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Title

Experiential Consumption Dimensions of a Winery Destination

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Conference Presentation

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Keywords

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Research Question

What are the main motivations for visiting a winery destination?

Which experiential consumption factors of a winery visit contribute to satisfaction most?

Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted at a major winery in South Africa; 3 OLS multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the relative impact of winery experience dimensions.

Results

The most satisfactory experiential consumption factors were not associated with the winery and its experiential features, but rather elements beyond the attraction, e.g. scenery and emotions associated with the visit.

Abstract

ABSTRACT

Winery activities typically include participating wine tastings and winery/vineyard tours, but often include a variety of additional components such as dining, shopping, and tasting of other (non-wine) agricultural products, as scenic views, walking trails, historic buildings, indigenous flora, etc. The goal of this study is to explore visitors' experiences at a winery destination and to unveil the main appeals while visiting the attraction. Specifically, the purpose was to discover the main motivations for visiting a winery destination. To this end, a cross-sectional survey of visitors was conducted at a major winery destination in South Africa.

BACKGROUND

Wine tourism

Previous studies have explored tourism in the world's wine-producing regions. These studies have addressed wine regions as destinations, and investigated their development and formation process (Basiuk & Udvorgeli, 2014), the dimensions of their perceived image (Bruwer & Joy, 2017), their brand equity (Gómez, Lopez, & Molina, 2015), and visitors' attitudes towards wine and travel motivations (Yozukmaz & Bekar, 2017). Several studies have looked at the economic impacts of wine tourism and the value added to stakeholders (McFarlane et al., 2017), and the hosts' perspective regarding the implications for agriculture, the natural environment, and the community (Poitras, & Getz, 2006). Other studies have discussed the evolution of wine tourism destinations into all-inclusive tourist attractions (Jaffe & Pasternak, 2004; Bridge, 2017).

A large body of literature has addressed experiential consumption aspects of wine tourism in different wine regions of the world. These studies explored the various dimensions of visitor experience (Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009), the staging of wine tourism experiences (Pikkemaat et al., 2009), consumers' expectations and performance of services and products (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004), the alignment of experience designed by wine tourism suppliers with tourists' perceived experiences (Donna & Ann Marie, 2016), experiential priorities of wine suppliers' and visitors (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2016), and wine tourists' purchasing behavior (Kolyesnikova & Dodd, 2008).

Holistic Agritourism or Wine Tourism Experience

While the literature on wine tourism is extensive, most studies have focused on specific aspects of the farms or the regions in which they are located but have not addressed these tourism destinations as holistic tourist attractions that typically include inherent or exhibited natural or cultural values, historical significance, natural beauty, and other added amenities that create an overall leisure and amusement experience. In addition, while the collection of studies includes both qualitative and quantitative contributions, the measurement tools used to capture visitor experiences has been mainly based on input from visitors, farmers, and experts in the specific research setting rather than based on theory. Thus, a theoretical foundation for a holistic measurement of experience in the context of wine tourism is lacking in the literature. Finally, these studies, especially the qualitative contributions, often rely on small sample sizes (Brandth & Haugen, 2014; Kaaristo & Järv, 2012; Pikkemaat, et al., 2009), and therefore larger samples may reveal new and different findings of the various experiential consumption characteristics.

METHODS

A cross-sectional survey was conducted at a major winery in South Africa. A structured survey was designed to include questions about sociodemographics, visit distance and duration, past visits, travel party size/composition, decision-making timeframe, activities engaged in, favorite activity, products purchased, satisfaction level with the winery experience dimensions (sense, feel, think, act, and relate), flow experience at the winery, and loyalty towards the winery. The activities and products purchased were developed based on the actual offerings of the winery; respondents were asked to select the activities that they participated in and purchases that they made during their visit along with their favorite and the least favorite activities.

The survey was conducted at the winery just before the conclusion of each participant's visit. To help with the response rate, a gift (a spice blend produced at the winery) was offered to all respondents. A total of 468 surveys were completed; however, missing values due to unanswered questions reveal different sample sizes for different variables. SPSS 20.0 was used to analyze the data. Frequencies and descriptives were used to describe the sample profile, the winery products, and winery experience dimensions. Three ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the relative impact of winery experience dimensions on flow, satisfaction, and loyalty of respondents regarding the winery.

