

THE ROLE OF TASTING ROOMS IN CREATING AN EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO WINE BRANDS

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Abstract

Winery tasting rooms currently account for 64% of the California wine that is sold and the number of tasting rooms is growing rapidly. Tasting rooms are found not only in California, but throughout the United States and in many other wine grape growing countries. As well as providing a retail location for the sell of wine, tasting rooms can play an important role in developing long term customer loyalty to the wine brand. A positive experience at the winery can create an emotional attachment to the brand that is retained long after the visit occurs. Therefore, it is important for tasting room managers to understand the factors that create an emotional attachment in the mind of consumers. This study empirically investigates the relationship between 5 factors believed to be important to creating an emotional attachment. These 5 factors are: **Basic Customer Service, Visitor Education, Brand Differentiation, Tasting Room Appearance** and **Purchase Assistance**. Data for the empirical study came from a mystery shopper program and the sample had evaluations from 26 different wineries. Three premier wine producing regions in California were represented in the study. Scales to measure the constructs were tested for reliability and correlation and regression analysis on factor loadings were used to test the relationships. All of the 5 factors correlate highly with **Emotional Attachment**, with the most important factors appearing to be **Visitor Education, Brand Differentiation** and **Basic Customer Service**.