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Shannon A. Courtney

School of Business Administration, University of Prince Edward Island

Sean M. Hennessey PhD

Tourism Research Centre, School of Business Administration, University of Prince Edward Island

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Appealing to Different Appetites? A Comparative Analysis of Visitors and Residents to a Culinary Festival

Shannon A. Courtney
School of Business Administration
University of Prince Edward Island
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada

and

Sean M. Hennessey, Ph.D.
Tourism Research Centre
School of Business Administration
University of Prince Edward Island
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada

ABSTRACT

This study presents a comparative analysis of visitors and local residents attending selected events at a month-long culinary festival. The primary purposes of this study were to compare the motivations, spending behaviours, and satisfaction levels of these two groups. Consideration was also given to the information sources used to learn about the Festival Findings are based on an on-line survey of festival attendees; in total 460 surveys were collected and used. Research findings highlighted differences between visitor and resident groups with respect to motivations for attending a culinary events, spending behaviours and information sources used. An examination of satisfaction rating revealed significant variance across individual events. These results offer valuable insights for culinary festival organizers and marketers, who may wish to consider the differing motivations and information sources used by these two groups when developing advertising campaigns and on-site food and shopping experiences.

Keywords: culinary tourism; festivals; motivations; residents; visitors

INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism has grown in recent years, as travelers exhibit an increased interest in unique food and drink experiences. In some cases, culinary events and experiences have become the primary motivation for travel to a destination (Bessiere, 1998; Long, 2004). As a result, tourism planners for destinations throughout North America are pursuing efforts to attract visitors with unique culinary products and experiences. While many destinations have focused on attracting culinary tourists from other areas, it is also worth considering whether culinary experiences appeal to local residents (backyard tourists) and comparing these two types of culinary tourists.

The purpose of this study was to examine the motivations, satisfaction levels, and spending behaviours of attendees at a culinary festival in Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada. Segmentation of the culinary tourist by place of residence provided further insights regarding differences between

culinary tourists visiting PEI and residents of PEI. The specific objectives of this study were to determine (1) the attributes that ‘pull’ visitors and residents to a culinary festival, (2) whether satisfaction levels differed between these two groups, and (3) the spending behaviours of each group. Consideration was also given to the information sources used by these two groups to learn about the Festival.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Definitions of culinary tourism abound, but typically refer to the gastronomical activities and experiences available at a destination. Long (2004) considered it to be “food as a subject and medium, destination and vehicle, for tourists”, while the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA) (2008) has defined it very broadly as “unique and memorable culinary experiences of all kinds.” A wide range of activities and experiences are typically considered to belong to the culinary tourism profile including: wine tours; culinary festivals; dining at restaurants that specialize in local or regional foods; visiting farmers’ markets, farmstands, or orchards; and participating in hands-on-learning experiences.

Many scholars have examined opportunities for the creation of unique culinary products/experiences and marketing plans, as well as other strategies to promote and develop culinary tourism (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Boyne & Hall, 2004; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Meler & Cerovic, 2003; Okumus, Okumus & McKercher, 2007; Tourism Research Unit, 2007). Other researchers have considered the economic impacts of culinary tourism, as well as supply chain logistics (Deale, Norman & Jodice, 2008; Skuras, Dimara & Petrou, 2006; Smith & Xiao, 2008).

Case studies of culinary destinations have provided valuable insights into several aspects, including the relationship between food images and visitor’s intentions (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010), challenges facing the culinary tourism industry (Stewart, Bramble & Ziraldo, 2008), and the role of traditional cuisine as tourist attractions in rural areas (Bessiere, 1998).

Some scholars have considered the motivations of tourists that participate in culinary experiences (Hjalager, 2004; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009; Thompson & Prideaux, 2009), as well as the degree to which food and wine opportunities influence destination selection (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010, Ryu & Jang, 2006) and how gastronomy influences the tourist experience (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Others have segmented visitor markets based on their interest in culinary experiences (Mack, Blose & MacLaurin, 2009; Thompson & Prideaux, 2009; Tourism Research Centre, 2010; Travel Industry of America, 2007). More study is necessary to understand culinary tourists’ motivations, behaviours, and economic impact. It has also been noted that individuals can be culinary tourists in their own region (ICTA, 2011); but further research is necessary to understand how these ‘local tourists’ differ from those that are visiting the region for culinary experiences.

