

Wine and culinary tourism: Preferences of experiential consumers

Guenter H. Schamel

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Faculty of Economics and Management, 39100 Bozen-Bolzano, Italy

Abstract. We explore the key components of consumer demand for the development of a successful wine and culinary tourism segment. In particular, we investigate the demand preferences that are important to consumers interested in a wine and culinary related hotel stay in South Tyrol. Conceptually, we utilize the 4E-Model of experiential consumption by Pine & Gilmore [1,2] and propose that the four realms of an experience (i.e., entertainment, education, escapist, and aesthetic) relate to the principal components of consumer preferences. We survey potential tourists to gain a better understanding of their demand preferences for culinary and wine related hotel stays. Using an exploratory factor analysis, we identify the principal components of consumer demand preferences. The most preferred demand feature of a culinary wine experience relates to informative entertainment. The second feature relates to social-cultural activities that are educating. The third are escapist wine and food-specific activities and the fourth relates to the aesthetics of accommodation traits and style in the culinary and wine domain. Moreover, we study the current supply attributes of wine and culinary related hotel offer in South Tyrol and their pricing using a hedonic model. Attributes that provide an entertainment experience form the basis of any offer in the wine and culinary domain. Attributes that provide an educational experience are highly relevant and add will a significant price premium. Matching demand preferences and supply conditions is crucial in developing a successful culinary and wine related tourism segment.

1. Introduction

In this study, we want to obtain a better understanding of the demand preferences that consumers are looking for in a wine and culinary related vacation, i.e. integrated winery visits, wine seminars, specific wine selections for dinner, etc. Specifically, we study these preferred elements of consumer demand in order to assess efforts to develop a wine and culinary tourism segment and related hotel offers in South Tyrol. In addition, we explore the nature and pricing of the current supply related to such offers. We relate the preferred elements of consumer demand to the key components of experiential consumption and to the current supply in the market in order to determine their implicit prices.

In the literature, we find some relevant studies on food (culinary) or wine tourism features from a demand perspective. Charters and Ali-Knight [3] identify specific wine tourist activities in an effort to define wine tourism. Getz and Brown [4] study the demand for long distance wine tourism. Schamel [5] analyses the importance and potential of wine tourism in South Tyrol. He concludes that in addition to oenophiles, relishing culinary tourists are an interesting target group for the further development of a wine and culinary tourism segment since they have only a limited knowledge about wine.

There are also a number of papers examining general aspects related to food in tourism. Mak, Lumbers, and Eves [6] explore the motivations underlying food consumption in tourism. Quan and Wang [7] propose a structural model integrating peak and consumer experiences in tourism and illustrate it in terms of food

consumption. The theory of experiential consumption by Pine and Gilmore [1,2] has inspired numerous studies related to tourism in general (for example, [8]) as well as to wine or food tourism (for example, [9]).

What we do not understand very well, however, are the preferences of tourists when it comes to a combined food (culinary) and wine related experience. Moreover, the literature seems to lack a look at the pricing of experiential consumption related to culinary and wine tourism. We aim to close this gap by providing an examination of the specific elements of wine and culinary related offers that are available in the market, how they relate to the theory of experiential consumption and how they are valued in the market. Consequently, we follow two objectives in this study. First, to examine the demand preferences that are important for tourists in identifying a suitable wine and culinary experience and to relate it to the theory of experiential consumption. Second, to study the attributes of current supply that offer a wine and culinary tourism experience and relate them to actual prices charged in the market, i.e., valuing key components of experiential consumption by estimating implicit prices.

Methodologically, we developed an online survey among potential tourists visiting a wine region and asked them about their preferred features related to a wine and culinary hotel stay. We employ the data obtained in the survey to test the theory of experiential consumption using a principal component analysis. In addition, we gathered a second data set from hotels offering a culinary and wine experience to tourists visiting South Tyrol. This data set characterizes the supply of culinary and wine tourism experiences. We can use it to relate the attributes of supply

to the theory of experiential consumption [1,2] and to build a hedonic model in order to estimate implicit prices for them.

We have structured the remainder of the paper as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the literature related to wine and culinary tourism and the theory of experiential consumption. In Sect. 3, we describe the data sets collected and the methodologies applied. In Sect. 4, we discuss the results of our empirical analyses and we conclude and derive some practical implications for our research in Sect. 5.

