

Padua 2017 Abstract Submission

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

Corresponding Author

L. Martin Cloutier

E-Mail

cloutier.martin@uqam.ca

Affiliation

University of Quebec at Montreal

Co-Author/s

Name	E-Mail	Affiliation
Laurent Renard	renard.laurent@uqam.ca	University of Quebec at Montreal
Sébastien Arcand	sebastien.arcand@hec.ca	HEC Montreal
E. Michael Laviolette	em@laviolette.fr	Toulouse Business School

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Research Question

What are the representations held about initiatives underlying the definition of the vision, mission, and strategy by the stakeholders of the Wine Route and of the Cider Route in Quebec?

Methods

Group Concept Mapping, a mixed methods-based approach, in which participants (i.e. wine and cider makers) engage in representation identification, and in strategic action prioritization.

Results

Spatial and visual graphs display matching patterns, and initiative go-zones which report on perception measures of importance and feasibility ratings. A set of theoretical conjectures is articulated on collaborative processes.

Abstract

Oenotourism has often been introduced and studied as a lever of regional economic development (Peris-Ortiz, de la Cruz Del Río Rama, & Rueda-Armengot, 2016). Yet, a productive collaborative process among stakeholders of oenotourism or agritourism routes and trails remains an important obstacle in the way of optimizing this opportunity (Brás, Costa, & Buhalis, 2010; Brunori & Rossi, 2000; Cloutier et al., 2016).

As can be observed from available trend data, the situation is not different regarding the Wine Route and the Cider Route of the Montérégie region of Québec, Canada. For both of these routes, there are a number of impinging challenges: i) the membership of both trails have reached the lowest historical levels while the number of wineries and cideries has never been that high; ii) the attendance at planning meetings by wine and cider makers for each of the routes with the tourism association was so low over the past few years, that no events have been jointly organized by the association for the respective routes, iii) the ownership of both the Wine Route and the Cider Route are not clearly defined, and so are the leaderships, and the governance structures; iv) the financing of the Routes are not recurrent over the intermediate and long term, v) there is competition from other tourism circuits and happenings which are overlapping with the routes physically and psychologically in the minds of both wine and cider makers, on the one hand, and visitors, on the other hand; and vi) the mission, vision and strategy for the Routes are either outdated or simply lacking. Although these symptoms are related to the current fledgling collaborative process, there is also an opportunity for stakeholders of the Wine Route and the Cider Route to

redefine their purpose. Hence, the need for a process by which the mission, vision and strategy for both routes could be re-established for these agrotourism theme routes to act again as engines of regional economic development.

Thus, the objective of this study is to identify and prioritize the set of initiatives to be undertaken by the stakeholders (e.g., wine makers and tourism association; cider makers and tourism association) to update the mission, vision, and strategy of the Wine Route and of the Cider Route. In line with the guiding principles expounded by Byrne (2009a, 2009b) regarding case research methods, the two routes examined within this research are conceptualized as “complex system units”. Thus, as such, the relevance is not about contrasting respective trajectories or trends between cases, but rather comparing participants’ representations of each case in similar yet distinct systemic circumstances. In addition, in accordance with a critical realist epistemological perspective, the objective is to uncover generating mechanisms among/between cases (Easton, 2010; Wynn & Williams, 2013).

To meet the research objective, the group concept mapping (GCM) approach is used as methodological foundations for conducting a comparative case study research. The GCM is a multivariate mixed methods-based approach (qualitative and quantitative), employed to sort and to prioritize decision-making-oriented statements by research participants evolving in complex systems (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The GCM is a bottom-up participative and facilitated process by which a group of participants is engaged to produce a shared conceptual framework representation based on multivariate statistical analyses (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Rosas & Kane, 2012). The data, information, and knowledge distributed among participants in a group are shared as part of the integrated facilitated process (Rosas, 2016). The relevance and value of these types of approaches is to move from individually aggregated data, as is often the case in typical qualitative methods (Jackson & Trochim, 2002), toward collective and complexity system-based perspectives (Trochim & Cabrera, 2005).

Therefore, the primary research question raised is: What are the representations and perceptions held of key initiatives underlying the definition of the vision, mission, and strategy by the stakeholders of the Wine Route and of the Cider Route in Quebec? Once the representations are estimated and the perception measured, the secondary research question is: How are the representations and perceptions similar and different among the groups and subgroups of stakeholders?

The end goal is to set up, with the respective sets of members of the Wine Route and of the Cider Route, two distinct GCM cases. This ensures concept maps produced by each group can be compared using both qualitative methods and formal statistical procedures. It is important to keep in mind that the methodological steps, as described below, are conducted in parallel and separately with members of the Wine Route and with members of the Cider Route. The research process involves setting up two steering committees which include the research team, members of the tourism association, and stakeholders participating in each route. The role of the steering committees is to plan the calendar, determine the focus of the intervention, and to ensure the perspectives of stakeholders are well-represented throughout the research process, especially at the results appropriation phase.

Prior to and in preparation for implementing the steps of the GCM approach, a series of eleven in-depth semi-directed interviews have been conducted with stakeholders of the two routes (three were conducted with representatives of the tourism association in three separate sessions; two were held to collect qualitative data on the Cider Route and on the Wine Route; and one interview was to confront results of the analyses with representative perspectives to ensure results’ external validity). The researchers were provided with internal documents related to the management of the routes from the tourism association, and in addition, a series of web-data was independently collected and analyzed to better understand the discourse about the routes from bloggers, researchers, and visitors.

The GCM methodological framework as applied in this study comprises seven steps which imply generating two distinct concept maps as part of a fully integrated research design: one for the stakeholders of the Wine Route and one for the stakeholders of the Cider Route. To summarize, the first step comprises two facilitated group discussions, one with the members of the Wine Route and the one with members of the Cider Route; and both groups have participants from the tourism association.

The second step is an iterative process involving the researchers and members of the steering committees. The ideas collected from the group discussion are formalized and structured into a final list of statements of initiatives to be undertaken.

The third step is the data structuring process and it involves a larger group of participants who are asked individually, using a set of specific instructions, to sort the statements into piles of themes that are related based on a logic that makes sense to them. The participants are also asked to rate each statement using a five-point Likert-type scale for the perceived relative 'importance' and 'feasibility' of each one.

At the fourth step, a total similarity matrix of the individual participants' binary sort matrix of the mixed data collected from the piles of sorted statements is used to estimate the (x, y) coordinates of the statements on the concept map using multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS) (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). The MDS coordinates are inputs into the agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis using the Ward algorithm (Everitt et al., 2011).

At the fifth step, the results from the cluster analyses are discussed among members of the respective steering committees for each route, and a facilitated group discussion takes place to identify the number of clusters to be retained on each concept maps. At the end of the process, the steering committees debrief on the concept maps.

Sixth, the latent constructs based on the results of the MDS will be identified, analyzed and contrasted to highlight the generating mechanisms within the quadrants of the regions of meaning from the concept maps. The accumulation of the cluster mapping results from the two cases will allow for a synthesis regarding the generating mechanisms. While the approach used at steps one to five of the GCM method is mainly based on inductive inference, in GCM, the sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005) part of it, which consists in interpreting the results, involves a retroductive (or abductive) inference process which consists in generalizing the results based on available knowledge, literature and participants' experience.

Seventh, a second group discussion open to participants of the Wine Route and of the Cider Route GCM processes takes place to examine the consensus measures, and the research questions are analyzed and answered.

The paper concludes with a detailed set of theoretical conjectures for the Wine Route and Cider Route stakeholders in the conduct of analogous collaborative processes. A discussion on economic policy implications is outlined.

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