

Analysing wine tourists in the Rheingau region – a case study

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◦*Purpose: The Rheingau is one of the smallest but most famous wine regions of Germany and enjoys a high status among wine lovers. Due to the unique experience of nature, culture and sights one can find many tourists who are not wine orientated visiting here - particularly in Rudesheim. The aim of this study was to find only the typical wine tourists in the Rheingau, analyse them and as a result give the Rheingau wine growers a realistic picture of their customers.*

◦*Design/methodology/approach: The study, in which only tourists were interviewed, was conducted as part of a face to face survey with a standard questionnaire. The survey period of about one and a half months was from 15th April to 31st May 2013 and 327 wine tourists were interviewed.*

◦*Findings: The results shows that the Rheingau is perceived as an important destination among wine lovers. With wealthy and elderly visitors this wine growing area is well positioned, but one must not lose sight of the younger generation. In a second step, a further survey will be realised with "normal" tourists in cooperation with the Rheingauer Winzerverband (Rheingau Wine Growers Association). The goal is to bring out potential opportunities in terms of the attractiveness of the wine growing area in order to expand and to use them touristically.*

Keywords: tourism, wine, Germany, Rheingau

1. INTRODUCTION

All along viticulture has benefited from tourism and tourism has benefited from viticulture. However, it should be noted that there are significant differences between wine tourists and tourists visiting a wine region – the motivation and destination, to visit a specified wine growing region may be completely different between these two kinds of tourists.

The Rheingau is one of the smallest but most famous wine regions of Germany and enjoys a high status among wine lovers. Due to the unique experience of nature, culture and sights one can find many tourists who are not wine orientated visiting here - particularly in Rudesheim. The aim of this study was to find only the typical wine tourists in the Rheingau, analyse them and as a result give the Rheingau wine growers a realistic picture of their customers. This will contribute to a better understanding of customer requirements and hopefully to an improved quality of service.

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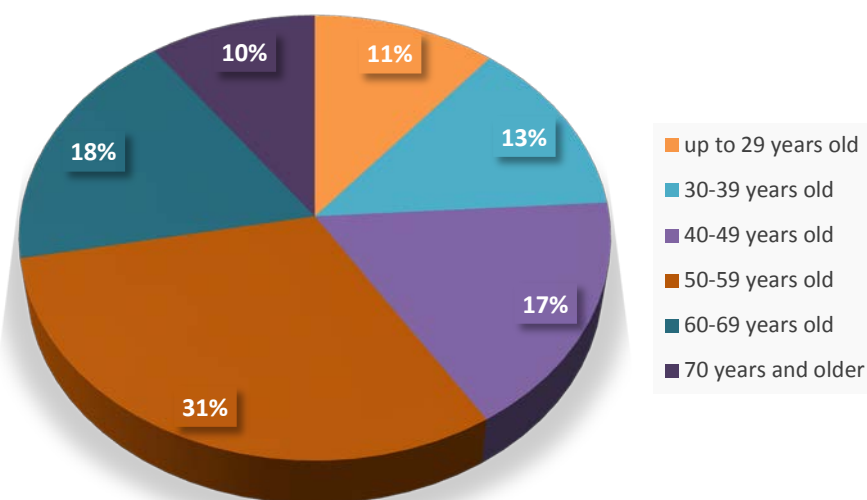
2. METHODOLOGY

In selecting the survey locations there was a major focus set on wine tourist attractions in the Rheingau. These included among others the Rheingau Gourmet Weeks, the wine walk on Flötenweg, the German Sekt Day as well as small, medium and large wineries. At the end the survey sample amounted to a total of 327 tourists. The fact that the survey locations were determined arbitrarily to ensure that a typical selection of wine tourists were present, means the sample cannot be considered as representative. However, this study provides an overview of who the wine tourists in the Rheingau are, what factors influences their travel motivations and travel decision-making processes and how satisfied visitors were with their stay.

3. RESULTS

More than half of all the respondents were people who are 50 years or older. About one third of the interviewed persons belong to the group of 50 to 59-year olds, while 28% were 60 or older. This suggests that the Rheingau is mainly an attraction for people in advanced ages (Figura 1).

Figure 1: Age distribution of the respondents



Considering the criterion of 'highest educational qualification', you will find that half of all visitors stated they had finished a degree. A further 17% reported having achieved A-levels at

high school or equivalent education and almost a quarter (23%) have a medium level of education. The high average level of education is probably also the reason for a quite high net income, which the respondents specified. The analysis of the net income of the interviewed people showed that due to their above-average income, Rheingau wine tourists have a high purchasing power.

Just under half of the 327 respondents are from Hesse. Adding to this the visitors of the neighbouring states Rhineland-Palatinate, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia, a total of three-quarters of all people are from nearby. Subtracting those who did not want to reveal their origin from the total, there are already over 90% who live in Hesse or its neighbouring states.

