

Motivations to attend a New Zealand wine and food festival: The role of involvement

Joanna Fountain

Lincoln University, New Zealand

joanna.fountain@lincoln.ac.nz

Greg Ryan

Lincoln University, New Zealand

greg.ryan@lincoln.ac.nz

Abstract:

Purpose - This paper explores the motivations of attendees at the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival and examines the effect of wine involvement on these motivational factors.

Design/methodology/approach - The data were collected via a structured self-complete survey, distributed by research assistants at the Wine and Food festival. In total 249 usable responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square and t tests.

Findings - Wine involvement had a significant effect on the motivations of attendees to the wine and food festival. In particular, those with high wine involvement were much more motivated by learning objectives, including experiential learning (tasting new beer), as well as talking with friends and experts, although socialization and enjoying a festive atmosphere ranked as important motives also. By comparison, socialisation and relaxing motives were key for the low involvement attendees, who generally ranked all motives lower than the high involvement respondents.

Practical implications - This paper explores the under-examined topic of the motivations for wine festival attendance. In particular, by segmenting the sample by wine involvement levels, the varying motives of wine festival attendees are apparent.

Keywords: Wine festival motivation, wine involvement

1. INTRODUCTION

Wine festivals, along with other food and beverage festivals, have become increasingly important as tourist attractions and as branding and promotional tools for regions over the past two decades (Bruwer, 2002; Dodd et al., 2006; Hall and Sharples, 2008). These festivals and events appeal to a growing number of consumers, but for different reasons. For some attendees, a wine and food festival offers an authentic and unique experience of local gastronomy; for others, it is a place to learn more about wine and wine making. In some cases, wine and food festival attendees are more than happy to just enjoy an entertaining experience outside of everyday activities. Despite the growing role of wine festivals and events, the academic study of wine festival attendees –who attends them and why – is still relatively limited. The studies that have been reported generally reveal that motivations for attending these events revolve around escape/relaxation, the specific focus or product of the event (in this case wine), socialisation with friends and family, and entertainment (Park et al., 2008; Tanford et al., 2012; Yuan et al., 2008). The findings echo those of more general festival studies (e.g., Crompton and McKay, 1997; Li and Petrick, 2006).

The role of wine and food festivals in wine socialisation and wine education is somewhat disputed. While there is some evidence of wine festivals providing a good opportunity to attract younger, less experienced wine consumers who are able to learn about wine in a more social and less intimidating environment than at a wine class or a winery (Dodd et al., 2006; Houghton, 2001), other studies have suggested that the focus on fun and entertainment at wine festivals means that it is less likely to attract serious wine consumers, who may be deterred by the ‘party atmosphere’ and conviviality of some wine events (Houghton, 2008). The reality is that wine festival attendees are not homogeneous (Yuan et al., 2008), and different types of festivals will attract markets with varied characteristics and motivations (Houghton, 2001; Park et al., 2008). Wine-related festivals and events exist on a continuum regarding the centrality of wine to the event. For example, many wine festivals incorporate food and music to enhance the experience and some people may attend for these features, rather than for the wine. The educational component of wine festivals can vary dramatically also, ranging from informal learning through wine tasting, to more formal seminars and workshops (Dodd et al., 2006).

The Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival is one of the most recent additions to the growing number of wine festivals and events in New Zealand. This festival was first held in December 2011 and has occurred annually since then. Unlike the many wine festivals which are located in rural regions, this festival is based at North Hagley Park in the centre of the city of Christchurch and features wines from the five South Island wine regions. While wine is undoubtedly central to the festival, this is supplemented by a strong programme of musical entertainment and a range of food options. There is a significant programme of free educational events also, which are generally oversubscribed. This programme includes cooking seminars from well-known chefs and a range of wine master classes from winemakers and wine writers and critics (Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival, 2014). The price of tickets to the event range from NZ\$30 to NZ\$150. General admission tickets in 2014 cost NZ\$37.50, which entitled ticket holders to entry and access to the performances and seminars, but wine tasting was extra (\$1 to \$2 per tasting). Children attending the event with an adult received free entry. With a total capacity of 8,000, all tickets sold out before the day of the event.

In an earlier study of the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival, Fountain (2014) reported that the characteristics of attendees at this festival are quite diverse in terms of socio-

demographic characteristics and wine consumption behaviour. In particular, younger festival goers self-reported as significantly less knowledgeable than older respondents, and purchased considerably less wine for home consumption. Fountain (2014) concluded that younger people may have different motivations for attending this festival than older attendees, but that further research is required to explore this assertion. This study takes up that challenge by examining the motivation of people attending this festival, and explores the segmentation of the market, in particular by wine involvement. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to answer two research questions:

- 1 What are the motivations for attendees at the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival?
- 2: What effect does wine involvement have on these motivational factors?

