

ORGANIC OREGON: AN EMERGING EXPERIENCE IN TERROIR TOURISM

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Abstract

Emerging from anthropology, climatology, ecology, gastronomy, geography and wine tourism, terroir tourism has been recently recognized to have potential for developing rural agriculture tourism in Oregon. However, little research has investigated to determine terroir tourism and its characteristics, differentiating it from wine tourism. This paper investigates potential experiences and characteristics of terroir tourism from the organic vineyard perspective. The extensive literature review on experience economy and wine tourism conducted for this study reveals that terroir has 59 characteristics categorized into four viticulture terroir categories. The findings will help future research to better understand the characteristics of terroir tourism to build theory and constructs for future investigation using the 4E framework. The results will help Oregon further develop rural agriculture tourism based on its apparent terroir tourism characteristics.

Keywords: *Terroir, Tourism, Organic, Experience economy*

1 INTRODUCTION

The term terroir, a French term derived from terre (land) has been used to denote special characteristics of a particular place, interacting with plant genetics in agricultural products such as wine, coffee, chocolate, tea, and cheese (Trubeck, 2009). Particularly, French winemakers employed the concept of terroir by identifying the differences in wines from different regions, or vineyards. The concept of terroir is developed as a way of describing the unique aspects of a place that influence and shape the wine made from it (Ewing-Mulligan, 2001, p.22) Jacobson (2010) defines terroir as sense of place, which indicates unique characteristics of the local environment to produce certain qualities of the product. Looking at the history of terroir and grape growth their organic nature provides a relationship that is unique to few products like wine. Vaudour (2002) developed a typology of viticulture terroir, whereby terroir is characterized as the intersection of four components of plant growing, territory, identity, and advertising.

Based on the typology by Vaudour's (2002), for example, Holland, Smit & Jones (2014) recently presents a framework of terroir tourism, including regional / rural economic development, wine tourism and winemaking / viticulture to form place identity. While Holland et al., (2014) made a significant initial step to develop a framework of terroir tourism; it is not clear if terroir tourism is conceptually different from wine tourism and if so, how the two types of tourism are different. This investigation looks to research Oregon as an organic wine production state and begin the initial steps of characterizing terroir through a literature review to create links between terroir and terroir tourism described in this paper.

Despite the occasional confusion over the term "terroir," wine tourism research illustrates that most wine tourists are more interested in tasting, learning, and having fun. Studies in California have shown that the average wine consumer is aware of the broader level AVA such as Napa Valley but only the highly involved consumer knows about the more specific AVA's, such as Rutherford. This suggests the importance of segmenting wine consumers (Thach, 2011). Segmentation of vineyards between conventional grape production and organic grape production is a current trend in the wine tourism industry.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Wine Tourism and Experience Economy

Recently, an experiential view of wine tourism has been scant although promising (e.g. Bruwer and Alant, 2009; Galloway et al., 2008; Getz and Carlsen, 2008; Pikkemaat et al., 2009; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012, 2013), given the hedonic nature of the wine tourism experience. Quadri-Felitti's 2012 dissertation study of rural wine tourism utilized the central constructs of the experience economy model; the 4E's-education, esthetics, entertainment and escapist (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) to explain the experiential nature of wine tourism. These studies, along with the fragmentary evidence found in the current wine tourism literature, discussed in the following section strengthen the call for wine tourism research to explore the applicability of the 4E framework.

Quadri-Felitti & Fiore (2013) posited that the 4Es are equally relevant to and useful in conceptualizing the wine tourism experience and that the current wine tourism literature provides evidence of the framework's value on the whole (Table 1). Descriptions and motivating factors culled from the existing wine tourism research are cataloged according to the constructs of the 4E model. Table 1 inventories evidence of individual 4Es selected from the current wine tourism literature. It suggests the need for a more encompassing view of the experiential nature of wine tourism. Adopted from (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012) Typical wine tourist activities within the 4E model of the experience economy provides a depiction of typical wine tourist activities positioned within the model, which demonstrates the suitability of this framework in helping to understand the greater wine tourism experience.