2. Literature

We find some, but relatively few relevant studies on culinary and wine tourism from a demand perspective. Charters and Ali-Knight [3] identify specific activities of “wine tourists” in an effort trying to define what constitutes them in general. Using an exploratory study, Getz and Brown [4] identify the core wine-product, the general destination appeal and cultural product as the critical features of a wine tourism experience from a consumer perspective. Sidali, Kastenholtz and Bianchi [10] develop a theoretical framework for niche marketing food specialties through rural tourism that incorporates the experience economy model.

Quadri-Felitti and Fiore [11] review studies on the evolution of understanding the wine tourism experience and propose a model to advance a theory of experiential consumption (4E = Entertainment, Education, Escapist, Esthetic) and referenced to Pine and Gilmore [1,2]. Within this framework, Charters and Pettigrew [12] ask whether wine consumption is an aesthetic experience.

Conceptually, Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung [8] are among the first to embark on measuring experience economy constructs. Tsai and Wang [13] evaluate a food tourism experience and their value in branding. In this study, we identify and evaluate important demand features for hotel stays that combine a wine and culinary experience, applying the theory of experiential consumption. We also add to the growing literature relating tourism product prices and attributes (for example [14, 15]), i.e., evaluating experience economy concepts in terms of observed market prices.

Consequently, this paper will extend the existing literature in two ways. First, it will apply the theory of experiential consumption to combined culinary and wine related tourist experiences, in an effort to identify preferred elements of consumer demand and using an exploratory factor analysis, we reveal the key components of tourism demand preferences in this domain. Second, it will relate the 4E-model of experiential consumption to the hedonic literature on tourism product pricing in an effort to estimate implicit prices for the realms of an experience. In doing so, we can critically assess the development of wine and culinary tourism segments and to create more successful marketing initiatives.

3. Data and methodology

This study combines primary data obtained through an online survey and secondary data compiling the nature of supply related to culinary and wine vacation offers available in South Tyrol. We use the survey to assess

Table 1. Survey Sample Statistics.

Gender	Female	66%
	Male	34%
Family Status	Single	38%
	Relationship	50%
	Separated	6%
	No answer	7%
Country Origin	Germany	29%
	Italy	60%
	Austria/Switzerland	7%
	Other	4%
Education Level	<12 Years	11%
	12–13 Years	16%
	>13 Years	22%
	University	51%
Work Status	Self-employed	12%
	Full-Time	36%
	Part-Time	8%
	Students	29%
	Retired	8%
	Other	8%

Source: Own calculations from sample data.

the theory of experiential consumption and to relate its key components to hedonic pricing models of tourism products. Together with the survey, the secondary data source identifies the pricing of the key components of experiential consumption related to culinary and wine tourism demand.

3.1. Survey

We developed an online survey aimed at potential tourists interested in culinary and wine related holiday stays in South Tyrol. We compiled a convenience sample comprised of 182 respondents about their demand preferences when booking a wine and culinary related offer. We translated the survey into two languages for Italian and German speakers to reflect the bilingual character of the destination studied. The usable sample size with complete responses for all relevant items reduced to 134 observations. We list important sample statistics including origin, gender and education in Table 1 and note that the average age of the respondents was 40.7 years (range 16–74 years).

We elaborated 13 selected items to identify important demand features that wine and culinary tourists would like to have included in their vacation. The items consist of the following features: a winery visit, a guided wine tasting, a guided vineyard walk, a guided cellar visit, the availability of a trained hotel sommelier, access to a specific wine information events, other hotel guests with a wine interest, the option to attend a regional cooking class or a wine seminar, a hiking activity with a traditional food experience, a culinary activity (for example a gourmet wine dinner), a dedicated hotel wine bar and exclusive wine cellar, a daily restaurant menu with featured wines, and the accessibility of wine and culinary books and magazines. Respondents had to rank the importance of having these features offered during their stay in South Tyrol using a 7-point Likert scale.

Table 2 lists a ranking of the 13 items characterizing the selected demand features in declining order based

Table 2. Demand Features: Response Ranking.

