

The Impact of Eco-Friendly Attributes on Bordeaux Wine Tourism and Direct to Consumer Sales

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◦**Purpose:** *To explore the ability of Bordeaux wineries to attract tourists and drive cellar door sales based on eco-friendly attributes, e.g. being certified organic or biodynamic.*

◦**Design/methodology/approach:** *Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 12 winery owners and managers in the Bordeaux wine region.*

◦**Findings:** *From the owners/managers' perspective, visitors to eco-friendly Bordeaux wineries are not "accidental tourists", appointment only visitation policies are the norm and do not seem to be a barrier, wine tourism products are varied and attract visitors interested in qualitative experiences offering enrichment and learning, direct to consumer sales are an important channel for Bordeaux eco-friendly wineries, potential barriers to direct to consumer sales expansion include resourcing and the Bordeaux négociant structure.*

◦**Practical implications:** *There are two categories of managerial implications: for the winery and the wine region. Wineries should consider to conduct cultural profiling for certain groups of tourists, improve their tasting room and documentation standards, sell at the cellar door during en primeur week, convey eco-friendly certification on all communication materials and improve digital and Web 2.0 offerings. The Bordeaux wine region should integrate eco-friendly lifestyle elements into communication strategies, improve coordination between eco-friendly producers, offer a variation of Germany's strausswirtschaften, expand the existing wine route network, develop a simple financial model to determine tourism investment hurdle rates, increase the supply of rural guest lodging, improve coordination between private and public actors responsible for Bordeaux wine tourism and hold more eco-friendly wine festivals.*

Key words: Bordeaux wines, direct to consumer sales, eco-friendly wines, wine tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, between 7.5 and 10 million foreign and domestic tourists visited a French winery (Baudouin, 2013, Lespinasse-Taraba, Dumont, Cholvy, and Puydebat, 2011). The majority dedicate a week to their visit (Bloch, 2011) and spend an average of €203 (ex-lodging) (Girard, 2013, Bloch, 2011). Given this healthy mix, there is significant potential for further development of wine tourism in France. Yet wine tourism for profit in the Bordeaux region is a relatively new phenomenon (Vignaud, 2011). Growth in Bordeaux wine tourism began in the 1990s, the result of multiple factors, including competition from New World wineries and the French wine crisis (Vignaud, 2011). In 2011, the Bordeaux wine region welcomed approximately four million visitors, an increase of 18% versus 2009 (Gombault and Coutellier, 2011). Yet the median number of visits per winery is just 100 per annum (Tarricq, 2011), mostly during the summer months (Bloch, 2011).

If wine tourism is a priority for the Bordeaux region (the 2016 planned opening of the €63 million Cité des Civilisations des Vins is a case in point), eco-friendly wines and wineries do not figure prominently. According to Barber, Taylor and Deale (2010), environmental tourism, or ecotourism, is an expression of tourism that takes place within the natural environment. Though wine tourism normally takes place within the natural environment, it is not often associated with ecotourism. Winescapes appear to be natural attractions yet, like national parks they are managed and regulated, products of a value system leading to a constructed view (Ryan, Hughes and Chirgwin, 2000, Gombault and Jolly, 2011).

The question of what impact eco-friendly attributes, hereby defined as being certified organic or biodynamic, have on a wine tourist's decision to visit a winery and purchase at the cellar door is valuable for tourism operators, destination marketers and eco-friendly winery managers. Targeting tourist segments that value eco-friendly credentials could help wineries differentiate themselves and increase lucrative cellar door sales. The purpose of this study is to investigate the ability of eco-friendly winery owners to attract tourists and sell them eco-friendly wines at the cellar door. Based on the literature review (Section 2), it appears that eco-friendly wineries and tourism are a good fit; interviews conducted (Section 3) seem to confirm this point (Section 4).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of wine tourism research has accelerated over the past two decades. A number of researchers have focused on the wine tourism destination features and competitive positioning based on the ability to connect with consumers (Getz and Brown, 2006, Orsolini and Boksberger, 2009, Weston, 2003). Among destination features, eco-friendly attributes and claims are starting to play a key role in attracting wine tourists, even in the Bordeaux region.

