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MASTER THESIS

**STRATEGIC USE OF BLOGS TO INCREASE WINE TOURISM SALES:
A FRAMEWORK MODEL OF BEST PRACTICES**

How can virtual content be used to boost bookings of wine tourism experiences and tours?

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Internship developed at Greek Grape Wine Tours

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ABSTRACT

With an increasing trend shifting away from print media towards the growing use of digital platforms, blogs have offered a meeting point between content writing and tourism promotion. While the early 2000s saw an increase of personal blogs used in the first wave of influencer marketing, recently, a shift towards businesses leveraging blogs to reach customers along various touchpoints of the customer journey has presented a powerful opportunity as a branding tool for businesses. While previous research into the use of blogs for wine tourism has analyzed already generated wine blogs to determine writing practices, further research on consumer motivation to read wine tourism blogs and the impacts of wine blogs for businesses remains under-conducted.

Greek Grape Wine Tours is an American-based wine tourism business that provides wine tours throughout Greece, connecting the relevancy of Greek mythology to modern experiences while exploring under-promoted Greek destinations. To strengthen its virtual presence, Greek Grape Wine Tours is in the process of developing a blog to provide articles that cater to a wide range of wine consumer levels.

The following master's thesis focuses on the development of an applicable framework model for content writing, which was then applied to the Greek Grape brand. This thesis utilizes bibliographic research, a survey of consumers of wine tourism blogs' behaviors and motivations, and a benchmarking case study to develop a framework model that could be applied to wine tour operators, wineries, and regional tourism board websites to generate wine tourism experience bookings. Objectives include an examination of academia's current understanding of the impacts of blogs on tourism, an analysis of various touch points along the customer journey and how interaction with blogs can impact the touchpoints, and the development of a framework model demonstrated through the application on the Greek Grape Wine Tours platform.

KEYWORDS: *wine tourism blogs, wine tourist customer journey, blog content consumer, wine writer*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GGWT - Greek Grape Wine Tours

SEO - Search Engine Optimization

SERP - Search Engine Results Pages

WINE TOURISM BUSINESSES = when referenced includes wineries, wine tour operators, and wine tourism boards

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and Objectives of the Project

The wine tourism industry is a rapidly growing segment of the tourism and beverage industries, fueled by the growing consumption of wine and the diverse offerings from wine-centered businesses worldwide. With a global market value of over \$300 billion USD and expected growth of wine consumption to average 5.52% annually from 2020 to 2027 (Statista Market Forecast, 2020), more and more wine businesses are offering diverse experiences to attract wine tourists as a tool for economic growth (Hall & Mitchell, 2000). To better promote experiences, wineries, wine tour operators, and wine tourism boards are increasingly turning to digital content, to connect with customers along the customer journey, which leads to an increase in site traffic and ultimately, drives bookings.

Several studies have shown that blogs can effectively drive customer engagement and increase bookings in tourism industries (Cox *et al.*, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Blogs can be a powerful tool to increase customer engagement by providing potential wine tourists with authentic and personalized content (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Additionally, blogs can help wineries connect with wine tourists at different stages of the wine tourism journey, including during the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases of decision-making (Vieira *et al.*, 2019).

Virtual content, such as blogs, can increase site traffic and generate business bookings for wine businesses (Thatch, 2010). By providing potential customers useful insights about the wine tour experiences available, the wine, and the wine region, blogs can help wine tourism businesses establish themselves as trusted sources of information. Additionally, virtual content aids wine tourism businesses in building brand awareness and loyalty by connecting with wine tourists on a personal level (Thatch, 2010), either on their personal platforms or by utilizing influencer marketing strategies. Accordingly, it is important for wine tourism businesses to understand the potential benefits of using blogs to maximize their impact on customer engagement.

While simplified models of the customer journey break the process of decision-making into three stages, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), more complex models extend the stages to represent various customer interactions within different dimensions of the customer journey (Court *et al.*, 2009). A customer's journey begins with awareness of a need that segues into consideration of a product based on brand perception (Court *et al.*, 2009). Wine blogs provide wine reviews, tasting notes, brand information, and

more, serving as a touchpoint to promote products and experiences to potential customers. As customers move to purchase research (Court et al., 2009), a wine blog can allow for a deeper understanding of what a wine tourism business not only offers but also believes in or supports, which aids a customer in setting expectations for visitations. The increase in site traffic as potential customers research by interacting with multiple posts within the blog platform (Thatch, 2010) segues the customer into the purchase stage of the customer journey (Court et al., 2009). For wine tourism businesses, this purchase could include booking an experience, buying wine, or joining wine clubs. Upon completion of the purchase, a wine tourism blog can be used to connect with previous customers to develop brand loyalty and entice future repurchases of a similar or new product or tourism offering.

While many businesses rely on influencer marketing for promotion (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019), wine tourism businesses creating content on their own platforms must post engaging, informative, and accurate content to ensure trustworthiness (Mack *et al.*, 2008). This guarantees that during the evaluation stage of the customer journey (Court et al., 2009), customers feel like the experience they gained matched the narrative they read on the blog. Success in this stage will ideally cause the reader to enter a loyalty loop returning to the consideration stage of the journey (Court et al., 2009). On a blog platform, this would entail the reader engaging in other blog articles that would encourage future purchases and customer loyalty.

Therefore, this paper studies the impact of blogs as a tool to generate site traffic and tourism sales and proposes a framework of best practices for wine tourism businesses to apply to the creation of digital content based on reader motivations. The framework was established from bibliographic research, a survey, and benchmarking case study analysis.

The bibliographic research takes a closer look at the impacts of tourism storytelling from the beginning of time through the modernization of blogs. Additionally, a look at reading consumption trends, especially within a post-Covid-19 itinerary development setting, was analyzed.

Digital sociology is an up-and-coming sociological concept modeled in data collection that takes into consideration the sociological impacts of digital technology (Selwyn, 2019). As technology can influence human behavioral patterns (Selwyn, 2019), it is essential to consider the touchpoints at which humans are impacted by technological interactions. As wine tourism blogs exist virtually, it is essential to better understand behavioral patterns when engaging with blog content. In understanding reader motivations, businesses can better engage with their audience during all stages of the customer journey. The survey conducted provided a structure for a framework model to apply when writing blog content which took into consideration the

impacts digital technology had on sociological behavioral patterns. This included consideration of reader motivations, the impact of demographics on consumption trends, and the correlation between blog reading and all stages of the customer journey.

To demonstrate the framework application, and to target key areas of success and areas for improvement within existing online blog platforms, a benchmarking case study was completed. Benchmarking within the tourism industry has previously been used to analyze tourism businesses' online platforms from a user perspective. Han modeled this in the discovery of forty-seven key tools for tourism businesses to apply to their website to effectively market tourism offerings. Upon completion of the framework model, twenty-five tourism businesses were randomly selected as a benchmarking case study. From the framework developed, each business was measured on a dichotomous scale (Han, 2006).

Applying a research model within a benchmarking case study allows for an evaluation of which factors of the model are consistent and which factors differ across virtual platforms. This methodology provided the ability to determine which elements of the framework of best blogging practices were consistently applied on wine tourism businesses blogs.

The intent of this master's thesis is to develop a framework model of best practices when developing blog content for wine tourism businesses and show how it can be directly applied through the development of virtual content on the Greek Grape Wine Tours website. As a result of the research gathered, a series of informative articles were developed for GGWT that implemented the developed framework.

1.2 Context of the Internship: Greek Grapes Wine Tours

In collaboration with the WINTOUR master's program, a wine tourism internship was completed to aid in the application of research developed in the proposed thesis. Internship duties centered around blog content creation and were performed over a four-month period.

1.2.1 Presentation of the Company

Greek Grape Wine Tours is an American-based wine tour operator that offers ten-day wine tours throughout the Peloponnese region of Greece, Macedonia, and the island of Crete. Lisa Stavropoulos founded the business in 2015 as a wine education platform through the brand The Greek Grape. The platform offered insight into the wines of Greece, the various terroirs of the different wine regions, and highlighted producers in the area. As site traffic increased, demand for wine tours guided through the extensive expertise of Lisa presented itself.

As the founder of the company and previous wine and tourism consultant, Lisa has a vast knowledge of the Greek wine industry. Her passion for Greek wines developed through

professional experiences that connected her with Greek wine producers. As requests for tours grew, the company evolved to become Greek Grape Wine Tours.

The company aims to develop tours to extend the awareness of and improve the perspective on the quality of Greek wines, and deeply explore the under-promoted wine regions of Greece. With a wide range of indigenous grapes, a rich history tied to ancient mythology, influential history of wine production, and a welcoming community of winemakers, the Greek wine industry offers a wide potential for wine tourism experiences.

GGWT is working to cohesively merge its educational aspects of the online platform The Greek Grape with the Greek Grape Wine Tours experiences through developing blog content that merges the two entities. The primary internship goal was to aid the company in the creation of content that could attract potential clients, provide helpful information for customers who have booked an experience, and for past clientele to stay connected with the brand.

1.2.2 Internship Duties

The internship position with GGWT fulfilled the role of Content Writer, which focused on strategically developing articles for the GGWT website. Articles aimed to feature partners that collaborate with GGWT, while providing useful information about Greek wine.

Key responsibilities included meeting with partners and conducting interviews to get insider information on the unique selling points of the companies. These partners included not just wineries and their oenologists and tourism specialists visited on the tours, but also local wine bars, restaurants, and tour guides that are key aspects of enhancing the wine tourism experience. Additionally, secret shopper-style attendance of wine tourism offerings was completed to provide unbiased insight into experiences that wine tourists visiting Greece would participate in. Research prior to content writing was performed to apply best SEO practices for each article, which included researching keywords and frequently searched questions related to the topic to best generate site traffic and article engagement. Additional consideration was placed on determining how each article would interact with customers along their customer journey. From the content written, social media posts to cross-promote articles on various social media platforms were developed. This was strategically done as a tool to increase the readership of the articles.

2 BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The following bibliographic research aims to contextualize the use of blogs as a tool for the promotion of wine tourism offerings. The bibliographic analysis begins with an introduction to the history of digital content, followed by a specific look into tourism blogs and their impact on

the industry. The tourism industry is vast, with wine tourism being a small segment within the greater tourism industry. Therefore, textual support on the impact of blogs on both the tourism industry and how wine tourism businesses can benefit from blog use was considered. Additionally, further bibliographic text was used to clarify how blogs can reach customers for businesses at different touch points along the customer journey, through an understanding of digital consumption trends.

2.1 The History of Digital Content

Travel storytelling has a long and rich history, dating back to ancient times when stories of journeys and adventures were shared orally (Thompson, 2020). With the advent of writing, these tales were recorded and shared more widely. As travel became more accessible, the demand for travel stories grew, and a variety of mediums emerged, from magazines and guidebooks to blogs and social media platforms.

