

Tales of two travelers: A comparative analysis of winery and general tourists

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Abstract

The growing significance of wine production in the viticultural regions of southern Ontario, invites an examination of the demographic composition, visitation and trip characteristics, motivations and wine consumption patterns of winery visitors. They raise the question of whether there are differences between those who are primarily driven to visit wineries from those who are drawn by other attractions. In the wine appellations of the Niagara Peninsula and Prince Edward County in southern Ontario, no statistically significant differences were found between the demographic composition of the wine tourist and general tourist. However, several clear distinctions were observed in the behaviours between the two categories of visitors.

Key Words

Wine Tourism; Wine Tourist; Niagara Peninsula; Prince Edward County

Topics

Cellar door sales and wine tourism

Introduction

Dramatic increases in visitations to wineries in Ontario and British Columbia have led to the creation of a new niche market in Canada known as “wine tourism” (Telfer, 2000). In Ontario, most activities take place in the four designated wine regions of the Niagara Peninsula (TNP), Lake Erie North Shore, Pelee Island and Prince Edward County (PEC) that have been formally designated by the Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA, 2009). These appellations encompass 20,000 acres under vine (Wine Council of Ontario, 2009). With 13,500 acres of grapes, the Niagara Peninsula has become Canada’s premier wine-producing region, accounting for over 80% of the wine grapes grown in the nation (Telfer, in Hall *et al.*, 2000). Pelee Island and Lake Erie North Shore in south western Ontario have a combined 1,000 acres of vineyards (Wine Council of Ontario 2009). Prince Edward County, about 225 km. east of Toronto on the north shore of Lake Ontario, is a predominantly rural county that has begun to transition from its historical dependence on barley, canning and dairy production to an emphasis on culinary tourism that focuses on wine production. With an expansion from 20 acres in 2000 to 600 acres in 2005, the jurisdiction has become the second largest region under vine in Ontario (The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward, 2007) An additional 2000 acres of plantings are expected by 2015 (Phillips, 2006; Lawrason, 2002).

Several studies have shown that wine tourists differ from the other types of tourists. Dodd found that tourists tend to have higher education as well as higher household incomes (1995). In a more recent study, Tassiopoulos, Nuntsu and Haydan found that the wine tourist in South Africa was an unmarried professional female less than 35 years of age who favoured day trips and who travelled in a party of 2.1 persons (2004). Carmichael’s (2005) examination of the wineries in the Niagara Region concluded that wine tourists tended to be well-educated, 73% were professional workers, 30% were between the ages of 41-50 and 44% of respondents had a household income over \$90,000). The 2006 Travel Activities and Motivations Survey (TAMS) found the affluent, educated and mature couples and families were more likely to engage in wine related activities (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, 2007).

Macionis and Cambourne (1998) suggested that the primary motivation of wine tourists relates broadly to such activities as festivals, learning about wine/wine making, winery tours, meeting the winemaker and tastings at the vineyard destination. For those whose primary purpose to be in the area is the winery; education and new experiences seem to be the driving force behind tourists visiting the area (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Ignatov & Smith, 2006). However, several other motivations appear integral to the total travel; experience, as shown in the 2006 TAMS survey which found that travellers value highly the opportunity to relax and relieve stress, to get a break from the day to day environment, to create lasting memories and to enrich relationships with spouses/partners/children (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, 2007).

The following study focuses on whether differences exist between two categories of travellers, the Primarily Motivated Winery Tourist (PMWT) who are primarily drawn by the opportunity to visit the wineries in the regions and the Generally Motivated Winery Tourist (GMWT) whose primary motivations are other attractions. The following results are based on visitors to Niagara which has been a member of the Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) since its inception in 2000 and Prince Edward County, a nascent region of production which only received the designation of appellation of origin in 2007.

Methodology

Information about wine tourists was collected with a standardized questionnaire that was developed from the existing literature (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Brown & Getz, 2005; Carmichael, 2005). Five hundred and eight surveys were conducted at seven wineries in the Niagara Peninsula (TNP) in August and September 2005 and another 405 at six wineries in Prince Edward County (PEC) during July and August 2007. Individuals were approached on the basis of non-probability convenience sampling, and were visually screened for a minimum age requirement of nineteen years, the legal age of alcohol consumption in Ontario. Participants were given the questionnaire to complete independently, although assistance was provided if needed. The instrument contained four groups of questions that related to:

- (i) Respondent and demographic characteristics
- (ii) Trip and visitation characteristics
- (iii) Attitudinal and motivational related aspects of winery visitation
- (iv) Wine consumption and consumer purchase behaviour

T-tests were performed to establish whether or not there were significant differences between the respondents who were primarily drawn by the opportunity to visit wineries from those who were mostly attracted to the two regions for other reasons.