According to Weston (2003), successful wine tourism regions develop overtime like a heritage site. By creating a wine tourism place and marketing associated attractions in conjunction with the winery, wine tourism destinations can ensure a better future. From this perspective, physical distance can even be part of the wine tourism destination's appeal. Getz and Brown (2006) explored this topic by evaluating the level and characteristics of demand for long-distance wine tourism among Canadian consumers in Calgary, Alberta.

According to Orsolini and Boksberger (2009), wine tourists place the highest value on aesthetics (33%), entertainment (24%), escape (22%) and education (21%) when evaluating wine tourism experiences. This is in line with Getz and Carlsen (2008) and Quadri-Felitti and

Fiore (2012), who highlighted the importance of ‘edutainment’ in successful wine tourism destinations. As such, regional initiatives and individual cellar door activities can play an important role in attracting customers and developing direct sales for wineries.

2.1. Wine tourism in the Bordeaux region

In the Old World, wine tourism is inked to the natural environment as well as the area’s cultural, architectural gastronomic heritage (Frochot, in Hall, Johnson, Cambourne, Macionis, Mitchell and Sharples, 2000). Of the wine tourists in France who dedicate a week to their tour and spend €203 (ex-lodging), half their spend is on wine (€104). The balance is divided between food and beverage (€70), wine education (€15) and wine-related products (€14) (Girard, 2013, Bloch, 2011). By contrast, 43% of Napa Valley’s wine tourists allocate one day and spend \$150 (Bloch, 2011). In Spain, the average length of stay is 2.6 days and the average spend (ex-lodging) is €127 (Bloch, 2011).

The Bordeaux region is a popular wine tourism destination thanks to the outstanding reputation of its wines as well as its proximity to the Atlantic coastline (Frochot, 2000, Vignaud, 2011). Yet Bordeaux has been accused of being a latecomer to wine tourism due to the fact that Bordeaux wine producers traditionally sell their wine to *négociants* or cooperative cellars (Randelli and Schirmer, 2010, Lespinasse-Taraba et al., 2011). As a result of this commercial structure, the Bordeaux region does not have a strong tradition of vineyard hospitality or direct to consumer sales (Randelli and Schirmer, 2010). Being a latecomer can have its advantages in that best practices can be observed, potentially leading to the development of a superior offer.

Examples of outstanding Bordeaux wine tourism entrepreneurship include the Cathiards at Château Smith Haut-Laffitte (vinothérapie spa, Michelin starred dining, boutique hotel), Philippe Raoux at the Château d’Arsac (contemporary art collection) and La Winery, (fun wine education, fine and relaxed dining, contemporary art, wine shop), the Cazes at Château Lynch-Bages (Bages village shops and restaurant, contemporary art) and Bernard Magrez (cultural foundation, luxury wine tourism offering, large events) (Gombault and Coutellier, 2011; author, 2013).

Yet, the Bordeaux region is not a member of the 36 destinations that form “*Vignobles & Découvertes*”, an initiative launched in 2009 by Atout France, to promote wine and vine tourism across the country (Versace, 2011). Instead, Bordeaux offers a ‘*millefeuille*’ of wine tourism initiatives (Randelli and Schirmer, 2010). For example the Aquitaine region has “*Destination Vignobles*”, the Gironde département has “*Vignobles et chais en Bordelais*” (nearly 500 members), the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) promotes its “Best of Wine Tourism” label and the Chamber of Agriculture supports “*Bienvenue à la Ferme*”. The official wine route of Graves and Sauternes, with its three themed itineraries, information points, accommodation and restaurants, resembles official wine routes in other parts of France, e.g. Burgundy and Alsace. Unfortunately, other parts the Bordeaux region are less well structured and visitors must fend for themselves via the myriad information points or join an organized tour. According to Vignaud (2011), the D2, a local road running through the Médoc peninsula, is often referred to as the route des châteaux but it is not an official circuit.

