

Everything Happens for a Riesling: A Case Study of Wine Tasting
Experience Design at Claiborne & Churchill Winery

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Tara E. Seaman

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ABSTRACT

EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A RIESLING: A CASE STUDY OF WINE TASTING

EXPERIENCE DESIGN AT CLAIBORNE & CHURCHILL WINERY

TARA E. SEAMAN

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Time is one of the most valuable commodities, and many tourists and wine enthusiasts turn to wine tasting as a way to spend this resource. Wineries have developed unique experiences to showcase the varietals they specialize in and utilize this opportunity to connect with their consumers through the tactic of experience design. The purpose of this study was to holistically examine the wine tasting experience at Claiborne & Churchill Winery. A case study was conducted on this winery using an instrument developed by the researcher to analyze the components of the total wine tasting experience, a holistic examination of their practices and strategies. The findings concluded that the people-focused hospitality implemented fulfills the needs of the consumer. Recommendations include adding specialized element to elevate the experience design depending on the purpose of the consumer's visit.

Keywords: experience, wine, wine tasting, holistic, experience design, Claiborne & Churchill, hospitality

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

If there is one thing Americans have come to love, it's a glass of wine. In 2020, the United States was the top consumer of wine worldwide, consuming 33 million hectoliters of wine (International Organization of Vine and Wine, 2021), equivalent to 1,320 Olympic-sized swimming pools. California is home to numerous famous pockets of wine country, like Napa, Temecula, Sonoma, and many more, including San Luis Obispo's Edna Valley. These popular wine regions not only are known for producing different varietals, but also have become popular destinations for the avid wine drinker to experience a winery's product on site.

In 2019, Napa had an average of 1,372 monthly visitors (per winery), while Sonoma had 1,098 monthly visitors (per winery) to their tasting rooms (Silicon Valley Bank, 2020). These data show that wine tasting and the experience of visiting a winery remains a common option for tourists. Each winery has the opportunity to create its own unique wine tasting experience, tasting flight, and ambiance, creating pressure for a winery to be different from its neighbor. The popularity of wine tasting and curating a memorable experience is rising throughout the state, and Claiborne & Churchill Winery in the Edna Valley is faced with the challenge of designing an exceptional wine tasting experience with almost 30 other wineries in the area to compete against.

While there have been many obstacles, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed Claiborne & Churchill and many others to reevaluate the wine tasting experience and

pushed the boundaries of what a Saturday in wine country might look like. By evaluating every step of the wine tasting process, from initial research of the wineries to the experience itself, and finally the impression left on the consumer, Claiborne & Churchill has the chance to develop something different for the wine enthusiast. The purpose of this study was to holistically examine the wine tasting experience at Claiborne & Churchill Winery.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, JSTOR, Science Direct, and Statista. This review of literature includes the following subsections: experience design, customer experience design, emotional appeal, wine tourism, and destination appeal.

Designing transformative and memorable experiences is becoming a popular tool for companies not only to reach new markets, but to bring in revenue, secure customer loyalty, and make a lasting impression on everyone. Some experiences are designed by companies and establishments that have a holistic and complete understanding of what an experience really is. According to Rossman and Duerden (2019), “Experience is a unique interactional phenomenon resulting from conscious awareness and reflective interpretation of experience elements that is sustained by a participant, culminating in personally perceived results and memories” (p. 10). Experiences are not designed to be a

one-way interaction of the consumer taking what is being offered, but rather to engage and develop a relationship with the consumer so that there is a strong connection between the two. Emotion is a major factor of experiences and these interactions, for example thinking about the consumer's expectations or the organization's intent. Rossman and Duerden highlighted the ability for the experience to have a lasting impact on the consumer, referencing memories that could be taken along with any physical mementos or souvenirs, fulfilling a need that the consumer may not even realize they have. Determining the unspoken needs of the consumer is a challenging aspect of experiences and experience design. When explaining the hierarchy of needs he developed, Maslow (1943) explains "Within the sphere of motivational determinants any behavior tends to be determined by several or all of the basic needs simultaneously rather than by only one of them" (p. 390). These needs, the way everyone chooses to create their own hierarchy, and the difference of the interdependency of these needs from consumer to consumer determines the values and expectations consumers put towards the experiences they seek out.

