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# Residents' Perceptions of the Contributions of Local Wineries

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# RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF LOCAL WINERIES

## CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Wine tourism, a steady growing industry throughout the world, is considered a main economic and social development driver (Carlsen 2004). Wine tourism is also growing in the USA, where wineries are found in all 50 states (America's Wine Trail 2012). The state of North Carolina (NC), ranking fourth in wine and culinary tourism nationally, is showing a rapid wine tourism development especially in its Piedmont region, which currently hosts over 77 wineries (NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services 2015). Unparalleled with its growth and stated development effects, scant information exists on the varied contributions wine tourism brings to local communities which may hinder the further sustainable development and consolidation of both the wine and wine tourism industries.

Several constructs are found in the literature to assess the contributions of tourism endeavors in local communities. Among those, community impacts, personal benefits, and social capital are the most salient. *Community Impacts* are frequently assessed using the three-dimensional sustainable development approach, which includes a set of positive and negative items representing the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions of sustainability (Chen and Chen 2010; Ko and Stewart 2002). Evaluation of *Personal Benefits* (i.e., gains at the individual level) associated with tourism development has also caught researchers' attention, though to a lesser extent (Andereck and Nyaupane 2011; McGehee and Andereck 2004). The development of *Social Capital*, defined as "the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks" (Woolcock 1998, p.153), is also considered a contribution of tourism development in a destination through their five comprising elements: bonding (horizontal relationships within a community); bridging (relationships across distinct networks); trust (expectations members have in other members' good intentions and actions); collective action (activities members pursue towards a common objective); and information sharing (information flow) (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000; Putnam 1993; Wu 2008).

## STUDY JUSTIFICATION AND PURPOSE

The steady growth of wine tourism and its suggested contributions to local communities (Carlsen, 2004), local residents' capacity to support further tourism development in their communities (Oviedo-Garcia, Castellanos-Verdugo and Martin-Ruiz 2008), and the emerging state of scholarship of wine tourism (Xu 2014) calls for a deeper examination of residents' perceptions of the contributions wine tourism bring to themselves and their community. Given the multiplicity of constructs suitable to examine the contributions of tourism development, such examination calls for an integrated approach.

In response to such a need, this study was conducted to evaluate the contributions of local wine tourism development, at both personal and community levels, as perceived by surrounding neighbors. The complexity of wine tourism contributions was captured in this study as perceived personal benefits, community impacts, and social capital that local wineries produce. Taking into consideration that relationships with local wineries can support further wine tourism development (Hoffman, Beverland, and Rasmussen 2001), this study also evaluated whether perceptions of those contributions differ across neighbors with different levels of visitation to their surrounding wineries. Study results not only contribute to the scholarship of wine tourism, but also provide marketing and management insights that can help to increase residents' support for further wine tourism development.

## RESEARCH METHODS

A survey was conducted in 2013 among residents within a 10-mile buffer from two wine trails in the east (Haw River) and west (Surry County) areas of the Piedmont (NC); each trail comprises four wineries. The sample was composed of 681 households, randomly selected. A drop-off/pick-up method was used to distribute surveys because its suitability in small and rural communities, with reduced non-coverage error and a relatively high response rate (Steele et al. 2001). The self-administered survey instrument collected information on personal benefits (7 items, 2 dimensions), community impacts (24 items, 3 dimensions), and social capital (18 items, 5 dimensions) associated with local winery development; items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The survey also queried respondents' wine-tourism behavior (e.g., frequency of visiting a local wineries) and demographics.

Descriptive statistics were used to examine respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and perceived personal benefits, impacts, and social capital associated with wine tourism. Cronbach's alphas were computed to assess internal reliability of items within each dimension of personal benefits, community impacts, and social capital. Then, a series of analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) were conducted to test whether those perceptions differed between respondents with different visitation frequency to local wineries ( $p < .05$ ). Significant results were followed with post-hoc *t*-tests to examine differences between groups; Bonferroni adjustments were applied to critical values as appropriate (personal benefits  $0.05/2 = 0.025$ ; community impacts  $0.05/3 = 0.02$ ; social capital  $0.05/5 = 0.01$ ).

## KEY FINDINGS

A total of 305 residents completed the survey (45% response rate). Respondents were predominantly middle-aged ( $M = 52$  years old) and female (59%); about a third had at least a four-year college degree or an annual household income above \$75,000. On average, respondents lived 21 years in their neighborhood and 35 years in the Piedmont. About half (48.0%) reported having visited a Piedmont winery at least once in the past three years.

Based on the visit frequency to Piedmont wineries in the last three years, respondents were segmented in three groups: The *Non-goers* ( $n = 156$ ; 52%) who have never visited a Piedmont winery in the last three years; the *Infrequent* visitors ( $n = 51$ ; 17%) who did so but rarely; and the *Occasional* ones ( $n = 93$ ; 31%) reported going to local wineries at least on occasional basis.

