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Factors contributing to a memorable wine route experience

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Abstract

Wine tourism, especially wine festivals and routes, is becoming more popular in South Africa, primarily because it gives wine cellars and wine farms greater publicity and exposure leading to increase in wine sales. The wine farmers or cellars are also expanding their product offering to involve more than just wine tasting and sales. They are therefore developing tourism products such as accommodation, restaurants, wedding venues, cultural activities and adventure activities. The unanswered question is what factors do consumers regard as important when visiting a wine route? Therefore, the purpose of this article is to determine the factors that contribute to a memorable wine route experience. This study was conducted at one of South Africa's largest wine routes, namely the Robertson Wine Route, from 4-6 June 2014. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The results revealed four important factors for having a memorable wine route experience, namely amenities, food and entertainment, information dissemination and qualities of the route. The most important motive for visiting a wine route is to relax and escape, followed by experiencing a unique event. These results can be used by wine route managers and product owners to develop and market wine routes more effectively.

Keywords: Wine tourism, wine routes, travel motives, Robertson Wine Route (RWR), memorable experience, destination mix.

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Introduction

Saayman and Van der Merwe (2014) define wine tourism as "travelling primarily to experience the attributes of a wine region". This definition stresses the importance of the experience that wine regions offer, thereby implying that wine regions and route marketers need to understand who their market or markets, as well as their associated needs, are. This would also include an understanding of what these tourists regard as important in order to have a memorable experience, since a tourism route is a combination of different products and experiences. In this context, Orsolini and Boksberger (2009), Cole and Chancellor (2009) and Saayman and Van der Merwe (2014) concur that, although a lot of research concerning wine tourism has been conducted and

published in various journals, research that specifically addresses memorable wine route experiences is still lacking.

The reason for this could be that most of it has been product-driven research (Bruwer, 2003), which could be explained by greater competition among wine farms and routes in South Africa in order to sell more wine and expand their market share in difficult economic conditions. In addition, wine farms and cellars are expanding their offerings, with the result that wine tourists have more to do and experience; this includes a greater variety of wine and wine-related products. In order to be more competitive, wine routes also offer adventure activities, game drives, boat rides and various festivals, to name but a few. It is also important to note that market needs are changing – tourists are looking for different experiences, as they are more experienced and better informed than before. The greater competition is highlighted by the fact that there are approximately 580 wine cellars in South Africa, of which most fall within one of the 16 wine routes (Bruwer, 2003; SAWIS, 2011). The importance of wine tourism is stressed by the fact that in 2009, wine tourism generated approximately R4,3 billion and the wine industry would like to increase this contribution (South African Tourism, 2012; WOSA, 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to determine the factors that contribute to a memorable wine route experience.

Methodology

Quantitative research was conducted by means of a questionnaire in order to achieve the research aims. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: Section A captured the demographic details of respondents, Section B the motivations of respondents for attending the Robertson Wine Route, Section C measured respondents' behavioural aspects and Section D measured aspects impacting on respondents' experience.

The questionnaire was administered at the Wacky Wine Festival, which is one of the promotional tools of the Robertson Wine Route. The Robertson Wine Route (hereafter referred to as the RWR) is situated 150 km from Cape Town and includes towns like Robertson, Montagu, Bonnievale and Aston. The RWR forms part of the well-known Breede River Valley. The route was founded in 2004 and is currently one of the largest regional wine routes in South Africa, with 47 wineries forming part of the route (Robertson Wine Valley, 2015) (Figure 1).

The questionnaires were distributed by trained fieldworkers among festival-goers at the Wacky Wine Festival in 2014. A total of 391 questionnaires were completed and retrieved during the period of 5 to 8 June 2014. The data that had been obtained from the survey was captured in Microsoft Excel and was subsequently statistically analysed by using SAS 9.3 (Field, 2006). Factor analysis was used to process the data. The rotation method that was used for the

principal axis factoring analysis was oblimin with Kaiser's normalisation. Factor analysis is used to establish latent variables or factors among observed variables (Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk, 2005); in other words, the technique is used to reduce the data (Malhotra, 2010). The interpretation of a factor analysis is facilitated by identifying the items that have sufficient loadings on the same factor (Mulder, 2011).

