

Wine tourist valuation of information sources: the role of prior travel

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine winery visitors' use of information sources in making decisions regarding the choice of wineries to visit. Enrichment theory is used as a framework for determining how previous experience influences the decision on how much and what type of information individuals will use when planning a trip using wine tourism as the context for the research. **Design/methodology/approach:** A visitor study was conducted at 23 wineries in the US Southeast. Data were collected from winery visitors using a structured self-administered questionnaire. **Findings:** Results from 832 consumers indicate that an individual's previous travel systematically influences the number and type of information sources that they will seek out when making future consumer decisions. Findings confirmed the hypothesized expectations about wine tourist information search behavior and help to partially explain the nature of bounded rationality in the case of tourists' winery visit decisions. **Research limitations/implications:** Because the study focused only on winery visitors in the US Southeast, the research results may lack generalizability. **Practical implications:** These findings can assist winery owners and destinations with wineries in their promotional efforts. Of major importance is the finding that increases in experiential knowledge from prior travel are monotonically associated with increases in the number of information sources marked to be valuable in selecting a winery. The influence of experience is particularly dramatic in that the mean number of information sources marked to be valuable moves from a low of 2.5 to a high of 10.0 out of 16 as travel experience increases. **Originality/value:** The study contributed significant and useful findings that advance the application of enrichment theory to wine tourism. Enrichment theory does not currently differentiate between types of knowledge that enrich a consumer's ability to more easily encode and use new information. The current study confirms that experiential knowledge is an important knowledge construct in models of bounded rationality.

Keywords: marketing | tourism | survey research | bounded rationality | enrichment theory | information source usage | visitor intercept

Article:

1. Introduction

For many regions and communities, winescapes have become a major addition to their tourism product offerings (Peters, 1997). Wine tourism is:

[...] visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape and wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors (Hall and Macionis, 1998, p. 197).

Its duality is attractive in that destinations can develop wine-based attractions both as a tourist-focused income source and as a marketing opportunity for local wine companies to educate consumers and sell their wines directly at the cellar door (Getz and Brown, 2006).

A key factor in marketing wine tourism is the “identification of what is important to the [wine tourist’s] decision making process” (Barber, 2009, p. 251). To this end, countries, regions, municipalities and individual businesses are all striving to understand how consumers choose a destination (Bastida and Huan, 2014; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Extant literature suggests that information search processes have become central to comprehending what tourists do when planning a visit (Bieger and Laesser, 2004; Chaney, 2000; Dodd *et al.*, 1996; Sharifpour and Walters, 2014; Fodness and Murray, 1998). Therefore, research needs to explore how wineries can communicate vital product information to attract visitors and how wineries should actively manage their communication strategies in addressing the information needs of potential and current visitors (Barber, 2009). Winery owners and allied organizations and agencies need to focus the allocation of their limited marketing resources (Williams and Dossa, 2003, p. 3). One way to accomplish this is to leverage systematic variation in consumers’ use of wine tourism information sources (Getz *et al.*, 1999).

The purpose of the present study is to expand the literature on wine tourism by exploring the valuation of information sources in the context of wine tourists planning visits to wineries. Specifically, this article provides an empirical test of enrichment theory which has suggested that prior familiarity or experience influences consumer information search behaviors (Brucks, 1985; Johnson and Russo, 1984). The study proposes a model involving the effects of self-reported travel experience on the perceived value of wine tourism information sources.

2. Background literature

Trip planning is often separated by time and space from actual consumption of the destination and its services, as travel consumers acquire information about a product in advance of final selection or purchase (Capriello *et al.*, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2007). The choice and use of information sources in the trip planning process, that is, type, number and variety used, can be influenced by a multitude of factors, including *gender* (Barber, 2009; Bishop and Barber, 2012; Hall *et al.*, 2000a; Mitchell and Hall, 2001); *age* (Bruwer and Alant, 2009; Bruwer *et al.*, 2012; Nowak and Newton 2008); *prior knowledge and experience* (Alonso, 2009; Brucks,

1985); *prior visit* (Bruwer and Thach, 2013; Hall *et al.*, 2000a); *place of origin* (Bruwer and Thach, 2013; Bruwer and Lesschaeve, 2012); and *involvement* (Dodd *et al.*, 1996).

