

13 Innovations in the wine tourism experience: The case of Marqués de Riscal

Diego Bufquin, Robin M. Back and Jeong-Yeol Park

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Assess the effects of congruence perceptions – between a post-modernist hotel architecture, its surrounding landscape, visitors' self-image, and a winery's brand image – on winery visitors' arousal, delight and behavioral intentions;
- Analyze the relationships between substantive and communicative servicescape perceptions, and winery visitors' positive affect, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, as well as the moderating effects of brand and architectural familiarity;
- Investigate the influence of winery tourists' motivations and satisfaction on number of visits and revisit intentions;
- Study whether visitors' geographic proximity or distance has an influence on revisit intentions and number of visits;
- Examine whether winery tourists' revisit intentions decrease after a certain number of visits, and whether satisfaction postpones such decrease in revisit intentions.

Keywords: wine tourism, servicescape, motivations, satisfaction, delight, revisit intentions

Introduction – winery innovations: The case of Marqués de Riscal

Wine tourism has been gaining importance as a popular form of special interest tourism, with an increasing body of academic literature concentrating on the field, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization holding its first Global Conference on Wine Tourism in the Kakheti Region of Georgia in 2016. While the term ‘wine tourism’ originally related mainly to visitation of wineries for the purpose of tasting and/or purchasing wine, it has become accepted that wine tourists now desire far more from their wine tourism experience. They also look for innovative products and services such as culinary offerings, lodging, cultural and recreational activities, retail choices and an enjoyable rural landscape (Brown et al., 2006; Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009). This has resulted in many wineries around the world adding additional facilities and attractions beyond the primary wine tasting experience.

There is, however, little academic research on innovations in wine tourism beyond the traditional wine tasting/winery tour experience, yet many wineries have been adding attractions and activities, especially restaurants and accommodation. One such example is Spice Route in Paarl, South Africa, which, besides wine tasting, also offers tastings of beer, gin, chocolate, charcuterie, and preserves, and is home to three restaurants, a delicatessen, a coffee shop, a glass blowing studio, a diamond cutting studio, a gift shop, a pilates studio, and mountain biking trails (Explore Spice Route, 2018). Another is the Spier Wine Farm in Stellenbosch, South Africa, whose facilities include a luxury hotel and spa, conference facilities, four restaurants, a gift shop, a craft market, picnic facilities, Segway tours, and eagle encounters (Spier Wine Farm, 2018).

Such innovations in wine tourism are not confined to ‘new world’ wine regions, however. Since the mid-2000s, Spain has been marketing wine tourism as an alternative to its better known beach vacations (GBSB Global Business School, 2017). With the shift in wine tourism in recent years from a focus on winemaking and wine tasting to a wider group of leisure and recreational experiences (Brown et al., 2006; Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009; Getz & Brown, 2006), Spain has seen the development of a number of innovative winery attractions, with the Marqués de Riscal winery, on which this case study concentrates, having led the way. Established in the town of Elciego in Spain’s Rioja region in 1858, Marqués de Riscal is one of the country’s oldest and most respected wineries (see Figure 13.1).



Figure 13.1: Hotel Marqués de Riscal. Photo credit: I-Escape.com.

In 2006, Marqués de Riscal inaugurated its 'City of Wine'. Occupying a 100,000m² site and at a cost of some €70 million, the intention was to attract as much attention as possible in order to maximize both tourism and wine sales (Michael, 2015). In addition to the existing historic winery, the 'City of Wine' added a striking post-modernist hotel designed by world renowned architect, Frank Gehry. The 'City of Wine' incorporates two restaurants (one of them Michelin-starred), a wine therapy spa, conference and events facilities, a coffee shop, a shop selling wine and other products, and a museum. While not unique in the world, its sheer scale and cost, together with the diversity of its tourism product offering, differentiate Marqués de Riscal from most other Spanish wineries (Vila et al., 2012). In the City of Wine's first year of operation, visitor numbers to the Rioja region as a whole increased by an astonishing 68 percent (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2010; IREA, 2008), which resulted in around twenty applications to local authorities for the construction of new hotels to house the Region's greatly increased number of tourists (Vila et al., 2012). Thus, Marqués de Riscal presents an ideal case for further investigation into innovations in the wine tourism experience.

(In)congruence perceptions, and wine visitors' arousal, delight and behavioural intentions

The hospitality industry has continually been evolving over the past few decades with the development of unique products and services (Vila et al., 2012). The main goal of these innovations is for companies to avoid falling into the trap of commoditization, of which product homogeneity

is considered by hotel executives to be the element that contributes the most to a lack of meaningful differentiation (Beldona et al., 2015). Hence, hospitality companies are doing their best to differentiate themselves with the creation of distinguishable products and services in order to surpass customer expectations while delivering memorable experiences.

As mentioned, an example of such product innovations was led by Marqués de Riscal with the inauguration of the 'City of Wine', which includes the Hotel Marqués de Riscal, a postmodernist jewel designed by world-famous architect Frank Gehry and located in the heart of this historic winery. Although the 'Gehry effect' (i.e. the power of Frank Gehry's buildings to transform an entire city) is undeniable, the juxtaposition between historic and postmodernist architecture has not seen much investigation in the hospitality literature (Meagher, 2014; Vila et al., 2012). Frank Gehry is known to create architectural landmarks that not only disrupt the local landscape, but are at times a source of controversy. For instance, when the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao was inaugurated in 1997, it generated a fair share of criticism for being too imposing and spectacular (Hedgecoe & Whittle, 2012).

Because of the disruptive nature of Frank Gehry's buildings, the first study's objective was to understand how the juxtaposition between historic and postmodernist architecture affects visitors' emotions and behavioral intentions. Second, due to the historic nature of the Marqués de Riscal winery, the authors also wanted to understand how such a groundbreaking and postmodernist hotel may affect customers' brand perceptions of one of the region's oldest and most traditional wineries. Lastly, as Solomon (1983) explains, consumers frequently purchase products not solely for their functionality, but also for their symbolic or social significance, with the formation of a 'self-brand connection' (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Thus, the third objective was to examine how congruence perceptions between visitors' self-image and the hotel architecture (i.e. whether they identify with the hotel's architecture) affect winery tourists' emotions and behavioral responses.

In order to achieve such goals, Oliver, Rust, and Varki's (1997) delight model was taken into account, as it implies that surprise and performance act as antecedents of customer emotions (i.e. arousal and delight) and behavioral intentions. The use of this model allows academics and hoteliers to better understand how a surprise factor, such as Gehry's postmodernist architecture, affects winery visitors, as no study thus far has used disruptive hotel architecture as an 'excitement' element that could improve visitors' arousal, delight and behavioral intentions.