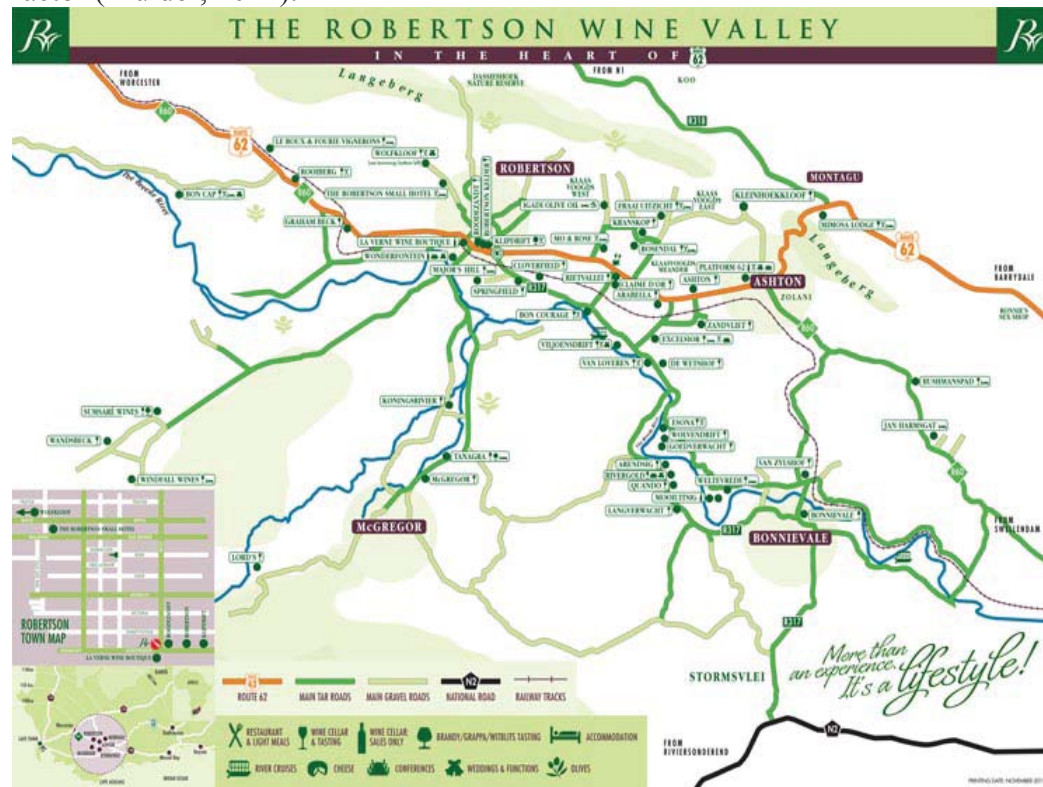


Figure 1: Map showing Robertson Wine Route (Robertson Wine Valley, 2015)

Two factor analyses were conducted: first, the travel motives of visitors to the RWR and second, aspects pertaining to a memorable wine route experience, which revealed four factors from 40 constructs (see Table 1); these included from management aspects of wine estates to route development. In addition, the travel motives of visitors to the RWR revealed five motivational factors from 25 constructs, ranging from *Uniqueness of the event* to more personal motives such as *Exploration*. The total variance that was explained for the travel motives is 66%, and for memorable experience it is 70%. According to Maree and Pietersen (2007), the variance that is explained must be above 50%.

Cronbach's alpha was then used to measure the internal consistency of the travel motives. Flucker and Turner (2000) confirm that Cronbach's alpha is the preferred measure of internal reliability, measuring the correlations between the items that describe the same concept. The Cronbach's alpha for travel motives

ranged between 0.78 and 0.84 and for memorable experience between 0.86 and 0.96, which is acceptable.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests were conducted in order to determine whether or not there was any significant difference between respondents' socio-demographic variables (Tunstin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk, 2005). An ANOVA test compares more than two independent groups, combined with Tukey's multiple comparison test. T-tests were used to measure two independent groups of variables that need to be compared, based on their average scores on a quantitative variable (Maree & Pietersen, 2007). Spearman's correlation coefficient was done to determine the relationship between ranked variables.

