

Customer Engagement: A comparison between Australian and French Wine Events

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Abstract:

◦ *Purpose: Given the popularity of Branded Marketing Events (BMEs) in the wine industry, this paper investigates their ability to facilitate customer brand engagement for the hosting wine brand, and consequently increase customer brand purchase intentions. An understanding of the influence of BMEs is investigated from a cross-cultural perspective, comparing the wine sectors and consumer wine culture within Australia (new world wine) and France (old world wine).*

◦ *Design/methodology/approach: A survey was conducted in Adelaide, Australia, and Bordeaux, France, at various wine related events. Event attendees were recruited to report on their perceptions regarding experiential components of the event, their level of engagement with the hosting wine brand, and their resulting brand purchase intentions.*

◦ *Findings: BMEs were found to significantly influence customers' brand engagement and brand purchase intentions in both Australia and France. However, the experience components within the events were found to have differing effects. Australian customers are influenced by cognitive, sensory, and relational components of events, and their increased engagement strongly influences their brand purchase intentions. French customers, however, require pragmatic event experiences to effectively build brand engagement. Their brand purchase intentions are increased by engagement, although not to the same extent as Australian customers.*

◦ *Practical implications: With an understanding of the experiential components of an event that drive customer brand engagement within these two cultures, wine brands can tailor their events to ensure these experiential components are present, which will lead to a more engaging event experience, with positive brand outcomes.*

Key words: wine events, engagement, experience, marketing events, experiential marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

Many wineries host Branded Marketing Events (BMEs) with the intention of engaging customers with their brand through experiential marketing. The interactive nature of these events is considered to engender a psychological state of engagement with the wine brand, hence enhancing loyalty, satisfaction, and commitment to the brand (Brodie, Ilic, *et al.* 2011). It is also expected, and hypothesized in this study, that an enhanced state of engagement will lead to increased brand purchase intentions (Bowden 2009; Hollebeek 2011). However, little is known about which aspects of the experience further the customers' engagement with the brand. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of BMEs, this study empirically investigates the ability for the various experiential components of a BME to facilitate customer brand engagement, and subsequent brand purchase intentions.

The wine industry is unique, in that consumer wine culture and industry structures vary considerably between countries. These differences are certainly highlighted when comparing Australia (a new world wine country) to France (an old world wine country). Australian consumer 'wine culture' is still developing, and, for many, wine is not considered to be a 'part of life'. French wine culture, conversely, is rich in history and deeply embedded within general French culture. The Australian wine industry is dominated by a small number of large wine brands, with over two thousand small wineries competing for the remaining market (Winebiz 2013). While wine regions in Australia do carry some importance and indicate quality of particular wine varieties, it is the individual wine brand that is predominantly marketed, and identified by the consumer. The French wine sector which contains more than three hundred wine appellations (FranceAgriMer 2013) and about fifteen wine regions includes thousands of small wineries. The complexity of this structure, which is due to a long history of wine making in France, explains why the wine estate is considered as the home of the brand - the old world wine (Bouzdine-Chameeva, Faugère, *et al.* 2013). However consumers do not generally identify with individual wineries, but more with wine regions (e.g. Bordeaux, Alsace or Champagne) or wine growing areas within these regions (e.g. Saint-Emilion or Medoc in the Bordeaux wine region).

Despite these considerable cultural and industry differences, wine-related branded marketing events are common in both countries. In considering the impact of BMEs, it should be investigated whether the BME experience impacts on Australian and French wine consumers in the same way. Given the differences in how consumers identify with a brand (i.e. individual wine brand vs. wine region/sub-region), whether customer brand engagement is facilitated in a similar manner and ultimately has the same influence on brand purchase intentions.

This paper will first review the extant literature on branded marketing events and customer engagement, followed by an outline of research hypotheses and conceptual framework. The method section will identify aspects of the research and survey design, measurement items, and report on the reliability and validity of these measures. The results from both the Australian sample and French sample will be discussed in a results section, and the paper will conclude with a general discussion, managerial implications and limitations of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Branded Marketing Events

The foundation for the concept of Branded Marketing Events, lies within the marketing events literature (Drengner *et al.* 2008; Whelan & Wohlfeil 2006) and also draws from the broader literature area of consumer experience (Brakus *et al.* 2009; Gentile *et al.* 2007; Schmitt 1999). While marketing events are "a communication tool whose purpose is to disseminate a company's marketing messages by involving the target groups in experiential activities"

(Drengner *et al.* 2008 p138), there is little consensus regarding the definition of BMEs (Close *et al.* 2006; Drengner *et al.* 2008; Wohlfeil & Whelan 2006; Wood 2009). While sponsorship and community events are often considered to be a type of BME (Close *et al.* 2006), this is debated on the basis that these events exist for some other purpose but are used later for marketing (e.g. sponsorship events), have some marketing application, or are primarily developed for other reasons (e.g. community festivals). Unlike Branded Marketing Events, customers at sponsorship events or festivals do not *necessarily* interact with the brand in the event space.

