

Profile and Motivations of Artisanal Beverage Tourists to the Free State Province, South Africa

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Abstract

An increase in South African domestic tourism could potentially be realised through offering locals easily accessible and affordable tourist products. Niche tourism may present this opportunity. Internationally numerous forms of niche tourism have started to emerge including battlefields, beach, beer, sex, and dark tourism. South Africa has much to offer for the niche tourism market, and one such product offering is artisanal beverage tourism. Artisanal beverage tourism includes beverages ranging from craft beer to vodka, gin, brandy, and rum. Artisanal beverage tourism is also a form of consuming local heritage and experiencing local history and cultures as reflected in drink. The paper's main aim was to establish artisanal beverage tourist to the Free State province, typical profile, behaviour, and motivations. The research further identified marketing guidelines, and the need for the establishment of an artisanal beverage tourist route for the Free State province. Ten artisanal breweries/distilleries were identified in the Free State province, South Africa. The study made use of a quantitative research design. The population of the study was visitors to artisanal breweries/distilleries in the province. Questionnaires were administered at several artisanal breweries/distilleries throughout the province where all patrons on the day of data collection were approached to complete a questionnaire. A total of 130 respondents completed the questionnaire.

Keywords: Artisanal beverage tourism; profiling; motivations; Free State province

Introduction

Tourism has been increasing steadily worldwide over the past decade. Potential reasons identified include economic opportunities through job creation, higher income generation, increase in government revenue and related infrastructural spending, and small business stimulation through tourism development (Acha-Anyi, 2018). According to the United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO), growth of 4.4% in international tourist arrivals worldwide during January-March 2019 is observable, compared to the previous year (National Department of Tourism Republic of South Africa, 2019). The South African tourism market has however seen a decrease in recent international tourist arrivals for the period of January to March 2019 compared to 2018 (National Department of Tourism Republic of South Africa, 2019). With the decrease in international visitor numbers, it is imperative that focus on domestic tourism be highlighted within South Africa (National Department of Tourism Republic of South Africa, 2017; Tourism, 1996).

The first step in reigniting the tourism economy of a country is through the promotion of domestic tourism as highlighted by the UNWTO (National Department of Tourism Republic of South Africa, 2021). An increase in domestic tourism could potentially be realised through offering locals easily accessible and affordable tourist products. Niche tourism may present this opportunity. Niche tourism has seen an gradual increase in recent literature worldwide (Ali-Knight, 2011; Mxunyelwa & Tshetu, 2018; Proos & Hattingh, 2020; Tassiopoulos &

Haydam, 2008). Internationally numerous forms of niche tourism has started to emerge including battlefields, beach, beer, sex, and dark tourism (George, 2019; Proos & Hattingh, 2020). Similarly, South Africa has much to offer for the niche tourism market. Examples of niche tourism sectors within South Africa include dark tourism, agri-tourism, eco-tourism, gambling tourism, and wine tourism (George, 2019; South African Tourism, 2019; Tourism Tattler, 2019). According to Francioni et al. (2014), Novelli (2005), and Rogerson (2015) culinary tourism is a form of niche tourism, as a result of tourists traveling to certain destinations to experience the unique food and beverages of a destination (Wesgro, 2017). Artisanal beverage tourism could also be classified as a niche tourism market. The term artisanal, in this case, refers to food or drink that is made in a traditional or non-mechanized way (LEXICO, 2019). Artisanal beverage tourism includes beverages ranging from craft beer to vodka, gin, brandy, and rum. Artisanal beverage tourism is also a form of consuming local heritage and experiencing local history and cultures as reflected in drink (Plummer et al., 2005). It is for this reason that the researcher suggests the use of the phrase artisanal beverages tourism throughout the article.

Artisanal beverages tourism presents an opportunity for economic growth of specific regions within South Africa, such as the Free State Province in South Africa. It is thus not only important to establish the typical profile of an artisanal beverage tourist that visits the Free State, but also further to understand the motivations behind their visit. Understanding these factors could potentially assist in developing an artisanal beverage tourism route for the Free State province, whilst simultaneously assist in creating marketing guidelines for the niche tourism product. The main objective of the study was to establish the typical profile and motivation of artisanal beverage tourists to the Free State province.

