Chapter 8

Potentials of Wineries as Tourism Destinations in India

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ABSTRACT

There are many famous vineyards and wine tasting destinations in India. It might be a splashy red or a soothing white, or a bubbly twist. Wines are here to stay and there are many wine related service providers in many wine tasting destinations and vineyards vying to grab this upcoming dining market. Although the concept of wine tasting is in its nascent stage in India, there are many vineyards which have come up, primarily in the Nashik and Pune region of Maharashtra state. One of the attractions for those following the wine trails in India are not only the domestic tourists but also by the foreign tourists who love having Indian foods pairing with the Indian wines. These wine tasting tours satisfy the customers and visitors of affluent class only who are of three levels: aromatic, visual and on the palate. Unlike most Western nations where wine is an essential part of everyday dining, Indian wines are still a part of exclusive fine dining experience affordable mostly to the selective elite or more recently to the upper middle class city folks. But the recent influx of these winemakers in the mainstream Indian Fine dining market has helped enlarge this market.

INTRODUCTION

Indians had the native familiarity with wine since time immemorial. This substantiates with the artifacts found at the sites of Harappan Civilization. Wine was often referred to as Somarasa during the Vedic period. It was believed to be associated with Indra (The King of Gods), and was a part of religious festivals. Soma is mentioned in Vedic scriptures as well. Also the reference of Drakshasava is found in Ayurvedic texts which was basically a delicious digestive preparation made from ripened red grapes, cinnamon, cardamom, nagkesara (Cobra saffron), vidanga (False Black Pepper), tejpatra (Bay Leaf), pippali (Long Pepper), and black pepper and contained natural alcohol.

In ancient India the ‘madiralaya’, as known from the texts were important place of recreation and amusement. The concept of ‘madirapaan’ is ubiquitous in legends as well. Even during the days of
Kautilya, the ancient economist—the mention of beverage prepared from fruits as a royal drink is found. But the perception remained a taboo for society at large. The Islamic rulers forbade drinking as per their religious norms. However, during the medieval period several rulers had the habit of drinking in courts during ceremonies and celebrations. The big tribal population has in their custom, the culture of social and religious drinking.

Wine has been made in India for as many as 5,000 years. The history of Wine-making in India dates back several hundred years. The Mughal kings were as devoted to fine wines as they were to grand architecture and the British made wine fashionable. It was the early European travellers to the courts of the Mughal emperors Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who reported tasting wines from the royal vineyards. Under British influence in the nineteenth century, vineyards were established in Kashmir and at Baramati in Maharashtra and a number of Indian wines were exhibited and favourably received by visitors to the Great Calcutta Exhibition of 1884. However, Indian vineyards were totally destroyed by phylloxera (microscopic root insects) in the 1890s. It took nearly half a century to replant them. Today, lineal descendants of some of these historic wines are produced by Chateau. Indage, India’s largest producer of wine, as well as by Grover Vineyards and by many others.

Today with the growing wine industry, India is evolving into a wine tourism destination. This is a good way to promote wines and to give wine enthusiast a real look at the world of wine. Enotourism, Oenotourism, Wine tourism, or Vinitourism refers to tourism whose purpose is to includes the tasting, consumption or purchase of wine, often at or near the source. Where other types of tourism are often passive in nature, enotourism can consist of visits to wineries, tasting wines, vineyard walks, or even taking an active part in the harvest. And wineries are the ideal place for this.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this paper, wine tourism is defined as visits to a wine region for recreational purposes, the development and marketing of wineries as places to visit, and of destinations based on the appeal of wine. As some (Hall, Sharples, Cambourne & Maconis, 2000) have pointed out, wine tourism is still emerging as a concept or product. As the field of wine tourism continues to develop (Mitchell & Hall, 2006 for a comprehensive review), the need for a better understanding of consumer behaviours is paramount, especially in respect of likelihood of visiting wine regions. Getz and Brown (2006) point out that much of the research into the wine tourist has originated from studying consumers at the cellar door.

Some researchers have sought to explore wine tourism as a form of consumer behavior in which wine lovers and those interested in wine regions travel to preferred destinations (Charters & Knight, 2001). To put it concisely wine tourism can be defined as travel for the purpose of experiencing wineries and wine regions and their links to lifestyles. Wine tourism encompasses both service provision and destination marketing. The wine industry lends itself to a marriage with tourism. It is a beverage associated with relaxation, communing with others, complementary to food consumption, learning about new things, and hospitality. Tourists will often seek some or all of these things while in movement or vacation (Dodd, 1997). The wine tourism experience can therefore be provided in a number of ways, the most notable being events and festivals (Charters & Knight, 2001). However wine tourism and its links with other tourism sectors have received little attention in literature (Telfer, 1999).