This paper provides a definition of BMEs that recognizes the necessity for customers to interact with the brand at the event. This builds on the BME literature (Drengner *et al.* 2008; Whelan & Wohlfeil 2006) and the consumer experience literature (Brakus *et al.* 2009; Gentile *et al.* 2007; Schmitt 1999), but also captures the nature of dynamic interactions considered in contemporary marketing fields (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011). We define Branded Marketing Events (BMEs) as “*an experiential activity initiated by a brand that serves as a platform for customers to interact with the brand and each other*”. These events are often held with the explicit purpose of creating a unique, interactive, brand-related experience that facilitates engagement with the brand.

We conceptualise BMEs by considering the key aspects of a consumer experience. However, previous studies investigating consumer experiences have typically examined product-related experiences (Gentile *et al.* 2007), or with reference to experiential (product) brands (Brakus *et al.* 2009). It is widely recognised that an event falls within the plethora of consumer experiences (Gentile *et al.* 2007; Schmitt 1999), and as such we utilise consumer experience measures to capture a BME experience. We use the experience ‘types’ indicated by these studies to measure the types of experiences initiated during a BME. The measure developed by Gentile *et al.* (2007) was selected as it provided a good depiction of social elements (Schmitt 1999), as well as cognitive aspects (Brakus *et al.* 2009). Consistent with our conceptual lens, the authors’ also recognise that customers actively create the experience, rather than passively receive the experience from a company (Gentile *et al.* 2007 pg 396).

Four components of the consumer experience were identified as relevant to the BMEs incorporated in this study; sensorial, cognitive, pragmatic, and relational (Gentile *et al.* 2007). Table 1 outlines the definitions of each experiential component, and identifies examples of winery BMEs that demonstrate these components.

Sensorial component	Experiences that aim to provide positive sensory stimulation, addressing sight, hearing, touch, taste and/or smell. <i>Example: Wine and food event, music event.</i>
Cognitive Component	Experiences that stimulate thought or conscious mental processes. <i>Example: Wine education sessions, food/wine pairing, winery tours</i>
Pragmatic component	Experiences that involve physical action – “the practical act of doing something”. <i>Example: ‘Make your own wine blend’ events</i>
Relational component	Experiences that provide social context, relationships with others, or expression of one’s ‘ideal self’. <i>(An inherent component of any winery event that caters to numerous customers.) Example: Events that project a ‘wine enthusiast’ image, or means of entering an in-group of wine connoisseurs</i>

Source: Definitions adapted from Gentile *et al.* (2007)

2.2. Customer Brand Engagement

Customer Engagement is defined as “the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings and/ or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiate” (Vivek *et al.* 2012 pg 127). This definition of customer engagement recognizes that either the customer or the provider (the wine brand) initiates engagement, but it highlights the need for an interaction between the focal object (i.e. the wine brand) and the customer. In this regard, customer engagement comes about from the connection that individuals form with the brand, based on their experiences at the BME (Vivek *et al.* 2012). Although Vivek *et al.* (2012) recognize that providers may initiate activities or events to engage customers, they do not explain how the nature of interaction with the event facilitates customer brand engagement.

Engagement is most commonly conceptualized as a state of activation, with cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements (Brodie, Hollebeek *et al.* 2011). It is a heightened-state of connectedness with a brand, where consumers are motivated to interact with the brand, create value, and develop strong brand connections. In contrast, the literature on brand experience does not presume a psychological state; it can include experiences in which the consumer shows little interest or connection with the brand (Brakus *et al.* 2009). By examining wine events from an engagement perspective, wineries must not only focus on facilitating an experience, they must ensure that this experience elicits a heightened motivational state for the customer, in order for it to be truly effective. Therefore, the key driver of success of a BME lies in those activities that create customer engagement.