Niche tourism

The tourism market is extremely diverse and can be divided into many segments. Francioni et al. (2014) stated that the tourism growth of destinations and attractions can be assisted through the development of tourism niches. According to George (2019:245), a niche “is a market segment that can be tailored to meet the interests of the consumer. It is a group of consumers within a larger target market who have similar lifestyle characteristics and identifiable tastes”. According to Ali-Knight (2011), destinations are provided with an opportunity to differentiate and reposition themselves through niche tourism products. A destination can thus also develop a regions socio economic impacts (Proos & Hattingh, 2020). According to Colleen (2022), niche tourism is a good way of growing visitation to a destination. Examples of well-known international niche tourism markets include agri-tourism, eco-tourism, and wine-tourism.

Niche tourism is an integral part of the South African tourism industry as it contributes to the National Department of Tourism’s objective. This objective aims to increase the length of stay and spend of tourists, widening geographical distribution, increasing volumes, reducing seasonality, and driving transformation in tourism (George, 2019; National Department of Tourism Republic of South Africa, 2017).

Niche forms of tourism has been receiving increasing attention within tourism scholarship (Rogerson, 2014). This is visible through the numerous studies that have researched niche tourism internationally (Mxunyelwa & Tshetu, 2018; Tassiopoulos & Haydam, 2008; Tourism Tattler, 2019). Worldwide, beverage tourism, most notably wine tourism, has experienced a growth in popularity as a tourism niche (Francioni et al., 2014). According to Wesgro (2018), wine tourism in the Western Cape, South Africa has experienced similar significant growth. Novelli (2005) stated that a wine growing region made use of the niche product ‘wine’ to position itself as a niche destination. Wine related tourism activities thus attracted tourists to the region, resulting in an economic boost within the region. This could

thus explain why so many wine regions develop wine tourism products and host wine festivals and events (Wesgro, 2018). Rogerson (2015) suggests that similarly, beer tourism is a way for areas to attract niche tourists. Artisanal tourism thus presents an opportunity for a region to offer artisanal beverage activities to ensure an increase in visitor numbers, similar to that of wine growing regions. The following section alludes to tourist profile and motivation.

Tourist profile and motivation

For a tourism marketer it is of high importance to understand the profile and motivation of tourists to a destination to assist them in their marketing activities. Tourist motivation in destination and product selection is a complex phenomenon. Tourism offers visitors a wide range of aspects that could potentially motivate them to buy tourism offerings. Maslow's hierarchy of individual needs is the most common theory used in marketing. The needs according to Maslow consist of physical needs (food, drink, warmth, shelter), safety needs (security, protection), social needs (belonging, friendship, love), self-esteem (status, recognition), and self-development (self-actualisation) (Cunningham, 2018; George, 2019). Tourists have different motivating patterns at different stages of their life cycles (George, 2019). Motivation can be defined as "a state of arousal of a drive or need that impels people to activity in pursuit of goals" (George, 2019:232; Seaton & Bennet, 1996:66).

Motivation research related to culinary and beverage (artisanal) tourism has largely focused on food and wine (Charters & Ali-knight, 2002; Francioni et al., 2014). According to Wesgro (2018), wine tourism experienced a growth between 10 and 50% during 2017. Wine tourism plays an important role in tourist motivation to travel to a destination, as is the case in the Western Cape region in South Africa. Tour operators state that the typical profile of a wine tourists is middle age and elderly retired tourists, that are in a relationship (Wesgro, 2018).

However, there is still a lack of research concerning artisanal beverage tourism and its motivation. Brewery/distillery tours and tasting rooms allow tourists to experience new types of artisanal beverages and interaction with the different brew masters, and is thus an integral part of motivation for tourists to visit breweries (Rogerson, 2015). Bujdosó and Szűcs (2012) concluded that beer is a popular motivating factor for travel and a growing number of tourists visit the beer-superpowers. Francioni et al. (2014) concluded that there is a need to conduct research regarding tourist motivation to visit breweries in locations beyond the United States of America. However, before tourist motivation to artisanal tourism attractions are determined, it is important to get a deeper understanding on the theory behind artisanal tourism.

