

Exploring Novelty as an Aspect of Tourism & Wine Preferences

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Novelty seeking is an important driver of tourism, encouraging travelers to explore destinations, cultures, and experiences beyond their everyday routines. As wine tourism continues to grow worldwide, understanding the factors that influence consumers' willingness to explore unfamiliar wines has become increasingly important for wine tourism, the wine industry, and hospitality education. This exploratory mixed-methods study examined differences in wine-related novelty preferences between university students and non-student adults. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, an online survey was administered to a convenience sample of 52 participants, including 26 university students (mean age = 24.88 years, SD = 6.41) and 26 non-student adults (mean age = 56.83 years, SD = 13.04). The questionnaire measured wine-related novelty seeking, perceived wine knowledge, and the importance of wine purchasing attributes using five-point Likert-scale items. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the two groups, while responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using conventional content analysis. Non-student adults reported significantly lower fear of trying unfamiliar wines ($p = .02$), higher perceived wine knowledge ($p < .001$), and placed greater importance on wine quality ($p < .001$) than university students. Although university students reported a stronger preference for familiar wines, no significant differences were observed between the groups in their willingness to try unusual, exotic, or foreign wines. Qualitative findings indicated that non-student adults demonstrated greater confidence when selecting unfamiliar wines, whereas university students more frequently preferred familiar wines, suggesting that differences in prior wine experience and perceived knowledge shaped confidence in wine selection. Overall, the findings suggest that openness to wine-related novelty varies across life stages and may be influenced by previous exposure and perceived knowledge. These results provide practical insights for wineries, wine tourism operators, and hospitality educators seeking to design targeted marketing strategies, wine tourism experiences, and educational programs for consumers with differing levels of wine knowledge and experience.

Keywords: wine tourism; novelty seeking; wine preferences; consumer behavior; hospitality education

Introduction

Novelty seeking has long been recognized as one of the primary motivations underlying tourism behavior. Travelers increasingly seek destinations and experiences that differ from their everyday routines, providing opportunities for learning, exploration, entertainment, cultural immersion, and personal enrichment. As tourism

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has evolved, travelers have shifted from passive sightseeing toward more authentic and experience-driven activities that engage multiple senses and create memorable experiences (Santos et al. 2019, Kotur 2023). Among these emerging forms of experiential tourism, wine tourism has become one of the fastest-growing niche sectors worldwide, attracting visitors interested in wine, regional culture, and hospitality (Charters & Ali-Knight 2002, Kotur 2023).

Wine tourism extends beyond simply tasting wine. It encompasses visits to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, tasting events, educational programs, and culinary experiences that collectively provide immersive cultural and sensory experiences. These activities allow visitors to develop a deeper appreciation for wine while interacting with local traditions, landscapes, and wine producers (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck 2019, Santos et al. 2019). Research has shown that memorable wine tourism experiences are influenced not only by wine quality but also by educational opportunities, hospitality, scenery, authenticity, and emotional engagement (Saayman & Van Der Merwe 2015, Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró 2020). Consequently, wineries increasingly focus on creating experiential offerings that enhance visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visitation by delivering value beyond the product itself (Carlsen & Boksberger 2015).

Consumer behavior plays a central role in wine tourism because visitors differ considerably in their motivations, purchasing decisions, and willingness to explore unfamiliar wines. Previous research has demonstrated that wine purchasing behavior is influenced by factors including prior wine knowledge, perceived quality, country of origin, price, label design, recommendations, and previous winery experiences (Barth & Salazar 2010, Lockshin & Corsi 2012, Sherman & Tuten 2011). Among these influences, novelty has emerged as an important factor shaping consumer preferences. Individuals with greater openness to novelty are generally more willing to experiment with unfamiliar wines, sample wines from different regions, and seek authentic tasting experiences (Barber et al. 2021). Conversely, consumers with limited wine knowledge or experience may rely on familiar wines to reduce uncertainty and increase confidence in their purchasing decisions (Ellis & Mattison Thompson 2018).

Age and previous experience may further influence novelty-seeking behavior. Studies have reported that younger and older consumers often differ in their motivations for visiting wineries and selecting wines (Alonso et al. 2007, Getz & Carlsen 2008). Younger generations frequently value social interaction, innovation, and technology-enhanced experiences, whereas older adults often place greater emphasis on education, product quality, and authenticity (Stergiou et al. 2018). Similarly, younger consumers have been shown to exhibit unique wine purchasing habits and attitudes toward wine innovation, although they may possess less confidence and experience than older consumers (Garcia et al. 2013, Castellini & Samoggia 2018). Repeated exposure to wine experiences has also been shown to influence consumer preferences over time, suggesting that familiarity and accumulated experience contribute to greater willingness to explore unfamiliar wines (Tempere et al. 2019). Furthermore, personality characteristics may influence openness toward novel products, with individual differences contributing to consumers' willingness to experiment with different wine styles (Saliba et al. 2009).

The continued expansion of wine tourism has also increased demand for hospitality professionals with knowledge of wine, sensory evaluation, and visitor experiences. Consequently, hospitality and tourism education programs have expanded wine-related curricula through experiential learning, sensory education, winery visits, and more recently, virtual wine tours that provide authentic learning opportunities while strengthening students' professional competencies (Carmer et al. 2024, Shi et al. 2025). These educational innovations highlight the growing importance of understanding how students perceive wine and whether their willingness to engage with unfamiliar wines differs from that of more experienced adult consumers.