Organic Oregon Vines and Wine

Oregon's wineries are already globally recognized for its sustainability practices. Another trend putting this region in the spotlight is the production of organic wine. Although Oregon has only about 13,000 acres of wine grapes compared to California's 450,000-plus acres, it's estimated that nearly 50 percent of Oregon's vineyards are sustainable or organic compared to California's one percent. Twenty-three percent of its vineyards have met very stringent certification guidelines and are LIVE-certified sustainable or organic (Oregon Organic Wine, 2014).

Low Input Viticulture & Enology or LIVE is just one of two sustainable certification agencies in the United States for wine, established in 1997, that recognizes farms and vineyards for sustainable agricultural practices. LIVE was once an under-the-radar group of Oregon vineyard owners who wished to establish a benchmark of good stewardship in wine-grape farming. Its standards are rigorous and far-reaching, but its underlying principles are simple: Minimize the use of pesticides, fertilizers and resources such as water and energy; promote biodiversity; protect waterways; treat workers fairly and ensure their safety; be a good neighbor; and reduce waste.

Like all organic products, Oregon organic wine must meet all USDA organic requirements. Organic alcoholic beverages must also meet Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) regulations. Wine sold, labeled, or represented as "organic" must meet these criteria (USDA, 2014):

- All grapes and other agricultural ingredients (including yeast, if commercially available) must be certified organic, except those on the national List.
- Non-agricultural ingredients must be specifically allowed on the national list and may not exceed a combined 5 percent of the total product (excluding salt and water).
- Sulfur dioxide (sulfites) may not be added.
- Labels must state the name of the certifying agent (certified organic by)

Moreover, if you make wine and want to claim that it or its grapes are organic, it must be overseen by a certifying agent in Oregon. The Oregon Tilth has certified over 1,000 acres as meeting the USDA standard for organic production in Oregon shared in (Table 2).

The goals of organic wine production are to reduce reliance on synthetic chemicals and fertilizers with the purpose of protecting the farmer and the environment, and ensure land protection by maintaining natural, chemical-free soil fertility. Perhaps the biggest hindrance in producing organic wine is preserving the wine with a sulfite-free preservative. Wines require long periods of storage so standardized methods of preserving wines includes adding sulfites. Even though yeast naturally produces sulfites during fermentation, adding sulfites goes against certification standards. The question remains on how this makes Oregon a potential destination for organic wines which share many characteristics with terroir. The practices associated with organic, sustainable winemaking are really the traditional ones, says Mr. Tunnell of Brick House Vineyards who was interviewed for the New York Times article on organic Oregon wine trails in 2010 titled *On This Oregon Trail, Pioneers Embrace Organic Wine*. "Our model from the start was Burgundy: small family farms," he said. Mr. Tunnell and his wife, Melissa Mills, live in the brick house on their farm, the namesake of their label, and keep an organic garden. "In the beginning, the vines looked pretty weird for a while, and they had to compete with everything from hardy native grasses to fungal diseases," said Mr. Tunnell (2010). "We did a lot of hand hoeing and planting of cover crops. And we learned that things like vegetable oils are really effective against mildew (Tsui, 2010).

Terroir

Terroir has been used to explain agriculture for centuries, but more recently the discourse on terroir has promoted the association of 'place' and product quality in the minds of many consumers (Trubek, 2008). With respect to wine, many people believe that all of the features of a winegrowing region taken as a whole – its terroir – culminate in a distinctive influence that can be tasted in the wine (Sommers, 2008). Vaudour (2002) characterized viticultural terroir (grape growing), in four components: plant growing, territory, advertising, and identity. The plant growing terroir is based on the notion that the quality of agricultural products is related to the

agronomic properties of a farmed environment. The territory aspect of terroir, which is expressed in Europe through appellation systems and over time becomes a historical geography – think, for instance, of the storied wines from Burgundy or Bordeaux. The advertising terroir refers to the most recent incarnation of the term, which is to relate terroir to a region that creates original products. Finally, the identity terroir relies on a type of landscape perception that associates various sociological and cultural meanings to a geographical place, an idea that Moran (2006) distinguishes from that of territory through a discussion of land as an economic asset (territory) and place as a cultural experience (identity).