Bruwer (2003) maintains “*the concept of a bounded space is vital to the idea of a wine route since it defines for its wine-producing members an identity that proclaims unique attributes for their wines and cultural heritage*”. Given the Bordeaux region’s rich architectural and cultural heritage, there is a clear opportunity to further structure its wine tourism offering to

ensure an authentic and multi-dimensional experience.

2.2. Ecotourism and Eco-tourists

Ceballos-Lascuráin's historical definition of ecotourism has transformed, according to Sharpley (2006), into "*a manifestation of alternative (to conventional, mass) tourism that takes place within the natural environment and, implicitly, a specific form of sustainable tourism development*". Moreover, Sharpley explains that ecotourism "*is also considered to be a form of tourism that challenges the traditional structure and inherent power relations of international tourism*". In short, ecotourism is a means of shifting power from corporations (e.g. Thomas Cook, Tui) to local providers for which there are three pillars for development (Sharpley, 2006):

1. Environment: Ecotourism is low impact tourism that contributes to the conservation of natural areas.
2. Development: Ecotourism should encourage local participation and sustainable socio-economic benefits.
3. Experience: Ecotourism should provide opportunities for learning and meaningful encounters.

Sharpley (2006) also explains that "*given the broad interpretation and widespread appropriation of the term, some organisations have now re-defined ecotourism as 'responsible' tourism, emphasizing the role of tourists and their interaction with local communities and the environment*".

The International Ecotourism Society describes tourists pursuing "*responsible travel that conserves the natural environs and sustains the well-being of local people*" as eco-tourists (Prebensen and Lee, 2013). Sharpley (2006) suggests using behavioural attributes to distinguish the 'regular' or mass tourist from the eco-tourist. He says an eco-tourist should have "*a positive interest in the environment, culture and development of the destination area/community...[and his/her behaviour] should, ideally, be framed by positive motivations and attitudes towards behaving in a consistently responsible manner*". He also reveals that studies of eco-tourist behaviour and motivations are inconclusive with regards to the extent to which environmental values are powerful motivators in the demand for ecotourism; ego-centric motivational forces and destination pull tend to dominate leading to the conclusion that eco-tourists, like 'regular' tourists, consume ecotourism products for personal benefit. As Ryan *et al.* (2000) humorously assert: "*it must be kept in mind that ecotourists are often sophisticated, educated, but they are on holiday!*" The eventual consumption of vinous ecotourism products by holidaymakers is not the worst outcome for eco-friendly wineries.

Sustainable wine tourism and the host community perspective is the subject of a case study by Poitras and Getz (2006). The researchers investigate the Canadian town of Oliver in British Columbia, an area "*where local economic viability is increasingly dependent upon wine tourism*". They propose a strategic planning sustainable wine tourism framework based on the "*three pillars of economic, environmental, economy and social sustainability*" as discussed by Hall [et al.] (2000). Concerns related to sustainable wine tourism include "*unique issues pertaining to the resources used (i.e. the land and water, labour, capital, and infrastructure inputs necessary for grape growing and wine making), specific forms of wine tourism development (e.g. visitor facilities and events at wineries, wine-themed interpretation and information centres, wine museums, wine-themed villages, wine country tours), and the specific impacts caused by wine-related tourism (such as increased traffic on rural roads,*

development of services and facilities in agricultural areas, and new and increased spending patterns)". The authors underline the importance of private-public partnerships where environmental, economic and social goals are managed holistically. While their recommendations are tailored to Oliver, their approach is applicable to other wine regions.

