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Research Paper

The effects of architectural congruence perceptions on winery visitors' emotions and behavioral intentions: The case of Marqués de Riscal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of the perceived congruence of a postmodernist hotel, which was built at one of Spain's oldest wineries, on visitors' emotions and behavioral intentions. Due to the rather unpredictable nature of Frank Gehry's architectural landmarks, the delight model was used to investigate the effects of congruence perceptions – as related to the local landscape, visitors' self-image and the winery's brand image – on arousal, delight and behavioral intentions. Data were collected from travelers who had visited a winery in Spain and structural equation modeling was used for analysis. The results suggest that the perceived congruence between the hotel architecture, the local landscape and the winery's brand image positively affect visitors' arousal and delight. On the other hand, the perceived congruence between the hotel architecture and visitors' self-image only improves arousal. Arousal also affects delight and both of these emotions significantly increase visitors' behavioral intentions. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed in detail.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry has constantly been evolving over the past decades and is currently reaching new heights with the development of unique products, processes, and brands, among other types of innovation (Vila, Enz, & Costa, 2012). The goal of these innovations is mainly to avoid falling into the trap of commoditization, which contains such elements as product homogeneity, industry stability, switching costs, and price sensitivity (Beldona, Miller, Francis, & Kher, 2015). Of the aforementioned factors, hotel executives perceive product homogeneity as the element that contributes the most to commoditization. Therefore, to avoid such product homogeneity, hospitality companies are doing their best to differentiate themselves with the creation of unique products that allow them to surpass customer expectations and deliver memorable experiences.

An example of such product innovations was led by Marqués de Riscal, one of Spain's oldest wineries, with the conception of its 'City of Wine' in 2006. This project, which comprises an astonishing post-modernist hotel incorporating a wine therapy spa and a Michelin-starred restaurant, was designed by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry and built in the heart of this historic wine estate. In addition to the Gehry-designed hotel, the facilities also include a modern conference center and two retail stores for visitors. Like its iconic neighbor, the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, which was also designed by Frank Gehry, the objective of the 'City of Wine' was to attract as much

attention as possible and to benefit from increased tourism and wine sales (Michael, 2015, April 30). Despite the project's total investment of €70 million, the Hotel Marqués de Riscal enjoys months-long waiting lists and the total number of visitors to the Rioja region rose by 68% during the project's first year of operation (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2010; IREA, 2008).

Although the 'Gehry effect' (i.e. the power of Frank Gehry's buildings to transform an entire city) is undeniable, the juxtaposition of historic and postmodernist architecture has not yet been investigated in the hospitality or servicescape literature (Meagher, 2014; Vila et al., 2012). Frank Gehry's architectural landmarks, which are known to disrupt the local landscape, are at times a source of controversy. For instance, the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao generated a fair share of criticism for being too imposing and spectacular (Hedgecoe & Whittle, 2012), while the new Louis Vuitton Foundation, which he also designed, was accused of being a grotesque imposition on the eyes of local residents from the Bois de Boulogne near Paris, France (Wainwright, 2014). Hence, because of the disruptive nature of Frank Gehry's buildings, further research needs to be performed in order to better understand how such architectural disruptions affect visitors' emotions and behavioral intentions.

Because of the historic origins of the Marqués de Riscal winery, which was inaugurated in 1858 in the ancient town of Elciego, it would also be interesting to understand how a postmodernist hotel may affect the brand perceptions of one of the region's oldest wineries. As Kelly

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(2003) points out, corporate identity has become an increasingly important part of commercial architectural design projects, with iconic commercial buildings used to redefine older brands. Yet, despite the literature on the relationship between architecture and brand identity (e.g. Balmer, 2001; Brauer, 2002; Kelly, 2003), no research has been found within the extant literature exploring the perceived congruence between commercial architectural design and the brands they represent.

Furthermore, to the authors' knowledge, no investigation has been done so far with regard to the perceived congruence between winery visitors' self-image and the architectural style that characterizes such postmodernist landmarks. As Solomon (1983) explains, consumers frequently purchase products not solely for their functionality, but also for their symbolic or social significance, with the formation of a 'self-brand connection' (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Because Frank Gehry's buildings are known to be somewhat controversial, the current study will also examine how the perceived congruence between visitors' self-image and hotel architecture affects winery tourists' emotional and behavioral responses.

In order to measure the aforementioned relationships, Oliver, Rust, and Varki (1997) delight model will be taken into consideration, as it shows that surprise and performance act as antecedents of customer emotions (i.e., arousal and delight) and behavioral intentions. The use of this model will allow academics and hoteliers to better understand how a surprise factor, such as Frank Gehry's postmodernist architecture, affects winery visitors, as no study thus far has used disruptive hotel architecture as an 'excitement' element that could improve visitors' arousal, delight and behavioral intentions. This study will also help investors and marketers to assess the value of such product innovation, which many hospitality companies have been recently adopting in order to differentiate their products from the competition.