To understand the trip planning process more fully, we turn to theories that have proven useful in other industries. Foremost is the concept of consumer learning in enrichment theory that entails that consumers are influenced by having prior experience with a product and that this experience increases the number of information sources that they use in future consumer decision-making (Brucks, 1985; Johnson and Russo, 1984). We outline the research project as follows. First, we describe the nature of information search. Second, the act of information search is reviewed from both a decision-making and a tourism perspective, as both fields have made significant inroads in understanding competing influences and heuristics involved in the search for and valuation of information. Finally, characteristics of wine tourists, that is, travel experience and gender, are explored as potential factors in determining the extent to which consumers value each of the discrete wine tourism information sources generally available in the marketplace.

2.1 Information search dimensions in the wine tourism context

The decision to visit a winery is representative of the decision to visit a tourist attraction in general; it typically involves information search before making the visit (Bruwer and Johnson, 2010). *Information search* in our context refers to accessing information sources used in the planning of a visit to a winery or wine region (Bruwer and Lesschaeve, 2012; Hyde, 2006). Prior research on information search in tourism reveals various concerns which we address now:

- spatial issues;
- temporal considerations; and
- operational dimensions of the cognitive search process (Fodness and Murray, 1998).

The *spatial* dimension refers to the handling of internal versus external cues during information search (Fodness and Murray, 1998). Internal cues are cognitive resources already available and stored in one's mind that require no external search or acquisition of new information. External cues are those gained through acquisition of new information from the information environment. When prior mental knowledge exists, consumers will tend to scan their own memories for internal information cues before seeking new external information (Murray, 1991).

The *temporal* dimension is the timing of search activity in relation to an actual decision being made. Information sources can be used by consumers at different stages and for different purposes. For example, in a typical pre-purchase search, consumers are making a decision in a narrow choice situation, that is, arriving at and validating a decision to visit a particular winery. In contrast, consumers can retain previously acquired information as part of an ongoing learning process without having any destination immediately in mind. The current study concerns the latter application.

In terms of the *operational* dimensions of information search, research has focused on the number and types of sources being used by consumers in different purchase situations (Bettman, 1975; Engel *et al.*, 1995). In the tourism setting, consumers access a variety of information sources:

- targeted marketing;
- sales collateral;
- traditional advertising;
- mass press releases, as well as social sources of information such as blogs;
- word of mouth, referrals; and
- previous personal experiences (Kotler and Armstrong, 1994) from both face-to-face and online channels.

Bruwer and Thach (2013, p. 234) isolated more than 16 separate information sources in their wine tourism study but found that only a few of these sources such as recommendations from family and friends, brochures and “previous exposure to a regions winery label” are widely used by the wine tourists in their sample. While a wine tourist’s information environment may include many possible sources of information including recommendations from family and friends, brochures, previous exposure to a wine regions label, various internet sites, visitor information centers, print articles, festivals, billboards, television programs, etc., there are likely constraints on how many and what types of information sources a consumer selects to use or rates as valuable.

Generally, tourists, including wine tourists, do not fully use all available information sources (Bruwer and Thach, 2013). It has been shown that more involved visitors use more information sources (Dodd *et al.*, 1996). Several authors found that women are more interested in detailed information and that men use fewer sources than women (Barber, 2009; Bishop and Barber, 2012). Recent research also has examined the role of online information in making tourism decisions finding that digital information sources are becoming increasingly important to both consumers and businesses seeking to attract travelers (Kang and Schuett 2013; Sotiriadis 2017). While younger travelers are more likely to utilize social networking sites, a majority of all travelers across age groups used some form of information from the internet (Kim *et al.*, 2013). However, questions remain as to what other factors influence consumer use of available information in making decisions about winery visits.

2.2 Constrained information searches and bounded rationality

Some constraints derive from the mind itself. Mallard (2012) follows Simon (1955) in suggesting that decision-makers respond to increasingly complex decision situations by constraining rather than expanding the thoroughness of their information searches and review of information. Information search is said to carry significant personal costs to consumers that can be minimized through the use of shortcuts or heuristics (Winter, 1971). Global rationality and bounded rationality have been introduced as opposing ways of understanding how consumers search for information and make associated decisions. Pure global rationality is more of an ideal cognitive state, where consumers are expected to consider all available sources of information. Bounded rationality, in contrast, refers to the use of a relatively small number of information sources, sometimes just one source, and for the most part, is the more common type of human decision-making.