Respondent and demographic characteristics

No significant differences were found in the demographic composition of the PMWT and the GMWT. In fact, the average age in both groups was identical while there was only a minor difference in the percent of respondents who were university educated (Table 1). No statistically significant differences were found in the representation of respondents who were male, who had children at home nor whose household incomes exceeded \$70,000.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Winery Tourists

Demographics	PMWT	GMWT	Difference	n
Age	44	44	0	894
Male	52%	47%	5%	899
Less than university education	38%	36%	2%	903
University education or higher	62%	64%	2%	894
With children at home	29%	34%	5%	893
Household income of \$70,000 or more	71%	67%	4%	742

*T-test significant at * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$.*

Trip and visitation characteristics

While party size did not differ noticeably, significant differences appeared in the trip and visitation characteristics between the two groups. A significantly higher percentage of PMWT visited three or more wineries on their visit ($d=20\%$, $p < 0.001$). GMWT's were more likely to visit the wineries less than once a year ($d=13\%$, $p < 0.01$). As shown in Table 2, PMWT were also more likely to make day trips to the region than to stay overnight ($d=25\%$, $p < 0.001$),

Table 2: Trip/Visitation Characteristics of Winery Tourists

Trip/Visitation Characteristics	PMWT	GMWT	Difference	n
Party size of 2 to 3 people	75%	80%	5%	668
Visitation to at least three wineries this trip	70%	50%	20% ***	888
Visitation to the wineries less than once a year	44%	57%	13% **	572
Length of Stay (day trip)	67%	42%	25% ***	891

*T-test significant at * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, *** = p<0.001.*

Attitudinal and motivational related aspects of winery visitation

Few differences between the two groups of tourists were observed in their motivation to participate in various winery activities. Table 3 shows that they are alike on the basis of an interest in experiencing winery tours packaged with a fine dining experience, tour packages including winery tours and overnight stays, and tasting events for new vintage releases and/or unique wines. However, PMWT are significantly more likely to be motivated than GMWT by the opportunity to experience winery tasting events offering wines at the wineries (d=12%, p<0.001).

Table 3: Motivations of Winery Tourists

Motivations	PMWT	GMWT	Difference	n
Winery tasting events offering wines available at the winery	75%	63%	12% ***	845
Winery tours packaged with a fine dining experience	54%	55%	1%	845
Tour packages including winery tours and overnight stays	44%	47%	3%	851
Tasting events for new vintage releases and/or unique wines	53%	49%	4%	831

*T-test t significant at * = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, *** = p<0.001.*

Wine interest, consumption and purchase behaviour

Significant differences between the two groups of tourists were found in the level of wine enjoyment, interest, time commitment, knowledge, expenditures, commitment to Ontario wines and consumption. Table 4 shows that PMWT have a greater tendency to agree or strongly agree that drinking wine gives them pleasure (d=7%, p<0.001), they have a stronger interest in wine (d=19%, p<0.001), and they devote more time to the purchase of a bottle (d=13%, p<0.001). Further, PMWT spend more on wine (d=12%, p<0.001), purchase more Ontario wine (d=17%, p<0.001) and are more likely to drink more than one bottle of wine a week (d=9%, p<0.001). GMWT are more likely to agree or strongly agree that they do not understand much about wine (d= 7%, p<0.001).

Table 4: Wine Interest, Consumption and Purchase Behaviour of Winery Tourists

Wine Interest, Consumption and Purchase Behaviour	PMWT	GMWT	Difference	n
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Drinking wine gives me pleasure	90%	83%	7%	***	813
I have strong interest in wine	71%	52%	19%	***	806
I like to take my time when I purchase a bottle of wine	66%	53%	13%	***	795
I do NOT understand very much about wine	17%	25%	7%	***	803
Total expenditure on wine of \$50 or More	60%	48%	12%	***	900
More than 3 of the last purchases of wine were Ontario Wine	55%	38%	17%	***	889
More than 1 bottle consumed per week	32%	24%	9%	***	893

T-test significant at * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$.

Conclusions

This study has provided a comparative analysis of Primarily and Generally Motivated Winery Tourists in the Niagara Peninsula and Prince Edward County, the two largest wine regions in Ontario. Responses to surveys at selected wineries reveal two major conclusions. In contrast with many findings elsewhere, the first suggests that all wine tourists, regardless of their primary motivation for travel, share similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics. However, the second reveals that the primary motivation for travel does have a significant bearing on the attitudes, perceived knowledge levels and behaviour of tourists with respect to the activities they seek from the winery experience. The conclusions suggests that the marketing of wine tourism can benefit from an understanding that Primarily Motive Winery Tourists take greater pleasure from and know more about wine. Although more likely to be day-trippers, they also tend to drink and purchase more wine, take more trips to wine regions and visit more wineries each trip.

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