Despite considerable research examining wine tourism, consumer behavior, and generational differences, relatively little attention has been given to directly comparing novelty-seeking behaviors between university students and non-student adults. Such comparisons are important because the two groups differ in age, life experience, purchasing power, exposure to wine, and confidence in evaluating unfamiliar products. A better understanding of these differences may assist wineries, tourism marketers, and hospitality educators in developing tourism experiences, marketing strategies, and educational programs that effectively engage diverse consumer groups. In addition, understanding the role of novelty may contribute to broader efforts aimed at expanding participation in wine tourism and encouraging consumers to explore a wider range of wine experiences as the industry continues to grow globally (Torres et al. 2021).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to compare wine-related novelty preferences between university students and non-student adults using survey data. Specifically, this study examined differences in willingness to try unfamiliar wines, perceived wine knowledge, and the importance placed on various wine attributes. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare responses between the two groups, while qualitative responses were analyzed using content analysis to provide a richer understanding of participants' perceptions of wine, familiarity, and novelty.

Literature Review

Wine tourism has attracted increasing scholarly attention as researchers seek to better understand the factors that influence consumers' motivations, preferences, and experiences within this rapidly expanding segment of the tourism industry. Existing literature suggests that wine tourism extends beyond wine consumption to encompass education, cultural immersion, gastronomy, and authentic destination experiences that create emotional and memorable connections between visitors and wine-producing regions (Santos et al. 2019, Kotur 2023). Among the many factors influencing wine tourism, novelty seeking has emerged as an important determinant of consumer behavior, affecting individuals' willingness to explore unfamiliar wines, participate in new experiences, and engage with different wine cultures (Barber et al. 2021). At the same time, consumer characteristics such as age, previous wine experience, and wine knowledge have been shown to influence purchasing decisions, perceptions of quality, and preferences for wine-related experiences (Alonso et al. 2007, Lockshin & Corsi 2012). Furthermore, the continued growth of wine tourism has increased the importance

of hospitality education in preparing future professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to meet evolving consumer expectations (Carmer et al. 2024, Shi et al. 2025). The following sections review the literature related to wine tourism as an experiential activity, novelty seeking and wine consumer behavior, age-related differences in wine preferences, and the role of wine education in hospitality, thereby establishing the theoretical foundation for the present study.

Wine Tourism as an Experiential Activity

Wine tourism has evolved into a multidimensional form of experiential tourism that combines wine appreciation with education, gastronomy, cultural heritage, and social interaction. Rather than simply visiting wineries to purchase wine, contemporary wine tourists seek meaningful experiences that engage multiple senses and foster emotional connections with destinations (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck 2019, Santos et al. 2019). These experiences often include vineyard tours, guided tastings, food and wine pairings, interactions with wine producers, and opportunities to learn about regional history and wine production practices.

The experiential nature of wine tourism has become increasingly important as wineries seek to differentiate themselves in a competitive marketplace. Visitors derive value not only from the quality of the wine itself but also from the authenticity of the experience, the surrounding landscape, the quality of hospitality, and opportunities for personal learning (Carlsen & Boksberger 2015). Similarly, memorable wine tourism experiences have been associated with high-quality service, attractive winery settings, educational opportunities, and positive emotional responses that encourage repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Saayman & Van Der Merwe 2015). Crespi-Vallbona and Mascarilla-Miró (2020) further reported that wine enthusiasts increasingly seek authentic cultural experiences that combine local gastronomy, history, and social interaction, highlighting the importance of experiential value within wine tourism.

As wine tourism continues to expand internationally, researchers have emphasized the importance of understanding visitor motivations and preferences to develop tourism experiences that appeal to diverse consumer segments (Kotur 2023). Consequently, wineries are increasingly designing experiences that balance education, entertainment, authenticity, and sensory engagement to enhance visitor satisfaction, create memorable visitor experiences, and strengthen destination competitiveness (Jones & Comfort 2019). More recently, wine tourism has expanded beyond traditional winery visits to include virtual tastings and online experiences, demonstrating the industry's ability to adapt while maintaining opportunities for consumer engagement, education, and experiential learning (Amarendra & Das 2022). These innovations further highlight the importance of understanding how consumers respond to novel wine experiences across different delivery formats.

Novelty Seeking and Wine Consumer Behavior

Novelty seeking represents an important component of consumer decision-making within wine tourism. Consumers who seek novelty are generally more willing to

experiment with unfamiliar wines, explore new grape varieties, and sample wines from different countries or regions (Barber et al. 2021). Barber et al. (2021) demonstrated that novelty interacts with perceptions of authenticity, regional identity, and price to influence consumers' evaluations of wine quality and purchasing intentions, suggesting that novelty extends beyond curiosity to become an important determinant of consumer behavior.

Wine purchasing decisions are influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic product characteristics. Intrinsic characteristics include taste, aroma, and perceived quality, whereas extrinsic characteristics include price, country of origin, packaging, branding, and label design (Lockshin & Corsi 2012). Sherman and Tuten (2011) reported that wine labels serve as influential marketing tools by shaping consumer expectations before tasting, particularly among less experienced consumers. Similarly, Barth and Salazar (2010) found that previous winery experiences and tourism activities significantly influence future wine purchasing behavior, illustrating the close relationship between tourism experiences and consumer decision-making.

Wine knowledge also plays a critical role in shaping purchasing behavior. Ellis and Mattison Thompson (2018) found that consumers with greater objective and subjective wine knowledge were significantly more likely to exhibit variety-seeking behavior than individuals with limited wine knowledge. As consumers gain experience through repeated exposure, they become increasingly comfortable experimenting with unfamiliar wines and relying less on familiar brands (Tempere et al. 2019). These findings suggest that confidence, familiarity, and accumulated experience may influence openness toward novelty and ultimately shape wine preferences.

