

Identifying facilitators, constraints of wine tourism for outbound Chinese tourists

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Abstract:

Purpose - The proportion of the international wine tourists, particularly from Greater China is expanding, compelling many wineries to attach importance to this market and enlarge their potential purchasing power. The aim of this research is to identify the facilitators and constraints from the perspective of outbound Chinese wine tourists and potential wine tourists.

Methodology - The overall approach of this paper is qualitative exploratory. Using in-depth interview, this study investigated the existing facilitators and constraints that wine tourists encountered. Then a preliminary content analysis was performed so as to develop an analytical framework.

Findings - Results will show a wide range of facilitating and constraint factors. They will also reveal how different the perspectives of winery owners and wine tourists are.

Practical implications - the results can serve as a starting point to understand outbound Chinese wine tourists. Implications of the factors that contribute to successful winery operations and local wineries cooperation will be put forward.

Keywords: Wine Tourism; Wine Tourists; Constraint; Facilitator; China

1. INTRODUCTION

As more wine regions attach importance to production volume, quality and brand, the link between wine and tourism products are becoming stronger. The cases of Napa Valley in California, Hunter Valley and Margaret River in Australia illustrate the importance for the entire wine sectors to expand from simply growing grapes and selling wines to providing experiences to visitors.

Most wine tourists to Australia are from local or domestic origin (Sparks, Roberts, Deery, Davies & Brown, 2005). However, statistics show that international tourists are becoming more relevant to the wine tourism industry. For example, among all winery tourists in New Zealand, 177,700 were international trips (or 8% of all international trips) and 297,500 (or 1% of all domestic trips) were domestic trips (Ministry of Tourism, 2009). In Australia, a government report released by the Australian Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism indicated that the share of international visitors to Australian wineries increased from approximately 9.6% in 2000 to 12.8% in 2009, with the peak of 13.7% in 2007 (Tourism Research Australia, 2010). Little research attention has been paid to long haul wine tourists or even wine tourists from different cultures, even if the characteristics and demand of international wine tourists may vary due to specific cultural and geographical differences (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002). A number of questions arise from this trend: What are the motivations behind actual international wine tourists? What kinds of positive factors help them to engage in wine tourism activities? What are the constraints of potential international wine tourists may encounter? The proposed study will try to answer these questions. The specific research objectives are as follows.

RO1: To investigate the main facilitators for visiting wineries among long haul Chinese wine tourists;

RO2: To investigate the main constraints for not visiting among long haul Chinese wine tourists;

RO3: To put forward correspondent strategies to industry on how to attract long haul Chinese wine tourists.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 FACILITATOR

Raymore (2002) proposed the following definition of facilitators: “Facilitators to leisure are factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation” (p.39). Facilitators to leisure can be reflected in promoting the leisure preference formation and encouraging participation.

Despite overwhelming recognition of the important status of facilitators in leisure participation (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001, Raymore, 2002), there is little empirical evidence about measurement scales in the tourism research and how facilitators are associated with tourist participation. Kim, Heo, Chun and Lee (2011) developed systematic leisure facilitator scales including intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural facilitators which are based on both theory and data-driven technique. However, given the nature of diversified tourism types, the validity and reliability of these scales should be examined with caution since there is little empirical study into facilitators of specific activities.

Facilitators should be relocated to the specific context. This study will adopt Alonso's (2007) research finding which listed main reasons for visiting wineries. These main reasons listed the wine tourist motivation, which are fit for this study. Also, there might be other unknown specific facilitator items which are not included in Kim's (2011) scale scope, here a qualitative approach may be appropriate to develop the scale further.

2.2 CONSTRAINT

The role of perceived inhibitors (or situational constraints) has long been recognized to have a significant influence on why people avoid certain actions (Botha, Crompton & Kim, 1999). Research involving leisure constraints has focused primarily on the classification of constraints. Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991) developed a framework in constraint research that highlighted that constraints can be divided into two groups: participant-related constraints (i.e. interpersonal, intrapersonal) and structural constraints (i.e. external to the participant). Intrapersonal constraints lead people to choose or reject selected leisure choices based on their beliefs, values, skills, self-concept, predispositions, or expectations of others (e.g. peers and family members). Interpersonal constraints are defined as barriers related to social interaction with friends, family members, and others necessary to facilitate leisure participation. While interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints have their greatest influence on the development of leisure preferences, structural constraints block the participant from engaging in leisure activities. Structural barriers intervene between a person's preferences for a leisure activity and his or her actual participation in the activity. Examples of structural constraints include financial cost, work, climate, family commitments, transportation, as well as the availability of facilities, opportunities and time, work, climate, and family commitments (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Hudson, 2000; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Scott, 1991).

There are few papers that have explored constraints from the perspective of local residents (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2009; Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2012). For domestic group, they need an opportunity to socialize, while for international ones, the group size are smaller and they prefer to taste more wines. However, these studies did not consider the constraints and incentives from long haul and even cross-cultural market perspective.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to identify factors, the authors interviewed wine tourists who have the overseas wine tourism experience, winery owners/ wine tourism/festival practitioners who are currently working in wineries and media/consultation agency practitioners and government officers whose work are related with tourism/hospitality industry. Major parties of participants have been included to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The interview period starts from Dec, 2014 to July, 2015. The principal author visited wineries in Auckland, New Zealand Dec, 2014, and wineries in Yarra Valley, Melbourne, Australia during May and Jun, 2015. Winery owners/practitioners, media/consultation agency practitioners and government officers were approached during the principal authors' overseas field trip. Wine tourists from Greater China were approached both from overseas field trip and Hong Kong, Guangzhou, China. Convenience sampling was applied considering that the qualitative nature and purpose of understanding wine tourism. Potential participants were approaches at Tourism Information Centre, Melbourne and also through personal network.

A total of thirty-three interviews have been conducted, nineteen of them are wine tourists that consist of seventeen wine tourists and two potential ones. In order to have a whole

understanding of constraints and facilitators, this study undertook fifteen industry interviews. Among them, five interviewees are winery stakeholders, six interviewees are wine-related travel agency operators, and four were wine media/consultation agency practitioners and government officers.

The interview protocol contains a list of predetermined questions and topics to be asked in the interview. Open-ended questions were asked in the interview to generate insightful information from respondents. Participants were probed to share the desired wine tourism experiences, encountered facilitators and possible constraints. For wine tourism travellers, questions were asked through three consecutive orders: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural facilitators/constraints: such as “which factors of this winery/wine regions attracted you (intrapersonal facilitators)?” For industry participants, questions such as “from supplier’s perspective, what kinds of facilitating factors that you already consider?” were asked to gauge the answers from the providers’ point of view.

All of the interview content will be subjected to content analysis, followed by coding and categorizing of the data. Creswell (1997) suggested that reading through all the collected information could help a researcher obtain an overall sense of the data. Hence the principal author will read the comments carefully, considered which codes will be written, and then label the comments with relevant codes. This process indicates a higher-order data grouping approach and contribute to a conceptual understanding of the related research (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). During the categorizing process, the principal author will reconsider the codes and divide into different categories and then the categories will be named carefully. To ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the content analysis, rounds of discussions among three authors will be held to reach a consensus. The classification results input by the three researchers will be cross-compared to ensure consistency.

4. DISCUSSION

This study investigates the concept of leisure constraints within the context of wine tourism. Information about the dynamic consumer decision-making process and industry constraint insights will contribute to travel constraints literature, especially constraints literature concerning outbound tourism for special interest travel. In terms of practical contributions, this study will help wineries worldwide to cater for the long haul market and grow the number of Chinese-speaking wine tourists.

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