Table 1: Summary of the behavioural characteristics

	Wine tourist survey 2013 N=327	Representative survey 2013 N=2000
Consumer frequency		
Several times a week	43%	7%
Once a week	20%	9%
2 to 3 times a month	16%	13%
Once a month	16%	11%
Less than once a month	3%	25%
Never	2%	36%
Flavour preference		
Dry	61%	30%
Semi-dry	29%	51%
Sweet	10%	19%
Colour preference		
White wine	51%	41%
Rose wine	13%	10%
Red wine	36%	49%
Origin preference		
German wine	66%	62%
Foreign wine	34%	38%
Shopping place usage		
Discount store	16%	38%
Food retail store	17%	35%
Wine shop	18%	9%
Direct from winery	41%	15%
Mail order business, Internet, abroad	8%	4%

When analysing their drinking behaviour, it immediately becomes clear that there exists a segment among respondents, the wine lovers, who have a high affinity to drink wine.

43% of all interviewed people drank wine several times a week within the last year.

16% of the surveyed tourists stated that they drink wine two to three times per week, and 20% drank wine at least once a week during the last year. A further 16% said they drink wine once a month. Only 3% of the wine tourists drank wine less than once a month and 2% said they never

drink wine at all.

With relation to the distribution of white, red and rosé wine, preference for white wine emerged most clearly with 51%, followed by red wine with 36%. Furthermore, 66% of German wine was consumed. Looking at the distribution of the preferred flavours, respondents drink by their own account 61% dry, 29% semi-dry and 9% sweet wine. The remaining percentage falls to the consumption of noble sweet and dessert wines.

Looking at the annual wine purchases of the tourists in terms of wine shopping venue, it is evident from the average values that 41% of the respondents buy their wine directly from the wine grower or at a winery. Otherwise those interviewed buy their wines in specialist wine shops (18%). Another 17% of respondents buy wine in the food retail market. 16% of those interviewed do their wine shopping at discount stores and 8% of them bought their wine on the internet or by mail order.

During their stay in the Rheingau, the tourists increased their wine purchased from the wine grower or at a winery to 56%. Apart from that, 14% bought their wine in specialist wine shops, followed by shopping at the local wine store with 12%.

The answers from the respondents regarding wine consumption, colour and taste preference or shopping venue use - are proof that we are dealing with a special target group in this case. It's about wine lovers who consume disproportionately much, drink above average proportion of white wine and are passionate to buy their wines directly from the winery. For comparison with the official statistics see Table 1.

Regarding the type of vacation the occasions wine, visits and relaxing are the first ones. 32% of the respondents took a wine tour in the Rheingau. 18% said the main reason to come is to visit relatives or friends. 13% were on recreational holiday, another 25 people were on a cultural or educational trip, 24 people described their stay as hiking holiday. 17 people took a city trip as hiking tour, another six a cycling trip. Four people were on business travel and 41 stated the main reason for their holiday / stay as "Other". Regardless of what purpose the tourists came to the Rheingau, there was something they all had in common: the Rheingau wine.

Therefore the Rheingau is primarily a destination for short breaks and this is reflected in the results of this study. In total, 47% of the surveyed tourists said they came for a day out to the Rheingau. Guests stay an average of 2.1 days. The higher average is attributed to the 15% of two-day and about 20% to the three-day stays. As previously suspected, the visitors valued the role of viticulture in the travel decision very high. About 2/3 of the respondents stated that wine growing in the Rheingau was an important or even the most important decision criterion for the travel occasion.

For 28% the wine played a less important role in travel decision.

As already noted, the respondents in this study buy their wine predominantly directly from the wine grower or at the cellar door. Asking questions about the wine purchase should on one hand find out what position the purchase of wines takes for the tourists on the other hand how much is spent per head during the stay. Regarding to the relevance of the wine purchase it was reported by 51%, that wine was already bought, and another 18% planned to buy, while 20% still were not sure and 11% excluded themselves from buying wine. Considering the expenses on wine per capita, which the tourists spend during their stay in the Rheingau, 27% spend between 0 and 15 € In the range of 15 to 30 euros, 27% of respondents were located. During their stay in the Rheingau 23% spent between 30 and 60 Euro per capita on wine and a further 24% of respondents paid more than 60 euros for wine.

The average expenditure on wine was 55 Euros per person.

The guests were also asked about their general satisfaction within the stay in the Rheingau respectively about the satisfaction of specific points on a scale of 5 (1 = very satisfied, 5 = very unsatisfied). It should be noted that visitors were very pleased in general and also with the wines that the region offers. Also the tourist attractions and hiking trails were found to be

excellent. Guests were most dissatisfied with shopping on site (especially typical shopping) and the offers for families with children. Nevertheless, the rate here was around 2.5, which is exactly in the middle between "Very satisfied" or "very dissatisfied". Overall, 99.4% of respondents would recommend the Rheingau as a holiday resort.

4. SUMMARY

The results show that the Rheingau is perceived as an important destination among wine lovers. With wealthy and elderly visitors this wine growing area is well positioned, but one must not lose sight of the younger generation. In a second step, a further survey will be realised with "normal" tourists in cooperation with the Rheingauer Winzerverband (Rheingau Wine Growers Association). The goal is to bring out potential opportunities in terms of the attractiveness of the wine growing area in order to expand and to use them touristically.