

Culture You Can Drink:
What Can Museums Learn from Brewery Tours?

Paul Talpos

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Committee:

Kris Morrissey

Bill Rorabaugh

Nidhi Agrawal

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Paul Talpos

University of Washington

Abstract

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Paul Talpos

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Kris Morrissey, PhD

Museology

Large brewery tours are popular attractions. However, they are rarely considered to be cultural attractions despite academic research linking localized food and beverages such as beer to local culture. To investigate this popularity and determine what visitors to brewery tours think museums can learn from brewery tours, a qualitative study was undertaken to interview visitors and staff at New Belgium Brewing in Fort Collins, Colorado. Visitors identified the key aspects of the brewery tour as the accessibility of the information presented, the relatability of the brewery's values and staff, and the personalized interactive aspects of the tour. These aspects were readily contrasted with perceptions of museums being inaccessible and unwilling to involve visitors in the institution. Staff indicated that these aspects were consciously included to create positive experiences and differentiate the brewery from competitors. Both staff and visitors indicated their belief that the brewery represented a Fort Collins cultural institution.

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Cheers!

Chapter 1: Introduction

On a warm spring day, visitors flock to the most popular cultural attraction in Fort Collins, Colorado. Visiting from around Colorado, around the nation, and even around the world, the visitors comprise all age ranges, including students from nearby Colorado State University, adults, and intergenerational family groups. On weekends, the facility's eleven daily tours are filled weeks in advance by visitors who create bookings online, although this does not deter the dozens of visitors who wait outside with the hope of being admitted off of a standby list.

If this does not sound like something that happens often at American museums, it is because the most popular cultural attraction in Fort Collins is not a museum—it is a brewery. New Belgium Brewery, the fourth-largest craft brewery in the United States (Kell, 2016), hosts tens of thousands of visitors each year for its tours alone, a ninety-minute exploration of the brewery's campus detailing the history of the brewery, the beer-making process, and the company's activities today. Founded in Fort Collins in 1991 (Acitelli, 2016), New Belgium's tour programs are regarded as among the foremost in the nation (Duncan, n.d.), contributing to Fort Collins's reputation as one of the greatest destinations for beer-lovers in the United States (Sexton, 2014).

The American beer industry is currently in an era of unprecedented success in terms of both quantity and quality. As of December 2015, more American breweries are in operation than any previous point in history, surpassing a pre-prohibition record set in 1873 (Brewers Association, 2015) and contributing to an industry with massive national appeal. This growth has made the value and popularity of craft beer brands readily apparent, hallmarked by the sale of San Diego's Ballast Point Brewery Company to beer conglomerate Constellation Brands in November 2015 for the stunning price of one billion dollars (Mclean, 2015).

As beer has grown nationally, beer tourism has become a compelling niche of culinary tourism. Owing to the regional—or local—distribution areas of many American breweries, beer tourism has created a demand not only for breweries to satisfy visitors with their products, but also to create an experience for visitors. The degree of familiarity beer tourists may have with the brewery varies widely—while some may purposely seek out the home of their favorite brands, others may travel to experience new beers that are not available where they live. Whatever the case, it is not uncommon for brewery events today to draw crowds from throughout the nation, with some events even including brewery-sponsored hotel packages for visitors (Jarrett, 2015).

Breweries have capitalized on the remarkable growth and popularity of beer through brewery tour programs, which create interpretive branding experiences for visitors. These programs vary from brewery to brewery, ranging from short and informal peeks at production facilities in small breweries to elaborate tour programs offered by breweries such as New Belgium or Anheuser-Busch, which accommodate hundreds of visitors on a daily basis.

While breweries and brewery tours may seem to have little in common with conventional cultural institutions such as museums, the two, in fact, have much in common. Drinking local beverages has been identified as a way of “consuming place” (Bell, 2008) and a way for visitors to experience local culture (Howlett, 2013). Mathews & Picton (2013) take this concept a step further, describing the perception of craft beer as a way to experience a place and also as a medium for self-expression in consumers seeking to demonstrate authenticity or status. Through these perceptions of localized beer products, beer is not a product of local culture or a contributor to local culture as much as it *is* local culture. While local culture is traditionally found in museums, theaters, landmarks, or events that cannot be found elsewhere, beer has the added benefit of being culture that can be held, tasted, and drunk.

Excepting the inherent differences between traditional cultural institutions and business such as breweries, the core brewery tour activities of interpreting significant objects or events, explaining the history of the brewery, and teaching the beer-making process greatly resemble museum activities. This is particularly apparent at large brewery tours such as Anheuser-Busch in St. Louis, which operates a company museum on-site (Calhoun, 2015), or New Belgium, where prospective visitors have been known to call asking for the brewery's museum (which does not exist) rather than for its tour (personal communication, April 1, 2016).

With brewery tours resembling museums, some museums have begun blurring the line between traditional cultural institutions and brewery tours as well. Notably, George Washington's Mount Vernon in Virginia opened a 1790s-era distillery on the property in 2009 to mirror one that existed during Washington's lifetime. Once an entrepreneurial venture by the first president, tours to Mount Vernon now include a visit to the distillery and discussion of period distilling techniques. Despite a hefty price tag and extremely limited availability, a waitlist of thousands await the chance to connect to that particular era of American history through craft spirits (Edwards, 2013). Additionally, until 2017 San Diego's Museum of Man will feature an exhibit on the history and science of beer entitled "BEERology." Featuring regular beer tasting events held in conjunction with this exhibit, "BEERology" describes itself as featuring "fascinating stories" and "phenomenal artifacts that reveal the links between beer and culture" (San Diego Museum of Man, n.d.)

A final, crucial consideration of brewery tours as cultural institutions lies in their popularity. In cities with large, well-developed brewery tours, the tours are invariably among the most popular cultural attractions in the city. The Budweiser Experience in Saint Louis, Missouri, for example, reports receiving 350,000 visitors annually (Brown, 2014), and a study commissioned

by the Denver Conventions and Visitors Bureau found that Coors Brewery in nearby Golden, Colorado is among the city's three most popular attractions (Longwoods International, 2014). Internationally, Dublin, Ireland's tourism bureau describes Guinness Storehouse as the top attraction in the entire city (Visit Dublin, n.d.)

As competitors and neighbors to breweries, the museum community stands to gain much from an increased understanding of breweries, brewery tours, and the people who visit them yet despite the popularity of breweries, little research exists regarding their position as cultural institutions. While literature on wine, spirits, and even beer-related tourism is plentiful, the majority of it explores the motivations of visitors from a psychographic perspective, rather than considering business, cultural, or visitor experience-centered viewpoints.

From a business perspective, relevant research has shown that brewery tours are an "important service" for breweries to use in creating relationships with customers (Francioni, 2012). In single-malt scotch whisky distilleries (and therefore also likely in breweries), the primary benefit the establishment receives from tour programs has been identified as the creation of positive associations that are reflected onto the brand and its products, which has created a trend toward increasingly personalized experiences (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008). From a visitor perspective, research has suggested a bevy of potential motivations for beer tourists, most interestingly a desire to experience the tour and brewery itself rather than a desire to sample beer or gain a personal experience with a brand (Bujdoso & Szucs, 2012).

