



Understanding beer tourist motivation



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ABSTRACT

Craft beer as an industry has been growing rapidly across over the past decade. This growth and interest has created an emerging market niche in tourism, beer tourism. Given the significant number of dollars spent on both craft beer and beer tourism, an understanding of the beer tourism niche is important in order to be able to market successfully to consumers who have this interest. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine motivations of beer tourists and to determine if beer tourists exhibit significant differences from non-beer tourists. A study of visitors to North Carolina craft breweries was conducted throughout the state during the Fall 2011. It was found that there were four main motivational factors for tourists to visit a NC brewery, which can be explained by the push and pull theory. These four factors were: craft brewery experience, enjoyment, socialization, and beer consumption.

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world. In 2010, leisure visitor spending totaled \$526 billion in the United States. During that same time period U.S. residents took 1.5 billion trips for leisure purposes (U.S. Travel Association, 2011). It is important to note that no single destination or attraction can meet the wants and needs of all tourists. Therefore, tourism related organizations and businesses need to identify and market to specific market segments (i.e. culinary tourists, eco tourists, cultural tourists) that maybe interested in their destination or attraction.

The development of tourism niches can assist destinations and attractions in market segmentation. According to Robinson and Novelli (2005) tourism can be segmented into niches (macro-niches and micro-niches) to meet the motivational needs of specific market segments. Niche tourism focuses on the consumer market segment's interests and travel desires making the destination more attractive and marketable. A macro-niche can be defined as a niche that has a larger consumer interest segment (e.g., rural tourism, sports tourism, environmental tourism) while micro-niches reach out to consumers in more narrowly defined groups (e.g., cycling tourism, geo-tourism, gastronomy tourism) (Robinson & Novelli, 2005).

One tourism niche that has grown in popularity is beverage tourism; most notably wine (Getz & Brown, 2006; Plummer, Telfer, Hashimoto, & Summers, 2005). Beverage tourism implies that visitors travel to experience and enjoy a certain beverage type (e.g. wine, beer, or tea); much as culinary tourists travel in search of certain food experiences or cuisines (Plummer et al., 2005). Wine tourism is a prominent type of beverage tourism appearing in the tourism literature (Plummer et al., 2005). Other types of beverage tourism addressed in the literature include whisky, bourbon, tea, sake, and beer (e.g., Alonso, 2011; Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009; McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008; Plummer et al., 2005; Spracklen, 2011). While a considerable amount of research has examined wine tourism, there has been very limited research which focused on other forms of beverage tourism, especially beer. A beer tourist's primary motivation for travel is to visit a brewery, beer festival, or beer show in order to experience the beer-making process and/or tasting of beer (Plummer et al., 2005). The growth of beer tourism coincides with the expansion of the craft beer production sector.

Craft beer is a growing industry across the United States, especially in North Carolina (NC) (NC Brewers Guild, 2014). A craft brewery is defined as a small, independent brewery that produces 6 million barrels or less of beer annually. Characteristics that are linked to craft beer and breweries include;

- small scale,
- innovative (small scale production allows for more experimentation and the development of twists and new styles)
- made with traditional ingredients

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- support and reflect the local community (through their product and philanthropic endeavors) (Brewers Association, 2014)

These characteristics as well as the simple draw of the operation make the craft beer industry fit well within the concept of tourism and community tourism development. The craft beer industry consists of four markets: “brewpubs, microbreweries, regional craft breweries, and contract brewing companies” (Brewers Association, 2014). A brewpub is both a brewery and a restaurant that sells at least 25% of its beer onsite. A microbrewery produces 15,000 barrels of beer or less per year, a third or more of which is sold offsite. A regional brewery produces between 15,000 and 6 million barrels annually (Brewers Association, 2014). “In 2013, craft brewers reached 7.8% volume of the total U.S. beer market, up from 6.5% the previous year. Additionally, craft dollar share of the total U.S. beer market reached 14.3% in 2013, as retail dollar value from craft brewers was estimated at \$14.3 billion, up from \$11.9 billion in 2012 (Brewers Association, 2014).”

Given the significant number of dollars spent on both craft beer and beer tourism, an understanding of the beer tourism niche is important in order to be able to market successfully to consumers who have this interest. In addition, an understanding of who visits craft breweries and what motivates them to visit will assist craft breweries and tourism professionals in effectively promoting this new tourism niche and providing what the tourists wants. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine motivations of beer tourists and to determine if beer tourists exhibit significant differences from non-beer tourists.