A customer who participates at a BME will demonstrate engagement when they interact with other attendees, experiential cues within the BME (music, food, wine tastings) and/or communicate with winery sales staff. By interacting within the experiential event, they create an experience that is of most relevance to them, and therefore gain the most value from the experience. Customers interact with the brand and with other customers; they are not passive during the experience – firms merely provide a platform through which customers create their own unique value in the experience (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011).

A key element of engagement is that it is a ‘momentary state’ (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011, pg 255). Engagement levels at the onset of the process (or beginning of the event) typically are relatively low; however, they develop over time as the individual interacts with the event, and individuals at the event, and hence the level of engagement increases over the course of these interactions (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011). This heightened state is momentary; the BME is provided as a platform to facilitate value from the experience and engagement with the brand, however the length of time this heightened state of engagement persists is unknown, and it is expected to dissipate after the event.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

An ‘experience’ is recognised as an “environment in which the brand is marketed or sold (e.g. events)” (Brakus *et al.* 2009, pg 53). While extant literature recognises that customers engage with the event itself (Bowden 2009; Vivek *et al.* 2012), it is the interaction with the brand within the event space that facilitates brand engagement. BMEs elicit active engagement between the customer and the brand through an experiential approach, and thus have far greater effectiveness than traditional marketing (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982). Previous research on BMEs has overlooked the active participation of the target group in the communication of the marketing message (Drengner *et al.* 2008). However, taking a Service Dominant Logic theoretical lens, the highly experiential and contextual nature of value co-creation is emphasised (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011; Vargo & Lusch 2004). Therefore, when

considered this way, it is evident that BMEs are an effective platform for a company to interact with customers, engage them, and co-create value in the experience with them. A BME is an effective means of engaging customers for the purpose of co-creating value, as it is completely interactive and subjective in nature. The engagement stems from the meaningful experience at the BME (Calder *et al.* 2013). Events are an effective tool for implementing the experiential marketing perspective; but as well as this, events have the capacity to achieve engagement between the customer and the brand, that cannot be matched by other traditional media tools (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011).

A cognitive experience is one that requires the participant to actively think, or aims to build on a particular area of interest or knowledge. The 'wine connoisseur' actively seeks information about wine brands, regions, varietals, production processes; events that provide in-depth information are of great interest to these customers. This cognitive experience fulfils the customer's need for wine knowledge and brand/region related information. The sharing of information gives the wine connoisseur a greater wine knowledge, and creates a closer connection with the brand. The intrigue and stimulation created through a cognitive experience will encourage the customer to interact more with the wine brand and create a greater sense of engagement.

H1a – Cognitive experience contributes to the Australian customer's brand engagement

H1b – Cognitive experience contributes to the French customer's brand engagement

A sensory experience is one that combines multiple senses (sight, sound, taste, and smell). Wine consumption is strongly related to leisure activity and aesthetic consumption (Charters & Pettigrew 2005), in particular music and food. Events that include activities such as wine and food pairing, or tasting wines while listening to live music, can create a powerful and memorable experience and encourage customers to interact and engage with the brand.

H2a – Sensory experience contributes to the Australian customer's brand engagement

H2b – Sensory experience contributes to the French customer's brand engagement

A pragmatic experience requires physical behaviours or actions from the customer. With the focus of a BME being on the brand, in most instances the customer interacts and engages with the brand itself. Many wineries now invite their customers to participate in certain production processes, to provide them with a closer connection to the wine and how it is made (e.g. winery tours, wine stumping, or customers making their own individual wine blend). The physical, 'hands on' nature of the experience immerses the customer and draws great attention to the brand, enhancing the customers overall brand engagement.

H3a – Pragmatic experience contributes to the Australian customer's brand engagement

H3b – Pragmatic experience contributes to the French customer's brand engagement

Wine consumption is commonly associated with a social experience, and in particular wine events are usually held within in a social setting. People often attend wine-related BMEs with others, whether it be friends, family or acquaintances. In addition, events are usually public and attended by many people, and so the entire experience occurs within a social context. Strategic BME organisers utilize this social setting to ensure that a customer's interaction with the brand causes them to look good in front of their peers. This has an impact on their motivation to further engage with the brand, giving it more attention, interacting further with the brand and being more emotionally engaged with it.

