

FOOD AND WINE TOURISM IN POST-WAR LEBANON

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Lindsay Milich

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## ABSTRACT

### FOOD AND WINE TOURISM IN POST-WAR LEBANON

LINDSAY MILICH

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Tourism has played a major role in Lebanon since its peak period of 1930-1974; sometimes subsiding as a result of war and conflict, but always rebounding at least to some extent. Lebanon's touristic appeal includes its geographic location between the East and the West, its varied landscape (beaches and mountains), its hospitable and diverse population, and its well loved cuisine. The focus of this study was food and wine initiatives across the country, and their role as related to the traditional tourism industry. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the nature of regional and community based initiatives within the interrelated sectors of food and wine tourism in post-war Lebanon. Data was collected in January 2011 through personal interviews with experts in the field. Findings revealed a need for greater support of the food and wine industry, as it has proven to be a sustainable alternative to traditional touristic development strategies.

Keywords: wine tourism, Lebanon, food tourism, culinary tourism, community-based initiatives

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	1
Background of Study .....	1
Review of Literature .....	2
History of Tourism in Lebanon.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	12
Research Questions.....	12
Delimitations.....	13
Limitations .....	13
Assumptions.....	14
Definition of Terms .....	14
Chapter 2 METHODS AND PROCEDURES .....	15
Description of Subjects.....	15
Description of Instrument .....	15
Description of Procedures.....	16
Method of Data Analysis .....	17
Chapter 3 PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS .....	20
Reflections of the Study.....	20-28
Chapter 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	30
Summary.....	30

Discussion.....	32
Conclusions.....	40
Recommendations.....	41
REFERENCES .....	45
APPENDIXES .....	47
APPENDIX A. Interview Script.....	48
APPENDIX B. Informed Consent Letter .....	52



## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Background of the Study

Prior to a 17-year civil war that broke out in 1975, Lebanon was a prime tourist destination, and was known internationally as the “Switzerland of the Middle East” (Kanso, 2005). In 1974, Lebanon welcomed roughly 1.5 million visitors (Kanso). During the war, tourism practically came to a halt, and the country’s economy suffered immensely. Infrastructure was destroyed, safety could not be guaranteed, and services necessary for travel were virtually nonexistent.

When the Civil War finally ended in 1991, and once Israel lifted its naval ban in South Lebanon in 2001, the country demonstrated notable resilience as it began to rebuild. A particular emphasis was placed on efforts to promote growth in tourism (Citrinot, 2002). Although a war-torn image from international markets made tourism a tough sell initially, the government provided incentives for domestic rebuilding in the hospitality and services industry (Ladki & Dah, 1997), and within a number of years, tourism had increased considerably. Tragically, violence broke out again in 2006, between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Hezbollah. Although the 36-day war was not nearly as long as the civil war of the 1970’s and 80’s, damage was significant (Ladki, Atallah, Hamam & El Hariri, 2008).

Once again, Lebanon had to rebuild its infrastructure, boost a shattered national morale, and breathe life back into the tourism industry. During this most recent restructuring, new ideas emerged at the community level, and private enterprises such as

farmer's markets, craft markets, and traditional food production appeared (El Tayeb staff, 2008). These projects took less time to mobilize than larger government funded projects, and provided stakeholders with a sense of ownership as well as allowance for creativity. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the nature of these regional and community based initiatives within the context of food and wine tourism in post-war Lebanon.

### Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted primarily online and at the Monrovia Public Library in Monrovia, California. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, Google Scholar, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, Free Library, and LIBCAT (American University of Beirut). This review of literature is organized into the following topic areas: history of tourism in Lebanon and current state of food and wine tourism in Lebanon (2006-the present).

History of tourism in Lebanon. Tourism has long been a focal point as a prime earner for the Lebanese economy and an integral part of the country's identity. During times of peace, the industry has been a key factor in establishing Lebanon as a player in the world market. This is particularly true of the period from 1930-1974, when Lebanon was dubbed the "Switzerland of the Middle East" and the capital city Beirut was known as the "Paris of the East" (Kanso, 2005). During times of war, tourism activities were diminished due to insecurity, broken transportation and hospitality services, and a tarnished international image; yet the industry always held hope for post-conflict

recovery (Kanso). During post-crisis redevelopment phases, tourism growth has been used as an indicator of reconstruction progress and as a tool to help mend the country's war torn image (Ladki & Sadik, 2004). Tourism in modern day Lebanon can be broken down into the following phases: pre-Civil War (1930-1974), Civil War (1975-1991), the interim between the end of the Civil War and the Israeli invasion of Beirut (1991-2006), and post-2006. This section will review these phases, and will focus primarily on the trends that have taken place during the two post war phases (1991-July 2006, and August 2006 to the present).

In 1974, just before Civil War broke out in Lebanon, tourism had reached its highest peak, and was contributing roughly 20% to the gross national product (Ladki & Sadik, 2004). Lebanon became a "modernized" and sophisticated destination for European travelers beginning in the 1920's when it was a French protectorate (Citrinot, 2002). Due to the French presence, a "westernized" familiarity, and Beirut's reputation as a financial hub (Ladki & Sadik), many Europeans traveled to Lebanon during this time period for both business and pleasure. Some of Lebanon's attractions include its accessible location on the eastern Mediterranean, its position as a gateway between East and West, a pleasant climate on the coast, the glitz and glamour of Beirut's nightlife, a rich history, and a vibrant food culture (Jahn & Thomson, 2009; Kanso, 2005). In addition to its pleasant beaches, Lebanon provides the opportunity of snow-skiing in the Lebanon Mountains (Kanso), which makes it unique in the Middle East. Ladki and Sadik noted that during this relatively prosperous time in Lebanon's history, tourism was certainly the "backbone of the Lebanese economy" (p. 172). Soon, however, this prosperity would be interrupted by over 15 years of continuous violence.

With the outbreak of a long, bloody Civil War in 1975, and later perpetuated by the Israeli occupation (1978-2000) came a rapidly tarnished image of the “Switzerland of the Middle East” (Kanso, 2005). In addition to the massive loss of life and widespread destruction of land and traditional livelihoods, Ladki and Dah (1997) have suggested that the war also imposed various economic, social, human resource, and environmental constraints on the country. As Lebanon emerged from the war, the government faced serious debt challenges, as it struggled to rebuild the country’s tattered infrastructure and improve social services (Ladki & Dah). The resultant inflation of prices impacted the tourism industry, and even though arrivals increased in the years after the war, the relatively high expense of travel and leisure in Lebanon was a major deterrent to potential return visitors (Ladki & Dah, 1997; Ladki & Sadik, 2004).