An effective body of literature exists, then, on the business and tourism-centered aspects of alcohol tourism as well as on the relative importance of brewery and distillery tours in branding and attracting visitors. However, useful information pertaining to the status of breweries as cultural attractions and what it is that make them successful as cultural attractions is much less

well-understood, relating to both the opinions of visitors and the attitudes and practices of those involved in brewery tours. Gaining a better conception of these opinions, attitudes, and practices stands to benefit greatly the museum community in creating popular, effective, and self-sustaining cultural attractions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics of brewery tours as cultural institutions by examining the opinions, attitudes, and practices of brewery tour visitors and tour operators. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do brewery tour visitors believe museums can learn from brewery tours?
2. What practices do brewery tour programs use to create popular cultural experiences?
3. To what extent do brewery tour programs consider themselves to be cultural establishments?

This study represents a unique opportunity to expand the knowledge base of museology by exploring related institutions that are popular, but poorly-understood. By forming interdisciplinary connections between museums and breweries, each industry stands to benefit.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review creates context for understanding brewery tours by examining research on the motivations and expectations of visitors to cultural institutions alongside existing research on beer, wine, and spirits tourism related to both the visitor and the institution itself.

Owing to the significant benefits—both organizationally and financially—that come with popularity, a wide body of research exists examining visitors to museums, businesses, and cultural institutions. Gaining a heightened understanding of visitors and their attitudes, preferences, likes, dislikes, and preconceived notions gives institutions such as museums and breweries information on how to best craft their offerings for appealing to visitors. A wide body of research also exists evaluating the techniques businesses and cultural institutions use to attract and satisfy visitors.

Although many differences exist between beer tourism and wine tourism (Niester, 2008), wine tourism provides an effective analogue to brewery tours as a topic of research related to both visitor preferences and visitor attraction techniques. As an old and classically popular form of tourism, the wine industry has a vested interest in visitor research, which has created substantial research on wine tourism, and it is easy to see the connections between forms of alcohol-based culinary tourism such as beer, wine, and spirits tourism.

The lack of relevant research specific to beer tourism and breweries as cultural institutions presents an obstacle, then, but also an opportunity indicative of the opportunities that beer tourism presents as a rising trend. By examining relevant research on techniques used to attract visitors alongside research on beer, wine, and spirits tourism, it is possible to create applicable context for understanding the popularity of brewery tours.

What do visitors to cultural institutions want?

The conflict between education and entertainment in museums looms large in research on cultural institutions, as scholars envision a battle between education-focused museum traditionalists and visitors who greatly prefer entertainment to vapid educational content (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004). Miles (1986) argues the educational approach “gives [museums] definite views on how ‘good’ or ‘proper’ exhibitions should be organized and how they should look...Considerable research shows that this sort of exhibition is a failure, in educational terms, with the great majority of museum visitors” (p. 79). Museums, then, may struggle to reconcile their perception of visitors as people who are extremely concerned with educational factors with the reality of visitors as being concerned not with education, but with entertainment. Crafting museums from their entrenched viewpoint, museums are placed at risk because they produce exhibits that are not desirable to visitors.

This conflict, however, may come more from the perceptions of visitor priorities than the actual priorities of visitors because visitors may not perceive a conflict at all (Packer & Ballantyne, 2004). As areas of free-choice learning, multiple processes exist enabling visitors to interact with educational content in special ways—foremost being that visitors to museums are able to make choices on what they learn, which predisposes them toward topics that they enjoy. Packer (2006) explains the importance of free-choice learning by saying, “it is the element of choice that makes the difference between learning as a chore and learning as a pleasure” (p. 330). By experiencing learning that is pleasurable rather than a chore through the application of free choice, visitors are drawn not only into an experience that they enjoy, but one in which they learn as well.

Rather than being opposite, neutral, or merely compatible factors, some research suggests that education and entertainment are synergistic, producing a greater positive effect together than they would independently. Packer and Ballantyne (2004) summarize:

The findings of the present study imply that what happens in educational leisure settings, and indeed what people seek, is not a combination of two distinct experiences—education and entertainment—but rather an experience in which education is entertainment, discovery is exciting, and learning is an adventure. Visitors perceive these as elements of the same construct, distinct from both effortful learning and passive enjoyment. (p. 68)

These findings are supported by Falk, Moussouri, and Coulson (1998), who studied visitor motivations across six dimensions—place, education, life-cycle, social event, entertainment, and practical issues—and found that education and entertainment-motivated visitors learned the most in museum settings. While the possibility of conflict between education and entertainment in visitor preferences is an important possibility in museum research, then, visitors “see no apparent conflict between fun and learning” (p. 117).

The engagement of personal interests in museum settings through free-choice learning is important to note given the rising trend of tourism as a means to learn and engage rather than passively enjoy leisure time. Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, and Benckendorff (2012) explain:

Whereas the archetype of the 20th century Western model of tourism and leisure might be lying on a secluded beach under a palm tree or riding on a miniature train through a recreated historic town, the archetype of the emerging new model of tourism and leisure involves learning about people and places. (p. 910)

Tourism is typically a highly personal activity related to important personal interests, a psychological reward for individuals escaping their daily routines (Falk et al., 2012). As such, the trend of tourists seeking to learn and engage in their activities aligns with the concept of free-choice learning being effective due to it being pleasurable for those able to partake in it. Partially explaining the trend of increasing amounts of educational tourism may be the rising average level of education in the United States, as the average amount of education completed by Americans rose noticeably between the 20th and 21st centuries (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d).

Falk et al. (2012) further situate the concept of free learning and the focus of tourism on personal interests by recommending asset-based learning as a rising trend in cultural institutions wherein the visitor's interests and experiences are used as a platform for education. Rather than highlighting the deficits in the visitor's understandings, the visitor is challenged to build meaning from their own understanding, personalizing the experience.

Unsurprisingly, visitors are eager to accept such a challenge. In introducing the concept of Science Cafés—popular informal gatherings that are often hosted by museums—Cohen and Macfarlane (2007) attribute the success of their programs to maintaining an accepting atmosphere for visitors of all backgrounds and consciously rejecting the lecture model. By avoiding the characterization of speakers as experts or authorities, visitors feel welcome to take part in the activities and contribute their own viewpoints and questions.

In providing recommendation for engaging and attracting visitors, then, it should come as no surprise that important tenets of free-choice learning are foremost. In addition to allowing free choice and enabling learning to be effortless for visitors, Packer and Ballantyne (2004) suggest

techniques to enhance the personal and entertainment aspects of cultural institutions through the creation of multisensory experiences and the promotion of fascination, discovery, and wonder.

How do breweries, wineries, and distilleries approach culinary tourism?

As businesses, breweries, wineries, and distilleries share many motivations with conventional businesses when it comes to justifications for hosting visitors and/or providing tours. Food and beverage companies such as breweries are disproportionately represented when it comes to brand experiences such as tours because the frequency with which food and beverages are purchased necessitates that brands work harder to differentiate themselves (Mitchell & Orwig, 2002).

The primary benefits of hosting visitors are seen as building a positive relationship between the brand and the visitor and creating word-of-mouth marketing as the visitor recounts their positive visit with friends and family (Mitchell & Orwig, 2002). The results of these branding experiences and opportunities for word-of-mouth marketing, rather than being insignificant ancillary benefits, are extremely positive for businesses which relish the opportunity to differentiate themselves from their competition. To demonstrate the importance of in-person brand experiences, Mitchell and Orwig (2002) quote the president of Celestial Seasonings tea company: “one visit has more value than one hundred commercials when guests relate their positive experiences to friends and family” (p. 30). Specific to breweries, the benefits of tour programs are seen as increased sales, greater customer awareness, additional revenue, and improved relationships with customers, with the primary drawback being the increased costs of operating tours or visitor-specific activities (Niester, 2008).