The act of designing experiences and the experiences themselves hold a different value than other commodities because of this emotional attachment, rather than just a physical attachment. As stated by Pine and Gilmore (2011), "buyers of experiences...value being engaged by what the company reveals over a duration of time" (p. 99). Thus, the challenge of designing experiences presents itself: keeping the consumer engaged and providing an opportunity for organizations to have a lasting impact on each consumer. Rossman and Duerden (2019) articulate experience design as "the process of intentionally orchestrating experience elements to provide opportunities

for participants to co-create and sustain interactions that lead to results desired by participants and the designer” (p. 14). So much of experience design is taking the ordinary and rethinking it and designing it with intention. The efforts of experience designers are to create a product out of something that might not always be tangible. The purpose and objective of these designers is to sell an idea, a possibility, or a message while making a connection between the organization and consumer to show the meaning behind their efforts.

While an experience by an organization can feel like an isolated event, the design of the experience goes beyond just what happens on the day of the interaction. Verhoef et al. (2009) explains how “customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involved the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to the retailer” (p. 32). Experience designers utilize these responses as touchpoints when creating and utilize them as a guide to take into consideration personal factors of the consumer, like emotion. Taking these responses into consideration when designing an experience pushes the designers to explore the tangible and intangible or the incorporation of the five senses. These responses serve as avenues for design when considering the macro- and micro experiences of the consumer. Rossman and Duerden (2019) explore the different phases of the macro experience: anticipation, participation, and reflection phases (p. 10). These phases serve as an overall linear framework for the components of an experience and remind designers about the impact of their design before the consumer has even participated in the experience.

Another important aspect of experience design is understanding the consumer’s wants and expectations for the experience they are investing their time, money, and

energy. Teixeira et al. (2012) lists seven customer experience requirements of affordability, engagement, content, convenience, reliability, reward, and speed (p. 369). These elements of an experience greatly influence the aspects of experience design that an organization will choose to focus on, like target market, surprise and delight, or elements even as basic as physical location. The best designed experiences would consist of all these elements in a balanced and harmonious design, leaving the consumer satisfied and content. Meeting, and or exceeding, the expectation of the consumer is a goal of experience design that motivates the way elements are incorporated. As previously discussed, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs contains five basic needs that are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization (p. 394). It is upon these needs that experience designers might prioritize different aspects of their design. Asking questions like "How will the physical environment of the experience affect the consumer's perception of safety or sense of belongingness?" can allow for intentional interactions or elements to be built into the design. Organizations that can incorporate these elements and reach to fulfill levels of the hierarchy of needs have a competitive advantage over other organizations that offer similar experiences, like a wine tasting.

The wine industry's offering of a tasting experience creates an opportunity for application of many elements of experience design. In a study conducted by Bruwer and Rueger-Muck (2019), the motivational reasons for visitation, visitation dynamic, consumption outcome, and nature of the perceived regional characteristics were explored with their relation to wine tourism (p. 493). So not only does a winery have the task of portraying itself as a destination, but it is also challenged with curating a wine tasting experience that combines the previously discussed elements of experience design while

fulfilling the elements researched by Bruwer and Rueger-Muck, all while operating as a business trying to move its inventory and succeed financially. To achieve this lengthy list of goals and experience design requirements, it is best to consider a holistic approach to designing experiences. Because experience design is interactional and wine tasting involves an exchange of goods, the basis of experience design is already started. The biggest factor now is the consumer's emotion and reaction to how the organization can cultivate an experience that contains the aforementioned elements of experience design. Vo Thanh and Kirova (2018) developed a theoretical framework for the wine tourism experience, combining entertainment, education, esthetic, and escapism while comparing it to different types of participation, absorption, passive participation, active participation, and immersion (p. 32). Within this comparison, Vo Thanh and Kirova found a "sweet spot" between all variables, explaining that a wine tasting experience has the need for dimension, like the physical environment, and not just incredible wine.

