

Generation Y as wine tourists: Their expectations and experiences at the winery cellar door

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INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism and research surrounding it has developed substantially over the last 15 years. The importance for wineries of visitation to cellar doors is recognised by both the tourism and wine industries (Carlsen and Charters, 2006; Mitchell and Hall, 2006) and the need to understand the expectations and experiences of wine tourists has driven much of the research that has been conducted. Ensuring a match between expectations and experience of the cellar door will affect not only the tourists' satisfaction with the experience but their emotional attachments to the brand and, by implication, their future purchase intentions (Dodd and Bigotte, 1997). It is important to note, however, that wine tourists are not a homogeneous grouping (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Mitchell, Hall, and McIntosh, 2000), and the importance of understanding the differences between them is increasingly recognised.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Baby Boomers, particularly males, have been viewed as the typical, and perhaps most desirable, wine tourist in the past (Charters and O'Neill, 2000). This is due to a range of factors, including their role in driving the growth in wine consumption in the Anglophone world, their perceived level of wine knowledge and wine involvement and greater disposable income. However, it is now becoming clear that a younger generation of wine consumers and wine tourists need to be considered if the industry is to have a long-term future (Koerber, 2000). This will require an understanding of the relationship of Generation Y to the winery experience. To this end, this chapter explores the attitudes, expectations and behaviour of Generation Y at the winery cellar door. In particular, the focus is on their

preferences regarding the interaction they seek with cellar door staff, their needs with regards to the type of education and/or information sought during a winery visit and their overall attitude to a winery experience. The chapter is based on fieldwork conducted in Swan Valley, Western Australia, Yarra Valley, Victoria, and Waipara Valley, New Zealand. It is worth noting that Generation Y has been defined in this chapter as those born between 1978 and 1994 (Sheahan, 2005).

GENERATION Y, WINE, AND WINE TOURISM

A growing body of research has explored the significance of age or generational groupings as a factor in the wine tourism experience over the past decade (Charters and Fountain, 2006; Dodd, Yuan, and Kolyesnikova, 2006; Mitchell, 2002; Nowak, Thach, and Olsen, 2006; Treloar, 2004; Treloar, Hall, and Mitchell, 2004). In relation to younger wine tourists' experience at the winery cellar door, Mitchell's (2002) study found no significant generational differences in satisfaction. However, glimpses of age-related factors affecting cellar door experiences have at times emerged from other more general investigations of the characteristics and experiences of wine tourists. For example, Dodd and Bigotte (1997) found evidence of a variation in perception of winery experiences based on the age of winery visitors, suggesting that older visitors were generally less critical than younger ones. The same study also suggested that younger wine tourists rated service quality as a more important factor in determining satisfaction with the winery visit than their older counterparts. What was not investigated, however, was whether the lower satisfaction of younger wine tourists was due to differing priorities at the cellar door, or to differential experiences of service quality at the winery visited.

Additionally, there has been research conducted into the importance of generational cohorts in relation to wine consumption, with growing recognition of the need to foster an interest in wine amongst younger consumers in order to ensure the long-term survival of the wine industry (Beverland, 2001; Howard and Stonier, 2001; Nowak et al., 2006; Olsen, Thach, and Nowak, 2007; Thach and Olsen, 2006; Treloar, 2004).

Generation Y has been portrayed by some as a confident cohort – comfortable with evolving technologies, self-reliant, ambitious, tolerant of others and eager for a challenge (Martin and Tulgan, 2001). However, they have also been described as lazy,

self-absorbed, impatient and ill-mannered (Martin and Tulgan, 2001). Sheahan (2005) counters this by suggesting that Generation Y is perceived this way because they are not prepared to compromise or sacrifice lifestyles for career ambitions. They expect (and demand) enjoyment from their employment, and seek meaningful and interesting work in which they experience some control over their working environment. Generation Y seeks similar stimulation in their leisure environments through multi-sensory experiences, entertainment, fun and variety. This generation has been raised to be demanding; they want 'instant gratification' and enjoy getting 'something for nothing'. In this regard, they may see little connection between effort and results. Researchers report that this cohort has high self-confidence, expecting respect and carrying a sense of entitlement into most encounters. However, they also need validation from others, suggesting the self-confidence noted above may not yet be very robust (Sheahan, 2005).