2.3. Summary of research objectives and questions

This research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the impact of organic or biodynamic certification on the choice of a Bordeaux region wine tourism product and cellar door purchases. The study was guided by the following questions:

- Q1: Do eco-friendly attributes positively impact wine tourism offerings?
- Q2: Do eco-friendly attributes positively impact wine tourist purchase behaviour?
- Q3: Is it worthwhile for eco-friendly producers to welcome wine tourists?
- Q4: Can improved wine tourism offerings attract more eco-friendly wine consumers and increase direct to consumer sales?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. A qualitative and exploratory approach

This research involved three steps: a preliminary secondary data gathering of eco-friendly wine producers in the Bordeaux region, twelve in-depth interviews with a nonprobability sample and an analysis. As no previous research was found on this topic for the Bordeaux region, an exploratory research methodology was selected to encourage participants to share their experiences and views. The in-depth interviews were conducted at the winery so interviewees would be comfortable in their own surroundings. Being at the winery also provided the researcher the opportunity to observe the cellar door, tour the winemaking facility, visit tourist offerings (e.g. guest rooms, restaurant), view cultural and/or heritage aspects (temporary art exhibitions, architectural features) and see the winescape.

In the case of eco-friendly wine production, hereby defined as being certified organic or biodynamic, there are myriad reasons why a wine producer decides to embrace this approach and various motives for a tourist to visit an eco-friendly winery. Personal interviews provide insights that otherwise might be difficult to unearth during a focus group or single dose of observation. With the consent of the interview participants, all interviews were recorded, enabling the researcher to maintain eye contact and detect non-verbal cues. Listening more than speaking, demonstrating patience, avoiding open displays of judgement and reiteration techniques were employed during the interviews. Interviews ranged from one to two hours and were usually followed by a tour and tasting. Interviews were conducted in French and then transcribed and translated into English by the author.

The literature review provides a number of benchmark examples of inductive method in-depth interviews. Poitras and Getz (2006) conducted face-to-face interviews with winery owners/managers, government officials, agriculturalists, accommodation operators and recreational tourism providers. Scherrer et al. (2009) conducted semi-structured interviews with wineries in Tenerife and La Palma in the Canary Islands. Like Poitras and Getz, the authors were able to generate a valuable list of proposals for the Canaries' to develop a long-term strategy for rural food and wine tourism. Bruwer (2003) conducted face-to-face interviews with South African wine route estate enterprises in his endeavour to understand the nature and extent of the 'product' on offer. Gombault and Derbaix (2011) conducted an in-

depth interview with the project management team and lead architect of the future Cité des Civilisations du Vin.

3.2. Interviews topics and content

Content and questions were partially derived from the existing knowledge on eco-friendly wines and wine tourism (Barber, Taylor and Deale, 2010, Barber, Taylor and Strick, 2009, Carlsen and Charters, 2006, Croce and Perri, 2010, Hall and Sharples, 2008).

Key aspects covered during the interview:

TOPIC	CONTENT
Why organics or biodynamics?	Drivers, philosophy, rationale, experience Benefits and/or drawbacks.
Certification and labelling	Why or why not? Benefits and/or downsides Commercial impact
Visitors/wine tourists	Number of visitors per annum Opening hours and seasonality Tracking system Mailing list Newsletters/social media, other communication Dedicated staff
Wine tourism product/visitor experience	Specialised tastings, B&B, restaurant, music festival, etc.
Impact of being an organic or biodynamic producer	Visitors' prior knowledge of organic/BD wine % of organic/BD interested visitors Organic/BD communication strategy? Why/why not? % DTC sales and impact of being organic/BD on DTC sales
Evolution in visitor attitudes	Historical vs now and current trend for "natural" wine
Future strategy (1-3 years)	Plans to increase DTC sales (e-commerce?) More/different wine tourist products Communication strategy (changes, increase)
What is needed to develop more direct sales activity?	Benefits/downsides, rationale, examples

3.3. Interview participants

Potential interview candidates in the Bordeaux region were identified during two eco-friendly wine fairs concurrent with Vinexpo in June 2013: a professional tasting of “natural” wines at Moulin Pey-Labrie (Fronsac, 16 June 2013) and the La Renaissance des Appellations biodynamic wine fair (Bordeaux, 17 June 2013). Other events during Vinexpo (Expression of Organic Wine Growers tasting and the multi-producer organic wine stand) provided the opportunity to meet a variety of eco-friendly producers. These experiences, coupled with additional internet research and input from an eco-friendly Bordeaux-based wine seller, led to the compiling of a non-probability sample list of eco-friendly Bordeaux producers who welcome wine tourists and sell directly to the public. Small and large producers (between 10 and 100 hectares) were chosen for their range of experiences.