Wine country, the physical landscape in this experience, is often referred to as the "winescape," the "unique agricultural landscapes that are shaped by the presence of vineyards, wine-making activities, and the wineries where wines are produced and stored" (Peters, 1997, p. 222). The development of wineries to become more of an experience within this winescape, moving away from just a production site. Williams (2001) emphasizes the shift of the winescape in the 1990s emphasized the leisure and aesthetics found in wine country. Though, the consumer can be drawn into an experience on more than just the winescape. Consumers have the power to choose their tasting stops based many elements of a winery, but possibly on price, varietals offered, and the types of tasting experiences offered. With all that there is to offer, consumers might see

wineries as a more of a physical building, rather than an opportunity for friendship and connection. This allows the winery to design experiences, whether they be tasting current wines, library wines, or a vertical comparison of different vintages of the same varietal, that foster an emotional connection. A winery wants to be able to offer the consumer not only wine that impresses the consumer, but to capture their attention and loyalty, creating a connection between winery and consumer, bringing them back for more experiences. With the implementation of the elements and strategies of experience design, a winery can create an experience unlike its competitors that showcases their wine, their story, and their purpose. Adding emotion and intention into wine, tasting design and wine tourism will push any winery past its competition and into the cellars of its consumers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to holistically examine the wine tasting experience at Claiborne & Churchill Winery.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What elements are part of the planning process of a wine tasting experience at Claiborne & Churchill?
2. What is involved in the execution of an experience at Claiborne & Churchill?
3. What are the post experience practices of Claiborne & Churchill?
4. How effective are the planning efforts of Claiborne & Churchill?

5. How effective is the wine tasting experience execution at Claiborne & Churchill?
6. How effective are the post experience practices of Claiborne & Churchill?

Chapter 2

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to holistically examine the wine tasting experience at Claiborne & Churchill Winery. This chapter includes the following sections: description of organization, description of instrument, and description of procedures.

Description of Organization

A case study was conducted on Claiborne & Churchill Winery. Claiborne & Churchill Winery (2022) was founded in 1983 by owners Claiborne Thompson and Fredericka Churchill. This small, family-owned and operated winery is known for its focus on dry, Alsatian white wines, as well as Pinot Noirs. Thompson and Churchill left the University of Michigan, where they taught Old Norse Mythology and German respectively, in 1981 to pursue a life in the wine industry in the Edna Valley of California. Much of the vineyards in the Edna Valley are covered in Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, so the duo wanted to bring something different, focusing on fruity French wines they loved, like Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Pinot Gris, and more. In its founding year of 1983, Claiborne & Churchill produced 565 cases of Dry Riesling and Dry Gewürztraminer but has grown to an annual production of 6,000 to 8,000 cases of many different red and white varietals, dessert style wines, and both red and white blends, sourcing from its two-acre Riesling estate vineyard, from other local vineyards in the surrounding valley, and from Monterey County. Claiborne & Churchill has a straw bale building tasting room and production site in the Edna Valley, where they employ 20

individuals. This straw bale building, built in 1995, is the first of its kind in California, features sixteen-inch-thick walls of rice straw, and serves as an example of their sustainable practices, keeping a cool and constant temperature for wine making and wine storage. This permanent winery location not only serves as a place for the Claiborne & Churchill wine to be made, but also as a space for the organization to share its product with the community in a wine tasting experience and through various events (Claiborne & Churchill Winery).