As stated above, limited research has been conducted into the wine involvement of Generation Y (Thach and Olsen, 2006; Treloar, 2002, 2004), and no in-depth study has been completed into the expectations and experience of this generational cohort as wine tourists. This is partly due to the fact that members of Generation Y, outside Europe at least, are currently irregular wine drinkers (Scalera, 2002). Their early experience of alcohol begins with experimenting with alcoholic beverages in pubs, clubs and bars where the expectation to drink wine is lower than it is to consume beer and spirits (Scalera, 2002; Treloar, 2004). This does not mean that members of Generation Y are not drinking wine at all; Treloar (2004) reports that over 60% of his Australasian Generation Y respondents drank wine at least once a month, and almost a third drank wine weekly. According to his research, the most common environment in which this group consume wine is while having an 'intimate dinner', where the wine adds to the atmosphere of the occasion. These findings are echoed in research in the USA which found that a similar proportion of their sample drank wine (66%); however this is much higher than the national average of 26% (Thach and Olsen, 2006). Thach and Olsen (2006) report that amongst their young respondents there was a preference for red wine over white, and they drank wine because they liked the taste, its relationship with food, and its ability to help them relax. While they associate wine with 'nice dinners' there was a perception that wine is not 'cool or hip', and it

was seen by some to be 'expensive, snobby and snooty' (p. 319). However, it is also seen to be a natural product.

Treloar (2004) observes that a significant proportion of Generation Y respondents show an interest in wine tourism. Fifty nine percent of his respondents had visited a winery at least once in the past, and 67% of his sample thought visiting wineries was an appealing activity. As a result of this finding, Treloar, Hall and Mitchell (2004) suggest that an emphasis on the leisure and social aspects of wine tourism rather than more wine-related aspects, such as production techniques, wine styles or cellaring practices may be more effective in marketing to this segment. Similarly, other authors have suggested that social activities, such as wine events and festivals, may prove an important avenue through which to introduce younger wine tourists, including the Generation Y cohort, to the wine tourism experience (Dodd et al., 2006; Houghton, 2001). There is evidence also that a positive experience at the cellar door will stimulate a long-term sense of attachment and brand loyalty in Generation Y tourists (Nowak et al., 2006).

While these findings provide a useful starting point, it is clear that further research into this cohort at the winery cellar door would be beneficial. Furthermore, given that this generation has grown up with ever changing technologies (Hofman, 1999; King, 2001; Thach and Olsen, 2006), their openness to change may provide an important opportunity for wine marketers and cellar door managers if they are able to identify products and experiences which appeal to these young adults.

EXPLORING GENERATION Y WINE TOURISTS: A MODIFIED MYSTERY SHOPPING APPROACH

A modified mystery shopping approach was developed and applied to the exploration of the experience of Generation Y at the winery cellar door. Mystery shopping is a form of covert participant observation in which researchers take on the role of customers or potential customers in order to monitor the processes and procedures involved in service delivery (Wilson, 1998). Most significantly, this approach enables the researcher to get first-hand knowledge of the service environment as it unfolds in a natural and uncontrived setting (Grove and Fisk, 1992; Wilson, 1998). The potential of observational methods, including mystery shopping, for investigating service

provision is increasingly acknowledged and has been used extensively in the services industry to investigate service quality (Grove and Fisk, 1992; Jorgensen, 1989; Wilson, 1998), yet it has rarely been used in tourism research to date (Hudson, Snaith, Miller, and Hudson, 2001; Thach, Mason, and Amspacher, 2007).

