

DEVELOPING WINE TOURISM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF WINERIES IN NEWFOUNDLAND

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies the wine tourism product and the experience as well as factors that contribute to wine preferences and consumption. This is a case study of wine tourists' visiting the Auk Island winery, Twillingate and Rodrigues winery, Markland both in Newfoundland Province. The research results reveal that most of the visitors came to the wineries because they were on vacation, wine tasting and wine purchasing. The study further revealed that quality of wines, wine taste tour and value for money influenced their decision to purchase the wines. Overall, there were significant relationships found in demographic characteristics and wine references and these findings, have an implication for wine tourism promotion in the Province in future.

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INTRODUCTION

Wine is increasingly seen as a life style beverage and a more acceptable and desired product. Nowadays, many wineries are recognizing the need to launch new products or brands to target existing and new markets more specifically, by addressing the preferences of wine buyers. Hall and Macionis (1998: 197) define wine tourism as "visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows" whereas grape wine tasting

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and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape and wine region are the primary motivations of the visitors. A wider definition offers that “experiential tourism occurring within wine regions provides unique experiences which include wine, gastronomy, culture, the arts, education and travel” (Dowling 1998: 78; Saayman & van der Merwe, 2014). In another definition VanWestering (1999) focuses mainly on the attractions of the wine regions such as heritage, landscape and the wine made (Carmichael, 2005). The winery tourism product is complex, and like other tourism products, it is “a bundle of activities, services and benefits that constitute experiences” (Medlick & Middleton, 1973). The wine tourism experience is based on agricultural land use and the production of wine that appeals to the senses of taste, smell and sight. As more wine regions develop and the wine sector further improves production concepts and strategies, or increases volume, quality, and recognition; the links between the wine and tourism products are becoming stronger (Alonso, Bressan, O’Shea & Krajsic, 2014).

The boom that wine tourism is experiencing means that more research on wine tourists is needed (Hall, Sharples, Cambourne, & Macionis, 2000), which are aiming to understand tourists’ characteristics, motives, and preferences (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002). In addition to exploration of the wine tourists, another element of interest is an analysis of the correspondence existing between wine consumption and participation in wine tourism. The existence of a link between the preferences for the wines of a certain region and the trips made to that region will result in a series of important implications for wine tourism marketing (Navarro & Iglesias, 2009). Wine tourism demonstrates a symbiosis between tourism and agriculture that provides potential for their mutual benefit (Carmichael, 2005). According to Batra (2008), gastronomic tourism focuses mainly on the food and drink of a certain area that is interesting for tourists to go and visit because of the varieties of food or drink can be found there. Wine tourism research in Canada and specifically in Newfoundland is rather limited. Little research has been conducted on Newfoundland wines and wine tourism in general. The importance of wine tourism is very relevant for all stakeholders, since wine is often seen as a social lifestyle beverage. The aim of this article is to identify and provide a general profile of winery visitors with specific references to wine preferences in relation to key demographic variables such as age and gender. Further, the article examines the visitors’ assessment of the wine tourism experience and service quality.

WINE TOURISM PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE

Mitchell and Hall (2006) give a comprehensive overview of the state-of-the-art of wine tourism research. They identify seven themes from the literature: wine tourism product; size of the winery visitation market; winery visitor segments; behavior of the winery visitor; nature of the visitor experience; wine tourism and regional development; and biosecurity risks posed by visitors. None of these, however, is explicitly linked to creating a tourism strategy based on terroir. For the purposes of developing the conceptual framework for this paper, two of these themes will be further explored: wine tourism product, and wine tourism and regional development (Holland, Smit, & Jones, 2014). Batra (2008) notes that previous studies have identified numerous factors that have been found to have an impact on the wine selection process (Batt & Dean, 2000; Jenster & Jenster, 1993; Koewn & Casey, 1995). When a product has a high proportion of attributes that can only be assessed during consumption (experience attributes) like wine (Chaney, 2000), then the ability of consumers to assess quality prior to purchase is severely impaired.