The oral tradition of travel stories has influenced the development of written narratives, as documented in the epic "The Odyssey" by Homer, which recounts the travels of Odysseus and his crew while mapping routes through Ancient Greece. The rise of travel magazines and guidebooks in the 19th and 20th centuries played a significant role in shaping travel writing, with publications like National Geographic and Baedeker's Guidebooks providing readers with detailed descriptions of destinations around the world.

Today, the digital age has revolutionized the way we consume travel stories, with travel blogs and social media offering a more personal and interactive approach to travel writing (Banyai & Glover, 2012). In addition to traditional print media, many travel writers now publish their work online, creating a vibrant community of travel bloggers and influencers who share their experiences with a global audience (Butler & Zobel, 2007). The rise of the internet led to a shift in the way travel stories are told and consumed as print media switched to online platforms.

Blogs appeared in the late 1990s as a form of online personal journals. However, it wasn't until the early 2000's that blogs gained mainstream popularity (Gunter *et al.*, 2009). Early blogs were primarily text-based, with a focus on personal stories and opinions. Yet, with the improvement of technology and the emergence of social media, the format of blogs evolved to include multimedia content, such as videos or interactive maps (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008).

2.2 Blog Impacts On Tourism

Blogs within influencer marketing have greatly impacted many industries and their marketing strategies, of which includes the tourism industry. Blogs have become an important source of information for travelers seeking authentic and personalized experiences (Munar &

Jacobsen, 2014). Travel blogs provide platforms for travelers to share their experiences and recommendations, which can help to shape the booking behavior of others.

According to a study by TripAdvisor, 84% of travelers were influenced by online reviews when making travel decisions (TripAdvisor, 2018). While booking platforms allow visitors to comment in a short form review, blog posts provide in-depth reviews of experiences, giving potential travelers behind the scenes insight.

In addition to influencing travel behavior, blogs have also become an important tool for destination marketing. Tourism boards and travel companies are increasingly collaborating with bloggers and influencers to promote their destinations (Pühringer & Taylor, 2008). This form of marketing is often more effective than traditional advertising, as bloggers and influencers have a loyal following and can provide authentic and engaging content.

However, despite the many benefits of blogs for the tourism industry, there are also challenges to their use. One criticism is that many travel blogs lack transparency, with bloggers receiving compensation or free trips in exchange for positive reviews (Mack *et al.*, 2008) and brands posting personal blogs only choosing to show their preferred image. This can lead to a lack of credibility and trust among readers. Additionally, blogging can also be used as a platform to promote unsustainable or unethical tourism practices and encourage over-tourism.

With the growing concern over environmental issues and ethical practices in the tourism industry, there has been a shift toward sustainable and ethical travel practices (Scott, 2021). As a result, more people are prioritizing sustainable travel choices such as eco-friendly accommodations and responsible tourism activities (Han, 2021) and increasingly seeking destinations that prioritize environmental and social responsibility. Furthermore, as a result, consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable travel experiences (Scott, 2021). If travelers do not feel like travel blogs provide authentic reviews on sustainable experiences, the likelihood of relying on the articles as trustworthy sources will decrease.

Blogs have had a significant impact on the tourism industry, shaping travel behavior and destination marketing strategies. While there are criticisms associated with their use, the potential benefits of blogs for the tourism industry cannot be ignored.

2.3 Digital Reading Consumption Trends

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in digital consumption, with more people than ever before using online channels to access information and engage with their interests (Perrin, 2015). According to a twelve-year study by the Pew Research Center that considers blogs a critical element of social media use, 26% of U.S. adults reported reading

blogs in 2021, up from 19% in 2015 (Wright *et al.*, 2017). This trend is particularly evident among younger generations, with 36% of adults aged 18-29 reporting reading blogs in 2016 (Wright *et al.*, 2017). The popularity of blogs can be attributed to their accessibility, diversity of topics, and personalization features, which allow readers to tailor their content to their preferences (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). As a result, blogs have become a valuable marketing tool for businesses, providing a platform to reach and engage with a wider audience (Kim & Ko, 2021).

With the widespread use of digital platforms, there has been a significant increase in the digital consumption of travel and wine tourism content. According to a study by Phua *et al.* (2017), consumers now use online channels to research and plan their trips, with travel blogs being one of the most popular sources for gathering information. It can be concluded that wine tourists can utilize blogs to search for information when planning a trip.

In recent years, there has also been a growing trend of consumers seeking personalized and authentic experiences in travel and wine tourism. According to a study by Xiang *et al.* (2015), consumers are increasingly turning to social media to find unique experiences that align with their interests and values. This trend is shown within wine tourism, as consumers seek personalized experiences that offer a deeper understanding of the local culture and wine-making practices.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a shift in the way people travel, with a significant increase in the use of digital media to facilitate trip development and ensure safety measures. A significant increase in the use of online platforms such as travel apps, virtual tours, and booking sites since the onset of the pandemic (Sigala, 2020) has developed to cater to safety measures.

With an increasing number of travelers seeking information and recommendations through online channels, the use of blogs can help connect businesses with their target market. As the consumption of digital media grows, wine tourism businesses must adapt their marketing strategies to effectively reach and engage with their audience.

By using the latest digital marketing techniques, such as search engine optimization, social media marketing, and content creation, wine tourism businesses can establish their online presence and increase the attraction of customers to their establishments. It is crucial to strike a balance between digital and in-person experiences to provide a holistic wine tourism experience. Due to the ever-changing scope of the internet, further research is needed to explore the full potential of digital marketing in the wine tourism industry.

2.4 Use of Blogs for Wine Tourism Businesses

While modern-day tourism marketing strategies have significantly relied upon bloggers to develop content to promote their sites, the use of blogs as a business tool can also generate destination and virtual site visitation, increasing bookings of experiences, and therefore, increasing profits for the business.

Wine tourism is a vast and expanding industry. Wineries around the world offer a wide range of tours and tasting experiences. Tour operators develop unique experiences for wine tourists with diverse backgrounds of wine knowledge. Regional tourism boards develop wine routes to better promote a wine region's potential. When strategically leveraged, wine tourism businesses can use blogs on their website to attract visitors and increase revenue.

Connecting to a customer throughout all stages of the customer journey is an essential tool for the success of a wine tourism business. The customer journey can be broken into three sequential stages: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Within the pre-purchase stage of the customer journey, a blog can be utilized to bring awareness of a wine tourism opportunity to meet a customer's needs. Within the purchase stage, the blog can provide booking tools for excursions. The post-purchase stage of the model is equally as important as it can help build brand loyalty and future consumption of the wine from the experience or generate other experience purchases (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Blogging can offer many benefits for wine tourism businesses. By regularly publishing informative and engaging content, tourism businesses can attract potential visitors to their websites and increase brand awareness (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Blogs can also provide a platform for businesses to share information about their products, such as tasting notes or food pairing suggestions, which can help to attract customers and increase sales. Additionally, blogs can help to build customer loyalty. By providing valuable content in articles and engaging with readers through comments, wine tourism businesses can develop a strong relationship with their customers and build a community around their brand (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019).

According to a study by Beninger *et. al.* (2019) that analyzed existing blog content to identify key themes for effective content creation and marketing, content could vary depending on the writer to include informative and engaging content, tasting notes, food pairings, and recommendations for local restaurants and attractions.

Furthermore, to attract visitors to their websites, wine tourism businesses should also employ SEO techniques, such as using relevant keywords and meta descriptions, and the cross-promotion of their content through social media and email marketing (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

SEO is a digital marketing technique used to improve the visibility of a website or web page on SERPs by optimizing its content to match search engine algorithms (Bhandari & Bansal, 2018). One of the most important SEO practices is keyword research, which involves identifying relevant keywords or phrases that users are likely to search for and incorporating them into the content (Bhandari & Bansal, 2018). Additionally, creating high-quality and original content, optimizing website speed and mobile friendliness, and regularly updating website content is also critical for improving SEO (Killoran, 2013). Implementing these practices can help improve a website's ranking on SERPs and drive more organic traffic to the site.

The Beninger *et al.*, (2019) study aimed to explore the role of wine tourism blogs in shaping travelers' perceptions and attitudes toward wine tourism destinations. While the study offers some valuable insights into the potential benefits of wine tourism blogs, it also has some notable weaknesses.

The study only analyzed five amateur wine blogs, which is not representative of the overall universe of wine content (Beninger *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, the study investigated the perspective of wine blogs through the view of a writer but did not take into consideration consumption motivations. While the study's focus on content analysis provides valuable insights into the themes and best practices for effective content creation, it does not address the key question of whether wine blogs drive tourism and sales.

One of the key factors driving wine tourism is the desire for experiential consumption, where consumers seek out immersive experiences that go beyond the mere consumption of products (Carlsen & Charters, 2007). Within the wine tourism industry, travelers are increasingly motivated by the desire to learn about the cultural and historical significance of wine, as well as the production and tasting process (Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró, 2020).

It is significant to note that wine tourists are not a homogenous group, but rather are motivated by a range of factors that vary according to their demographics, wine knowledge, and personal preferences (Hall *et al.*, 2010). For example, wine enthusiasts may be motivated by the opportunity to taste rare and exclusive wines, whereas novice wine consumers may be more interested in learning about the basics of wine production (Hall *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, wine tourists may seek out different types of experiences, such as cultural and heritage tours, gastronomic experiences, and outdoor activities (Hall *et al.*, 2010).

Overall, wine blogs must be mindful of these diverse motivations and preferences to provide tailored content that could be consumed prior to, during, and after a wine tourism visit. By understanding what drives wine tourists and what they expect from an experience,

businesses can develop innovative and engaging blogs that cater to their customer's needs and preferences.

While blogs can offer many benefits for wine tourism businesses, there are also challenges and limitations associated with their use. One challenge is the time and resources required to maintain a successful blog. For wine tourism businesses, while the benefits of maintaining a useful and informative blog are great, the financial resources and workforce needed to develop consistent content can be a barrier to maintaining a beneficial blog.

Another limitation is the difficulty of measuring the impact of blogs on site traffic and revenue. While tools such as Google Analytics can provide some insight into the effectiveness of blogging efforts, it can be difficult to determine the exact return on investment of a blog (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). For smaller businesses, the benefits of developing a blog may not outweigh the upfront costs of content creation.

Blogs can offer many benefits for wine tourism businesses, including attracting visitors to their websites, increasing revenue, and building customer loyalty (Beninger *et al.*, 2019). To effectively use blogs for wine tourism, businesses should focus on informative and engaging content, SEO application, and social media and email marketing promotion. While there are challenges and limitations associated with blogging, the potential benefits for wine tourism businesses make it a worthwhile investment.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

Blog consumption and consumer preferences drastically vary depending on a wide range of demographics, such as age, gender, hometown location, income level, and more (Taylor *et al.*, 2010). The challenge of demographic scope must be considered in the development of a framework model for businesses to implement in their blogs. The framework must contain a series of applicable practices that are broad enough to be adjusted to the individual business' core consumers, while niche enough to differentiate a blog as an effective business tool.

