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UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIAL INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN WINE TOURISM – A CASE STUDY ON THE KAMLOOPS WINE TRAIL, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Introduction

For many, experiencing local culture and traditions is one of the main motivators to travel. One of the emerging trends in tourism is culinary tourism, which describes the participation in food and beverage experiences other than one is used to (Garibaldi, Stone, Wolf, & Pozzi, 2017). One of the major players in Canada's wine industry is British Columbia (BC). According to the British Columbia Wine Institute (BCWI, 2017), the BC wine industry contributes \$2.8 billion to the provincial economy and generates about 12,000 jobs. Hence, the promotion of wine tourism is a lucrative opportunity for boosting the local economy. In Kamloops, the Kamloops Wine Trail is the newest addition to BC's wine tourism development with three licensed wineries currently participating (Kamloops Wine Trail, 2019). Based on its novelty, there has not been any empirical research conducted regarding the visitor profile of visitors to the Kamloops Wine Trail. Identifying the wine tourist target segment is an important step in maximizing a winery's sales and customer satisfaction (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002). According to Bruwer, Lesschaeve, and Campbell (2012), people form their drinking habits while in their early to mid-twenties. Hence, introducing Millennials to wine, and wine tourism, is a crucial part of ensuring the industry's future growth.

Literature Review

Hall (1996) defines wine tourism as "visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors" (Hall, 1996, p.109). Getz and Brown (2006) argue that wine tourism definitions relate to a traveller's motivation. Getz (2002), however, claims that not only is the consumer's perspective relevant to wine tourism, but one should also consider the perspectives of wine producers and those of the destination. For example, this can be represented by local tourism agencies. Hence, "wine tourism is, simultaneously a form of consumer behaviour, a strategy by which destinations develop and market wine-related attractions and imagery, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to educate, and to sell their products, directly to the consumers" (Getz & Brown, 2006, p.147).

According to IPK International (2016), Millennials are the new key market for the tourism industry's future growth, as they currently are the largest generation in history (Napier Burkhard, 2016). Millennials are defined as people born between 1980 and 2000; it is estimated that there are 1.8 billion millennials worldwide (IPK International, 2016). Research identifies food and wine as one of the main motivators for Millennial leisure travel (Barton, Haywood, Jhunjunwala, & Bhatia, 2013). Getz and Brown (2006) concluded that for attracting a younger generation of wine drinkers, destination features and cultural activities are as important to the experience as wine-related features.

Methodology. This study aimed to identify motivations and memories of Millennials participating in wine tourism through a psychographic analysis using a case study

approach. The importance of this research was to assist wineries that are part of the Kamloops Wine Trail with improving their marketing strategy aimed at millennials. The research data was collected online through Qualtrics using a 56-item quantitative survey which was available from January 17 to February 17, 2018. Paper copies of the survey were also distributed to students at Thompson Rivers University (TRU), and the link to the online Qualtrics survey was posted to class websites by various professors at TRU. To reach a broader audience, respondents were encouraged to share the survey link, and students on the TRU campus were intercepted randomly and asked to participate. A total of 246 valid responses were collected by the end of the data collection period.

Results/Analysis

Most respondents had high agreeableness for seeking new experiences. This was identified by IPK International (2016) and TIAC and HLT Advisory Inc. (2016) as a distinct characteristic of millennials. From the analysis, it was found that the most important motivation factor for visiting wineries for millennials was tasting wine. The second most important factor was enjoying the natural landscape and scenery. This was higher for repeat visitors than first time visitors. Socializing was the third highest motivation for repeat visitors and the fourth highest for first time visitors. This contradicts observations made by Getz and Carlsen (2008) who argue that for the millennial generation, the main motivator for participating in wine tourism is the opportunity to socialize. Yet, the results do partially agree with Alant and Bruwer (2004), who state that the primary motivation of wine tourists are product-related experiences such as wine tasting and buying, and secondary motives include socializing and learning.

Interestingly, repeat visitors were more motivated by having a learning experience at the wineries than first time visitors. One additional noteworthy result was that the motivation of 'group influence' to visit wineries was higher among first time visitors ($M=4.88$) than repeat visitors ($M=4.46$). This idea supports Pratt's (2014) findings that some wine tourists visit wineries based on group pressure. Additional analysis on millennial memories from winery visits was also conducted.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is important for wineries to take a closer look at personal attitudes and motivations regarding winery experiences. For this research on the Kamloops Wine Trail, although the top motivation was tasting the winery products, the top two memories indicated were socializing with friends and loved ones and enjoying the natural surroundings and scenery of the winery. The fact that purchasing wine and tasting wine and food at the winery were only the third and fourth most cited memory is noteworthy. There is a disconnect between motivation and memory which requires further research. The memory results in this study do support Getz and Carlsen (2008) and Alebaki, Menexes, and Koutsouris (2015) which state that for Millennial wine tourists, the idea of socializing is more important than the tasting experience. Personal engagement with the winery staff or owners was also indicated as an important factor, but more research and insight is needed. By being more aware of millennial motivations and memories behind participating in wine visits and wine tourism, wineries will be better able to provide the experience that patrons are seeking.

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