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Comparing Millennial Visitors to Wineries and Breweries in British Columbia: An Examination of Social Involvement, Social Return, and Self-Image Congruency

Jarrett R. Bachman

Fairleigh Dickinson University - Vancouver Campus, jbachman@fdu.edu

John S. Hull

Thompson Rivers University

Sanja Haecker

Thompson Rivers University

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COMPARING MILLENNIAL VISITORS TO WINERIES AND BREWERIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT, SOCIAL RETURN, AND SELF-IMAGE CONGRUENCY

Introduction

Two of the most important trends in the tourism and hospitality industry today are the progression of millennials as a crucial generational market for future growth (IPK International, 2016) and the development of culinary tourism as a driver of the industry, particularly as tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences (Garibaldi, Stone, Wolf, & Pozzi, 2017). According to Barton, Haywood, Jhunjunwala, & Bhatia (2013), millennials are also a unique generation in that they are fiercely brand and product loyal. This is particularly salient in the beverage space, as people form their drinking habits while in their early to mid-twenties, an age that represents a part of the millennial generation (Bruwer, Lesschaeve, & Campbell, 2012).

Across the tourism industry, food and wine are being rapidly integrated into tourism offerings in both rural and urban areas in an effort to support local business and immerse tourists into local products and communities (Maria, 2014). In fact, many destinations are using local food and wine products as a competitive advantage and differentiator within destination marketing (Croce & Perri, 2017). In British Columbia (BC), both the wine and craft beer industries have been growing and are promoted by destination marketing organizations at the local, regional, and provincial levels. As of May 2019, the BC Ale Trail (2019) website, a provincial tourism initiative, lists 183 craft breweries in operation in BC, an exponential growth over the last decade. The BC Wine Institute (2019) states that the 370 licensed wineries in BC welcome over 1,000,000 visitors annually and contribute \$2.8 billion to the BC economy. To continue the growth and success of this sector, capturing the millennial market during their formative years is vital.

Literature Review

Within the literature, although wine tourism has been the primary focus of research in the past (Croce & Perri, 2017), craft beer tourism research has been a growth area more recently (Alonso, Sakellarios, & Bressan, 2017). Previous literature from the wine industry has indicated that wine tourism is indulging and includes socialization and relaxation while tasting and consuming alcohol (Alant & Bruwer, 2004). In addition, literature in craft breweries has started to examine the social aspects of craft breweries (i.e., Bachman & Hull, 2018; Bachman, Hull, & Marlowe, in press; Donadini & Porretta, 2017; Fletchall, 2016; Murray & Kline, 2015). Concepts and theories including social involvement (Xu, Barbieri, Anderson, Leung, & Rozier-Rich, 2016), social return (Bachman & Hull, 2018; Boley, Jordan, Kline, & Knollenberg), and self-concept theory (Bachman et al., in press) have been used to explore winery and craft brewery patrons. However, previous research has focused on either winery or craft brewery patrons, but not both in the same study using similar geographic contexts. As such, the current study seeks to provide a more comprehensive examination of millennial patrons to both wineries and breweries concurrently using a similar geographic context (BC).

Methodology

A multiple methods approach (Babbie, 2016) was used to collect quantitative survey data. This was completed using two different surveys. One survey was conducted for visitors to craft breweries in BC. For craft brewery respondents, a total of 113 usable surveys from millennials were collected in August and September 2017 using an intercept technique at eleven different craft breweries located throughout BC.

A second survey was conducted for millennial visitors to wineries on the Kamloops Wine Trail in BC. For winery respondents, a total of 246 usable surveys from millennials were collected in 2018. Patrons who had visited at least one winery on the Kamloops Wine Trail in the previous 12 months were recruited to participate in the survey using a variety of techniques including email invitations, intercepting patrons, and snowball sampling.

Both surveys contained questions regarding social return (Boley et al., 2018), social involvement (Xu et al., 2016), self-image congruency (Bachman et al., in press; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Todd, 2001), and demographic questions. In total, 359 surveys of millennial visitors to either BC craft breweries or wineries were collected and used for analysis.

Results/Analysis

One objective of this study was to compare millennial visitors to BC craft breweries and wineries. Demographically, respondents were not significantly different in gender (Wineries: 74.8% female; Craft Breweries: 67.3% female, $\chi^2=2.204$, $p=.138$) or in education (Wineries: 45.9% University degree or higher, Craft Breweries: 55.8% University degree or higher, $\chi^2=2.986$, $p=.084$).

The second objective of this study was to better understand the social and self-constructs of millennial visitors to both breweries and wineries. An analysis was conducted on the aggregated data to determine the social involvement, social return, and self-image congruency for millennial visitors to craft breweries and wineries. Millennial craft brewery patrons were significantly higher in social involvement than millennial winery patrons. They were also significantly higher in self-image congruency than millennial patrons to wineries. Surprisingly though, millennial craft brewery patrons were significantly lower than millennial patrons to wineries regarding social return.

Conclusion

Differences found in social involvement, social return, and self-image congruency in this study between millennial craft brewery and winery patrons provide evidence that although millennials are often grouped together as one generation, preferences and expectations of all millennials are not the same. Differences among millennials must be better understood, and product and experience offerings must be created to reflect this phenomenon. Conceptually, this research provides further evidence of the impact that social involvement can have for tourist experiences and destinations. By getting patrons to be more socially involved with both wineries and craft breweries, a more solid long-term relationship between patrons and those businesses can be established. This relationship is a key area for tourism and business development in BC and throughout destinations which promote culinary tourism through wineries and craft breweries.

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