Artisanal tourism

A growing dimension within culinary or food tourism is artisanal/beer tourism (Rogerson, 2015:1). Wine tourism in South Africa has existed, operated successfully, and been researched extensively for a long time, thus researchers are investigating new trends (Marais & Saayman, 2011; Wesgro, 2017, 2018). According to Howlett (2013:32), beer tourism is considered as "a young form of special interest tourism," with Rogerson (2015), and Rogerson and Collins (2015) confirming this statement. Unique tourist destinations could be distinguished from their competitors by local cuisine including food or beverages. Due to the lack of research on artisanal tourism per se, the researchers focused on academic literature on craft beer and tourism. According to Niester (2008), beer tourism has been neglected in academic research (Rogerson & Collins, 2015). However, Slocum (2016) states that there is an increase experienced in the literature regarding craft beer tourism.

Previous research on beer and tourism includes: Beer tourism in Canada along the Waterloo–Wellington Ale Trail (Plummer et al., 2005), Investigating the links between beer producers and the tourism and hospitality industry in Yorkshire (Niester, 2008), Developing

beer tourism in South Africa: international perspectives (Rogerson, 2015), and Understanding tourism support for a craft beer trail: the case of Loudoun County, Virginia (Slocum, 2016).

The expansion of the craft beer industry and microbreweries has escalated due to the popularity of beer tourism in several countries (USA, Europe, and Canada) (Rogerson, 2015). Niester (2008:19) highlights the concept of route development that “has been adapted by the beer brewing industry in several areas and is commonly referred to as a ‘beer trail’ or ‘ale trail’”. International examples of beer tourism routes include Waterloo-Wellington Ale Trail in Canada (Plummer et al., 2005; Rogerson, 2015), the Ontario Beer Route, the Finger Lakes Beer Trail in New York City, and the Bend Ale Trail (Rogerson, 2015). South Africa is currently experiencing an expanding network of craft beer microbreweries and associated organised beer festivals (Rogerson, 2015). Some of the most well-known craft beer festivals within South Africa include the Clarens Craft Beer Festival (Clarens Craft Beer Festival, 2019), and the Capital Craft Beer festival in Pretoria (Capital Craft Festival). The following section alludes to South African artisanal/craft beer tourism.

South African artisanal/craft beer tourism

South Africa’s beer tourism is a relatively new phenomenon (Rogerson & Collins, 2015). South Africa is an emerging destination in global beer tourism, and is most widely known for its wine tourism in the Western Cape province (Rogerson, 2015; Rogerson & Collins, 2015). However, this could change in the near future due to the increase of artisanal activities and attractions for tourists. New directions projected in artisanal tourism in South Africa exhibit parallels with craft beer tours, trails and festivals in regions of the world such as North America and Western Europe (Alonso, 2011; Bujdosó & Szűcs, 2012; Francioni et al., 2014; Murray & Kline, 2015; Rogerson & Collins, 2015).

During the 1990s and 2000s, a small number of craft breweries were established in South Africa. A total of eight craft breweries were established by 2000, then, 22 operational breweries were established by 2008. However, the tipping point for brewery development in South Africa was in 2011 when an extraordinary increase was experienced in the number of breweries throughout South Africa. By 2014 there were 105 microbreweries in the country (Rogerson & Collins, 2015).

The first beer tourism route in South Africa (the KwaZulu Natal Brew or Beer Route) was launched in 2002 in the KwaZulu-Natal province (News24, 2002; Rogerson & Collins, 2015; South African Tourism, 2016). There are also a number of unofficial ale trails or brew routes in the Gauteng, and Western Cape provinces (Rogerson & Collins, 2015). An example of this growth in artisanal beverage tourism is also visible in the Free State province, which offers many artisanal breweries/distilleries that could potentially be transformed into a tourism route. The following section will allude to the Free State province and artisanal beverage products available in the region.

Free State province and artisanal beverage products

The Free State province is situated in the heart of South Africa. The province shares its borders with six other South African provinces (Gauteng, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northwest, and Mpumalanga), and an international border with Lesotho (Proos & Hattingh, 2020). Bloemfontein is the capital of the province and is the judicial capital of South Africa. According to Van der Merwe (2012), the misperception amongst tourists is that the Free State is flat, and boring. However, the opposite is experienced once the province is visited and tourists partake in the numerous activities such as adventure tourism, heritage tourism, dark tourism and also visit some of the well-known restaurants and artisanal breweries/distilleries situated in the province.