Typically the goal of commercial mystery shopping is to *reduce* the impact of the shopper's personal characteristics and subjectivity on the assessment of a service encounter (Hudson et al., 2001; Morrison, Colman, and Preston, 1997; Wilson, 1998), but in the current context the differences in perceptions and expectations of the mystery shoppers based on individual characteristics, particularly as they related to generational groupings, were of central importance. Consequently, the research sought to explore both the supply and the demand sides of the service encounter, using a modified mystery shopping approach that returns the methodology to its qualitative origins, brings a phenomenological emphasis on the consumer's experience, and prioritises the subjective and affective components of the visitor experience of the winery cellar door (Charters, Fountain, and Fish, forthcoming).

This research consisted of two main processes. Firstly, a short, open-ended questionnaire was developed to assess the participants' experience of the winery cellar door during the mystery shopping exercise. Secondly, focus groups were used to revisit the questions covered in the questionnaire in more detail.

The participants involved in the encounter were recruited using convenience sampling amongst residents in the cities adjacent to the winery regions (Perth, Melbourne and Christchurch), and specifically with a form of snowball sampling. The Generation Y participants included students and recent graduates of the researchers' universities, plus friends of those students, and friends and children of work colleagues.

Participants were selected by virtue of having visited a winery, having some interest in wine, and to represent a range of generational cohorts. While a range of interest levels was felt desirable to offer some form of triangulation (Denzin, 1989; Thach and Olsen, 2006), participants with a high degree of involvement which could skew the findings were avoided.

Fitting with the phenomenological approach of this research, before visiting the winery, the participants were briefed to treat the experience as a normal and pleasurable experience. They were then sent out to visit wineries in teams of six

participants. In general the teams comprised a pair of each of three “generational groups”; one pair of Baby Boomers, one from Generation X and one from Generation Y. All participants were sent out in pairs, to ensure alternative perspectives on a single encounter, again increasing trustworthiness of data (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). The teams, although at the winery at the same time, were sent in a staggered way to avoid any appearance of acting as one homogenous group. On leaving the cellar door the participants individually completed a questionnaire about their experience before returning to the project headquarters where the focus group debriefing, facilitated by one of the researchers, took place. The focus groups tended to last for between 20 and 40 minutes and they were recorded on audio-tape, then transcribed for later analysis. The analysis involved the close examination of both the transcriptions and the questionnaires for patterns of behavior and for emergent themes – as well as for any apparent contradictions.

In total, 82 participants were involved in this research, and teams made 28 winery visits (16 in Australia, 12 in New Zealand). Forty-eight of these encounters were undertaken by 24 Generation Y participants, with a fairly even split between males (11) and females (13). This cohort of participants generally had relatively low subjective wine knowledge; 9% reporting no knowledge at all, 68% reporting basic knowledge and the remaining 23% reporting intermediate knowledge. They did drink wine, however; almost three quarters (74%) drank wine at least monthly, and 47% drank wine weekly or more often. To this extent, as one would expect within a wine tourism setting, the participants generally showed a higher level of involvement with wine than would be normal for their age group.

GENERATION Y WINE TOURISTS: SOME CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 provides a summary of some key findings relating to the experience of Generation Y at the cellar door in comparison to the other generational groupings. These will be explored in more detail with a consideration of the cohort’s need for a total experience and for interaction, the desire to learn and to gain a connection, and the fact that differing experiences are sought at differing wineries. Whilst a percentage is given to the number expressing a preference in each category this is

merely indicative or relative importance, as this was not a quantitative study, so no statistical significance is implied.

% rating activity as important when visiting a winery	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomer
wine tasting	75	76	85
wine buying	25	40	40
learning about wine tasting	63	43	24
learning about wine making	56	29	14
learning how to cellar	25	38	14
touring the winery	38	19	24
atmosphere location	63	76	62
enjoying day out with friends	94	95	85
attending wine event festival	25	14	5
Eating a meal	44	67	60

Table 1: A comparison by generational grouping of the importance of aspects of the cellar door experience

