



Segmenting Wine Festival Visitors Based on Their Visit Experience

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Abstract: *Wine tourism experiences can be offered in many ways, such as visiting wine festivals. They can provide a wide range of experiences that differ from day-to-day living and could be viewed as lifestyle tourism experiences. The goal of the research was to segment wine festival visitors and describe them within the experience economy context. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire at wine festivals in Croatia. Research hypotheses were tested using cluster analysis and ANOVA. Segmentation results show four significantly different groups of wine festival visitors (business visitors, explorers, devotees and companions). The identified segments significantly differ in their motivation and experience at the wine festival. Based on the results of this research, recommendations for specific marketing strategies can be given to festival organizers, wineries and destination management organizations. Research expands previous knowledge about customer segments in wine tourism. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first empirical study that has developed a wine festival visitor profile based on the experience economy framework.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Travel for the purpose of visiting festivals represents a fast-growing segment of the tourism market and is a unique opportunity for destination development based on the fact that festivals provide various economic benefits to the local community (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). Festivals can have a significant effect on the promotion and brand awareness of a destination and are capable of generating significant tourism income (Dash & Samantaray, 2018). Organizing festivals can attract visitors to the destination outside of the main tourist season and possibly even to destinations and regions they would not otherwise consider visiting (Getz, 2008). The Festival environment can provide a unique and memorable experience to the visitors based on their specific interests (Manthiou, 2014). Providing memorable experiences to festival visitors leads to multiple positive outcomes and should be the focus of festival organizers and researchers.

Wine festivals combine elements of wine and festival tourism and are a perfect opportunity to create unique experiences (Lee, Hwang & Shim, 2019). They are defined as special events which are based on showcasing local wines, food and culture (Quadri & Fiore, 2013). Wine festivals are usually held in picturesque settings within wine regions which only adds to their attractiveness and makes them an ideal platform to create memorable experiences (Lee, Bruwer & Song, 2017). Visiting wine festivals can be the main motive for travel to a certain destination as well as a specific experience that visitors want to immerse in during their stay at a destination (Lee, Bruwer & Song, 2017). Comprehensive literature reviews have revealed a limited amount of research that views the wine festival experience as a multidimensional construct.

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Experience economy research has been based on the assumption that consumption has a hedonistic component and that decisions on purchases (or travel) are made with a combination of rational (cognitive) and irrational (emotional) elements (Carvalho, Kastenholz & Carneiro 2021; Chang 2018; Godovyk & Tasci, 2020; Oh et. al., 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). A multidimensional model of consumer experience has been originally proposed by Pine & Gilmore (1999) which consisted of four dimensions (escape, education, entertainment and environment) and since then it has been the base of a large number of tourism studies that have empirically tested the concept in various tourism settings (Dieck et al, 2018; Manthiou, 2014; Mehmetoglu & Engen 2011; Park et al, 2010; Rivera et al, 2015). Research has shown that tourism experiences are subjective to the consumer and context-specific (Fernandes & Cruz, 2016; Kim et al, 2017; Lee, Sung & Zhao, 2017; Lee Hwang & Shim, 2017).

In other words, experience and its underlining dimensions will greatly vary depending on the platform on which they are created (i.e., restaurant, festival, resort, shopping) and will depend on the different kinds of socio-demographic and psychological characteristics of the consumer (Geus et al, 2016).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to segment and describe wine festival visitors based on their motivation and visit experience so the following hypothesis are proposed:

Hypothesis One: Wine festival visitors are significantly different regarding their motivation.

Hypothesis Two: Wine festival visitors are significantly different regarding their visit experience.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to test the proposed research hypotheses, an empirical study based on primary data was conducted using the self-administered survey method. The used questionnaire was based on a comprehensive review of previous research on tourism experience, festival experience, wine tourism experience and wine festival experience. The questionnaire was designed in English, Croatian, German, Spanish and Italian language. It consisted of twenty-one items regarding the visitors' experience, and six items regarding visitor motivation while the final section was designed to collect data about the demographic profile of the visitors.

Based on an extensive literature review six wine festival visitor experience dimensions were proposed. Measurements were drawn from previous research and were adapted for this study concerning: cognitive experience (Rivera et al, 2015), affective experience (Kim, 2010), social experience (Chang & Horng, 2010), sensory experience (Geus et al, 2016), experiential value (Kim et al, 2011) and service experience (Chang & Horng, 2010).

To test content validity, clarity and comprehensibility as well as to determine the exact time needed to complete it, a pretest of the questionnaire was conducted on a sample of academic and non-academic community.

The sampling strategy was based on the assumption that there are different types (segments) of wine festival visitors so for purposes of data collection three distinctly different wine festivals were chosen. The empirical analysis was carried out using univariate (average scores), bivariate (ANOVA), and multivariate (cluster analysis) statistical methods.