According to Ladki and Dah (1997) more than 1.2 million individuals were forced to leave their homes during the war. These internally displaced people often relocated to overly concentrated areas unfit for such large numbers. Urban migration and population concentration combined with inadequate public services resulted in serious environmental and aesthetic concerns as well as health risks. During their survey of tourists to Lebanon, Ladki and Sadik found that 46% of visitors were “very dissatisfied” with the widespread pollution problem. Indicating yet another component of the war’s devastation, Citrinot (2002) noted the staggering destruction that the conflict imposed on hospitality infrastructure: “In 1974, the country had 362 hotels with 16,363 rooms totaling 28,283 beds . . . By 1991, only 171 hotels with 6,630 rooms were still available to visitors” (p. 12).

Although the Civil War ended in 1991, Israel remained an occupying force in Lebanon until 2001, and violence continued to erupt between the Israeli forces and Palestinians, particularly in South Lebanon (Citrinot, 2002; Kanso, 2005). In spite of these ongoing tensions, Citrinot (2002) suggested that the government considered tourism a high priority on its restructuring agenda, and Ladki and Sadik (2004) noted that tourist arrivals began to increase quite remarkably in the years following the war, considering that the seventeen years of violence had brought tourism to a complete “standstill.” As Ladki and Sadik have observed, “The tourism sector is the first to suffer from violence and war, and the first to benefit from peace” (as cited in Aboukhalil, 2002, p. 173).

According to one report, the damage of the war totaled \$25 billion, and in the years following (between 1993 and 1997), approximately \$18 billion was spent on reconstruction projects (United Nations, as cited in Citrinot, 2002). However, despite this massive investment in reconstruction and the “enormous potential” for growth in tourism noted by Ladki and Sadik (2004, p. 172), Kanso (2005) suggested that the country’s “war torn images have not faded, and the government’s public relations efforts to diminish these images are minimal” (p. 136). Various studies have indicated that in the post war years, although there was growth, Lebanon was not prepared for tourism and was initially unable to meet tourist’s needs and expectations (Ladki & Sadik, as cited in Troels). Ladki and Dah (1997) suggested there was a need for the education and training of industry employees at this time as well as a need to “rehabilitate Lebanon’s service culture” (p. 42).

Though a post-war increase in tourism activity may have spurred some positive economic progression for Lebanon, the industry was also riddled with shortcomings that

were prohibitive of healthy growth (Ladki & Sadik, 2004). Ladki and Sadik noted that it is important for attention to be paid to the alleviation of existing problems in the tourist industry in order to make way for suitable growth and for capitalizing on the industry's promising potential.

Problems arose because although visitation increased in the post war years, tourism and transportation services were not able to cater to the demands of these visitors (Ladki & Sadik, 2004). The government provided incentives to foreign investors and to internal members of the hospitality industry to rebuild services quickly through measures such as tax exemption and "duty-free import of all related hospitality equipment" (Ladki & Dah, 1997, p. 39), but revival still did not happen sufficiently enough to keep up with the pace of the tourist influx. Although Ladki and Sadik (2004) noted that visitation had increased at about 6.3% annually since 1983, these statistics do not necessarily indicate a strong and successful tourism infrastructure. Citrinot (2002) noted that unchecked debt and ongoing political instability in the region were some of the obstacles that hindered efforts toward rebuilding an effective and sustainable tourism industry in the years after 2000. Ladki and Sadik (2004) noted that the prevalent dissatisfaction among visitors to Lebanon during these precarious years perpetuated the negative images of Lebanon as a destination, rather than positively altering it. Another factor challenging the success of tourism in Lebanon at this time was that during its seventeen years of isolation, neighboring countries in the Middle East such as Syria, Jordan, Israel and Turkey had invested heavily in their tourism programs and international marketing campaigns; this created regional competition from countries that could offer tourists cheaper accommodations and services as well as fewer presumed risks (Ladki & Dah).

On July 12, 2006, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) initiated a month long attack on Lebanon in an immediate response to the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah (Ladki et al., 2008). The attack came without warning to the Lebanese people, and was devastating in terms of infrastructure bombardment, interruption of food, water and supply distribution services, human displacement, destruction of land and personal property, and loss of life (Ladki et al.). Between 1,200 and 1,400 Lebanese citizens were killed during four weeks of shelling and bombing that took place all over the country, and “thousands . . . were forced to evacuate their homes and villages” (Daily Star Staff, 2010; Ladki et al., p. 98). Ladki et al. noted the following:

The outcome was devastating for Lebanon. During the four weeks of aerial and ground bombardment by the IDF, the nation faced a major humanitarian crisis. The country's infrastructures, roads, bridges, gas stations, highways, factories, power plants, schools, hospitals and more suffered destruction on a catastrophic scale. Israeli forces hammered buildings into the ground, bringing entire neighborhoods to ruins and transforming villages into ghost towns. Families were massacred by air strikes on their homes or their cars while trying to flee their villages. Many people were buried beneath the wreckage of their homes. For weeks, the Red Cross and other rescue teams were barred from entering the so-called military zones to rescue people. Even when the war was over, a large number of the Lebanese citizens continue to face the danger imposed by unexploded cluster bombs left in many villages. (p. 98)

The complete report by Ladki et al., while entirely professional and methodically researched, resounds with an undeniable air of frustration by the authors, several of

whom reported to have families who were directly impacted by the war and resulting food shortages in the village of Sidon in southern Lebanon.

This frustration is understandable, especially when one considers the trials of the country since the first outbreak of war in 1975, and the subsequent heavy investments in reconstruction that were in many cases entirely negated by the destruction invoked on the country during the 2006 war (Ladki et al., 2008). The Daily Star (2010) noted that “billions of dollars worth of infrastructure were destroyed” (p. 1) during the Israeli attack. Referring to the time period since Israel withdrew its forces in 2000, marking the end of the first IDF occupation in Lebanon (1982-2000), Ladki et al. noted that “thereafter, Lebanon witnessed positive economic, construction, and tourism comeback which lasted until July 12, 2006. Since the eruption of the July 12, 2006 war, Lebanon has witnessed a halt to its six years of prosperity” (p. 98). Lebanon would have to build itself up once again, sparsely equipped with the resources that it needed to do so.

