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Understanding winery visitors: The relationship among wine involvement, perceived value, and winery loyalty

Introduction

One type of agritourism that has enjoyed increasing popularity is wine tourism (Mitchell & Hall, 2006). Wine tourism, according to Dowling (1998), is “experiential tourism occurring in wine regions, providing a unique experience which includes wine, gastronomy, hospitality, culture, the arts, education, and travel” (p. 78). Since wine tourism relies heavily on visitors’ experiences of different attributes offered at wineries, it has become important to understand how visitors interact with such attributes (Carlsen & Boksberger, 2015). Understanding these factors is particularly important because they are directly related to destination and/or product loyalty (Carlsen & Boksberger, 2015; Shapiro & Miguel, 2014).

A winery is a place that offers a tourism experience as well as diverse products and services. How winery visitors perceive the value of these tourism products and services might be essential information to winery marketers and management looking to enhance customers’ winery experiences. According to Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung (2007), the value of a destination is determined by the nature and scope of the destination and tourists. Thus, it might be important to know how tourists perceive the value of these winery attributes, just as it might be to know whether their perceived values differ according to their level of involvement in wine.

Thus, the primary focus of this study is to investigate the extent of tourists’ perceived values of their winery experience and whether that extent determines loyalty to that particular destination. Here the meaning of loyalty includes tourists’ intention to return, to recommend the destination to others, and to repurchase the winery’s wine. In addition, the study investigates whether these perceived values differ according to the tourists’ level of wine involvement. The wine regions considered here are those located in Wisconsin. The wine produced in Wisconsin’s rapidly expanding wine regions obviously has less exposure than that of the more famous wine regions where, indeed, a primary reason to visit is the reputation of the wine itself. Hence, the characteristics of wine tourism visitors to Wisconsin may differ significantly from those visitors to better-known wine regions.

Literature Review

1) Perceived Value

Consumer studies focusing on a product’s or a service’s get-and-give components have commonly adopted the concept of perceived value. Perceived value’s most widely known example is the trade-off between the price of a product and its quality (Zeithaml, 1988). According to the theory of consumption values, however, consumer choice is a function of more than simply taking into account price value but also multiple consumption values that can include functional, conditional, social, emotional, and epistemic values (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). The distinct point of the theory is that consumption values take into account

emotional and epistemic values that emphasize the hedonic value of consumption. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) also asserted that the simple trade-off between price and quality is too simple to explain perceived value. Hence, they developed a more sophisticated scale that measures a broader range of customers' perceived values. Their scale, called the PERVAL scale, is based on Sheth et al.'s (1991) theory of consumption values. Numerous researchers have applied the theory of consumption values and the PERVAL scale to their studies related to loyalty research in diverse contexts, such as retailing and tourism (Gill, Byslma, & Ouschan, 2007; Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2012; Prebensen, Woo, & Uysal, 2014; Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez, & Moliner, 2006; Turel, Serenko, & Bontis, 2010). Since service quality is also important in experiential tourism activities, Petrick (2004) developed the SERV-PERVAL scale, which covers perceived service quality value. Sánchez et al. (2006) utilized the diverse dimensions of perceived value scale to explain the overall perceived value of a tourism product. Prebensen et al. (2012) and Prebensen et al. (2013) adopted Sweeney and Soutar's PERVAL scale to explain the tourists' satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Many tourism products are not tangible but rather experiential, where tourists experience a destination by consuming tourism products and receiving services. Hence, perceived values can explain what tourists value about particular attributes they experience at a tourism destination. In addition, perceived values are on-site evaluations rather than post-visit evaluations, such as satisfaction. According to Vargo's service-dominant logic (2008), values can be co-created by users in the process of experiencing services and/or purchasing products. That is, identifying visitors' perceived values allows us to measure values of tourism attributes that are co-created by visitors at the tourism site.

Carlsen and Boksberger (2015) identified key wine tourism attributes. They conducted a meta-analysis and included a total of 13 qualitative and quantitative wine tourism experience studies. The attributes were classified primarily based on Roberts and Sparks's enhancement factors (2006), which include authenticity, value for money, service quality, setting, indulgence, convenience, entertainment, and lifestyle. The results from the meta-analysis indicated that the most important attributes in wine tourism settings are service quality and winery settings. The least important attributes are value for money and authenticity. Carlsen and Boksberger emphasized the importance in future studies to consider the perceived value that is identified in consumption value theory. The most important to consider are, according to them, emotional and epistemic values.

So far, there has been only one study that utilized perceived value in a winery tourism context. Gill et al. (2007) adopted diverse perceived value items, while adding several new items, from a range of perceived value studies—Sheth et al. (1991), Sweeney and Soutar (2001), Petrick (2004), and Zeithaml (1988). Factor analysis identified four factors: service and technical quality (e.g., quality of wine), price, social and epistemic values. These values were positively related with winery visitors' overall satisfaction.

