

DETERMINANTS OF VISITOR SPENDING AT THE WACKY WINE FESTIVAL

Abstract.

The Wacky wine festival in Robertson, South Africa is one of the country's largest wine festivals. Events have long been used to promote a destination or region as well as to generate revenue. The uniqueness of this wine festival is that it takes place on an existing wine route where 48 wine farms also participate in this event. This paper presents the results of a survey that was conducted during the festival in June 2009 where 450 questionnaires were administered. The aim was to identify the determinants of visitors spending at the festival. A regression model was used to analyse the data. It is the first time that this type of research was conducted at a wine festival in South Africa and the research will assist the organisers in identifying the high spending markets or visitors. This will enable organisers to focus their resources more effectively in order to target markets that can contribute to the further growth of the festival and the economic well being of the area.

Key words: Wine tourism, Regression analysis, Festivals, Events

INTRODUCTION

The Wacky Wine Festival in Robertson in the Western Cape Province started in 2004 with 2500 visitors and grew to 16 000 visitors in 2008. This festival is unique in the sense that the festival takes place along the Robertson wine route that consists of 48 wine farms each producing their own wine. Each wine farm also has its own entertainment programme during the festival and wine tasting is offered by all wine farms. Additional activities offered by the different wine farms include food tasting, stalls selling arts and crafts, children's activities, music performances, bottling of your own wine and even adventure activities such as sky diving.

Hall and Sharples (2008) indicated that wine festivals are typically used to promote a wine region, to attract visitors and engage the local community and to promote consumption of specific wine products. The aim of a wine festival is to increase the revenues of the wine producers in the short and long term and the spillover effects benefit the community in that area. According to Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) research on wine tourism has been expanding rapidly, but very little is known about the spending behaviour of wine tourists. Defining a wine tourist is a challenge since researchers such as Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) and Dodd and Bigotte (1997) clearly indicate that there are different categories of wine tourists which make it difficult to capture the concept of a wine tourist in one definition. The categories include the wine lover, the connoisseur, those interested in wine, the wine novice, the curious, the drinker to name but a few. Hence there is not a single accepted definition. For the purpose of this paper a wine tourist is seen as someone who travels primarily for a wine experience and makes an economic input in the area where he/she travels to. With an increase in festivals and especially wine festivals in South Africa, as well as an increase in wine farms, it has become important to determine the determinants of wine tourists' spending. This information has become paramount for marketing decision making since it can assist marketers in the use of scarce resources. The aim of our research is to examine the determinants of the spending of wine tourists at the Wacky Wine Festival. The layout of the paper is as follows: The following presents a brief review of the literature of the determinants of