Satisficing is a term used to describe non-optimizing behavior, that is, cases where actors will pursue information up until the point that they anticipate a satisfying outcome; satisficing is non-optimizing because the goal of the decision-maker was from the start something less than global rationality, that is, less than the maximized use of all possible information sources. We argue that tourists practice satisficing, as they normally do not have cost-effective awareness of or access to all possible information sources (Mallard, 2012). If wine tourists exhibit bounded rationality, then we believe it will manifest as an observable reduction in the number of information sources they see as valuable. For the purposes of the current study, the concepts of global and bounded rationality are conveyed through the logic of a continuum where at one end respondents value a large number of identified information sources (nearer to the idealized abstract notion of global rationality), and at the other end, respondents perceive constricted or no value in the information sources available.

We propose a dependent variable defined as follows: *value* is how valuable an information source is (from the point of view of the tourist) for learning about or making a decision about a visit to a winery (Fodness and Murray, 1998). Moreover, we focus on measuring the overall number of information sources perceived as valuable or valuable by each respondent and explaining differences by using facets of enrichment theory.

2.3 Enrichment theory and the role of experiential knowledge

Following Gursoy and McCleary (2004), we adopt enrichment theory as a theoretical framework for examining wine tourists' valuation of information sources. Research in enrichment theory has shown that individuals who gain experience and associated memories relevant to an unfolding consumer choice situation are better able to recognize, sort and find value in new information sources and experience an associated reduction in cognitive costs and increase in practical benefits in future consumer decision-making (Brucks, 1985). Prior knowledge can also prime an individual to be more open to new information; therefore, enrichment theory suggests that prior product knowledge is positively associated with the number of information sources consumers find value in using in future purchase situations (Brucks, 1985; Johnson and Russo, 1984; Gursoy and McCleary, 2004). It is important to note that enrichment theory is limited in that it addresses only the number of information sources and not the types of information sources.

Findings in tourism support this association, for example, work by Alonso (2009) for wineries and by McBoyle and McBoyle (2008) for distillery visits. Fodness and Murray (1998, p. 4) explain this association between prior information and source receptivity in that "past touristic experience (e.g. with a destination) [...] probably [...] heightens the traveler's sensitivity to stimuli related to that destination". We surmise that personal travel experience is a type of prior knowledge that prompts consumers to show keener interest in accessing additional sources of information helpful to travel planning, quite possibly to add new or innovative elements to future visits. Our major contribution to the field is in demonstrating a positive relationship between prior travel experience and the collective number of other information sources a wine tourist uses in selecting a winery to visit; this clearly advances the theoretical base in enrichment theory applied to wine tourism:

H1. A wine tourist's level of prior related travel is positively associated with the number of external information sources that the wine tourist perceives as valuable in making a future winery destination selection.

2.4 The role of gender

Men and women differ on the extensiveness of their cognitive processing activity. For example, women use a more detailed memory scan than men (Reder and Anderson, 1980). The tourism literature suggests that women vary from men in the breadth of information sources that they find to be valuable in their search processes (Pan and Ryan 2007; Pascual-Miguel *et al.*, 2015; Wood *et al.*, 2014):

Travelers displaying high femininity traits were found to engage in more internal as well as external information search [...] [while] travelers displaying high masculinity traits [rely] less on the use of internal and external sources of information for decision making (Ramkisson and Nunkoo, 2012, p. 205).

Thus, the role of gender is important to investigate in the present study, as women often make up the larger portion of the wine tourist market in many regions (Bruwer *et al.*, 2012; Bruwer and Thach, 2013; Getz and Brown, 2006; Tassiopoulos *et al.*, 2004).

We argue that men will tend to rely on their own personal opinions in decision-making, while women will reportedly be more willing to undertake a prolonged information search activity compared to men (Darley and Smith, 1995; Kim *et al.*, 2007; Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991; Mitchell and Walsh, 2004). We have operationalized gender as male or female to test the following hypothesis:

H2. In choosing a winery to visit, female wine tourists will rate a larger number of external information sources to be valuable than will male wine tourists.