Demand Feature (7-pt Likert scale)	Average	Std. Dev.
Guided Wine Tasting	5.78	1.49
Guided Cellar Visit	5.60	1.61
Gourmet Wine Dinner	5.48	1.52
Visit of a Winery	5.39	1.73
Daily Menu with Featured Wines	5.33	1.66
Hiking Activity with Food Experience	5.22	1.67
Trained Hotel Sommelier	4.99	1.71
Guided Vineyard Walk	4.64	1.59
Hotel Wine Bar & Exclusive Cellar	4.57	1.71
Regional Cooking Class with wine	4.45	1.98
Specific Wine Information Event	3.66	1.76
Wine/Culinary Books and Magazines	3.57	1.73
Hotel Guests with a Wine Interest	3.32	1.56

Source: Own calculations from sample data.

on average importance expressed by the respondents. A reliability analysis for these items reveals a Cronbach's Alpha equal to 0.835. We observe that a "Guided Wine Tasting" has the highest average response rating (and the lowest standard deviation) followed by a "Guided Cellar Visit" while other "Hotel Guests with a Wine Interest" receives the lowest average response rating. Note that all these extremes relate to wine tourism demand. "Gourmet Wine Dinners" and "Daily Menus with featured wines" receive the highest average response ratings of features combining both culinary and wine tourism demand.

The survey data is used to perform an exploratory factor or principle component analysis (PCA) in order to group the items (demand features) with the aim to relate the groupings to the theory of experiential consumption of Pine and Gilmore [1,2]. Hence, we aim to associate the preferences related to wine and culinary wine tourism demand with the realms of 4E-Model (i.e., entertainment, education, escapist, and aesthetic).

3.2. Nature of supply

We obtain our second data set from hotels offering a culinary and wine experience to tourists visiting South Tyrol. Recently, the regional tourism sector has started an initiative to promote wine and culinary related hotel offers and to develop a dedicated website using the domain vinumhotels.com. From this domain, we gather data on the featured attributes of culinary and wine tourism experiences on offer and about the prices that are charged. The initiative promotes a vision of supplying international comfort and local hospitality of a well-known wine region with an ancient cultural landscape making the tourism experience unique and exciting. While the domain name focusses on wine, it equally stresses food, culture and wellbeing to offer an authentic experience to the visitor. The domain includes 29 hotels in South Tyrol that emphasize a wine and culinary tourism experience when developing their product offers.

Hence, the data set derived from the website comprises 29 basic offers characterized as culinary and wine tourism with an average price of 88.64 €/person per night. The average hotel has 4-stars. Dinner at the hotel restaurant or half-board is included for about 2/3 of all offers. Using the descriptors found on the website of the initiative, we classify each of the 29 hotel offers according to whether it

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix ^a.

Demand Features	4-Factor Solution			
	Entertainment	Education	Escapist	Aesthetic
Visit of a Winery	.823			
Guided Wine Tasting	.775			
Guided Vineyard Walk	.754			
Guided Cellar Visit	.701	.300		
Trained Hotel Sommelier	.644			.433
Specific Wine Information Event		.775		
Hotel Guests with Wine Interest		.656		.406
Regional Cooking Class / Wine Seminar		.615	.384	
Hiking Activity with Food Experience Culinary Activity (Gourmet Wine Dinner)			.823 .806	
Hotel Wine Bar and Exclusive Cellar				.706
Daily Restaurant Menu with Featured Wines	.309			.673
Wine/Culinary Books and Magazines	.344	.442		.512

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. ^aRotation converged in 12 iterations.

includes important features that wine and culinary tourists prefer, i.e., we relate them to the items presented in the survey so that we can group them according to the results of the PCA.

4. Empirical results

4.1. Principal component analysis

We use the items surveyed to perform a PCA on the preferred elements of culinary and wine tourism demand. The analysis reveals a 4-factor solution and Table 3 shows the result of the PCA with factor loadings greater than 0.300. It identifies four key factors of demand that tourists look for in a wine and culinary related hotel stay.

The factor or principle component analysis indicates logical groupings of demand features for wine and culinary related hotel stays. The total variance explained with the model is 65.2% of which the four individual factors explain between 13% and 24%. Factor names should reflect the main demand features from a tourist perspective and they should relate to the 4E-model of experiential consumption.

As suggested in Table 3, we can relate each of item groups to one of the 4E's proposed by the theory of experiential consumption (entertainment, education, escapist, and aesthetic). These relationships then confirm that the 4E-model of experiential consumption applies to wine and culinary tourism as suggested previously by other researchers addressing wine tourism (for example [11, 16, 17]).

The factor names given in Table 4 reflect the main demand features from a tourist perspective and relate to realms of the 4E-model of experiential consumption. The first factor groups features that refer to "Wine as Infotainment" and associates with *entertainment*. The second factor exemplifies "Social-Cultural Engagement"

Table 4. Factor Names reflecting the 4E Model.

Factor	Wine & Culinary Feature	4E-Realm
1	Wine as Infotainment	Entertainment
2	Social Cultural Engagement	Education
3	Wine and Food Activities	Escapist
4	Accommodation Traits & Style	Esthetic

Source: Own description from sample data.