Results

The results of the research are presented in two sections: The first section focuses on the factor analysis that was conducted on the travel motives and experiences of attendees and the second section focuses on the discussion of the t-test results (based on the socio-demographic results).

Factor analysis

Travel motives for attending a wine route

Based on the results from Table 1, five factors were extracted and labelled *unique event* (factor 1), *to socialize* (factor 2), *to explore* (factor 3), *to relax and escape* (factor 4) and *to buy wine and lifestyle* (factor 5). *Relaxation and escape* had the highest mean value (4.14) and is therefore rated by the respondents as the most important motive for visiting the RWR.

Unique event had a mean value of 3.98, making it the second most important motive for respondents visiting the RWR. The mean values of the factors *to explore* and *to buy wine and lifestyle* were recorded as 3.55 and 3.67, respectively, thus rated by the respondents as the third and fourth most important motives for attending the RWR. *To socialize* had the lowest mean value (3.21) of the five factors.

Although *to relax and escape* were rated as the most important factor, one must keep in mind that all five factors were rated above three on a five-point Likert scale, where one is *not at all important*, three is *important* and 5 is *extremely important*. Thus, from a marketing point of view, all five these factors are important and can be used to market the RWR.

Table 1: Factor analysis: Travel motives for visiting the Robertson Wine Route

Identified factors	Cronbach's alpha	Mean value
Factor 1: Unique event	0.83	3.98
Factor 2: To socialise	0.82	3.21
Factor 3: To explore	0.78	3.55
Factor 4: To relax and escape	0.83	4.14
Factor 5: To buy wine and lifestyle	0.84	3.67
Total variance explained		66%
Kaiser's measure of sampling adequacy		0.93
Final communalities		(0.64; 0.78)

Factor analysis: memorable wine route experience

Based on the results from Table 2, four factors were extracted and labelled *qualities of the route* (factor 1), *food and entertainment* (factor 2), *information dissemination* (factor 3) and *amenities* (factor 4).

Table 2: Factor analysis: Memorable wine experience

Factors and constructs	Mean value
Factor 1: Qualities of the route (Cronbach's alpha 0.96)	2.94
Easily accessible cellars	0.890
The opportunity to visit lesser-known wineries	0.860
Knowledgeable staff	0.790
A variety of wine available	0.750
The wine route is well signposted	0.745
Opportunity to visit a large number of wineries	0.720
Attractive scenery	0.690
Quality of the environment	0.660
The route can be visited all year round	0.520
Great restaurants on the route	0.510
A wide range of activities and attractions	0.490
Unique accommodation facilities	0.414
Well-maintained roads	0.362
Factor 2: Food and entertainment (Cronbach's alpha 0.94)	3.02
There are also food trails in the area	0.820
An opportunity to purchase healthy food	0.790
Entertainment on the route	0.762
Places on the route that also supply interesting food	0.750
Opportunities for outdoor recreational activities	0.711
A variety of things to do and see on the route	0.633

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Factors and constructs	Mean value
This is an experience that will not cost me a lot of money	0.510
Regional produce that is unique to this destination	0.490
A variety of festivals on the wine route	0.340
Factor 3: Information dissemination (Cronbach's alpha 0.94)	2.99
Information centres at strategic places	0.820
A central wine distribution point	0.802
Positive TripAdvisor feedback	0.740
Good website and other information media	0.731
Good road maps	0.660
Affordable wine (value for money)	0.652
The opportunity to taste new wines	0.542
Factor 4: Amenities (Cronbach's alpha 0.86)	3.08
Activities available for children	0.842
Speciality shops in the area	0.703
An international airport nearby	0.680
Group tours available	0.590
Availability of cellar tours	0.460
Participation in winemaking activities	0.400
Availability of tours on this wine route	0.380
The route is close to large towns	0.340
Total variance explained	70%
Kaiser's measure of sampling adequacy	0.96
Final communality	(0.55; 0.85)

Amenities had the highest mean value (3.08) of the four factors and are therefore seen as the most important factor by the respondents. *Food and entertainment* were rated as the second most important factor with a mean value of 3.02. *Information dissemination* (factor 3) was rated as the third most important factor with a mean value of 2.99 and *qualities of the route* (factor 1) received the lowest rating with a mean value of 2.94. Although *amenities* were rated as the most important factor, it is important to take note that the four factors were rated on a five-point Likert scale where one is *not at all important* and five is *extremely important*; all four factors were, as in the case of motives, close, which is an indication that all four can be seen as important for respondents having a memorable wine route experience.