Ten artisanal breweries/distilleries were identified in the Free State province (see Figure 1). They include (1) Karoo Craft Breweries in Philippolis, (2) The Famous Brew and Still and (3) East End Brewery (previously Stella Brewery) in Bloemfontein, (4) Whistler Rum in Henneman, (5) Clarens Brewery in Clarens, (6) Appointment Craft Beer Brewery in Kroonstad, (7) Dog and Fig Brewery in Parys, (8) My Grandfathers Cat Brewery in Deneysville, (9) De Vry Destillery in Deneysville, and (10) Thanda Tau Microbrewery in Vrede. These ten breweries were identified as they adhere to the necessary liquor license requirements, they produce artisanal beverages on their premises, and have a municipally regulated set place of distribution and on-site consumption. The selected breweries/distilleries provide various products to tourists, including craft beer, gin, vodka, and rum. Rogerson (2015) concluded that there is a need to profile beer tourists in future research, thus, giving rise to the present investigation. Please refer to Figure 1 for location of the different artisanal breweries/distilleries in the Free State province.

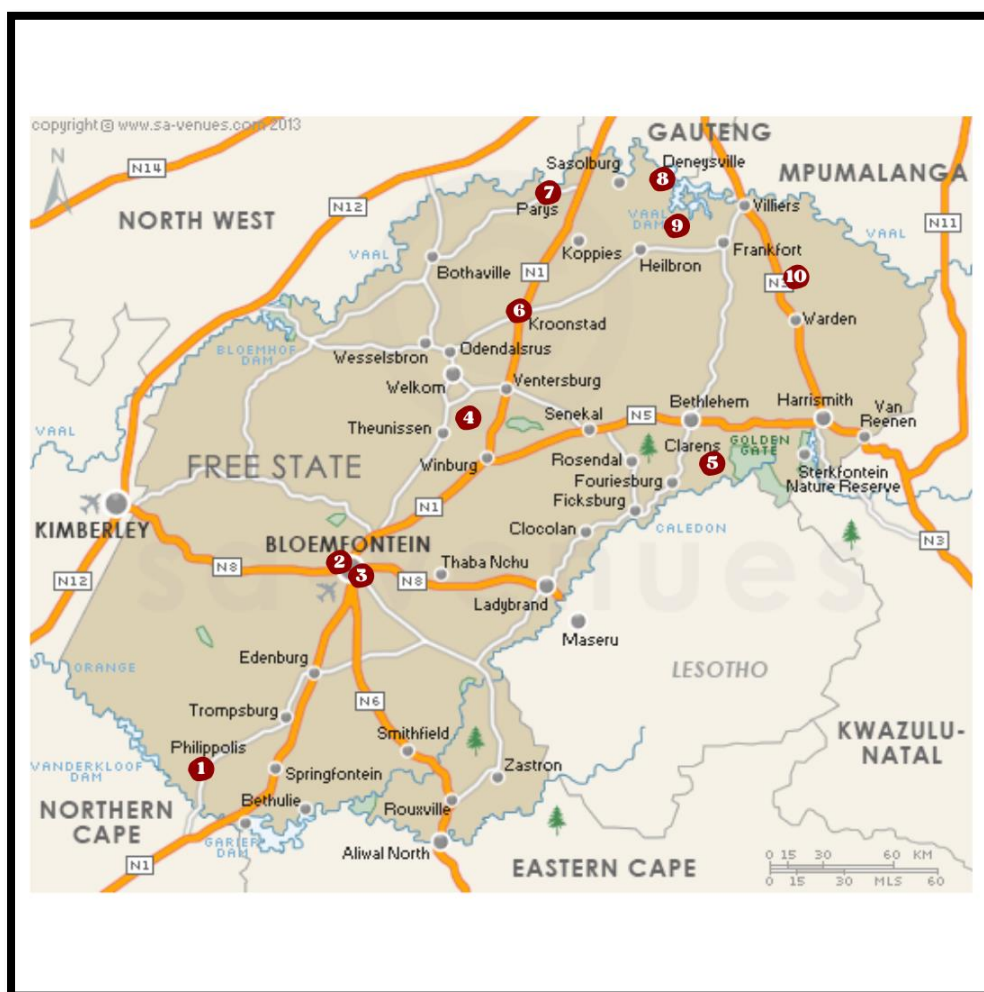


Figure 1: Location of the artisanal breweries/distilleries in the Free State province
Source: SA Venues (2022)