Description of Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was a case study guide developed by the researcher (see Appendix A). The instrument was created after analyzing elements of experience design from the review of literature. The instrument aims to holistically examine consumer's attitudes of Claiborne & Churchill's wine tasting experience by gathering qualitative data: from initial research into wine tasting, to the experience itself, and the impression and impact left on the consumer after the experience. A pilot test was conducted on Chamisal Vineyards on February 6, 2022. After the pilot test, the researcher altered the instrument to add "contact with organization" to the research of the experience to be able to include phone conversations and knowledge of staff to the research process.

Description of Procedures

A case study was conducted on Claiborne & Churchill Winery. The instrument utilized in this study was a case study guide developed by the researcher. Research for this study was conducted during February 2022. To look at the entire wine tasting

experience design, the website, actual facilities, and tasting process from January 2022 to February 2022 were analyzed. The organization's website served as a starting point for data collection and analysis. Pages on the website specific to visiting, tasting experience, and reservation process were prioritized, and researcher followed natural progression of interest and keystrokes when looking through the information available. To evaluate during the experience, the researcher visited the site and participated in a tasting, gathering notes, and collecting data throughout. Additionally, through the contacts with the organization, more in depth information about the tasting experience was procured. The total data collected was then analyzed using a comprehensive perspective, as stated in the purpose of the study.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to holistically examine the wine tasting experience at Claiborne & Churchill Winery. A case study was utilized to examine Claiborne & Churchill Winery. This chapter includes the following sections: setting the scene, telling the story, and impressions.

Setting the Scene: Absorption Experience Design

Claiborne & Churchill Winery's wine tasting experience can be classified as an absorption experience. Since it is an experience that is primarily focused on one specific sensory element, taste, it is important that all the other senses are heightened equally as much. This winery was founded to make French style wines, which brings in an aspect of inspiration for the physical environment and other elemental designs that consumers experience throughout their time.

Initial research into this organization portrays a simple, quaint aesthetic, emulating the atmosphere of a quiet countryside. The visuals on this website, whether it is the images, the font style, or font color, create an ambiance and the description of what it is like to visit the property further enforce these feelings by stating:

To appreciate the unique wines and the cozy ambiance of Claiborne & Churchill, a visit to our Edna Valley winery is a must! We are conveniently located just minutes from historic San Luis Obispo, the charming village of Arroyo Grande and the oceanfront town of Pismo Beach.

We invite you to join us for a tasting of our aromatic white wines (Dry Riesling, Dry Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc) and hand-crafted Pinot Noirs. We offer a variety of wine tasting experiences, from our house flight in our tasting room located within the wine cellar of our “Straw Bale” Winery to an outdoor tasting in the garden or a private tasting with our owners Clay & Fredericka Thompson and/or Winemaker Zack Geers.

Before even arriving at the property, Claiborne & Churchill has taken many steps to intrigue the senses and illicit a feeling of wanting to visit their property.

Upon arrival, the visual aesthetics continue with a consistent color palette and font use on the signs welcoming guests to the property. A white fence lines the property as guests pull into a lot bordering to the estate vineyard and straw bale building. The first impressions of the physical environment must align with the expectations set through what is available on the winery’s website. Creating feelings of anticipation of what is to come, portraying the environment as a haven to escape from the problems outside the gate, and creating a pleasurable and relaxing physical space further the absorption experience design of wine tasting at this organization.

Telling the Story: Enjoyable Education

As guests arrive on property, the interaction starts with being greeted at the check in station. The check in station is comprised of two wine barrels with a large, rustic wood countertop piece acting as a desk. In front of this check in station, there are a mix of different sized pots with flowers and greenery to add to the entry experience. At this spot,

the guest has its first interaction of a representative of the organization, an employee, creating an impression of the atmosphere and what is to come.