As wine tourism research continues to grow, it is important especially for the small and medium sized wineries to have a better understanding and outlook of the consumer. This will eventually aid in developing strategic planning for their market not only in the Province but also countrywide and globally. It is argued that the demand for wine tourism is driven by desire to purchase wine, interest in learning more about wine, opportunity of social interactions, and health reasons (Batra, 2008., Hall et al., 2000; Mitchell, Hall, & McIntosh, 2000). Therefore, the overall product experience in winery visitation would include various enticements such as scenery and cost of the wines. Wine tourism is considered as a form of agri-tourism and by being seen as a distinct niche market that is gaining popularity in wine producing regions. Carmichael (2005) points these wine producing regions are generally aesthetically pleasing with congenial climates.

However, despite recent interest in wine tourism among the academics, little is known about the characteristics of the winery visitors (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Dodd & Bigotte, 1997; Getz, 1999), the complexity of wine tourism product, and the manners of marketing or management (Hall et al., 2000). Wine tourism does not only involve visiting wineries and purchasing wine but also a broader range of experiences. Williams (2001: 9) conceptualizes wine tourism as “the culmination of a number of unique experiences, such as the ambience,

atmosphere, surrounding environment, regional culture and cuisine, local wine styles and varieties". One challenge for managers that requires much more attention is to create memorable experiences in order to obtain loyal winery visitors (Cole & Chancellor, 2009, Saayman & van der Merwe, 2014). Table 1 shows the theory developed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) describes four stages of economic progression that starts from commodities to goods and services and eventually turns into memorable experiences. Their application of the 4Es revealed that esthetic had the greatest influence on establishing a memorable wine-tasting experience. Some other studies (Saayman & van der Merwe, 2014) also targeted to identify the factors that affect memorable experiences (Axelsen & Swan, 2009; Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Taylor & Shanka, 2007; Yaun, Cai, Morrison, & Linton, 2005; Yaun & Jang, 2007).

Table 1. *Wine Tourist Activities Within The 4es Model*

<i>Entertainment</i>	<i>Educational</i>	<i>Esthetics</i>	<i>Escapist</i>
Tourists are engaged by performances	Tourists enhance their knowledge or skills	Tourists are enriched by sensual environments	Tourists become engrossed by participating in a different time or place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cellar concerts, music in vineyard • Wine blending demonstration • Farm and food demonstrations • Museum and heritage site visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine tastings and seminars • Culinary wine pairing events • Home wine-making seminars • Cooking and craft making classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consuming the winescape • Enjoying unique lodging and wines • Driving rural roads lined with vineyards • Art and craft fairs at wineries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vineyard hiking, cycling tours • Hot air ballooning over vineyards • Vineyard tour by horse and carriage • Harvesting grapes, riding a grape picker

Source: Saayman and van der Merwe (2014), adapted from Pine and Gilmore (1999).

WINE TOURISM IN CANADA

According to official statistics of Canada, wine accounted for 1% share of the Canadian beverage market (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, 2015). Globally, Canada is competing against other wine producing regions such as France, Italy, South Africa since the Canadian vintners have increased their production of high-quality wines. However, the larger firms are concentrated in two major provinces, British Columbia and Ontario. In the Maritimes, Nova Scotia is by far the region's major wine producer (although production is still relatively very small) and new operations are being added, but there are also a few small craft wineries in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The Quebec region also sees a small production on wines. Due to climatic conditions the Newfoundland wines are made of berries as opposed to grapes found in other parts of Canada which makes it a very unique market. As indicated before, there is very little information on wine tourism in Newfoundland. The data and statistical analyses on the impact of wine in the Province are lacking. It is therefore difficult to prove the demand for the product against the service and overall wine experience from wine tourism industry perspective. Keep in mind they are also competing against the bigger and larger firms in other regions in Canada which perhaps have better scenery and other subsidiary touristic activities that draws visitors to the area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study consisted of the only two wineries in Newfoundland. The survey was conducted through the use of a questionnaire and by the participation of the visitors after their winery tour of the facility. This methodology allowed that the visitors had vital information to respond regarding their overall experience of the winery. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, the respondents were asked if they were willing to participate. Only those who responded in affirmative answered the questionnaire. No form of compensation was provided. A total of 200 useable surveys were collected (100 from each winery). Data analysis was done using SPSS 23.0.

