

**Segmenting wine festival attendees by level of wine knowledge to enhance future destination marketing strategies**

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Harsha E. Chacko Ph.D., C.S.W.  
University Of New Orleans  
Lester E. Kabacoff School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Administration  
Kirschman Hall #462D  
2000 Lakeshore Drive  
New Orleans, LA. 70148  
hchacko@uno.edu  
Tel: 504.280.6821

David Pearlman Ph.D., C.H.E.  
University Of New Orleans  
Lester E. Kabacoff School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Administration  
Kirschman Hall #451  
2000 Lakeshore Drive  
New Orleans, LA. 70148  
dpearlma@uno.edu  
Tel: 504.280.6962

Harsha E. Chacko is a Professor of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Administration at the University of New Orleans where he has been teaching for the past 30 years. In 2009, Dr. Chacko successfully completed the requirements for the designation as a Certified Specialist of Wine. He has been involved in many New Orleans area tourism research projects and is a Past President of the South Central Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association.

**Title: Segmenting wine festival attendees by level of wine knowledge to enhance future destination marketing strategies**

Special event tourism has become an increasingly important sector within the world wide tourism industry and this research examines how attendees at a wine festival in New Orleans, USA can be segmented so that more effective marketing strategies can be developed. Data were collected by intercept surveys during the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience (NOWFE), an annual wine and food festival, resulting in 487 usable responses. Respondents were segmented into three groups based on their level of wine knowledge and data analysis showed that there were significant differences between the groups in terms of demographics (gender, income, residency); trip characteristics (primary purpose of visit, length of stay); and spending behavior. The paper discusses how these differences in the segments can be used to create better market positioning of the festival and to develop more effective marketing communications. In addition, data were collected from a smaller subsample using a wine involvement scale which was factor analyzed resulting in two factors labeled expertise and enjoyment. Further analysis showed strong significant correlations between high levels of wine knowledge and the expertise factor.

Keywords: Special event tourism; wine festivals; destination marketing

## **Segmenting wine festival attendees by level of wine knowledge to enhance future destination marketing strategies**

### **Introduction**

Food and wine related travel is a niche travel market in the United States that has received considerable attention in the past few years and is seeing tremendous growth. A recent study by Mandala Research (2013) showed that for thirty percent of leisure travelers, the availability of food and wine activities was the *primary* reason for taking their trips. A previous study by the Travel Industry Association (TIA), indicated that more than ten percent of leisure travelers have partaken in wine and food related activities (TIA, 2007). This research also reported that almost one in ten travelers were involved some wine related activity during their trips. These activities were defined as participating in winery tours, “driving a wine trail, tasting locally made wines or attending wine festivals”(p.7). The wine industry related website, [www.localwineevents.com](http://www.localwineevents.com), lists over 800 wine festivals including prominent ones in locations that are not wine growing regions such as South Beach (Miami), Aspen, and New Orleans. These festivals range from a one to five day duration and attract large number of visitors, many of whom are visiting the destination for the primary purpose of attending the event (University of New Orleans, 2012). These events have considerable economic impacts on their host communities with the Aspen Food and Wine Classic accounting for \$3 million in direct economic impact (Lutz, 2011), and the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience (NOWFE) at \$7.2 million (University of New Orleans, 2012). Although there are no economic impact studies available for the South Beach Wine and Food Festival, it had around 60,000 attendees and raised \$2 million for charitable causes

(Walker, 2013). These three wine festivals have been highlighted here since none of them are in wine producing areas and thereby attract more diverse audiences that need to be better understood. Specifically, this study will examine the characteristics of NOWFE attendees to better understand their interests in wine as well as their demographic characteristics and purchase behaviors.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to segment attendees of a wine festival (New Orleans Wine and Food Experience) by level of wine knowledge and create distinguishing profiles of these market segments to be used festival organizers to enhance their future destination marketing efforts.

### **Background**

Alebaki and Iakovidou (2011) conducted a comprehensive review of market segmentation approaches in wine tourism and discussed an array of variables that were used to segment wine tourists. These include visitor motivations, demographics, psychographics, lifestyle, level of interest in wine, wine knowledge, and involvement. However, most of these studies focused on visitors to well known wine producing regions. Since this current study is one that examines the characteristics of visitors to a wine festival at a destination that is not in close proximity to any major wine producing region, the literature review will specifically look at studies that have been conducted on wine festival attendees.