FINDINGS

The sample was dominated by respondents between 18 and 44 years of age (70%) and female respondents (63%). The majority of respondents were domestic South African visitors (82.1%), followed by those from the U.K. (7.7%). About one-third of respondents (37.6%) visited the winery on an overnight stay trip while only 8.3% for an event or with a tour. Overnight visitors stayed away from home for about 12 nights. Those who were on a day trip traveled about 55 km to the winery, on average. Respondents visited the winery more than twice on average, made the decision to visit the winery about 5 days before, and planned to spend about three and a half hours at the winery,

on average. The travel parties included a little over 3 adults and about 1 child under the age of 18.

The most popular activities were wine tasting (73.3%), followed by viewing the scenery (73.1%) and chocolate tasting (69.2%), while the least popular activities were having a picnic (4.3%), charcuterie tasting (25%), and visiting the deli (29.7%). However, these did not entirely correspond to respondents' most favorite and least favorite activities. The top three most favorite activities were wine tasting (29.5%), chocolate tasting (24.4%), and having a meal/drink at one of the restaurants (19.9%), while the top three least favorites were wine tasting (14.1%), visiting the gift shop (12%), and visiting the glass studio (11.1%). In line with the most popular and least popular activities, most popular purchases were chocolate (42.3%), wine (29.9%), and beer (23.5%) while the least popular favorites were glass items (3%), coffee beans (6.6%), and gin (7.3%).

All winery experience dimensions were rated above the midpoint of the 7-point satisfaction scale. When winery experience dimensions were examined, the most satisfactory winery dimension was found to be related to a sensory experience associated with the surrounding scenic view beyond the attraction (6.51). Feel experiences followed and were associated with opportunities to spend time with family and friends (6.48), the feeling of peacefulness, tranquility, safety, and security (6.47), and appeal of the overall atmosphere (6.35). An act experience associated with walking around the farm was also among the top experiential consumption variables.

Respondents' ratings on the flow experience at the winery, satisfaction with the winery and loyalty towards the winery were also rated highly. All dimensions of these variables were rated above five, on average. The average of flow experience was 6.05 while that of satisfaction was 6.03 and loyalty 6.00. These averages were further used as the dependent variable in the OLS regression analysis in order to identify the winery experience dimensions explaining flow, satisfaction, and loyalty. Results revealed that not all winery experience dimensions contribute to explaining all of these variables. Winery experience attributes explaining flow experience were taste of the food and beverage, feeling of peacefulness, tranquility, safety and security, appeal of the scenic views, providing a sense of history, opportunities to touch the artwork and products, commitment to environmental friendliness, comfort level of background noise and sounds, and stimulation for new ideas. It was surprising that three of these dimensions, namely, the appeal of the scenic views, opportunities to touch the artwork and products, and commitment to environmental friendliness were negatively correlated with the flow experience; the higher the satisfaction level with these dimensions, the lower the flow experience.

On the other hand, the winery experience attributes explaining satisfaction with the winery were taste of the food and beverage tastings, providing a sense of history, friendliness of staff, stimulation of attention with interesting information, photo opportunities, comfort level of background noise and sounds, stimulation for new ideas, and landscaping with indigenous plant species. Unlike flow experience, satisfaction was in a positive relationship with all these dimensions; the higher the satisfaction with these dimensions, the higher the satisfaction with the winery. Nonetheless, when it came to identifying the winery experience attributes explaining visitor loyalty to the winery, only one winery experience dimension was significant: the taste of the food and beverage tastings.

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

It should be noted that the most satisfactory experiential consumption factors while visiting the winery were not associated with the winery itself and its experiential features, but rather elements beyond the attraction like the scenery or the emotions associated with the visit. Similar findings were suggested by Milman and Zehrer (2017) who studied a mountain attraction, as well as Fountain (2018) who studied interests and engagement of Chinese tourists in wine tourism in New Zealand.

It is interesting to mention that sense experience associated with tasting of the food or drinks was ranked eighth (6.18) among all the experiential items. This is an important finding, as many winery destinations emphasize production and tasting of wine and sometimes overlook other important elements that contribute to their guests' overall satisfaction. Therefore, decisionmakers may wish to shift emphasis to different experiences such as scenic viewing platforms or creating a tranquil atmosphere, as the actual winery experience may become secondary or complementary to other experiences the destination may offer.

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