**Title**
IN NEED OF SOMETHING DIFFERENT? - YOUNG CONSUMERS AND THEIR NOTION OF WINE TOURISM

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**Keywords**
wine tourism, perceptions, wine tourism experience, young travelers

**Research Question**
How do young travelers perceive wine tourism and are they interested in this form of traveling?

**Methods**
A two-step methodology using a collage technique approach and a quantitative survey was applied.

**Results**
Results show certain interest in wine tourism among a young target group. However, it seems that current wine tourism products do not correspond to their interest and lifestyle.

**Abstract**

1 INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism has become a significant pillar of the tourism industry in several countries. Wine constitutes an important component of the appeal of various destinations and it can even become the main attraction for visitors. Nevertheless, the strategic development of wine tourism involves adapting the wine tourism product to the desires and preferences of potential customers (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2012). At the same time several authors discovered a lack of information on exactly those (potential) wine tourists and claim that more consumer based research into wine tourism is needed in order to firstly understand the image of wine tourism and (potential) wine tourists and secondly to measure their interest in this form of tourism (Charters & Ali-Knight,
Increasing attention is given to generational differences related to wine consumption and wine tourism, but little information is available on the young generation and their wine-tourism related attitude and behaviour (Carlsen & Getz, 2006). An understanding of the relationship of young consumers and wine tourism is heavily needed (Fountain & Charters, 2015), as this generation of wine consumers and (potential) wine tourists needs to be considered if the industry is to have a long-term future (Koerber, 2000). Young travelers are increasingly recognised as valuable visitors, as they are tomorrow’s globally-oriented citizens and leaders in future travel trends (World Tourism Organization, 2008). The need of a good understanding of this target group regarding their future impact was accordingly highly emphasized by Bruwer, Saliba, & Miller (2011).

Skinner (2000) particularly sees a broadening of the future wine tourism market base when attracting younger generations. Similarly Cambourne et al. (2000) see the need of a shift towards attracting a younger market in the future, as their growing interest in wine as a lifestyle product increases the wine tourism market potential. Treloar, Hall, & Mitchell (2004) proved that a significant proportion of generation Y members show interest in wine tourism. Fountain et al. (2015) even suggest that generation Y is more interested in winery experiences and learning from them than generation X and baby boomers.

This paper investigates the perceptions of young consumers towards wine tourism and analyses the interest in this type of tourism. Consequently, the overarching research question of this study is: How do young travelers perceive wine tourism and are they interested in this form of traveling?

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

WINE TOURISM AND THE WINE TOURIST

Wine tourism is initiated by consumers who travel for wine related experiences or who include wine experiences in their destination visits. Their interest can be based on wine preferences, or on the image of wine regions. Different wine-themed and other activities and attractions can be part of their experience (Getz, 2000).

Summarizing a number of recent studies Mitchell et al. (2000) found similar demographic profiles of wine tourists besides other convergent consumers’ characteristics. Wine tourists are usually 30 to 50 years of age, in the moderate to high income segment and come from within or in close proximity of the wine region itself. Pratt’s (2011) findings show that the typical wine tourist is viewed as passionate about wine, relaxed, sociable, friendly, wealthy, mature, educated, intelligent, adventurous and interested in good food.

Whilst the baby boomer generation and generation X were seen as the most important target segments, as their travel behavior, education, economic status and fine-wine demand drove wine consumption and wine tourism, the wine industry must meet generational challenges to build future demand among younger generations (Getz, 2000).

YOUNG CONSUMERS AND WINE TOURISM

Young customers are often referred to as digital natives or generation Y. According to Pendergast’s (2010) definition, members of generation Y are born between 1982 and 2002. They are therefore currently in their young adulthood. These young people are confident and relaxed, conservative and the most educated generation ever. Y generation travelers travel more often and explore more destinations compared to other generations. When investigating the proportion of their income, they spend more than any other group on international travel. Furthermore, they book their travels online and are experience and information hungry, not only when traveling. Usually they are not deterred by problems such as terrorism, disasters and epidemics.
Finally, they want to get out a lot of their traveling (Pendergast, 2010).

With regards to wine, age is generally a significant determinant of wine consumption: the older the consumers, the more wine they drink (Brunner & Siegrist, 2011). However, the younger generation already seems to be spending substantial amounts of money on wine and show increasing interest in wine (Charters et al., 2011) and value is very important (Qenani-Petrela, Wolf, & Zuckerman, 2007). Additionally, younger target groups buy significantly more wine than older consumers from restaurants and bars/pubs, which may be due to their higher level of mobility (Bruwer et al., 2011).

When analyzing expectations and experiences of generation Y wine tourists Fountain et al. (2015) found out that they place emphasis on experience, seek interaction and connection with cellar door staff and they want to learn more about wine.

3 METHODOLOGY

A two-step methodology was applied to provide answers to the above mentioned research question.