Individual characteristics may further contribute to differences in novelty-seeking behavior. Saliba et al. (2009) demonstrated that personality traits influence taste preferences and consumer responses to wine, indicating that willingness to explore unfamiliar wines may vary according to individual psychological characteristics. Together, these findings suggest that novelty seeking is a multifaceted construct influenced by experience, knowledge, personality, and previous exposure to wine.

Age Differences in Wine Preferences

Age has been identified as an important factor influencing wine tourism experiences and consumer preferences. Alonso et al. (2007) reported that visitors of different age groups often evaluate winery experiences differently, with older adults placing greater emphasis on educational experiences, hospitality, and product quality. Younger visitors, in contrast, frequently value social interaction and entertainment alongside wine consumption.

Research examining generational differences has produced similar findings. Getz and Carlsen (2008) observed that Generation X and Generation Y wine tourists differed in their travel motivations, suggesting that younger visitors were more likely to seek lifestyle-oriented and experiential activities. Likewise, Stergiou et al. (2018) found that Generation Z visitors preferred interactive experiences, technology integration, and opportunities for active participation during winery visits, reflecting evolving tourism expectations among younger consumers.

Consumer behavior studies have similarly demonstrated age-related differences in wine purchasing patterns. Garcia et al. (2013) found that younger consumers often exhibit distinctive wine consumption habits, with purchasing decisions influenced by affordability, peer influence, and familiarity. Castellini and Samoggia (2018) further reported that Millennials generally express positive attitudes toward wine innovation and experimentation, although purchasing decisions remain strongly influenced by previous experience and confidence in evaluating wine quality.

Collectively, these studies suggest that age and life experience contribute to differences in wine-related attitudes, purchasing decisions, and openness to unfamiliar wines. However, despite growing interest in generational differences, limited research has directly compared university students with older non-student adults regarding their willingness to explore unfamiliar wines and perceptions of novelty. Such comparisons may provide valuable insights into how life experience and accumulated wine knowledge influence consumer behavior.

Wine Education and Hospitality

The rapid growth of wine tourism has increased demand for hospitality professionals with specialized knowledge of wine, sensory evaluation, customer service, and destination experiences (Charters & Ali-Knight 2002, Carlsen & Boksberger 2015, Santos et al. 2019, Kotur 2023). Consequently, hospitality education programs have expanded wine-related curricula to include experiential learning opportunities that prepare students for careers within the hospitality and tourism industries (Carmer et al. 2024, Shi et al. 2025).

Carmer et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review demonstrating that structured wine education enhances students' sensory evaluation skills, product knowledge, confidence, and professional preparedness. Experiential learning activities, including wine tastings, vineyard visits, and sensory exercises, allow students to develop practical competencies while strengthening their understanding of consumer behavior.

Technological innovations have further expanded opportunities for wine education. Shi et al. (2025) demonstrated that live virtual wine tours provide effective experiential learning environments by connecting students directly with wineries and industry professionals. These immersive learning experiences improve engagement while increasing students' understanding of wine production, regional culture, and hospitality operations.

Developing wine literacy has become increasingly important as hospitality graduates are expected to understand both the technical characteristics of wine and the experiential factors that influence consumer satisfaction. Greater knowledge and confidence may also encourage students to become more willing to experiment with unfamiliar wines, potentially increasing their appreciation of wine tourism experiences. Understanding differences in wine-related novelty between students and non-student adults may therefore assist educators in designing learning experiences that foster confidence, curiosity, and professional competence.

Research Gap

The existing literature demonstrates that wine tourism has become an increasingly important form of experiential tourism and that novelty, wine knowledge, previous experience, and age all influence consumer behavior. Previous studies have examined motivations for wine tourism, purchasing behavior, memorable winery experiences, wine education, and generational differences (Alonso et al. 2007, Bruwer & Rueger-Muck 2019, Carlsen & Boksberger 2015, Lockshin & Corsi 2012). However, relatively little research has directly compared openness toward wine-related novelty between university students and non-student adults. Given the increasing importance of experiential wine tourism and hospitality education, a better understanding of how these groups differ in their willingness to explore unfamiliar wines may provide valuable insights for wineries, tourism marketers, and hospitality educators seeking to appeal to consumers with varying levels of knowledge and experience.

Methodology

Research Design

This exploratory mixed-methods study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine differences in wine-related novelty preferences between university students and non-student adults. The study formed part of a broader investigation exploring wine preferences, wine knowledge, and novelty-seeking behaviors. Quantitative methods were used to compare responses between the two groups, while qualitative data collected through open-ended questions provided additional insights into participants' perceptions and experiences. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed the researchers to compare differences between the two participant groups while also providing a richer understanding of participants' perspectives regarding wine preferences and novelty.

Participants

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants were recruited using a convenience sampling approach. A total of 52 participants completed the online survey and were divided equally into two groups consisting of 26 university students and 26 non-student adults.

The student group ranged in age from 21 to 43 years, with a mean age of 24.88 years ($SD = 6.41$). The non-student adult group ranged in age from 34 to 79 years, with a mean age of 56.83 years ($SD = 13.04$). The inclusion of these two groups enabled comparisons between individuals at different life stages and with varying levels of experience and familiarity with wine.

Survey Instrument

Data were collected using an online questionnaire consisting of demographic questions, structured Likert-scale items, and open-ended questions. Demographic information included participants' age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background.