An important framework to consider in the creation of activities designed to differentiate brands and businesses is the experience economy introduced by Pine and Gilmore (1999). Consumers are increasingly willing to pay higher prices to obtain goods that come with an experience associated with them, and that experiences are emerging in a variety of industries as businesses seek to differentiate themselves. While experiences may be offered by any sort of business or institution and may take any number of forms, brand tours are specifically cited by Pine and Gilmore (1999) as a way for brands to provide a museum-like experience:

Not every manufacturer can turn extra space into a ticket-taking museum, but any company can recast production as a miniaturized plant tour, thus turning the everyday acquisition and consumption of a candy bar, box of cereal, bottle of vitamins, or any other good into a memorable event. (p. 20)

Creating a memorable event, then, is a primary focus of institutions seeking to create experiences—and those experiences, as Packer and Ballantyne (2004) or Falk et al. (2012) might expect, are made special by the fact that they are personal and memorable. Because no two visitors have the same experience, the visitor is enabled to interpret their own meaning of it. In fact, sensorial elements that engage a consumer's smell, taste, or other senses are identified as one of the most effective ways to add an experiential component to a service or product due to the personal and memorable nature of experiences involving the senses (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Another important aspect of the experience economy is that experiences are not only a part of entertainment, education, or some other singular factor. Experiences are linked to a combination of factors—entertainment, education, esthetic, and escapism—that may each work independently, but create the strongest impressions when used in concert. By combining these

factors—perhaps through sensorial elements—goods or events such as brewery tours are transformed into special and memorable experiences. (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Although it may not be due to a conscious understanding of the experience economy, aspects of the framework are frequently applied in breweries, wineries, and distilleries. Mitchell and Turner (2010) identify the beginnings of “agri-tainment”—the combination of agricultural activities with experiential activities for visitors—with wine tourism in Europe and visitors having the opportunity to stomp grapes as part of the winemaking process. By involving visitors in the creation of the good and including an extremely strong sensorial component, experience economy principles have long had a link to culinary tourism that has only intensified in recent years.

Owing to the wide variety of consumer involvements with products such as beer and wine—and, as previously mentioned, the frequency with which they are purchased—product differentiation is important for businesses such as wineries. While some wine purchasers may be highly particular about which brands they purchase, for example, many others may not know or care about differences in brands and instead base their purchases on some other factor. In saturated markets where the quality of the wine or the quality of the service provided by the winery is not enough to differentiate the product, experiences may become critical tools for wineries to differentiate themselves (Ali-Knight & Carlsen, 2003) and that creating on-site attractions such as tours are important contributors to the creation of experiences (Howley & van Westering, 2008). In addition to wine tourism, this trend has been identified in distilleries as well, with McBoyle and McBoyle (2008) characterizing the trend of visitor experiences in distilleries going from passive observers historically to distinguished guests today who are invited to tours and activities.

Who visits breweries, wineries, and distilleries? What are their motivations?

Owing to the previously-mentioned differences in product involvement among beer and wine tourists, it is known that wine tourists vary widely in their involvement with both wine and particular wineries. While some visitors may live nearby and enjoy the ability to visit any time they want, others may have traveled a great distance to specifically visit a favorite brand (Alant & Bruwer, 2004).

Research on brewery and winery visitors suggests that beer and wine tourists frequently travel great distances to visit locations in-person. A majority of visitors to wineries travel long distances (Bruwer & Alant, 2009), a finding that is replicated in breweries as well (Plummer, Telfer, Hashimoto, & Summers, 2004). As long-distance visitors, a majority of brewery visitors stay overnight as part of the visit that brought them to the brewery (Francioni Kraftchick, Byrd, Canziani, & Gladwell, 2014).

The prevalence of brewery and winery visitors traveling long distances to experience new beers or wines finds support in Bell's (2008) concept of "destination drinking," whereby visitors link beverages such as beer and wine to local culture. Consuming these products is linked to experiencing local culture in the same way that a visitor may experience local culture through a visit to a cultural attraction. By consuming local wine or beer, visitors are in turn consuming local culture, making establishments such as wineries and breweries into cultural attractions in their own right.

In applying the experience economy to wine tourism, Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2013) suggest that the obvious categories of education and entertainment are not the only aspects that matter for wineries seeking to differentiate themselves. In fact, among visitors in an experience economy-

based framework, the esthetic of the winery visit was considered the most important factor. Similarly, in a study of South African wineries Bruwer and Alant (2009) conclude that the overall environment surrounding the winery—the “winescape”—is a critical aspect of the wine tourism experience that wineries should feature in their marketing. In any case, the most frequent and important motivations for visitors to wineries are drinking wine, learning about wine, and experiencing the atmosphere of the winery (Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2008). In fact, the desire to experience the atmosphere of the winery is particularly important for visitors with low involvement with wine as a hobby, a group that may be particularly attractive to wineries seeking to differentiate themselves (Nella & Christou, 2014). The esthetic, then, comprises a variety of elements including both the sensorial elements of the winery and wine-drinking experience and the overall atmosphere of the winery and “winescape.” It is recommended that wineries develop and emphasize these in their offerings if they do not already due to their importance in engaging visitors (Quadri-Felitti & Fiora, 2013).

Another important aspect of visitor motivation and enjoyment that may be specific to breweries is access. In determining visitor loyalty to craft breweries that offered tours, Murray (2012) found that access—the ability to tour the brewery, see production areas behind-the-scenes, and purchase products in-person ranked second only to satisfaction. By inviting visitors into the brewing facilities, breweries can build loyalty with visitors and differentiate themselves from their competition.

Summary

A review of literature on wine, beer, and spirits tourism alongside research on visitor preferences presents multiple implications for techniques that may contribute to the popularity of brewery tours. Visitors, for example, may not perceive an apparent conflict between educational

and entertaining content, and learn best in free-choice learning situations where they are given the freedom to choose what they learn and turn their learning into a personal experience. When learning, asset-based learning techniques where learning is personalized based on the understanding of the visitor have been shown as effective due to their personalized nature.

For breweries, wineries, and distilleries, the desire to differentiate their products from those of their competitors has led to the creation of experiences such as brewery tours. By providing visitors with experiences that are a combination of entertaining, educational, esthetic (particularly sensorial), and escapist, businesses and institutions form enhanced relationships with visitors that lead to increased loyalty and financial benefits.

Visitors to wineries and breweries frequently travel great distances to do so, forming a relationship with local culture through “destination drinking.” While the act of drinking beer or wine in this case is important, research has also shown that the esthetic aspects of the winery or brewery are on a level of importance comparable to the winery or brewery’s actual products.

Chapter 3: Methods

Research Goal and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the status of brewery tours as cultural institutions by examining the opinions, attitudes, and practice of brewery tour visitors and tour operators. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do brewery tour visitors believe museums can learn from brewery tours?
2. What practices do brewery tour programs use to create popular cultural experiences?
3. To what extent do brewery tour programs consider themselves to be cultural establishments?

