

The Wolfville Magic Winery Bus: Profiles and Segmentation of Wine Tourists in a Nascent North American Cool-Climate Wine Region

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Purpose: This study was designed to explore the characteristics of wine tourists in the emergent wine region of Nova Scotia, Canada and to compare the profile to wine tourists in other regions as reported in the extant literature.

Methodology: Using online survey instruments, data were collected annually for the period 2013-2015 from respondents who participated in seasonal organized wine tours. Descriptive statistics and Two Step Cluster Analysis were employed to produce demographic profiles and customer segments for these wine tourists.

Findings: A demographic profile of respondents showed that most were female empty-nesters with an expressed interest in wine but limited wine knowledge. Cluster analysis determined that wine tourists in the region can be segmented into six groups, based on self-reported wine knowledge and interest, when combined with levels of activity at wineries visited.

Practical Implications: The success of the Wolfville Magic Winery Bus demonstrates the value of cooperation amongst businesses that might ordinarily consider themselves as competitors, particularly as a new sector forms. The results suggest that winery owners and staff must be aware that various visitor types will enter their doors and that tourist preferences for activities and program may vary. Since this form of wine tourism is mediated through a formal tour, future research should compare these visitors with those who travel to the winery independently.

Key words: wine, tourism, segmentation, Nova Scotia