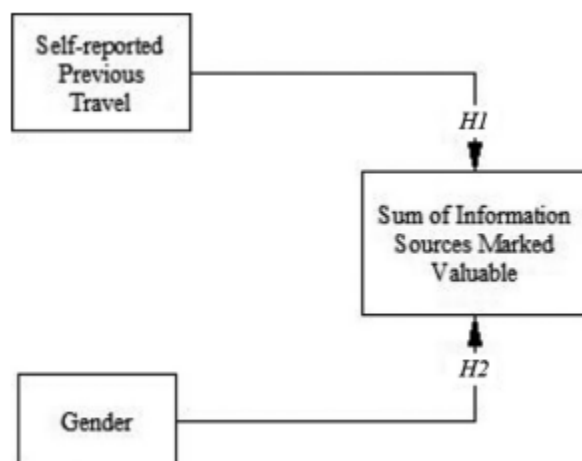


Figure 1. Effects on information sources marked valuable

2.5 Schematic of the model being tested

Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relationship between (a) previous travel experience and (b) the number of information sources that respondents ranked valuable for choosing a winery to visit in future. Our operating assumption is that our measure of previous travel conveys the level of internally stored experiential knowledge that the tourist is able to draw upon in making decisions regarding future visits to wineries. Gender is an additional exogenous variable in this model.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

A visitor study was conducted at 23 wineries in the USA Southeast over the space of several months in the summer/fall of 2012. Data were collected from winery visitors using a structured self-administered questionnaire. Trained field researchers approached all visitors as they entered the tasting room; researchers explained the nature of the study and requested participation from all members of the visiting party over 21 years of age. Visitors completed their surveys and returned them to the field researchers waiting nearby.

A sampling frame of 117 wineries identified by industry organizations was used to determine a subset of wineries as final data collection sites. Selection decisions on which wineries to include in the study were determined by the study protocol, logistical constraints, as well as budgetary issues. As part of the sampling plan, the entire set of wineries located in the state was stratified across certain winery attributes to reduce attribute bias. Stratification factors included:

- winery location;
- winery trail participation;
- size of winery;
- grape variety;
- AVA affiliation;
- internet presence;
- types of onsite tourist services and winery events; and
- inclusion in the State *Visitor's Guide*.

The final subset of wineries selected included those representing each of the levels of the aforementioned winery attributes. Upon the completion of data collection at the selected wineries, a sample of 832 visitors was achieved from a total of 1,028 winery visitors approached, resulting in an 81 per cent response rate.

3.2 Instrument design

The survey questionnaire was developed based on previous wine tourism research concerning factors identified as drivers of visitation to wineries and wine regions (in particular, Galloway *et al.*, 2008; Getz and Brown, 2006; Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias, 2010; O'Neill and Plamer, 2004; Yan *et al.*, 2008). The survey instrument was developed in several stages by a team of faculty researchers and incorporated feedback from industry organizations, including state wine council members and commerce department executives.

Pilot testing was conducted to assure that the language of each question was appropriate, that questions conveyed intended meanings and made sense, and to assure optimal question placement and flow. A mixed group of ten winery operators/staff, hospitality students and other business school faculty were asked to take the survey and also asked to provide feedback on the survey. Survey completion was timed to determine how long it would take to complete and expert validation of item constructs was conducted before the instrument was finalized.

Survey items used in the present study included the perceived value of previous travel (independent variable) and the perceived value of different external wine tourism information sources (dependent variable). Demographic profile variables comprised age, gender, race, ethnicity, marital and family status, life-cycle stage, education, household income, occupation and place of origin (in/out-of-state).

3.3 Value of previous travel

The concept of prior knowledge derived from enrichment theory was operationalized in the form of a question asking respondents to rate the value of “previous travel” in choosing a winery to visit. The question differs from the usual logging of travel experience in time units because it seeks to assess the importance of the task of an internal recall and recognition search (accessing contents of memory related to travel experience) to future winery visit decisions. The value of previous travel was operationalized on a scale of 0 to 5 with 0 indicating no awareness of previous travel influencing their decision to visit a winery. A rating of 1 indicated the respondent considered previous travel to have no value in their decision-making process. Previous travel having little value was represented by a rating of 2 while a rating of 3 indicated a neutral influence value of previous travel. A rating of 4 or 5 indicated higher levels regarding the value of previous travel with a 4 representing some value and a 5 representing that previous travel was very valuable.