H4a – Relational experience contributes to the Australian customer's brand engagement

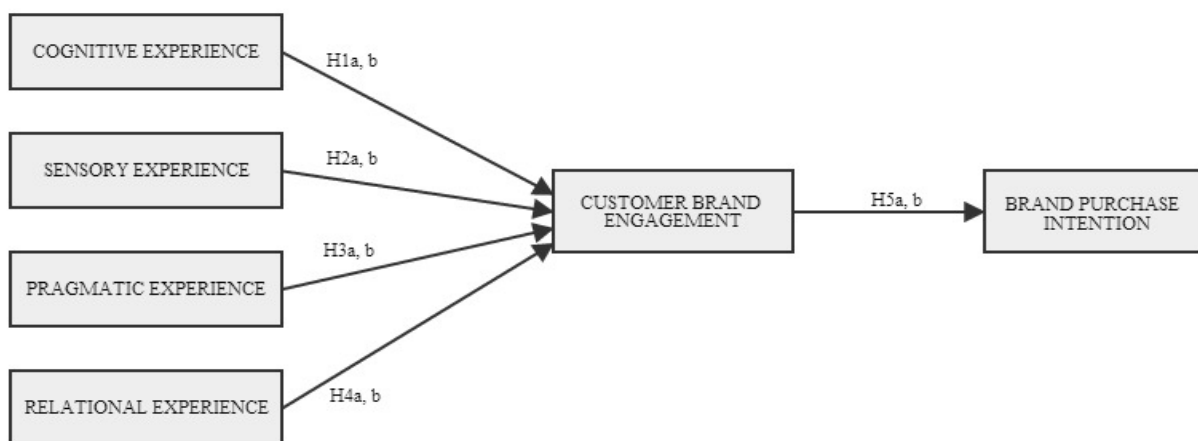
H4b – Relational experience contributes to the French customer's brand engagement

The notion that customer brand engagement enhances a customer’s predisposition towards a brand and hence increases purchase intention has been espoused in recent literature (Bowden 2009; Hollebeek 2011). The increased mental and emotional stimulation, as well as the behavioural interaction that occurs between customer and the brand is thought to predispose the customer to future purchases. However, as engagement is considered context-dependent and not necessarily an enduring state (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011), whether the brand engagement persists until purchase is questionable. Despite these previous assertions that customer brand engagement facilitates brand purchase intentions, this relationship is yet to be examined empirically.

H5a – Positive relationship between Australian customer brand engagement and purchase intention

H5b – Positive relationship between French customer brand engagement and purchase intention

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses



4. METHOD

4.1. Research Design

A quantitative research design with a survey instrument was deemed most suitable to meet the objectives of this study. Following a brief introduction, respondents were first asked to indicate their perceptions of the various experiential components of the event. Then the level of engagement towards the brand was established by asking questions about their cognitive (attention), emotional (enthusiasm) and behavioural (interaction) perceptions of the wine brand/region that hosted the event. Purchase intention questions were then posed to establish the level to which the respondent would actively search for, and purchase, wine from that winery or wine region. The survey concluded with questions relating to demographics of the respondent.

A pre-test of the questionnaire was first conducted with a 220 students attending events at an Australian university. Pre-test participants were asked to complete the survey online, and provide feedback on any difficulties they faced (Page & Meyer 2000; Zikmund 2003). The main data collection used the same survey structure, and included minor wording adaptations to be specific to each event name and wine brand or wine region. The questionnaire was translated to French for the Bordeaux study, and then back-translated to English to check for consistency of wording.

4.2. Sampling

Wineries in Adelaide, Australia and Bordeaux, France that run BMEs for their customers were invited to participate in the study, based on the applicability of their event to this study (i.e. the event fitted the description of a BME) and ensuring diversity of event experiences (e.g. music

oriented, degustation, educational, social events). A total of 10 events held by 6 wine brands in Adelaide were included in the study. Wineries were located in the Barossa, McLaren Vale and the Adelaide Hills, and included 3 music concerts, a winery picnic, a silent auction, and various food-related events (e.g. 2 food and wine pairing events, meet the winemaker dinner, harvest celebration lunch, wine series launch dinner). In Bordeaux, the data collection process embraced the famous wine estates located in 5 different sub-regions (Saint-Emilion, Saint Julien, Entre-deux-Mers, Sauternes, Graves): wine tasting and wine tours, 3 exhibitions and 2 concerts in wine cellars and wine bars, and gastronomic dinners in a restaurant which is well-known in the area for an excellent wine collection and direct relations with wine producers. Researchers attended the events; in Adelaide, event attendees were recruited by the researcher asking for emails to send the survey online; in Bordeaux, event attendees were asked to complete the survey during or immediately after the event through printed surveys.