Similarly, it is essential to consider in the development of the model how the framework could be applied in a way that interacts with customers along all phases of the customer journey. Each wine tourism business will have a unique set of goals they wish to achieve. This could include anything from generating income through wine tourism visits to increasing bottle sales or building a demographic of loyal return customers (Alonso *et al.*, 2015). The developed

framework must be adaptable for businesses to implement based on their goals and stages of the customer journey they choose to prioritize in applying the model.

Ultimately, a framework model of best practices will only be valuable if it can demonstrate measurable impacts that benefit a wine tourism business. To demonstrate how a framework model of best blogging practices can be effectively measured when applied to a wine tourism platform, a survey of motivation patterns of wine tourism content consumers was conducted.

The survey was based on a digital sociological approach that takes into consideration the impact and use of digital technologies on human behaviors (Lupton, 2013). Within digital sociology, Lupton identifies four key elements: professional digital practice within a sociological setting, an analysis of people's use of digital media technologies and how it impacts behavioral patterns, digital data analysis, which considers both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, and critical digital sociology which considers how technology influences social theory. While the analysis of sociological influences is no stranger to research fields, utilizing sociology in the context of a digital platform provides unique insights into the way in which individuals and groups engage with various technological systems (Lupton, 2013). Aspects of sociological analysis of digital media use and digital data analysis provided the fundamental elements of the conducted research survey.

While digital sociology research focuses on the consumers' motivations and behavioral patterns, digital media is generated by the content creators, not consumers (Lupton, 2013). As a result, digital sociology can be used as a tool to look closer at people's consumption patterns and inform developers on best practices. Lupton notes that consumption patterns extend well beyond what services consumers buy, taking into consideration a wide range of demographic factors. Further insight can be gained as to other related research topics, such as where they prefer to take holidays or how they choose to travel (Lupton, 2013).

With this baseline of digital sociology established, the survey aimed at analyzing the motivations behind people's consumption of blogs, the influence of demographics on consumption trends, and any influencing factors within a digital space that would impact human behavior.

Additionally, to show aspects of the framework model in use, a benchmarking case study was completed to analyze the use of blogs for wine tourism businesses across all continents. It also provided the opportunity to analyze what elements of the model were most effectively and frequently used and what areas could be improved upon to better match consumer motivation.

3.2 Survey of Content Consumers

Technology has drastically transformed the way in which wine tourists interact with wine tourism businesses. Therefore, when conducting research centered around virtual platforms, it is important to consider the influence of digital sociology within the methodology. Sociological research on digital technology can be an effective tool used when analyzing digital methods (Greyson et al., 2016). Furthermore, the use of digital data research can be used as a tool to better understand society and its behavior patterns (Beuscart, 2018). To apply this concept to wine tourism, reader motivations were collected to show how digital media influences behavior.

The following section provides an overview of a digital sociology survey of readers of wine tourism blogs and an analysis of how their responses can help dictate core considerations for a framework model and demonstrate the benefits of applying the model to future blogs. The survey objectives centralized around answering three core research questions:

1. Considering various demographic influences, what are reader motivations when consuming wine tourism businesses' blog posts?
2. How do content consumers interact with blog posts at various touchpoints on the customer journey, and therefore how can content creators leverage various touchpoints?
3. What are the benefits for a wine tourism business in increasing readership using the framework model?

As a result of the responses to the survey, an adaptable framework model for best practices when developing blog content for wine tourism businesses was developed. A series of seven categories within the framework model for wine tourism blog development was established. Each category was then examined to demonstrate its adaptability to various demographics and show the benefits for a wine tourism business based on the company's business goals.

3.2.1 Data Collection

The first step of data collection was to gather a pool of participants of varying demographics. The ideal participants in the study would have an interest in wine tourism and at least some experience reading blog platforms related to wine. However, a lack of wine blog engagement was not an immediate terminator for participants, as they still were able to provide insight as to what could influence them to potentially read wine blogs in the future.

In collaboration with GGWT, an initial pool of participants who had previously completed the first two stages of the customer journey were contacted for their participation. While this initial subset of participants provided a great baseline of insight about customers utilizing a wine

tour operator platform, to create a varied set of demographic responses, further surveys were conducted in collaboration with other blog platforms. This allowed for information from multiple continents, different ages, wine knowledge levels, and diverse blog platforms to be gathered.

As shown in *Figure 1* in the Annex, an email was sent to the 75 previous customers of GGWT explaining the scope of the research and requesting permission to utilize responses within the project. Additionally, All Wine Tours, a wine blog platform that features winery experiences in France, Spain, and Portugal, provided survey participants. While GGWT typically caters to an American, forty-plus market, All Wine Tours has a European readership, with readers typically in their thirties and forties. To promote participation in the survey, All Wine Tours posted links to the survey on social media platforms encouraging readers to participate.

The final group of survey participants came from the LinkedIn private group Wine Bloggers, Lovers & Enthusiasts. This diverse group has members from countries all around the world and with different levels of experience and reading consumption behavior. A post following the same structure as the GGWT email was posted and opened for a week before concluding the survey. A further breakdown of the companies utilized to gather a pool of participants, with company descriptions, can be found in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Survey Participants Breakdown

<i>Business Name</i>	<i>Company Description</i>	<i>Number Of Consumer's Viewing Platform</i>	<i>Responses Received</i>
Greek Grape Wine Tours	An American-based company that provides wine tours to Greece. Has a blogging platform on the company website.	75	42
All Wine Tours	A France-based wine tourism blog with content about France, Spain, and Portugal.	590	20
Wine Bloggers, Lovers & Enthusiasts	A LinkedIn group with professional and amateur wine writers and blog readers.	29,820	56

The survey consisted of eighteen closed questions and two open questions to establish further consumption motivation trends, demographic impacts, and customer journey touchpoint timeline interaction results. The full survey can be found in *Figure 2* in the annex.

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

Results were gathered from 118 fully completed surveys. All surveys were submitted anonymously to prevent bias. The survey served as a tool to consider how various demographic influences impacted reader motivations when consuming blog posts.

Digital consumption patterns can be influenced by a wide range of demographic influences. Within the survey conducted, two core demographics were considered: age and travel frequency. These two categories were considered to address how wine businesses could better tailor their content to meet a range of clientele.

Within the age demographic, most survey participants were 26-34 years old age range. A full summary of the age breakdown of survey participants can be found in *Table 2*. Age not only provides an influencing factor in how participants consume blog articles, with the majority of readers under the age of 55 using smartphones or laptops to read content, whereas older readers relied on tablets and desktop computers, but it also impacted motivations behind utilizing wine tourism blogs.

Table 2. Age Breakdown of Survey Participants

AGE	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
21-25 years old	14	11.86%
26-34 years old	37	31.36%
35-44 years old	16	13.56%
45-54 years old	11	9.32%
55-64 years old	21	17.80%
65 years or older	19	16.10%

To analyze how various age demographics interact with blog posts, three key questions were asked. When asked about the consistency of blog content engagement, participants could answer on a scale of never, rarely, sometimes, often, or frequently. When asked about sharing content, participants could answer no never, yes occasionally, or yes frequently. Additionally, when asked about the likelihood of engaging in a wine tourism activity as a result of a blog post, participants could answer no definitely not, no not really, yes somewhat, and yes definitely.

Responses were then broken into positive or negative responses. With never and rarely categorized as negative, and sometimes, often, and frequently as positive. “No” responses were

categorized as negative, whereas both “yes” responses were positive. *Table 3* demonstrates the positivity responses sorted by age.

Based on the survey results, 26-34 year olds and 35-44 year olds most frequently engage with blog content, whereas 21-25 year olds and 35-44 year olds are more likely to share wine-related content with others. While all age demographics held positive response rates to booking wine-related experiences after reading them in a blog post, 21-25 year olds and 55-64 year olds responded with a 100% positive response rate.

Table 3. Blog Activity in Relation to Age Group

Age	How often do you engage with wine-related blog content?	Do you ever share wine-related blog posts with others?	Would you be more likely to participate in a wine-related activity if it was recommended in a blog post?
21-25 years old	42.86%	71.43%	100%
26-34 years old	57.76%	45.94%	91.89%
35-44 years old	56.25%	81.25%	93.75%
45-54 years old	36.36%	45.45%	81.82%
55-64 years old	33.34%	52.38%	100%
65 years or older	47.27%	36.85%	84.21%

Furthermore, to determine how age impacted consumption motivations, a series of five questions were posed that could be answered on a scale from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Throughout all age ranges, in every question, strongly disagree was never selected. Therefore, disagree and neutral were considered negative and agree and strongly agree were considered positive. Positivity response ratings for motivations of varying age demographics can be found in *Table 4*.

Table 4. Age Motivations Positivity Responses

Age	I read wine tourism blogs to help determine whether or not I will make a wine tourism related purchase.	I find wine tourism blogs useful when planning for a wine focused trip.	After reading about a wine tourism experience, if I enjoy my experience, I will return to the blog platform and read more articles.	I will purchase wines or experiences based off of reviews or recommendations wine tourism blogs.	In addition to content on wine tours, I enjoy reading content about wine related industries (culinary, wine making, business owners).
21-25 years old	50%	50%	50%	85.71%	92.86%
26-34 years old	50%	70.26%	59.45%	89.19%	72.98%
35-44 years old	37.50%	62.50%	81.25%	75%	87.50%
45-54 years old	36.46%	72.73%	72.72%	63.63%	54.54%
55-64 years old	19.09%	76.19%	57.15%	76.18%	61.90%
65 years or older	26.31%	78.95%	52.64%	78.95%	74.06%
Average	36.56%	68.44%	62.20%	78.11%	73.97%

While positivity ratings tended to lean more positive than negative for all questions, a few key findings stood out. When influencing a wine-related purchase, the 21-25 and 26-34 year old demographics rated higher on a positivity scale. This could be due to a lack of wine experience, knowledge, or confidence due to a younger age. Therefore, when promoting wines or wine experiences on a blog, a younger demographic could be a useful target.

For businesses operating with customers of a diverse age demographic, various motivations rated with higher positivity ratings. Reviews and recommendations by wine tourism blogs positively motivate all age demographics' purchase decisions. In addition to purchasing influence, blogs that aid in trip planning average a high positivity rating and can be used as a tool to promote wine tourism experiences as a part of the itinerary development process. Additionally, there is a high average positivity rating within all age demographics for consuming content that offers a diverse profile of wine-related stories, including winemaking, wine business

owners, and other people within related culinary or tourism industries. Finally, in considering how motivation can positively impact loyalty from a consumer of a blog post, all age demographics demonstrated an interest in how reliable recommendations that result in a positive experience, could motivate a reader to return to the blog for future use.