The t-test analysis that was conducted was based on the socio-demographic (for example, age, place of residence, marital status and education) and behavioural aspects (for example, times visited, preferred wines, number of days attending and wine club member) of the respondents. The socio-demographic aspects that showed statistical significant differences are gender, language and province of residence (Table 3). Two motives, namely *unique event* (factor 1) and *to buy wine and lifestyle* (factor 5), showed statistical differences that are based on gender. The results revealed that *event uniqueness* and *to buy wine and lifestyle* are more important to female than to male attendees.

Regarding language, three motivational aspects showed statistically significant differences, namely *unique event* (factor 1), *to socialise* (factor 2) and *to explore* (factor 3). All three motives were seen as more important to Afrikaans-speaking than to English-speaking respondents. Province of residence had statistically significant difference for only one motive, namely *to explore* (factor 3); this was seen as important for all the other provinces in South Africa except the Western Cape province, where the RWR is situated.

Table 3: Socio-demographical aspects

Factor analysis motives	Gender		P-value
	Male	Female	
F A1) Unique event	3.8343	4.0857	0.0067
F A5) To buy wine and lifestyle	3.5078	3.7722	0.0150
	Language		
Factor analysis motives	Afrikaans	English	P-value
F A1) Unique event	4.0239	3.8002	0.0397
F A2) To socialise	3.3026	2.8770	0.0035
F A3) To explore	3.6283	3.2693	0.0069
	Province of residence		
Factor analysis motives	Western Cape	Other provinces	P-value
F A3) To explore	3.48	3.88	0.0027

Behavioural aspects that showed a statistically significant difference are listed in Table 3, namely *wine club members*, *days attending the RWR* and *years attending the RWR*. It is important to note that *wine club members* and *days attending the RWR* were both regarded as memorable experiences and that *years attending the RWR* was also regarded as a motive for visiting the RWR.

Wine club members: The results revealed that people who were not wine club members rated all the experience factors, namely *qualities of the route* (factor 1), *food and entertainment* (factor 2), *information dissemination* (factor 3) and *amenities* (factor 4) as more important than club members. This was an

interesting finding, as one would expect these aspects to more important to the wine club members, who can also be seen as the serious wine lovers.

Days attending RWR: It was clear from the results that memorable experience factors 2 and 3, namely *food and entertainment* and *information dissemination*, were rated as more important by those attendees who stayed five days and longer at the RWR. This makes sense, as people who stay longer at tourism products are more exposed to the food, entertainment and information that are offered by the destination (route) and therefore need to buy more food, maybe need more activities to participate in and need more and better information while they are visiting.

Years attending RWR: The motive *to buy wine and lifestyle* (factor 5) was rated as more important by respondents who have visited the RWR for five years and more. This might also be the more serious wine lover and wine club member for whom wine forms part of their lifestyle.

Table 4: Behavioural aspects

Factor analysis experience	Wine club member		P-value
	Yes Mean value	No Mean value	
F B1) Qualities of the route	2.44	3.01	0.0061
F B2) Food and entertainment	2.60	3.08	0.0081
F B3) Information dissemination	2.61	3.05	0.0142
F B4) Amenities	2.76	3.13	0.0441
	Days attending the RWR		
Factor analysis experience	<4 days	5> days	P-value
F B2) Food and activities	2.96	3.41	0.0116
F B3) Information distribution	2.93	3.37	0.0196
	Years attending the RWR		
Factor analysis motives	<4 years	5> years	P-value
F A5) To buy wine and lifestyle	3.62	3.89	0.0538

Discussion

The first finding of the study is that the key motive for travelling to a wine route is to *relax and escape*, which confirms the notion that this motive remains one of the most important motives for travel and tourism; in essence, it also confirms that a route can be seen as a destination; a finding which is supported by several studies (Loker & Perdue, 1992; Backman, Backman, Uysal & Sunshine, 1995; Koiselt, 2004; Swanson & Horridge, 2006). The finding also supports one of the key 4Es in the theory of Pine and Gilmore (1998) in which they indicate the importance of the escapist experience. The implication and importance of this finding for management of the RWR are that to *relax and to escape*, in combination with the other motives, should form the key message in the

marketing campaign. Management of the RWR must encourage wine estate owners, wineries, wine farms and attractions that form part of the route to offer visitors/tourists the opportunity to relax and escape, which could include enjoying good food and wine in beautiful vineyard landscapes.