Ladki et al. (2008) specifically noted the negative impacts of the war on the sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, fisheries, and food and fresh water distribution throughout Lebanon. These impacts were most significant during the thirty six days of war, but lasted long after the end of the bombing in August 2006 (Ladki et al.). The authors argued that these widespread problems could have been less devastating and better contained had the government responded in a more effective and timely manner. They have suggested that the government implement certain strategies, specifically regarding food distribution channels, to help alleviate the severity of a crisis such as the 2006 war on the quality of life of the Lebanese people (should a similar incident occur again). Given that this region has such a tumultuous history, these concerns are

legitimate, and it would make sense to implement proper strategies to prepare the country for another such event. More frequent, reliable distribution channels as well as less reliance on the public sector and international aid agencies by private groups would lessen the severity of interruptions to transportation and delivery services that often occur as a result of war and national crises (Ladki et al.)

Post-2006 trends. After the July 2006 war, the Lebanese government once again set to work rebuilding its tourism services, and mending its war torn image (Fabricant, 2010). However, having been through this scenario before, the people of Lebanon seemed to recognize more strongly than in previous reconstruction phases, the importance of community initiative and self reliance. Communities devastated by the war could not wait for the untimely process of government subsidies and international loans to trickle down from the public sector into their hands. Thus, the Lebanese people demonstrated resourcefulness, resilience, and determination as they salvaged what was left of their bomb laden crops and carried on (Blomfield & Short, 2006).

A project that exemplifies this behavior is the Souk el Tayeb, a farmer's market in Beirut that was created with the specific objective of achieving cross-cultural cohesion between farmers of various religious backgrounds from all over Lebanon. The Souk el Tayeb reasserted itself with a renewed fervor after the July 2006 war (Mouzawak, 2007). Kamal Mouzawak, the market's founder, expressed his aspirations for the program: "This is about joining hands and bringing opposites together...planting seeds of peace and not war. Joining hands and forces is the essence of Souk el Tayeb's story, the first farmers' market in Lebanon and the region" (Mouzawak, 2007, p. 1). In this same article, the author also spoke of the importance of "regaining control of [Lebanon's] food suppliers,"

and of supporting Lebanon's farmers so that "the farmers market gets to the heart of the city, and becomes the route/root of the countryside to the city" (Mouzawak, p. 1).

Elsewhere in the country, farmers markets and craft markets emerged or reemerged (Fabricant, 2010), allowing farmers and craftsmen to sell their goods to a growing segment of travelers, including many Lebanese expats who were returning home to visit after fleeing during more turbulent times ("Lebanon prepares," 2010). Some women in the village of Ain el Kabou in central Lebanon came up with the idea of producing and selling traditional "mouneh" or preserved foods, as a means of diversifying their income after the devastation of their village during the civil war of the 1980's (Mymoune, 2006). Their business, "Mymoune," continued to grow after the latest conflict, and today their products are sold locally all over Lebanon, as well as in some specialty stores in Britain and the United States (Mymoune).

Overall, tourism showed relatively slow but steady growth from the end of 2006 until 2008 ("Lebanon prepares," 2010), and by 2009 tourism had risen to heights that actually exceeded pre-1975 statistics (Daily Star staff, 2010). Travel to Lebanon in 2009 had risen a staggering 39% from the previous year (Daily Star staff). This increase was due partly to publicity in the New York Times, which awarded Lebanon the title "top place to visit in 2009" (Daily Star staff). As 2009 has seen a "major rebound" for Lebanese tourism ("Lebanon prepares"), the question remains whether the country, and Beirut in particular, is capable of accommodating this influx of tourists in a sustainable manner (Jahn & Thomson, 2009; "Lebanon's boutique," 2010). The question also remains: are the people of Lebanon prepared to survive on their own, should an

unforeseen event such as violence or a shift in travel behavior cause tourism to come to a sudden standstill (as has happened so many times in the past)?

Summary. The story of Lebanon is a turbulent one; since the first outbreak of war in 1975 until the present day, there has been national crisis followed by periods of peace, followed by more conflicts, followed by more peace. Each time the people of this country were given the chance to rebuild, they did, in spite of the challenges that they were faced with. While “recovery” always meant first and foremost a national agenda of rebuilding essential physical infrastructure such as the airport, housing developments, roads, ports, schools, etc. (Citrinot, 2002), it also often involved a focus on two sectors that have always been critical to the national character of Lebanon: food and tourism. To a lesser extent, and particularly in recent years, wine tourism has also played a role in redevelopment (Blomfield & Short, 2006).

The period of reconstruction since the latest conflict, the July 2006 war with Israel, has been characterized by a growing segment of small private businesses and community initiatives (“Lebanon’s boutique,” 2010; El Tayeb staff, 2008), following suit with global trends that imply an interest in personalized tourism experiences and “genuine products” (Jahn & Thomson, 2009, p. 142). The Lebanese people have noted the international appeal of their culinary traditions and agricultural endowments, and as a result they are emphasizing growth in this market (Fabricant, 2010; “Lebanon’s boutique”). Food and wine in Lebanon can now be seen as a main attraction for potential visitors (Fabricant). It also provides an opportunity for people of various backgrounds to benefit from tourism, where they may not have been able to benefit before. For example, in previous reconstruction phases, farmers and residents of rural villages outside of the

main tourist hub of Beirut may not have seen a link between the country's heavy investments in tourism and their own needs ("Lebanon prepares," 2010). Now, with the growth of community oriented initiatives such as Souk el Tayeb and Mymoune, people from all over the country, often with no previous experience in this sector, are able to benefit from tourism.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the nature of regional and community based initiatives within the interrelated sectors of food and wine tourism in post-war Lebanon.

### Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Who are the stakeholders involved with regional and community-based food and wine tourism initiatives in post-war Lebanon?
2. What are the stakeholder motivations associated with regional and community-based food and wine tourism initiatives?
3. What methods are being employed by stakeholders to promote growth in food and wine tourism?
4. Are stakeholder expectations being met and/or goals being achieved related to regional and community –based food and wine tourism initiatives?
5. How does the nature of these regional and community initiatives vary across the country (i.e. more instability in certain areas, urban versus rural, etc.)?

6. Is food and wine tourism a viable option for economic and cultural diversification in Lebanon?

### Delimitations

This study was delimited to the following parameters:

1. Information on food and wine tourism was gathered from stakeholders and owners of small businesses throughout Lebanon.
2. Stakeholder motivations and company policies were analyzed.
3. Data were collected during the winter of 2011.
4. Information for this study was gathered using a combination of online questionnaires and personal interviews.

### Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. The researcher's physical distance from the location of data collection prevented the sample size from being larger and more representative of the population.
2. Language barriers limited the researcher to English speaking subjects (not fully representative of experts in the Lebanese tourism field).
3. Language barriers limited the researcher's review of literature to information written in or translated to English.

### Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. It was assumed that subjects were in fact experts in the field of Lebanese tourism.
2. It was assumed that the subjects responded truthfully and to the best of their ability.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Expert. An individual with a superior knowledge and/or expertise in a specific subject (usually with academic and/or professional merits).

Food tourism. The activity of traveling to or within a destination combined with a particular investment in local foods, restaurants, agriculture, and/or culinary traditions.

Infrastructure. The facilities, equipment, and installations needed for the basic functioning and daily lives of the residents of a region. These include communication systems, water and sewage facilities, public protection, health, transportation, and education systems (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006).

Wine tourism. The activity of traveling to or within a destination with a particular interest in wine and/or the making of wine.

## Chapter 2

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### Description of Subjects

For this study, the researcher conducted interviews with various experts utilizing the Delphi method. Several industry professionals were chosen for the initial interviews. They were chosen based on their experience and involvement in food or wine tourism in Lebanon, and their demonstrated knowledge of the subject. For example, individuals who hosted culinary tours of Lebanon, directed farmer's cooperatives, and/or participated in governmental tourism activities were targeted for data collection. At the conclusion of each interview, these primary subjects were then asked to recommend other qualified field experts to be interviewed. This method helped the researcher to permeate the industry, as well as to achieve greater legitimacy through strong references.

#### Description of Instrument

The instrument used to measure data in this study was an interview script developed by the researcher. The interviews were semi-structured; an interview script of ten questions, each with several probing questions, was used to guide the dialogue and provided consistency between interviews. Interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, and were recorded in writing as well as via a tape recorder to ensure accurate transcription. Subject responses were later evaluated and compared. Questions varied slightly between interviews, but a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions were asked. Questions were specifically designed to answer the research questions of this

study. The researcher sought to encourage thoughtful responses by building on primary questions with prompting questions. For example, subjects were asked a primary question such as “Are there any external factors or influences that affect or have affected the success or operation of your business?” The researcher encouraged the subject to expound on the question by using probing phrases such as “please explain” and “how so?” A description of procedures and a copy of this instrument (see Appendix A) was submitted and approved by the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee prior to conducting interviews.

A copy of the Cover Letter/Informed Consent Letter was also submitted to the Human Subjects Committee at this time (see Appendix B). The cover letter provided subjects with a brief description of the study, and informed them of the confidentiality, voluntary nature of, and risks associated with their participation in this study. The cover letter was administered to subjects prior to conducting the interview.

### Description of Procedures

Interviews for this study were conducted in January of 2011. Subjects were initially contacted by the researcher via e-mail, two months prior to the intended time of data collection. Upon this initial contact the subject was notified of the purpose of the study and asked if they would be interested in participating. Willingness to participate was confirmed, and interviews were tentatively scheduled. One month prior to data collection, interview timelines were reiterated or finalized.

Telephone interviews were conducted with an initial time frame of 10-20 minutes, although occasionally the discussion lasted longer. For each semi-structured interview,

the researcher prepared a script of at least ten primary questions, along with several “probing questions” for each of these. The interview script remained similar in content for each of the interviews, though some logical adjustments were made for the sake of relevancy and specificity.

In adherence with the Delphi method, each subject was asked to recommend another “industry expert” who would be interested in participating. Interviews were conducted until a saturation of responses was achieved, meaning the researcher noticed a general consensus among subjects on a particular topic/question.

Each interview was recorded to ensure accurate referencing of the conversation. A total of seven subjects were interviewed for the purpose of this study. All were sent a letter of appreciation following the interview, thanking them for their cooperation.

#### Method of Data Analysis

The interview was formatted in a manner that addressed the research questions of the study. For example, subjects were asked how they were involved in the Lebanese tourism industry, what their motives were for becoming involved in this sector, and what their plans were for the future. If the interviewee managed or operated a business, questions were asked regarding who the business employed, how the business was managed, and how its operations affected the local community. To get an idea of whether or not food and wine tourism shows a potential for positive and sustainable growth, subjects were asked what their business or project hoped to achieve and how they intended to achieve these objectives. Finally, subjects were asked what their hopes were for the future of Lebanese food and wine tourism.

The means of data collection was open ended verbal interview. This allowed the researcher to compare responses utilizing an open and axial coding process in which a laundry list of codes were first developed and then refined into manageable themes. The researcher and research assistant independently conducted this analysis and then compared results to assess inter-rater reliability.



## Chapter 3

### PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the nature of regional and community based initiatives within the interrelated sectors of food and wine tourism in post-war Lebanon. The researcher sought to interview 5 to 10 experts in the field of food and wine tourism in Lebanon. Candidates were selected based on their involvement in and knowledge of food and/or wine tourism in Lebanon. At the end of each interview, subjects were asked to recommend other experts in the field who would be good to interview for this study. This sampling methodology allowed the researcher to connect with individuals they did not have access to previously. Data collection was finalized once the researcher had reached maximum feasible saturation in interview content from as many experts as possible (i.e. once subjects began to repeat recommendations for other experts in the field). Approximately 15 individuals were contacted with a request to participate in the study, 7 of who were interviewed (46% response rate). Two candidates were unable to participate due to time constraints, seven candidates failed to respond to e-mail requests, and seven candidates participated either via personal interview or through e-mail correspondence.

Of the total acquired responses, two interviews were conducted through Skype (approximately twenty minutes in duration), one conversation was held through Facebook “chat” (approximately one hour in duration), and the remaining four responses were collected through e-mail. In the case of e-mail correspondence, subjects were sent a list of interview questions to complete. In most cases, the researcher continued the

“conversation” with follow up questions regarding the subject’s initial responses in an attempt to emulate the conversational aspects of an in-person interview.

### Subject Characteristics

Stakeholders in the Lebanese food and wine industry are wide-ranging and include Lebanese expatriates displaced by the war who’ve returned to revive the local economy and lifestyle, various leaders in the wine industry, Lebanese residents in Beirut (primarily as consumers, but also employees and project developers), residents of the various regions and villages of the country (primarily as local employees and “hosts” of tourism activities), authors and bloggers on Lebanese cuisine and culture, hosts of culinary tours of the region, and a wine expert who organizes local wine tours and offers wine education courses. Lebanese tourism appears to consist primarily of Arabs from the Middle East who are less frequently deterred by regional political tensions than are their Western counterparts. Visitation from members of the Lebanese Diaspora also makes up a significant segment of tourism in the country, as does “internal” tourism (for example, people from Beirut interested in learning about their culinary heritage traveling to a Food and Feast event in a village, or attending a wine tasting event in the Bekaa Valley).

