

Wine tourism

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Introduction.

Tourism associated with wineries has been a major area of recent growth in regional Australia. The Winemakers Federation of Australia recognized this in developing a national wine tourism strategy in 1998. WFA predicted a value of nearly Aus\$1 billion, comprising money spent at wineries and elsewhere by domestic and international winery visitors: figures since borne out. The benefits to associated businesses in regional economies are clear.

A key strategy of the WFA is to improve wine tourism research. There is general agreement that wine tourism is under-researched, impacting on the knowledge required for business development.

For space reasons, only issues relating to knowledge infrastructure are reported. Specific issues relating to branding finance (e.g. double taxation), lack of relevant research and human resource development were also identified. Some operators considered that more networking and local planning initiatives were required, since some areas were oversupplied with accommodation, and there was a need to co-market attractions with other facilities in the area. One region had 11 wineries near the accommodation supply but no link, nor tourist route designation, was provided.

Australia generally has high technological awareness, and even regionally – where infrastructure is less advanced – most wineries sampled had Internet presence and email. Within this, however, a range of activity was apparent.

Some wineries had their own website with e-commerce functionality, such as online ordering: others outsourced this as part of a cooperative marketing strategy. One winery had a website at their vineyard location (elsewhere), but had no plans to introduce one at the cellar door operation.

Responses on e-commerce, e-readiness and industry linkage and clustering issues were of particular relevance. Some state governments would facilitate, but not operate, educational sessions on e-commerce, delivered by private providers.

Conclusions

Wine tourism sustainability is closely aligned to that of the winemaking industry. Bruwer noted that in Australia '51% of all wineries have a production capacity of less than 4000 cases per year while 66% ... produce less than 7500 cases per year'. New Australian wineries have emerged rapidly, recently as frequently as one every three days. Unless contracted to a big purchaser, this would position a majority of wineries in niche segments, thus favouring direct sales through cellar doors or online. This industry structure differentiates those operators primarily concerned with product from those for whom tourism-associated revenue is a significant part of the business mix.

Genetically modified products and other practices aimed at global markets were viewed with suspicion, although not ignorance: the wine industry is officially opposed to GM use. Local governments also impose environmental requirements through planning approvals and inspections, although, in more than one state, inconsistencies in application were reported. State tourism authorities recognized the need for a coordinating role in, for example, route development, and in ensuring environmental and capacity issues were properly considered at regional levels.

References

1. Global Wine Tourism Hardcover – September 28, 2006 by Jack Carlsen (Editor), Stephen Charters (Editor)