Substantial research has been conducted on special event and festival tourism from many different perspectives (Getz & Andersson, 2010). Of particular interest for this study

include the roles of festivals in affecting destination image (Boo & Busser, 2006) and the segmentation of visitors based on various characteristics (Chang, 2006; Li & Petrick, 2006). Several studies have also specifically researched wine festival attendees (Bruwer, 2002; Houghton, 2008; Yuan, Cai, Morrison, & Linton, 2005). These and other studies have also shown that wine related travelers are not a homogeneous bloc and can be segmented in a many different ways (Hall et al, 2000; Getz, 2000). Shanka and Taylor (2004) showed that there were significant differences between first-time and repeat visitors to a wine festival in terms of demographics and the rating of festival attributes and proposed suggestions to festival organizers. Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) posited that wine tourists could be segmented into wine lovers, wine interested, and wine connoisseurs based on their interest in wine while Brown et. al. (2006) used an involvement scale to segment wine consumers and developed their profiles. Yuan et. al. (2005) identified three market segments using cluster analysis, which they named wine focusers, festivity seekers, and hangers-on. While the wine focusers and hangers-on were similar to the segments in the study by Charters and Ali-Knight (2002), Yuan et. al.'s festivity seekers were considered a new segment. This segment of wine festival attendees was interested in other experiences at the destination in addition to the festival itself. Hall's (1996) research suggested three market segments that were labeled wine lovers, wine interested, and the curious tourist. Each of these was classified, as implied by their names, based on their involvement and interest in wine. Houghton (2008) further developed Hall's (1996) classifications using a clustering procedure and found that wine festivals attract a diverse group of attendees ranging from those who were serious about wine to those who would be considered wine novices with only a passing interest in wine.

These and other studies show that there is a need to better understand the differentiating characteristics of wine related traveler segments.

### **New Orleans Wine and Food Experience (NOWFE)**

NOWFE is a twelve year old festival that promotes the culinary heritage of the city of New Orleans and includes a variety of individually priced events over a period of five days. The Premium Fine Wine Dinner is multi-course dinner with wine and features a prominent local chef (\$125.00). The Vintner Dinners are held at various high end restaurants in New Orleans where the chefs and vintners pair food and wine (\$85-\$125). Vinola is an upscale wine tasting limited to 200 wine enthusiasts who can mix and mingle with a variety of notable vintners who pour their wines (\$150) and is followed by an Auction of fine wines. The Royal Street Stroll is a fun event that takes full advantage of location of the festival in New Orleans. This outdoor event is a time to taste wine, shop for antiques and fine art, and enjoy the architecture of the French Quarter while listening to live jazz on the street (\$75). Seminars at NOWFE are for those who are interested in learning more about wine, for those who are interested with cooking with wine, and also those who building a palate for wine tasting (\$50-\$100). Finally, the Grand Tasting is an elaborate event held at the New Orleans Superdome that brings together 75 chefs, 1000 wines, and features entertainment by local musicians (\$100.00). Hundreds of tickets were sold for the events and the overall economic impact of the event in 2012 was \$7.2 million (University of New Orleans, 2012).

### **Methods**

Data were collected through intercept surveys of attendees at the various events on different days of NOWFE and a total of 498 usable responses were obtained. The survey questionnaire consisted of four sections including 1) money spent by visitors on goods and services; 2) satisfaction with NOWFE; 3) level of personal wine knowledge; 4) trip characteristics; and 5) demographics. Wine knowledge was self reported by respondents on a 10 point scale (1= little; 5 = intermediate; 10 = superior). A sub sample of respondents (n=80) received a survey that also included 14 questions of a Wine Involvement Scale developed by Brown et. al (2006). For data analysis, the sample was first divided into three groups by level of wine knowledge. Second, Chi square tests were used to examine the difference between the groups on the categorical variables (trip characteristics, demographics) and ANOVA was used to test differences in the continuous variables (spending). Third, the responses to the Wine Involvement Scale were factor analyzed and the relationship between the resulting factors and the three segments based on level of wine knowledge were examined.

## **Results**

A profile of the sample is shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Table 1 shows the trip characteristics and demographics of the sample of NOWFE attendees. On average, attendees were almost split equally between first time attendees and repeaters; a majority (59.2%) were residents of the New Orleans area and thus were mostly day trippers. Attendees tended to be more female (55.1%) and were their ages were almost equally split between 25-34 (32.5%), 35-49 (27.6%) and 50-64 (28.9%). Incomes of attendees were skewed towards above \$75,000 per year (47.1%) with another 37.4% reporting incomes under \$75,000.