First, an exploratory study was done to understand the image and perception of wine tourism among young travelers. 17 regularly traveling (at least once per year) students aged 19 to 27 years and currently studying in Austria were recruited and asked to produce collages. Participants were presented with a wide range of newspapers, magazines and brochures encouraged to visualize their perceptions and underlying beliefs and attitudes regarding wine tourism. Thereafter, their task was to assemble images, phrases and patterns on a piece of A3 paper. Furthermore, the participants had the opportunity to draw aspects onto their collages, which they could not find in the provided material. After finishing the collages, participants were asked to briefly explain their work, to make sure that the researchers understand all items correctly and as intended by the creator. In order to analyze all data illustrated on the collages a content analysis using Atlas.ti 7.5.9 was carried out.

Secondly, survey results from primary research in form of a quantitative survey in Austria and German were used. This survey was initially done to investigate culinary tourism in Austria. Respondents were asked to express their interest in various culinary tourism products (such as wine, various food, events, tastings, etc.) using a 5-point scale. One of the questions of this survey was if wine tourism in an attractive offer. Answers to this question given by the respondents of different age groups were analyzed in the light of the given research question. This resulted in an in-depth data analysis of the interest in wine tourism among different age groups and especially for a young target group. For the purpose of this study a population-representative online survey in Austria and Germany was carried out. A quota sample based on the criteria age, gender and residential areas all over Austria and Germany was drawn to reach theoretical representativeness. A sample size of n = 539 was achieved for Austria. A total sample size of n = 506 was obtained in Germany. Data analysis was done using SPSS 23.

4 FINDINGS

The collage technique approach revealed that respondents hold a distinct perception of wine tourism. Wine tourism is characterized as being a stereotypical tourism product for a male, mature and wealthy target group. Wine tourism is seen as an exclusive or luxury product, very often represented by a well-off male wine tourist. This wine tourist is described as sporty (e.g. playing golf, biking and hiking) and is perceived as being interested in culture and culinary arts as well as nature loving. Wine tourism destinations are predominantly seen in Italy, France, Australia, California, Spain and Argentina. Young people think that wine tourism is usually combined with
cultural journeys and wellness trips. This type of tourism is seen as a suitable offer for couples. In the eyes of a young target group, the typical wine tourist looks smart, is well dressed and educated. Nevertheless, negative associations and characteristics towards wine tourism like “expensive”, “dowdy”, “boring” and “conservative” were emphasized as well. This also underpins the findings of Thach & Olsen (2006) who found out that some young people see wine as “expensive, snobby and snooty”. However, experience related visuals (such as wine tastings, outdoor activities, etc.) were used rarely. Moreover, only little evidence can be seen for wine and the learning aspect of wine tourism. Just one item explaining the wine color chart indicates a knowledge and learning oriented facet. To sum it up, wine tourism is seen as a decent form of traveling for mature people with a higher economic status. However, it might not be regarded as appealing for younger travelers searching for experiences or knowledge.

Besides the collage technique, quantitative survey results were used to answer the above mentioned research question. Findings on the interest in wine tourism indicate that the younger target group (15-30 years) shows certain interest in this type of tourism. Approx. 12% of this age group are highly interested in wine tourism, at least for the case of Austria and Germany. Another 28% see wine tourism as rather interesting. This outcome is similar to the results in age groups 31-45 years and 46-60 years. However, the age group 60+ years shows even higher interest in wine tourism. This underlines the findings of Treloar, Hall, & Mitchell (2004) who stated that a significant proportion of generation Y members show interest in wine tourism, which is as high as of generation X.

All in all, findings indicate that there is a significant interest in wine tourism among a young target group, at least for the case of Austria and Germany. However, as the collages show, wine tourism seems rather not appealing to young customers, as their perceptions towards wine tourism are not corresponding to their interest and lifestyle, which is experience and learning oriented. Wine tourism is usually seen as a conservative product for mature and wealthy travelers.

5 CONCLUSION

Considering the result of Pratt (2011), who proved a strong relationship between respondent’s attitudes towards wine tourism and their intentions to visit a wine region, the future of wine tourism has partly unfavorable constraints. Attitudes towards wine tourism were found to be the link between self-congruity and functional and affective destination attributes, on respondents’ intentions to visit a wine region (Pratt, 2011). Following this result and taking the above mentioned attitudes and perceptions towards wine tourism into account, wine tourism has unflattering starting conditions among a young target group.

But, as the quantitative survey showed and since the literature proved that there is noteworthy interest of young people in wine tourism the question arises, if the product itself is suitable and attractive to this target group. It seems questionable that current wine tourism offers and experiences meet the expectations of young travelers and correspond to their lifestyle and attitudes. Experience and learning oriented generation Y members do not seem to be attracted by current wine tourism products, although they are highly interested in traveling. This leads to the conclusion that there is a market potential, but young travelers’ needs may not be fulfilled by existing products. This underpins the claim of further research on young adults and their wine tourism experiences, as “[...] it is possible that they are searching for something different from previous generations” (Carlsen & Getz, 2006).

Based on these preliminary findings and on prior studies examining the expectations of young customers towards wine tourism (such as Carlsen & Getz (2006), Mueller, Remaud, & Chabin (2011), Charters et al. (2011) and Fountain & Charters (2015)), further research is required to understand their expectations and experiences in order to create a relevant wine tourism product.