

# New apps drive wine tourism

Wine regions embrace smartphone apps to attract visitors

Kellie Arbuckle

## Information technology

SMART PHONE TECHNOLOGY and the myriad of associated applications are opening up a whole new conversation between wine regions and visitors – with wineries boasting the benefits.

Wine regions, such as the Hunter Valley and those in Victoria, are increasingly using apps to promote the best of their region.

In addition to these region-specific apps, there are number of apps which have been developed in the last year that focus on promoting cellar doors throughout Australia. These include VisitVineyards and Oz Cellar Door.

Wine Australia has also jumped on the opportunity, with its A+ Australian Wine: Discover Australia's Flagship Wines app, which specifically targets the fast-growing Chinese wine market.

As more and more consumers tap into their iPhone or Android to source information on the spot when they want, *Grapegrower & Winemaker* was keen to profile some of these exciting apps and find out how wineries can get involved.

## Connect McLaren Vale

Created by Connect Broadcast, this app is essentially a free regional guide featuring up-to-date information on the region's wineries, restaurants, accommodation, news and events.

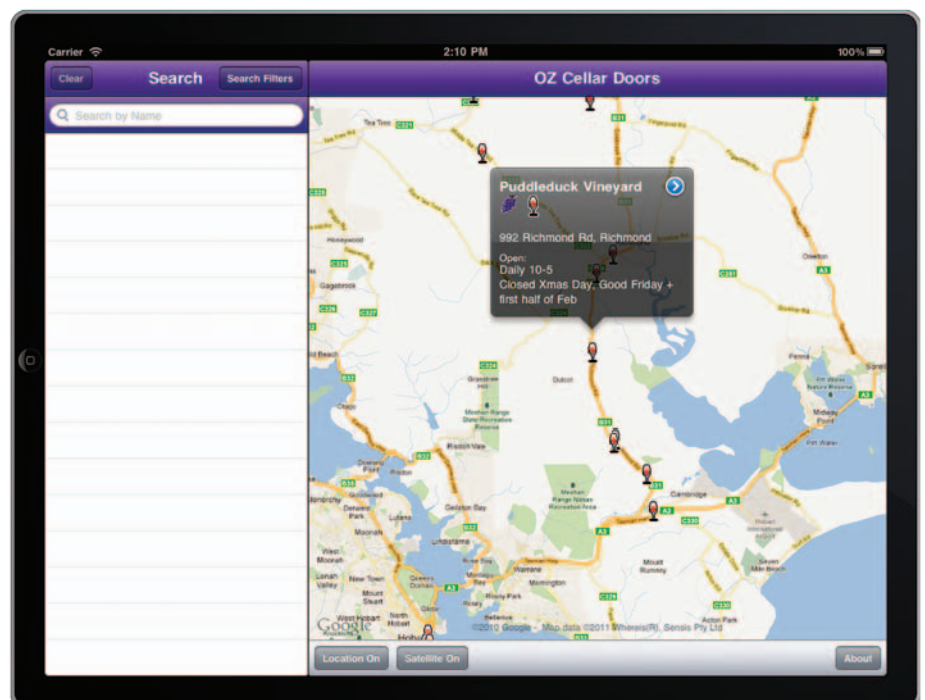
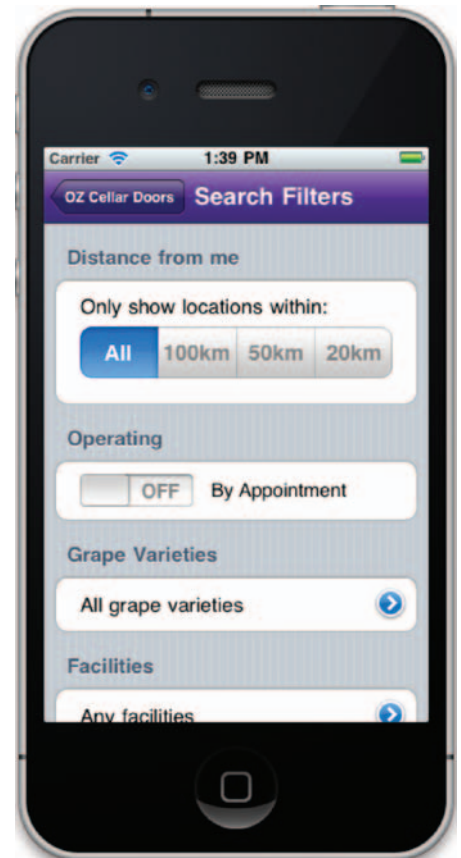
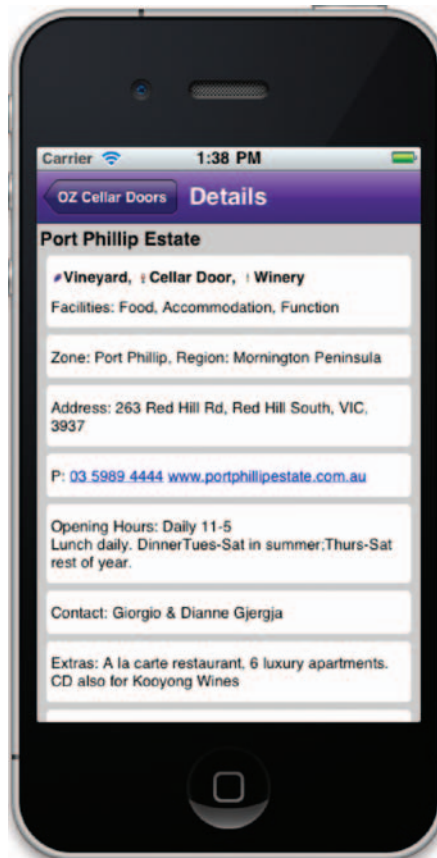
Businesses involved with the app can publish and update their own content and photographs from anywhere at any time. These updates can then be streamed directly to their Facebook or Twitter account.

