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Priority maps at wine tourism destinations: An empirical approach in five Spanish wine regions



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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes wine tourism destination brand equity in five wine regions. A survey questionnaire was conducted with a sample of 598 visitors and the estimates of Partial Least Squares were used to develop priority maps with which to study the policies at the various wine destinations. This technique includes the impact of each component on brand equity formation and the evaluation of these dimensions. These priority maps were then used to address various questions such which determinants should have low priority and high priority. The findings show how the formation of brand equity contributes to successful wine tourism development by identifying the sector's main strengths and weaknesses, and provide useful information that can be used to create strategies based on the primary factors that influence the development of brand equity. The marketing implications for the wine destinations studied are discussed in relation particularly to destination branding and management practices.

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1. Introduction

Spain is one of the main international tourist destinations and presently holds third position in the global ranking by tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2015). Although the principal type of tourism in this country is based on sun and beaches, new products have been developed in the last few years. A restructuring of the tourism industry presents opportunities for the development of new choices. In this context, there has been a general tendency toward creating new tourist products that focus particularly on Spain's interior regions (Sampaio, 2012; Haven-Tang & Sedgley, 2014). Tourism linked to culture, nature or rural places has undergone huge growth, as has that related to traditional products, and specifically that of wine, which is one of the main products that adds value to rural regions, thus increasing employment opportunities (Alamanos, Kuznesof & Ritson, 2014) and attracting tourists to wine areas (Ye, Zhang & Yuan, 2014). Bearing in mind that Spain is the largest producer of wine worldwide, the study of wine tourism in this country is a relevant topic. Wine tourism is an opportunity to develop the traditional Spanish wine industry and plays a crucial role in attracting tourists to rural regions (Scherrer, Alonso & Sheridan, 2009). Various initiatives have been undertaken by

public entities such as Savor Wine Routes of Spain and ACEVIN over the last few years.

A literature review of wine tourism destinations reveals the existence of academic studies that examine wine tourism from the perspective of visitors and wineries. Studies that analyze the tourist perspective address various topics, of which the following can be highlighted: visitors' segmentation (Hall, 1996), winery visitors' motivation and satisfaction (Bruwer & Alant, 2009) and post-visit consumer behavior (Mitchell & Hall, 2004). Some researchers who focus on wineries analyze topics such as wine routes (Bruwer, 2003), critical factors in wine tourism (Getz & Brown, 2006), wine festivals (Veres, Clark & Golbourne, 2008) or brand equity at wine tourism destinations (Lockshin & Spawton, 2001).

In this respect, branding is a significant tool for destinations (Caldwell & Freire, 2004). The wine sector tends to use brands related to the products' place of origin. These global brands, called denominations of origin, are the most important certified warranties of product and destination authenticity, and act as a protection and value system. Because denominations of origin provide a valuable means to differentiate among destinations (Alant & Bruwer, 2010; Lim & Weaver, 2014), these global brands have become essential for products and tourist areas by helping create destination brand equity, i.e. the assets and liabilities connected with a brand (Aaker, 1991). Brand equity is hence a relevant concept for wine tourism destinations and is a useful instrument with

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which to differentiate tourist products and create identity (Bruwer, 2003). Brand equity is, then, a key factor regarding the commercialization of destinations (Lockshin & Spawton, 2001). However, no representative studies have investigated the various types of brand equity at different wine destinations. Moreover, the majority of studies use qualitative techniques (Medina & Tresserras, 2008) in their analyses and are additionally based on the opinions of winery owners and managers (Getz & Brown, 2006). Wineries and tourism management agencies should aim to use their brands to create a competitive advantage to differentiate themselves from their competitors. It is also worth noting that brand equity is itself defined in various ways, and it is possible to recognize a number of different definitions of wine destination-types (Merrilees, Miller & Herington, 2013).

The primary objective of this investigation is therefore to study wine tourism destination brand equity from a tourist perspective in five Spanish wine regions (*Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Navarra, Rueda, and La Mancha*) using a novel technique. This paper will examine brand as a success factor at wine tourism destinations and will also make significant recommendations regarding business strategies and marketing, in addition to providing a definition of wine destination types that could be applied to international wine destinations more generally. The comparison of wine regions will permit each destination's strengths and weaknesses based on the design of priority maps: a quantitative technique that allows priorities to be set and strategies to be developed. Specifically, the paper aims to discover if there are significant differences between each component's score and its impact on brand equity.