274 completed surveys were collected in Adelaide and 177 completed surveys in Bordeaux. 98% of respondents of the Bordeaux survey were French residents (1 respondent from Bolivia and 2 from Sweden), and 95% of respondents to the Adelaide survey were Australian residents (1 respondent from Austria, China, Ireland, New Zealand, and the US; 8 respondents from the United Kingdom). It was important to capture a high number of responses from Australian and French nationals, in order to compare results and investigate cultural impact.

4.3. Measurement

All multi-item variables (outlined in Appendix Table 2) were adopted from existing literature and measured using a seven-point Likert scale. Existing scales were adapted for this study, including measures of cognitive, sensory, pragmatic, and relational experiential components (Chang & Chieng 2006; Sweeney & Soutar 2001), engagement dimensions of cognitive (brand attention), emotional (enthusiasm) and behavioural (interaction) (So *et al.* 2012), and purchase intentions (Leroi-Werelds & Streukens 2011; So *et al.* 2012).

It should be noted that the conceptualisation of engagement presented in this research is different to that of So *et al.* (2012), who operationalize engagement as a 5 dimension construct (attention, identification, absorption, enthusiasm, interaction). This study follows a 3 dimension conceptualisation of engagement, which is consistent with extant literature on engagement (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011). The cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions are generally considered the most comprehensive conceptualisation of engagement (Brodie, Hollebeek, *et al.* 2011), and as such, were utilized in this study.

To ensure reliability and validity of multi-item constructs, one-factor congeneric measurement models were tested using AMOS 20 prior to the evaluation of a comprehensive measurement model (Australian data: $\chi^2_{(1)} = 471.75$, $df = 180$, $p = 0.00$, $GFI = .86$; $AGFI = .84$, $CFI = .94$, $NFI = .90$, $RMSEA = .077$) and (French data: $\chi^2_{(1)} = 458.62$, $df = 160$, $p = 0.00$, $GFI = .81$; $AGFI = .74$, $CFI = .84$, $NFI = .78$, $RMSEA = .10$). All variables show Cronbach's alphas of at least 0.80 (Australia) and 0.63 (France) as well as high composite reliability scores (Fornell & Larcker 1981). Convergent validity was confirmed with the average variance extracted exceeding 0.5 and Discriminant validity was examined with all average variance extracted (AVE) scores exceeding the square of the correlations between constructs (Fornell & Larcker 1981; Hair *et al.* 2012). These results are presented in the Appendix Table 4.

Given the complexity of the model and the limited sample size, composites were computed for each construct for further analysis using a three-step approach (Rowe 2002). After testing one-factor congeneric measurement models for all multi-item constructs (step one), factor score regression weights provided by AMOS 20 were used to create a proportionally weighted scale score for every item (step two). The final composite scores were then computed in SPSS 20 (step three), as each proportionally weighted scale score was multiplied by the data column of

the respective item (Rowe 2002). The composite of engagement was calculated as a first-order reflective second order formative construct comprising brand attention, brand enthusiasm and brand interaction.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Australian Results

To further our understanding of the influence of BME experiences on customer brand engagement, the interrelationships between the factors were tested by means of a path model. The complete Australian path model was tested using AMOS 20, and achieved fit ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.29$, $df = 3$, $p = .15$, $GFI = .99$; $AGFI = .96$, $CFI = .99$, $NFI = .99$, $RMSEA = .05$). The standardised path estimates indicate the strongest relationship between cognitive experience and customer brand engagement (.28), followed by sensory experience (.25) and relational experience (.11). Pragmatic experience was not a significant factor to achieve engagement. These results indicate that hypotheses H1a and H2a are supported, while H3a and H4a were not supported (see Table 2). The path model shows a strong relationship between customer brand engagement and brand intentions (.92), indicating that Australian customers are strongly influenced by an engaging event experience (supporting H5a).

Overall, we can see from these findings that Australian customers attending wine-related BMEs are predominantly seeking cognitive, sensory, and relational experiences. These experiences will motivate the customer to interact and engage with the brand in this event space. Facilitation of engagement is important to Australian wine-event customers, as we can conclude that a successful and engaging event will increase customer’s purchase intentions towards the hosting brand.