The survey was organized into three primary quantitative constructs: wine-related novelty seeking, perceived wine knowledge, and importance of wine purchasing attributes, followed by two open-ended questions. Responses to the quantitative items were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*), with higher scores representing greater agreement or perceived importance. A summary of the survey constructs and representative items is presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. *Summary of Survey Constructs and Representative Items*

Construct	No. of Items	Representative Survey Items
Wine-related novelty seeking	8	Preference for trying unusual wines, enjoyment of unfamiliar wines, willingness to drink exotic wines, trying wines at social gatherings, interest in wines from different countries, preference for familiar wines, fear of unfamiliar wines, and frequency of sampling new wines
Perceived wine knowledge	1	Self-rated knowledge about wines
Importance of wine purchasing attributes	8	Importance of color, quality, price, country of origin, taste, grape variety, alcohol content, and label and packaging when selecting wines
Open-ended questions	2	Favorite wines and reasons for preference; influence of wine color on perceptions of taste

The open-ended questions were included to provide richer qualitative insights into participants' preferences and perceptions of wines. Participants were asked to describe their favorite wines and explain why they preferred them, as well as discuss whether the color of wines influenced their perception of its taste.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize participants' characteristics and survey responses. Independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare university students and non-student adults across the three quantitative constructs, including wine-related novelty seeking, perceived wine knowledge, and the importance of wine purchasing attributes. Statistical significance was established at an $\alpha = 0.05$.

Responses to the two open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis. Qualitative responses were reviewed repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data before being coded into meaningful units. Similar codes were grouped into categories

and synthesized into broader themes representing participants' wine preferences, purchasing considerations, and perceptions of how wine color influences taste. Representative participant quotations were selected to illustrate the identified themes.

Results

The quantitative findings are presented according to the three primary survey constructs: wine-related novelty seeking, perceived wine knowledge, and importance of wine purchasing attributes. Participants' demographic characteristics are presented first to provide context for the study sample, followed by comparisons between university students and non-student adults using independent-samples *t*-tests. Qualitative findings from the open-ended questions are presented in a subsequent section using conventional content analysis to further explain participants' perceptions of wine preferences and novelty.

Participant Characteristics

A total of 52 participants completed the survey, including 26 university students and 26 non-student adults. The university student group ranged in age from 21 to 43 years ($M = 24.88$, $SD = 6.41$), whereas the non-student adult group ranged from 34 to 79 years ($M = 56.83$, $SD = 13.04$).

The university student group consisted primarily of females ($n = 23$, 88.5%), with three males (11.5%). Participants represented diverse ethnic backgrounds, including White ($n = 11$), Asian or Asian American ($n = 6$), Hispanic or Latino ($n = 3$), Native American or Alaska Native ($n = 2$), Black or African American ($n = 1$), and other or multiracial backgrounds ($n = 3$). Most students were undergraduate students, while the remaining student participants were graduate students enrolled in design-related programs. As expected, the majority reported annual household incomes below \$25,000 and most consumed wine occasionally or approximately once per month.

The non-student adult group included 17 females (65.4%) and nine males (34.6%), with ages ranging from 34 to 79 years. Participants were predominantly White ($n = 21$), with the remaining participants identifying as Hispanic or Latino ($n = 1$), Native American or Alaska Native ($n = 1$), or other ethnic backgrounds ($n = 3$). This group represented a broad range of occupations, including university faculty, staff, administrators, retirees, and industry professionals, and generally reported higher educational attainment and household incomes than the university students. Wine consumption patterns among non-student adults were more frequent, with many participants reporting consuming wine weekly or several times per week.

Across both groups, participants were primarily US residents, although several individuals reported being born outside the United States, including Vietnam, Nepal, Iran, Sri Lanka, Germany, Mexico, and Turkey. Preferences for red, white, and both wine types were represented in both groups, and the majority of participants indicated they would be willing to try a wine with an intriguing bold color. Supermarkets and specialty liquor stores were the most frequently reported locations for purchasing wine, followed by wineries, restaurants, bars, and online retailers. A summary of the participant demographic characteristics is presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Participant Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	University Students (n = 26)	Non-student Adults (n = 26)
Age, Mean (SD)	24.88 (6.41)	56.83 (13.04)
Age Range	21–43	34–79
Female	23 (88.5%)	17 (65.4%)
Male	3 (11.5%)	9 (34.6%)
Predominant Ethnicity	White (42.3%)	White (80.8%)
Highest Education	Primarily undergraduate	Primarily bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees
Primary Occupation	University students	Faculty, staff, administrators, retirees, industry professionals
Typical Wine Consumption	Occasional to monthly	Weekly to several times per week
Common Wine Purchase Locations	Supermarkets, specialty liquor stores	Supermarkets, specialty liquor stores, wineries

Wine-Related Novelty Seeking

Participants' responses to the eight wine-related novelty seeking items are illustrated in *Figure 1*. Overall, both university students and non-student adults expressed positive attitudes toward exploring new wines, with mean ratings exceeding the midpoint of the scale for most items.

Although university students reported slightly greater agreement with statements related to trying unusual wines ($M = 3.69$ vs. 3.42), enjoying unfamiliar wines ($M = 4.23$ vs. 4.15), enjoying new wines at dinner parties ($M = 4.40$ vs. 4.31), trying wines from different countries ($M = 4.65$ vs. 4.42), and preferring familiar wines ($M = 4.08$ vs. 3.42), these differences were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). Likewise, non-student adults reported slightly higher ratings for drinking exotic wines ($M = 3.46$ vs. 3.24) and constantly sampling new wines ($M = 3.36$ vs. 2.80); however, these differences also did not reach statistical significance.