Generation Y wants a total experience

Initial findings from the research reveal some interesting characteristics of Generation Y wine tourists, which tend to support some of the more general assessments of the cohort. Firstly, Generation Y participants clearly placed an emphasis on enjoying the entire experience of the winery, rather than explicitly focusing on wine tasting (and even less buying wine), although wine tasting was still important. A number of participants commented that a significant aspect of their visit was that it was relaxed, inviting and ‘fun’. As an example of this, one male wrote in his questionnaire: ‘When wine tasting with friends having a good time ... is more important than tasting the wine.’ This informant stated subsequently in the focus group that he ‘didn’t like the wines’ this winery offered, but liked the atmosphere as it was not ‘too posh’; therefore he would return with friends. This seems to support the findings of previous research that enjoying a day out is a more important motivator for cellar door visitation than wine tasting alone (Dodd et al., 2006; Treloar et al., 2004).

As indicated above, the atmosphere of a winery was very important for these young participants, and they appreciated an environment that was not intimidating. An important point in this context was that wineries with imposing buildings, or which seemed too ‘refined’ or ‘upmarket’ to Generation Y, were seen as potentially more intimidating than small family run establishments. A number of participants

acknowledged that they felt apprehensive approaching larger, more imposing winery structures. By comparison, the smaller establishments, with their less sophisticated surroundings, were less threatening, and in some ways were more appealing:

At [the smaller winery]... I didn't feel as intimidated by the whole situation ... the building was not as nice looking but it does the job (male).

While all of the young participants in this research had visited a winery before, many considered themselves inexperienced wine tasters and appreciated efforts to reduce the 'intimidation factor'. Thus, the welcome received from cellar door staff was crucial in relaxing these visitors. Participants unanimously agreed that an appropriate and proactive greeting from cellar door staff made them feel much more relaxed in the setting on arrival. Other things could also set them at ease, for example, having a dog at the door or music playing were two ways some participants felt wineries had reduced their initial tension on arrival.

Generation Y seeks interaction

In keeping with their focus on the overall experience, Generation Y participants expressed a strong desire for interaction with cellar door staff during their winery experience; as one respondent said 'the more interaction there is the better'. Thus it was important that their cellar door experience involved a personalised service – rather than merely exchanging information or goods. This point is summarised as follows:

It's more about having a conversation with them ... It's like getting to know you and your wine habits.... Not trying to sell you anything, but trying to see what you like, and what might suit you (female)

This prior expectation of interaction with cellar door staff was most apparent in accounts from participants who had not had this need met:

She didn't ask anything about us ... about what we were doing, or try to make it more personal, it was very much just 'taste the wines' (female).

Generation Y participants sought a wine tasting experience that was more flexible than that desired by Baby Boomers, however they did desire some structure in their cellar door experience (more than Generation X), due to their lack of confidence

about the wine tasting experience. In focus group discussions, they questioned their ability to ‘do the tasting right’, as the following quotation indicates:

I felt really intimidated because she just goes ‘Do you want to try the wines? There’s the list’ and I was looking at the list, going ‘this is just complete gibberish to me, I have no real idea of what’s going on,’ so I sort of blindly pointed at one (male).

For this reason, Generation Y participants seemed happiest with a partially structured process, involving more reassurance or guidance from the cellar door staff to account for their lack of experience. This reassurance, and more interaction in general, were additional ways in which staff could reduce the intimidation factor. Thus, a number of young participants thought an opening question from the staff member – similar to that experienced in other retail settings – would have been useful to ascertain visitors’ interests and existing knowledge of wine. In light of this requirement, Generation Y participants rated their experience very highly in situations where they did not feel uncertain about the process. They also sought advice from the cellar door staff in order to find a wine that would suit them:

The whole reason that you go to the cellar door is to try and find wines that you enjoy drinking. So, as far as I’m concerned, they’re the experts, they’re the ones who know what they’re talking about, so ... they can help *you* find out what *you* want in a wine (female).

There were other ways in which they sought this guidance too, including using displays of awards won to indicate which wines they should taste.