Research Methods

A qualitative approach used semi-structured in-person interviews with brewery tour visitors and brewery employees involved in the tour programs. For brewery visitors, questions pertained to what they thought museums could learn from brewery tours. For brewery employees, questions focused on the brewery's approach to its tour programs and the benefits the brewery received from the tour programs.

Semi-structured in-person interviews were chosen for both sets of interviews for several reasons. For visitors, conducting the interviews in-person allowed for responses to be collected shortly after the conclusion of tour programs, providing an immediate and unfiltered response from subjects while the experience of the tour was fresh in their minds. Additionally, in-person interviews enabled subjects to participate on a level of formality and effort below that of a traditional questionnaire or interview at a later date, allowing them to participate on their own terms and in their own terms. For brewery employees, conducting interviews in-person allowed

for direct engagement with the brewery's tour programs in order to understand the content and organization of the tour as well as the brewery esthetics and atmosphere. Funding to travel and complete the research was made possible by the University of Washington Museology program.

Sampling

For visitor interviews, all brewery tour visitors over the age of 18 were potential participants regardless of age, gender, race, and ethnicity. On pre-determined days in late March and early April 2016, visitors participating in tour programs were given the option of participating in interviews following the conclusion of the tour. In all cases, I approached visitors whose tour had recently ended, explained the purpose of the study, and asked if the visitors would be willing to participate in an interview. Participating alone or in groups, 31 visitors participated in 17 interviews ranging in length from 1 minute, 30 seconds to 13 minutes, 59 seconds.

Ten brewery employees involved in the tour programs were interviewed. Interviews ranged in length from 5 minutes, 28 seconds to 23 minutes, 40 seconds. Twelve employees were approached for interviews. Nine were willing to do interviews, while three declined due to time constraints. Of those three, one participated in a phone interview in the week following the research (the remaining two were not asked to participate in phone interviews). In total, ten employees were interviewed.

Site

New Belgium Brewery in Fort Collins, Colorado was chosen as a research site due to the size of the brewery, the stature of its tour programs, and the volume of visitors that it receives. Founded by Jeff Lebesch and Kim Jordan, who began brewing beer in their basement in Fort Collins in 1991 (Acitelli, 2016), New Belgium today is the fourth-largest craft brewery in the

United States (Kell, 2016), producing—as of 2015—nearly a million barrels of beer each year (Fixell, 2015). Becoming 100% employee-owned in 2013, the brewery is renowned not only for its beer, but also its sustainability practices and employee ownership (Dahl, 2016).

Today, New Belgium is regarded as hosting one of the best brewery tours in the United States (Duncan, n.d.). Tours, which are run 11 times per day, typically have a flexible maximum of 25 visitors—an amount that is often reached regardless of time of day or day of the week (New Belgium, n.d.). Particularly in summer months, prospective visitors strive to find rare available tour time slots, accessing the tour reservation website at midnight in order to claim spots the moment they open.

Instruments and Protocol

Interviews took place at New Belgium Brewery in Fort Collins, Colorado, over three days in March and April 2016. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, with interview notes also kept using pen and paper.

Interview questions for visitors were:

- What do you think museums can learn from brewery tours such as this one?
- Would you say that you visit museums frequently, occasionally, or rarely?
 - Probe: How many times would you say you visit a museum in a year?
- Are you from the area or are you visiting?
 - Probe: What other locations are you planning on visiting during your visit?
 - Probe: How did you decide to visit today?

Interview questions for brewery staff members were:

- What do you see as the benefits the brewery receives from the tour program?
 - Probe: How does it affect your bottom line?
- What outcomes do you want visitors to get out of the tour program?
- Is there anything you would like to do with the tour program, or anything you would do with it if you had unlimited resources?
- To what degree do you consider the brewery part of the city's cultural community?
 - Probe: To what extent do you consider the brewery to be a museum?
- Do you have a formal or informal system in place for evaluating the tour program or any aspect of the brewery acting as a tourist destination?

The interview instruments were granted institutional review board exemption by the University of Washington. For the full interview instruments, see Appendix A.

Analysis Protocol

All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo research software. Interviews were coded using a combination of a priori and emergent coding. The a priori coding was informed by the literature, including the experience economy and the blending of education and entertainment. Further information on coding, including sample quotations related to each theme, can be found in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1: Coding for Visitor Interviews—Making Learning Accessible

Theme	Subtheme	Sample Quotation
<p>Making Learning Accessible</p>	<p>Easy-to-Understand</p>	<p>“I think the way they present information is really good because it’s bullet-pointed and condensed instead of long and drawn out”</p>
	<p>Relatable</p>	<p>“There’s a personal connection with the tour guide. I don’t know if museums have that or not, but for me it made it special.”</p>
	<p>Storytelling</p>	<p>“All of the personal anecdotes that connected the big information to why it mattered to the person giving the tour”</p>

Table 2: Coding for Visitor Interviews—Personalization

Theme	Subtheme	Sample Quotation
<p>Personalization</p>	<p>Interactive</p>	<p>“[It’s] interactive, there’s a real person there who can explain things.”</p>
	<p>Asset-Based Learning</p>	<p>“He tried to really provoke people to really talk about what they did and did not know about the whole process.”</p>
	<p>Behind-the-Scenes</p>	<p>“It’s like <i>How It’s Made</i>, the TV show. It exists for a reason, people are interested...this is kind of a real-life version of <i>How It’s Made</i>.”</p>

Table 3: Coding for Visitor Interviews—The Beerscape

Theme	Subtheme	Sample Quotation
<p>The Beerscape</p>	<p>Sensory</p>	<p>“You can taste [it], you can feel it, you can do something with it.”</p> <p>“[We] went inside and outside a lot, go to different buildings. It created different atmospheres.”</p>
	<p>Esthetic</p>	<p>“Even from the exterior, it’s modern and it looks appealing on the outside. Before you go inside it looks like it’s going to be a fun place.”</p>
	<p>Cultural Identity</p>	<p>“It’s mostly the culture they have here...they give back to the community consistently.”</p>

Chapter 4: Results

Data Summary

Data collection took place at New Belgium Brewery in Fort Collins, Colorado over three days in March and April 2016 and included:

- Seventeen interviews with 31 total visitors participating individually or in groups, related to the first research question, “What do brewery tour visitors believe museums can learn from brewery tours?”
- Ten interviews with New Belgium staff members participating individually, related to the second and third research questions, “What practices do brewery tour programs use to create popular cultural experiences?” and, “To what extent do brewery tour programs consider themselves to be cultural establishments?”

Brewery and Tour Description

New Belgium Brewery is located in Fort Collins, Colorado, a city 60 miles north of Denver with a population of roughly 160,000 (City of Fort Collins, n.d.). Known for being the home of Colorado State University, Fort Collins is also nationally regarded for its local culture relating both to beer (Sexton, 2014) and to bicycling, where it is regarded as one of the most bicycle-friendly cities in the nation (Gray, 2014). Situated walking distance from downtown Fort Collins, New Belgium’s campus includes beer production, bottling, and canning areas alongside offices and a taproom dubbed the “Liquid Center” where visitors are able to sample beer.

Brewery tours at New Belgium are run every half hour from 11:30am to 4:30pm seven days per week. Tours last 90 minutes, include guided beer samplings, and are free. Visitors are able to book tours through New Belgium’s website, although owing to the popularity of the tours it can

be difficult to reserve a spot on a tour without booking several weeks in advance. Visitors without a reservation are able to wait on a standby list for limited numbers of tour spots set aside for walk-ins or reservations that are not honored.