2. Literature review

2.1. Brand equity: Definition and components

Brand equity is one of the major topics in marketing research and is defined as a group of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, name or symbol, that add or reduce value to or from a product or service (Aaker, 1991; Lei & Chu, 2015). It is a relevant element in market development that enhances the brand's worth (Hornig, Liu, Chiu & Tsai, 2012). For Keller (1993), brand equity is the value of a brand in consumers' minds: that is, the value that a brand adds to a product or service. Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) define this concept as the difference between a branded and an unbranded product. Moreover, from a business perspective, brand equity is a useful instrument with which to calculate a brand's value (Buil, Martínez, & de Chernatony, 2009), provide firms with value (Keller, 1993), and maintain companies' competitive advantages (Rasha, 2015). Brand equity allows consumers to have more confidence in a company's brand than the brands of its competitors (Sasmitha & Mohd, 2015).

Two approaches to measure brand equity have been contemplated: one-dimensional and multidimensional. The second perspective is more often used due to the numerous variables that need to be considered (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1993). The aforementioned authors suggest that brand equity is a multidimensional construct consisting of: loyalty, perceived quality, associations (perceived value, brand image) and awareness. Loyalty, one of the primary components of brand equity, is an outcome of the relationship between a customer and a brand (Aaker, 1991). It denotes a commitment to repurchase or recommend a product or service in the future (Oliver, 1997). Perceived quality is considered to be one of the most important components involved in building a strong brand (Farquhar, 1989). Zeithaml (1988) defines this concept as the consumer's judgment of a brand's excellence. When improved quality is perceived by customers, brand equity will increase and a product will be chosen over competing

products. Perceived value, the customer's overall assessment of perceptions (quality and satisfaction) relative to price, can be considered to be the difference between what is given and what is received (Zeithaml, 1988). This component refers to a brand's functional and utilitarian aspects (Aaker, 1996). Brand image is considered to be the brand's personality (Upshaw, 1995), where personality is defined as a set of unique and favorable associations in a consumer's memory that may improve brand equity (Keller, 1993). Finally, awareness is an important component of brand equity as regards both products (Keller, 1993) and services (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). This concept, which represents the presence of a brand in consumers' minds, can affect both perceptions and attitudes (Aaker, 1996).

2.2. Wine tourism

Wine tourism is an economic activity that has undergone huge growth in the last few years, especially in rural areas, owing to the connection between agriculture and tourism (Maude & van Rest, 1985). Wine tourism is an emerging line that increases wineries' sales and expands knowledge concerning wine and the area in which it is produced (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002). Wine tourism is defined as visits to vineyards, wineries and wine events (Hall, 1996; Hall & Macionis, 1998). For Getz (2000), wineries are the main attraction, but they are not the only one. For Carlsen (2004), wine, food, tourism and art are the main components sought by visitors on package tours to wineries. Wine tourism is a sensory experience (Getz, 2000) that increases knowledge about wine and may become a way of life that provides tourists with enjoyment.

Research into wine tourism dates from the 1990s and is focused on descriptive and comparative studies (Getz, Dowling, Carlsen, & Anderson, 1999). The volume of studies has increased in recent years due to the relevance of the tourism industry and collaborations between universities and governments. A literature review of wine tourism highlights the existence of two main lines of research: studies from the perspective of visitors and those from the point of view of wineries.

With regard to the visitors' perspective, several main topics are analyzed, the first of which is the visitors' characteristics (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2000, 2002; Brown & Getz, 2005; Cullen et al., 2006). Other researchers have even carried out a pre-study of a visitors' segmentation analysis (Dodd, 1995; Williams & Dossa, 2003; Mitchell & Hall, 2006; Alonso, Fraser, & Cohen, 2007), and some papers focus on wine tourists' segmentation. Several variables are used in studies of this type, such as the following: demographic variables such as age and income (Dodd & Bigotte, 1997); psychographic characteristics (Hall, 1996; Hall & Macionis, 1998; Chen & Sasias, 2014; Cho et al., 2014); prior experience of wine tourism (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2009); degree of involvement with wine (Brown, Havitz, & Getz, 2006; Nella & Christou 2014); motivation (Williams & Kelly, 2001; Bitsani & Kavoura, 2012); attitude and behavior (Williams & Dossa, 2003); frequency of visits to wineries (Tassiopoulos, Nuntsu & Haydam, 2004); or sensation seeking (Galloway, Mitchell, Getz, Crouch & Ong, 2008). Another topic studied is the combination of satisfaction and motivation for visiting wineries (Mitchell & Hall, 2006). In this respect, some authors study the main factors that determine motivation (Alant & Bruwer, 2004; Bruwer & Alant, 2009). The stages of the tourism experience have also been analyzed, and three main steps have been identified: before, during and after the visit (Mitchell & Hall, 2004). Finally, some authors focus on the study of the factors that help predict behavioral intentions (Sparks, 2007).

With regard to studies that focus on the perspective of wineries, five research lines can be highlighted. The first is wine tourism and regional development, which studies the socioeconomic impact of this type of tourism on rural areas (Carlsen, 1999; Alonso

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