Table 5. Hedonic Model: Dependent Variable Log (Price/Person/Night).

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Err	t-Stat.	Prob.	€ ^b
Constant	2.314***	0.269	8.599	0	—
½ Stars	0.221***	0.033	6.656	0	21.92
Dinner	0.175***	0.057	3.090	0.005	16.95
Education	0.141**	0.059	2.418	0.024	13.42
Escapist	0.125*	0.070	1.793	0.086	11.80
Esthetic	0.138*	0.070	1.959	0.062	13.12
N = 29, Adj. R ² = 0.719, F-Stat. = 15.31					
Significance Level: *** (1%), ** (5%), * (10%)					

Source: Own calculations. ^bwith adjustments according to [18].

and relates to *education*. The third factors concerns “Wine and Food Activities” and suggests being *escapist*. Finally, the fourth factor groups features that relate to “Accommodation Traits & Style” and is commonly associated with *aesthetic* dimensions of culinary and wine related demand.

4.2. Hedonic pricing model

As just discussed, the results of the PCA allow us to relate each item group to the 4E-model of experiential consumption (entertainment, education, escapist, and aesthetic). We use this result and the descriptors of the 29 basic culinary and wine related hotel offers found on *vinumhotels.com* to classify whether a realm of the 4E-model are included in the offer or not. Thus, we classify the attributes of hotel offers according to their experiential dimension based on the PCA and derive four dummy variables representing the 4E’s, respectively.

As it turns out, all 29 basic hotel offers include at least one feature classified as “Entertainment” while only 52% of them include a feature related to “Education.” Moreover, we can find “Escapist” and “Esthetic” features in 79% and 66% of all hotel offers, respectively. Next, we use the supply data retrieved from the website and the dummy variables classifying the attributes of each hotel offer to estimate a simple hedonic pricing model, which relates both tourism product and experiential attributes to market prices.

Table 5 shows the estimation results for the hedonic model with Log(Price/Person/Night) as the dependent variable. Independent variables included in the model are the hotel star rating, a dummy variable for dinner or half-board included, and dummy variables categorizing the features offered into one of the 4E-realms of experiential consumption. The last column calculates the relative price effect in Euros based on the average room price of 88.64 €/person per night. Reference category is a stay in an average 4-star hotel with a basic offer that includes at least one “Entertainment” feature.

As shown in many previous applications that relate hotel room prices and their attributes (for example [14, 15]),

the accommodation’s star rating is the most significant characteristic also explaining prices for wine and culinary related hotel offers. Another ½ star would make a stay about 22€/person/night more expensive. Including dinner or half-board at the hotel’s restaurant is another important attribute adding about 17€/person/night to the price level of a hotel offer in this domain.

In terms of the realms of the 4E-model, educational features are the most significant experiential attribute of a culinary and wine related hotel offer adding about 13.40€/person/night to its price. Experiential attributes related to the escapist and aesthetic realms of the 4E-model are also significant at least at the 10% level. According to our model, they contribute about 11.80€ or 13.10€ per person/night, respectively to the price level of a wine and culinary related hotel offer.

5. Conclusions

Our analysis indicates that wine and culinary tourists are experiential consumers. The empirical results obtained for demand preferences and for hotel offers in this domain for South Tyrol seem plausible and in line with previous research relating to wine tourism features in general and the 4E-model of experiential consumption in particular.

We relate the results of the PCA to current supply conditions for culinary and wine related hotel offers in South Tyrol and show that the tourism sector is developing offers with supply features that both reflect consumer preferences and market prices, respectively. The demand preferences identified in the survey are relevant in order to develop and market successful culinary and wine vacation offers.

Based on the results of our PCA, the 4E-model is a useful vehicle to classify the attributes of hotel offers according to their experiential dimension. Attributes of supply that provide an entertainment experience form the basis of any offer in the wine and culinary domain. Attributes of supply that provide an educational experience are highly relevant and add will a significant price premium. The demand features examined in this domain (e.g., specific wine information events, cooking lessons, wine seminars) require human capital investments, but they can be implemented relatively easily into an existing hotel infrastructure.

The wine and culinary tourism segment can help to foster regional development and the preservation of the culinary and cultural heritage in wine regions. Even though our study is exploratory, the results validate the relevance of experiential consumption related to wine and culinary vacation themes. Future research needs to explore a wider range of potential demand preferences and to exploit more representative sample to generalize the results beyond the local context to other wine regions.

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