Tours leave the Liquid Center and travel to New Belgium's brewhouse, where guides first describe the brewery's origin story before taking visitors to a separate brewing area, where they briefly describe the production of beer. From there, the tour travels back to the Liquid Center and goes into areas not accessible to the public, namely a large beer aging area filled with gigantic wooden barrels used in the production of sour beers and the brewery's experimental brewing area. The next stop on the tour is the brewery's bottling production line, followed by a visit to a separate building for the brewery's canning line. The tour concludes in the Liquid Center, where a corkscrew-shaped slide deposits visitors in the taproom. All interviews were conducted in the taproom, with visitors intercepted upon the conclusion of their tours.



Liquid Center Exterior

(Photo by Author)



Explaining the New Belgium Origin Story

(Photo by Author)



Liquid Center Taproom

(Photo by Author)



Sour Beer Aging Area

(Photo by Author)

What can museums learn from brewery tours?

Participating individually or in groups, 31 visitors participated in 17 interviews related to the first research question. Responses were transcribed using NVivo and coded using a mix of a priori coding informed by the literature and emergent coding. The literature suggested concepts related to the experience economy, such as the creation of personal experiences, sensory experiences, and esthetic experiences. Other a priori coding themes related to the blending of education and entertainment, particularly in regard to discovery-based learning, free choice, and techniques related to creating learning that would be perceived as low-effort.

Of the 31 visitors interviewed, 19 were visiting from outside of Colorado, 11 lived in Colorado, and 1 visitor did not answer whether they were visiting Colorado or not. When asked if they visited museums frequently, occasionally, or rarely, 5 responded “Frequently,” 14 responded “Occasionally,” 11 responded “Rarely,” and 1 visitor did not answer.

Three major trends were identified through the analysis:

Making Learning Accessible

This category included themes related to the brewery tour making learning easier for visitors, whether by encouraging visitors to want to learn or by reducing barriers standing between the visitors and learning. In this supertype, the primary themes were presenting information in an easily-understood and nontechnical manner, relatability to the brewery and staff, and storytelling techniques used during the tour.

Presenting information regarding the process of brewing beer in a manner that was *easy-to-understand* was important to visitors because it increased the accessibility of the tour. One subject remarked, “I think the way they present information is really good because it’s bullet-

pointed and condensed instead of long and drawn out.” Rather than focusing on numbers and technical information, visitors appreciated that guides presented key information in a simple manner. Despite the relative lengthiness of the tour at 90 minutes, visitors felt that the brevity of the information positively contributed to engaging them in the tour, with a visitor saying that “it was a lot of short information and then you were moving... You go from one activity, talk a little bit, get some information, go to another activity.” By obtaining information in a brief and easy-to-understand manner, visitors were able to learn without a great amount of effort—“you could almost fade in and fade out and still get what you wanted,” explained a visitor. This aspect of the tour was readily contrasted against museums. “A lot of museums have this very bad currency of just jumping straight into very dry anecdotal information about whichever era they’re doing,” explained one visitor.

Relatability was the next major theme of creating an accessible learning environment. Visitors remarked that they were easily able to relate not only to the tour guide, but to the brewery’s founders and brewery itself through stories told during the tour. “If the tour guide can relate to you, you’re going to listen to everything they have to say,” explained one visitor, while another stated, “there’s a personal connection to the tour guide. I don’t know if museums have that or not, but for me it made it special.” By positioning the guides not as beer authorities but as (in the words of a visitor), “regular [people] just talking about beers,” visitors were found it easier to understand and enjoy the tour on their own terms. Again, this concept was contrasted with the perception of museum guides and curators being inaccessible and concerned with differentiating themselves from visitors rather than embracing them.

Storytelling also appeared to contribute to relatability in two ways. The first is that by telling personal stories related to their experience with beer and New Belgium, tour guides helped

visitors build meaning related to the experience in a language that they could understand. One visitor explained, “All of the personal anecdotes...connected the big information to why it mattered to the person giving the tour.” Storytelling made the information presented in the tour both accessible and relatable by demonstrating the visitor’s connection to the information while presenting new information in a personal manner.

The second storytelling technique was relating the stories of the company and its founders to visitors. By emphasizing the human aspects and motivations in play during New Belgium’s early years, visitors felt a connection to the brewery’s founders and to the brewery by extension. One visitor stated that the story of New Belgium’s creation inspired her to change her future career plans:

With [stories], they make it relatable. At the very beginning, I relate to it because they talk about [New Belgium founder] Jeff and he started as an engineer and realized that’s not making him happy. I started as an engineer and realized that’s not what’s making me happy.

Like the founder of New Belgium, that visitor was now pursuing a career in beer. By forming personal, memorable links to the brewery, the tour guide, and the stories of key figures within the brewery, visitors felt that the tour’s storytelling components made them naturally interested in the brewery and tour.

Personalization

The second trend that emerged was the personal involvement of visitors in the tours, a concept related to the experience economy. Subthemes were interaction—particularly related to asset-based learning—along with the behind-the-scenes aspects of the tour.

Visitors felt that the tour was personalized and *interactive* across several axes. The first is that visitors widely acknowledged that tour guides engaged them, invited them to ask questions, and created a welcoming environment for visitors to feel comfortable with asking questions. “You can ask any question at any time,” stated one visitor. Visitors not only felt encouraged to ask questions, but to ask any question they might have rather than hoping to find a part of the tour where the question would be relevant. Through this structure, visitors were brought in as active participants in the tour and allowed to personalize the experience as they wished.

Visitors also identified *asset-based learning* as a positive personalizing aspect of the tour. Through asset-based learning, which is a method described by Falk et al. (2012), guides sought to determine what visitors understood about beer and the brewery and build upon that relative to their level of understanding rather than teaching the same level of understanding to all visitors. A visitor described the practice of incorporating tour participants:

He tried to really provoke people to really talk about what they did and did not know about the whole process...it was really nice to see somebody try to provoke thoughts and ideas from other people in the group, what this person may or may not know.

Practicing asset-based learning created a personalized experience that was greatly appreciated by visitors. Rather than presenting a standardized set of information for visitors, asset-based learning allowed tour guides to personalize the information they conveyed to visitors, whether they had little understanding of the brewing process or were intimately familiar with it.

Regardless of what level of understanding visitors possessed, their experience was validated and encouraged to demonstrate that the tour was right for them. The practice of involving visitors and building off of their existing knowledge was not perceived to be shared by museums, as the same visitor went on to say, “I wish more museums...took a proactive approach...When it comes to

museums they feel like you're intruding by asking the tour guide different questions." By involving visitors in the tour process, visitors felt that they had a stake in the tour program and also that they were welcome to ask any questions that they might have without fear of being judged or talked down-to.

The next theme related to personalization is the *behind-the-scenes* aspects of the tour. While not as inherently interactive as the relationship between visitors and tour guides, the behind-the-scenes aspects of the tour invited visitors to personally experience the brewery in a manner that was entirely new and special to them. Seeing the brewery's inner workings made visitors feel that they were being engaged on a personal level, as they were invited into the brewery and allowed to personally experience parts of the facility that would not be accessible outside of tours. While not all museums are able to provide insight into the creation of a popular product, the concept of seeing parts of a facility that were not accessible to general visitors was identified as inherently enjoyable. Visitors suggested that museums may be able to do the same with their collections.