To further demonstrate how other demographics could influence reader motivations, data was additionally analyzed by vacation habits. As wine tourism can be its own motivator when planning a wine-centered vacation or incorporated additionally as a single element into a broader vacation experience, understanding the frequency of which people travel and use blogs as a tool when planning their travels can give further insight into what elements are best used within wine blogs. A full summary of the breakdown of vacation habits of survey participants can be found in *Table 5*. Survey participants who travel 2-4 times per year ranked highest amongst all participants in the survey, whereas those who travel less than once a year held the lowest percentage of participants.

Table 5. Vacation Habit Positivity Responses

Travel Frequency	Responses	Percentage
<Once a year	5	4.24%
Once a year	36	30.51%
2-4 times per year	52	44.07%
5+ times per year	25	21.19%

To compare how reading consumption motivations are impacted by the frequency at which people travel, the previous five questions from *Table 4* were applied to the travel frequency demographic. As similarly analyzed within the age demographic, for all questions asked, strongly disagree was never selected. Positivity response ratings for motivations of varying age demographics can be found in *Table 6*.

Table 6. Travel Frequency Motivations Positivity Responses

Travel Frequency	I read wine tourism blogs to help determine whether or not I will make a	I find wine tourism blogs useful when planning for a wine focused trip.	After reading about a wine tourism experience, if I enjoy my experience, I will return to the blog	I will purchase wines or experiences based off of reviews or recommendations wine tourism blogs.	In addition to content on wine tours, I enjoy reading content about wine related industries (culinary, wine

	wine tourism related purchase.		platform and read more articles.		making, business owners).
<Once a year	60%	60%	80%	100%	100%
Once a year	42.85%	74.29%	74.29%	85.71%	82.85%
2-4 times per year	33.33%	66.67%	58.82%	80.39%	72.55%
5+ times per year	41.67%	75%	50%	75%	58.37%
Average	44.46%	68.99%	65.78%	85.28%	78.44%

Overall, those who travel less frequently demonstrated a higher positivity rating in motivations for consuming blog content across all questions. For those with a low travel frequency of less than once per year, consumption of blogs motivated by using them as a tool to make wine-related purchase decisions ranked at 60%, notably higher than all other travel frequencies. However, those who travel the most at 5+ times per year, had the highest positivity rating for using wine tourism blogs as a tool when planning a trip.

To further understand the motivations behind readers' use of wine blogs, a series of three questions were asked where participants ranked from one to four, one being most important and four being least important, the reasons why they may read a wine blog. From there, each motivation was given the numerical value it was rated by the survey participant, results of which are demonstrated in *Figure 3* in the annex, totaled, and averaged. Due to a number one ranking being considered the most important motivator, the lower the average number received, the more influential the motivation became. Ranking results can be found in *Table 7*.

Table 7. Motivation Ranking Results

Category	Total Points Earned	Average
To learn about a wine region or a country and the wines from the region	182	1.542372881
Regional descriptions with info on what to see and do	219	1.855932203

To plan a trip or make a booking decision	222	1.881355932
Personal reviews of wine products or experiences	245	2.076271186
To learn about grape varieties and their characteristics	255	2.161016949
To learn about wine-related events	297	2.516949153
To gather product insight from reviews before making a purchase decision	321	2.720338983
To imagine I am in a destination outside of my daily routine	334	2.830508475
Current wine news stories	340	2.881355932
To learn about people in the wine industry	370	3.13559322
To learn about new winemaking techniques	373	3.161016949
Interviews with wine-business professionals	377	3.194915254

Significantly, the top two motivating factors when consuming blog content were based more on education and learning about wine, wine regions, and tourism opportunities, whereas the third highest motivator centered around travel planning. While previous interest was shown in the positivity rankings for content related to wine tourism industries, such as interviews with winemakers, chefs, and business owners, when ranked by motivating factor, interviews with wine business professionals ranked lowest.

While previous survey results demonstrated the impact of demographics and analyzed reader motivations, to further understand consumer motivations and how blogs can be used along the customer journey to better benefit wine tourism businesses, two open-ended questions were asked. All responses to the open-ended questions can be found in *Figure 4* in the appendix.

Developing content that is equally informative and engaging is key to enticing readers to continually engage within the written content. After cross-referencing all responses to the question of what content is the most enjoyable for consumers to read, ten key categories that represented each reading motivator were created. Categories and descriptions can be found in *Table 8*.

Table 8. Reading Categories

What type of topics related to wine tourism do you find the most enjoyable to read?
--

<i>(Please explain why)</i>	
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Personal Stories and Experiences	This category includes personal stories, experiences, and journeys of wine professionals, winemakers, and individuals involved in the wine tourism industry.
Unique and Unconventional Experiences	This category encompasses responses that focus on unique areas outside of normal wine tourism. It includes unusual wine experiences or events and itineraries that go beyond a traditional winery tour and tasting.
Wine Recommendations and Pairings	This category includes responses that highlight new wines, wine reviews to determine purchases, food and wine pairing advice, and descriptions of different grape varieties.
Regional Exploration and Travel Recommendations	This category covers responses that emphasize exploring different wine regions, regional descriptions, local cuisine, sightseeing besides wineries, and recommendations for travel experiences, including transportation, hotels, restaurants, and cultural places.
Empowering Artisans	This category focuses on the exploration of inspiring stories of unique producers including small family businesses, natural wine producers, and marginalized communities.
Reviews and Recommendations	This category includes reviews of experiences and recommendations based on personal experience.
Cultural and Historical Context	This category encompasses responses that emphasize the cultural aspects of wine tourism, including descriptions of regional culture, hotels, outdoor activities, museums, and historical information.
Destination Guides and Itineraries	This category includes responses that provide information on different destinations, travel guides, recommended wineries, and itineraries to enhance the wine tourism experience.
Wine Education and Exploration	This category covers responses that focus on grape varieties, tasting notes, wine trends, regional differences, winemaking processes, and learning about different wine regions.
Local Experiences and Recommendations	This category includes responses that emphasize local wine bars, restaurant recommendations, regional descriptions, local traditions, and experiencing wine within the context of the local culture.

Furthermore, understanding the benefits of a wine blog for customers can aid in businesses best utilizing the tool to engage with customers during all stages of the customer journey. *Table 9* represents the ten categories pulled from the open-ended survey question asking participants to express why wine-related blogs are useful for them.

Table 9. Desired Information Categories

<i>What makes a wine-related related blog useful for you? (Please explain why)</i>	
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Travel and New Experiences	Blogs that offer recommendations and tips for travel, highlighting new experiences and destinations related to wine.
Concise Recommendations and New Varietals	Blogs that provide short and concise recommendations, including suggestions for purchasing and exploring new varieties.
Unique Experiences	Blogs that focus on showcasing unique and off-the-beaten-path wineries, regions, and experiences.
Wine Education and Resource Hub	Blogs that serve as educational resources, offering information about different wine types, grape varieties, and winemaking techniques.
Wine, Food, and Trip Suggestions	Blogs that provide suggestions for wine purchases, wine pairing with food, and recommendations for wine-related trips.
Enjoyable Entertainment	Blogs that focus on entertaining content, including interesting stories, personal experiences, and enjoyable reads.
Regional Exploration and Recommendations	Blogs that offer detailed information, recommendations, and insights about specific wine regions, helping readers plan their visits and explore all available options.
Information and Direction	Blogs that provide valuable information, direction, suggestions, warnings, and human interest stories related to wine.
Continuous Learning and Industry Insights	Blogs that offer continuous learning opportunities about grapes, regions, evolving wine styles, market insights, and emerging trends.
Knowledgeable and Trustworthy	Blogs that are perceived as knowledgeable and trustworthy, providing reliable recommendations and insights for wines and experiences.

While some categories heavily impact the pre-purchase stage of the customer journey, such as planning and gathering regional information about potential wine tour experiences, others could be applied during and after the purchasing phase. A wine blog that fits into the category of knowledgeable and trustworthy could be cross-referenced during visitation or returned to upon completion of the visit to further brand interaction. Enjoyable entertainment blogs can keep customers connected to a brand and provide previous visitors with future motivation to return or impact purchasing behavior post-visit with bottle sales.

To apply the information gained from the survey, a framework model was further developed that took into consideration the most important categories and their positivity rankings.

5 BENCHMARKING MODEL APPLICATION

The digital sociology survey served as a baseline for understanding the interests of various demographics when consuming blog posts. In selecting from the categories that appeared as a result of the open-ended questions that consistently matched the highest positivity ratings of motivators found in the closed question, seven key categories were chosen to serve as a framework for digital content creation. This 8 E framework can be found in *Table 10*.

Table 10. 8 E Framework

FRAMEWORK CATEGORIES FROM SURVEY RESPONSES	
EDUCATION	This category focuses on aiding readers in learning about wine regions, grape varieties, and wine production. Information should include specific grape and wine characteristics, land descriptions, and environmental and cultural impacts that influence the wine production.
EXPLORATION	This category centralizes around providing useful information about how to get to destinations, local transportation, what exists and what the region is known for to set an expectation of an experience for readers before visiting.
ENROUTE	This category aids in detailed itinerary development for customers planning a trip or making a booking decision. Information should be inclusive of all cultural activities that enhance a wine tourists visit. This could include, but is not limited to, restaurants, hotels, museums, and outdoor activities.
EXPERIENTIAL	This category relies on the writer's personal experience to give insightful reviews and recommendations of wine tourist experiences.
EMPOWERED	This category focuses on the exploration of inspiring stories of unique wine-related experiences and people, such as family-run businesses, women, POC, or LGBTQ owned businesses, natural wine producers, and more.
EVENTS	This category highlights wine-related events readers can participate in. This can include special tasting opportunities, festivals, and awards.
ENTERTAINMENT	This category extends content beyond educational to enjoyable. Articles provide interesting anecdotes and personal experiences.
ERUDITE	This category conveys the significance of expertise and intelligence a writer should convey in their writing to be reliable and trustworthy to ensure readers feel like they can trust information from the business being given.

Research objectives from the digital sociology survey were to gather insight as to what would motivate readers to consume blogs. This would therefore aid businesses to better generate content that would engage with customers along the customer journey. While the

study served as a baseline for gathering information that could be applied to the creation of content for GGWT and wine tourism businesses, to further demonstrate the applicability of best practices within the wine tourism industry, a benchmarking case study was performed.

5.1 Benchmarking Case Study

The developed 8 E model served as a foundation for the following benchmarking case study. The objective of the completed benchmarking study was to contextualize the application of blog use of existing wine tourism businesses. To demonstrate the range of digital content developed within the wine tourism industry, and to ensure a well-rounded analysis for future application, two wine tourism boards, two wine tour operators, and two wineries were selected from The Americas, Europe, Africa, and Australasia. This allowed for consideration as to how the 8 E model could be applied within multiple old and new world wine regions and business models. Full descriptions of all companies selected can be found in *Figure 5* in the annex. Businesses were only considered if there was a blog or virtual magazine button on the homepage.

