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Visitors Motivations for Attending Wine Festivals – A Case Study of „Vinistra Wine Festival“ in Croatia Anita ILAK PERŠURIĆ, Ana TEŽAK

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Abstract

Attending a wine festival as a planned activity has roots in the motivation of socializing during leisure time, enjoying wine, meeting the producers and learning about wine. In wider frames using leisure time in visiting wine fairs has a future implication on visiting wine cellars, wine roads and enjoying the surroundings. Since Istria is a wide known tourism area that offers a large range of activities, the wine fair Vinistra is one weekend offer that occurs every year in May. For numerous local visitors this wine fair becomes a socializing point and a place for enjoying wine with friends and family. The fair is a focal point for discussion about wine preferences and gaining new wine experiences. Exploratory factor analysis in a clear factor structure with four factors have shown that Vinistra wine fair enhances the probability of future visits to wine fairs, wine roads and wine producers and increases wine consumption, wine tasting and wine purchase. Therefore the research on a sample of visitors provided important information for the organizers and wine producers explaining what to expect of such an event and what consumers demand, while for science it gave valuable input for further and deeper research.

Keywords: wine festivals, wine tasting, consumer preferences

Introduction

Vinistra wine fair as an event is a spatial and temporally unique event. As a planned event it has a primary purpose to promote business and trade of wine. The wine festival Vinistra started in 1992. as a local event and in two decades it became the most important regional event (organized at the weekend of 1st May every year).

Since then it had a constant gradually improving growth in the number of visitors and the number of wine producers attending the event.

For wine producers Vinistra is a business event to present and promote their wine products, for wine professionals to explore what is going on in the wine business in the region, or to promote products connected to vineyard and wine production, while for both groups it can be an occasion for gaining professional knowledge and up to date news. Vinistra improved the image of Istrian wines providing free wine tasting, workshops of wine tasting and with wide scale marketing enhanced the image of Istria wines. Finally it performed future economic benefits for wine producers through the increase in wine sales and establishment of wine roads. As a weekend event Vinistra wine fair is popular among local visitors as place of meeting, enjoying time with friends and family along with a glass of wine. In time it became a prestigious event to “see and be seen” at. For visitors from all Croatian regions it is an occasion to explore the sights of Istria and enjoy local wine. In line with tourism promotion purpose are educational activities of open access discussions, invited lectures and show cooking which all have wine in focus.

Although the majority of visitors are from the region, a certain percent of visitors come from abroad (Italy, Germany, Austria, Netherland, France). Therefore Vinistra became an event that promotes beside wines the touristic destination of the County, Istria and the City of Poreč.

Theoretical background

Attending a wine festival is for one a socializing event for others a professional event while in general it can be a part of culture or tradition (like in the Mediterranean countries where wine consumption, having a wine cellar and the culture of wine drinking are a path of culture and it refers to Istria too).

For the organizers it is important to recognize the motives of visitors in order to meet their needs and finally to achieve benefits of attendees and their satisfaction with the visit.

Vinistra as an event gives various opportunities to present local, autochthonous wines and promote the region of Istria as well. This connection of wine and tourism is also mentioned in literature by Carlsen and Getz (2006) explaining the relation between tourism and wine as natural partners.

Several researchers have recognized (evaluated) the role that wine festivals have in marketing of wine regions, wine brands and particular wines (Bruwer, 2002; Cambourne and Macionis, 2000; Getz, 2000; Hoffman et al. 2001). Only a few studies have analyzed regional wine festivals, while the most of them studied tourists visiting wineries

While tourists in general terms usually have certain behavior and travel motivational factors to travel, wine tourists as a segment of tourists are motivated with the focal point - wine.

In the 80ties of the last century a theory of push and pull factors was presented by Dann (1977, 1981) and Crompton (1979). According to Dann push motives were escape, relaxation, prestige, exploration and evaluation of self, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships and facilitation of social interaction. The pull factors were novelty and education.