The Beerscape

The last remaining major theme evident from coding the interviews relates to qualities of the "winescape" described by Bruwer and Alant (2009)—the overall experience of visiting a winery outside of the wine itself. Unsurprisingly, the idea of the winescape is easily adapted to breweries, as the overall beerscape at New Belgium—featuring sensory engagement, esthetics, and the brewery's cultural identity—were frequently praised by visitors.

Sensory aspects—the tastes, smells, and sounds of the tour—were commonly cited as engaging. While in many areas these sensory aspects were natural byproducts of the brewery—

such as the smell of beer production or the sound of the beer bottling line—in other areas the tour took conscious steps to incorporate them, such as the slide into the Liquid Center’s taproom.

These sensorial aspects of the tour link to the experience economy by creating positive, personal experiences for the visitor, related to Pine and Gilmore (1999) explaining that sensory components are one of the simplest ways to add an experiential quality to something.

The concept of *traversing* was an interesting finding. While the tastes and smells of the tour were unsurprising additions to the brewery’s sensorial aspects, moving from setting to setting within the tour by going inside, outside, up stairs, down stairs, and so on provided an additional sensorial theme that was unexpectedly popular. “It’s fun to walk around such a large facility,” remarked one visitor, while another described that moving throughout the campus “created different atmospheres” over the course of the tour. The visitors remarked that these elements kept them engaged and enhanced the overall experience of the tour in an area related to sensory engagement.

The *esthetics* of the brewery—its atmosphere, construction, decoration, and layout—were frequently praised aspects of the beerscape as well. Visitors felt that the esthetics of the brewery positively contributed to tour experience through beauty and playfulness. “Before you go inside it looks like it’s going to be a fun place,” commented one visitor. Another visitor described the brewery’s interior as “gorgeous” while a third more succinctly stated that the interior “felt really Willy Wonka.” In addition to the construction of the brewery, the art featured prominently inside—often whimsical and related to the brewery or its beers—was frequently cited as an important contributor to the brewery’s atmosphere.

The final aspect of the beerscape relates less to the brewery’s physical offerings and more to the brewery’s cultural representation of itself outside of beer. Visitors appreciated that the tour

highlighted the brewery's values and culture related to sustainability and community engagement, among other things, and they found themselves more positively connected to the brewery as a result. One visitor explains:

It's mostly the culture they have here, the fact that they're 1% for the Planet, they're ESOP [Employee Stock Ownership Plan], they give back to the community consistently. They don't accept tips, they said they take those tips and give them back to a nonprofit of the month. They're big into animal rights and that really strikes me. I can't support a company I don't believe in, and so if you're looking to reflect that in a museum, what does the museum represent? If it's not something I believe in, I'm not going to support it.

The brewery's cultural identity created strong support among not only visitors who liked the brewery's beer, but those who were aligned with the brewery's own causes.

Another way that the brewery's cultural identity attracted visitors was through New Belgium's status as an important cultural institution in Fort Collins and Colorado as a whole. A visitor living in Colorado explains, "this is unique to Colorado...it represents our state, it's known throughout the nation...I look at it as a reflection of our community, our state." The status of New Belgium as a cultural institution important in the community was reflected in the demographics of visitors—of the 30 visitors who identified whether or not they lived in Colorado, a strong majority—19 visitors—were visiting from outside of Colorado. Similarly, of the eleven visitors interviewed who were local to Colorado, six—a majority—had brought non-local friends or family to the brewery. In this respect, visitors are drawn to New Belgium's cultural appeal not only in terms of the culture that they support, but the Fort Collins and Colorado culture that they represent as well

The Role of Beer

The presence of free beer sampling was identified by some visitors not only as a motivation for their visit, but also as a motivation that could not be easily replicated in museums. Visitors stated that unlike objects found in museums such as art, beer could be literally consumed in the brewery that produced it, drawing an important distinction between breweries and museums. Receiving a tangible piece of the brewery that could be tasted, held, and experienced contrasted significantly with museums because, as one visitor conveyed, “[an] art gallery isn’t going to go, “Let me give you a piece of art.””

Visitors also explained that beer had wider appeal than topics found in museums. While museums topics—specifically art—were seen as having appeal limited to enthusiasts, the appeal of beer was seen as significantly more universal. Furthermore, the brewery, tour, and beer were seen as known quantities, while “if you go to a museum you don’t really know what they’re offering.” The presence of beer in the brewery was viewed as contributing to the tour because it was both more popular and more straightforward than museum content, aspects which may make the tour’s popularity difficult to translate to museums.

Not all aspects of beer were thoroughly independent of museums, however. Visitors praised the social aspects of beer and the effect it has on contributing to enjoyment and fun, frequently linking it—directly or indirectly—to the effects of alcohol in lowering inhibitions. The perceived benefits of the effects of alcohol were widespread. It was described as creating a “culture of enjoyment” and also as enhancing the ability of the visitor to interpret and make sense of the tour experience. One visitor explained, “[in museums,] you have to go around and look at each picture and stand there and study it for a while but if you were allowed to drink beer or wine you'd get better insight.” The positive effects of alcohol in this regard were not viewed as

specific to the brewery, and visitors identified that museums could take advantage of them by allowing beer and wine or even by operating bars inside the museum.

Contributions Made By Tour Guides

“If it’s the most interesting subject in the world, if you have a bad guide you’re not really going to enjoy it,” stated one interview subject while, similarly, another stated, “if someone could do what he did at an art gallery it would make me much more interested.” Visitors suggested that museums would do well to pursue guides of the quality found at the brewery, with some contrasting the effectiveness and passion of the brewery guides with museums who may not invest in guides of the same quality.

Staff Interviews

Ten New Belgium staff members were interviewed to assess New Belgium’s ideas and goals related to its tour programs.

By analyzing the staff’s answers, trends related to the brewery’s approach to its touch programs and involvement in the cultural community of Fort Collins became apparent.

What practices do brewery tours use to attract visitors?

New Belgium’s staff members approach their tour program as a way to market the brewery while using fun, storytelling, and education related to the brewery and its values to differentiate itself from other breweries. A tour guide explains:

By sharing our culture, sharing our core values, drinking a lot of beer, showing them a fun time, and leaving with a smile, they’re more likely to buy our product in the store.

When they look at a huge beer cooler with a ton of brands...[you need to] have

something that stands you apart in the market...one of the biggest things we can do is provide a tour experience so people get to share with the actual employees what we're doing here, what our goals are.

Differentiating the brand is an important task, then, because of competition in a crowded market.

The foremost priority for brewery staff members is for visitors to enjoy their visit. Past that, staff members seek to educate visitors about the company and form a personal connection to them through experiences. Information on the process of brewing beer is defaulted to an accessible high-level approach (that can be made more detailed if the group desires it), and storytelling is used as an important part of forming connections between the brewery and visitors. As a tour guide describes:

The tour program is one of our biggest ways to connect with consumers. When people have a story or a narrative around something it feels like they're a part of it too...the next time they pick up that Fat Tire [New Belgium beer] they're going to think, "that one time at the brewery I had this on tour and I learned this crazy story about Jeff and his bicycle in Belgium." That creates a moment. I think for us, the biggest thing is having a personal interaction and having people being able to create their own stories.