2. Literature review

2.1. The winery destination

While the term 'wine tourism' originally concerned mainly visitation to wineries for the purpose of tasting and/or purchasing wine and perhaps to see how wine was produced, it has become accepted that wine tourists now desire much more from their wine tourism experience (Brown, Havitz, & Getz, 2006; Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009). This has resulted in many wineries adding additional facilities beyond the wine experience. While there is little academic research on this phenomenon, Marqués de Riscal is one such example with the inauguration of its 'City of Wine' in 2006, covering a 23-acre site. Besides the preexisting historic winery and tasting room and the aforementioned Gehry-designed hotel with its spa and Michelin-starred restaurant, Marqués de Riscal also added a museum, two shops, a coffee bar, a second restaurant, and conference/event facilities. With the Rioja region in which Marqués de Riscal's "City of Wine" is located having received a 68% increase in visitors in the year following its inauguration, there is no doubt that the "City of Wine" is a major tourist draw.

There are various understandings as to what constitutes a tourist destination, including a collection of attractions and services (Framke, 2010) and the reason for traveling, with the attractions at the destination generating the visit (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, & Wanhill, 1993). Given the increase in visitors generated by the 'City of Wine,' the number of facilities and experiences offered, with this being the main or sole reason for many visitors traveling to the area, and with many visitors spending one or more days at Marqués de Riscal, the authors feel safe in contending that Marqués de Riscal's "City of Wine" constitutes a destination in its own right, while still forming part of the greater Rioja wine region.

2.2. Servicescape and hotel architecture

Bitner (1992) defines servicescape as the manmade or built environment (i.e. physical surroundings) affecting consumers and employees in service organizations. This physical or built environment can include facility aesthetics, building design and décor, as well as exterior factors (Kottasz, 2006; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996, 1999). Although previous studies about the physical environment of hotels have just begun exploring the use of elements such as nature, art, performance, and local culture (Chang, 2016; Countryman & Jang, 2006), more empirical research needs to be done in order to assess the effects of physical attributes on consumers' emotions and behavioral intentions. This suggestion is supported by a study from Wakefield and Blodgett (1994), which argued that for leisure providers, which include upscale restaurants and resorts where consumers spend longer periods of time, servicescape is more likely to influence consumers' attitudes toward service provision. Thus, service providers should recognize the important role of servicescape as a marketing strategy, while academics need to further investigate the effects of unique servicescape elements, such as hotels' architecture and design, on consumers' attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Inspired by the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and its significant effects on the local economy and tourism, a number of traditional Spanish wineries have sought to incorporate unusual building projects designed by celebrity architects (i.e. 'starchitecture') at their wineries (Ponzini, 2014). Such product innovation, they hoped, would attract more visitors and thereby generate additional revenue (Michael, 2015, April 30). Along these lines, Marqués de Riscal, one of Spain's oldest wineries, inaugurated its 'City of Wine' in 2006, a project that gained international exposure thanks to the help of Canadian-born American architect Frank Gehry, who created a unique hotel concept within this old winery property, using the deconstructivist and postmodernist style that characterizes his architectural landmarks. Although research has shown that the product innovation led by Marqués de Riscal has resulted in a considerable tourism revival in the Rioja wine region, with the total number of visitors increasing by 68% during the 'City of Wine's' first year of operation (Vila et al., 2012), few studies thus far have measured the effects of such architectural cues and product innovations on winery visitors' affect and behavioral outcomes (Lin, 2004).

2.3. Perceived incongruence between hotel architecture and local landscape

The Hotel Marqués de Riscal, managed by the Luxury Collection Hotels and Resorts, was constructed at one of Spain's oldest and most traditional wineries (Vila et al., 2012). Accordingly, the Marqués de Riscal winery, which is located in the historic town of Elciego, was founded in 1858 and is recognized as being the oldest winery in the region. Interestingly, such juxtaposition or incongruence between historic and postmodernist architecture (i.e. the town of Elciego and the Hotel Marqués de Riscal) has not yet been investigated in the hospitality or servicescape literature. Although the 'Gehry effect' has already proven to produce noticeable and positive effects on tourism in cities such as Bilbao, Paris, Los Angeles and Prague, further research needs to be accomplished in order to measure the effects of such architectural contrasts on visitors' emotions and behavioral intentions (Meagher, 2014; Vila et al., 2012). Accordingly, most studies related to perceived servicescape congruence were either performed in other sectors (e.g. restaurants), or did not include several exterior elements (e.g. hotel architecture and local landscape) in their analyses.

For instance, a study by Lin and Mattila (2010), which examined the relative impact of physical surroundings and customer-employee interactions on restaurant customers' emotions and satisfaction, found that perceived congruence (i.e. matching the restaurant theme with food served, and matching the exterior look with the interior décor) has a positive impact on pleasure, while such impact on arousal is minimal.

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