**Table 1. Trip and demographic characteristics of NOWFE attendees**

Variable	Percent
<b>First time or Repeat (n=498)</b>	
First time visitor	52.2
Repeat visitor	47.8
<b>Live in the Greater New Orleans Area(n=493)</b>	
Yes	59.2
No	40.8
<b>Overnight or Day Tripper (n=493)</b>	
Overnight visitor	38.8
Day tripper	61.2
<b>Gender (n=459)</b>	
Male	44.9
Female	55.1
<b>Age (n=453)</b>	
Younger than 25	4.6
25 – 34 years	32.5
35 – 49 years	27.6
50 – 64 years	28.9
65 and older	6.4
<b>Income (n= 479)</b>	
Under \$25,000	4.6
\$25,000 - \$49,999	13.2
\$50,000 - \$74,999	19.6
\$75,000 - \$99,999	15.2
\$100,000 - \$149,999	15.0
Over \$150,000	16.9
Prefer not to answer	15.4

Table 2 and 3 show the trip characteristics of nonresident (visitor) attendees and their daily, per-person expenditures. Majority of visitors traveled to New Orleans by personal vehicle and their primary purpose was to attend the wine festival. Their spent an average of 3.6 nights in the city and around \$490.00 per person per day on a variety of goods and services.

**Table 2. Trip characteristics of non-resident visitors**

Variable	Percent
<b>Mode of transportation (n=197)</b>	
Airplane	42.9
Personal vehicle	54.0
Other	3.0
<b>Primary purpose of visit (n=192)</b>	
New Orleans Wine & Food Experience	62.5
Vacation/Pleasure	27.1
Business/ Convention	5.7
Other	4.7
<b>Number of nights in New Orleans(n=168)</b>	
One night	5.4
Two nights	22.0
Three nights	36.9
Four nights	17.3
Five nights	13.1
Six nights	0.6
Seven nights or more	4.7
Average = 3.6 nights	

**Table 3. Average daily expenditures of nonresident visitors**

<b>Average Daily Expenditures</b>	Dollars
Category	
Meals	\$152.58
Lodging	\$ 79.51
Shopping	\$105.82
Gambling	\$ 25.35
Bars and Nightclubs	\$ 59.95
Entertainment	\$ 44.62
Transportation	\$ 23.35
Total	\$488.18

*Note.* Dollar amounts reflect **per-day** spending. Individual spending totals for each category were adjusted by respondents' reported length of stay to reflect average daily expenses.

The sample was divided into three groups based on answers to the question on level of wine knowledge. Responses of 1 through 4 were in the first group; responses of 5 and 6 were in the second group; and 7 through 10 were in the third group. These segments were labeled Wine Novices (34.9% of the sample, n=170), Wine Intermediates (35.7% of the sample, n=174), and Wine Connoisseurs (29.4% of the sample, n=143).

Chi square tests of categorical variables (Tables 4a and 4b) showed significant differences between first-time versus repeat attendees ( $X^2 = 16.6$ ;  $p=0.00$ ) with first timers consisting more of Novices while repeat attendees tended to be more Connoisseurs. Wine Novices and Intermediates tended to be more local residents ( $X^2 = 8.90$ ;  $p=0.01$ ) while Connoisseurs were almost equally split between residents and visitors. Regarding the question comparing NOWFE to other wine and food festivals, majority of Novices and Intermediates had not been to other similar festivals while Connoisseurs described NOWFE as being better than other festivals that they had

attended ( $X^2 = 61.30$ ;  $p=0.00$ ). Significant differences were also seen in income ( $X^2 = 41.71$ ;  $p=0.00$ ) and age ( $X^2 = 27.78$ ;  $p=0.00$ ) with Intermediates and Connoisseurs tending to be older and with higher incomes while Novices were younger (under 35 years) with lower income (less than \$75,000). Gender was also significantly different between groups ( $X^2 = 10.33$ ;  $p=0.00$ ) with females dominating Novices and Intermediates and males leaning towards Connoisseurs.

**Table 4a. Results of variables with significant difference between groups based on level of wine knowledge (all attendees)**