The employee greets the guests, asks the guests how they are doing, and asks how they can be of help today, which opens the conversation for the guest to state their own purpose for being there. This does not assume that the guest is there for wine tasting and allows for some control of the experience to be in the hands of the guest. In the case of visiting for the purpose of a wine tasting, the employee then gathers the guest's contact information, unless there is a prearranged reservation that was made via the website or over the phone. This does not have a way of being aesthetically pleasing due to the nature of the action, but due to the conditions of the pandemic, it can be deemed essential to a safe experience.

Once the purpose of the guest's visit and all essential information is collected, in this case for a wine tasting, the employee takes the individual towards the garden area adjacent to the winery's physical building. In pre-pandemic times at this property, guests would enter the physical building as taste inside the tasting room, but service has shifted due to the safety protocols that have been enforced. The employee created small talk in the short walk from check in to the garden area, guiding them to take a seat in one of the many different types of seating options. There are wicker settees with cushions surrounding firepits, tables and chairs, small bistros with chairs, and picnic table style seating available for the guests, seeming to depend on party size. Once the guest has taken a seat, the employee explains the options for onsite consumption, as well as other options available like bottle purchases or available tastes of cheese and charcuterie. This transition period between arrival and actual service and tasting allows for the guests to

begin feeling like they are part of an experience, expect the service and wine education, and simply focus on the tasting of the wine.

After the guests have chosen the wine tasting experience that they want, there is a period of waiting where the employees go to prepare the flight inside the physical building. This is an important time because it is a period in which the guest will notice a lot about the environment that they are now in. Absorption experience design calls for the absence of active thinking, which can be achieved if the environment around them stimulates other senses in this anticipation phase. The winery does this by incorporating the following: playing French cooking music throughout the garden to engage the sense of hearing, providing different styles of seating to engage physical touch, continuing the aesthetic with décor and visuals of wine, and the smells vineyard itself, trying to engage and stimulate each of the senses.

The tasting flight is brought out all at once, the first pour being in the glass, and the subsequent four other wines in small, stemless tasting glasses on a wooden paddle with small wells to hold each glass. The employee takes this time to educate the guests about the types of wine the winery is known for, the purpose behind starting this label, and the elements of each wine that are most notable. From there, the guest is left to follow a wine list as the flight is primarily a self-guided experience. With periodic check ins to answer questions or offer more anecdotal stories from the dedicated employee, the guest is left to engage with each wine, taste them, and experience the product the organization has to offer. With the glass in hand, the guest can move at their own pace, take their own time with each wine, and taste the wines with independence, giving them the option to taste in whatever order they want. Allowing for the ability to move back and

forth through the flight offers the guests a sense of freedom that may not be typically present in an experience that seems to be so structured. With the accompaniment of some crackers, the guests can finish the wine at their own leisure, embodying the elements of absorption design and focusing on the present. It might be unusual for education of wine to be somewhat self-taught, but with the guidance provided by the employees, the tasting experience felt approachable and easygoing.

Impressions: Creating a Lasting Aesthetic

The end of the experience is very transactional because it is, at the end of the day, a service that must be paid for. The employee indicates the experience coming to an end by giving the option for purchasing bottles of wine to take home, which can be seen as a possibility to take a piece of the experience with the individual once their time has come to an end. Depending on the number of bottles purchased, they are placed in some sort of take-home vessel with Claiborne & Churchill branding on it, like a bag or a cardboard tote box. Additionally, towards the end of the tasting experience, the employee informed the guest about how the winery has a “Cellar Club,” which is their wine club that offers benefits and discounts to its members while they receive scheduled shipments based on their level of club status. This is an opportunity to creating a lasting impression and develop a stronger relationship with the guest by presenting an opportunity like this.

The narrative created by the employee is driven around the guest the entire time. From the moment the guest enters, it is about their needs and wants for being at the organization. During the experience, it is about educating the guest and answering questions related to the notes and production of the wines, and when the experience ends,

it is about the guest leaving feeling relaxed, satisfied, and connected to the experience they just went through. The conclusion of the experience aims to leave the guest feeling satisfied. After all, this organization is a business, and it is trying to determine the needs of the consumer and provide them solutions that meet and/or exceed said needs.