Table 1: Participants summary

Château Name	AOP	Interview Participant Roles
de Bellevue	Lussac-Saint-Emilion	Owner
du Champ des Treilles	Sainte-Foy-Bordeaux	Owner
Falfas	Côtes-de-Bourg	Owner
Fonroque	Saint-Emilion GCC	Owner & Hospitality Manager
Fonplégade	Saint-Emilion GCC	Hospitality Manager & Technical Director
Guiraud	Sauternes 1er GCC	Co-owner & Brand Ambassador & Wine Tourism Manager
La Grave	Fronsac, Canon-Fronsac	Owners
Le Puy	Francs-Côtes-de-Bordeaux	Owner
Moulin Pey Labrie	Fronsac, Canon-Fronsac	Owner
Tire Pé	Bordeaux Rouge	Owner
Troplong-Mondot	Saint-Emilion 1er GCC	Marketing Dir. & Wine Tourism Director
Clos Puy Arnaud	Castillion-Côtes-de-Bordeaux	Owner

3.4. Data analysis

Interviews were conducted in French and responses were transcribed and translated into English by the author. The provided responses were categorised and analysed using an Excel grid of recurring responses.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Rationale for adopting an eco-friendly approach

The rationale for adopting organic and/or biodynamic methods varies among producers. For some it is a family tradition; others came to the conclusion after years of observing the adverse impact on the soil and vines as a result of conventional viticulture. New ownership and change of life events also played a role.

4.2. Certification and labelling

Some of the sample wineries have been certified organic or biodynamic for decades; others recently certified. Many properties have been working organically or biodynamically for decades or even generations; though certification was an afterthought, often driven by importer requests. The mostly widely cited certification benefit is the ability to communicate certification status. Two-thirds of châteaux proudly display their organic or biodynamic status on their label. Three properties also display their certification logo on their entrance signboards. According to all three owners, this type of visibility drives drop-in visits and direct sales, especially in the summer. Despite the benefits, the certification process is not universally appreciated. Drawback include increased administration and cost.

4.3. Visitors/wine tourists

The participating châteaux receive between 50 and 7,000 visitors per annum. The broad range is due to a number of factors including size, location staffing and strategy. Due to resourcing, the majority the properties are open are by appointment only and visitor management information systems are the exception. Just over half of the châteaux have active consumer mailing lists and only one-third less issue regular newsletters.

4.4. Wine tourism products

The 12 properties offer a range of wine tourism products. All provide tours and tastings of several wines. One property operates a gastronomic restaurant and offers luxury guest accommodation. Another hosts summer concerts and participates in *balades gourmands*, a several kilometre vineyard stroll where one part of a four-course meal is provided at a different winery accompanied by live music. Another offers a selection of tours and wine and food pairings, as well as seated lunches, dinners and cocktail receptions; they even hold an autumn moon celebration. Underground cellars with historic carvings, a guesthouse situated in the middle of the vines, in-depth explanations of biodynamic methods and biodiversity vineyard walks are some of the other offerings. Several owners alluded to the importance of making a personal connection with visitors.

4.5. Impact of being an eco-friendly producer on visitation

One group of interviewees maintain the majority of their visitors seek them out because they produce eco-friendly wines. These visitors, often from northern Europe, have already tasted the wine are not “accidental tourists”. Word of mouth also plays a role, as does an eco-friendly logo at the main entrance to the winery.

A second group of interviewees revealed that their eco-friendly credentials are not the main draw for their wine tourists. Being listed with the Bordeaux tourism office and/or the local *La Maison des Vins* drives visitation from ‘normal’ tourists. Château architecture attracts heritage tourists as does proximity to Saint-Emilion, a UNESCO world heritage site. Concerts and *balades gourmandes* attract visitors interested in music, landscape, the outdoors, gastronomy and the arts. Being a *Grand Cru Classé* or classed growth is also an important factor. In many cases, classed growth visitors are not even aware of a winery’s eco-friendly credentials.

