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Enhancing wine tourism experiences: The impact of itinerary choice driven by landscape appreciation

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Objectives | Wine tourism, extending beyond winery visits, invites visitors to experience the full extent of the wine-producing rural areas or wine terroirs. This study investigates how tourists' itinerary choices, driven by landscape appreciation, influence their formation of positive memories. Central to this exploration is the role of satisfaction with the movement experience as a mediating factor. The research employs a dual approach, considering both the cognitive perspective, focusing on mental processes behind behavior, and the behavioral perspective, examining physical movements during visitation (Caldeira & Kastenholz, 2020; Xia et al., 2010). The mental processes involved in tourists' itinerary decisions are crucial, as they not only dictate behavior but also shape their spatial experiences and outcomes like memories (Quadri-Felitti et al., 2013). It is posited that wine tourists selecting routes for landscape enjoyment tend to have more enriching experiences (Caldeira et al., 2021; Kastenholz et al., 2020), leading to stronger positive memories. The study delves into how satisfaction with the overall movement experience influences this relationship (Caldeira & Kasteholz, 2018; Xia et al., 2010), examining aspects such as scenic views and effective signage along wine routes.

Methodology | The study employed a combination of GPS tracking and questionnaire survey, focusing on Bairrada and Dão Wine Routes. Conducted between February 2020 and August 2021, it involved 302 hotel guests who agreed to participate. The GPS tracking provided objective spatiotemporal data on the tourists' movements. The post-visit surveys gathered insights into the tourists' itinerary choices, their levels of satisfaction, and the formation of their memories. As a component of the broader TWINE research project (Kastenholz et al., 2022), this study used structural equation modeling to analyze the posited hypotheses and Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis to compare the mapping of different tourist groups' itineraries, specifically in relation to their reported landscape appreciation expectations.

Main results and contributions | The study reveals that tourists form more positive memories when they select itineraries that emphasize the landscape appreciation. It was found that satisfaction with the movement experience plays a pivotal role as a mediator in enhancing these positive memories. Theoretically, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how cognitive decision-making in itinerary selection impacts affective outcomes in wine tourism. It bridges a gap in the existing literature by linking these elements cohesively. On a practical level, these findings are invaluable for destination managers and policymakers in rural tourism, emphasizing the importance of curating scenic and engaging routes that enhance tourist experiences. The study's incorporation of cartographic representations further enriches the analytical perspective, providing actionable insights for optimizing tourist routes and strategies.

Limitations | The study's limitation stems from the predominant inclusion of Portuguese residents in the sample, a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on international travel. The reliance on voluntary participation may also influence the breadth of the findings. Future research should consider a more diverse sample and include a broader range of factors such as terroir-specific characteristics and group dynamics within the wine tourism context.

Conclusions | This research highlights the significant impact of itinerary choice on enhancing the overall quality of wine tourism experiences. By revealing that itineraries focused on landscape appreciation lead to more positive memories, the study also stress the mediating role of satisfaction with the movement experience in this process. The dual methodology, combining GPS tracking and survey data, offers a comprehensive understanding of tourists' cognitive decisions and spatial behavior. These insights are essential for destination managers and policymakers in rural wine regions, establishing a strategic framework for creating engaging and scenic tourist routes that can significantly enhance the wine tourism experience. GIS allows for the visual representation of spatial data, adding a new dimension to understanding tourist behavior and offering practical strategies for optimizing tourist routes and experiences. Additionally, this study contributes to the theoretical discourse in wine tourism by connecting cognitive decision-making with outcomes, thereby enriching the academic understanding of tourist behavior in rural areas. The practical implications of this research include improving tourist satisfaction, which has the potential to impact future marketing and development strategies in wine tourism. Overall, this study offers a valuable blueprint for the sustainable development of wine tourism by promoting creative and innovative methods to enhance tourist experiences and matching visitor preferences with the distinctive features of rural wine regions.

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