Materials and methods

This study adheres to positivism and follows a quantitative research design. The population for the study was artisanal beverage tourists who visited artisanal breweries/distilleries in the Free State province. As there was no data available on the amount of artisanal beverage tourists to the province, convenience sampling applied. To address the objectives of the present study, the

researcher made use of self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires were administrated at several artisanal breweries/distilleries throughout the Free State province where all patrons on the day of data collection were approached to complete a questionnaire. The request to complete the questionnaire was repeated throughout 2020 – 2022. Management of the mentioned artisanal breweries/distilleries in the Free State province granted permission for the research activities and motivated potential respondents to complete the questionnaire after recognising the importance of such research being conducted within the province. Questionnaires were also shared on some of the establishment’s databases where members were motivated to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires were completed anonymously. The questionnaire was developed from the research of López-Guzmán et al. (2014). The questionnaire was structured to acquire the demographic profile, motivation, behaviour, and recommendations of tourists visiting artisanal breweries/distilleries in the Free State province. Data was captured, cleaned and recorded on Excel and was compiled in English, with a total of 130 respondents completing the questionnaire.

Limitations

The relatively small sample size (130) has certain limitations upon interpretations and inference, as such this research has been done with caution, and with suggestions in mind. The impact of Covid-19 on data collection during 2020, and 2021 should be highlighted in addition to the restrictive opening hours of the establishments. This research is a first for the Free State province, and thus still in its infancy. This research thus provides a point of departure for inquiry into the niche market of artisanal beverage tourist to the province.

Findings

Demographic profile

This section of the paper presents the demographic profile of the respondents (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Age:		Annual income:	
18-30	43%	0-R300,000	43%
31-40	22%	R300,001-R500,000	18%
41-50	12%	R500,001-R700,000	14%
51-60	14%	R700,001 or more	19%
61-70	9%	No response	6%
Race:		Highest level of education:	
Black	7%	Matric	26%
White	90%	Diploma	22%
Indian	1%	Bachelor’s degree	23%
Asian	1%	Other	29%
Other	1%	Country of residence:	
Gender:		South Africa	99%
Male	57%	Other	1%
Female	38%	Province of residence:	
No response	5%	Free State	78%
		Gauteng	10%
		Western Cape	3%
		KwaZulu Natal	5%
		Other	4%

As illustrated in Table 1, 57% of respondents were male and 38% female, whilst 5% did not respond. Most of the respondents were white (90%), whilst 7% were black, 1% Indian, 1% Asian, and 1% other. Most of the respondents are between 18-30 years of age (43%), followed by 31-40 (22%), 51-60 (14%), 41-50 (12%), and 61-70 (9%). A large proportion of the

respondents (43%) indicated that their annual income is between R0 – R300,000, and 19% R700,000 or more. Whilst 18% of the respondents indicated R300,001 - R500,000, 14% R500,001 - R700,000, and 6% did not indicate their annual income. The majority of the respondents (26%) have Matric, followed by Bachelor’s Degree (23%), Diploma (22%), and 29% other. The vast majority of the respondents (99%) indicated that they reside in South Africa, whilst 1% was from other countries including the United Kingdom. The majority (78%) of the respondents reside in the Free State, Gauteng (10%), KwaZulu-Natal (5%), Western Cape (3%), and other provinces (4%). The following section will allude to the motivation and behaviour of artisanal tourists who visit the Free State province.

Motivation and behaviour

Respondents were required to indicate which breweries/distilleries they have visited in the Free State province. The responses were as follows, 68% had visited the Clarens Brewery in Clarens, 49% Whistlers Rum in Hennenman, 26% Karoo Craft Breweries in Philippolis, 25% Dog and Fig Brewery in Parys, 12% Appointment Craft Beer Brewery in Kroonstad, and 46% other. Other breweries/distilleries identified by the respondents included The Famous Brew and Still and the East End Brewery in Bloemfontein, My Grandfathers Cat Brewery and De Vry Distillery in Deneysville (please refer to Table 2).