Another tour guide agrees: "The stories that we have, the stories are untouchable...I've never ever heard anybody with stories that compare to ours...I'm proud to tell them, I love to tell them."

In addition to building personal connections through storytelling, the brewery aims to involve the visitor in the tour as well. Guides explain the importance of presenting themselves as

accessible rather than as an authority, and taking steps to ensure that visitors feel comfortable asking questions

Although these strategies vary from guide to guide, they are nevertheless a common theme among each member of the brewery staff. This illustrates another practice used by the brewery—the tours are effectively unscripted. Rather than having a literal script for new guides to learn, they instead observe a variety of veteran tour guides to learn different techniques and stories to incorporate into their own tours. Another important feature of having an unscripted tour is that it allows guides to modify their tour to best fit the group they are leading—a guide explains that a group purely wanting to have fun would not want to spend an hour talking about sustainability.

Do breweries consider themselves to be cultural attractions?

To assess whether breweries consider themselves to be cultural attractions, two approaches were used: asking about the status of breweries as cultural attractions, and asking to what degree staff members considered the brewery and tour to be like a museum.

In regard to whether staff members considered New Belgium to be a significant part of Fort Collins culture, the response was overwhelming in the affirmative. The majority of staff members linked New Belgium not only to the beer culture of Fort Collins, but the bicycle culture as well. Noting that bicycle culture and beer culture are important facets of Fort Collins culture, many staff members felt the brewery had, to some degree, influenced the town's culture in that regard.

Responses relating to New Belgium and its tour program as being similar to a museum were more mixed. Many staff members identified New Belgium as “museum-ish” or “museum-y” due to the history components of the tour, the presence of a story or living history, and the presence

of the brewery's original brewing equipment in the tour. However, many differences or perceived differences were highlighted as well.

Foremost among these is the perception that the brewery tour's informal aspects and capacity to entertain differentiate it from museums. Staff members describe museums as formal, self-serious, lacking in interaction, and static compared to the brewery tour.

Limitations

The study only concerns the activities of a single brewery site. Breweries in cities larger or more popular with beer tourists than Fort Collins may produce different results, as would breweries that operate their tours different than New Belgium.

Similarly, research was only undertaken during a Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in late March and early April, meaning that results may be biased by the time frame. Visitors more likely to visit on another day of the week or during a different season would be underrepresented by this research design, and visitors present at the brewery would naturally be overrepresented relative to their presence over the course of a year.

Translating activities between breweries and museums is also limited by the inherent differences between breweries and museums in regard to the purposes of their programs. While many museums are nonprofits with strong educational focuses, breweries are businesses that operate for profit. Despite the similarities between breweries and museums, it is important to recognize that breweries operate tours as methods of marketing and increasing brand loyalty rather than educating the public or serving a nonprofit purpose.

Interviewing visitors immediately following the tour has its benefits, but it also has drawbacks, namely that visitors may not have time to adequately process the content of the tour

and give the best answer possible. Visitors may also default to answering what they think the researcher wants to hear, as asking what breweries can learn from museums may create the assumption that the tour program is already a positive program that museums can indeed learn from. Similarly, visitors may not have answered truthfully in order to avoid motivations that might be seen as socially undesirable, such as having a strong desire to drink beer without caring about the educational content of the tour. Staff members interviewed may not be forthcoming with sensitive information in order to prevent it from becoming known outside of the brewery, or their knowledge of the workings of the tour program may be limited by their experience with the brewery.

Finally, giving visitors the opportunity to give their opinion on what museums can learn from breweries introduces the possibility of visitors relying on personal conceptions of museums that are wrong or informed by faulty preconceptions. Suggestions given by visitors may not apply to certain museums, or may already have been enacted at some or all museums. The research assumes that visitors have a working knowledge of museums and the experiences they provide, and if they do not have that background the responses they will provide will be based on faulty assumptions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusion

Discussion

Visitors identified several ways that museums could learn from New Belgium's brewery tour, with many relating to concepts that were reviewed in the literature. Foremost among these was the brewery tour presenting information in an accessible and easy-to-understand manner. By consciously avoiding technical information and presenting information in a manner that visitors described as succinct and easy-to-understand, visitors found the educational aspects of the tour more appealing.

Another way that the tour used concepts related to accessibility was through techniques that increased the relatability of the brewery and brewery staff to visitors. Identifying with staff members who are like them and connecting to the overall culture of the brewery, visitors found themselves more engaged with the tour. Storytelling holds an important role in the proceedings of the tour not only in providing visitors with personal information about the tour guide, but the brewery and its key figures as well. The connections formed through storytelling increased both the relatability and the accessibility of learning for visitors.

Accessibility relates directly to the concepts of effortless learning and free-choice learning reviewed in the literature. Packer and Ballantyne (2004), among others, speak of the inherent benefits of learning when it is done on the visitor's own terms, or when learning is perceived by the learner as being effort-free rather than effort-intensive. Increasing the accessibility of the informational aspects of the tour by avoiding dry technical details and creating an experience that visitors can relate to satisfies both of these. Information presented in an easily-understood manner decreases the effort required to interpret it, and having the visitor relate to the guide

and/or brewery creates a situation in which the visitor wants to become engaged in the tour because of their personal connection to it.

These seem to be concepts that museums would benefit from incorporating into their institutions because they were frequently compared by visitors to perceptions of museums presenting information in a dry and inaccessible manner. While these perceptions certainly do not apply to all museums, it nevertheless shows that museums have a reputation for information that is inaccessible, unappealing, and difficult to relate to.

The second group of suggestions that visitors had for museums related to creating a personalized experience for the visitor. Falk et al.'s (2012) description of asset-based learning was found to be a key factor in involving the visitor in the brewery tour, as visitors lauded the guides for incorporating this practice and guides spoke of their prioritization of it as well. Having tour groups wherein some visitors may be experts on brewing and New Belgium and other visitors may know very little, personalizing the experience through asset-based learning is an effective technique for ensuring that visitors get the most out of the tour. Inviting and challenging visitors to create their own meaning through the course of the tour on their own terms regardless of their existing base of knowledge engaged visitors and created a positive—and more importantly, personal—experience for them.

The popularity of the tour's behind-the-scenes aspects matches Murray (2012)'s finding that visitors to breweries greatly value receiving increased access to breweries through tours and other behind-the-scenes looks. While museums typically are not involved in the production of a product in the same way that a brewery is, visitors nevertheless value receiving a glimpse of the exclusive inner workings of an institution and museums are certainly able to provide that with, for example, their collections spaces. Offering access to visitors, perhaps in the form of tours, is

an effective way that museums can implement this concept independent of the need to produce a product.

The third group of suggestions, relating to the beerscape, connect significantly to the experience economy—particularly in regard to the tour’s sensorial aspects. Pine and Gilmore (1999) identify sensorial elements as important and straightforward ways to increase the experiential qualities of goods or events. While sensorial elements are certainly inherent to a branch of culinary tourism such as a brewery tour (and not inherent to many museums), the brewery tour benefited from sensorial elements not related to taste or smell of beer. Of note among these was the concept of traversing, with visitors identifying the act of moving throughout the brewery campus’s rooms, buildings, and settings to be an aspect of the tour that engaged them and enhanced the tour experience. While the majority of museums do not reach the size of New Belgium’s campus, the concept of creating distinct sensory settings throughout a museum is something that could be incorporated regardless of size.

