

## Brokering the Wine Tourism Experience: Tours, Guides, and the Winescape

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### *Abstract*

◦*Purpose* – The winescape construct (WC) has become an important device for investigating the various destination characteristics affecting the wine tourism experience (WTE). Whether measured using freeform respondent descriptions (Bruwer & Joy, 2017) or scales applied at either the micro (Thomas, Quintal, & Phau, 2018) or macro levels (Bruwer & Gross, 2017), the WC surfaces the ways in which wineries and/or the region impact perceptions of the WTE by different tourist segments (Quintal, Thomas, Phau, & Soldat, 2017, 2021). However, extant studies using the WC measure only unmediated WTEs.

While the mediating role of guided tours on tourism experiences is recognized in both the tourism (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Weiler & Davis, 1993) and wine tourism literatures (Carlsen & Dowling, 1998; Hall et al., 2009; Joy, Belk, Charters, Wang, & Peña, 2018) there are few studies looking at the mediation of the WC in the WTE (cf Robertson, Sears, & Weatherbee, 2018; Terziyska & Damyanova, 2020; Weatherbee & Sears, 2021).

A guided tour is “a form of tourism [with] ...direct participation by agents apart from the tourists themselves.” (Schmidt, 1979, p. 441). Hence these agents may be considered as brokers mediating the tourist experience (Weiler & Black, 2015). Brokering is multidimensional and guides therefore mediate the physical (routes, landscape views), social (encounters and interactions with locals and others on the tour), intellectual (providing knowledge of the destination and activities within it), and emotional (facilitating empathy and affinity with the landscape, locals, and tour activities) dimensions of the tourist experience (Weiler & Black, 2014). Consequently, guides mediate most of the elements of the winescape and the WTE that WC scales are designed to measure.

*Do guided tours mediate the relationship between the winescape and the WTE and, if so, in what ways?*

◦*Design/methodology/approach* – The Bruwer-Gross (2017) macro-winescape measure was incorporated into a survey of participants of a guided WTE

◦Findings – Mediation of the WTE was tested using regression analyses (MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). The presence of guides was found to partially mediate the wine tourists' perception of the winescape.

Key words: winescape, wine tourist experience, guides, guided tours

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