3. RESULTS

As shown in Table 1 research sample consisted of 462 respondents with more than half of the respondents coming from WF1 (Diocletian Wine Cellar Split) and others from WF2 (Vinstra, Poreč) and WF3 (Fine wine festival, Skradin). Sample is fairly evenly distributed among male (48,7%) and female (51,3%), married (44,7%) and unmarried (50,1%) respondents. Most of the respondents are employed (61,5%) with college (39,8%) or higher education (31,4%) and higher than average income (55,8%). Slightly more than half of the respondents are first-time visitors to the festival (58,2%).

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

		Total WF1		Festival					
				WF2		WF3			
		%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Gender	Male	225	48,7	68	27,6	101	81,4	56	60,9
	Female	237	51,3	178	72,4	23	18,6	36	39,1
Total		462	100,0	246	100,0	124	100,0	92	100,0
Marital status	Married	205	44,7	121	49,7	51	41,1	33	35,9
	Unmarried	230	50,1	104	42,8	69	55,6	57	61,9
	Other	24	5,2	18	7,5	4	3,3	2	2,2
Total		459	100,0	243	100,0	124	100,0	92	100,0
Festival visit	First	265	58,2	163	68,2	67	54,0	35	38
	Repeated	190	41,8	76	31,8	57	46,0	57	62,0
Total		456	100,0	239	100,0	124	100,0	92	100,0
Employment	Employed	283	61,5	145	59,4	73	58,9	65	70,7
	Self Employed	72	15,7	39	15,9	23	18,5	10	10,9
	Retired	31	6,7	27	11,1	2	1,6	2	2,2
	Unemployed	18	3,9	6	2,5	10	8,1	2	2,2
	Other	56	12,2	27	11,1	16	12,9	13	14,1
Total		460	100,0	244	100	124	100,0	92	100,0
Education	High school	130	28,8	67	27,9	48	40,0	15	16,3
	College	180	39,8	100	41,7	34	28,3	46	50,0
	Masters, PhD	142	31,4	73	30,4	38	31,7	31	33,7
Total		452	97,8	240	100	120	100	92	100,0
Income	High	75	16,2	27	10,9	35	28,2	13	14,1
	Above average	183	39,6	90	36,5	51	41,1	42	45,7
	Average	162	35,1	98	39,8	31	25,0	33	35,9
	Below average	12	2,6	9	3,6	1	0,8	2	2,2
	Low	30	6,5	22	8,9	6	4,9	2	2,2
Total		462	100,0	246	100,0	124	100,0	92	100,0

Source: Own research

The sample was mainly international as 31 countries were represented which account for 94,2% of the sample. The largest amount of respondents originated from the USA (30,7%) and the UK (18,4%).

To better understand the role of motivation in the creation of experience cluster analysis was used to segment wine festival visitors. The level of their motivation to taste and buy wine at the festival was used as segmentation criteria.

Initial hierarchical cluster analysis showed the existence of five clusters; however, ANOVA showed that clusters three and five are not significantly different ($p > 0,05$) so further non-hierarchical cluster analysis would be done using four clusters.

To segment the visitors' nonhierarchical k means clustering procedure (CLUSTER = 4, MXITER = 10, CONVERGE = 0) was conducted which revealed four significantly different clusters of wine festival visitors using motivation (tasting wine, buying wine) as criteria variable.

Table 2. K means cluster analysis results

		Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tasting wine	Between groups	1203,782	3	401,261	482,855	,000
	Within groups	375,619	452	,831		
	Total	1579,401	455			
Buying wine	Between groups	960,167	3	320,056	480,969	,000
	Within groups	300,779	452	,665		
	Total	1260,945	455			
Cluster				n	%	
Cluster one				151	32,68	
Cluster two				98	21,21	
Cluster three				73	15,8	
Cluster four				134	29	
Respondents assigned to clusters				456	98,7	
Unassigned respondents				6	1,3	
Total				462	100	

Source: Own research

Results of cluster analysis show that there are four different segments of wine festival visitors based on their motivation. Results show clusters are significantly different in their desire to taste and buy wine at the festival (Table 1) but are also significantly different in level of motivation to meet the winemakers ($F_{3,452} = 32,621$, $p < 0,001$), socialize ($F_{3,452} = 37,580$, $p < 0,001$), learn about wine ($F_{3,452} = 482,855$, $p < 0,001$) and conduct business on the festival ($F_{3,452} = 15,006$, $p < 0,001$).

Results of cluster analysis and ANOVA support hypothesis one which states that wine festival visitors are significantly different concerning their motivation to visit the festival.