2) Involvement

Involvement is defined as “the perceived importance or relevance of a person to an object/stimulus, which is based on the person's personal needs, values, and interests” (Nella &

Christou, 2014, p. 786). The concept of involvement has been utilized widely in marketing, advertising, tourism and leisure research and, depending on the field of study, researchers have used different types of involvement scales (Bruwer, Burrows, Chaumont, Li, & Saliba, 2013; Kyle & Chick, 2004; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Lockshin, Spawton, & Macintosh, 1997; Prebensen et al., 2014; Zaichkowsky, 1985).

In consumer research, Laurent and Kapferer's (1985) consumer involvement profile (CIP) has been applied the most in diverse fields. CIP consists of four distinct facets—perceived importance of product and consequences of a mispurchase, subjective probability of a mispurchase, hedonic value of the product class, and perceived sign value of the product class. Here, mispurchase could be unexpected product quality after purchasing and experiencing, say, a vacation package (Beatty et al., 1988; Prebensen et al., 2012). Prebensen et al. (2012) and Prebensen et al. (2014) utilized the CIP scale and Kyle and Chick's (2004) leisure involvement scale to test the relationship between perceived value of destination experiences.

In addition to CIP, Beatty, Homer, and Kahle (1988) study applied two types of involvement, those of ego (enduring) and purchase (situational). According to Beatty and colleagues, ego involvement is more related to self, hedonic pleasure, and personal importance. Purchase involvement, which is a more specific concept of situational involvement, is defined as “the outcome of an individual's interaction with the product and the purchase situation” (Beatty et al., 1988, p. 150). While Beatty et al. focused on both ego-involvement and purchase-involvement in soft drink consumption studies, several studies have focused on one side or the other of involvement.

In wine market research, Bruwer et al. (2013) profiled wine consumers based on the CIP scale as well as through additional items. Depending on a wine consumer's level of involvement, results differed in terms of consumption level, information search behavior, and other areas. Hollebeek, Jaeger, Brodie, and Balemi (2007) used two involvement concepts—product and purchase involvement—and segmented wine consumer's demographic and psychographic characteristics. Lockshin et al. (1997) also segmented wine shoppers based on three involvement scales—product, brand, and purchase involvement. Brown, Havitz, and Getz (2007) utilized CIP and other relevant items, though they focused solely on the facet of enduring involvement. The authors segmented tourist behavior based on three extracted factors of involvement—expertise, enjoyment, and symbolic centrality. This is known as the wine involvement scale (WIS).

3) Destination Loyalty

Destination loyalty has been studied in a plethora of studies and still considered as an important factor in evaluating the success of tourism services (Meleddu, Paci, & Pulina, 2015; Um, Chon & Ro, 2006; Zhang, Fu, Cai, & Lu, 2014). Destination loyalty generally consists of two categories—attitudinal and behavioral approaches. Attitudinal loyalty indicates the overall attitude toward a service received, such as intention to repurchase, preference to use a particular brand and more (Outi & Michael, 2004; Zhang, Fu, Cai, & Lu, 2014). Behavioral loyalty is related to the concept of patronage, such as repeat visit (Zhang et al., 2014). These two types of destination loyalty have generally been constantly used together.

Of these diverse factors, several authors have employed perceived value as a factor that explains destination loyalty (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Gill et al., 2007; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Shapiro & Miguel, 2014). In Um et al.'s study (2006), the authors particularly measured Hong Kong's perceived value of money, perceived attractiveness, and perceived quality of service. Of these three, the strongest predictor of explaining intention to revisit was perceived attractiveness. In Patrick's cruise tourism study (2004), the strongest factor for explaining repeat visitors was perceived value. Lastly, Sirakaya-Turk, Ekinci, & Martin (2015) measured hedonic and utilitarian shopping values of the Turkish resort city of Antalya. They found a positive relationship with repatronage intention and destination word-of-mouth. Thus, it can be seen that different types of perceived values for destination attributes could be good indicators for explaining visitors' destination loyalty.

Methodology

Over the last decade and relying on new types of grapes that are hardy enough to withstand cold weather, Wisconsin has developed a new and rapidly growing industry of small vineyards and wine enterprises. This study explores this growing industry with integrated research on viticulture, winemaking, marketing of new wine grapes, and winery tourism.

For participants, the study sought out wineries in Wisconsin. Visitors to winery tasting rooms were intercepted at 17 Wisconsin wineries. For data collection, post-visit online surveys were conducted with visitors to winery tasting rooms. Emails with links to online surveys were sent a week after emails were collected.

A perceived value scale was composed based on Gill et al.'s (2007) study and additional items that were based on a pre-conducted Wisconsin winery survey. These items included epistemic, wine quality, service, physical quality, social, price, emotional values. Involvement was measured based on Brown et al.'s (2007) wine involvement scale (WIS). Loyalty was measured by intention to recommend the winery to others, to revisit the winery, and to repurchase the winery's wine. All scales were set up as 5-point Likert-type scales.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine whether data fit the hypothesized measurement model. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted to identify causal relationship among proposed relationships. All of these analyses were conducted by SPSS 22 and AMOS 22.