According to Hall and Macionis (1998) wine tourism is „visitation to wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a wine region are the prime motivating factor for visitors“. Motivations to visit wine tourists involve multiple variables like: wine related, attending wine related events, socializing with friends, meeting the wine maker, learning about wine, tour of wineries, visiting attractions in the surroundings, entertainment.

According to Yuan et al. (2005) travel motivations are subject to specific situations and unique settings. The authors' posted a question why people attend to wine festivals, and if there are common motives specific benefits or extrinsic obligations that they intended to realize, and if there were differences in demographical groups.

From numerous research it became obvious that wine tourists are not a homogeneous group (Bruwer and Li, 2001; Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Cambourne and Macionis, 2000). Studies of several authors (Hall, 1996; Dodd, 1995; Getz, 2000; Charters and Pettigrew, 2007) used qualitative studies to identify segments of wine tourists. Hall stated three groups of „Wine lovers, wine interested and curious tourists“ while Charters identified winery visitors as „casual visitors, novelty or lifestyle experiences and sophisticated drinkers“.

As Crompton and McKay (1997) quoted motives occur before the experience while the satisfaction comes after it. Crompton (1979) evaluated seven socio psychological motivational domains: novelty: a desire to seek out new and different experiences through pleasure, travel, experience thrill, adventure surprise to alleviate boredom.

Patterns of consumption of food and beverages are likely to have been shaped by previous exposure, experiences, and associations during an individual lifetime. It depends often on socio-demographical features such as gender, nationality, age (Ilak and Težak, 2011; 2009; Ružić et al. 2006) and external circumstances like the occasion or event where and when wine was consumed. Also combination of lifestyle attitudes, product related attitudes and situational factors determine specific consumers' choice (Brunso and Grunert, 2007.)

Liking can be a stimulus of previous experience and helps understanding current consumption (Melo et al. 2012). In the case of Australian consumers' enjoyment, situational factors, personal history and lifestyle related issues are crucial drivers to wine consumption (Charters and Pettigrew, 2008).

A wider frame for wine festivals, wine tourism and tourism as an escape and socializing situation was given by Iso-Ahtola which concept provided a frame of push and pull factors an escape-seek dichotomy can also be a model for tourism motivations. Escaping is a „desire to leave every day environment behind yourself“, while seeking is „desire to obtain psychological (intrinsic) rewards through travel in a contrasting environment“.

Iso-Ahtola (1982) stated that tourists may escape their personal world (i.e. personal troubles, problems, difficulties) and for interpersonal world (i.e. coworkers, family members, relations, friends, neighbors) and my seek personal rewards (e.g. feelings of mastery, learning about other cultures, rest and relaxation, recharge, getting rewarded, ego enhancement, prestige) and or interpersonal rewards (e.g. varied and increased social interaction, interacting with the travel group, with old friends).

Methodology

A pilot research focused on visitors' motivations for attending wine exhibition Vinistra in Poreč, Croatia and their wine consumption habits was conducted on 1st May 2010. In this study the target population included those responders that were visitors who attended the wine exhibition Vinistra and were 18 years of age or older. Responders were approached by trained researchers and asked to participate in the survey. Researchers explained the purpose of the survey and said that the survey was anonymous. Data was collected through personal interview with responders. In that process convenient sampling was used.

For the purpose of gathering data, the questionnaire was constructed. It consisted of 13 questions which were divided into three sections. The first section of questions was designed to gather respondents' characteristics (age, gender, education level, occupation, net monthly personal income, settlement size, family members, country of origin/country, first or repeat visit, sources of information, reason for visiting, frequency of wine consumption and level of wine knowledge). The second section of questions involved questions relating to responders' preferences about wine consumption and purchase. In the third section, responder answered questions related to their habits of consuming and purchasing wine and rated certain aspects of wine exhibition.