The positive aspects of sensory engagement may not be a particularly groundbreaking discovery for museums, but it is important to consider that the sensory aspects of the brewery tour are genuine, rather than constructed, experiences. The smells and tastes of the brewery relate to the actual beer that it is producing at that specific moment, meaning that they are truly unique and not replicable. The brewery tour is not an experience with a sensory component added on, but instead an experience with a living sensory component inherent to activities of the brewery.

Also related to the experience economy and the beerscape were the esthetics of the brewery. Research related to winery visitors has shown that the atmosphere and physical qualities of wineries, along with educational content on how the wine is made are some of the most important motivational factors for wine tourists (Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2008). Furthermore, the

esthetics of a product, event, or place are identified by Pine and Gilmore (1999) as one of the four key ingredients of an experience in the experience economy. Both of these findings were reinforced by visitors to the brewery, who frequently commented on how the brewery's architecture, decorations, and atmosphere contributed to the experience. The museum community would benefit from paying attention to these factors.

A final connection to the experience economy concerns how the brewery differentiated itself by communicating its cultural identity and values through the tour. These aspects were well-received by visitors, who are more likely to form strong connections to the institution through shared values. Creating cultural involvements for visitors to relate to—perhaps related to sustainability or identity—is an intriguing concept for museums to explore in light of these benefits because museums are not typically forthcoming with communicating their values to stakeholders.

In regard to what techniques breweries use to create successful tour programs, many commonalities surfaced between the tactics of the brewery and the suggestions of visitors for what museums could learn from the tour. While the brewery's end goal in its tour programs is related to marketing and brand differentiation, qualities that are difficult to translate to museums, the techniques used—interaction, being relatable, and presenting information accessibly—are not.

The final research question concerns to what degree breweries consider themselves to be cultural attractions. Opinions were mixed as to whether the brewery tour was like a museum due to the presence of storytelling, the presence of objects significant to the brewery's history, and the numerous perceived differences between the informal tours and formalized museums. The brewery's staff was, however, in complete agreement that New Belgium represented an

important part of the culture of Fort Collins due to common cultural interests between the brewery and city as well as the brewery's philanthropic activities in the community. As previously stated, these aspects being featured in the tour created an additional differentiating factor for the brewery that allowed visitors to form connections with the institution through shared values.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that information is presented in an accessible manner in exhibits or programs.

By taking steps to approach educational topics in a way that is not perceived to require high amounts of effort from the visitors, visitors will be more willing to engage with information and challenge themselves. This can be accomplished by ensuring that information is presented in an appropriately condensed format while avoiding dry technical details. While detailed, in-depth information is certainly important to some museums, it should be deployed carefully and with much consideration.

2. Incorporate the visitor into exhibits and programs, building on of their understanding rather than emphasizing what they do not know.

Asset-based learning is a valuable technique for personalizing the experience of the visitor. By respecting—and asking for—the visitor's extant knowledge, experience, and preconceptions while rejecting the notion of the institution as a complete authority, the visitor gains a stake in both the institution and their own experience. This can be accomplished through concerted efforts to engage visitors in educational settings and consciously taking steps to understand their individual backgrounds and then building upon them.

3. Use storytelling to present concepts in a relatable fashion.

Helping visitors to personally relate to concepts in the museum will naturally increase their involvement in the topic along with their willingness to pursue and learn about it. By creating personal connections visitors will approach and make meaning of the topic on their own terms. This can be accomplished by emphasizing the stories of real—and relatable—people in the area of the topic, and also by emphasizing personal stories of the visitor or museum of what the topic means to them.

4. Incorporate authentic sensorial elements wherever appropriate.

The engagement of different senses is regarded as an important element in creating a memorable experience. This can be accomplished not only by including traditional sensory experiences such as taste or smell (which may be difficult to incorporate into museums), but through others as well, such as the creation of distinct atmospheres within the institution.

5. Explore, emphasize, and strengthen cultural identity.

While New Belgium brewery claims many associations with Fort Collins culture—through beer, bicycles, sustainability practices, and philanthropy—the cultural identities of many museums is not so clear. By making apparent the institution's values and other aspects that differentiate it from others, museums can open new avenues of interacting with and attracting stakeholders. This can be accomplished through the choices that the museums makes in presenting itself and its exhibits to the public. A museum that readily communicates its values through programs or exhibits will certainly see those values recognized by the public.

Conclusion

Due to the connections that people draw between local food and beverages and the culture of a particular area, craft breweries are growing nationally not only as businesses, but as cultural

institutions as well. Breweries that offer tours are often some of the most popular attractions in the cities where they are based, and as cultural attractions they present an intriguing area through which museums can better understand how to attract and engage visitors. Previous research, while not specific to brewery tour practices, has shown the importance of engaging visitors on their own terms, creating memorable experiences, and emphasizing the atmosphere and esthetics at institutions including breweries.

This study suggests that visitors identify *information accessibility*, *institutional relatability*, *personalization*, and the differentiating factors making up the *beerscape* as the areas where museums can learn most from brewery tours. In examining the brewery itself, many of these techniques were consciously employed by the brewery in an effort to create positive experiences for the visitor and ultimately differentiate the product from others. Finally, while the brewery staff's opinions are mixed regarding the status of the tour as museum-like, the staff strongly agrees that New Belgium is an important part of the Fort Collins cultural community.

The museum field stands to benefit from leveraging this information as it relates to creating accessible, interactive, personalized, and relatable experiences. It is important to note that while the presence of beer was identified as a positive contributing factor to brewery tours, it was far from the only factor and it should not be viewed as an insurmountable confounding factor explaining the popularity of brewery tours. While not every museum can exhibit beer, any museum can use the techniques recommended here to attract and connect to visitors.

Further research could approach one of two different areas not addressed by the present study. The first would be conducting a similar study at different sites in order to see to what degree the results of the study are relatable to different environments—particularly macrobreweries such as Anheuser-Busch that would provide an effective contrast to New

Belgium. The second would be to approach a similar study in a manner that relied less upon the preconceptions—informed or others—that visitors and brewery staff have related to museums.

Because this study relies on personal understandings and perceptions, taking steps to ensure that participants have a strong understanding of the museum field may produce different results.

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Appendix A: Instruments

Interview Protocol: Brewery Visitors

Study Procedure

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my project. As a museum studies student, I think that museums have much to learn from breweries when it comes to attracting and engaging visitors.

What do you think museums can learn from brewery tours such as this one?

Would you say that you visit museums frequently, occasionally, or rarely?

Probe: How many times would you say you visit a museum in a year?

Lastly, are you from the area or are you visiting?

Probe if visiting: What other locations are you planning on visiting during your trip?

Probe: How did you decide to visit today?

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to my research. Do you have any questions?

Interview Protocol: Brewery Employees

Study Procedure

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. I am particularly interested in the business approach the brewery takes to its tour programs, the outcomes the brewery produces through its tour programs, and the similarities between breweries and museums.

What do you see as the benefits the brewery receives from the tour program?

Probe: How does it affect your bottom line?

What outcomes do you want visitors to get out of the tour program?

Is there anything you would like to do with the tour program, or anything you would do with it if you had unlimited resources?

To what degree do you consider the brewery part of the city's cultural community?

Probe: To what extent do you consider the brewery to be a museum?

Do you have a formal or informal system in place for evaluating the tour program or any aspect of the brewery acting as a tourist destination?

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to my research. Do you have any questions?