

MEXICAN WINES AND WINERIES: CAN EDUCATION LEAD TO APPRECIATION?

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ABSTRACT

This current study examines the concept of educating U.S. consumers about Mexican wines on an in-depth scale. A pre-test post-test design surveying U.S. consumers about their perceptions and expectations of Mexican wines was conducted among attendees of tours of Mexican wineries. The results of this study show that educating consumers about Mexican wineries and wines may positively affect the image and perceptions consumers hold regarding the country of origin when it comes to wine.

Keywords: Wine, Mexico, educational tourism

INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago interest in Mexican wines seemed to be on the upswing [1] and a few years later, in 2002, Fodors.com stated “Although Mexican wines are still relatively unknown in the United States; the industry is exploding in Mexico...” So, why aren’t we sipping Monte Xanic Syrah with our haute cuisine here in California? One 2002 study examined the case of Mexican wine “introduced to consumers in a Mexican restaurant versus a more general themed contemporary restaurant” and found that this type of matched introduction may be useful, although getting consumers to buy Mexican wines for the home might be more difficult [2].

This current study examines the concept of educating U.S. consumers about Mexican wines on a more in-depth scale. A San Diego, CA restaurant has begun organizing tours of the Valle de Guadalupe, Mexico’s largest wine growing region. This 3 day, all inclusive tour includes transportation from San Diego to the Valle, two nights at a legendary local seaside hotel, all winery tours and tastings, most meals and a great deal of informative fun for all.

The question is: can these tours accomplish what nearly 10 years of marketing seems to have not quite reached? A pre-test post-test design surveying U.S. consumers about their perceptions and expectations of Mexican wines will be conducted among attendees of the tours (three tours of approximately 50 people each tour). Previous research “suggest(ed) that Mexican wine producers should first penetrate the market through Mexican food restaurants” [2]. This current study supports a similar strategy; by pairing with an established, well respected restaurant for tours such as the ones offered by this restaurant, Mexican wineries may increase awareness and appreciation of Mexican wines and wineries.

While the pool of attendees/participants in this study was small, the initial results are certainly encouraging and the study will be replicated and expanded. Many of the participants in the tours had low expectations of the Mexican wineries and wines before undertaking the tour but those expectations were exceeded. This study also endeavored to uncover the motivation for participating in the tours and found that most participants were open minded and wanted to learn about the Mexican wineries and wines because they were prompted by the restaurant owners promoting the tours.

The results of this small study show that educating consumers about Mexican wineries and wines may positively affect the image and perceptions consumers hold regarding the country of origin when it comes to wine.

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