Table 2: Breweries/distilleries visited in the Free State province

Karoo Craft Breweries in Phillopolis	26%
Thanda Tau Microbrewery in Vrede	7%
Whistler Rum in Hennenman	49%
Clarens Brewery in Clarens	68%
Dog and Fig Brewery in Parys	25%
Appointment Craft Beer Brewery in Kroonstad	12%
Other	46%

Table 2 exemplifies that most of the respondents have visited Clarens Brewery in Clarens, Whistlers Rum in Hennenman, and Karoo Craft Breweries in Philippolis. Respondents were asked to identify their main purpose for the visit to the different establishments. The majority (55%) of the respondents indicated that the main purpose to visit a particular establishment was leisure, tasting artisanal drinks (28%), events (26%), and visiting family or friends (23%). The least popular purpose to visit a particular establishment was business (12%). Respondents highlighted other activities which they participated in whilst visiting an artisanal brewery/distillery included food markets (36%), events (32%), scenic drives (26%), and outdoor activities (23%).

Respondents were asked to rate different services and facilities at the artisanal breweries they have visited. The rating scale was as follows, (1) very poor, (2) poor, (3) satisfactory, (4) good, and (5) excellent. The majority (52%) of the respondents highlighted that the friendliness of the staff is excellent, and 34% good. The respondents indicated that their experience of personal safety was excellent (43%), and 34% good. With regards to accessibility per vehicle, 45% of the respondents indicated that it was excellent, 29% good, and 16% satisfactory. A large number of respondents (58%) did not indicate accessibility by air (since it was not applicable). However, 19% found it to be excellent. The friendliness of the local people was excellent with 55% responding as such, whilst 32% listed it as good. 78% of the respondents indicated that the local cuisine at the establishment was good or excellent.

The shopping experience in town and the nightlife was perceived as satisfactory by 30% of the respondents respectively. 35% found the shopping experience in town as good. A large amount of the respondents (53%) found that the cleanliness of the establishments was excellent, and 33% good. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one motivation. Most

of the respondents (67%) are motivated by enjoyment, 61% relaxation, 60% socializing, and 54% to taste/experience new types of artisanal drinks. Respondents were also requested to indicate their spent during a visit to artisanal breweries/distilleries. 21% indicated that they spend R701.00 or more during a visit to a brewery/distillery, whilst 72% spent between R101.00 – R700.00. The majority (70%) of the respondents indicated that the overall quality of the brewery/distillery is excellent, whilst 23% indicated that it is satisfactory.

The most popular provinces in South Africa where respondents have visited artisanal breweries are the Free State (91%), Western Cape (48%), and KwaZulu Natal (26%). When asked whether respondents travel alone or with friends to visit these artisanal breweries/distilleries, the results were as follows, 92% travelled with friends, and 5% alone. Friends and family (67%), social media (55%), and internet (30%) was indicated as the most popular place to obtain information regarding artisanal breweries/distilleries. 28% of the respondents indicated that they would like to visit more than five breweries/distilleries in the province, whilst 18% indicated that they would like to visit three.

Recommendations



Figure 2: Recommendations from respondents on to how to improve the artisanal brewery/distillery experience in the Free State province

Figure 2 shows the recommendations from respondents on to how to improve the artisanal experience in the Free State province. Most of the respondents referred to the ‘creation of an artisanal beverage route for the province’, ‘longer opening hours during the week’, ‘an option

to make use of transport to and from accommodation provided by the establishment’, ‘more seating’, ‘more visible marketing’, and ‘more events at the establishments’. It emanates from the above section that artisanal breweries/distilleries would require adequate marketing, hosting of more and diverse events, and increasing operating hours to satisfy customer’s needs. The following section will discuss the findings from the investigation.

Discussion of findings

The following section provides a brief discussion on the findings and their implications. Through insight into what the typical artisanal beverage tourist to the Free State province, South Africa resembles, focused marketing initiatives can be identified and suggested to assist the local artisanal beverage product owners in the Free State. According to Fairlie (2022), demographics are a key part of small business marketing strategies. The typical profile of an artisanal beverage tourist to the Free State province, South Africa is a white male between 18 – 30 years. Similarly, Scott Taylor Jr and DiPietro (2016) concluded that 21 – 30 years was the most prominent age group in their research conducted in the USA on beer tourists. White males were the most prominent amongst respondents (this is also echoed by Francioni (2012), and Heidkamp (2020), and is further confirmed by TheBeerProfessor (2020). In contrast, the profile of a wine tourist attending a festival in South Africa shows differences with regard to gender, and age, mostly being females an at average age of 35 years (Saayman et al., 2013). The demographic profile of artisanal beverage tourists could assist product owners in understanding the characteristics of this niche market of tourists that visit the province. Through the demographic information (typical profile) that was obtained through the research, more marketing can be focused on this segment, and money not wasted on trying to reach markets that are not interested.