Product involvement has been defined as “the degree of personal relevance to a product” (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342) and relates to the idea that “certain product classes may be more or less central to an individual’s life, their attributes about themselves, their sense of identity and their relationship with the rest of the world” (Bruwer et al., 2014, p. 147). Being highly involved with a product, such as wine, is also about interest in the product on a regular basis. In the case of wine, this interest may manifest in spending time reading about wine, and talking about wine with friends or wine professionals (Pratt and Sparks, 2014; Lockshin and Spawton, 2001; Yuan et al., 2008). High involvement in wine relates also to a sense of enjoyment and excitement about the product. In other words, wine is an important part of the consumer’s lifestyle and sense of identity (Yuan et al., 2008). To date, there is no universally accepted measurement of wine involvement, although there have been a number of very useful attempts (e.g. Lockshin et al., 1997; Lockshin et al., 2001; Ogbeide and Bruwer, 2013; 2006; Bruwer et al., 2014). Increasingly the concept of involvement has been incorporated in various ways in the study of wine tourism motivations, intentions and behaviour (Brown et al., 2007; Nello and Christou, 2014; Pratt and Sparks, 2014) and has been used to segment wine festival visitors (Yuan et al., 2008). The assumption here is that one’s level of wine involvement may influence the motivations of attendees at the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on data gathered using a self-complete survey which was distributed on a ‘next to pass’ basis by four research assistants during the first four hours of the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival, in December 2014. This resulted in a total of 249 useable surveys. As well as questions about information sources for the festival and wine consumption behaviour, the survey asked a series of questions exploring the motivation for attending the festival, as well as a series of Likert-scale questions aimed to measure respondent’s wine involvement. This wine involvement scale was modified from previous scales, in particular, those used by Brown et al., 2007 and Nello and Christou (2014). All data was entered into SPSS and analysed using descriptive statistics, Chi square tests and t-tests.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1. Females outnumbered males at a ratio of two to one amongst festival respondents. This high proportion of females is similar to that found in previous studies in New Zealand (Fountain, 2014; Nicholson and Pearce, 2000) and globally (Park et al., 2008; Weiler et al., 2004; Yuan et al., 2008), and reflects the fact that females represent a higher percentage of wine consumers than males (Kolyesnikova et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 2003). The age distribution was bimodal, peaking in the 26-35 years and 46- 55 year groups. As reported by Fountain (2014) this festival seems to attract an older age profile than many wine festivals (Hall and Mitchell, 2004; Houghton, 2008; Nicholson and Pearce, 2000; Park et al., 2008), which may reflect the family-friendly environment (children have free entry). The educational food and wine seminars may attract an older audience than other wine festivals. Furthermore, the price of entry (excluding wine tasting) is relatively high, perhaps deterring younger people from attending.

In relation to educational qualifications, 37.6% of the respondents had a degree or postgraduate degree, than while a quarter of respondents had a trade qualification (26.4%) and a quarter of respondents had high school qualification or no formal qualifications, reflecting previous research (Houghton, 2008; Park et al., 2008; Yuan et al., 2008). This spread of educational qualifications is reflected in the personal incomes reported.

Table 1: Demographic profile of festival visitors

Variable	%		
Gender		Highest qualification	
Female	67.5	No formal qualifications	3.7
Male	32.5	High school qualification	23.1
Age		Trade certificate	26.4
18 to 25 years	11.2	Degree	21.1
26 to 35 years	30.5	Postgraduate degree	16.5
36 to 45 years	18.5	Other tertiary qualification	3.6
46 to 55 years	28.5	Personal income per annum	
56 to 65 years	10.4	Less than NZ\$20,000	7.0
Over 65 years	0.8	NZ\$20,000 - NZ\$40,000	12.4
		NZ\$40,000 - NZ\$60,000	26.9
		NZ\$60,000 - NZ\$80,000	19.4
		NZ\$80,000 - NZ\$100,000	10.3
		NZ\$100,000 and over	13.2
		Prefer not to say	10.7

3.2 Wine consumption behaviour and wine involvement.

Festival-goers were asked a range of questions about their wine consumption behavior and their responses are presented in Table 2. Given their presence at a wine festival it is perhaps surprising that only half of respondents stated that wine was the alcohol they consumed most frequently. The small proportion of respondents selecting red wine as their favourite wine style (20.9%) is surprising also, but may reflect the survey period during the summer months. Wine consumption was frequent with a quarter of respondents (25.3%) reporting that they consumed wine every day or most days, with close to three quarters of the sample consuming wine at least once a week.

Involvement levels for respondents were determined by adding the scores for the twelve involvement statements for a sum involvement score. From this total, the most involved quartile was identified and labelled 'high involvement' and the least involved quartile labelled 'low involvement'. The remainder of the sample was labeled 'moderate involvement'. Perhaps surprising, cross tabulation analysis reveals that the sociodemographic characteristics of age, gender and income had no significant influence on wine involvement levels. However wine involvement did have a significant correlation with wine consumption behaviour, with the highly involved much more likely to state that wine was their most frequently consumed alcohol (84.7% of high involvement respondents compared to 25.5% of low involvement respondents, $p < .001$), and 96.8% of the high involvement sample consumed wine at least once a week, with a quarter of the highly involved consuming wine daily. There was no significant difference in preferred wine styles between the highly involved and low involved sample, although the former group were slightly more likely to name red wine or sparkling wine/champagne as their favourite wine style.