4.6. Evolution in visitor attitudes

Responses to the question about the evolution of visitor attitudes to organic and biodynamic wine were noteworthy. One producer noted whenever a major food crisis attracts media attention, consumers become more interested in organic products. Several producers mentioned the current “fashion” or “trend” for organic and biodynamic wine, though consumer mind-sets for purchasing these wines are still work in progress. Another producer commented on the number of tourists seeking qualitative experiences that offer enrichment and learning, “more than just going to the beach”. Several producers observed increased consumer interest and understanding of eco-friendly practices, particularly among foreign tourists.

4.7. Future strategy and direct to consumer sales

Increasing export sales was a common theme among interviewees. As for increasing direct to consumer sales, responses were mixed. In the case of two classed growth properties, direct to consumer sales were described as a “complimentary activity” and a “promotional tool” - a way of ensuring wine tourists do not leave empty handed, or worse disappointed, without creating any conflict with the *négociant* structure. Conversely, small properties said they would be happy to increase direct sales because of the positive impact on margins and profitability. Interestingly, more than half the sample sells between 10% and 66% of their wine directly to consumers already. The challenge is how to sell more without significantly increasing overhead costs. Several producers said they would like also like to transform dormant historic buildings

into guest accommodation.

4.8. Requirements for increasing direct sales and wine tourism

When asked what is needed or what is missing in order to develop more direct sales and wine tourism activity, the responses were clear: more than half the interviewees said staffing is a barrier; they personally don't have the time to dedicate themselves to the task. Unfortunately, employment costs are high and most say it would be hard to justify the cost of hiring someone for direct sales and tourism, at least initially. Moreover, the classed growth properties are very committed to the *négociant* system though one has an active wine club.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1.

This research endeavoured to explore the ability of eco-friendly Bordeaux wineries to attract tourists and drive cellar door sales from the perspective of winery owners and managers. Based on the research, the answer would appear to be that eco-friendly Bordeaux wineries can; however, there is plenty of room for improvement. A summary of the responses to the questions that guided the study is as follows:

Q1: Do eco-friendly attributes positively impact wine tourism offerings? According to the interviewees, there is a niche group of eco-wine tourists who visit their wineries specifically because they produce organic and/or biodynamic wine. These visitors have prior knowledge of their product and are not "accidental tourists". As such, appointment only visitation policies do not seem to create a barrier. Such visitors tend to seek out tourism experiences offering enrichment and learning.

Q2: Do eco-friendly attributes positively impact wine tourist purchase behaviour? Like any other kind of tourism, wine tourism is subject to assumptions and omissions (Ryan et al., 2000). Eco-friendly wineries that clearly exhibit the lifestyle that accompanies organic and biodynamic viticulture cited the importance of the personal connections established with their visitors. These visitors purchase at the cellar door and tend to remain loyal customers. This accounts for the percentage of direct sales for half of the sample base: between 10% and 66%.

Q3: Is it worthwhile for eco-friendly producers to welcome wine tourists? Direct sales to wine tourists improve a winery's margins by eliminating middlemen, reducing freight and shipping costs and building customer bases. In the case of three sample wineries, the loyal direct *en primeur* sales customer base also provides improved cash flow.

Q4: Can improved wine tourism offerings attract more eco-friendly wine consumers and increase direct to consumer sales? The recent increase in French wine tourism and the steady growth in organic French wine sales beg an improved offering. By offering wine tourism products that attract tourists also interested in culture, heritage, gastronomy, etc., eco-friendly wineries can better promote their wines and attract new consumers to the eco-friendly wine category.