Moran's (2006) study on Crafting terroir: people in cool climates, soils and markets addresses the importance of empirical knowledge by practitioners in the winegrowing business in the context of terroir. Moran (2006) suggests that it is important to understand the terroir from the vine and wine perspectives through the views of practitioners and researchers. Exploring the previous literature on terroir using definitions, typologies and frameworks from categories and characteristics were established by the investigator, in addition three layers or levels of terroir were also investigated.

The three different levels of terroir as described by Thach (2011) were investigated to help characterize terroir tourism characteristics: 1) The literal level, meaning "earth or soil" (Websters, 2014), 2) The environmental level, including "climate, sunlight, topography, geology; and soil/water relations" (Robinson, 1999), and 3) The holistic level, which includes "all of the above plus viticulture and winemaking practices, as well as desires of the consumer and the local community" (Gade, 2004). In Vaudour's (2002) study of viticulture terroir (grape growing), whereby terroir is characterized as the intersection of four components: plant growing, territory, identity and advertising (Figure 1).

Terroir Tourism

Holland et al., (2014) developed a framework of terroir tourism with regional development, wine tourism product and viticulture and winemaking components to form regional identity (Figure 2). Moran (2006) suggests that the importance of human involvement be factored into crafting terroir at the holistic level as well "Great wines...are created by people understanding where they work and expressing its qualities quality in their product" (Moran, 2003, pg. 41).

The geographical characteristics of terroir and associated human interaction together construct the cultural landscape of the locality (place or region) - a set of conditions for producing high-quality culinary products with creative and artistic characteristics of the place (place identity and image), which reflect their place of origin (Croce and Perri, 2010). To capitalize on these characteristics, terroir can be and is often used in marketing as an image for a winegrowing region (Turner & Creasy, 2003). A scientific approach to researching the characteristics of terroir tourism will also develop on previous experiments that have clearly shown that numerous aspects of terroir can be specified (Jones, 2014).

Methods

Qualitative content analysis was used for this study. Data were collected and analyzed from June 15th to August 15th, 2014. Particularly, inductive category development was employed to interpret texts from the literature based on the frameworks of Vaudour (2002), Moran (2006), and Holland et al. (2014). The approach includes procedures in formulating a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question, which in turn, determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. Following this criterion, the literature was thoroughly investigated to categorize findings into tentative groups. The reliability for the identified categories was evaluated using Mayring's (2000) deductive category application to the literature.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The content analysis revealed the characteristics of terroir tourism based on the frequency of keywords on literature within the typologies of Vaudour (2002) and Moran (2006). This study identified 59 keywords to describe the characteristics of terroir in the four categories. Table 3 shows the items with the number, indicating how many times each keyword was found on the literature see Table 3 below:

A total of 17 keywords with 128 times of frequency in the territory category were found. *Region*, *Place*, and *Land* were the three most frequent characteristics reported in this category. Next, the advertising category of terroir included 14 keywords with a total of 81 frequencies. *Product*, *Rural*, and *Environment* were the three most frequently found keywords to describe the characteristics of the advertising. The plant growing category of terroir had 16 keywords with a total of 61 frequencies. *Plant*, *Climate*, and *Science* were the three most frequent characteristics reported in this category. Lastly, the identity of terroir was the least frequently reported category with 12 keywords and a total of 60 frequencies. *Winemaking*, *Culture*, and *Local* were the three most frequent terms in this category. Qualitatively, an initial finding from interviews conducted by the investigator share

characteristics to include:

“Part of the wine DNA or the wine identity. My first experience with terroir was in Switzerland, where almost every region grows grapes and makes wine. There is distinct wine culture in Switzerland between the French, German and Italian regions that translates in wines that are unique in those regions and have a distinctive terroir. In Oregon, the concept of terroir is growing but I feel that we are still in the stage of trying planting new varietals, discovering new viticulture areasthere aren’t thousands of years of wine culture at this point.”