Results

Of the 638 surveys emailed out, 307 were returned, making the effective response rate 56.1%. Nearly three out of four respondents were female (73.3%) and their average age was 49.

CFA result indicated a relatively good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.63$; NFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05). Regarding the involvement scale, the study identified three factors—expertise, symbolic centrality, and enjoyment. For the perceived value scale, a unidimensional factor was identified

and it included service and emotional values. All other items, because of their low loading values, were deleted. A unidimensional loyalty factor was identified.

The SEM result demonstrated the relationship of wine involvement → perceived values → loyalty ($\chi^2/df = 1.65$; NFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05). It was found that among three types of involvement, only the casual level of involvement (enjoyment factor) was positively related with perceived value ($\beta = 0.38$, $t = 2.95$), while expertise was negatively related ($\beta = -.31$, $t = -2.35$). Symbolic centrality was not significant. Perceived value positively predicted winery loyalty ($\beta = 0.67$, $t = 9.71$). That is, individuals who had an enjoyment level of wine involvement were more likely to value highly a winery's service and emotional values—elements that lead to higher loyalty to winery.

Conclusion and Discussion

The main indicators that explained the perceived winery value factor for the Wisconsin wineries consisted of emotional values. Emotional values included “visiting a winery is pleasant and enjoyable; it relaxes me and makes me feel good, enjoyable and pleasant” and the service values, which included “the winery's staff was professional, personable and provided dependable information.” The result was consistent with other wine tourism experience attribute studies where the most frequently identified attributes were winery service qualities (Carlesen & Boksberger, 2015). In addition, Carlesen and Boksberger (2015) recommended studying the emotional values, which they considered to be the important factors in a winery tourism context. The current study also found the emotional value in wineries to be the most important factor. The retained emotional value items in the current study were plausible; a pre-conducted Wisconsin winery visitor survey had indicated that the top-two primary purposes for visiting a winery were to have a relaxing day out and to socialize with friends or family; for an entire trip, the reasons were to have a vacation/weekend gateway in the area and to visit friends or relatives. The primary purpose for visiting wineries then is to relax and have a pleasant experience with friends and family. This likely explains why service values are retained as main winery values. The analysis dropped price, wine quality, epistemic, social, and physical attributes of wineries because of the relatively low reputations of the wines, the small scales of wineries, and the absence of vineyards (some wineries have vineyards, but many wineries buy grapes from off-premise growers).

With regard to wine involvement, three factors were identified—expertise, symbolic centrality, and enjoyment. In terms of the relationship with winery values, only the enjoyment level of involvement was significantly and positively related. This makes sense since the primary value items that were retained in the value factors were related to service and emotional values rather than quality of wine. A casual wine drinker (enjoyment) might put more value on enjoying the atmosphere and service of wineries than on drinking the types of wine. The negative relationship with expertise level of involvement would suggest that those who are highly involved with wines put less value on service and emotional values. Compared with the wines of other well-known wine regions such as Napa Valley in California and Barossa Valley in Australia, Wisconsin wines have yet to build much of a reputation. Because of this, highly involved wine drinkers in this study might be more interested in the quality of wine than service and winery activities.

Lastly, consistent with Gill et al. (2007) and Shapiro and Miguel's (2014) studies, this study found a strong relationship among perceived values and winery loyalty. That is, those who put high values on service and emotional values were more likely to recommend the winery to others, to revisit it, and to repurchase its wine. This implies the importance of identifying the winery visitors' perceived values on winery attributes, particularly, if wineries are part of an emerging market and not established in an area known for wine. Since service values are key factors that influence destination loyalty, the winery staff's specialized and professional skills and knowledge related to wine and winery services could increase loyalty. In addition, social activities, such as live music, food pairings, fun and unique activities that can be shared among families and friends could increase visitors' emotional values that are put on the winery.

Depending on the type of winery, understanding winery visitors' perceived values as well as their level of involvement with wine could help a winery owner make better strategic ideas and plans on how to tailor to the wishes of different types of visitors. Better informed plans and strategies will promote the creation of value for the winery features, which ought to lead ultimately to destination loyalty.

This study could contribute, theoretically, to experiential tourism studies. While in marketing fields it is common to measure ongoing evaluations of product attributes with the concept of perceived value, it is relatively rare in tourism studies. Tourism studies generally measure visitors' evaluation toward their tourism experience through post-visit evaluations, such as satisfaction. In addition, since winery tourism is a distinct tourism type that combines both wine selling and tourism activities, understanding visitors' level of wine involvement and its relationship with the perceived value of winery attributes could provide better implications for study on culinary tourism (e.g., wine-, brewery-, and coffee-related tourism).

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