2. Target marketing

Studying the demographics, psychographics, and motivations of consumers is useful to marketers seeking to understand consumer behavior and develop a successful marketing strategy (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006; Plummer et al., 2005; Rivera, Chandler, & Winslow, 2010; Robinson & Novelli, 2005). Establishing a company's or industry's target markets and marketing position are important strategies in achieving the goals of maximizing exposure, maximizing strategic advantage over its competitors, and minimizing financial misuse (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006). Market segmentation is the division of a consumer population into groups based on specific identifiable characteristics (i.e., motivation, demographics, or interests). Segmentation assumes (a) that consumers in the marketplace are different and (b) that a specific trait, behavior, or attitude can be used to divide consumers into target market subgroups (MacKay, Andereck, & Vogt, 2002). The steps commonly associated with target marketing are first to identify specific profitable market clusters of consumers, secondly to intentionally develop products and services to meet these specific consumers' needs or wants, and finally to market to them with focused communications (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006).

There are five requirements for defining a target market (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006). First, the consumer group must be measurable in the sense that companies need to determine the size of the potential consumer demand. Secondly, it is essential that the target markets be accessible, so that the costs of delivering or getting products or services to the target consumer are not overly burdensome. A third fundamental consideration is that the target market be substantial in terms of numbers of consumers to warrant customizing promotions or offers to the group. Fourth, it is vital to be able to differentiate the target market on specific characteristics that are easily observed by marketers and businesses, (e.g., gender: men versus women, or age: youth markets versus senior consumers). Lastly, the target market must be actionable in that the businesses can actually modify their services in ways that are meaningful to the targeted consumer.

In an effort to identify and profile the beer tourist, Plummer et al. (2005) investigated the visitor profile and the visitor experience of the Waterloo/Wellington Ale Trail in Ontario Canada. It was found that most of the visitors to the Ale Trail were men, between the ages of 30

and 50. Almost all of the visitors lived in Ontario and were traveling with another person. Visitors generally had heard about the Ale Trail by word-of-mouth or by walking or driving by the location. Plummer et al. (2005) alluded to the need to not only identify and describe a beer tourist based on demographics, but to “obtain a more in-depth understanding of the beer tourists in a variety of locations (p. 457).”

One necessary aspect of the beer tourist that needs to be identified and explored is what motivates visitors to desire a beer tourism experience. It is well known in the marketing and consumer behavior fields that consumer buying decisions are heavily influenced by a person's personal motivations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006). Determining what motivates and drives beer tourists is an important component of developing a marketing strategy to grow an industry such as the craft beer sector and beer tourism niche.

3. Beverage tourism

Culinary tourism can be described as people traveling to a particular destination to experience the unique foods and beverages of that destination (Robinson & Novelli, 2005). Beverage tourism, of which beer is a part of, has been found to be an important element for tourists and considered an unforgettable part of a visitor's trip (Butts, 2012; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall & Mitchell, 2005; Karim & Chi, 2010). Howley and Van Westering (2008) conducted a study of British vineyard owners and their attitudes and opinions towards wine tourism in their region of England. According to the respondents, the number of tourists who travel to Britain only to visit vineyards and view the wine production process was decreasing. The researchers discovered vineyards that added attractions (e.g., art exhibitions, event/meeting spaces, and restaurants) realized an increase in tourism. It was also determined that including a visit to a vineyard, as part of organized tour itineraries, helped increase the number of visitors to the winery. Lastly, this study revealed staffing to be a major contrast between large vineyard producers and small. The large vineyards had the ability to employ tour guides and other staff members and thus encouraged tourists to visit. Since small vineyard owners had to do everything themselves, they tended to move away from allowing visitors to their winery due to time and availability constraints (Howley & Van Westering, 2008).

In addition to wine, more recent studies (e.g., Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009; McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008; Plummer et al., 2005; Spracklen, 2011) have examined whisky and bourbon tourism, tea tourism, sake tourism, and beer tourism. In Scotland, whisky tourism has grown in popularity since the 1960s. Similar to wine tourism, Scotland's whisky tourism attracts visitors to their onsite facilities in order to increase brand awareness and image. McBoyle and McBoyle (2008) concluded that the success of whisky tourism (e.g., connoisseur tours, whisky schools, and the Classic Malts Cruise) had increased Scotland's tourism capital. Scottish distilleries became very innovative in marketing a variety of whisky related experiences including tours, schools, and the Classic Malt Cruise. Through these efforts the Scotland whisky and tourism industry increased their overall visibility. McBoyle and McBoyle (2008) also concluded that the simple action of visiting a distillery was not enough to create a loyal consumer. Success of the distilleries' ability to create brand loyalty depended upon the emotional connection that was established while the visitor was onsite through the actual experience with combination of the product, individuals that produced the product and the location the product was produced.

Some researchers consider beverage tourism, such as tea tourism, to be a form of heritage tourism (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009). Research done by Jolliffe and Aslam (2009) focused on Sri Lanka's history and heritage of tea and its relationship with tourism. Visitors to tea suppliers, gardens, plantations, factories, museums, exhibits, and events were all considered part of this region's tea tourism. Further, the research found that there was a market for tea heritage tourism in Sri Lanka. There was already a presence of this form of

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