3.4 Value of different wine tourism information sources for visiting a winery

This question did not concern the decision to revisit the specific winery where the questionnaire was completed but rather “to visit a non-specified winery” to test the model in an ongoing search situation rather than in a pre-purchase specific choice rationalization. The root question constituted the following instruction: “Please rate how valuable each information source would be to you in making a decision to visit a winery”. Although the value of each information source was measured with a single question, there is evidence that a single item measure can be an effective and valid measure of constructs that are relatively concrete as in this particular case (Bergkvist and Rossiter 2007; Rossiter 2002). Building upon the work of Rossiter (2002), Bergkvist and Rossiter (2007, p. 176) demonstrate that, across a wide variety of applications in marketing research, a construct that consists of a single item will perform as well as multiple item constructs as long as the construct consists of a “concrete singular object” and a “concrete attribute”. When viewed in light of our measure of the value of previous travel in choosing a winery to visit, “previous travel” is the “concrete singular object” and “value” is the “concrete attribute”. Bergkvist and Rossiter state that the object of the construct (previous travel) is “concrete singular” if it consists of one object that is “easily and uniformly imagined”. In this case, based on our initial pilot tests of the survey, the concepts of “previous travel” and “value”

are easily and uniformly imagined by respondents. Thus, we maintain that the single item construct representing the value of previous travel in choosing a winery is a valid approach.

By specifying a list of forced information sources, we sought to control the degree of qualitative information about the extent or character of information sources used (Murray, 1991, p. 13). *Sixteen* information sources were listed and comprised the following types:

- personal or social sources of information – recommendations by people I know personally; chef or restaurant recommendations; recommendations from retail stores/supermarkets;
- winery-based sources of information – information provided by the winery, for example, brochures and website;
- traditional marketing sources of information – billboard, television, internet, radio, news/magazine advertisement;
- public press sources – newspaper/magazine story, published media review of the winery/wines, experts' formal ratings of the wines produced; and
- state/regional sources of information – state winery guidebook, official travel guide, welcome center, regional visitors guide.

To test the hypotheses related to enrichment theory, it is necessary to understand *if* the information source is valuable in making the choice – but not necessarily how valuable the information source is in making the choice. Therefore, to test the two hypotheses flowing from enrichment theory, each information source item was converted into a binary item. This allowed for the creation of a new dependent variable: an index variable summing across all information sources. With an index variable, the only attribute being summed is the number of valuable resources perceived. Using an index variable permits us to retain the independence of each information source item intact, with an assumption that all information sources are weighted equally for the purpose of exploring consumers' use of bounded rationality. The immediate goal is to learn if consumers limit the sources they use and, ideally, to tie this back to travel experience and gender as specified in the two hypotheses.

The initial range of possible participant ratings on the 16 information sources in the survey ran from 0 to 5. Item value labels were as follows: 0 – “not aware” of information source; 1 – “no value”; 2 – “little value”; 3 – “neutral”; 4 – “some value”; and 5 – “very valuable”. Information sources with ratings of either “4” (“some value”) or “5” (“very valuable”) were characterized by the research team as being valuable for the respondent. In creating the index variable, we assumed that less than “4” meant that the information source was not perceived as valuable in making the choice to visit a winery. Then, respondent information source ratings were converted to corresponding binary variables:

- either (a) “1” where the information source *is* “valuable” in making the decision (initial rating of 4 or 5); or
- (b) “0” where the source is *not* “valuable” in making the decision (initial rating 0 to 3).

The resulting binary variables developed from each information source were then summed in a new index variable ranging from 0 to 16.

3.5 Gender variable

To test *H2*, we needed to establish the gender of each respondent to develop a testable independent variable. A self-report item was included in the demographic section of the survey, where respondents could elect “female” or “male”.

3.6 Data analysis procedures

As noted, we created a dependent variable by counting the collective number of information sources participants rated as valuable in choosing a winery to visit in the future. As a next step, we tested the model in a single SAS GLM procedure, using the value of previous travel as an independent variable and the index variable as our dependent variable to test *H1*. We used SAS as the chosen software, as SAS enables one to test the significance of the “main effect” associated with each hypothesis while controlling for the potentially confounding influence of other effects, main and interaction. More specifically, the use of Type III Sums of Squares permits such control. We also wanted to verify that a significant gender*information source interaction effect would not create difficulties in interpreting each of the two “main effect” test results which are central to the test of the two hypotheses.