Generation Y wants to learn

A key finding in this study is the interest these participants expressed about learning more about wine, reflecting their openness to a challenge and to new experiences. This tends to contradict previous research which suggests that the social, enjoyable element is more important to young people’s winery experience than wine tasting and related activities (Treloar et al., 2004). In fact, this study seemed to suggest that Generation Y is *more* interested in learning from their winery experience than either the Generation X or Baby Boomer participants, perhaps due to these other cohorts having more existing knowledge. Despite evidence of a lack of self confidence about

the wine tasting process, these participants were willing to confront their ignorance by asking questions, sometimes of a fairly basic nature:

I'm not a big wine connoisseur or anything, so I ... asked her the difference between Pinot Noir and Riesling and stuff like that and she was really helpful. I learnt a few things. She answered my questions really well (female).

In order to feel comfortable asking these questions Generation Y participants had to feel as if the staff members treated them seriously and with respect; this was an issue to which they seemed particularly sensitive. At the outset of this study the researchers were interested to explore whether younger people were treated differently at the cellar door from older visitors. While at some cellar doors Generation Y participants perceived that they received different and inferior service to their older counterparts (Fountain and Charters, 2004), there were also occasions when the youngest pairing in a team received superior treatment to the others, so there was little consistency in this regard. However, where Generation Y participants did feel less well treated, or treated in a different way, their interpretation of this situation differed markedly to that of the older cohorts. On receiving what they felt was inferior service, older participants would explain this difference of treatment in structural terms – for example, their positioning at the tasting bar was disadvantageous or their arrival at a busy time precluded better treatment. By comparison, Generation Y participants took it personally, often blaming their different treatment on their age, their probable financial status, or their lack of wine knowledge; the following quotation is typical:

She may not have been quite so at ease with us, or maybe not so interested in talking to us, because it was probably unlikely that we would be buying, or able to hold a conversation to the same extent that perhaps [the others] could. (male).

Where they did feel respected, however, Generation Y participants were keen to seek more information from the cellar door staff:

We were asking some pretty silly questions and he wasn't laughing about it or anything - he was giving a serious response back (male).

Another important prerequisite for members of Generation Y to feel comfortable asking questions was the feeling that the staff had the time to talk to them. Again, the

atmosphere had to be non-intimidating, and not feeling rushed was an important part of this.

Generation Y seeks a connection

Despite an assumption in some quarters that Generation Y may be a ‘self-absorbed’ cohort, this did not seem to be the case; these participants did not want ‘one way conversations’ where the emphasis was only on them and their needs. Through interacting with the cellar door staff they were seeking more meaningful encounters and experiences and a sense of ‘connection’ to the winery itself – a quality linked to Generation Y in previous research (Sheahan, 2005). Consequently, many participants expressed a strong desire to find out more about the history of the winery and winemaker in order to give their experience that more meaningful, personal touch (Charters et al., forthcoming). In this desire the youngest participants were joined by their Generation X counterparts, but it did not seem to be as important to the Baby Boomers.

This connection they were seeking seemed much more likely to occur at smaller wineries where many young participants felt that they were having a genuine conversation with the staff members, rather than a commercial transaction. Comments about the personal and ‘real’ nature of the interaction between the visitor and staff of smaller cellar doors were frequently made, and there was a sense that participants were made to feel special at these smaller wineries. As one female said of a smaller winery visited ‘it was just that family feel – it was her wine, and her photo and her bottles ... so there was just a personal touch to it’. Other participants linked these smaller, family run wineries to a less commercial experience:

I enjoyed the boutique experience there. Because going to a commercial winery and then a boutique one, it is interesting to note the differences. Just chatting to the guy, his knowledge was fantastic. I really enjoyed that. Compared to the commercial ones with just staff who don’t know a huge amount whereas this chap just seemed to know everything (male).

Money, or lack of it, was explicitly an issue for these participants and their lack of funds was mentioned frequently, particularly in relation to buying wine. Having said this, many of the Generation Y participants *did* buy wine. In deciding to buy wine not only was the taste and price important, but also the feeling of connection that had

developed with the cellar door staff or the winery itself. As one male succinctly put it ‘if the service is excellent then it is easier to get your wallet out’. Further, the role of a bottle of wine as a souvenir of an enjoyable experience was explained by a young participant:

[You’d buy a bottle of wine] and then you’d drink that wine, and you’d remember the experience, and if you were drinking it with friends you’d say ‘oh, I bought this at [the winery]. I remember we had a great experience, this is what we did’ (female).