Culinary festivals are, as Smith and Xiao (2008) note, ‘a major draw for culinary tourists and often one of the most visible aspects of culinary tourism’, however, there has been limited research regarding this culinary offering. Smith and Costello (2008) provide some empirical findings regarding visitor satisfaction at an international culinary festival, while Nicholson and Pearce’s (2000) research provides a comparative profile of visitors to different types of festivals, including a culinary festival. Further study of culinary festivals will provide insights that can be used by organizers to attract culinary tourists and encourage higher spending, as well as greater satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The Festival

Fall Flavours is an annual, month-long culinary festival featuring more than 250 culinary and cultural events that take place across Prince Edward Island (PEI) during the month of September. PEI is located on the East Coast of Canada and has a strong agricultural heritage. The Fall Flavours events showcase PEI's culinary offerings (e.g. lobster, oysters, mussels, new potatoes, strawberries) through food tastings, unique dining experiences, hands-on-learning, cooking demonstrations, culinary competitions, and special farmers' markets. The ambassador of the Festival is Chef Michael Smith, a PEI-based chef with television shows on Canada's Food Network. 2010 marked the third year of the Festival, which is promoted by Tourism PEI, the province's tourism department.

Data Collection

This study is based on data collected by the Tourism Research Centre (TRC) via an on-line survey of 2010 Fall Flavours attendees. Surveys were distributed to attendees that had provided contact information to TRC representatives on-site at 14 Fall Flavours events. On-line surveys were distributed to attendees within a week of the event. The surveys were designed to collect information that could be used to profile the people attending Fall Flavours, determine the economic impact, identify strengths as well as opportunities for improvement, and gauge overall satisfaction with the festival(s). In total, 460 surveys were collected and used. The survey sample was weighted by the attendees' place of residence and the number in travel party to align it with the total number of attendees at each event. This produced weighted samples representing 466 (60%) PEI residents and 310 (40%) visitors. A sample of this size has a sampling error of 4.1 percent at a 95 confidence level.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were performed for all items in the survey. These provided characteristics of the sample and offered general information regarding the variables. In addition, Chi-square analyses for categorical variables and a series of *T*-tests for continuous variables were carried out in order to compare differences between the two groups (i.e. residents and visitors).

FINDINGS

Residents and visitors were both most highly motivated to attend Fall Flavours to support the local food industry, farmers, and chefs (80% rated it a 5 or higher on a 7-point Likert-type scale) and to sample local food/beverages (79%). Findings also revealed some notable differences between visitor and resident groups with respect to motivations for attending a culinary event. A much larger percentage of visitors were highly motivated by the opportunity for close interaction with the festival's ambassador, Chef Michael Smith (63% vs 37%). Visitors were also more likely to be attracted by opportunities to attend events in unique settings/locations (81% vs 69%) and engage in cultural experiences (80% vs 67%). Residents were more likely than visitors to be motivated by opportunities to socialize with family/friends (82% vs 73%). These findings suggest that culinary festival marketers should consider the development of separate marketing campaigns tailored to the motivations of these two groups. See Table 1.

Table 1
Motivations of the Fall Flavours Festival Attendees

	Residents		Visitors		Total	
Number of Parties (%)	466	60.1%	310	39.9%	776	100.0%

	% ^a	Mean ^b	% ^a	Mean ^b	% ^a	Mean ^b
Sampling high quality food	66.7%	4.94	82.3%	5.69	72.9%	5.24
Attending events in unique settings/locations	69.1%	5.03	80.6%	5.58	73.7%	5.25
Supporting the local food industry, farmers, chefs, etc.	82.0%	5.74	77.7%	5.32	80.3%	5.57
Sampling local foods/beverages	74.9%	5.33	86.1%	5.73	79.4%	5.49
Hands-on learning experience	39.9%	3.96	44.8%	4.02	41.9%	3.99
Close interaction and experience with Chef Michael Smith	36.7%	3.57	63.2%	4.87	47.3%	4.09
Cultural experience (types of food, traditional music, local crafts)	67.2%	5.08	79.7%	5.49	72.2%	5.24
Learning new methods of food preparation for own use	43.1%	4.03	48.1%	4.22	45.1%	4.10
Learning how food from the farm becomes food on the plate	39.5%	3.79	35.5%	3.50	37.9%	3.67
Socializing with family/friends	81.5%	5.70	72.6%	5.22	78.0%	5.51

Note: ^a Percents (%) were for those who rated 5, 6 or 7; ^b Mean values were based on a 7-point Likert type scale (1=not at all a motivator; 7=high motivator).