4. Results

4.1 Demographics of the respondent profile

A total of 832 winery visitors participated in the study. The demographic profile of respondents was similar to participants of previous studies (Table I). In general, the results show that winery visitors are predominantly white, educated females. Age ranged from 19 to 90 years with an average age of 45.6 years. Approximately 81 per cent of the respondents were white (80.7 per cent), followed by Black or African American (10.5 per cent), with other ethnic/racial categories below 4 per cent. Almost three-fourths of respondents (74.2 per cent) indicated that they hold some form of college or community college degree. Most of the respondents indicated that they were Professional/Executive (56.4 per cent). Over one-third (37.5 per cent) of respondents reported an annual household income of \$100,000 or more. In all, 80 per cent identified themselves as tourists (non-county residents) visiting the community. The majority (66.7 per cent) of the winery tourists indicated they were from the state where the research was being conducted.

Respondents were asked to indicate the value of each information source for deciding to visit a winery (Table II). Most respondents were aware that these information sources existed (percentages of persons not aware ranged from 8.4 to 17.3 across the various information sources). However, the lowest levels of awareness were attached to information sources related directly to the state (State website, State Winery Guidebook, State Official Travel Guide, State Welcome Center).

Table I. Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic	(%) of tourists
<i>Mean age</i>	45.6
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	31.2
Female	68.8
<i>Occupation</i>	
Professional/Executive	56.4
Retired	11.4
Clerical/Sales/Craftsman/Factory Worker	9.3
Self-employed	7.5
Student (full time)	4.4
Other	4.0
Homemaker	3.9
Military	1.6
Unemployed	1.3
<i>Race/ethnic group</i>	
White	80.7
Black or African American	10.5
Multi-racial/multi-ethnic	3.0
Hispanic	2.3
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.9
Asian	1.1
Other	0.5
<i>Education Level</i>	
High school or less	7.0
Some college – no degree	18.9
Associate’s degree	11.1
Bachelor’s degree	35.9
Post graduate	27.1
<i>Annual Household Income</i>	
Less than \$25,000	4.7
\$25,000-\$49,999	19.5
\$50,000-\$74,999	19.5
\$75,000-\$99,999	18.8
\$100,000-\$124,999	16.2
\$125,000-\$149,999	7.4
\$150,000-\$199,999	7.3
\$200,000+	6.6

The most valued information sources for making a decision to visit a winery were *recommendation by people I know personally, internet, state website and information provided by the winery*, for example, *brochures or website*. These results indicate that winery visitors are heavily relying on “word of mouth” recommendations and the internet. It is important to note that more than half of the respondents rated some of the traditional marketing outlets (*recommendation from retail stores/supermarkets, newspaper/magazine advertisement, billboard advertisement*) as having little or no value.

Table II. Value of information sources

Source	Mean of those that were aware	% of respondents that were above neutral	% of respondents not aware of the source
Recommendation by people I know personally	4.31	85.1	8.4
Internet	4.00	75.5	8.6
State website	3.94	73.6	16.0
Information provided by the winery, e.g., brochures, website	3.94	73.3	9.2
State winery guidebook	3.71	67.5	16.8
State official travel guide	3.50	60.1	17.3
Chef or restaurant recommendations	3.48	58.2	13.5
Local region visitors guide	3.40	55.8	13.5
Newspaper/Magazine story	3.36	55.1	13.0
Experts' formal ratings of the wines produced	3.35	52.8	15.3
State welcome center	3.16	48.2	16.6
Recommendation from retail stores/supermarkets	3.15	46.5	14.7
Newspaper/Magazine advertisement	3.11	45.9	13.1
Billboard advertisement	3.10	44.6	11.5
Television	3.04	42.6	14.4
Radio	2.87	36.9	15.7

Notes: Sources rated on the following 5 point scale (1 = no value; 2 = little value; 3 = neutral; 4 = some value; 5 = very valuable, NA = not aware of the source)

Given the prominence of the internet as a valuable source of information for winery trip planning, additional insights were obtained from examining respondents' preferred social media websites and the degree to which they would share their winery experiences via social media (Table III). There is evidence that Facebook is a preferred site for 65.2 per cent of winery visitors in the sample and that some would use Facebook to communicate their thoughts about past winery visits (26.5 per cent).