This experience was about creating opportunity. Creating opportunity for enjoyment and creating opportunity for impact. Not only are the wines produced by this organization meant to be drunk and enjoyed by many, but they are meant to be shared beyond the physical property. Creating an opportunity for the employees to educate the guests about the winery history and wine production allows for the guest to connect to and develop a liking of certain wines, that the employee then encourages by suggesting purchasing wine to take home. This experience is driven by the elements of hospitality – friendliness, warm reception, and entertainment. One might enter this experience as a stranger and leave feeling they have gained a new friend.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Experiences and experience design utilize the most valuable commodity that humans have to offer – their time. The wine industry has a unique opportunity to offer different types of experiences to entice consumers into patronizing their organizations, understanding their product and purpose, and building relationships that last beyond a single visit. This concluding chapter includes the following: a discussion of the findings, limitations of the research, conclusions based on research questions, and recommendations for the future.

Discussion

Claiborne & Churchill prioritizes three elements of a wine tasting experience: the hospitality from the staff, the visual aesthetics of the experience, and quality product. These three practices showcase the efforts that the organization makes to fulfill the needs of the consumer whether they are fulfilling one basic need or multiple simultaneously (Maslow, 1943). The need for hospitable service was met immediately upon interaction with the employees of the winery, creating a fulfillment of the consumer's need for connection and belonging. This connection that the employees make from the beginning and continue to foster throughout the experience satisfies the consumer's want or need to be engaged for the entirety of their time in the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). This sense of belonging and engagement was specifically met by the style of service Claiborne

& Churchill implements, one of tableside service with a dedicated employee to educate the consumer of all things wine, the history of the winery, and of the surrounding wine region. Additionally, opening the experience up to the consumer and allowing for them to make the personal choice of exactly which type of experience they will have makes the consumer feel like the organization wants them to be there. Given the options of a tasting flight, wine by the glass, or wine by the bottle, opens the experience past just a tasting flight and creates more of a social connection between the consumer(s) and the organization. This type of flexibility and adaptation to different likes and dislikes of the consumer proves Claiborne & Churchill to be an advocate for experience co-creation. There is a concern of providing too many options, where the consumer is overwhelmed by all that is being offered. Claiborne & Churchill limits this by creating set tasting lists and offering select wines by the glass at a discounted price. This not only takes pressure off the consumer from having to make too many decisions, but also still creates structure and guides the consumer to make a choice the organization has almost already decided for them, while still allowing for the feeling of self-direction.

Even though most organizations began outside service due to an adaptation forced by COVID-19 protocols, it provides Claiborne & Churchill to further immerse their consumers in the wine tasting experience. The act of consuming wine can be done anywhere – in one’s own home, at a park, in a restaurant, and so on, but the orchestration of the physical design of the organization’s wine tasting experience immerses them in the elements (Rossman & Duerden, 2019). For a winery that only has a small vineyard on its property and turns to surrounding properties and vineyards for other varietals, the outdoor experiences aides in the visual aesthetic, where the consumer can look across the road at

a neighboring vineyard that the organization sources from. This access to visual aide in creating the experience within the “winescape” of the Edna Valley adds to the quality of the service and product the winery is providing for its consumer (Peters, 1997). Creating this experience in a location like this emphasizes the appeal of it as a destination. Additionally, it allows for engagement and additionally content for the employees to provide for the consumer, aspects of an experience that consumers yearn for (Teixeira et al. 2012). Visual cues, like being able to see where the fruit is coming from for the wine, or even just seeing a vine up close, gives Claiborne & Churchill’s experience an added level of excellent.