The second finding reveals that factors concerning a memorable experience differ from destination to destination due to the key attributes that are offered by the destination (which is a wine route in this case). One would also refer to this as 'the destination mix'. In addition to this, a combination of memorable experience factors has never been identified before. Furthermore, this study corresponds with two of the 4Es of Pine and Gilmore (1998), namely *escapist* and *entertainment*. The remaining two aspects of the 4Es of Pine and Gilmore (1998), namely *education* and *ecstatic*, were not confirmed by this study. A possible explanation could be that these tourists are familiar with the route, that many of them are educated wine lovers (as indicated by the results) and (coupled to this) that this route has been in existence for more than ten years. The research has revealed that *amenities* are the most important factor for creating memorable experiences and it supports research by Yaun and Jang (2007), Taylor and Shanka (2007) and Yaun et al. (2005). Getz et al. (1999) and Saayman and Van der Merwe (2014) did not find *amenities* important. The implication of this finding is that wine routes' managers need to make sure that the following amenities are in place, namely ports of entry, for example airports and bus services; tour operators who bring tourists to the area; activities for children; activities for the younger wine lovers (for example students, as there are several universities in the area of the RWR); making your own wine; bottling your own bottle of wine; wine-tasting talks; buying wine from the wine maker; and cellar tours. These aspects refer to the escapist experiences as labelled by Pine and Gilmore (1998). Activities can also be provided along the route such as horse riding, hiking and hot air ballooning. Factor 3, namely *information dissemination*, is also critical in informing the market (tourists) of chances, new activities and developments along a wine route.

In support of the latter, the third finding is that *food and entertainment* are particularly important components of wine routes. This implies that wine routes need to focus on the quality and variety of food and entertainment on offer. Tourists want to do more than just taste wine; they want to have different experiences. The variety of restaurants and shops can also include fruit and flea markets.

The fourth finding reveals that respondents who do not form part of wine clubs rated the four identified experience factors (*qualities of the route, food and entertainment, information dissemination and amenities*) as more important than wine club members. This can be explained by the possibility that people who are not wine club members have had less exposure than wine-club members, who

often have wine-tasting evenings and route visits. The implication is that wine estates and wine route managers need to diversify their products; they must also inform the market of new products on a regular basis. For people who are not wine club members, the memorable experiences that were identified in the factor analysis need to be highlighted, as they might be first-time visitors and, in the end, one would like them to become wine club members and wine lovers too. This will result in an increase in the selling of wine on the route.

The fifth finding is that, as the length of stay increases, *food and entertainment* and *information dissemination* become more important for having a memorable wine route experience to visitors on the route. As the number of years attending the route increases, the motive *to buy wine and lifestyle* also becomes more important for visiting the RWR. Implications of these findings are that to create loyal tourists who will return to the route, management of the route and wine estate owners need to enhance food and activities that are provided at the festival. Management of the RWR further needs to add a variety of food and entertainment to the route; this is also applicable to wine estates and farms on the route.

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to determine factors contributing to a memorable wine route experience. The most important motive that has been identified by the research was *relax and escape*, which is the most common motive in tourism literature. Concerning the factors contributing to a memorable wine route experience, *amenities* were identified as the most important factor. This research made a clear contribution to the literature, not only of wine routes and wine tourism, but also to the tourism literature in which it becomes clear that as destinations differ, so do the factors. The results indicating that a memorable experience on a wine route is not depended on the qualities of the wine only, but that a variety of aspects are important, is also interesting. One could therefore identify aspects that destinations should have, such as entertainment or food and amenities. However, the importance of these aspects differs from destination to destination and this difference makes up that specific destination mix. From the t-test, it was discovered that socio-demographic aspects such as *age*, *language* and *province* and behavioural aspects such as *time visited*, *length of stay* and *member of a wine club* do impact on route development; management and wine route managers, wineries and wine farms must thus take note thereof.

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