Figure 2: Path model of Australian data

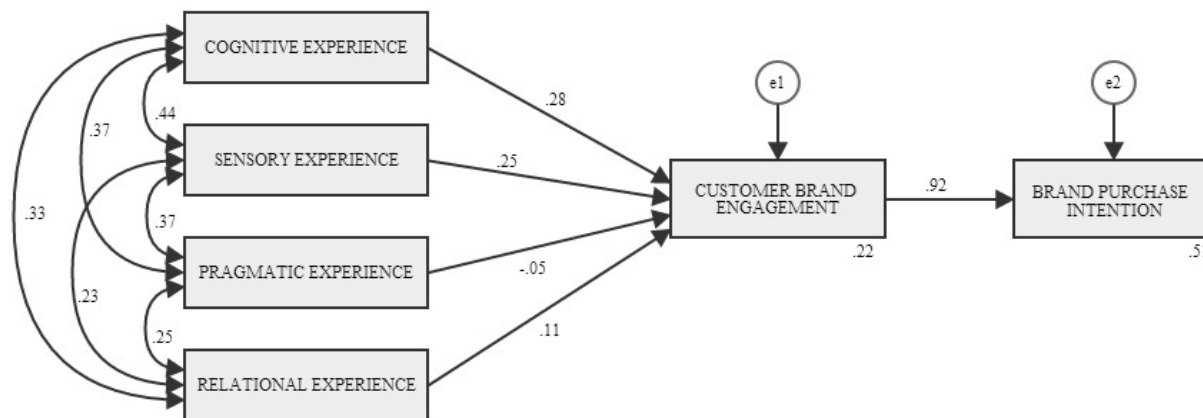


Table 2: Hypothesis Results Summary – Australian Customers

<i>Hypothesis:</i>	<i>Standardized Estimates</i>	<i>Critical Ratio</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Supported/ Not Supported</i>
H1a – Cognitive experience -- > customer brand engagement	.28	4.48	0.00	Supported
H2a – Sensory experience -- > customer brand engagement	.25	4.23	0.00	Supported
H3a – Pragmatic experience -- > customer brand engagement	-.05	-0.83	0.41	Not supported
H4a – Relational experience -- > customer brand engagement	.11	1.89	0.06	Not supported
H5a – customer brand engagement <-- > purchase intention	.92	9.93	0.00	Supported

5.2. French Results

The complete French path model also achieved fit ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.43$, $df = 4$, $p = .25$, $GFI = .99$; $AGFI = .95$, $CFI = .99$, $NFI = .95$, $RMSEA = .05$). The standardised path estimates indicate the strongest relationship between pragmatic experience and brand engagement (.32). The path model shows a significant relationship between customer brand engagement and brand intentions (.36), indicating that French customers are influenced by an engaging event experience, although not as strongly as Australian customers. These results indicate that hypotheses H3b and H5b are supported, while H1b, H2b, and H4b are not supported (see Table 3).

These findings indicate that French customers will only engage if they have participated in a pragmatic experience; they do not respond strongly to experiences that are cognitive, sensory, or relational in nature, but rather they must elicit physical behaviours or actions in order to achieve brand engagement. While engaging with a wine-related event does elicit positive brand purchase intention, French customers are not as persuaded as Australian customers as a result of brand engagement during a BME.