Participants in this study were based in Beirut on the central coast (3), in the Bekaa Valley (2), in a village east of Beirut near the Lebanon Mountains (1), and outside of Lebanon (1). However, it should be noted that while the 3 wineries involved in this study operate almost entirely within the parameters of their physical location, the remaining 4 participants are involved in tourism activity across the country (for example, through regionally held food festivals and culinary/wine tours).

### Industry Trends and Characteristics

Food tourism appears to be a somewhat less organized and less established sector than is wine tourism, though almost all subjects commented positively on the potential for growth in this area. Numerous independent enterprises with a focus on agriculture and food exist, though their role as related to tourism is not typically well defined; in these cases the focus tends to be on production, sales, and the organization's respective goals and objectives, with tourism as an afterthought.

### Stakeholder Motivations

Subjects were asked, "How and why did you get involved in this role/sector?" as well as "What are your goals and objectives?" Some common objectives that emerged include national unification, preservation of Lebanese heritage and tradition, provision of high quality food and wine products/packages, promotion of peace and stability through various initiatives, and creating "a good image of a country undermined by political tensions and wars." One winery owner stated the primary reason for founding their organization as to "help bring back the population who had fled years before to escape...the war" and noted that they have since "kept the needs of the community of primary importance."

Though certainly financial sustainability is an elemental concern for all of the businesses referred to in this study, at least one altruistic motivation was mentioned in all responses. In most cases the needs of the community and/or Lebanon as a whole was noted as the primary reason for involvement in food and wine tourism initiatives. A

strong sense of pride in the quality of regionally available agricultural products, and a devotion to the Lebanese cultural identity was evident in all responses.

### Methods to Promote Growth in the Industry

Subjects were asked, “How do you promote your business or project?” The most common response was “word of mouth.” Representatives of the large, long established wineries also noted specific marketing and promotional strategies such as web-based publicity, billboards, advertisements, participation in international wine fairs, and export-specific publicity as managed by international partners and distributors. Some of the initiatives were non-profit and/or simply didn’t allocate a significant budget to marketing/PR. In these cases, funds were simply not available to spend on paid advertisements etc., and other aspects of the business/project were considered a higher priority in regards to the allocation of what funds were available.

Subjects were usually also asked if they received any governmental assistance or aid from NGO’s. None of those asked mentioned that they’d received financial assistance from external groups or from the government. In most cases there were no verbalized complaints against a lack of governmental cooperation; however, with the reason for non-assistance being attributed either to the preference of the business/project to remain independent and/or to the fact that the government was frankly “out of [money].”

Articles and written press were acknowledged as other important means for promoting growth in the industry. One winery representative noted that “tourism is a key factor in developing our business, and showing a better image of Lebanon.” Finally, all subjects were clearly dedicated to the efficiency and betterment of their respective

organizations, thus portraying an attitude which would lend to the growth of the industry as a whole.

### Stakeholder's Expectations

Subjects were asked “Do you believe that your business/project is helping the Lebanese community?” and “If so, in what ways?” Since all subjects mentioned that at least one of their objectives was to help the Lebanese community (or local community) in some way, this question is relative to how the business/project has progressed in achieving its own operational goals and expectations.

Employment is one way in which the businesses involved in this study have contributed to economic sustainability in the region, employing up to 110 individuals at the largest winery. One respondent noted that:

by employing local staff and using local shops and craftsmen whenever possible, we actively facilitate the vitality of the economy here...we've been able to employ members of local families who then have the resources and will to stay in [the village] throughout the year, enrolling their children in local schools, and patronizing a variety of small businesses for 12 months rather than 3 or 4 months in the summer only.

Another contribution frequently noted by subjects was that of improving Lebanon's image. The majority of participants mentioned that in some way(s) their work had helped to improve the image of the country and has spread awareness of the true character and quality of Lebanese food and culture (both among Lebanese who have lost touch with their traditions, and internationally).

A higher concern than spreading the word internationally, however, seemed to be the objective of building a stronger sense of unity and pride within Lebanon.

Stakeholders appear to be reaching their expectations in regards to this. When a representative of one development project was asked what the most positive outcome of the project's work has been, he responded with the following:

Empowering the producers...and it's very important to look at the kids of these producers. [They] are from different regions, different religions, different politics, and so when I see their kids getting on very well together, as if there's no difference at all, I think it's quite an achievement.

One respondent, a representative from one of the largest wineries in Lebanon, noted the cultural significance of wine making in the context of Lebanon's historic claims to the origins of enology: "wine tourism contributes to spread the knowledge of Lebanese culture. Indeed while promoting our wine, we focus on the fact that wine making is a tradition we inherited from our Phoenician ancestors who used to elaborate wine and export it."

#### Regional Variation among Initiatives

The researcher sought to answer this question by interviewing subjects from all over Lebanon, and comparing their responses to questions such as "What are the main features of your organization?" and "How has the success of your operation been affected by external factors?" Responses were varied, though these differences seemed to be primarily related to business strategies, operational goals and objectives, and differences in quantity of production (ie: large scale vs. small scale), rather than physical location.

However, the researcher acknowledges some limitations in regards to the question posed here, as she was unable to secure interviews with stakeholders based in the far northern and far southern regions of Lebanon. Since the researcher sought contact with individuals entirely through telephone and internet mediums, and was limited to English speaking individuals, there are presumably businesses and projects located in non-represented regions that would ideally have been included in this study but which the researcher was unable to contact or acquire information from.

All subjects mentioned that “external factors” had impacted the operation of their business in some way. Political tension and instability posed the most significant obstacle, though the attitude toward this problem seemed to be not so much of resentment and complaint, but of a kind of necessary resignation (“this is Lebanon”). 100% of subjects mentioned ongoing political tensions as a problem. Other “external factors” included electricity outage, water shortage, a heat wave in 2010, unavailable resources and machinery, and land zoning conflicts; these problems were mentioned by business representatives outside of Beirut, and may presumably be more severe in rural areas, as Beirut operatives mentioned no restraints other than the political situation.

### Sustainability and Benefits of Food and Wine Tourism

The overwhelming response to the question of “Is food and wine tourism a viable option for economic and cultural diversification in Lebanon?” was that yes, tourism is an important part of the economy and it should be supported. However, its success is dependent on stability in the region. The general opinion among subjects was that tourism (and specifically food and wine tourism) can only be successful, and its benefits fully

reaped, so long as longstanding political tensions are absolved and peace is secured. The dependency of a successful tourism sector on political stability was a recurring theme; following or preceding nearly all of the optimistic comments regarding potential for growth in food and wine tourism was a remark such as "...if there is peace" or "first of all the political situation must be safe" or "as far as the political situation is stable..."