Data were processed using statistical methods i.e. univariate and multivariate statistics. Univariate statistics was used for general description of the sample while multivariate statistics was used to examine multidimensionality and internal reliability of the motives for visiting wine exhibitions. In order to examine multidimensionality of the perceived value exploratory factor analysis was conducted using principal axis factor analysis and direct oblimin rotation while internal reliability was determined by computing Cronbach's alpha (Field, 2005; Hinkin et al., 1997).

Results

A total of 143 usable questionnaires were collected. The proportion of male responders (62%) was higher than that of female (38%). The mean age of the responders was 36.7 years, and the standard deviation was about 12 years. Most of the responders were between 25 and 34 years of age. More than 50% of responders obtained some kind of higher education level, but the most commonly obtained education level was secondary school. The responders had different background and occupation, most of the responders stated that they were employees, while about 6% were managers and about 18% were entrepreneurs/company owners. Most of the responders were from County of Istria (67%), about 17% were from County of Primorje-Gorski kotar, and about 10% were from City of Zagreb. Most of the responders had personal monthly income between 4,001 and 6,000 kn and lived in mid-sized town. Average household of the responders had three members, but the most of the households had four members. Most of the visitors stated that they were only interested in wine (66%) and that they drank wine occasionally (54%)

Table 1. Responders' characteristics

Variables	Percent (%)	Variables	Percent (%)
Gender		Profession	
Female	38.5	Owner/Entrepreneur	18.2
Male	61.5	Manager	5.6
Age (mean 36.7, S.D. 12.5)		Employee	42.6
18-24	14.0	Student	12.6
25-34	40.6	Other	21.0
35-44	18.2	Settlement size (number of inhabitants)	
45-54	16.1	Up to 2,000	22.4
55+	11.2	2,001 – 10,000	17.5
Education		10,001 -100,000	37.8
Basic education	2.1	Over 100.000	22.4
Secondary education	40.6	County/Country of origin	
College	14.0	Istria	67.1
University	35.0	Primorje-Gorski kotar	16.8
Masters/ Ph.D.	8.4	City of Zagreb	10.5
Personal net monthly income (in kunas*)		Other counties	2.8
Up to 2,000	2.1	Various countries	2.8
2,001 – 4,000	9.8	Household number (mean 3.4, S.D. 1.5)	
4,001 – 6,000	29.4	Live alone	9.8
6,001 – 8,000	9.8	Two members	19.6
Over 8,000	9.8	Three members	21.0
Private (n/a)	25.2	Four members	30.1
No income	14.0	Five and more members	19.6
Frequency of wine consumption		Types of visitors	
Every-day	13,3	Interested in wine	65,7
Occasionally	53,8	Amateur farmer	13,3
On special occasions	32,9	Wine expert	21,0

Source: data processed by authors * 1 Euro= 7,5 kuna

To examine multidimensionality and internal reliability of the scale items, responders were asked to rate each of the 30 items as they apply to the various aspects related to visiting Vinistra wine exhibition. Using eigenvalues greater than 1.0, as criteria, seven initial dimensions i.e. factors were generated, but through scree plot the possible number of factors was set at four factors. A number of exploratory factor analyses were conducted in order to identify those items that most clearly represent the content domain of the underlying construct (Hinkin et al., 1997). A total of 18 items, presented through four factors, formed a clear factors structure (Table 2):

1) wine buying stimulation, 2) visitation of wine cellars, 3) wine related improvements and 4) wine booths related issues. These four factors jointly accounted for 40.206% of accumulated variance. To assess whether the items that were summed to create the four subscales of perceived value formed a reliable scale, Cronbach's alpha was computed for each of the subscales. The alphas for the subscales were as follows: 1) wine buying stimulation 0.688, 2) visitation of wine cellars 0.751, 3) wine related improvements 0.818 and 4) wine booths related issues 0.678.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis results