The first page of the blog or virtual magazine tab was analyzed to identify elements of the 8 E model in application. From this first page, one article was randomly selected to be analyzed for the categories disclosed in *Table 10*. Article titles with brief descriptions of the content read can be found in *Figure 6* in the annex. After reading each selected article, the article was rated on a scale of lacking, poor, average, good, and excellent and given a numerical value that coordinated with the analysis for each of the 8 E categories demonstrated in *Table 11*.

Table 11. Benchmarking Analysis

2 Excellent 1 Good 0 Average -1 Poor -2 Lacking	Wine Country Ontario	Penedes Turisme	Spier	De Bortoli	Wine Paths	The Vines of Mendoza
EDUCATION	2	2	2	2	1	1
EXPLORATION	0	0	-2	-2	-1	1
ENROUTE	-2	2	1	-2	1	2
EXPERIENTIAL	-2	-2	-2	0	2	0
EMPOWERED	2	0	0	1	2	2

EVENTS	-2	2	2	-2	-2	2
ENTERTAINMENT	2	1	2	2	2	0
ERUDITE	2	2	2	2	2	2

As each company blog analyzed has its own unique demographic of readers and goals from the given posts, the benchmarking activity was not completed to rank the success of each company’s blog. Instead, it demonstrated how various articles may value specific categories within the 8 E model more than others when writing content. It is possible that other articles on the blog included all elements of the 8 E model, producing a more holistic reading experience.

5.2 Benchmark Analysis

From the benchmarking case study, a variety of useful insights about the 8 E model were presented. As all companies chosen were wine professional companies, within the “Erudite” category, which focuses on producing content with knowledgeable and trustworthy information, each business ranked as excellent. The personal insight that comes from working within the industry adds reliability to the information being produced. It is possible that blog platforms written by wine influencers, and not wine tourism businesses, may face a challenge in being perceived as knowledgeable if they do not demonstrate a complete understanding of the industry. Furthermore, businesses that overly push their own products without further elements of the 8 E model may be looked at as lacking in trustworthiness if they only appear to be trying to promote personal sales.

Within the “Education” category, businesses flourished at providing useful, but easy to consume, facts about the wine region, tours, or wines produced. However, while many of the articles selected provided educational opportunities, they often fell short of extending that information outside of the knowledge needed for a winery or wine tour experience. Extending the “Exploration” category in partnership with “Education” can increase the usefulness of the blogs. Furthermore, it can aid in the “Enroute” itinerary development.

The challenge within the 8 E model is applying all elements in a cohesive and logical way. Various topics will rely more heavily on specific categories within the model than others. However, in creating content that is inclusive of all elements of the 8 E model, a wider range of reader motivations can be met. This extends the potential readership for businesses and allows businesses to communicate with potential, current, and past customers.

6 APPLICATION OF THE 8 E MODEL

To demonstrate the application of the 8 E model within a wine tourism business blog structure, blog posts were developed for future use on the GGWT platform. Throughout the course of the master's thesis internship, extensive interviews, wine tourism experiences with collaborative partners of the company, and digital research were conducted to aid in the development of written content. Within the development of the blog posts, elements of the 8 E model were considered to ensure all content was structured in an effective manner that would reach GGWT customers throughout each stage of the customer journey.

6.1 Greek Grape Wine Tours Blog Development Strategy

GGWT initially started as the brand The Greek Grapes. This online platform was used to educate wine-interested readers about the lesser-known and appreciated Greek wine industry. However, with the expansion into Greek Grape Wine Tours in 2016, the primary focus of the blog developed to highlight the tour experience. The goal moving forward was to reach an intersection that merged the GGWT experience and the original The Greek Grape brand.

As a result, ideal outcomes from the blog would be for potential customers to use the blog as a tool when considering purchasing, but also for previous participants to stay engaged with the company, and for other wine-curious readers to learn more about the Greek wine industry.

6.1.1 Previous Content Assessment

Prior to the development of new written content for the Greek Grape Wine Tours blog, all previously written articles posted to the wine tour operator's website were cataloged and analyzed to determine key elements of the 8 E model already existing within the site. Of the twenty-four posted articles, only one, that briefly introduced a quiz for readers to engage in, did not present any elements of the 8 E model. However, much of the other content primarily featured elements of the "Education", "Experiential", and "Erudite" categories.

As content was written via first-person perspective, many of the articles relied upon personal experience to share about Greek wines. However, the most successful articles then expanded upon personal experience to educate as well. For example, the article *GGWT's Newest Addition: Gerovassiliou Winery* introduced a new winery as an aspect of the GGWT tour experience. The article provided insight into the winery, winemaker, and history of specific Greek grape varieties in the area. Additionally, it detailed how to travel to the winery and nearby villages in the region, and discussed a local meal, which established itself strongly within the

“Exploration” element of the model. Furthermore, it provided personal context of the writer's first experience with the wines from the winery and detailed what the experience was like to visit.

The analysis of the twenty-four blog posts on the GGWT platform aided in identifying which elements of the model were missing within the site, and what could be improved upon in future article development. It also streamlined the process of developing future articles centralized around new and engaging content.

6.1.2 Applying The Model

Content for GGWT was written taking into consideration company goals and the application of the 8 E model within each post. For example, the article *Drink The Blood Of Hercules* was developed to provide context for one of the most famous Greek grape varieties, Agioritiko. This served the GGWT brand by providing interesting and informative content on Greek wines but further promoted an experience done on a GGWT tour.

When developing the article, all aspects of the 8 E model were applied. Within “Education”, the article gave detailed insight about the terroir of the region of Nemea and the grape variety of Agioritiko. Further context to the region of Nemea also ensured elements of “Exploration” were met. For readers trying to coordinate a visit to the Peloponnese, references to cultural traditions and activities to engage in were referenced ensuring content fell within the “Enroute” category. As the writer referenced a personal visitation to the winery featured within the article, the “Experiential” category of the model was additionally present. The winery featured was a unique, small family-run winery that is a pioneer within the wine region. This allowed for “Empowered” elements to enhance the authenticity of the wine tourism experience. No specific dates for future events were featured within the article, however, to ensure the element of “Events” was met within the article, explanations of unique tasting experiences offered at the winery were discussed. The combination of personal experience with unique Greek mythological storytelling provided “Entertainment” that was both educational and enjoyable. Finally, as the writer provided factual data in partnership with personal experience as a wine tourism professional, the “Erudite” category was enacted to ensure readers would feel the provided information was reliable.

As GGWT has its own specific target market for potential wine tourism customers and business goals, the content was carefully crafted to best match the desired audience and ideal outcomes for the blog posts. As a result, not every article featured each of the elements within the 8 E model. However, all articles written took into careful consideration what elements would be the most useful to reach the desired outcomes. It was essential that upon completion of the

internship, GGWT would be able to sustainably post blog content. Therefore, a package of a year's worth of article content was provided to the company with a posting strategy.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The research performed aimed to consider demographic influences and reader motivations to create a framework model that would be useful for when generating blog content.

7.1 Blog Impact for the Customer Journey

Strategically executed wine tourism blogs can have a positive influence on a customer's journey. Blogs can serve as valuable tools for creating awareness and generating interest in a brand's products or services. Blog readers are motivated to consume content centralized around not just unique wine tourism experiences, but also regional planning recommendations. In contemplating the benefits of purchasing a wine tourism experience, having holistic insight into what the purchase would involve is crucial to setting participation expectations. Crafting material that promotes a knowledgeable and trustworthy brand can aid in generating desire for transitioning into the purchase stage of the customer journey.

While participating in the purchase, having blog content available that enhances the offering can aid in providing a successful experience. Content that guides readers to understand how to arrive at the experience and what to expect during, can ensure they are present while participating. Useful educational tools like wine-tasting guides, tasting notes, and food pairings, make useful tools for participants to engage with while participating in the experience.

While many tourism experiences are a one-and-done type of booking, using blogs as a tool to connect with consumers post-purchase can feed participants back into a loyalty loop. Blog elements that feature more human-centered content can allow for brands to personally connect with their previous participants. While the aim of a business could be to provide updated content that entices previous attendees of a wine tourism experience to come again, it could also be used as a tool to retain a readership that continues to purchase wine from the business. Satisfied customers continually engaging with the content may then become brand advocates, sharing positive experiences with others, and attracting new customers.

Overall, when leveraged effectively, blogs can be powerful tools for guiding customers through their purchasing journey, from initial awareness to post-purchase satisfaction, ultimately contributing to brand growth, customer loyalty, and business success.

7.2 Wine Tourism Business Influence

While the 8 E model serves as a foundation for blog content, it is also adaptable to meet the needs of multiple wine tourism business models.

7.2.1 Wine Tourism Operator Impact

For businesses like GGWT which offer exclusive wine tourism packages, the impact of the 8 E model can help increase bookings, assist in customers preparation for and participation in the wine tourism experience, and encourage connection upon conclusion of the experience.

As wine tour operators will have a human whose personality serves as a representation of the brand while guiding the tour, enhancing “Experiential”, “Entertainment”, and “Erudite” elements can aid in a personal connection with customers. With a wide variety of businesses to choose who to support, having educational content that enhances the holistic tourism experience for the potential customer can differentiate a wine tourism business from its competitors.

While increasing bookings for a wine tourism operator is a high priority goal for businesses, developing content that is interesting and sharable for past participants can help facilitate readers in advocating for the brand. Furthermore, as wine tourism operators evolve their offerings, featuring new wine events and wine industry professionals that the brand engages with, can encourage past participants to repurchase new experiences from the brand.

7.2.2 Winery Impact

Wine tourism within a winery context is beneficial for both generating income and brand exposure due to an experience booking. However, it additionally can positively impact bottle sales for the winery. Providing content that educates on grape varieties, tasting notes, wine and food pairings, and serving recommendations within a winery blog context, can further aid customers, both new and returning, in making informed bottle purchase decisions.

Developing content that differentiates the brand and offerings from competitors in an entertaining and educational format can help purchasers make decisions. For potential customers determining the value gained from participating in a wine tourism experience, such as opportunities to explore historically and culturally significant regions, content can be used as a tool to entice readers to participate in an experience. Wine tourism is a holistic experience that relies upon the participants' use of all senses. Developing content that demonstrates all of these elements and the benefits of the tourism experience can increase bookings.

Additionally, utilizing blogs as a promotional tool for winery events can continually connect a winery with previous customers to ensure brand loyalty for the company. Developing context for consumers to return that is not just a repeatable experience, can enhance brand

loyalty and increase company revenue. As customers return to wineries for future experiences, the peers they choose to invite alongside them may expand the customer base for the winery and turn them into brand advocates.

7.2.3 Regional Tourism Board Impact

From a regional perspective, blogs are an effective tool for generating and enhancing wine tourism experiences. For a destination, wine tourism extends far beyond a winery tour and tasting. From accommodation and transportation to culinary and artisan industries, wine tourism relies on all stakeholders at a destination level to successfully develop a regional identity.