Different wineries for different experiences

It was clear that different types of wineries served very different functions for these young participants. Smaller wineries were environments in which younger wine tasters felt less rushed, and where a personal connection with the staff enabled them to feel comfortable and offered them the opportunity to ask more questions so that it is not surprising that many participants explicitly stated a preference for visiting smaller wineries in the future:

With the bigger winery you feel like you are pushed in the door, and pushed out again. It’s like there’s only a set time they really want you in there, then you kind of do the loop and then you’re out again. But here you wander around, and it’s small, but you feel like you can ask questions, it does make you want to come back and learn a little more from the guy. So yeah, I would go back and I would purchase their wine (male)

This preference for small wineries is not as clear-cut as it might seem. While many participants stated that they much preferred their experience at the smaller wineries – they felt like lingering, they learnt a lot, they would buy the wines again – many of these same people stated that they wouldn’t necessarily visit the *same* small winery again, as ‘you’ve seen what there is to see and there’s not much else’ - perhaps highlighting Generation Y’s need for variety in leisure activities (Sheahan, 2005). The issue seemed to be that once they had tasted the wine and learnt what they could from the cellar door staff, there was little more the winery could offer in the way of a ‘total experience’. This was a viewpoint heard repeatedly from Generation Y participants; while they preferred their experiences at small wineries, their encounters at larger

wineries did not necessarily leave them disappointed, and the wider range of attractions at larger wineries meant that they were more likely to consider revisiting them. However few of those who said they would return to a larger winery stated that they would come again to taste wine, reporting instead that a future visit would be for a social occasion, particularly for a meal. The exception to this was where a smaller winery was hosting a social event, such as a music festival, which Generation Y participants stated *would* draw them back for the social occasion it offered.

LESSONS FOR WINE TOURISM

The findings summarise the experience of only 24 Generation Y participants visiting a small number of wineries in Australasia. Nevertheless, there are important implications of the expectations of the winery cellar door experience amongst this group with much broader significance.

Firstly, despite their reputation as a ‘confident’ and ‘self-reliant’ group (Martin and Tulgan, 2001) there is evidence that when faced with experiences and situations with which they are not overly familiar, such as the winery cellar door, Generation Y appreciates efforts made to put them at ease and to guide them through the tasting process in a setting that is relaxed and informal. In general, they find the environment of a winery cellar door potentially intimidating – whether that is due to the grand, imposing appearance of the winery or the ‘mysteries’ of the tasting process. For this cohort a relaxing, fun atmosphere at the cellar door is very important; probably more important than the wines themselves. The efforts of the cellar door staff contribute significantly to this atmosphere, but so too does the setting, the décor and the music being played. Anything that a winery or the cellar door staff can do to put them at ease is greatly appreciated. This may be as simple as a friendly smile and welcome on entry, or good signage indicating where to go and the process to be followed. These efforts will be appreciated and are crucial considerations for wineries providing cellar door facilities.

Second, members of Generation Y want to be treated as individuals when they visit a winery cellar door. They expect cellar door staff to ascertain their needs and tailor an experience to suit their level of wine and tasting knowledge. There is no doubt that the Generation Y participants in general had much less confidence in the cellar door setting than their older counterparts. In general, they recognise that they currently

have quite limited wine knowledge and are somewhat uneasy about the visit due to their perception that their youth, inexperience and lack of funds make them less appealing clients. In this way they appreciate personalised guidance through the process in a way that is respectful and which shows they are valued as customers.

Third, Generation Y wants to interact and ‘connect’ with cellar door staff. This is not just a matter of staff listening to their needs but a meaningful two-way conversation. For this reason they find the experience more rewarding at small, family run wineries where there is time for this dialogue and a less scripted, more interactive approach is available. Smaller wineries introduce a ‘human element’ which is itself less intimidating and may be more difficult to uncover at larger commercial operations. These smaller wineries tend to offer a more relaxed environment, which is more conducive to taking one’s time and asking questions.