Figure 3: Path model of French data

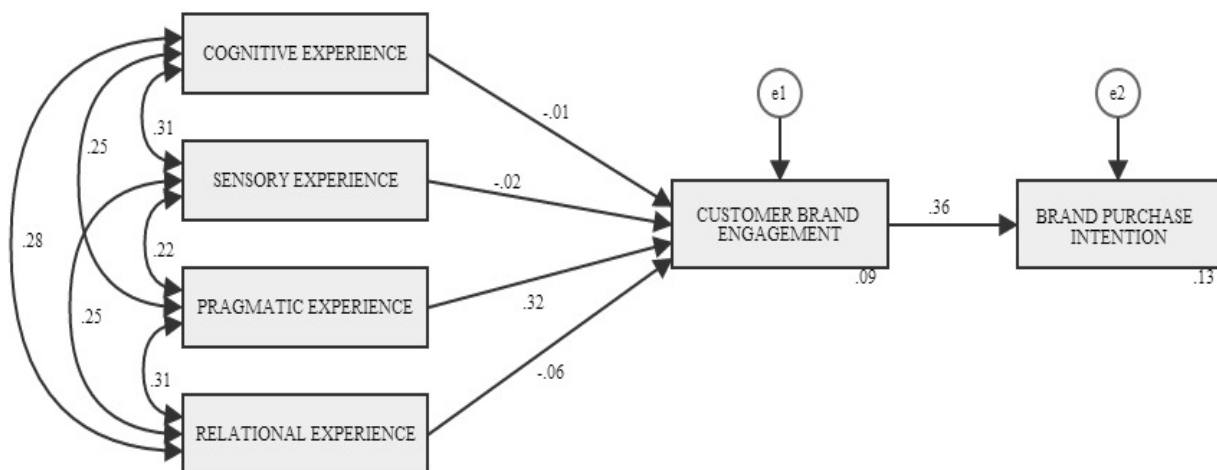


Table 3: Hypothesis Results Summary – French Customers

<i>Hypothesis:</i>	<i>Standardized Estimates</i>	<i>Critical Ratio</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Supported/ Not Supported</i>
H1b – Cognitive experience -- > customer brand engagement	-.01	-0.07	0.95	Not supported
H2b – Sensory experience -- > customer brand engagement	-.02	-0.22	0.83	Not supported
H3b – Pragmatic experience -- > customer brand engagement	.32	4.20	0.00	Supported
H4b – Relational experience -- > customer brand engagement	-.06	-0.79	0.43	Not supported
H5b – customer brand engagement <-- > purchase intention	.36	5.08	0.00	Supported

6. DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide preliminary evidence that wine-related Branded Marketing Events can facilitate customer brand engagement. The ability for an event to initiate a meaningful and unique experience for the attendee leads them to enter a motivational state of increased attention, enthusiasm, and interaction with the brand, which overall is considered to be a state of engagement. Although both events and engagement have been investigated within their own fields, this study combines the two literature bodies and provides quantitative evidence for events to impact on engagement.

This study identified the existence of four experiential components – cognitive, sensory, pragmatic and relational experiences, and aimed to investigate their impact on customer brand engagement. Results indicated that these components are not equally as influential as each other, but rather certain types of experiences stand out as being the primary influence on engagement, particularly for French customers. Marketing managers and event organizers must consider what experiential elements to include and emphasize during a BME, as providing a cognitive and sensory (and to a lesser extent relational) experience to Australian customers, and events with a pragmatic element for French customers, is of utmost importance in achieving customer brand engagement.

Our findings suggest very different relationships and outcomes between the Australian and French customers, most likely a consequence of the variations in consumer wine culture and wine industry structure. Results indicate that that cognitive, sensory, and relational experience have a significant impact on an Australian customer's brand engagement, while pragmatic experiences do not have a significant impact. The opposite findings were revealed for French customers. In order to facilitate engagement, French customers must be provided with a pragmatic experience, a chance to engage in physical behaviours during the event. This suggests a more 'hands on' experience at French events, while Australians prefer a less active event; a chance to take in wine information, experience the sensory components of food or music, or interact with others to create a social experience.

Finally, the results of this study identify that customer brand engagement does impact on brand purchase intention. The main emphasis in previous engagement research been on creating affect-based outcomes – e.g. satisfaction, loyalty, connection, emotional bonds, trust and commitment (Brodie, Ilic, *et al.* 2011); this study indicates that engagement can also elicit tangible, purchase-related outcomes for brands. The results provide preliminary evidence that this relationship is stronger for an individual wine brand (as depicted in the Australian results) than for a wine region/sub-region brand. This suggests a potential dilution effect occurring within generic branding, and is an interesting avenue for future research.

6.1. Managerial Implications

If we were to distill the essence of the managerial implications from this research it would be that, first and foremost, BMEs have been found to influence customer brand engagement and purchase intention, and therefore should be considered part of a winery's marketing strategy. A second essential implication is that intensifying engagement in an *old world* wine region requires different types of activities and strategies to be put in place compared to those necessary to be employed in the *new wine* world region.

For Australian wineries it is crucial for managers to increase their understanding of engagement as reaching this leads to increased purchase intent. Providing cognitive stimulation is needed in all types of events, as our findings confirm that this leads to engagement. As a sensory product, wine offers the opportunity to also extend sensory experiences into other areas; this type of experience also facilitates increased engagement. BMEs should be clearly targeted and focus on the message and the key experiences shown in this research to lead to engagement. From our findings we can infer that Australian wineries must put more emphasis on cognitive and sensory components of customer experience, while wine serves as one of the key constituents.