Table III. Social media preferences of sample

Sites preferred (check all that apply)	(%) of respondents
Facebook	65.2
Google +	14.5
Linked-In	13.5
Twitter	09.9
Pinterest	08.1
Personal blog	03.5
Instagram	02.7
Don't visit social media sites	23.6
<i>How likely are you to share your winery experience via social media? (five-point scale)*</i>	
Definitely will not	13.5
Unlikely	17.9
Possible	12.6
Likely	18.9
Very likely	37.2

Note: * 26.5 percent of the sample would use Facebook to share their winery experience, compared to less than 1 percent each for a blog or Twitter

4.2 Results of the tests of the hypotheses

The model results presented in Table IV are seen to be statistically significant at the $p < 0.0001$ level with an R-squared of 0.37. Based on the clear significance of overall General Linear Model results, individual effects can then be investigated.

Table IV. Effects of previous travel, gender and previous travel*gender interaction on number of information sources marked valuable

Source	df	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Model	11	4,694	426	27.68	<0.0001
Error	526	8,110	15		
Corrected tot	537	12,805			
R-squared	0.37				

The model indicates that both previous travel and gender are statistically significant factors influencing the number of specified information sources an individual would mark as valuable in choosing to visit a winery (Table V). Findings also show that there are no significant interaction effects from previous travel and gender, thus eliminating the issue of a confounding interaction between the two independent variables.

Table V. Previous travel and gender influence on number of information sources marked valuable

Source	df	Type III SS	MS	F	Pr > F
Experiential knowledge	5	3566	713	46	<0.0001
Gender	1	77	77	5	0.026
Experience & gender	5	43	9	0.6	0.726

Results further show that the mean number of information sources marked valuable increases monotonically as tourists' perceptions of the value of previous travel increases (Table VI). Tourists who had no previous relevant travel found only 2.5 sources to be valuable. Tourists who stated that their previous travel had no value marked on average 4.3 sources to be valuable and tourists who perceived their previous travel to be very valuable marked 10 sources to be valuable. As the number of valued information sources is increasing monotonically with the level of value found in previous related travel, *H1* is clearly supported as is our initial premise that enrichment theory is useful in understanding wine tourist behavior. The more experience a wine tourist draws from, the larger number of information sources he/she will mark to be valuable in choosing a winery to visit.

Table VI. Experiential knowledge effect on number of information sources marked valuable

Effect level of experience	Mean no. of valuable information sources
0 (not aware of previous travel)	2.5
1 (no value of previous travel)	4.3
2 (little value of previous travel)	4.8
3 (neutral)	8.4
4 (some value of previous travel)	9.9
5 (very valuable previous travel)	10.0

Results also support *H2*. Compared to males, females value a greater number of information sources. Specifically, the mean value of the number of information sources marked to be valuable by females in choosing a winery to visit (7.2) is statistically greater than the corresponding mean value for males (6.1) (Table VII).

Table VII. Gender effect on number of information sources marked valuable

Gender	Mean no. of valuable information sources
Female	7.2
Male	6.1

5. Discussion, conclusions and future research

The current study presents a distinctive test of enrichment theory in the wine tourism setting. In all, 16 information sources were examined in the context of planning future winery visits. A large percentage of respondents (over 80 per cent) recognized the existence of the 16 different types of information sources available for planning winery visits, although state-sponsored sources of information about wine tourism seemed to have slightly lower visibility than did the other types of information when looking at the sample as a whole. For respondents who indicated familiarity with the source, the sources deemed most valuable for planning winery visits were personal recommendations, internet sites, the state tourism website and information directly provided by wineries, for example, brochures or websites. Traditional outlets such as news ads, billboards, television and radio ranked lower in terms of value for winery visit planning.

Findings also supported the hypothesized expectations about wine tourist information search behavior and help to partially explain and illustrate the nature of bounded rationality in the case of tourists' winery visit decisions. Results supported prior findings (Alonso, 2009; McBoyle and McBoyle, 2008) that prior travel experience has a significant influence on the information search process. Women rated more information sources valuable in their decision-making than did men supporting the prior findings of Barber (2009) and Bishop and Barber (2012). There was no interaction effect from travel experience and gender, which permits us to accept that these two variables are each independently associated with the number of information sources a respondent will rate as valuable. Planning a trip to a winery – especially if one is inviting friends or family members – entails some degree of risk that the visit will not meet their expectations (Taylor and Barber 2016). Wine enthusiasts with considerable knowledge about wine and wineries may choose to consult and process greater levels of information because of their capability and the complexities involved in choosing a good winery to visit (Hu *et al.*, 2007). An individual's level of self-efficacy may help explain why these experienced travelers may value more sources of information than less knowledgeable and less confident travelers.