Variable	1	2	3	4
Intention of buying wines tasted at Vinistra exhibition	.730			
Importance of wide range of wines when buying one	.632			
Relation between visiting Vinistra exhibition and desire to buy wines	.503			
Desire to hear a story about wine, before consumption	.430			
Visitation of Vinistra exhibition in order to get familiar with wide range of wines	.396			
Visitation of Vinistra exhibition in order get to know wine producers	.394			
Tasting wine of not well-known producer	.370			
Interest in organised wine cellar excursions - Croatia		.961		
Interest in organised wine cellar excursions – foreign countries		.735		
Interest in organised wine cellar excursions – Istria County		.533		
Wine improvement related to bottle design (shape and label)			-.818	
Wine improvement related to presentation of wines			-.758	
Wine improvement related to quality of wines			-.749	
Display of wine samples on wine booths encourages wine tasting.				.645
Amiable hostesses (staff) at wine booths.				.571
Appropriate wine booths and easiness of finding particular wine booths.				.564
Arrangement of wine booths and desire to wine tasting.				.525
Wide passes among wine booths.				.420
Cronbach's alpha	16.01	25.96	33.58	40.20
% accumulated variance	0.688	0.751	0.818	0.678

Source: Data processed by authors

The factor analysis have showed four highly saturated factors; the first: wine buying stimulation shows that the visitation to Vinistra wine fair will enhance their willingness to buy and enjoy wines in the future and that the wide range of wine products offered is a positive aspect of the fair. The socializing aspect of meeting the producer and hearing the story about him and the products scores highly in factor one. The factor two visitation of wine cellars shows that the visitors have highly positive responses to attain organized wine cellar excursions. Attending Vinistra and its positive aspects will in future enhance the desire of visitors to use their leisure time in similar events and get more familiar with wine as a product and socializing glue. The wine related improvements were put in a time scale and visitors had noticed the improvement of quality and design of promotion. Finally wine booths related issues were positively ranked showing that the wine fair has been adequately organized its space enhancing the socializing aspects and assuring positive promotion of the producers.

Discussion and Conclusions

The wine fair Vinistra offers experiences to visitors in the segment of wine tourism. Similar to the research of Yuan et al. (2005) we posted a question to visitors why they attended the wine festival Vinistra and what motivates them to attend. From the answers we noticed that visitors were primarily attracted to the fair because of wine related motives - their interest for wine and wine attributes of the region. Further motives were meeting the wine maker and learning about wines. These results are similar to the previous research about wine tourist motivations done worldwide (Cambourne and Macionis, 2000; Crompton, 1997; Crompton and McCay, 1997; Dann, 1981; Hall and Macionis, 2008). Attending Vinistra fair implicates visitors' intentions to visit the surroundings and its touristic, cultural, heritage sites and enjoying local foods and beverages. In this way it confirms the role that Vinistra has in the marketing of the region (shown in studies of Carlsen and Getz 2006). Visitors' answers imply that the visitation to the fair had positive effects on their future intention to use their leisure time in visiting wine fairs, wine roads and certain wine cellars,

what confirms findings of Hall and Macionis (2008). Finally, the positive emotions that visitors have enjoyed on the fair were especially linked to the socializing effects of gathering with friends and family and enjoying a glass of wine in company (so wine has proven to be a socializing glue).

In literature socialization was evaluated by Crompton (1979) in research of socio psychological motivation. Also the author mentioned prestige what was noticed in our research as well; during the first decade of its existence Vinistra became a place of spending time and a point of social gathering with prestigious lifestyle connotations. The position of wine boots at the fair, the story told by the producer, the wide passes and open spaces between wine boots on the fair encourages the visitors to socialise and provoke even more positive emotions and desire to attend the fair again. Socializing implications were seen in the promotion on the fair and wine tasting, in hearing the story about wine from the producers, in stories about how the grapes are produced, processed and bottled, in stories about the producers' family and heritage of the wine cellar. All positive aspects of socializing and spending leisure time at the wine fair implies future intentions to visit the producer at their farms, spend a weekend on the farm and involve in farm activities (like harvesting) all in order to know more about wine, enjoy the wine and local produce and discover the surroundings and other activities offered in the region. Finally all positive responses and visitors positive motivation will enhance future engagement in wine excursions in the region and abroad.

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