This is connected with a crucial element in the Generation Y approach to the winery cellar door; they wish to learn and again this may be more important than tasting the wine for them. Furthermore, they are willing students, and want to extend their knowledge of wines and wine making. They do not want cellar door staff to use ‘technical jargon’, but they do appreciate being given information about the wine and the process at a level that they can understand. Learning may include gaining knowledge about wine generally; this is a generation for whom ‘lifelong learning’ is important. They are seeking a simple but not condescending introduction into the mysteries of producing and tasting wine. Additionally, they want to learn the story of the winery, its history, why it is there and what makes it different.

Fourth, it is clear that members of Generation Y seek different types of experiences at different types of wineries. While younger wine tourists clearly appreciate the ‘whole wine tourist’ experience available at the larger, commercial wineries, this has to be balanced against a desire for a personalised, intimate experience, where these other features may not be available. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that while Generation Y prefers the experience available at the smaller wineries, this may not be enough to get them to return to the same winery again; instead, they talk about visiting other small cellar doors for a similar but different experience, highlighting their need for variety.

This preference is nuanced, however; there were many occasions when a positive experience was rewarded with the intention to return. This suggests a significant impact on their purchase decisions and future brand loyalty, confirming the conclusions of Nowak et al. (2006). A good experience where they ‘connect’ with the wines and the wineries can have a lasting impact on these young people at the outset of their wine drinking career.

WHAT MORE DO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GENERATION Y AS WINE TOURISTS?

There is scope for further research in this area. For example, this project has only focused on Australasian respondents, who live in a culture where wine is not the drink of choice for young people, and for many of whom wine drinking and tasting is still a relatively new experience. For this reason it would be interesting to replicate such a study in a different cultural context such as Europe where perspectives on wine may be different. For example, Smiley (2004) reports that young consumers in France and Italy are drinking less wine, as wine is the beverage of their parents so it is considered ‘old-fashioned’. It is likely, as Thach and Olsen (2006) suggest, that a wider comparative study would be useful.

Furthermore, it is unclear which of the trends apparent in the expectations and requirements of Generation Y participants is a factor of them being young and inexperienced when it comes to wine specifically, as opposed to a general feature of their generational cohort. In relation to this, a characteristic of the wine tourist gaining attention in tourism literature is that of wine involvement (Brown, Havitz, and Getz, 2006; Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002). There is little doubt that most of the Generation Y participants in this study had less experience of wine and wineries than their older counterparts, although all participants had visited a winery at least once before. Thus, some of the differences identified between cohorts might be attributed to differences in wine knowledge and wine involvement and interest. In association with this it would be interesting to explore the influence of other personal characteristics on their expectations and experiences, such as gender, educational level and personality type.

More exploration of the different experiences sought at different types of wineries and how to leverage off the varying factors which improve brand loyalty would be useful. Currently it seems that larger wineries might be more likely to draw Generation Y back for a repeat visit, but this visit would be for a social occasion, and may not do much for brand loyalty. By comparison, it is clear that brand loyalty seems stronger at the smaller wineries, but these young people may not revisit the winery unless there is something new to experience.

Overall, however, there is cause to be optimistic about the potential of Generation Y to be an important market for wine tourism in the future and it is important for the wine industry to do what they can to foster brand loyalty amongst this cohort. The participants in this research revealed themselves to be eager to try new experiences and to learn, and despite their lack of experience and a tendency to feel a little intimidated they are not afraid to express what they want from a winery experience. It is important that wineries do not offer a 'one size fits all' approach to the cellar door; it is clear that Generation Y want a personalised and flexible service responsive to their needs. An environment in which younger visitors feel at ease, and from which they leave satisfied, is crucial to developing long-term brand loyalty for the wine and wine tourism industries; it is up to winery operators and managers to make the changes to ensure this happens.

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