The “Education”, “Exploration”, “Enroute”, “Events”, and “Empowered” elements within the 8 E model are used for wine tourism boards. These elements contextualize a region’s identity while promoting wine tourism experiences. Blogs provide an opportunity to demonstrate a holistic visitation experience.

7.3 Considerations for Future Research Efforts

While the 8 E model serves as a starting point for wine tourism writers and wine tourism companies to consider when developing content for online platforms, the potential for future research on the impacts of the application of the model could be further completed.

7.3.1 Extended Tracking

While the applied research determined motivating factors for readers of wine blogs, developed a model for content writers to ensure blogs provided written content that matched reader motivations, and contextualized the application of the 8 E model for wine tourism businesses, future tracking of the success of written content over an extended period of time, could provide useful context in determining which elements of the model are most beneficial to wine tourism businesses.

While written content must take into consideration ideal target demographics and company goals, tracking monthly readership and interaction with individual posts could help pinpoint areas within the model that are strong and influential within the content and that could be improved upon. Similarly to how a benchmarking case study was completed to contextualize the current range of content for wine tourism businesses, future benchmarking of a profile of articles from a selected business could provide valuable insight into the most beneficial elements of the 8 E model. It could further be interesting to determine if specific elements of the model are more influential when used within a winery, wine tour operator, or tourism board context.

In the tracking of this information, further analysis of the benefits of the blog for the business could be completed. Information like the amount of income generated per each blog post or a collection of data on wine tourism participants' purchase behavior as a result of reading a piece of content, could provide a clearer understanding of the benefits for a business to continually maintain a wine tourism blog.

7.3.2 Adaptability to Developing Technology

As the world and wine tourism industry continuously develop technologically, adapting the model to fit new platforms to target potential customers could provide useful context for wine tourism businesses. For example, as more people switch to consuming content via social media posts, adapting the model to aid written content in a more short-form structure could be key to the success of written content in the future. Elements of the 8 E model that greatly benefit long-form content, like blog posts may no longer be relevant or as useful as evolving elements could be based off consumption context patterns.

The context in which a reader gains awareness of a product can also further impact how they interact with the blog. For example, as wine bottle labels rely more heavily on QR codes to communicate company information, linked content that better promotes a brand or experience within a wine purchasing context may rely on various elements of the model more than others. Additionally, as digital tools, like AI generators develop, that aid in itinerary development within a region, optimizing content in an effective SEO manner, will be critical to AI generators promoting the experience as highly recommendable. It is possible that various elements of the 8 E model may be more likely to drive SERP results and therefore more consistently be recommended via an AI generator tool.

7.3.3 Advancement of Wine Tourism Trends

The wine tourism industry is ever-evolving. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, wineries, wine tour operators, and wine tourism boards had to adapt to navigating a new virtual tourism context. While wine tourism patterns have shifted as the pandemic concluded, it would be naive to assume there was no longer a need for adaptability within the wine tourism industry. Wine tourism trends as a result of social, environmental, political, and economic influences will continue to evolve. Therefore, it is essential to consider the current and future trends within the wine tourism industry when considering the benefits of the 8 E model.

When successfully executed, blogs can increase customer engagement, influence customer purchase behavior, and serve as a tool for businesses to reach company goals. However, seeing a positive response to a wine tourism blog is contingent upon the content

being written that consumers are motivated to engage with. Taking into consideration customer motivation to consume blog content is essential for businesses to effectively engage with their consumers along all stages of the customer journey. As wine tourism and industry trends evolve, customer motivation will continue to adapt alongside them. From climate change and environmental responsibility to social and political justice movements, many factors can impact wine tourism trends. Future adaptation of the 8 E model to address evolving motivations of readers based on wine tourism trends, will be critical to its relevance in future content.

While the world and wine tourism industry continue to evolve, further development of how wine tourism businesses communicate wine tourism stories must be considered. However, in whatever future form content is communicated through, storytelling, as it has been since the beginning of time, will always be an impactful tool to connect with people within a wide range of interests, professions, ages, and more.

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ANNEX

Hello GGWT Alumni, Future Alumni and Wine Tourism Friends!!! ❤️

I am sure I have not told everyone that I have been blessed these last few months with an amazing intern, Jessi Blanakik, from the Wintour Erasmus Mundus Wine Tourism Master's Program. This program sounds amazing as for almost 2 years she spent semesters studying in Spain, France and Portugal. Jessi joined me in February to start writing new content for the website and, most importantly, resurrecting my Greek Grape Blog! And now in her final research semester, she has been in Greece.

Her research is focused on determining how wine businesses, like Greek Grape Wine Tours and other wineries and tourism boards, can use blogs to better interact with their customers, enhance their brand, and generate sales. As a part of her research, she is conducting a short 7-min survey and would love to hear from you as GGWT past and future participants, as well as wine friends. Even if you have yet to read the Greek Grape blog, your thoughts still matter. Use [this link](#) or the link below to participate in the survey, all of which is completely anonymous.

Thanks so much for your help! I truly appreciate it! xx

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE: <https://forms.gle/gtXv1RWblrhCmR4W9>

Lisa Stavropoulos
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[Greek Grape Wine Tours](#)
[The Greek Grape](#)
[Greek Wine on the Go!](#)



Figure 1 - GGWT Survey Participation Announcement

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<p><i>The following survey is for research purposes on behalf of the Wintour Erasmus Mundus Wine Tourism & Sustainability master's degree. Research is being conducted to determine the impacts of blogs within the wine tourism industry. The aim of the study is to develop a series of best practices for blog writers to apply to their written content based off of the responses.</i></p> <p><i>The following survey takes 5 minutes to complete and is comprised of 18 multiple choice questions and 2 open-ended questions. Please answer each questions completely. All survey results are anonymous.</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for your input!</i></p>	
<p>What is your level of knowledge of wine?</p>	<p>a. I know very little about wine b. I have some wine knowledge c. I have significant knowledge d. I am a wine student e. I am a wine professional</p>
<p>Have you previously participated in a wine tour or tasting?</p>	<p>a. Yes b. No</p>
<p>How often do you engage with (comment, like, save for future use) wine-related blog content?</p>	<p>a. Never b. Rarely c. Sometimes d. Often e. Frequently</p>

Do you ever share wine-related blog posts with others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes, frequently b. Yes, occasionally c. No, never
Where do you typically read wine-related blog content?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Desktop computer b. Laptop c. Tablet d. Smartphone
Have you ever visited a winery or participated in a wine tourism-related activity (tour, tasting, travel plans) as a result of reading a blog post?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No
Would you be more likely to visit a winery or participate in a wine-related activity if it was recommended in a blog post?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes, definitely b. Yes, somewhat c. No, not really d. No, definitely not
Please rank from 1 to 4 (1 being the most important and 4 being the least important) reason why you may read a wine related blog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To learn about grape varieties and their characteristics b. To learn about a wine region or country and the wines that come from the region c. To learn about new wine-making techniques d. To learn about people in the wine industry
. Please rank from 1 to 4 (1 being the most important and 4 being the least important) reason why you may read a wine related blog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To plan a trip or make a booking decision b. To imagine I am in a destination outside of my daily routine c. To gather product insight from reviews before making a purchase decision d. To learn about wine-related events
Please rank from 1 to 4 (1 being the most enjoyable and 4 being the least enjoyable) reason what type of blog content is the most enjoyable for you to read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Interviews with wine-business professionals b. Personal reviews of wine products or experiences c. Current wine news stories d. Regional descriptions with information on what to see and do in a wine tourism region
I read wine tourism blogs to help determine whether or not I will make a wine related purchase.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neutral

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
I find wine tourism blogs useful when planning for a wine focused trip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neutral d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
After reading about a wine tourism experience, if I enjoy my experience, I will return to the blog platform and read more articles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neutral d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
I will purchase wines or experiences based off of reviews or recommendations in wine tourism blogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neutral d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
In addition to content on wine tours, I enjoy reading content about wine related industries (culinary, wine making, business owners).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neutral d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
What is your age?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 21-25 years old b. 26-34 years old c. 35-44 years old d. 45-54 years old e. 55-64 years old f. 65 years or older
What is your current employment status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Student b. Unemployed c. Self-employed d. Part-time employed e. Full-time employed f. Retired
How frequently do you travel for vacation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. < once per year b. Once per year c. 2-4 times per year d. 5 or more times per year
What type of topics related to wine tourism do you find the most enjoyable to read? (Please explain why)	Open ended

What makes a wine related blog useful for you? (Please explain why)	Open ended
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Figure 2 - Survey Questionnaire