The annual income of artisanal beverage tourists to the Free State ranges from R0 – R300, 000, they are educated (typically in possession of Matric, a Bachelor’s Degree or a Diploma), and share similarities with the findings from Herman et al. (2020) whom determined the motivational factors of attendees to the Capital Craft Beer Festival in South Africa. Interestingly, TheBeerProfessor (2020) mentions that the typical beer tourist is economically well-off. Artisanal beverage tourists to the province generally reside in South Africa in either the Free State, Gauteng, or KwaZulu-Natal. TheBeerProfessor (2020) states that beer tourists do not tend to stray too far from home, thus the target markets for the Free State province could potentially include local artisanal beverage tourists residing in the province, and bordering provinces Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal.

The central location of the Free State provides the opportunity to be a weekend getaway from the larger metropolitans in South Africa, and the potential target markets. The fact that significant highways, such as the N1, N3 and N5, traverse the Free State province (refer to Figure 1) makes it easier for artisanal beverage tourists to add visits to artisanal breweries/distilleries to their itinerary. Examples of artisanal breweries/distilleries in the major highways traversing the Free State include Thanda Tau (N3), Appointment Craft Brewery (N1), and Brew and Still (N1). Artisanal beverage tourists to the Free State usually visit Clarens Brewery in the popular tourist town of Clarens, Whistlers Rum in Hennenman, Karoo Brewery in Philippolis, and Brew and Still in Bloemfontein (confirming that it is easier to visit breweries on the main tourist routes). This information could assist in marketing the Free State as an ideal weekend getaway to surrounding provinces such as Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal. Tourists traveling through the province can also be persuaded, through dedicated marketing activities, to stop over at some of the breweries/distilleries to experience them, and also all the surrounding products on offer to tourists (potentially leading to longer stays in the province).

The main purpose identified for artisanal beverage tourists to visit a brewery/distillery in the Free State includes leisure, tasting artisanal drinks, and events. Artisanal beverage tourists also partake in other activities such as visiting food markets, events, scenic drives, and outdoor activities. The Free State is known for many events (such as the Free State Arts Festival, and the Mangaung African Cultural Festival (MACUFE), scenic drives (for example in Golden Gate National Park), and outdoor activities (popular in Parys and Clarens). Findings from the study clearly indicate that these activities are popular amongst artisanal beverage tourist whilst visiting the province, and purposeful marketing of these activities are required to entice potential artisanal beverage tourist to visit the province.

The findings suggest that artisanal beverage tourists are motivated to visit artisanal drink establishments in the province by factors ranging from enjoyment, relaxation, socializing, and to taste and experience new types of artisanal drinks (which can only be found in the Free State province). These findings correlate with the findings from Francioni et al. (2014). Product owners in the province can use these motivational factors in marketing materials to showcase the abundance of enjoyment and relaxation on offer during a visit to the Free State, and the breweries/distilleries. During a visit to artisanal beverage establishments, visitors reportedly spend between R101.00 – R700.00. According to Proos et al. (2017), tourism has a positive effect on economic growth and development. Considering the high unemployment rate in the province (Proos et al., 2017), and the increased popularity of artisanal breweries/distilleries in the Free State, artisanal beverage tourism could potentially lead to tourists spending more money in the province, more employment and economic rejuvenation of smaller towns in the province for example in Philippolis, Deneysville, and Hennenman.

The facilities and services provided at the different establishments such as friendliness of staff, friendliness of local people, and the local cuisine was considered as excellent by visitors. The personal safety, accessibility per vehicle, cleanliness of establishment and the local shopping experience in town was also considered as good to excellent. These are all important “draw cards” to the province and can be used in marketing materials for the province. Overall, the artisanal beverage tourists highlighted that the brewery/distillery quality in the province is excellent, and they have mostly visited breweries/distilleries in the Free State, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal. It is clear that breweries/distilleries in the Free State can compete with breweries in other popular tourism provinces such as the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Artisanal beverage establishments such as Whistlers Rum, and De Vry Distilleries in the Free State have received prestigious awards for their products, and can be capitalised upon during marketing the province (Bizcommunity, 2020; Lund, 2019).