On the side of French Wineries, the traditional focus has been on the cultural and educational aspects of the wine experience with wine estates not necessarily seeking to establish a long-term relationship with visitors (Faugère, Bouzdine-Chameeva, *et al.* 2013). The weight of tradition relates to the stronger emphasis that Bordeaux wineries place on the fact that their customers show a ‘deep respect’ for their traditions. This sentiment can certainly taint the overall interaction between winery staff and customers, often creating a feeling of ‘distance’ for the customer. However, testimonials by Bordeaux visitors show that there is room for improvement with the pragmatic experience of BMEs. Therefore, it becomes important for French wineries to accept that events must include a pragmatic component, giving attendees the opportunity to engage in physical behaviours and actions during the event, as this is a driving force of facilitating brand engagement.

This paper has purported to prompt managerial awareness of specific marketing strategies to target their customers and enhance brand engagement. Wine customers in France seek a more dynamic relationship with wineries – for example blending their own wine, or creating their own labels. In contrast, Australian customers wish to acquire knowledge in oenology, and wineries should consider their further role in educating customers and building ongoing relationships with a brand via specific sensory experiences. Our observations are consistent with theoretical notions concerning the enhancement of customers’ loyalty (Bowden 2009), contending that BMEs possess strong potential to contribute to customer purchase outcomes. We argue that appropriate levels and specific forms of customer stimulation and activities are expected to impact favourably the underlying mechanisms contributing to repeat purchase intent.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

In conclusion, this paper represents an initial attempt to define the impact of the four different experiential components of Brand Marketing Events on customers’ brand engagement. The interpretation of our results might be tempered by recognition of the various limitations of the study, in particular due to differences in data collection methods between the two countries e.g. paper vs. online survey, data collected during event vs. after event, investigating individual brand level engagement versus wine (sub-) region engagement. Replication of the study in other markets would be useful to identify the explanatory factors of sociocultural impact.

Several questions still remain as they are beyond the scope of this research: How would the findings differ for various segments across demographics such as income level, wine involvement, education and age? What kind of interplay exists between brand and region; does this create confusion and volatility to the customers’ perception of a winery? We leave these themes for future exploration. Ultimately, our aim is to create BME benchmarks in the wine sector to enhance customer brand engagement and strengthen the existing links between wine customers and wine producers.

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8. APPENDIX

Table 4: Reliability and Validity - Australian (and French) Data					
Scale	Item	Cronbach Alpha	Construct Reliability	Variance Extracted	Highest Squared Correlation
Cognitive Experience	This event tried to intrigue me	0.85	0.85	0.66	0.32
	This event tried to stimulate my curiosity	(0.63)	(0.74)	(0.59)	(0.14)
	This event appealed to my creative thinking*				
Sensory Experience	This event was focused on creating a sensory experience	0.94	0.91	0.77	0.48
	This event tried to excite my senses	(0.85)	(0.84)	(0.63)	(0.17)
	This event provided sensory enjoyment				
Pragmatic Experience	I engaged in physical actions and behaviours when I attended this event	0.84	0.88	0.72	0.23
	This event was action oriented	(0.67)	(0.75)	(0.51)	(0.13)
	This event involved physical experiences				
Relational Experience	Attending this event improved the way I am perceived	0.96	0.96	0.86	0.13
	Attending this event made a good impression on other people	(0.90)	(0.88)	(0.66)	(0.13)
	Attending this event gave me social approval				
	Attending this event created a favourable perception of me among other people				
Brand Purchase Intention	I intend to purchase (wine brand) wines in the near future	0.89	0.89	0.73	0.17
	I would actively search for (wine brand) wines in order to purchase	(0.87)	(0.83)	(0.62)	(0.08)
	There is a high probability I would purchase (wine brand) wines				
Brand Attention	I liked learning about (wine brand)	.93			
	I pay a lot of attention to anything about (wine brand)	(.80)			
	Anything related to (wine brand) grabs my attention				
Brand Enthusiasm	I am enthusiastic about (wine brand)	.88			
	I feel excited about (wine brand)	(.65)			
	To me, drinking (wine brand) wines is worthwhile				
Brand Interaction	I have a high level of interaction with (wine brand)	.80			
	I like to receive information about (wine brand) through newsletters/online subscriptions	(.67)			
	I enjoy discussing (wine brand) with others through online forums/brand communities/social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)				
	I spend a lot of time drinking (wine brand) wines, compared to other wines				
() French data is presented in brackets					
* Item was omitted from French analysis					