Respondents from the first cluster ($n = 151$) show a higher level of motivation for buying wine at the festival ($\bar{x} = 4,60$), while tasting wine was a lesser motivating factor ($\bar{x} = 2,99$). Focus on transactional activities like buying wine suggests a business-oriented type of visitor so respondents from the first cluster are named "*Business visitors*". Respondents from second cluster ($n = 98$) show a higher level of motivation for tasting wine ($\bar{x} = 5,02$) then for buying wine ($\bar{x} = 2,53$). Seeking out new wines and not being interested in transactional activities shows an inclination to exploring so the respondents are named "*Explorers*". Respondents from third cluster ($n = 73$) show a low level of motivation for both buying wine ($\bar{x} = 1,56$) and tasting wine ($\bar{x} = 1,53$). Those results indicate that these respondents are not interested in the theme of the festival and are present only as companionship, hence are named "*Companions*". Respondents from the fourth cluster show a high level of motivation for both tasting ($\bar{x} = 5,94$) and buying wine ($\bar{x} = 5,40$) which shows their interest in various festival activities and are named „*Devotees*".

Visitor experience was measured through six dimensions with satisfactory Cronbach Alpha scores: experiential value ($\alpha=0,887$), sensory experience ($\alpha=0,873$), emotional experience ($\alpha=0,741$), cognitive experience ($\alpha=0,870$), social experience ($\alpha=0,825$), service experience ($\alpha=0,738$).

To explore the experiences of identified visitor clusters ANOVA analysis was conducted for all six experience dimensions (Table 3).

Table 3. Experience dimensions mean scores and ANOVA analysis

Experience dimensions	Cluster mean scores				ANOVA
	<i>Business visitors</i>	<i>Explorers</i>	<i>Companions</i>	<i>Devotees</i>	
Experiential value	4,63	4,77	4,33	4,84	$F_{3,451} = 2,400$, $p > 0,05$
Sensory experience	4,68	4,67	4,42	5,17	$F_{3,452} = 6,280$, $p < 0,001$
Emotional experience	5,19	5,47	4,90	5,48	$F_{3,452} = 4,211$, $p < 0,01$
Cognitive experience	4,67	4,80	4,34	5,09	$F_{3,452} = 4,594$, $p < 0,01$
Social experience	5,43	5,65	5,51	5,72	$F_{3,452} = 2,873$, $p < 0,05$
Service experience	4,67	5,2	4,68	4,91	$F_{3,452} = 3,748$, $p < 0,05$

Source: Own research

Results of ANOVA analysis shows there are significant differences in visit experience between identified clusters of wine festival visitors for each experience dimension other than the experiential value which supports hypothesis two which states that wine festival visitors are significantly different in regard to their visit experience. In other words, based on the results shown we can conclude that visitors will significantly differ in their motivation to visit a wine festival which in turn will determine the type of experience they will have during the visit.

4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While significant differences were found among respondents in regards to their visit experience it is necessary to further explore the nature of experience dimensions for each visitor segment. For example, the social experience dimension was scored fairly high by all visitor segments even though it is obvious they come to the festival for different reasons and will have different needs while attending the festival. It stands to a reason that different social environments will affect visitors (business environment, personal environment, etc.) experience depending on which segment they belong to. The same goes for dimensions such as sensory or emotional where future research needs to identify which senses and emotions affect the visit experience the most.

Experience in this study was measured at a single point in time while the consensus is that experience creation is a process so adapting the methodology to measure visit experience at different points in time (during the festival and after the festival) would bring greater insight into what creates a truly memorable experience.

Additionally, future research should use multivariate statistical analysis to understand what effect will these experience dimensions have on the future behavior of identified market segments.

5. CONCLUSION

To better understand the nature of subjective wine festival experiences wine festival visitors were segmented into four significantly different groups (business visitors, explorers, devotees and companions) using motivation as segmentation criteria. The identified groups of visitors are significantly different in their motivation and experience at the festival.

Business visitors are motivated by buying wine and experiencing the festival mostly through its social component (dimension). Explorers represent a segment of consumers interested in tasting new wines and engaging in casual social activities at the festival. Devotees are a visitor segment that in literature is often referred to as wine lovers or enthusiasts. They visit wine festivals to experience their senses being stimulated, their knowledge expanded, their emotions triggered and their need for socialization fulfilled. More than any other visitor segment, the devotees highlight the need for the creation of multidimensional memorable experiences. Companions are uninterested participants of wine festivals. Their role is to support and companionship for visitors from other segments. Their festival experience is based on the social and emotional dimensions.

In conclusion, based on the results of this research it seems wine festival experience will significantly differ between specific groups of visitors attending the festival and that psychological characteristics such as motivation will greatly determine their visit experience. Since motivation exists in visitors' consciousness before the visit it could be viewed as an experience antecedent.

The results confirm the fact that there isn't one universal type of wine tourist which has been suggested in previous research on the topic. According to these findings festival organizers, wineries and other stakeholders in wine tourism should adapt their marketing strategies to better suit the needs of specific customer segments to build strong memories and in turn loyalty towards the festival and destination.

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