Still, the potential for growth in the area of food and wine tourism was widely noted. Even those individuals not actively engaged in the food tourism industry (a winery owner) commented on the significant role of food and food traditions in the Lebanese lifestyle; "I'm not in a position to comment about food tourism, except to say that we eat *very* well here, and I'm extremely happy with the seasonal offerings we can purchase/grow locally."

Comments regarding the potential for wine tourism in Lebanon were very positive. Observations made by some of the leading experts in the industry included: "Wine tourism...has enormous potential," and "[the wine industry] is booming, not only growing." Another individual remarked that "certainly in Lebanon [food and wine tourism] is sustainable because of the food-there is a real gastronomy, so people are really interested in the food and it is a way for people to re-visit a country for instance. And there are enough wineries to make a viable itinerary for tourists."

Many of these initiatives have indicated specific measures taken, and a primary interest in managing their operations in ways that will be sustainable. Reasons for a focus on sustainable practices include a love and appreciation for the land, the cuisine, the people of Lebanon, and a desire to see the long term continuation of these things. Specific ways in which participants have demonstrated sustainable and beneficial

practices include: local employment and economic stimulation, “helping the customers know more about their traditions and legacy,” “establishing a network of all the stakeholders in the environment, “development...gathering people who believe in change to work together,” “[making] accessible to the general public knowledge on food traditions,” “[giving] a good image of a country undermined by political tensions and wars,” “[supporting] small scale farmers and producers,” and “building a national bond/identity.”

The results presented in this chapter indicate a need for change and adaptation in the Lebanese tourism industry, as well as recognition of the importance of food and wine-related initiatives in relation to tourism activity and visitor incentives. A detailed summary and discussion of the findings will follow in Chapter 4.



## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The timeliness of this study is such that it coincides with an opportunity for change and renewed energy in the food and wine tourism industry in Lebanon. The global movement toward sustainability has picked up speed in recent years, and Lebanon has the assets to benefit from this trend both in terms of touristic desirability and national development. This is a time in which the country would greatly benefit from growth and partnership among initiatives which have proven their ability to inspire national unity and strength among Lebanon's diverse population. This concluding chapter will include the following: a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings including limitations, conclusions based on research questions, and recommendations for the organizations and for future research.

#### Summary

Tourism has played a major role in Lebanon since its peak period of 1930-1974; sometimes subsiding as a result of conflict, but always rebounding at least to some extent. When a violent Civil War broke out in 1975 (lasting until 1991), tourism came to a halt. Recognizing the potential for revival in the tourism industry in the years following the war, the government made significant investments in development of facilities related to this sector, particularly in Beirut. Development subsided once again in June 2006, when a 30 day war with Israel ravaged the country; infrastructure and transportation routes were destroyed or made impassable, and thousands of people were displaced. Redevelopment

occurred once again after the 2006 war, though this time it was somewhat less characterized by massive redevelopment strategies and more so by small, private initiatives. 2009 marked a year of strong growth in Lebanese tourism. Lebanon's touristic appeal includes its geographic location between the East and the West, its varied landscape (beaches and mountains), its hospitable and diverse population, and its well loved cuisine.

Research for this study was collected via personal interviews. A total of 7 interviews were conducted with experts in the field of food and wine tourism in Lebanon. Interviews were conducted in January and February of 2011. The instrument used was an interview script, which was designed to address the research questions originally outlined for this study.

Following an analysis of the data collected for this study, the researcher found that some primary objectives for food and wine tourism initiatives in the country included promoting pride and unity among Lebanon's diverse population, establishing a more positive image of Lebanon as a destination, and endorsing the preservation of Lebanon's rich heritage and traditions. The study also found that there was a consensus among subjects in the belief that tourism development (and specifically food and wine tourism) holds the potential for significant benefits, though this potential can only be fully attained when there is security and peace in the region. Political tension and instability were named as the primary hindrances to desired growth in food and wine tourism, though subjects also provided some feasible recommendations for strengthening the industry in spite of these obstacles.

## Discussion

The results from this study showed both consistency and inconsistency with previous research, though as far as the researcher is aware there has not been extensive research conducted on this particular topic before, so correlations between such studies should be viewed as somewhat limited in scope. The results from this study confirmed what was noted in prior research on tourism clientele; tourists in Lebanon consist primarily of Arabs from neighboring countries, internal tourists, and Lebanese expatriates. Travelers from Europe and America appear to be the next most present, although potential visitors from these regions seem to be more strongly affected by regional tensions (deterred) than other groups. The majority of clientele served by participants in this study were Lebanese; in most cases foreign tourism made up a lesser percentage of activity than did domestic tourism. Some groups reached out to a wider audience by participating in international food and/or wine festivals, and in some cases by participating in online sales or export of their products.

Also consistent with previous research was the finding that there is a strong potential for growth in the Lebanese tourism industry. Lebanon's primary attractions have been noted in previous research as its geographical diversity unique to the region, its agricultural resources and culinary traditions, as well as a rich historical heritage. These results were confirmed by this study; subjects often mentioned these assets as reasons for the potential for growth in Lebanese tourism. However, as noted in the previous chapter, subjects in this study almost always referred to the potential for such growth as dependent on the conditions peace and stability.

According to previous research, “The tourism sector is the first to suffer from violence and war, and the first to benefit from peace” (as cited in Aboukhalil, 2002, p. 173). Similarly, one subject noted that “Tourism is a major support to the economy here, and unfortunately the first thing to suffer in times of political strife.”

Results from this study have shown that food and wine tourism initiatives are relatively well established in Lebanon, though the “sector” (greater cohesion should be established before this segment can truly be considered a legitimate “sector” or “industry”) could benefit from strengthened unity and partnership.

This study has also shown that food and wine initiatives range in size and character; from non-profit developmental projects to privately run, internationally represented businesses. Employment (as represented by participants in this study) ranges from 1 to 110 persons, although the impact of these initiatives is not limited to number of persons employed, as they all produce effects in other ways as well. Some examples of these impacts include leading groups on tours throughout the region (differing from prior, government sponsored projects that have been primarily concentrated in Beirut), educating Lebanese people about their culinary heritage and traditions, inspiring pride in the quality of local products, and introducing an international audience to Lebanese food, wine and culture through press-related work.

