sensory stimulation which facilitate this discovery through routes inside the winery. It seems that the visitor would be involved in "much greater immersion than the entertainment and an education experiences" as experiential motivations (Ali-Knight and Pitt, 2001).

Conclusion

This research contributes to validating empirically causal relationships between visitors' associations with a place identity, by studying the winery as a mediator of experience stimulation for a visitor, defining the sense of the place and providing a better understanding of a collective representation of place identity as perceived by the winery visitors. The perceived positioning defined by the collective map also opens up a new perspective for exploring differences in winery perceptions according to visitors' personal characteristics, such as sex or age. To be attractive for proximity tourism, the diversity of wine offers, relaxation space and architecture are very much marketing driven (e.g. Raymond and Brown, 2007). For passage tourism, it is important that the winery defines some trails

between nature and building and some cultural activities that the visitor could then choose quite independently.

It will be interesting to link the sense of place perceived by the visitors to their buying behavior in future studies.

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Exhibit 1: **The appearance of La Winery.**

The emblem of the place, that the visitor from Bordeaux sees, is a red steel sculpture fifteen meters high (the Sun Tree by Susumu Shingu, a stylized vine plant). After the Sun Tree, a giant bronze turtle by Jan Fabre invites the visitor to come in. The Winery is a cellar door offering 40,000 bottles and 2,000 references costing between 8 and several thousands of euros a bottle. The Winery offers vintages that are difficult to find. The flagship event is a tasting, which is at one and the same time a sensorial discovery and a means to better self-knowledge (the visitor discovers what kind of wine corresponds to him best). The tasting is personalized and designed to direct the visitor into the world of wine. Several types of tasting are offered (first discovery, comparison between great wines, thematic). In the restaurant, a special menu enables you to combine gastronomical meals and wine. The sommelier selects little-known wines, of an excellent price-quality level. The visitor can discover wines before buying in the cellar door.

The entrance to La Winery.

Restaurant: Le Why.   The Wine Cellar Door

Exhibit 2 **Concepts**

1. place	12. restoration	24. know-how
2. cultural center	13. conference	25. values.
3. space	14. concert	26. variety
4. nature	15. freedom	27. diversity
5. pleasure	16. landscape	28. targeted
6. structure (modern)	17. modernity	29. innovation
7. sculpture	18. interactivity	30. reception
8. regional window	19. media	31. mixture of kind
9. market of local products	20. culture	32. fluidity
10. purchase of wine	21. international	33 library (of wine)
11. discovery.	22. relaxation	34. works of art
	23. calm	35. consumption

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36. discrete

37. terrace