STUDY AREA: RODRIGUES AND AUK ISLAND WINERIES

Rodrigues Winery located on the Avalon Peninsula in Markland road, Whitbourne, is a small town, with about 1,000 inhabitants. Rodrigues winery, the only fully Kosher certified winery, is a family-based business and the largest primarily fruit winery in Canada. The wines are made out of wild blueberries, strawberry and raspberry with two of the most expensive being cloudberry and raspberry. The Rodrigues winery is also the first facility in Newfoundland.

Auk Island Winery is located in Twillingate, a town of about 3,000 inhabitants situated on two islands, which are connected to each other by causeway, in Notre Dame Bay. The building of the winery was a former academy school. Based on the authors' personal observation, the wines are made out of several types of berries such as blueberries, bakeapple, and

partridgeberries. Visitors are given a checklist of 23 flavors to keep track of the wines they have tasted. The tasting is done inside the shoppe where visitors can also buy gifts and souvenirs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the research results to provide an overview of the winery visitors, their preferences, motivations and wine tourism experiences.

Visitor Demographics

The majority of the winery visitors (26%) were at the age group of 56-65 with the females at 54%. Sixty-eight percent of the visitors were married. Taking a vacation is vital for all participants, without related to education, level of income or occupation. Half of the visitors had university education and 36% were retired. Expenditure estimates are usually characterized by a high degree of error but are still useful in providing an approximation of consumer behaviour and economic impact in a destination. Twenty-nine percent had an income above than \$70,000, and 24% were in between \$40,000-\$60,000 (Canadian). Eighty-one percent of the visitors were Canadian followed by American (11%), Australians and Norwegians (1%) each. Other visitors were from Scotland, Czech Republic, The Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Ukraine, India, Africa, the U.K. and Germany. Of the Canadian visitors, 37% were from Newfoundland followed by Ontario (28%), Nova Scotia (4%) and Alberta (3%). Visitors from British Columbia (BC) were only 2% which is understandable given that in BC there are more wineries that are well established.

These results however, are a good indicator that domestic tourism is significant for the growth of the province. Many visitors prefer the convenience and comfort of travel Thus they would prefer to use their own vehicles rather than using hired vehicles, drivers or guides. It should also be noted that 45% of the respondents were travelling with their family members, 15% with spouse, and 15% with family members/friends. The examination of the impact of tourist destination image and reputation on visitor loyalty likelihood reveals that even a potential visitor who has not had experience with the destination may form perceptions from sources of information like advertising or word-of-mouth. Hence, the amount and type of information visitors receive before their trip or onsite influences

visitor interest in traveling to a particular destination. To determine important sources of information, visitors were asked how they got the information regarding the wineries. Word of mouth (38%), family and friends (38%) were followed by brochures (27%), and travel guides (17%).

Table 2. *Difference of Wine Usage by Age Groups*

Variables	Age						p
	<26 (%)	26-35 (%)	36-45 (%)	46-55 (%)	56-65 (%)	>65 (%)	
Special occasions	77.3	65.2	63.2	43.6	54.9	26.1	.686
During meals	45.5	52.2	52.6	43.6	54.9	60.9	.026*
Wine tours	45.5	39.1	57.9	25.6	41.2	19.6	.031*
When offered as a gift	40.9	30.4	52.6	23.1	37.3	15.2	.044*
Social gatherings	81.8	73.9	47.4	59.0	60.8	45.7	.329

* p < 0.05

Table 2 presents the results of wine usage across different age groups. Significant differences were recorded in cases where wine was taken during meals where the age group above 65 years had more cases of consumption than other age groups. Also, during wine tours, the age group 36 – 45 years had more cases than other ages whereas the age group above 65 years had the least cases. Similarly, a significant difference with the highest consumption was found in the cases where wine was given as a gift in the age group of 36 – 45 years. In all the other occasions, the results indicated a significant value of >0.05 indicating no association between ages and wine consumption during the special occasions, and social gatherings.