4 CONCLUSION

This investigation into experience economy research on wine tourism and the development of characteristics of terroir will expect to add to the applied research of Oregon as an emerging terroir tourism destination. Terroir tourism has the potential to be developed further by applying the characteristics of terroir from a vine perspective to marketing Oregon as a sustainable wine destination through the organic production of wine. Future researches based on this study will have potential to create theoretical frameworks and conceptual literature on terroir tourism. As a practical contribution terroir tourism destinations can create programs and market to terroir tourists as highly specialized wine tourists in the future from understanding the characteristics of terroir tourism and their relationship to organic wine production.

In summary, in recent years there has been increasing creative economic initiatives in place-based rural community development, Oregon is no exception. It follows that the creative food economy in rural community development depends on promoting region’s agricultural sector along with a terroir tourism strategy to include organic farming practices. These contributing factors to the quality of life and lifestyle of local individuals and tourists alike in Oregon will promote Oregon as a unique terroir destination. Terroir tourism development as part of a creative food economy in rural communities should characterize local factors building on local competitive advantages, local resources, local products and local distinctiveness like organic Oregon vines and wine. Quadri-Felitti & Fiore (2012) shared that the 4Es offer a relevant framework to examine the wine tourism experience. Therefore, terroir tourism should be investigated using the 4E framework in the future to conclude if similar or separate experiences for the wine tourist exist in this developing framework of the involved wine tourist.

Acknowledgments

Table 1. Indicators of the 4Es in literature on wine tourists

Article	Year	Entertainment	Education	Esthetics	Escapist
Bruwer and Alant	2009		x	x	
Galloway et al.	2008		x		
Getz and Carlsen	2008	x	x		
Pikkemaat et al.	2009			x	
Quadri-Felitti & Fiore	2012	x	x	x	x
Quadri-Felitti	2012	x	x	x	x
Quadri-Felitti & Fiore	2013	x	x	x	x

Table 2. Oregon’s Organic Vines (Oregon Tilth, 2014)

Oregon Tilth Organic Certified	Acres
Cattrall Brothers Vineyards	22
Columbia Blossom Orchards	1
Cooper Mountain Vineyards	110
Cornucopia Vineyards LLC	134.7
Croft Vineyards	96.9
Ecological Farms	4.5
Epyllion Vineyard	5
Evesham Wood Vineyard & Winery, Inc.	12.6
Idiot’s Grace	7
JMD Vineyard	4.8
King Estate Winery, LP	465
Meadows Vineyard	4
Pheasant Valley Orchard, Inc.	16

Redford/Wetle Farms	8
Sokol Blosser Vineyards	82.8
Starview Farm	0.5
Stater Vineyard	8
Upper Five Vineyard	4.2
Willamette Valley Vineyards	24.4
Western Oregon Organic Farms	8
TOTAL ORGANIC	1010.9