One notable exception emerged regarding fear of trying unfamiliar wines. University students reported significantly greater fear of trying wines they had never previously consumed ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.29$) than non-student adults ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 0.95$), and this difference was statistically significant ($p = .02$). Although students generally demonstrated enthusiasm toward trying new wines, they simultaneously expressed a stronger preference for familiar wines and greater hesitation toward unfamiliar wine selections.

Overall, these findings suggest that while both groups exhibited relatively high levels of openness toward wine-related novelty, non-student adults appeared more confident when encountering unfamiliar wines.

Perceived Wine Knowledge

Participants' perceived wine knowledge is presented in *Figure 2*. Non-student adults rated themselves as significantly more knowledgeable about wines ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.11$) than university students ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.57$). Independent-samples t -test results indicated that this difference was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Figure 1. Comparison of Wine-related Novelty seeking between University Students and Non-student Adults

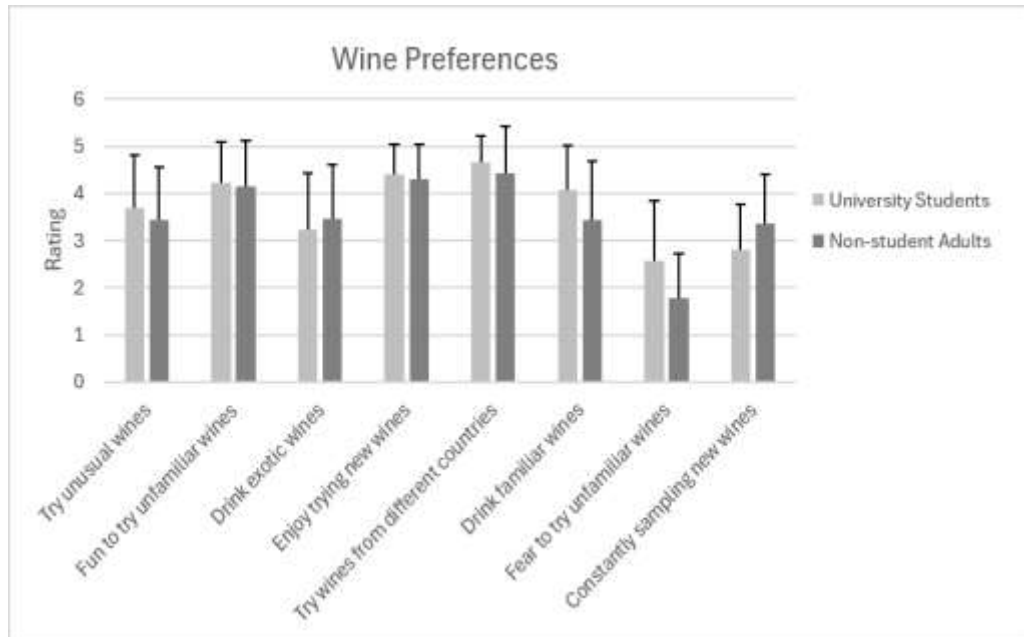
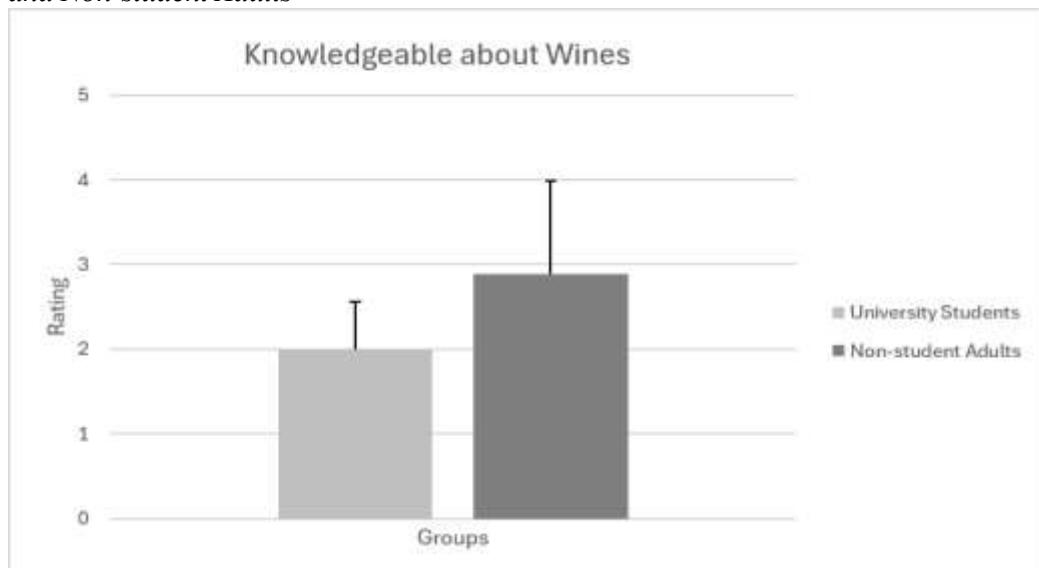


Figure 2. Comparison of perceived Wine Knowledge between University Students and Non-student Adults