Table 3. *Differences of Wine Usage by Gender*

Variables	Male		Female		p
	f	%	f	%	
Special occasions	44	47.8	57	53.3	.447
During meals	49	53.3	55	51.4	.613
Wine tours	38	41.3	32	29.9	.016*
When offered as a gift	29	31.5	32	29.9	.766
Social gatherings	61	66.3	58	54.2	.006**

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

The results in Table 3 shows significant differences in locations where wine was taken during tours. The male had more cases than the female who had consume wine during wine tours. Statistical difference

between wine consumption during social gatherings was also found between the genders where males had more cases of consumption during social gatherings than females. This may be due to the fact that most females may be cautious in responding to the survey and do not drink as much alcoholic beverages as men do. Results in Table 4 shows significant differences amongst age groups and wine preference for sparkling wine (0.045), rose wine (0.045), fortified wine (0.019) and fruit wine (0.000).

Table 4. *Wine Preferences by Age*

Wine preferences	Age						p
	<26 (%)	26-35 (%)	36-45 (%)	46-55 (%)	56-65 (%)	>65 (%)	
Canadian red wine	31.8	39.1	47.4	46.2	47.1	37.0	.772
Canadian white wine	40.9	21.7	36.8	35.9	45.1	37.0	.570
Sparkling	27.3	26.1	15.8	10.3	23.5	26.1	.045*
Rose wine	22.7	21.7	21.1	17.9	11.8	10.9	.045*
Fortified wine	18.2	13.0	5.3	7.7	15.7	13.0	.019*
Dessert wine	27.3	17.4	26.3	12.8	19.6	10.9	.463
Fruit wine	72.7	34.8	47.4	30.8	31.4	15.2	.000**
Imported	36.4	54.5	57.9	48.7	51.0	39.1	.562

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

For the sparkling wine, less preference was in the age groups 36–45 and 46–55 years compared to other ages whereas for the rose wine, the young consumers (<26) had highest preference. Fortified and fruit wines also had high preference in the ages group <26 years compared to other age groups. Canadian made wines and imported wines did not differ significantly across the age groups. Table 5 shows wine preference in relation to gender where only sparkling wine indicated a significance difference. The female respondents had more preference compared to the males ($p < 0.05$). Other wine types indicated no significant difference between preferences based on gender.

Table 5. *Wine Preferences by Gender*

Wine preferences	Male		Female		p
	f	%	f	%	
Red wine	42	45.7	42	39.3	.459
White wine	34	37.0	41	38.3	.725
Sparkling	16	17.4	27	25.2	.035*
Rose wine	15	16.3	17	15.9	.906
Fortified wine	13	14.1	12	11.2	.768
Dessert wine	15	16.3	20	18.7	.815
Fruit wine	35	38.0	33	30.8	.436
Imported	41	44.6	52	49.1	.467

* p <0.05

Winery Experiences

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents were first time visitors to the two wineries, whereas 43% visit wineries at least once a year. Survey participants were also asked to evaluate their main reasons for visiting the winery. The respondents (71%) visited the winery, because they were on vacation. A further 41% visited for the purposes of wine tasting and 36% to purchase the wines. These statistics would help to understand the profile of wine tourism in Newfoundland. Effectively, having these kinds of data and businesses in wine destinations may meet the needs and wants of their consumers. Additionally, the researcher examined the visitation statistics of other wine tourism regions in Canada and in selected countries in the world. This information is vital to understand the marketing dynamics that Newfoundland wineries may be facing nationally and internationally. Ontario- Niagara (43%), British Columbia (26%) and Nova Scotia (22%) had the highest share in wine tourists. This is not surprising given the fact that these areas are the most developed wine tourism regions in Canada.