Overall, the large majority of Festival attendees expressed satisfaction with the Festival event attended when asked to rate statements on a 7 point Likert-type scale. Eighty-three percent of attendees indicated they would recommend the Festival to others and an equal percentage said they would attend the Festival again. The lowest satisfaction ratings were related to the wait time for food and beverage (60% were satisfied), and the quality of food based on the ticket price (63% were satisfied). Comparatively, visitors were slightly more likely to agree with positive statements about the Festival than PEI residents. See Table 2. It should be noted, however, that these findings are representative of the average satisfaction ratings across the 14 events surveyed and an examination of satisfaction ratings by event revealed significant variance. See Table 3 for a comparison of selected events. Furthermore, when asked to provide additional comments at the end of the survey, a large percentage of the responses were negative or mixed. This may be due to the fact that dissatisfied attendees were more compelled to complete this section of the survey than satisfied attendees. Festival organizers should consider developing a set of guidelines or regulations for individual event organizers to follow in order to ensure consistency and quality across events. Particular focus should be given to improving food service and re-evaluating ticket prices for events where value for money was a key issue.

Table 2
Evaluation of the PEI Fall Flavours Festival & Event Attended

	Residents		Visitors		Total	
	466	60.1%	310	39.9%	776	100.0%
	% ^a	Mean ^b	% ^a	Mean ^b	% ^a	Mean ^b
The <specific event> was well organized	73.2%	5.49	76.8%	5.45	74.6%	5.47
The food I consumed was high quality	68.2%	5.75	78.4%	6.00	72.3%	5.86
The <specific event> was good value given the ticket cost	67.8%	5.90	69.4%	5.81	68.4%	5.86
The waiting time for food and beverage service was acceptable	57.3%	5.08	62.9%	5.05	59.5%	5.07
The quality of the food was excellent given the ticket cost	62.2%	5.63	64.8%	5.80	63.3%	5.70
I would recommend the <specific event> to others	82.0%	5.83	84.5%	5.92	83.0%	5.86
The <specific event> met my expectations	74.0%	5.38	77.7%	5.44	75.5%	5.40
The overall quality of the <specific event> was excellent	75.3%	5.55	81.3%	5.67	77.7%	5.59
I would attend Fall Flavours if it were held next year	86.9%	6.01	77.1%	5.59	83.0%	5.85

Note: ^a Percents (%) were for those who rated 5, 6 or 7; ^b Mean values were based on a 7-point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).

Table 3
Evaluation of the PEI Fall Flavours Festival by Event (Selected)

	Applelicious	Chef on Board	Clammin N Jammin	Empty Bowls Event	Festin acadie avec homard	Picnic in the Park
Number of Parties	39	108	30	81	31	94

Thee <specific event> was well organized	61.5%	59.3%	93.3%	45.7%	100.0%	78.9%
The food I consumed was high quality	69.2%	75.0%	90.0%	76.5%	93.3%	90.4%
The <specific event> was good value given the ticket cost	48.7%	66.7%	90.0%	61.3%	96.7%	81.1%
The waiting time for food and beverage service was acceptable	64.1%	44.9%	90.0%	39.5%	90.3%	58.9%
The quality of the food was excellent given the ticket cost	48.7%	62.0%	90.0%	72.5%	83.9%	79.8%
I would recommend the <specific event> to others	64.1%	70.4%	100.0%	76.5%	93.3%	87.4%
The <specific event> met my expectations	60.5%	60.2%	100.0%	63.8%	100.0%	87.4%

Note: Percent was based on those who rated 5, 6, or 7 for a 7-point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).

Results also revealed differences in the spending behaviours of residents and visitors. While it is unsurprising that visitors spent significantly more off-site than residents (e.g. on accommodations, food at restaurants), visitors also spent more while at the Festival on food and beverages, as well as shopping. On average, residents spent \$6.81 per person on food and beverages at the event (not included in entry fee), while visitors spent almost triple that (\$15.61 per person). Visitors spent almost twice as much (\$10.77) per person shopping on-site compared to residents (\$5.77). This suggests an opportunity for culinary festival organizers to encourage resident spending at the festival through targeted advertising and offers (e.g. an “Islander” sampling special). There were also notable differences within the PEI resident group. Residents that attended a Festival event in their own region tended to spend more money on food and beverages off-site (e.g. at stores and restaurants) than residents who had travelled to the region for the Festival, while traveling residents spent more per person on food at the Festival.