<b>Visit</b>	Novices (%)	Intermediates (%)	Connoisseurs (%)
First time visitor	63.69	52.30	40.85
Repeat visitor	36.31	47.70	59.15
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
( $X^2 = 16.6$ ; $p=0.00$ )	n=168	n=174	n=142
<b>Residency</b>			
Resident	62.65	64.91	49.30
Non-resident	37.35	35.09	50.70
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
( $X^2 = 8.90$ ; $p=0.01$ )	n=166	n=171	n=142
<b>Compared to other festivals</b>	Novices (%)	Intermediates (%)	Connoisseurs (%)
NOWFE is better	21.43	34.18	57.89
NOWFE is worse	0.65	0.00	1.5
NOWFE is the same	12.99	18.99	19.55
Not attended other festivals	64.94	46.84	21.05
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
( $X^2 = 61.30$ ; $p=0.00$ )	n=154	n=158	n=133
<b>Income</b>	Novices (%)	Intermediates (%)	Connoisseurs (%)
Under \$25,000	5.52	5.45	2.88
\$25,000 - \$49,999	22.09	9.09	7.91
\$50,000 - \$74,999	26.99	18.18	13.67
\$75,000 - \$99,999	13.5	18.79	13.67
\$100,000 - \$149,999	10.43	15.76	17.99
Over \$150,000	9.20	17.58	25.18
Prefer not to answer			
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
( $X^2 = 41.71$ ; $p=0.00$ )	n=163	n=165	n=139

**Table 4b. Results of variables with significant difference between groups based on level of wine knowledge (all attendees)**

	Novices (%)	Intermediates (%)	Connoisseurs (%)
<b>Age</b>			
Younger than 25	6.58	4.46	3.01
25 – 34 years	42.11	35.67	19.55
35 – 49 years	26.97	27.39	27.82
50 – 64 years	21.05	26.75	39.10
65 and older	3.29	5.73	10.53
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
( $X^2 = 27.78$ ; $p=0.00$ )	n=152	n=157	n=133
<b>Gender</b>	Novices (%)	Intermediates (%)	Connoisseurs (%)
Male	39.33	39.63	55.97
Female	60.67	60.37	44.03
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
( $X^2 = 10.33$ ; $p=0.01$ )	n=150	n=164	n=134
	Mean	Mean	Mean
<b>Days attended</b>	1.45	1.69	2.36
( $F=39.79$ ; $p=0.00$ ) n=468			

Analysis of the subset of out of town visitors showed (Table 5) that a large majority of Intermediates and Connoisseurs were in New Orleans specifically for NOWFE while Novices were in town for vacation/pleasure purposes ( $X^2 = 22.89$ ;  $p=0.00$ ). Analysis of variance of continuous variables for out of town attendees showed significant differences in certain visitor spending categories and also attendees length of stay in New Orleans (Table 5). Significant differences in expenditure categories were seen in restaurant/meals and bars/night clubs. Intermediates and Connoisseurs spent considerably more on restaurants/meals than Novices. Connoisseurs also spent more on bars/night clubs than

Intermediates and Novices. Wine Connoisseurs had longer overnight stays (3.8 nights) and they planned to attend more days of the festival (2.36 days). Novices and Intermediates were in the city for around three nights and attended two days of the festival on average.

**Table 5. Results of variables with significant difference between groups based on level of wine knowledge (non-residents)**

	Novices (%)	Intermediates (%)	Connoisseurs (%)
<b>Primary purpose of visit</b>			
NOWFE	43.33	60.00	80.00
Vacation/Pleasure	45.00	25.45	14.29
Business/Convention	5.00	10.91	2.86
Other	6.67	3.64	2.86
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
( $X^2 = 22.89$ ; $p=0.00$ )	n=60	n=55	n=70
	Novices	Intermediates	Connoisseurs
	Mean	Mean	Mean
<b>Number of nights</b>	3.00	3.08	3.86
( $F=5.82$ ; $p=0.00$ ) n=161			
<b>Expenditures per trip</b>	Mean	Mean	Mean
Restaurant/meals (\$)	268.90	532.95	544.67
( $F=5.95$ ; $p=.00$ ) n=146			
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Bars/nightclubs (\$)	136.42	154.74	242.55
( $F=3.88$ ; $p=0.02$ ) n=124			

The wine involvement scale was derived from Brown, Havitz, and Getz (2006) and consisted of fourteen items that were completed by a subsample (n=80) of attendees to NOFWE. The data were factor analyzed resulting in a two factor solution (Table 6) and these were quite similar to Brown et. al's findings and labeled expertise and enjoyment.

**Table 6. Factor Analysis of the Wine Involvement Scale**

Item	Expertise	Enjoyment	Communalities
I am knowledgeable about wine	.763		.637
People come to me for advice about wine	.767		.665
Much of my leisure time is devoted to wine related activities	.833		.715
I have invested a great deal in my interest in wine	.880		.828
Wine represents a central life interest for me	.828		.739
My interest in wine says a lot about the type of person I am	.764		.617
Many of my friends share my interest in wine	.762		.647
For me, drinking wine is a particularly pleasurable experience		.878	.780
I wish to learn more about wine		.883	.811
I have a strong interest in wine		.661	.758
My interest in wine has been very rewarding		.657	.663
Eigenvalues	5.08	2.78	
Cumulative variance	46.12	71.44	

Correlation analysis between these two factors and level of wine knowledge showed that the expertise factor was significantly correlated with level of wine knowledge ( $r = 0.77$ ) while the enjoyment factor had lower correlation ( $r = .48$ ).