Of major importance is the finding that increases in experiential knowledge from prior travel are *monotonically* associated with increases in the number of information sources marked to be valuable in selecting a winery. The influence of experience is particularly dramatic in that the mean number of information sources marked to be valuable moves from a low of 2.5 to a high of 10.0 out of 16 as the tourist's perceptions of value of travel experience in choosing a winery to visit increases. As respondents increase in experience, they move from a position of "less information is more" to "more information is better". This finding is a needed first step in

understanding consumer approaches to information use in winery tourism. It supports our belief that winery tourists adopt bounded rationality and opens the door to future work that explores what information sources get dropped initially and why and what sources are potentially added on as tourists develop wine tourism experience.

Our findings hold particular significance for winery owners and managers. Wine tourists having little relevant experiential knowledge in the form of personal travel experience to wineries are not nearly as sensitive to the value of external information sources as are experienced wine tourists. Formal promotions targeted at the “newbie” wine tourist appear to be relatively ineffective, as, evidently, inexperienced wine tourists do not know enough or do not care to find value in published external information sources. Furthermore, experienced tourists might demand accurate and detailed materials rather than superficial or hyperbolic messaging. Through visits to wineries, consumers form a more precise image of the wine product at each winery and develop experiential knowledge through direct on-site activities. Managers will benefit from viewing this as an opportunity to shape in experienced consumers a deeper knowledge and appreciation of their winery and thus develop stronger customer relationships with their winery visitors.

Additional insights are gleaned by scrutinizing the possible role of prior travel. Interestingly, there is no evidence that experienced wine tourists “anchor” or overvalue their own past travel experiences to make winery choices in the future. Quite the opposite is apparent; increases in travel experience are associated with steady increases in the number of information sources rated as valuable. Enrichment theory suggests that personal travel experience can impact the perceived value of other external sources of information in ways that are not necessarily intuitive. Thus, in using the logic of the phrase “I don’t know what I don’t know”, it takes some degree of experience with a product for consumers to perceive the value of using a broader set of information sources. Overall, results are in line with what other researchers have identified concerning the role of travel experience on information processing (Bruwer and Thach, 2013).

While this paper has investigated the influence of prior travel experience and gender, these are only two of many complex factors that influence a winery visitor’s behavior. Other factors that could influence information source uses include wine club memberships, attitudes, lifestyles, frequency of winery visitation, previous visits, among others. Therefore, prospective research avenues are numerous. Further research into these factors that might influence the information search behavior of the visitor could help develop a richer understanding of winery consumer behavior.

While it is important to note that prior travel has a positive influence on the number of information sources deemed valuable, it is also important to understand the type of sources that are valuable to the visitor. In general, wine tourists seem to rely more on personal referrals and the internet than on traditional promotional channels, that is, news ads, television and radio. Given that wine businesses and related organizations wish to allocate their marketing resources in ways that are cost beneficial, we assume that such businesses would prefer to invest only in those information sources perceived as valuable by targeted segments of wine tourists. For example, for this group of respondents, the internet was highly valuable to their decision-making. Social media can be included in the internet category and continues to be a growing marketing

tool for wineries. It was also evident that Facebook was a preferred outlet for these respondents. Given the smaller percentages using Facebook alternatives at the time of the study, one could also surmise that as a whole, these winery visitors are not early adopters of new social media sites, as Pinterest and Instagram were still in early phases of their product lifecycle. And too, this could be a response to what information is available from wineries since the latter tend to be slower than other types of businesses in terms of adopting new technology platforms (Canziani and Welsh, 2016).

Additional research should also try to discriminate among the types of information sources marked to be valuable at different levels of experiential knowledge. It may be beneficial to ascertain whether or not a “developmental” path of valuable information unfolds as the wine tourist gains relevant travel memories. For example, are some sources, for example, personal contacts and word of mouth, more or less important as wine tourists expand their own experiential knowledge base? Do any of the information sources serve as critical anchors for the average first-timer’s decision to visit a winery? Future tests concerning these and other related questions have the potential to help us identify whether and/or how specific information sources identified in this paper might systematically and sequentially accessed during information search and processing. This question of comparative importance of information sources is quite complex, as it may also involve additional respondent-influenced or situational issues, that is, the comparative salience of sources for different users and individual perceptions of the costs to access each information source.

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