

Wine Club Members' Enduring Involvement Toward Winery Visitation, Wine Drinking and Wine Club Participation.

David Christensen – *Graduated 2004*

Abstract

Although an interest in, passion for, and fascination with wine has existed for centuries, in some parts of the world, for example New Zealand, this interest, passion and reverence for wine is relatively new. How New Zealanders choose to engage with their newfound wine passion is unclear, as is the importance they place on wine within their lifestyle.

A wine lifestyle is emerging as a means of individual's engaging in their fascination with wine. This wine lifestyle exists within New Zealand wine clubs, and comprises wine habits such as wine drinking, wine purchasing, wine cellaring and wine knowledge extension as well as wine club participation and winery visitation. The importance level of these lifestyle components is unknown. Therefore, the primary objective was to ascertain which aspects of this lifestyle have the most importance placed upon them.

Decanter Club members participated in an online questionnaire, built in Macromedia's 'Dreamweaver' package, and attached to a Structured Query Language (SQL) database. The final analysis of respondent data was undertaken in SPSS, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients being used to determine adequate data reliability.

The concept of enduring involvement (EI) was used to determine exactly how individuals engage with their interest in wine. Higgie and Feick's (1989, p.690) definition of enduring involvement suggests that it is "a stable trait that represents an individual's degree of interest or arousal for a product on a day-to-day basis; an ongoing, long-term interest". This definition, along with Higgie and Feick's (1989) Enduring Involvement Scale (EIS) were adopted as integral components of this research. Higgie and Feick's (1989) EIS measures an individual's level of EI through 'hedonic' (pleasure-seeking) and 'self-expression' attributes. These are combined to give an overall level of EI.

Three specific components of the wine lifestyle, winery visitation, wine drinking and wine club participation, were chosen as the means of measuring an individual's EI. Wine drinking was found to evoke the highest levels of EI, followed by wine club participation and winery visitation. Wine drinking also recorded the highest hedonic and self-expression scores, providing the most pleasure for the club member, and as the most appropriate avenue through which the member can portray their sense of self. Neither gender differences, nor varying levels of cellar size, wine knowledge levels or wine club participation resulted in significantly different levels of EI.

However, a small but important sub-group of respondents did display higher levels of EI. This group, the wine specialist, not only displayed higher EI, but participated more often in wine club activities, had higher levels of wine knowledge, spent more per month on wine, had larger wine cellars, and were more likely to drink wine daily than the Decanter Club member on the whole.

A secondary objective of this research was to investigate the impact of winery visitation on post-visit purchasing behaviour. Although prior research suggests that winery visitation has little impact upon

future sales activity, this claim was not supported in the Decanter Club setting. In fact, a substantial proportion of members either had made a repeat purchase of the winery's wines subsequent to the visit, or expressed an intention to do so.