Each consumer that arrives at the winery may have a different motivation for visiting, whether it be for the engaging and knowledgeable staff or to purchase bottles a specific varietal. Claiborne & Churchill exceeds at delivering at all stages of the experience, like in the quality of the product. Their experience can holistically fulfill the consumer’s needs socially, emotionally, and even physically with the wines they produce (Verhoef et al. 2009). Through the experience the organization has curated, they attempt to make each individual feel special. What Claiborne & Churchill does lack is the experience design for a celebration or special occasion. Many individuals choose to go wine tasting or visit wineries for birthdays, anniversaries, or other various personal successes, and this organization does not have an element in their experience design to recognize and help those individual’s feel celebrated. Part of creating an authentic connection with each consumer is recognizing their value, and some might say that special days call for special treatment. Now the organization does not need to go above and beyond to make someone’s birthday feel important, but an added element of surprise

and delight could amplify the experience even further. A nonperishable treat, a special branded piece of merchandise, or a complimentary bonus taste of a reserve wine are all viable possibilities of elevating the Claiborne & Churchill experience past what it is today.

There were limitations to the study due to the personal involvement with the wine industry, and more specifically with the organization this study was focused on. As an individual working in the industry, there is a certain bias that may be present in the opinion of the success of Claiborne & Churchill's efforts because of the attachment to the company. To minimize the bias, research was conducted during a time when the property could be visited with the perspective of a consumer, rather than an industry employee. The researcher attempted to be impartial when collecting data and performing the study.

Claiborne & Churchill was founded because of the passion of two individuals and has almost 40 years of experience creating quality wines. It has grown and expanded into the organization it is today and has curated an enchanting wine tasting experience to showcase their products. Wine tasting at this organization has engaged consumers with the opportunity to co-create a fulfilling multi-sensory experience and the service in any industry can default to being quite robotic. But, with a staff that prioritizes the needs of the consumer and fosters hospitable connections with each and every interaction, Claiborne & Churchill no longer is just a stop along a wine tour. It becomes a delightful connection that consumers go back to time and time again, translating to a type of loyalty only few are able to achieve. Experiences and their design are not meant to create memories, but rather to open the opportunity for emotional connections between businesses and consumers.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Visual aesthetics and engaging descriptions draw the consumer in to pursue a wine tasting experience.
2. Hospitable service and experience immersion technique are utilized to provide the consumer with the total education about the wine, the winery history, and the purpose of the winery.
3. The push for a wine purchase allows for the consumer to take a piece of their experience with them on the experience at the property has ended.
4. The branding, aesthetics, and product of Claiborne & Churchill make them stand out from other wineries in the region.
5. Claiborne & Churchill is successful in its design of a wine tasting experience that provides a transformative, education, and pleasurable moment where the consumer is engaged with the brand from beginning to end.
6. The business minded efforts of Claiborne & Churchill provide consumers the opportunity to bring a piece of their experience home with them, in the way of a wine purchase, as the bottle can be a reminder of their time at the property.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The wine industry would benefit greatly from experiences designed with the focus of hospitable service being equally as important as the wine and quality

of product, allowing for a personal connection to be made between consumer and brand.

2. Building intentional touchpoints within the wine tasting experience at Claiborne & Churchill Winery can create a stronger sense of belonging for the consumer.
3. Curating a special element to add on to the tasting as an element of surprise and delight for an event, like birthdays or anniversaries, will foster a deeper connection between consumer and the brand at Claiborne & Churchill Winery.
4. Expanding the wine tasting opportunity to feature a vertical tasting of other vintages or select reserve wines outside of the current available wines will open opportunity for an elevated experience design.
5. Further research into this topic should look deeper into the relationship between experience design and financial success of a winery, and how the wine tasting experience creates the opportunity for long lasting monetary success with a customer.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Instrument

Categories/Areas	Description	Additional Comments
Beginning		
Website layout		
Reservation system		
Experience description		
Contact with organization		
Knowledge of staff		
During		
Perception and impression of location		
Attitude of staff		
5 senses		
Wine tasting process		
Tangibles		
After		
Personal impression		
Mementos		
Surprise and delight		