5.2. Managerial implications

There are two categories of managerial implications: for the winery and for the wine region. From a winery perspective, and based on our findings, owners / managers of eco-friendly wineries should consider to:

- Conduct a cultural profiling of Belgian and UK/Irish vs. French tourists and develop targeted marketing strategies for eco-wine tourism offerings that meet their specific expectations.
- Reduce potential visitor discomfort and/or anxiety by providing good standard tasting rooms, multi-lingual tasting notes, clear price lists and organic/biodynamic wine production summary documentation.
- Take advantage of the *en primeur* week and offerings to sell more eco-friendly wine directly to consumers at the cellar door and via newly established wine clubs.
- Convey organic and biodynamic certification on all communication and packaging materials as a point of differentiation.
- Welcome more tourists at eco-friendly wineries to improve cellar door sales and profit margins, create personal relationships and engender positive word of mouth publicity.
- Improve digital and Web 2.0 offerings, utilisation and analytics to ensure eco-friendly wine tourist satisfaction, positive word of mouth publicity and improved consumer understanding.

From a regional perspective, and based on our findings, the various stakeholders involved in the Bordeaux wine tourism development should consider to:

- Increase eco-friendly awareness among “normal” consumers by integrating eco-friendly lifestyle elements into all communication strategies and ensuring eco-friendly winery participation in a broad range of wine tourism offerings.
- Improve communication and coordination between eco-friendly Bordeaux producers to offer a variation of *strausswirtschaften*¹, to expand and extend the existing Bordeaux wine route network.
- Develop a simple financial model for small and medium-sized wineries to determine the hurdle rate for eco-friendly wine tourism product infrastructure and human resource investments.
- Increase the supply of rural guest lodging and sustainable tourism products in the Bordeaux wine region and ensure that nature-based, sustainable and family-friendly activities are included. Offering hands-on experiences/interaction with eco-friendly winescapes is critical.
- Improve coordination between the various private and public actors responsible for the management and promotion of the Bordeaux wine tourism region. Participate in Atout France’s “Vignobles & Découvertes”.
- Hold more eco-friendly wine festivals and events throughout the year to attract a broad base of attendees and avoid “touristification”.

In summary, an eco-friendly winery visit is an opportunity to experience a way of life. It should provide eco-friendly wine tourists aesthetic, educational, entertaining and escapist experiences that can fulfil personal development needs, build brand loyalty and generate word of mouth interest leading to more direct sales and better profit margins.

¹ *Strausswirtschaften* (literally, “bouquet at the inn”) are very popular in German wine regions in the spring and summer months. Winery owners are permitted to serve their own wine along with cold, regional dishes to tourists from May through September. No special licensing is required, normal business regulation does not apply and no additional taxes are due. Each state sets its own conditions for operation. The concept also exists in Austria.

6. CONCLUSION

This research endeavoured to determine the impact of eco-friendly attributes on the choice of a Bordeaux region wine tourism product and cellar door purchases. It also investigated the benefits and value of welcoming wine tourists to eco-friendly producers. There is an eco-friendly market segment buying wine directly at the cellar door in the Bordeaux region. Half of the sample wineries sell a significant percentage (between 10% and 66%) of their wine directly to consumers who search them out because they are eco-friendly; it is not accidental tourism.

6.1. Research limitations and directions for future research

There are several limitations to this research. Limitations include the sampling method and sample size. The sample is non-probabilistic and the researcher identified participating wineries. Another limitation is the single case study aspect. This is compounded by the case study being comprised of only winery owners and managers' views; it does account for consumers' experience and opinions. The primary data generated are limited and cannot be generalised to the entire Bordeaux region.

Suggestions for future research include a quantitative study of eco-friendly wine tourists in the Bordeaux region. This could be accomplished by attending a variety of wine tourism events such as concerts, open houses, *balades gourmands* and eco-friendly wine fairs. Similar studies could also be replicated in larger eco-friendly French wine producing regions, namely Languedoc-Roussillon and Provence. In addition to producing more eco-friendly wine, these regions are highly touristic and rich in nature-based, heritage and cultural offerings.

Further research could also include cross-cultural aspects of eco-friendly wine tourism. As demonstrated by Prebensen and Lee (2013), there are distinctly different approaches to tourism experiences according to nationality and culture. Studies of UK/Irish and Belgian nationals would be the most interesting for Bordeaux-based wine tourism. As domestic visitors account for 60% of France's wine tourists, it might also be worthwhile to investigate if regional cultural differences within France have an impact on eco-friendly visitor expectations and experiences.

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