Visitors were also asked, if they visited other wineries in the world. The results show that 58% of the visitors had not visited any other wine regions in the world. For those who already visited, France (21%), Italy (16%), Australia (11%) and Greece (10%) had the highest shares. This is also important for Newfoundland wine entrepreneurs to understand their competitors. Other wine areas (19%) visited include: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, England, Germany, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain and USA (Napa valley-California, Long Island-NY).

Since the wineries rely heavily on word of mouth as a source of generating visitor traffic, it is paramount that the quality of experience

offered to the tourists is high in order to attract new or repeat visits. The survey respondents (88%) felt that the service they received were excellent in terms of knowledge of staff, variety of wine tasting and adequate information material. Future research may look into the service level they perceived vis-à-vis the service level expected by the visitors. The results of this study show that Newfoundlanders offer good hospitality, friendliness and kindness to the wine tourists.

Table 6. Factors Influencing Decision to Purchase Wines

Factors	Very Important (%)	Important (%)	Not Important (%)
Wine taste tour	57.0	21.5	21.5
Tour guide recommended	37.5	27.5	35.0
Quality of wine	75.0	18.0	0.7
Souvenir	28.0	31.5	40.5
Aroma	37.5	38.5	24.0
Value for money	56.0	31.0	13.0
Service received	54.0	33.5	12.5
Brand label/loyal	30.0	25.0	45.0
Gift	39.0	27.5	33.5
Support local economy	49.5	39.5	11.0

The visitors rated (Table 6) good quality wines (75%), wine tasting tour (57%), value for money (56%), the service received (54%) and supporting local economy (49.5%) as very important factors that positively affected to their winery visits. The results support the earlier statistics where the visitors indicated that their main purpose of visit was wine tasting (41%) and purchasing wines (36%). Therefore, good quality of wines would evidently increase sales, visitor spending, and support local economy. However, brand label/loyalty (45%) and purchase as a souvenir (40.5%) were not considered important by the respondents.

CONCLUSION

There has been no study on wine tourism in Newfoundland, hence this study sets the stage for future research in this area. The results of this study reveal an interest in wine tourism in Newfoundland based on the findings. The study both attempt to broaden the scope of wine tourism in Newfoundland, and to add knowledge of wine tourism in Canada. There's limited number of wineries in Newfoundland and less competition in the area. However, this research can help the wineries to

ensure and to maintain quality experience for the visitors in competitive markets both in Canada and around the world. Additionally, the aspect of word of mouth is a key in marketing of wine tourism in Newfoundland as evident in the results. Findings reveal that good quality of wines influences purchase and consumers should be involved in the production process.

Management should maintain the quality of experience, as wine tourism in the province develops. There will be a need soon for additional infrastructure as well with the increase of the visitor numbers. As identified in the literature, education is a key motivation of visit to wineries. The wineries in this study will do well in adding a comprehensive component in their product. For example, focusing on the wine experience through various educational opportunities should further pull tourists to the province. Towards this direction, Mitchell and Hall (2006) suggest that greater attention should be paid to the educational function of winery visits to enhance consumers' wine knowledge. Special introductory wine tasting and educational events could be designed for homogeneous groups of wine tourists. Newsletters and invitations to wine related events can be used as tools to retain contact with visitors.

The winery experience becomes an opportunity to create a relationship between the winery and the visitor. As Charters, Fountain and Fish (2009) note, the establishment of "connection" with visitors is a key issue in wine tourism even if different wineries need to make their mark in different ways (Nella & Christou, 2014). Undoubtedly, Newfoundland has great opportunities of growth. As this study highlights, there is a need for similar and additional systematic research on benefits and impacts of wine tourism in the region. Overall, the results in this study assist the authorities by providing the core quality experiences that visitors seek during wine tours.

Future research may include health related issues and comparisons of other wine areas in Canada focusing on the views of wine consumers' preference of taste (berries vs grapes). Proper promotion and marketing of wine and wine tourism in Newfoundland as a destination is highly important for the wine market in Canada. As the demand steadily increases, Newfoundland Province may attract more number of wine tourists and meet the needs of tourists, if the results of such market-based studies are used as strategical tools.

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