McLaren Vale Grape, Wine and Tourism Association (MVGWTA) chair Pip Forrester says the app provides wineries with an opportunity to connect with new and existing customers.

"Wineries have the opportunity to post five stories a month on the app, which directs people to their website and encourages online selling," Forrester told *Grapegrower & Winemaker*.

"From a tourism point-of-view, it's a great way to connect with the customer about your specialty and to update your stories. And compared with print media, it's a cheaper way to advertise."

The importance of being able to provide



Oz Cellar is a user-friendly app that provides the details of more than 2600 Australian cellar doors.

such information via smartphones has almost become a necessity in attracting visitors, Forrester said.

"You're not going to carry a computer when you're on holiday but you will carry your phone," she said.

"When you're on the ground or you're sitting in your car and looking at it, it's really useful."

This app is free and compatible with the iPhone, iPod touch and iPad. More apps are being developed for the Barossa and Hunter Valley.

### Visit Vineyards

This free app provides users with a comprehensive guide to thousands of vineyards, cellar doors as well as restaurants, markets, accommodation and more.

Developed by the creators of travel website, VisitVineyards.com, this app was designed to provide instant access to useful information that benefits both tourists and wineries.

VisitVineyards.com founder and CEO, Robyn Lewis, says wineries are "the big winners".

Through the app, wineries can create and edit information about their business to extend their reach to customers.

"This is free, simple and easy marketing anyone can do to increase their reach," Lewis said.

"We have nearly 40,000 active subscribers, a lot more than they will probably be able to reach cost and time effectively on, for example, Facebook."

Wineries can also take out a 'premium listing' on the app which gives them even more exposure and direct links from the app to their website or Facebook page.

The decision to bring VisitVineyards.com to the smartphone was owed to increasing website traffic via mobiles.

"Access of VisitVineyards.com via mobile has grown from around 3 per cent to over 10% in under a year. So, we needed to meet this demand in the most user-friendly and cost-effective way," said Lewis, whose own research found the iPhone app to be the most popular device.

Lewis says plans are in place to include listings of New Zealand wineries on the app.

"As soon as enough New Zealand operators create listings on VisitVineyards.com, we will display them in the app as well," she said.

### A+ Australian Wine: Discover Australia's Flagship Wines

Though available to users worldwide, this free app specifically targets Chinese wine consumers and is designed to "take the risk" out of choosing quality wines.

Released in January this year, the app is the brainchild of Lucy Anderson, Wine Australia director Asia.

She says the point of the app is to make it easy for people buy good quality wines and to provide a history of those wines.

"We wanted to tell the story behind the wines and so the app features a profile behind the wineries as well as the region it is from. It's covering more into regional discovery," Anderson said.

In the first six months of its launch, the app was downloaded more than 20,000 times.

While there is no direct way to measure the success of the app from a sales perspective, Anderson says the number of initial downloads should serve as a positive indication that the app is working to promote quality Australian wine.

The app, which is expressed in

Mandarin, is currently being developed for Androids and information is constantly being updated.

Anderson recommends wineries become involved by expressing their interest with Wine Australia.

### Oz Cellar

This app tracks the details of more than 2600 Australian cellar doors on an interactive map that has been specifically designed to make navigation easy.

A VineFinders invention, this app provides information on contact details, opening hours, facilities, regional information and grape varieties grown.

The app also features an interactive satellite and road maps pinpointing the locations of cellar doors.

VineFinders director Dick Friend believes wineries that provide and update their details via this app will note an increase in tourism and sales.

"Maximum visitation and wine sales are achieved by checking that details, such as opening hours and facilities, are up-to-date," Friend said.

This app costs \$2.99 to download and can be viewed via the iPhone or iPad. **CW**



VisitVineyards CEO Robyn Lewis says the new VisitVineyards mobile app makes wine marketing simple, easy and effective.

**Q** A number of wine brands are intensifying their efforts to break into the Chinese market by opening cellar doors and running wine tastings in China. But for many smaller producers, this isn't financially practical. What are some of the things smaller wineries can do to increase their chances of attracting the Chinese buyer to their brand?

**A** **Lucy Anderson.** In my opinion, small wineries looking to build their brand in China must be very focussed and realistic about their goals. Having a detailed plan which identifies target customers, cities and/or provinces is the first step and then look to leverage off existing programs and activities that deliver against the business/brand objectives. For a small producer this may include activities run by the local importer/distributor/retailer or making sure you are an active member of the regional association in Australia as well as looking at both state and national programs to see if there are opportunities to increase brand visibility at relatively low cost. The internet and social media are also very useful tools in China. Patience is a prerequisite as building a brand takes time.