## **Discussion**

While level of wine knowledge as a single item variable may have its inherent weaknesses, the strong correlation between this item and the expertise factor on the wine involvement scale provides support for its efficacy as a market segmentation variable. The results of this study help to develop profiles of three market segments of attendees of the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience based on level of wine knowledge. **Wine Novices** tend to be mostly first time attendees, who were residents of the New Orleans area and attended the wine festival for around one and one half days. They also tended to be younger, with lower incomes and mostly female. In addition, a large majority had not attended any other wine festivals. Shanka and Taylor's (2004) study showed that there were differences in satisfaction with certain destination attributes between first timers and repeat attendees but in this study most first timers had not been to other wine festivals and had no basis for comparison. However, those first timers who had been to other similar festivals had a positive opinion of NOWFE. Marketing communications to this segment should be informative and educational with a goal of assisting members of this segment to improve their level of wine knowledge. It could also be geared mostly locally using media and communications that are attractive to younger demographics and should emphasize the positive price/value relationships of the event. Gender differences of wine tourists were discussed by Alebaki and Iakovidou (2011) where they found that European wine tourists were mostly male while many New World wine tourists were female.

While the latter is true also for NOWFE, when the sample was divided by level of wine knowledge, males tended to report higher levels of knowledge. Since a majority of Novices were women, gender differences must also be taken into account when developing marketing strategies for the Novice segment.

**Wine Intermediaries** were almost equally split between first timers and repeat attendees but they were also largely residents of the New Orleans area. On average, they had higher levels of income and were a little older than Novices. While they also tended to be more female, their overall characteristics seem to show that their repeat attendance, higher income levels, and higher levels of wine knowledge differentiated them from Novices. It is important to notice the relationship between increased level of wine knowledge and repeat attendance at the festival which may suggest that continued attendance may foster wine knowledge growth. Marketing communications to this group could also be mostly local and be focused around the idea that nurturing their interest and growth in wine knowledge could be achieved by attending the festival.

**Wine connoisseurs** were mostly repeat attendees and more than one half were from out of town. They had very positive views of NOWFE compared to other wine festivals and they were older and had higher income levels. They also tended to be mostly male and spent more time at the festival. This group is similar to Houghton's (2008) wine focusers segment; experienced consumers who also spent more money at NOWFE. They are probably well informed about wine and marketing communications should be national in scope as opposed to local. The appeal should be based on the attractiveness of New Orleans as a food and wine destination with the opportunity to interact with the large number of well-known wineries that make their wines available at the festival. The

emphasis should be on the opportunity for high quality wine and food experiences during NOWFE.

## Conclusions

Market positioning is a communications strategy and is defined as “the way a product is defined by consumers on important attributes – the place the product occupies in consumers’ minds relative to competing products” (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, (2005) p. 280). Thus, positioning is a communications strategy that is the natural follow-through of market segmentation. Although wine tourism has been often construed as a travel related to visiting wineries and wine producing regions (Getz, 2000), attending wine festivals is also an essential part of this niche travel market. These festivals provide opportunities for winery representatives to directly interact with their customers, including wine consumers and intermediaries such as restaurateurs and local distributors. These winery representatives are attracted to wine festivals that bring out large numbers of wine consumers so that they can get maximum exposure for their products. At the same time, wine consumers are attracted to the festival by the presence of representatives of reputed wineries from far flung regions of the country (or the world). This symbiotic relationship must be carefully nurtured by wine festival organizers before, during, and after the event. This study shows that attendees of a wine festival have clearly different levels of knowledge of wine, have different trip behaviors and demographics, and show differences in spending patterns. It is important for festival organizers to take these differences into consideration as they plan their future marketing and positioning efforts.

## **Limitations**

The findings of this study are based on one wine festival in one geographic region and may be limited in its generalizability. The level of wine knowledge is self-reported by attendees and therefore may be subject to the vagaries of such a measurement. The involvement scale which was used to correlate the level of wine knowledge was given to sample of only 80 which was less than one fourth of the total sample. Finally, the urban location of the festival, away from any major wine producing region, may have an effect on the type of wine consumer that is part of the sample. Future studies should look at a range of such events to get a more definitive picture of the segmentation of wine festival attendees.

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