Importance of Wine Purchasing Attributes

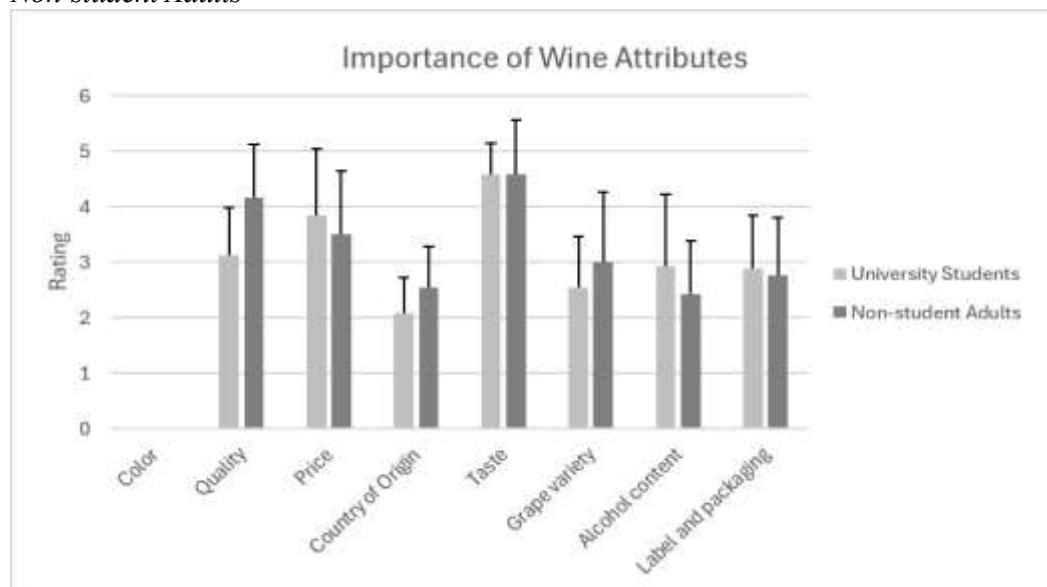
Although both groups rated their overall wine knowledge below the upper end of the scale, the findings suggest that non-student adults possessed greater confidence in their understanding of wine. This greater perceived knowledge may help explain their lower hesitation toward trying unfamiliar wines observed in the previous analysis.

Participants evaluated the importance of several attributes when selecting a wine, including color, quality, price, country of origin, taste, grape variety, alcohol content, and label and packaging. Mean ratings for these attributes are presented in *Figure 3*. Taste received the highest ratings among both university students and non-student adults ($M = 4.58$ for both groups), indicating that taste was the most influential factor in wine selection regardless of participant group. Color received the lowest importance ratings and did not differ significantly between the two groups ($p = .703$).

Among the remaining attributes, non-student adults placed significantly greater importance on wine quality ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.90$) than university students ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.77$), and this difference was highly significant ($p < .001$). Although non-student adults also assigned slightly greater importance to country of origin ($M = 2.54$ vs. 2.08) and grape variety ($M = 3.00$ vs. 2.54), these differences were not statistically significant.

Conversely, university students placed slightly greater importance on price ($M = 3.85$ vs. 3.50), alcohol content ($M = 2.92$ vs. 2.42), and label and packaging ($M = 2.88$ vs. 2.77), although none of these differences reached statistical significance. No significant differences were observed for taste, country of origin, grape variety, alcohol content, or label and packaging ($p > .05$).

Figure 3. Importance of Wine purchasing attributes among University Students and Non-student Adults



Collectively, these findings suggest that although both groups considered taste to be the primary determinant of wine selection, non-student adults placed greater emphasis on wine quality, whereas university students appeared to consider several product characteristics more evenly when evaluating wines.

Overall Quantitative Findings

Across the three quantitative constructs, relatively few statistically significant differences were observed between university students and non-student adults. Significant differences emerged only for fear of trying unfamiliar wines, perceived wine knowledge, and the importance of wine quality. In each case, non-student adults demonstrated greater confidence and experience with wine than university students. However, the absence of significant differences across many of the remaining novelty-seeking behaviors and wine purchasing attributes suggests that both groups shared broadly similar attitudes toward exploring new wines despite differences in experience and perceived knowledge.

Qualitative Findings

Responses to the two open-ended questions were analyzed using conventional content analysis to identify recurring themes describing participants' wine preferences and perceptions. Although participants responded to the same questions, differences emerged in the topics they emphasized. University students primarily described favorite wines based on sensory preferences, personal experiences, and social contexts, whereas non-student adults more frequently discussed how visual characteristics, particularly wine color, influenced their expectations of taste and quality. The findings for each participant group are presented separately below.

University Students

Five major themes emerged from the university students' responses: taste preferences, cultural and regional connections, health and dietary preferences, occasions and social context, and wine characteristics and quality (*Table 3*).

Taste preferences were the most frequently discussed theme. Students commonly described wines in terms of sweetness, boldness, crispness, dryness, and effervescence. One respondent shared, *"I really like Moscatos—sweet are my favorite. My favorite winery is Kunde, and I love their Cuvee."* Another preferred bold red wines, explaining, *"California Cabernet because it is typically stronger and more bold."* Others preferred dry white wines, noting, *"I prefer a dry white like a dry Riesling or Gewürztraminer."* These responses suggest that students primarily described wines using sensory characteristics and overall enjoyment.

Several respondents also described cultural and personal influences on their wine preferences. One participant expressed appreciation for an Italian wine, stating, *"Nero d'Avola—I love the complex flavors and feel safe about it being produced in Italy."* Another described a favorite wine they had personally produced, highlighting a unique connection to the wine-making process. Health and lifestyle considerations also

influenced some participants' preferences. For example, one respondent explained, *"Pinot Grigio because it is low in carbs. I try to limit my carbs when possible,"* while another preferred wines that were organically produced or "clean-crafted."