Ranking Results Question 1

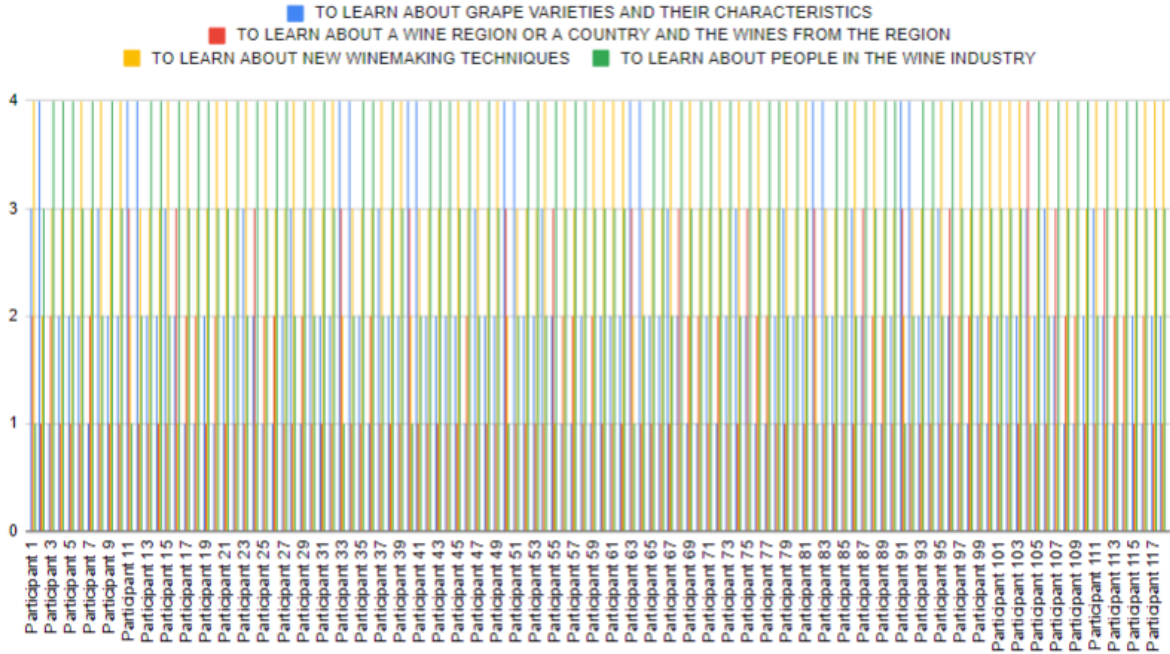
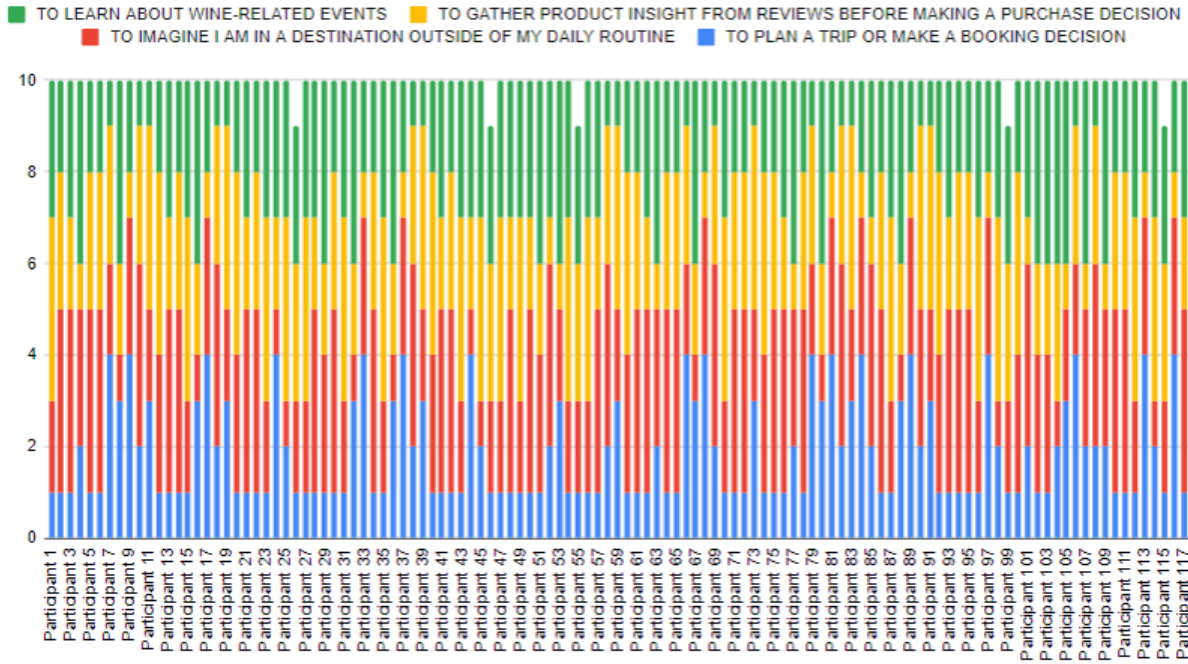


Figure 3 - Ranking Results

Ranking Results Question 2



Ranking Results Question

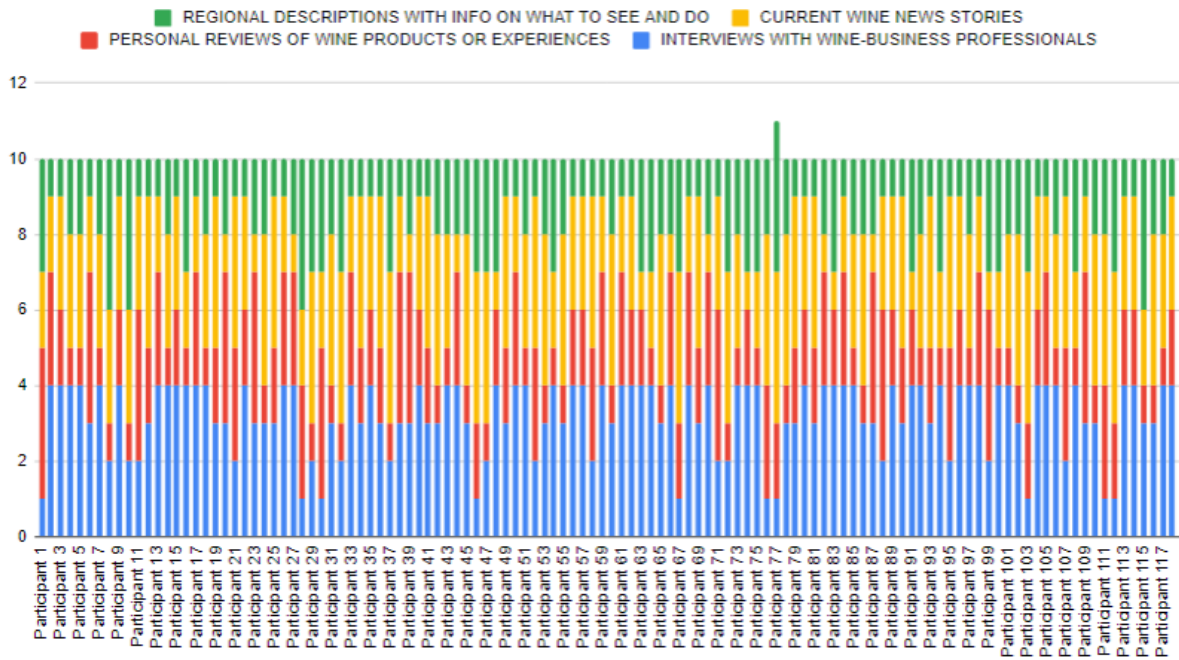


Figure 3 Cont. - Ranking Results

	What type of topics related to wine tourism do you find the most enjoyable to read? (Please explain why)	What makes a wine related blog useful for you? (Please explain why)
Participant 1	Wine professional stories	I find them useful if they seem knowledgeable and trustworthy
Participant 2	Unique areas outside normal tourism	Recommendations for travel and new experiences
Participant 3	Pairings: new reasonably priced wines	Short, recommendations, where to purchase, new varietals
Participant 4	Travel experiences	Unique recommendations
Participant 5	Regions in USA more likely to visit	Education and resource for types to try
Participant 6	Regional descriptions, local cuisine, sightseeing besides wineries, because I consider wine tourism as an holistic experience	Suggestions for purchases, wine pairing with food, suggestions for trips related to wine because these are close to my interests.
Participant 7	I will usually just read about wine from places I have been	Not really useful just enjoyable
Participant 8	Unique locations, interesting stories about the people in the wineries	An interesting story.
Participant 9	A little bit of everything, however not for it to be too wordy.	Searching for a region and understanding all the options
Participant 10	Women wine makers	Information, direction, suggestions, warnings, human interest.
Participant 11	ratings help determine purchases	information
Participant 12	I enjoy reading about the people involved in wine tourism	I have never read a wine blog
Participant 13	Descriptions of a region & the attractions in that area	A more indepth description of an area
Participant 14	places to visit/unique experiences	information for travel/visiting winery. Usually its about the view
Participant 15	Reviews	Specific details
Participant 16	Culture. Hotels.	Vacation ideas
Participant 17	Regional wine and food experiences	My degree of interest in traveling to that country or region
Participant 18	Reviews of what the experiences at various wineries are	It would have to have customer reviews
Participant 19	Regional wineries and their wines, reviews	They help me choice wineries and places to visit
Participant 20	notable details about the region	continuous learnings about grapes, regions, evolving wine styles
Participant 21	Southern Italian islands wine tours, because I have yet to vacation there.	Knowledge, opportunity, cost

Participant 22	Different wine regions	helpful and interesting items.
Participant 23	lesser known wine areas, grape varieties, producers and general travel recommendations	Knowledge regarding specific producers, wines, experiences
Participant 24	Destinations	Entertainment, reviews, destinations
Participant 25	restaurants, cultural places, outdoor activities	learn something new
Participant 26	Unusual wine experiences or events	The diversity of the regions presented there with many useful information what to see there (not only wine related)
Participant 27	Food and wine pairing advices	The reviews of grape varieties, focused also on differences in vintages in the region. It provides me better understanding
Participant 28	Wine tastings or new wineries to try in my area	When I read a wine related blog I am typically trying to plan a trip to a winery, so it is helpful if it is concise and includes reviews of places or travel tips for the area
Participant 29	which regions in the US are popular for wine tourism and especially places that are local to where I live in the Mid-Atlantic US because I am personally not likely to plan travel around wine-related activity. i enjoy reading about wineries to visit in a given region. i also enjoy reading about different kinds of wine and how they are different.	Information on wine regions and trip planning details like what to do in a certain region/city/town known for wine and which wineries to visit
Participant 30	Experiences. I like to understand with kind of experiences we can have wine related	Information, I can learn more about different topics
Participant 31	Affordable but high quality wines	details to help with planning
Participant 32	how to travel in a region, transportation, hotel, restaurants	things to do that are not as known
Participant 33	family stories	previous visitor experiences
Participant 34	new wine trends like natural wine and the people who are making them	what to do in an area that's not just wineries
Participant 35	more information about what makes different regions unique	Easy to understand facts about grapes and wines to decide what to buy
Participant 36	wine reviews to help with purchases	They're mainly helpful for me just to read and enjoy. I will use them to plan, but also just for fun.
Participant 37	Information on places I have never traveled to but will try wine from at home	Finding the tops spots in a destination

Participant 38	grape varieties	I don't like when wine is pretentious. They're useful to me if they are inclusive and make information easy to follow
Participant 39	tasting notes	If I can only visit one winery while traveling, I want to know what will be the best to do. I'll probably be doing other things when traveling + wine so I want to make the best choice.
Participant 40	information on what grapes/wines taste like from regions i have not been	Travel and vacation planning information
Participant 41	what makes regions different or better than others	Different producers to try
Participant 42	what different wineries do to make them unique	For wine centered trips, how can I best maximize my time
Participant 43	travel recommendations for diy	What wine tour experiences are like and how I can go
Participant 44	wine professional personal stories - how they got started and why	I enjoy learning about less "mass-produce" wineries so I can have a special experience
Participant 45	A personal experience visiting wineries	I find blogs helpful if they can help me plan my own trips and give me unique insight
Participant 46	Food pairings - regional food to try with wine	Quick reads that summarize regions, wines, or visit options
Participant 47	Local wineries, wine bars, restaurant recommendations	wine blogs that really help you understand what a region is about and what grapes come from it can help prepare for an experience
Participant 48	I find regional descriptions the most enjoyable to read, especially of places I will likely never travel so I can imagine it.	preparing for a visit - what to expect, bring, try, etc.
Participant 49	Places I've never been	Personal recommendations for wines and experiences
Participant 50	I like to learn about regions in my country I could travel to easily	they're helpful if I can read them and determine what a real trip would be like - will my experience match what they say
Participant 51	Winemaker stories	Wine education resources, such as beginner's guides or glossaries, are helpful for expanding my wine knowledge.
Participant 52	Special experiences you can book	I just enjoy reading for entertainment to hear unique stories and learn something I didn't know before
Participant 53	Wine visits that aren't wineries- museums, tastings, special events	wine pairing and tasting notes are the most helpful to me
Participant 54	unique experiences that aren't just winery tours	If I can book experiences through it or get booking discounts
Participant 55	history of a place	They're useful because they help me learn about wines I don't have access to or places I could not go to
Participant	different wineries to visit	Vacation planning