Table 2-3
Estimated Average Spending Per Day by Attendees at the 2010 PEI Fall Flavours Festival

Average Spending per Person per Day	Residents		Visitors		Total	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Food & beverages at event (not included in entry fee)	\$6.81	25.5%	\$15.61	23.5%	\$10.33	24.2%
Food & beverage (at restaurants, bars, and accommodation including take out)	\$3.50	13.1%	\$8.93	13.4%	\$5.67	13.3%
Food & beverage (at stores)	\$1.68	6.3%	\$1.92	2.9%	\$1.78	4.2%
Shopping (at event)	\$5.77	21.6%	\$10.77	16.2%	\$7.77	18.2%
Shopping (not at event)	\$1.33	5.0%	\$6.24	9.4%	\$3.29	7.7%
Accommodations (not including food & beverage at the accommodation)	\$0.01	0.0%	\$13.08	19.7%	\$5.24	12.3%
Local transportation (fuel, taxi, bus fees, car rentals, etc.)	\$4.81	18.0%	\$5.02	7.6%	\$4.90	11.5%
Attractions and entertainment	\$0.54	2.0%	\$1.76	2.6%	\$1.03	2.4%
All other spending	\$2.27	8.5%	\$3.15	4.7%	\$2.62	6.1%

Survey findings provided insights regarding the information sources used to learn about the Festival by different groups. For residents, the most popular source of information was a newspaper story, ad, or insert (41%), signage in PEI (36%), and/or radio (36%). For visitors who learned of the Festival before travelling, the Tourism PEI website and official Festival website were the most popular information sources (45% and 40%, respectively). Respondents who learned of the Festival after arriving in PEI accessed information from a wide variety of sources including: “other” (34%), recommendations from others (25%), and visitor information centres (23%). See Table 4. These findings highlight opportunities for festival organizers to deploy targeted ‘resident’ and ‘visitor’ campaigns through different marketing channels based on motivations. For example, the Tourism PEI and Festival websites, as well as Festival brochures could prominently feature Chef Michael Smith, while local newspaper ads/stories and radio could emphasize opportunities for socializing with family

and friends, sampling foods and supporting local farmers and chefs.

Table 4
Information Sources Used to Learn about the PEI Fall Flavours Festival

Number of Parties (%)	Residents		Visitors *				Total	
			Before Travel		Once in PEI			
	466	60.1%	230	29.6%	80	10.3%	776	100.0%
Attended in 2008 and/or 2009	167	35.9%	8	3.4%	n/a	n/a	175	25.2% ^a
I saw signage in PEI promoting Fall Flavours	169	36.3%	n/a	n/a	18	22.9%	188	34.4% ^b
Visitor information centre	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18	22.9%	18	22.9% ^c
Recommendations from other people	132	28.3%	44	19.1%	20	24.5%	196	25.2%
PEI Fall Flavours Festival website (www.fallflavours.ca)	136	29.1%	92	39.8%	7	8.2%	235	30.2%
Tourism PEI website	56	12.1%	103	44.9%	3	3.3%	163	21.0%
PEI Flavours website (www.peiflavours.ca)	42	9.0%	38	16.5%	1	1.6%	81	10.5%
Another website	8	1.8%	10	4.5%	3	3.3%	22	2.8%
PEI Fall Flavours Festival brochure	138	29.6%	n/a	n/a	18	22.9%	157	28.7% ^b
Radio (ad or commentary)	167	35.9%	10	4.5%	8	9.8%	186	24.0%
Newspaper story, ad, or insert	190	40.8%	55	23.9%	10	13.1%	256	33.0%
Facebook	38	8.1%	14	6.3%	0	0.0%	52	6.7%
E-newsletter	6	1.3%	5	2.3%	0	0.0%	11	1.5%
Direct mail	n/a	n/a	12	5.1%	n/a	n/a	12	5.1% ^d
Other	52	11.2%	37	15.9%	27	34.3%	117	15.0%

Note: * Of 310 visitor parties, 74.3% (230 parties) heard about Fall Flavours before travelling to PEI, while 25.7% (80 parties) had not.

^a percent based on 696 parties (466 resident parties + 230 visitor parties who heard about Fall Flavours before travelling)

^b percent based on 546 (466 resident parties + 80 visitor parties who learned about Fall Flavours after arrival)

^c percent based on 80 visitor parties who learned about Fall Flavours after arrival

^d percent based on 230 visitor parties who heard about Fall Flavours before travelling to PEI

CONCLUSION

The study findings offer important insights for festival organizers and marketers. Opportunities to develop targeted marketing campaigns for PEI residents and visitors should be explored and attention given to which information sources is most likely to be accessed by visitors or residents. Results suggest significant differences in the spending behaviours of visitors and residents. While organizers should pursue efforts to attract more visitors, they may also want to consider ways to boost on-site spending by Islanders through, for example, exclusive Islander sampling specials and unique shopping opportunities that are not tourist-oriented. Satisfaction ratings varied significantly depending on the event attended. Given the affiliation with the Fall Flavours Festival, it may be beneficial for Festival organizers to develop a set of standards or guidelines for individual event organizers to follow. Overall, this study provided insights regarding culinary tourists that can be utilized by culinary festival organizers and marketers to develop more effective and targeted marketing campaigns. It also highlighted challenges related to managing impressions/satisfaction of a festival with many independently organized events.

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