Table 2: Wine consumption behaviour of festival visitors

Variable		%	
Most frequently consumed		Frequency of wine consumption	
Beer	25.3	Daily	10.3
Wine	51.0	Most days a week	15.2
Spirits	12.9	Several times a week	21.8
Favourite wine style		Once a week	21.4
Red	20.9	Once a fortnight	9.5
White	56.0	About once a month	9.9
Rose	3.4	Less than once a month	7.1
Champagne/sparkling wine	9.0	Never	2.5
Don't have a favourite	10.7		

3.3 Motivations for attending a wine festival

Table 3 presents results of the motivations to attend the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival for the high wine involvement and the low wine involvement samples, and it is apparent that there are some very significant differences in motivation based on involvement. For those with low wine involvement, this event primarily provides an opportunity to socialise, relax and spend time with friends and family, although enjoying the food on offer was the third highest motivation for this group. Learning about wine is clearly not a priority at all for those with low wine involvement; trying new wines and experiencing a range of different wines are ranked only 9th and 10th respectively and increasing knowledge about wine scored only 3.35. It is noticeable that the supplementary attractions – the music, the cooking demonstrations – have little appeal for this group either.

By comparison, the high involvement group have a significantly higher motivation to learn about wines, although interestingly ‘Increasing my knowledge about wines’ ranked as only as the eighth highest motivation for attending the festival, Trying new wines and experiencing a range of different wines represent two of the three highest motivations for this group, but other avenues to increase knowledge are also ranked significantly higher than for the low involvement group, including the opportunity to exchange ideas with winemakers and meet people with similar interests. Having new things to tell friends about is ranked significantly higher for this group too, reflecting the role of wine as part of a wider lifestyle, which involves talking to friends about wine.

While the most significant differences between the high and low involvement groups relate to the focus on extending the former’s wine interest, it should be acknowledged that socialising with friends and family, relaxing and enjoying a festive atmosphere were still very important motives for the high involvement group. In fact on most of these measures the high involvement group ranked these motives more highly than the low involvement group. This may suggest that the role of wine in their life implicitly makes these types of events more exciting and more of a celebration than for the low wine involved.

Table 3: Motivations for attending the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival: influence of involvement

Variable	High involvement	Low involvement
Try new wines	6.42***	4.76 (9)
Have fun with my friends	6.39	6.32 (1)
Experience a range of different wines	6.28***	4.65 (10)
Enjoy a festive atmosphere	6.24	6.00 (2)
Enjoy interesting and tasty food	6.18	5.84 (3)
Relax and unwind from the stress of everyday life	6.08	5.78 (4)
Do and see new things	5.88**	5.23 (6)
Increase my knowledge about wine	5.54***	3.35
Be entertained by musical performances	5.40	4.90 (8)
Enjoy a change of scenery	5.02	5.00 (7)
Have fun with my family	5.02	5.29 (5)
Have new things to tell my friends about after the event	4.75**	3.71
Meet people with similar interests to me	4.28***	3.06
Listen to some of my favourite bands	4.24	3.90
Buy wine	4.22***	2.41
Exchange ideas with winemakers	4.06***	1.94
Learn about cooking through cooking demonstrations	3.83*	3.05

(1= not at all important; 7= extremely important) * p<.05; ** p<.01 *** p<.001

4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper has extended the work of Fountain (2014) by exploring the motivations of attendees at the Christchurch/South Island Wine and Food Festival, and segmenting the sample on the basis of wine involvement. Based on Fountain's (2014) findings that younger attendees at the 2013 Festival seemed to be less knowledgeable about wine, this study has found no difference in wine involvement by age. Similarly, despite the fact that females constituted 67.5% of the sample and represent a higher proportion of wine consumers than males (Kolyesnikova et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 2003), there was no difference in wine involvement by gender. What is apparent, however, is that there are significantly different motives for attending this festival between high and low involvement respondents. Low involvement attendees are primarily interested in socialising with friends and family, relaxing and enjoying the festive atmosphere, whereas the wine product – trying it, talking about it – is much more important for the highly wine involved. This study is not able to fully test the proposition by Dodd et al. (2006) that wine festivals provide less experienced wine consumers with a good opportunity to learn about wine, as levels of wine experience or subjective and objective wine knowledge was not investigated in this research, however what is apparent is that for many attendees, learning about wine is an important motivation for attendance. The current study perhaps contradicts also the suggestion that the focus on a festive atmosphere is less likely to attract serious wine consumers (Houghton, 2008). In fact,

the highly wine involved prioritise the fun and festive atmosphere as highly, if not more so, than the low wine involved, meaning that this atmosphere of festivity appeals to all attendees.

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