

Tbilisi 2022 Abstract Submission

Title

Promoting wine tourism in the desert: The case of the Israeli Negev

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

wine tourism, Negev, wine of the desert, small wineries

Research Question

To identify the relative importance of wine tourism features for potential wine tourists in their decision to visit a winery or a wine region in the Negev.

Methods

A questionnaire was distributed among Israeli citizens. The Best-Worst (BW) scaling method was utilized to measure the relative importance of the wine tourism attributes.

Results

The most important feature in the visit decision is the “winery visit” followed by “purchasing local agricultural products” and “cultural events in the region”.

Abstract

Wine tourism is growing in Israel as many wineries were established during the last decade. There are several wine regions in Israel all over the country. A relatively new region is the desert in the south of the country, the Negev. Overall, there are over 300 wineries in Israel but many of them are small wineries that do not have the supply to access conventional retail channels, cellar doors exist as a profitable alternative. In addition, increased wine involvement and consumption, and the developing culture of wineries becoming more experiential has created a demand for wine activities, as a component of or in some cases a complete, leisure or holiday experience.

The Negev has potential for differentiation and recognition as a wine region due to the severe stressful conditions of the vine crops in the desert. The Negev has spectacular views, an ancient tradition of growing vines and wine production, and innovative and leading technologies. The area is rich in wineries and vineyards proving that quality wine can be produced in the challenging conditions of the desert (Gaudreau, 2013). All of these make the Negev a unique and attractive tourist destination, with economic and social opportunities.

The great advantage is manifested when the experience of the visitors is inclusive and contains a number of activities in a number of different places, such as tasting food, visiting wineries, arriving at historical and cultural buildings, etc. (Joyner et al., 2018). These actions create an overall experience that adds value to local products. The strategy helps farmers earn more on their agricultural produce (Malak-Rawlikowska et al., 2019). This strategy is one of the most important tools for the small farmer and businesses to add value to their products and contribute to strengthening the development of the countryside. The development of the wine tourism network showed that an important component in differentiating the Negev as a wine region is the cooperation between the wineries and the other tourism businesses in the Negev.

The purpose of this study was to identify the relative importance of wine tourism features for potential wine tourists in their decision to visit a winery or a wine region in the Negev and to explore what are the most attractive packages of activities in the region might be most suitable for the tourists in the region.

A questionnaire was distributed among Israeli citizens, about 63% of them live in the central part of Israel (about 100-150 km from the north Negev), and most respondents are ages 18-22 years (52%), 23-29 (9%), 30-39 (21%) and 40-59 (18%). The Best-Worst (BW) scaling method was utilized to measure the relative importance of the wine tourism attributes (Cohen, 2009). The questionnaire included a set of seven features which were organized in choice sets, based on Balance Incomplete Block Design type (7,4,4,2). Respondents were asked to choose the feature they considered the most important and the least important feature while choosing a wine tourism destination.

Results show that overall, the most important feature in the visit decision is the “winery visit” followed by “purchasing local agricultural products” and “cultural events in the region”. The least important features are “accommodation” and “children’s activities”.

A major collaboration we recommend is the creation of joint tourism packages that include winery or wineries visits, and cultural events in the region. To provide local agricultural products, it is recommended to establish stands for local agricultural produce in wineries and in various tourism businesses in the Negev. The combination of businesses in the field of wine and businesses in the field of rural tourism is known to enable the creation of innovative collaborations and the creation of competitive advantage so that the partners can work toward achieving common goals and objectives (Karampela et al., 2017). In addition, the possibility of buying local agricultural produce is found to be one of the most significant variables for tourists when visiting the winery, so the establishment of these stations will allow increased exposure to agricultural products produced in the Negev and in particular wines from the Negev.

Although the results of the current study did not find that accommodation is not a significant factor for the subjects in the study, we believe that combining a winery tour with accommodation is a necessary factor to attract tourists to the Negev. This is with the fact that getting to the Negev is complex both in terms of transportation, driving

distance, and wine tasting. Another recommendation is to hold wine events in the central and the north part of the country, not only in the Negev, where winemakers from the Negev wineries will attend to tell the story of the winery and offer wine tastings and sell their wines at attractive prices. As Levy and Cohen (2016) showed in their study, organizing such evenings and the presence of the winemakers during such events is an important and effective marketing tool, especially for small wineries, and will allow the winery owners to reach additional audiences. The existence of wine evenings can lead to a marketing advantage as in this way the winery owners reveal their wines to people who would not necessarily come directly to the winery. In addition, since these might be intimate events, this is a good opportunity to expand the wine lovers and create new business opportunities.

This is an exploratory study. Future studies with a greater number of respondents and a conjoint study are important to recommend an attractive package for tourists in the Israeli Negev and be profitable for the businesses in the region.

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