Students also associated wine with enjoyment, celebrations, and social interaction. One respondent described orange wine as *"fun, tasty, light, and just really fun to drink!"* while another preferred a familiar Pinot Noir *"when I just want wine and don't have to think about any part of it."* Finally, several participants emphasized memorable wine characteristics, including complexity, balance, and effervescence. One respondent reflected on a particularly memorable tasting experience by stating, *"The best wine I ever drank was a Gevrey-Chambertin grand cru. Full-bodied and mellow, subtle fruit but not sweet, balanced tannins. Phenomenal wine."* Overall, university students described their favorite wines using sensory qualities, personal experiences, and social contexts rather than technical evaluations of wine.

Table 3. Themes Identified from University Students' Qualitative Responses

Theme	Description	Representative Quote
Taste Preferences	Preferences for sweet, crisp, bold, sparkling, and dry wines	<i>"I really like Moscatos—sweet are my favorite."</i>
Cultural and Regional Connections	International wines and personal wine-making experiences	<i>"Nero d'Avola—I love the complex flavors..."</i>
Health and Dietary Preferences	Low-carbohydrate and clean-crafted wines	<i>"Pinot Grigio because it is low in carbs."</i>
Occasions and Social Context	Social gatherings, celebrations, and relaxation	<i>"Orange wine... it's fun, tasty, light..."</i>
Wine Characteristics and Quality	Complexity, balance, effervescence, and memorable tasting experiences	<i>"The best wine I ever drank was a Gevrey-Chambertin grand cru..."</i>

Non-Student Adults

Among non-student adults, six themes emerged: influence of color on taste perception, preference for red versus white wines, clarity and quality perception, associations between color and flavor intensity, willingness to experiment with different wine colors, and clarity as an indicator of wine quality (Table 4).

Many respondents indicated that wine color influenced their expectations before tasting. One participant explained, *"I'd think it does subconsciously. Reds I associate with a richer flavor and more dryness."* Another commented, *"I like darker reds. They are stronger and more bold. A lighter red leads me to think the wine is lighter."* Others suggested that specific colors affected purchasing decisions. For example, one respondent noted, *"I do not prefer U.S. Chardonnay. When I see that gold color, it's a turn off for me."*

Several respondents emphasized that clarity rather than color itself influenced their perceptions of wine quality. One participant explained, *"It is more the clarity than the color itself that matters to me."* Others expressed reluctance to purchase cloudy or unusually pale wines because they associated these visual characteristics with lower quality.

Although many respondents associated darker wines with richer flavors and lighter wines with milder or sweeter characteristics, opinions were not unanimous. One participant stated, *"No, I don't think the color influences my perception of taste. I will drink both red or white wines."* Others expressed openness to trying wines with unusual or intriguing colors. As one respondent explained, *"I am typically willing to try a new wine if there is something intriguing about the color."* Overall, non-student adults frequently linked visual characteristics with expectations regarding flavor, quality, and overall wine experience, suggesting that appearance played an important role in shaping their perceptions before tasting.

Table 4. Themes Identified from Non-student Adults' Qualitative Responses

Theme	Description	Representative Quote
Influence of Color on Taste Perception	Color influenced expectations of flavor intensity, sweetness, and dryness	<i>"Reds I associate with a richer flavor and more dryness."</i>
Preference for Red versus White Wines	Preferences based on wine style and color	<i>"I strongly prefer white wine."</i>
Clarity and Quality Perception	Visual clarity influenced perceptions of wine quality	<i>"It is more the clarity than the color itself that matters to me."</i>
Associations Between Color and Flavor Intensity	Darker wines associated with stronger flavors; lighter wines with milder flavors	<i>"I like darker reds. They are stronger and more bold."</i>
Willingness to Experiment	Participants were generally willing to try wines with intriguing colors	<i>"I am typically willing to try a new wine if there is something intriguing about the color."</i>
Clarity as an Indicator of Quality	Cloudiness or pale color sometimes reduced perceived quality	<i>"If the wine has a cloudy color, I probably wouldn't choose it."</i>

Discussion

The present study contributes to the growing body of literature examining consumer behavior within wine tourism by comparing wine-related novelty preferences between university students and non-student adults. Overall, both groups demonstrated positive attitudes toward exploring new wines, supporting previous research that identifies novelty seeking as a fundamental motivation underlying wine tourism and experiential consumption (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck 2019, Carlsen & Boksberger 2015, Santos et al. 2019). Participants in both groups expressed high levels of interest in trying unfamiliar wines and wines from different countries, suggesting that exploration and new experiences are valued regardless of age. These findings are consistent with Barber et al. (2021), who reported that novelty and authenticity contribute to positive wine experiences, and with Lockshin and Corsi (2012), who emphasized that modern wine consumers increasingly seek experiences that extend beyond product consumption.

Despite these similarities, several meaningful differences were observed between

the two participant groups. Non-student adults reported significantly lower fear of trying unfamiliar wines, greater perceived wine knowledge, and placed greater importance on wine quality than university students. These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that wine knowledge and prior experience influence consumers' confidence when selecting unfamiliar wines (Ellis & Mattison Thompson 2018, Tempere et al. 2019). Similarly, Alonso et al. (2007) found that age influences winery experiences, with older visitors placing greater emphasis on wine quality and overall appreciation of the wine experience. Although university students expressed enthusiasm for trying new wines, they also reported a stronger preference for familiar wines, suggesting that openness to novelty may coexist with a desire for familiarity among less experienced consumers. This observation aligns with Castellini and Samoggia (2018) and Garcia et al. (2013), who reported that younger consumers often demonstrate interest in experimentation while relying on familiar products because of limited experience and confidence.