All subjects conveyed that tourism, and specifically food and wine tourism, holds the potential for significant and sustainable growth. All agreed that Lebanon’s culinary and agricultural resources and traditions are unique facets of the national character that could be harnessed to promote regional unity as well as a marketable tourism destination. All also agreed that the food/agriculture sector should be supported; though opinions as

to the extent in which it should also be related to mainstream tourism was somewhat less consistent. Most felt that tourism development should be invested in and pursued, while others conveyed that tourism development should be secondary to the establishment of greater regional stability (“Political stability, first of all, and then we take it from there”). This is not to say that any of the subjects felt that tourism should be neglected or condoned (none of them did), but that they differed slightly in their attitudes and priorities regarding the extent to which tourism investment should occur.

The researcher concludes, based on this, that the nature of traditional tourism development should be altered so that it can occur in a way that is less costly and more closely connected with the food and wine industries (where they are not already conjoined). The researcher believes that this will create a more efficient, more sustainable channel for national growth. This adjustment will allow for greater flexibility in the tourism sector; by placing an emphasis on developmental projects related to food and wine (i.e.: initiatives that have proven their ability to survive internal strife and inconsistencies, as indicated by this study), the industry can better adapt to environmental changes. For example, if tourism development occurs with a sole focus on investment in costly infrastructure and tourism-specific, regionally-concentrated services, these efforts and expenses could potentially be lost in the event of war (as occurred in 2006). Furthermore, the impact of this loss would be a significant burden to the many people solely involved in that sector in the case that tourism suddenly slowed or halted. Food and wine tourism initiatives on the other hand, have shown a greater ability to adapt to such environmental changes, and to rebound during times of peace (such initiatives rely

on teams of people whom have demonstrated notable resiliency in the past, rather than on physical structures which can be easily destroyed).

The researcher would like to note that this discussion is not being made with the intention of suggesting that money or support should be diverted from existing tourism operations; many subjects conveyed the belief that traditional tourism has historical significance, and that it plays an important role in the economy and for these reasons should be supported. However, greater attention should also be paid to initiatives such as those referred to in this study, because they tend to provide greater benefits to the Lebanese people as a whole, when compared to tourism-dependent businesses. These initiatives are better able to adapt to unpredictable situations because of their multi-dimensional nature. The beneficiaries of investment in the growth of food and wine tourism combined with an effort to alter the main features of traditional tourism as indicated above would include stakeholders in mainstream tourism (non-related to the food and wine sectors), stakeholders in agriculture and wine producing sectors (i.e. farmers, producers, and consumers), and anyone else interested in the long term sustainability of Lebanon's environmental, culinary, and cultural traditions/assets.

By cooperating with food and wine tourism initiatives, stakeholders in traditional tourism venues will benefit from increased diversification (strength through partnerships), and new opportunities to provide their customers with an optimally satisfactory experience. Previous literary research has shown that Lebanon's excellent cuisine and agricultural resources are draws for tourists. The results from this study support this; they have shown a consensus among experts in the field that Lebanon's

agricultural products, wine, and culinary traditions are well worth preserving for reasons including their appeal to tourists.

Members of the food and wine sectors will benefit from this proposal in that they will generate greater support from other establishments in the country. For example, hotels will recommend an itinerary for guests based on established wine routes, and/or culinary tourism initiatives. They will dedicate time and effort to understanding the specific features which these various programs have to offer and will then be able to satisfy customers based on their specific interests. Hotels, tour companies etc. should work together with both small and large food and wine establishments from locations all over the country (rather than direct them solely to activities in Beirut, Baalbek, and other locations with a concentration in tourism). This will allow for a more unique travel experience to tourists, and will help to break down the problem of negative imagery by encouraging travelers to see the vastness of what the country has to offer. Satisfied travelers will then spread the word about the unique aspects of Lebanon as a destination through internet reviews, blogging, press, and/or word of mouth.

Food and wine tourism should be supported because it is a sustainable practice in theory, and largely in effect as it is currently occurring in Lebanon. All food and wine initiatives referred to in this study have indicated at least some interest in the betterment of the country as a whole, and/or of the local community (and in many cases these interests are regarded as a primary objective). The interest here is not simply rhetoric, as it is for some tourist destinations worldwide which have endeavored to take advantage of growing trends in “sustainable tourism” and “responsible travel.” The participants in this study have outlined specific ways in which they have and do continue to support the local

community. For example, when probed on the question of “How is your operation helping the local community?” one subject stated the following:

...Our influence? Well, it starts in the valley, which had thousands of km of stone terraces lying fallow. We began to plant vines, and very slowly, other families became more interested in restoring their own agricultural land...Locally, the knowledge that someone was working in the valley was a catalyst for others to farm again...We employ members of local families who then have the resources and will to stay in [the village] throughout the year, enrolling their children in local schools, and patronizing a variety of small businesses for 12 months rather than 3 or 4 months in the summer only...We are working towards a critical mass of vineyards planted across the valley to discourage wanton construction...Fourthly, a more recent facet of our work: pride. People [from this village] here in Lebanon and abroad are waking up to the realization that the vineyards they remember from childhood are producing again, and producing outstanding wines. Our work has become the hub of a wheel whose spokes extend in all directions around the world, and many people want to be a part of it.

The focus of this study has indicated one of the primary problems in tourism as a global industry; it's potential for inconsistency. While external factors affect all industries to some extent, tourism is particularly vulnerable to environmental changes. Thus, diversification and de-centralization is essential to an efficient tourism strategy, particularly in a place like Lebanon where political tensions frequently shake the region. In the past, tourism in this country has time and again made post-conflict comebacks, thanks in large part to the resiliency of the Lebanese people and in some cases to massive

redevelopment projects (post-Civil War Beirut). As one subject has noted, “One relies on Lebanese resiliency and their ability to manage...” Though the determination of the Lebanese people has often been regarded as a primary factor in touristic recovery following periods of extreme hardships, the researcher believes that a better strategy to relying on the population’s impressive ability to survive tenuous times is that of equipping stakeholders in the industry with appropriate investment, support, and practical tools which will enable these individuals/organizations to reach their full potential.

The strategy of developing tourism through large, costly projects which focus on building structures without a corresponding investment in building a network of people has not proved appropriate for Lebanon. First and foremost, before tourists can be accommodated, the local people employed in the service sector must be properly accommodated (i.e. through training, education, support, opportunity and tools for sustained growth). Of course, adequate infrastructure is necessary and must be included in redevelopment/development strategies, but it should also be noted that while buildings are vulnerable to destruction and abandonment during times of conflict or neglect, a strong network of people and partnerships will survive, and may even deter conflict by fostering a solidifying sense of unity, community, and positive energy.

