A Supply-Side Stakeholder Analysis of Rural Wine Tourism Development: The Case of Lake Erie’s Southern Shore

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study assessed the cohesiveness and discord among four separate supply-side stakeholder groups in the US Chautauqua-Lake Erie wine region. Results from 17 ANOVA tests indicated agreement on many important issues, a departure from previous studies in tourism (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009; Kuvan & Akan, 2012). Disagreement was shown about marketing, community appreciation for, and attention by government to wine tourism issues. The findings suggest more data are needed to source the causes of these disparities. Overall, the results signify a region ready for “the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders” (United Nations World Tourism Organization, n.d.) and stakeholder collaboration that is requisite for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Lake Erie, Stakeholder Analysis, Sustainable Development, Tourism Suppliers, Wine Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism continues to be nurtured as an economic driver for rural destinations while concerns about sustainable tourism development have grown reciprocally. Stakeholder identification (Currie, Seaton, & Wesley, 2009) and participation (Landorf, 2009) has been recognized as critical to implementation of sustainable strategies. Increasingly sustainable tourism has been recognized as being differently “defined, interpreted, and implemented” (Lu & Nepal, 2009, p. 5) by various stakeholders. Rural wine tourism includes diverse businesses (e.g., lodging, retail, wineries, dining) within the supply-side stakeholder group. Employing a broader range of tourism suppliers in this inaugural research, the necessary knowledge and collaboration identified as necessary in sustainable development (Lu & Nepal, 2009) is more fully understood and therefore sustainability may be realized.

Rural tourism, of which wine tourism is a form, is considered a mechanism for economic development (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000; Gartner, 2004; Hall, Kirkpatrick, & Mitchell, 2000; Steiner, 2004; Whyte, 2003)....
A convergence of global forces such as urbanization, rural poverty, and changes in regulations governing wine distribution has led to diversification of rural economies with strategies such as wine tourism (Boyne, Hall, & Williams, 2003; Colman, 2008; Sznajder, Przezborska, & Scrimgeour, 2009). As an economic diversification strategy, rural tourism has been promoted by the cooperative extension offices of US land-grant universities (Brown & Reeder, 2007; Gartner, 2004). Entrepreneurial and legislative support for developing this segment of tourism has been documented (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000; Page & Getz, 1997; Sznajder et al., 2009; Wilson, D. Fesenmaier, J. Fesenmaier, & van Es, 2001) whereas Hall and Jenkins (1998) inventoried a variety of policy instruments including financial incentives implemented by governments for promoting rural tourism development.

Policymakers support may be based on the growth of the wine industry and winery visits as part of the New World wine industry. For instance, wine tourists in Australia spent AUD$7.1b on travel in (Tourism Research Australia, 2010) while in the same year of 2009 California wine regions hosted 20.7 million tourists who spent US$2.1b (California Wine Institute, 2011). By 2004 wine tourism was contributing $75 million to Michigan’s economy (Wargenau & Che, 2006) and a year later generated over 800,000 visitors to North Carolina (Evans, Pollard, & Holder, 2008). Bonded wineries exist in all 50 states in the US which has seen a decade rise in wine grape production and new wineries totaling over 6,600 by 2010 (Hodgen, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several themes have emerged in the academic literature: promotion of regional wine destinations, winery direct sales (cellar door activities), and environmental sustainability (Carlsen, 2004). As wine tourism is the intersection of two separate economic models of wine production and rural tourism (Hall, Johnson, Cambourne, Macionis, Mitchell, & Sharples 2000), the land-use devoted to wine production and that needed for tourism development may compete. Just as sustainability issues shape an increasing proportion of today’s global tourism research agenda, so, too, are wine and culinary tourism researchers now beginning to investigate sustainability matters tourism development (Jayawardena, Patterson, Choi, Brain, 2008; Poitras & Getz, 2006; Sims, 2009; Stewart, Bramble, & Ziraldo, 2008). Tourism researchers have acknowledged the significance of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development (Byrd et al., 2009; Page & Getz, 1997; Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Weaver & Lawton, 2002).

Stakeholder theory provides for identification of stakeholders, the intrinsic value of their interests, and the “attitudes, structures, and practices, that taken together, constitute stakeholder management” (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 67). Stakeholders in tourism have been identified as governments, communities, tourism suppliers (businesses), and tourists (Weaver & Lawton, 2002). Exploratory studies into the perspectives of rural wine region stakeholders have been gaining interest of tourism researchers (Hall et al., 2005; Sznajder et al., 2009). Stakeholder identification (Currie et al., 2009) and participation (Landorf, 2009) has been recognized as critical to implementation of sustainable strategies. Increasingly sustainable tourism has been recognized as being differently “defined, interpreted, and implemented” (Lu & Nepal, 2009, p. 5) by various stakeholders. Wine tourism, like other tourism experiences, is a series of separately consumed activities delivered by a collection of disparate business entities. Rural wine tourism suppliers include diverse businesses (e.g., lodging, retail, wineries, dining) within the supplier stakeholder group. Much of the wine tourism literature employs a single type to represent all tourism suppliers. More often than not, winery owners and wine makers have been studied as representing the sum of the wine tourism supply and, to a lesser extent, the destination policy maker.
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