The qualitative findings further complemented the quantitative results by illustrating differences in how participants described wine. University students primarily discussed wine using sensory characteristics, personal preferences, and social experiences, whereas non-student adults more frequently referenced color, clarity, quality, and other evaluative characteristics. These observations are consistent with previous research results indicating that greater wine knowledge influences both purchasing behavior and the criteria consumers use when evaluating wines (Ellis & Mattison Thompson 2018, Sherman & Tuten 2011). Furthermore, the emphasis placed on visual characteristics by non-student adults supports earlier findings that color and appearance contribute to expectations regarding wine quality and taste before consumption (Barber et al. 2021, Tempere et al. 2019). Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that while both university students and non-student adults demonstrate an interest in novel wine experiences, differences in perceived knowledge and previous experience may influence how individuals evaluate and approach unfamiliar wines.

Limitations

This study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the relatively small sample size limits the statistical power of the analyses and the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, participants were recruited from a single geographic region, and the results may not reflect the perceptions and experiences of individuals living in areas with different cultural backgrounds or more established wine tourism industries. Third, the use of convenience sampling may have introduced selection bias, as participants who chose to complete the survey may have had a greater interest in wine than the general population. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures of wine preferences and novelty seeking, which may be influenced by recall bias or social desirability bias. Finally, because the research employed a cross-sectional design, it provides only a snapshot of participants' attitudes and behaviors at one point in time and does not allow conclusions regarding causal relationships or changes in wine preferences over time. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable preliminary insights into differences in novelty seeking and wine preferences between university students and non-student adults and offers a foundation for future research in wine tourism and consumer behavior.

Future Research

Future research should build upon the findings of this exploratory study by recruiting larger and more geographically diverse samples to improve the generalizability of the results. Including participants from established wine tourism regions would provide valuable insights into how regular exposure to wineries and wine culture influences openness to novelty and wine preferences. Future studies may also benefit from comparing multiple age groups and varying levels of wine experience to better understand how novelty seeking evolves across the lifespan. In addition to self-reported attitudes, researchers should examine actual wine purchasing and consumption behaviors to determine whether stated preferences translate into real-world decision-making. Exploring individual characteristics, such as sensation seeking, food neophobia, openness to experience, risk tolerance, and cultural background, may further explain differences in willingness to try unfamiliar wines. Finally, longitudinal studies that follow participants before and after wine education programs, tasting experiences, or wine tourism visits could provide a deeper understanding of how knowledge and experience shape novelty seeking and wine preferences over time.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for the wine tourism industry, wineries, hospitality educators, and tourism marketers. First, the observed differences in openness to unfamiliar wines between university students and non-student adults suggest that wine tourism marketing strategies may be more effective when tailored to specific age groups and levels of wine experience. Younger consumers may respond more positively to marketing campaigns that emphasize exploration, education, and guided discovery, whereas more experienced adult consumers may be attracted to messages highlighting wine quality, authenticity, regional heritage, and exclusive tasting experiences.

The findings also suggest opportunities for wineries to develop experiences that accommodate consumers with varying levels of wine knowledge and confidence. For example, wineries may consider offering beginner-focused tasting experiences that introduce novice consumers to different wine styles in an approachable and educational environment. Such experiences could reduce uncertainty and increase confidence among younger or less experienced visitors. Conversely, wineries may develop more advanced tasting flights, vertical tastings, or region-specific experiences designed for knowledgeable consumers seeking greater complexity and novelty.

From an educational perspective, the results highlight the value of incorporating experiential wine education into hospitality and tourism curricula. Structured wine tastings, winery visits, sensory evaluation activities, and interactions with industry professionals may increase students' familiarity with diverse wine styles while improving their confidence in evaluating and selecting unfamiliar wines. Emerging educational approaches, such as virtual winery tours and immersive learning experiences, may further enhance students' understanding of wine tourism and prepare them for careers within the hospitality industry.

Finally, these findings may assist tourism organizations and destination marketers in designing wine tourism experiences that appeal to diverse visitor segments. Recognizing that consumers differ in their willingness to experiment with unfamiliar wines may allow destinations to develop more personalized experiences that balance familiarity with opportunities for discovery. Such targeted approaches may improve visitor satisfaction, encourage repeat visitation, and contribute to the continued growth and sustainability of wine tourism.

Conclusion

This exploratory mixed-methods study contributes to the growing body of literature on wine tourism by examining wine-related novelty preferences among university students and non-student adults. As wine tourism continues to expand globally, understanding the factors that influence consumers' willingness to explore unfamiliar wines has become increasingly important for wineries, tourism destinations, and hospitality educators. By combining quantitative analyses with qualitative insights, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how age, perceived wine knowledge, and previous experience may shape wine-related attitudes and behaviors.

Although both groups expressed interest in wine, several meaningful differences emerged. Non-student adults reported significantly lower fear of trying unfamiliar wines, greater perceived wine knowledge, and placed greater importance on wine quality than university students. In contrast, university students demonstrated a stronger preference for familiar wines, suggesting that limited exposure and lower confidence may influence their willingness to experiment with unfamiliar wine varieties. However, no significant differences were observed for several other novelty-related behaviors, indicating that openness to wine experiences may be more nuanced than previously understood.

Overall, the findings suggest that novelty seeking within wine tourism is influenced not only by individual curiosity but also by life experience, familiarity, and confidence in evaluating wine. By comparing two distinct populations, this study extends current understanding of consumer behavior within wine tourism and provides a foundation for future research examining how education, experience, and exposure shape wine preferences over time. As the wine tourism industry continues to evolve, a better understanding of consumer differences will contribute to the development of more engaging, inclusive, and meaningful wine tourism experiences for diverse visitor populations.

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