Artisanal beverage tourists to the Free State indicated that they would like to visit more than five breweries/distilleries in the province. This suggests that artisanal beverage tourists, similar to craft beer drinkers, like to travel from one brewery to the next, tasting the beer and enjoying the unique ambience of each brewery, as highlighted by TheBeerProfessor (2020). When they visit breweries/distilleries, they travel with friends and family (also highlighted by Herman et al. (2020), and obtain their information on breweries from friends and family, social media (such as Facebook), and the internet. Focused marketing campaigns can be launched on social media, and the internet to showcase the diverse products available in the province to the potential artisanal beverage tourists.

Recommendations from the respondents included the establishment of an artisanal beverage route for the Free State province. The province currently has ten breweries/distilleries, no further than 200km apart. Additionally, these establishments are located within popular towns on established tourism routes in close proximity to residences of the niche target market. These factors suggest the ability for the successful development of an artisanal beverage route within the Free State province (refer to Figure 1). As more

establishments are established, they can be added to the route. According to Slocum (2016), tour/bus companies are always searching for ways to diversify their product and create new memorable experiences to their customers. An artisanal beverage route could thus provide tour/bus companies with a unique experience whilst they are traveling through the Free State province. Referring to the recommendations from respondents, it is clear that there is an adequate demand for the creation of an artisanal beverage route for the Free State province. Research conducted by Csapó and Wetzl (2016) in Hungary provided the same results, showing an international interest in beer/artisanal routes.

Additional recommendations from respondents include longer opening hours during the week (not just be open on weekends), an option to make use of transport to and from accommodation provided by the establishment, more seating, more visible marketing, and more events at the establishments. It is important for establishments to have longer opening hours during the week to cater for artisanal tourist traveling during the week. Additionally, transport services such as Uber, to assist with the transport to and from breweries/distilleries, could be introduced and potentially lead to further job creation in the different cities and towns in the province. Another opportunity introduced is the use of local transport in smaller towns such as Philippolis where there is a “Philippolis-Uber”, a horse cart that takes tourists on rides. This could potentially lead to the employment of local residents and exposing the artisanal beverage tourist to more products on offer in the region. The Free State province is rich in history, and tours in and around the cities/towns where the breweries/distilleries are situated can also be arranged and included in visits to artisanal beverage establishments. These tours could provide tourists with more exposure to the surrounding areas and what it has to offer for tourists, potentially leading to return visits and positive word of mouth for the region.

However, dedicated marketing is crucial to ensure the success of this initiative. Marketing has to become more visible in surrounding provinces to attract the attention to the world class establishments that are available close to home. Artisanal beverage tourists reported enjoyment of events, and suggested that more events would be a potential draw to establishments. Events at breweries/distilleries could make use of local talent to perform at these events, creating more job opportunities for local people in the Free State. Events could include car shows, music festivals, quiz nights, or even car boot sales.

Conclusion

Domestic tourism in South Africa could potentially see an increase through offering locals easily accessible and affordable tourist products. One way this could potentially be achieved is through niche tourism which is increasing in popularity. Destinations could focus more dedicated marketing initiatives on the particular niche identified to attract more domestic tourist. This research is a first for the Free State province, and provides a point of departure for inquiry into the niche market of artisanal beverage tourist to the province. The study also provides a basis for future studies on artisanal beverage tourist. This study found that artisanal beverage establishments are plentiful, in excellent condition, and that an artisanal beverage route could potentially be established for the Free State province. All of the above-mentioned information could assist existing establishments, as well as future artisanal breweries/distilleries in the Free State province, with aspects to consider within their marketing strategies to local communities.

Marketing can further include indications of other tourist products the region has to offer. For example, artisanal beverage tourism can be linked with scenic drives or outdoor activities, and even other niche tourism products which are available currently in the province such as dark tourism (Proos & Hattingh, 2020). Similarly, as suggested by Proos and Hattingh (2020), the Free State Gambling, Liquor and Tourism Authority (FSGLTA) who is responsible

for marketing the Free State, could use the data gathered from the study in order to assist them in their marketing campaign to attract this niche market of artisanal beverage tourists. The Free State has the opportunity to potentially become an artisanal beverages “paradise”.

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