Cronbach's tests showed high internal reliability among items comprised in each of the dimensions constructed to examine personal benefits (personal enhancement  $\alpha = .817$ ; community sentience  $\alpha = .859$ ), community impacts (economic  $\alpha = .885$ ; socio-cultural  $\alpha = .853$ ; environmental  $\alpha = .847$ ), and social capital (bonding  $\alpha = .860$ ; bridging  $\alpha = .906$ ; trust ( $\alpha = .827$ ; collective action  $\alpha = .711$ ; information sharing ( $\alpha = .839$ )). Respondents perceived limited personal benefits ( $M = 3.1$ ) associated with winery development in the Piedmont. Those perceptions were being more pronounced towards their community sentience (e.g., caring more about their community's cultural resources) than to their individual enhancement (e.g., increasing their understanding of other cultures). Respondents perceived that their communities were not heavily impacted after Piedmont wineries were established ( $M = 3.2$ ), being the socio-cultural impacts (e.g., increase of the variety of cultural activities) slightly more positively rated than economic (e.g., increase of tourists' spending) and environmental (e.g., beautification of local landscapes) ones. Respondents also reported neutral and even low ratings in all wine-related social capital indicators, especially related to bonding ( $M = 2.8$ ) and bridging ( $M = 2.9$ ).

Statistical analysis showed that the visit frequency to local wineries is significantly associated with residents' perceptions of the contributions of these wineries in their personal and community realms (Table 1). Overall, *Occasional* visitors are statistically the most aware, while the *Non-goers* the least aware, of their local wineries' contributions in all three indicators examined (personal benefits, community impacts, social capital). It is worth noting, that in some indicators (e.g., community sentience, overall community impacts, trust), no statistical difference was found between the *Infrequent* and *Occasional* visitors. These results suggest that even slight connections between wineries and their neighboring residents (in the form of visits) may increase locals' recognition of their wineries, which can enhance their support to further local wine tourism development (Hoffman, Beverland, and Rasmussen 2001). However, research is needed to unveil the specific meaning of visit "frequency" (e.g., monthly, quarterly), as such information was not captured in this study.

Table 1. A comparison of residents' perceived personal benefits, community impacts, and social capital associated with wine tourism development across *No-goers*, *Infrequent* and *Occasional* visitors to local wineries

	No-goers (n = 156)	Infrequent (n = 51)	Occasional (n = 93)	Statistics	
<b><i>Personal Benefits (Overall)</i></b>	<b>3.0<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4<sup>b</sup></b>	<i>F</i> = 9.328	<i>p</i> < .001
Personal enhancement	2.9 <sup>a</sup>	3.1	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	<i>F</i> = 17.065	<i>p</i> < .001
Community sentience	3.1 <sup>a</sup>	3.4 <sup>b</sup>	3.5 <sup>b</sup>	<i>F</i> = 14.542	<i>p</i> < .001
<b><i>Community Impacts (Overall)</i></b>	<b>3.1<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>3.2<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>3.3<sup>b</sup></b>	<i>F</i> = 17.888	<i>p</i> < .001
Economic impacts	3.2	3.2	3.3	<i>F</i> = 3.156	<i>p</i> = .044
Socio-cultural impacts	3.1 <sup>a</sup>	3.3	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	<i>F</i> = 11.201	<i>p</i> < .001
Environmental impacts	3.1 <sup>a</sup>	3.2	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	<i>F</i> = 8.495	<i>p</i> < .001
<b><i>Social Capital (Overall)</i></b>	<b>2.7<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>3.2<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>3.4<sup>b</sup></b>	<i>F</i> = 46.054	<i>p</i> < .001
Bonding	2.4 <sup>a</sup>	2.9 <sup>b</sup>	3.3 <sup>c</sup>	<i>F</i> = 46.803	<i>p</i> < .001
Bridging	2.5 <sup>a</sup>	3.1 <sup>b</sup>	3.5 <sup>c</sup>	<i>F</i> = 54.154	<i>p</i> < .001
Trust	2.8 <sup>a</sup>	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	3.4 <sup>b</sup>	<i>F</i> = 16.828	<i>p</i> < .001
Collective action	2.9 <sup>a</sup>	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	3.6 <sup>b</sup>	<i>F</i> = 27.931	<i>p</i> < .001
Information sharing	2.8 <sup>a</sup>	3.3 <sup>b</sup>	3.4 <sup>b</sup>	<i>F</i> = 22.228	<i>p</i> < .001

<sup>a,b,c</sup> Different letter superscripts indicates statistical difference between groups after applying Bonferroni adjustments to critical values as follows: Personal Benefits (0.05/2=0.025); Community Impacts (0.05/3 = 0.02); and Social Capital (0.05/5 = 0.01).

## STUDY IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

Study results provide a better understanding of residents' perceptions of the contributions of local wine tourism development, at both personal and community levels. Residents' overall neutral ratings suggest local winery managers should place more efforts on communicating and educating residents about the positive contributions their wineries bring to local communities. Wineries can use a variety of marketing channels to disseminate their contributions, such as traditional marketing tools (e.g., flyers) or social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).

In addition, the significant association between level of visitation and overall residents' perceived contributions suggests that it is critical that Piedmont wineries devote more time to capture a local clientele by promoting popular wine-related (e.g., informal wine social groups, on-line wine-related social media) and non-wine related (e.g., weddings, birthday parties, concerts, art exhibitions) activities and events (Lockshin and Spawton 2001).

Study results enriched the existing managerial intelligence of wineries to better bridge with local residents, genuinely involve residents, maximize their benefits and gain their support for future wine tourism development. Understanding residents' perceived contributions of wineries is also a step forward toward fostering sustainable tourism development through the boost of economy and enhanced quality of life of residents.

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