

Wine tasting at Dark Sky Alqueva, an exploratory study to wine sensorial experiences at night

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Purpose – According to Dann and Jacobsen (2003) successful tourism destinations need to attract tourists by offering more than just visual stimuli and providing experiences involving all the senses. Wine tourism delivers a complete sensory experience, as tourists experience the consumption of wine from all senses: taste, smell, touch, sight, and sound.

Traditionally the wine tourism experience can be provided in a number of ways, the most notable being events and festivals, cultural heritage, dining, hospitality, education, tasting and cellar door sales, and winery tours. With the growing of this type of tourism, wine tourism has to provide for the creation of unique and genuine tourism experiences, which must be more personalized and differentiated (Carvalho, Kastenholz & Carneiro, 2021).

This study focuses on analyzing the different sensorial experience (taste, smell, touch, sight, and sound) of a blind-wine tasting experienced outdoors at night.

Design/Methodology/Approach - An exploratory, qualitative research approach was followed. Specifically, 16 semi-structured interviews with eight tourists experiencing a blind-wine tasting in different contexts were conducted, namely, during the day and at night at the Official Dark Sky® Observatory in Cumeada. McGregor (2005, p. 424) states that research with small groups 'can provide unique insights into feelings and emotions, as well as values and attitudes, far beyond that which can be gained from' other methods. Data collected was analyzed with content analysis method (Bengtsson, 2016).

Findings - This is an ongoing study. Theoretical and managerial implications will be presented.

Research limitations/implications – This study although being exploratory has some limitations. This study applied the conventional division and hierarchy of the external senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, attributed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (Cohen & Cohen, 2019). Future studies should have also sensory signals proposed by neuroscience such as, the proprioceptive sense, the visceral sense and the sense of pain and temperature. Due to COVID 19 restrictions the size of the sample had to be reduced to seven participants.

Originality/value - Most of the wine tourism studies are centered in experiences at the traditional wine settings such as cellars and wineries and about wine experiences during day time. There are no studies about wine experiences at night.

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