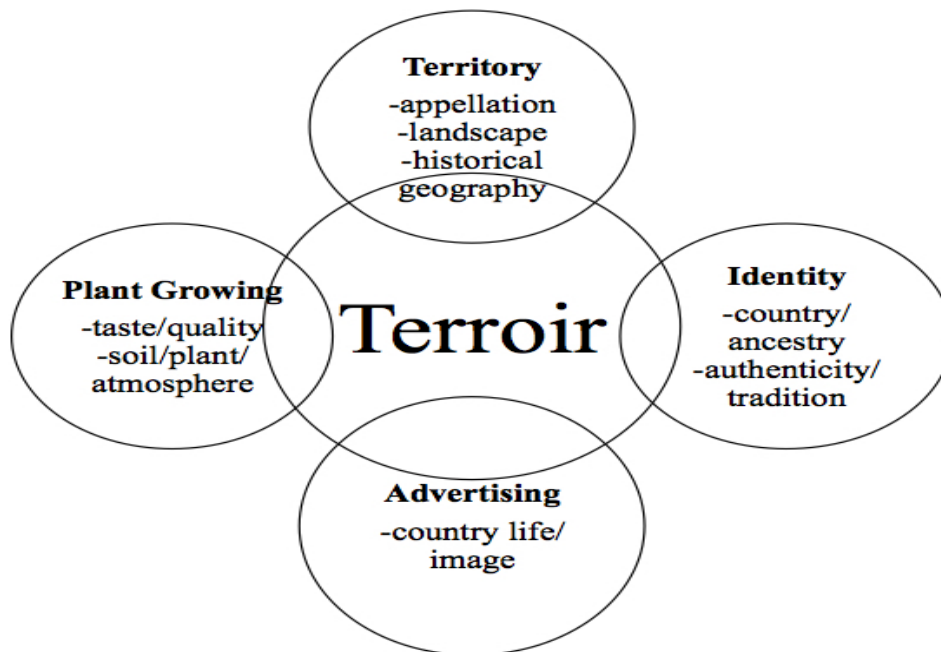


Figure 1. A typology of viticultural terroir (Vaudour, 2002)

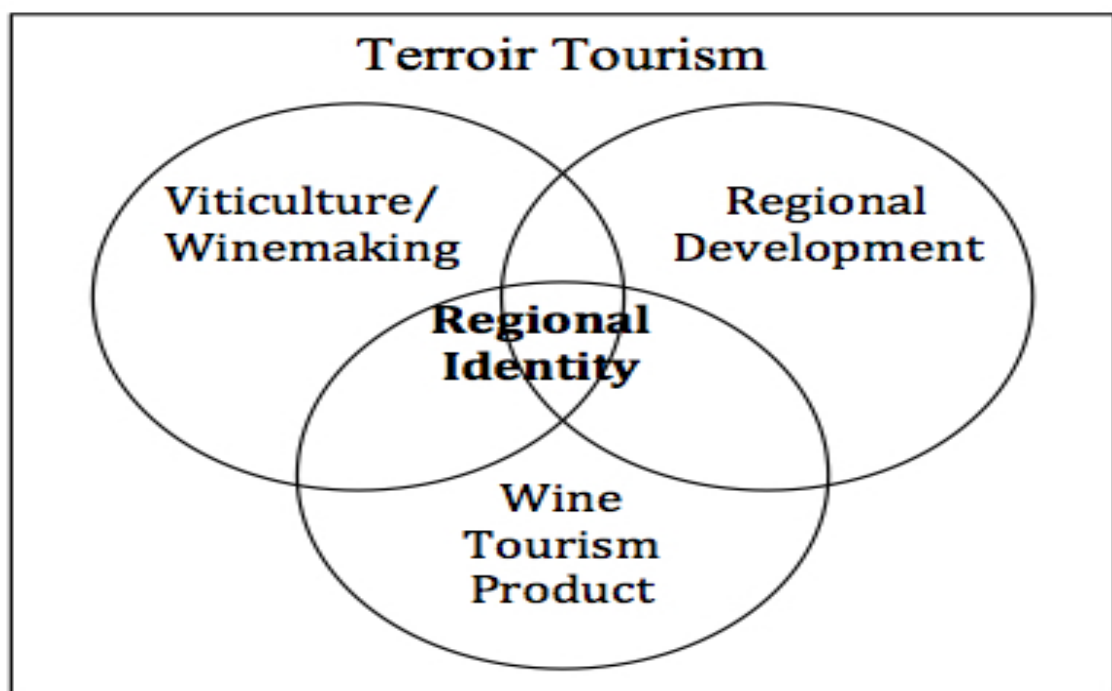


Figure 2. A conceptual framework of terroir tourism (Holland et al., 2014).

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