Food and wine tourism is a sustainable niche market that is unique in Lebanon, and which holds the potential for many benefits. It is a viable market segment which should be perceived as a legitimate contributor to the economy and well-being of Lebanon’s past, present and future. The segment would be more likely to achieve this image once it has created firm partnerships and networks both between similar-minded initiatives, as well as between food/wine tourism initiatives and members of the

traditional tourism industry (i.e. hotels, tour operators, travel publications). Initiatives such as those referred to in this study are beneficial to the country as a whole and to the strengthening of the traditional tourism sector partly because of the opportunity they provide for diversification. Establishing and promoting a strong network of sustainable-minded food and wine initiatives with a similar set of goals and objectives across the country will help spread the benefits of tourism to areas and groups typically not reached by its financial and cultural benefits. This will also lessen the strain on currently marketed, overly concentrated areas and will create for a more sustainable, more multi-dimensional, more interesting, and less destructible/vulnerable industry on the whole.

Predicted limitations as related to this study included language barriers and a restricted sample size due to the researcher's physical location so far from the area of interest. These factors did turn out to affect the characteristics and the sample size of participants. The researcher was essentially limited to English speaking subjects (although the intention was to find a translator if a non-English speaking candidate was contacted and willing to participate). To a greater extent, the researcher's location outside of Lebanon proved to be a challenge during data collection. Since candidates were contacted primarily through e-mail, participation was limited to individuals with internet access. The researcher would have liked to include feedback from farmers (for example a *zaa'tar* farmer in the south of Lebanon whose farm is frequently visited by groups on culinary tours), and participants in the industry who may not yet have established firm business strategies (i.e. "roadside vendors" or participants in regional food festivals). These individuals/enterprises were unlikely to have published contact information, and therefore were essentially unreachable to the researcher. However, the experts who

participated in this study were extremely insightful and knowledgeable, and some of the best sources of information on the subject at hand. For this reason the final results should be viewed as sufficient for which conclusions to be drawn; the sample size was not large, but the information attained was thorough, relevant, and in-depth.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The stakeholders in food and wine tourism in Lebanon are wide ranging and include business owners (small and large), project managers and directors, farmers, producers, consumers/purchasers, tourists, international partners (i.e. wine retailers/distributors), and authors/bloggers on the subject.
2. Motivations associated with regional and community-based food and wine initiatives include establishing pride and unity among Lebanon's diverse population, preserving Lebanon's rich culinary heritage, producing high quality food and wine products, improving Lebanon's image as a place of war and instability, and reviving communities that have been devastated by war and division.
3. Numerous methods are being employed by stakeholders to promote the growth of food and wine initiatives in Lebanon, including a steadfast dedication to the growth of their respective organizations; these organizations provide enhancement of the industry through a changing image, through education, through fostering the continuation of culinary traditions, and through the employment of sustainable management/agricultural practices.

4. Stakeholder expectations are being met, although there remains definite room for growth.
5. The nature of initiatives across the country appear to vary in nature, although these differences tend to be more closely related to logistical, managerial, operational, and decision making strategies, rather than physical location.
6. Food and wine tourism is a viable option for economic and cultural diversification in Lebanon.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Promote partnership among initiatives; establish a clearly defined network of independent food and wine initiatives across the country and market them together through tours and wine routes (Route des Vins) etc. Consider the successful “*agrotourismo*” model in Italy (network of farmhouses and home-stays). Lebanon’s advantage relative to this concept is that it is small, and therefore distances between various projects/businesses are not great; allowing them to be easily incorporated into interesting tour packages.
2. Promote partnership and mutual support between members of the food and wine sectors and members of traditional tourism operations (i.e. hotels, tour operators, Ministry of Tourism).
3. Greater support from the government and recognition of food and wine tourism as a specific niche market; this can mean financial assistance, and/or

support through other means (for example, include relevant links/information on the official tourism website and in associated publications).

4. Export and/or sell products online when this is a reasonable option; this will allow projects to establish international relationships and garner support even by groups who may be unable to travel to Lebanon or are concerned about safety issues. Also establish or improve online representation (i.e. websites and/or participation in social media channels).

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Interview Script

## Interview Script

1. What is your role in the food and wine industry of Lebanon?
2. How and why did you get involved in this role/in this sector?
  - a. What are your goals and objectives?
3. What are the main features of your business or organization?
  - a. Who do you employ?
  - b. Where are you located?
  - c. Who do you service? (i.e., primarily tourists or locals? Where are the tourists from?)
4. How do you promote your business and what is your target market?
5. Are there any external factors or influences that affect or have affected the success or operation of your business?
  - a. For example: political tensions, violence, inadequate infrastructure or transportation services, economic or governmental restraints etc.
6. Do you believe that your business is helping the Lebanese community? If so, in what ways? Who in particular is receiving the benefits?
7. Do you believe tourism development in Lebanon, as it is occurring now, is beneficial for the country?
8. Do you believe that food and wine tourism in Lebanon provides an effective channel for economic and cultural growth? Do you foresee this growth as sustainable?
9. What suggestions do you have for the future of food and wine and tourism in Lebanon?
10. What are your hopes for the future of food and wine tourism in Lebanon?

Appendix B  
Informed Consent Letter

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY ON FOOD AND WINE  
TOURISM IN LEBANON

A research project on food and wine tourism in Lebanon is being conducted by Lindsay Milich as a senior project in Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration under the direct supervision of Dr. Jerusha Greenwood. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the nature of regional and community-based initiatives within the interrelated sectors of food and wine tourism in post-war Lebanon.

You are being asked to take part in this study by participating in a voluntary interview with the researcher. Your participation will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may omit or skip any questions you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated with participation in this study. Your responses to interview questions will be confidential. Your name or other information which could be used to identify you will not be included in reports of this research.

Research findings culminated from this project will be submitted to the International Culinary Tourism Association (<http://www.culinarytourism.org/>), as well as potentially other professional organizations. The intent of the study is in part to promote sustainable growth and development of food and wine tourism in Lebanon.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Lindsay Milich (primary researcher) at (626) 353-7082 or Dr. Jerusha Greenwood (faculty advisor) at (805) 756-2050. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at (805) 756-2754, [sdavis@calpoly.edu](mailto:sdavis@calpoly.edu), or Dr. Susan Opava, Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, at (805) 756-1508, [sopava@calpoly.edu](mailto:sopava@calpoly.edu).

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by signing below. Please keep one copy of this form for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.

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Signature of Volunteer	Date
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Signature of Researcher	Date
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