56		
Participant 57	what else to do after wine tours	Information, reviews, suggestions, etc.
Participant 58	Wine tasting notes	I want to know what to do but also what not to do. A lot of blogs just talk about experiences everyone does, but is it worth it? Maybe not.
Participant 59	Unique wines that are rare. I want to go to special places.	Clear, concise information, that I can read to learn
Participant 60	History of wine in the region	Useful to me if I can then try the wines at home even if I don't get to travel.
Participant 61	Unique stories about the people in the wineries	different wines to try and learn about
Participant 62	where to go to learn about the region	it's useful for me if I trust the writers recommendations
Participant 63	wineries that are easy to travel to	Accurate and reliable information about different wine varieties and regions helps me make informed decisions.
Participant 64	Special events that occur rarely	Detailed tasting notes and descriptions allow me to understand the flavors and characteristics of different wines.
Participant 65	Regions in Europe I want to visit	Wine pairing suggestions enhance my dining experiences by guiding me towards the right wine for different meals.
Participant 66	All sightseeing opportunities in the area	Recommendations for affordable yet quality wines help me discover new options
Participant 67	Wines from places I know to learn more	expert reviews and ratings give me a sense of the overall quality and value of specific wines.
Participant 68	Unique locations, interesting stories about the people in the wineries	winemaking techniques and processes deepen my understanding and appreciation of the craft.
Participant 69	Short easy to read information about regions	News about emerging trends and new wine releases keeps me up to date with the latest offerings in the wine industry.
Participant 70	Wine maker stories	info about sustainable and organic wine production practices that I can try or experience
Participant 71	wine reviews to help me find wines I've never tried	Personal stories from the author's wine experiences make the blog more engaging and relatable.
Participant 72	I enjoy reading about the people involved in wine tourism	travel guides and recommendations help me plan wine-focused vacations and explore different wine regions.
Participant 73	Special experiences and itineraries I could do	If I trust the writer, I will rely on their recommendations when planning my experience
Participant 74	places to visit/unique experiences	Comparative tastings of either the same grape varieties or some wine different vintages to research

Participant 75	Reviews of wine and wine experiences	Historical context to make my visits more enriching
Participant 76	Local cultural experiences	Wine event coverage, such as festivals or tastings, allows me to stay informed about upcoming opportunities to explore wines.
Participant 77	I like to learn about things that will enhance my wine experience - like local food, or locations to enjoy wine in	Guest posts or interviews with winemakers and industry experts offer unique perspectives and insider knowledge.
Participant 78	Different wine tours that are special	Information on limited edition or exclusive wine releases enables me to discover unique and rare wines.
Participant 79	I want to read about different wineries	Discovering unique events or experiences to go to
Participant 80	Regional descriptions like the land, weather, scenic views	Reviews from the writer or others sharing their experiences in the comments
Participant 81	Why wine is different with local traditions	Coverage of lesser-known or underappreciated wine regions and grape varieties broadens my wine exploration horizons.
Participant 82	Wine regions I have never traveled to before	Wine industry news and insights into market trends help me stay informed about the business side of wine.
Participant 83	Places with unique history - like Georgian wines and winemaking	Educational videos or tutorials on wine-related topics make learning about wine more accessible and engaging.
Participant 84	Where to stay, eat, explore	I like wine-related resources like books to read, and wine tasting tools (glasses, decanters, etc.) or even podcasts or documentaries to listen to and watch
Participant 85	I like learning about unique wines. I recently read about underwater wines and it was such a unique process, it made me want to visit a tour for an underwater wine experience.	personal experiences that help me plan a vacation
Participant 86	I like when region info is clear. If I've never visited a place before, I can feel confused. I like knowing what I will experience before I go	off-the-beaten-path experiences can help me plan unique experiences for myself and colleagues
Participant 87	Special wine tasting experiences - but not sponsored events	A diverse range of perspectives and voices featured in the blog to learn about the industry
Participant 88	I want to read honest reviews good and bad so I can decide what to try	Knowledge regarding specific producers, wines, experiences
Participant 89	Personal stories of wine makers, chefs, guides, people in the industry	Personal reviews are the most useful for helping me make decisions
Participant 90	I like reading good routes and plans to follow to help organization a trip or imagine traveling	ideas about what to do while I'm traveling

	one day	
Participant 91	Wine professional stories	Anything that helps me plan an experience so I can support good businesses
Participant 92	What makes a winery different or better than another	I want to learn about unique people in the industry
Participant 93	New places I could travel to	A wine-related blog is useful to me if it demonstrates knowledge and reliability in its content.
Participant 94	History of the region	I greatly appreciate wine blogs that go beyond the usual recommendations and instead offer unique experiences
Participant 95	what to do in a region - wine things but also other experiences	A blog that helps me continue to learn about different grapes and wines is the most useful to me
Participant 96	Events going on in a region or winery	Personal reviews that honestly show what an experience is like
Participant 97	What an experience is like before I go	Planning tips and itinerary development
Participant 98	Different grape varieties and what they smell/taste like	Tasting notes on wines I've never tried or am going to try
Participant 99	Useful itineraries	Information on producers I have never heard of
Participant 100	What makes regions different - like the land or things to do	Blogs that feature unique wineries or experiences to visit
Participant 101	tasting notes for wines to try	Planning tips and guides to set expectations
Participant 102	I like to read a little bit of everything to better understand a place, wine, or business	Educational information that is still fun and enjoyable to read
Participant 103	small-family run wineries or wineries doing something special	Wine professional stories that make me want to visit a place
Participant 104	the people behind the experience	I want to read about wineries I have never heard of that aren't the "famous" wineries
Participant 105	lesser known experiences	Learning about regions I've never been before is the most useful to me
Participant 106	special experiences	Recommendations about what to buy and unique wines to try
Participant 107	unique wineries or tasting experiences	If I am planning a trip, blogs that give clear detailed guides about what to see and do are the most useful
Participant 108	I like stories that connect a winery to the history or unique story of the region and winemaking process	Information about a destination's history, culture, and what to see and do to experience it
Participant 109	why I should travel to a region	Regional guides
Participant 110	Descriptions about the wine destination	Information about the place I am reading about that helps me to imagine I am there
Participant	Family-owned, women run, sustainable,	Special wineries worth giving my money to

111	etc. wineries	
Participant 112	Stories about a personal experience visiting for a customer perspective view	Customer experiences so I can imagine what it would be like if I did it
Participant 113	Different grapes and unique wines to try	Information on grapes, special or rare wines, unique businesses
Participant 114	where to go and what experiences are worth doing	Guides on where to go and what to do
Participant 115	what all to do in a place that is both wine and not wine focused	Stories about traveling to a region that will show me what to do that is and isn't wine related
Participant 116	cool things to do in a region that are not the standard experience	Unique regional experiences that help me plan
Participant 117	regional descriptions and what to do in the area, how to travel there, what other things there are to do.	Itinerary help and logistical planning
Participant 118	Different wines to try, how to taste wine, what to pair it with so that if I do an experience I will feel comfortable going.	Blogs that teach about wine like how to taste, what to expect, tasting notes, etc. are the most useful to me

Figure 4 - Responses To Open-Ended Questions

COMPANY	TYPE OF BUSINESS	CONTINENT	DESCRIPTION
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Wine Country Ontario	Tourism Board	North America	Wine Country Ontario is a wine tourism board that covers wine related information on Lake Erie, Prince Edward County, and Niagara wine regions. The website offers information on trip planning, wineries, wine routes, events, accommodations, tour companies, and more. The extensive selection of information provides an excellent tool for readers to prepare for a visit to a Canadian wine region.
Penedès Turisme	Tourism Board	Europe	Penedès Turisme is a tourism board platform to aid in the trip planning process of visiting Penedès in Catalonia. The website provides extensive information on wine routes and other outdoor activities, like art installations, bike routes, and RV routes, to participate in during a visit to the famous wine region.
Spier	Winery	Africa	Spier's company goal is to make good wine, grow good food, and invest in people, the environment and South African art. They are located in Stellenbosch, South Africa.
De Bortoli	Winery	Australasia	De Bortoli is an Australian winery with the mission to become a "Zero Waste Wine Company." They prioritize sustainability in their wine growing practices, and offer regular wine tours and onsite lodging for visitors. Their blog is called Words With Wine.
Wine Paths	Wine Tour Operator	Australasia	Wine Paths is a luxury wine tourism travel company that helps customers explore some of the top wine regions and businesses around the world. They produce a Winezine that features articles on local travel experts, wine business professional interviews, and other wine related information.
The Vines of Mendoza	Wine Tour Operator	South America	The Vines of Mendoza is an Argentinian based travel company that creates customizable tours for visitors exploring the Mendoza wine region. The company has a blog featuring wine knowledge articles, tourism experiences, and events.

Figure 5 - Benchmarking Company Descriptions

COMPANY	BLOG ARTICLE	DESCRIPTION
Wine Country Ontario	The Story of Icewine	This article focuses on uncovering the “mystique and romance of Icewine.” The article contains a history summary of how icewine came to be produced, how it is made, grape varieties used, growing requirements, and discusses why it can be expensive. Furthermore, there are serving suggestions, food pairing recommendations, and cocktail recipes.
Penedès Turisme	Sustainable and responsible tourism	This article aims at disclosing information on the importance of maintaining sustainable and responsible tourism development for both the region and wine tourism experiences. It recommends locations to stay in, plus biosphere sustainable partners, such as wineries, restaurants, and tourist attractions.
Spier	Spier Introduces New Organic Harvest: A Garden-To-Glass Tasting	This article is used as an announcement for the winery’s new tasting opportunity, the Organic Harvest: A Garden-To-Glass Tasting experience. It discusses the components of an organic vineyard and wine, and provides details about what the experience entails.
De Bortoli	What Does Dry Wine Mean?	This article aims at educating about tasting profiles of wines. It informs about what constitutes a dry wine, offers wine tasting suggestions and tasting notes, tells the stories behind the company’s dry wines, and offers wine pairings.
Wine Paths	Executive Chef at the Appellation Restaurant Barossa Valley, Australia	This article is an interview with chef Daniel Murphy who cooks at Luxury Barossa Valley Hotel. It discusses information about the appellation, ingredients he uses, involves personal quotes, and discusses the culinary impacts food can have within the wine industry.
The Vines of Mendoza	The Ultimate Wine Experience: Wine Camp	This article aims at encouraging wine tourists to explore the world of wine outside of the standard wine tour and tasting. It describes in detail what a Wine Camp tour experience is like, sets expectations for readers, and provides educational information about wine production.

Figure 6 - Benchmarking Article Descriptions