

## Resistance to agritourism diversification: An analysis of winery owners' identities

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### ABSTRACT

This paper develops an identity-based rationale to investigate why winery owners resist and/or limit their engagement in agritourism diversification. Using qualitative evidence from a sample of Italian winery owners, the paper draws on social identity theory to explain how owners' identities affect tourism diversification. The findings reveal that they actively construct a *producer* identity and that this identity is simultaneously regulated by various institutional forces (e.g. local winemaking community), which in turn shape their reluctance to pursue tourism diversification. The paper contributes to a better understanding of why agricultural producers resist tourism diversification. Practical implications and future research directions are discussed.

### 1. Introduction

The concept of diversification has received increased attention within the agricultural field of study, where it is referred to as a farm adaptation strategy (Anosike & Coughenour, 1990) or a risk management strategy (Meraner, Heijman, Kuhlman, & Finger, 2015) that seeks to reduce farm businesses' dependence on agricultural production as well as generate additional income. There is a widely held belief that diversification is a successful survival strategy for farmers and farm businesses (Alsos & Carter, 2006; Barbieri, Mahoney, & Butler, 2008; Lopez-i-Gelats, Milán, & Bartolomé, 2011), can help to avoid uncertainty, and reduce the risk of the overall return through developing and adopting additional, mostly unrelated farm business activities (Culas & Mahendrarajah, 2005).

While there is no generally agreed upon definition of diversification, different concepts have emerged over the years, all having similar, if not identical meanings, such as *part-time farming*, *multiple job-holding farms*, *other gainful activities*, *pluriactivity* (Lopez-i-Gelats et al., 2011), and *alternative farm enterprises* (Bowler, Clark, Crockett, Ilbery, & Shaw, 1996; Damianos & Skuras, 1996). McNally (2001), for example, uses the umbrella term of *pluriactivity*, where diversification is only one part of pluriactivity. Distinctions, however, are made between on-farm diversification (activities using on-farm resources) and off-farm diversification (new ventures created outside of farming) (Fitz-Koch, Nordqvist, Carter, & Hunter, 2018; Lopez-i-Gelats et al., 2011). For the purpose of this study, diversification is defined as an investment strategy undertaken by winery owners, to develop non-agricultural products and services (e.g. tourism activities), using on-farm resources.

Diversification into agritourism, as an *alternative farm enterprise* has been recognised as an efficient catalyst for the development and renaissance of rural regions (Sharpley & Vass, 2006), as well as an effective individual strategy for farmers (Phelan & Sharpley, 2011). Past studies have, however, revealed various factors and reasons that limit or even oppose farmers' engagement in tourism diversification (Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Ilbery, 1991; Northcote & Alonso, 2011). In this instance, the aspect of farmers' identities, and how these identities affect tourism diversification have received little explicit research attention from tourism scholars (Ohe, 2018). Up until now, identity has been studied primarily from the perspective of tourists and the tourist experience, while the perspective of farmers has been largely ignored (Brandth & Haugen, 2011). Ohe (2018) further argues that tourism studies have mainly focused on national identity, ethnic identity, regional and local identity as well as place identity (Ohe, 2018). Farmers' social identities have, however, been rarely addressed. Accordingly, this paper aims to contribute to the literature by examining individual winery owners' social identities, to reveal the fundamental assumptions influencing their reluctance to pursue tourism diversification. While this research focuses on a particular type of farm, that is, wine-producing farms, investigating other types of farms, such as fruit and vegetable, dairy, and/or livestock farms may uncover different results.

The study is built from a case study of 20 winery owners in the Italian wine region of *Langhe*. Italy is currently the country with the largest wine production in the world (OIV 2018). The Italian wine industry is highly fragmented into small-scale wineries and is dominated by family-run businesses (Broccardo, Giacosa, & Ferraris 2015; Corrado and Odorici 2009), which display a strong attachment to the local

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tradition, culture, and land. *Langhe* is a region long renowned for its quality wines, and is characterised by 'old world' winemaking practices and traditions. Langhe was also awarded World Heritage status by UNESCO in June 2014, which has propelled further its already developing reputation as an internationally renowned tourism destination (DMO Piemonte 2017). The steady rise in tourist numbers to the area has also led to an increased awareness among many local winery owners of the potential benefits of agritourism, and a number of them have introduced various tourism-related activities at their wineries, such as: wine tastings, winery visits, cellar-door sales, B&B accommodation and restaurants. Others, however, have resisted tourism diversification, seeing it as antithetical to their core activity and identity as winemakers. The paper, thus, develops an identity-based rationale – drawing on social identity theory (SIT) – to explain winery owners' resistance to tourism diversification. In doing so, the paper responds to calls for more research on why agricultural producers resist diversification into tourism (Northcote & Alonso, 2011). The research question therefore is: *How do winery owners' social identities affect their resistance to agritourism diversification?*

The paper is structured as follows. First, the extant literature on agritourism diversification is explored, before outlining social identity theory as the main theoretical framework underpinning this research. Then the research setting and the qualitative approach adopted to conduct this study are discussed, followed by the analysis and discussion of the empirical findings. The paper concludes by providing some practical implications as well as offering directions for further research.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Agritourism diversification

During the agricultural crisis in the 1980s, national governments and municipalities promoted agritourism as an efficient rural development strategy (Farmaki, 2012) and a 'universal remedy' (Canoves, Villarino, Priestley, & Blanco, 2004) to alleviate a number of problems, such as economic decline, out-migration, market fluctuation, and loss of rural identity (Phelan & Sharpley, 2011; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). While the initial intention of promoting agritourism was to develop a side activity that allowed farmers to strengthen their economic position, agritourism rapidly became a sector of its own (Barlybaev, Akhmetov, & Nasyrov, 2009; Busby & Rendle, 2000). Indeed, agritourism, as a strategy of economic growth and diversification, is likely to act as a potential economic panacea in rural areas at the regional and local level, as well as at the individual farm level (Sharpley, 2002; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). From a regional/local perspective, agritourism has been promoted as a beneficial rural development strategy that is able to diversify the rural economy, reduce outmigration (Oppermann, 1996), repopulate rural areas, allow for cultural exchange between the local community and tourists (Colton & Bissix, 2005), as well as improve local services such as education, health care and public transport (Canoves et al., 2004). Additional benefits at the regional level include employment creation and retention, environmental improvement in degraded rural regions, rural heritage and identity preservation (Calza, Go, Parmentola, & Trunfio, 2018). At the individual farm level, agritourism has largely been perceived as a survival strategy, bringing additional income to the farm household (Ainley, 2014; Comen & Foster, 2006; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Besides highlighting the economic benefit of generation of additional income (Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Weaver & Fennell, 1997), social benefits depicted in the literature include living in the right environment; enjoying a good lifestyle (Getz & Carlsen, 2000); maintaining rural lifestyles; preservation of local customs (Tew & Barbieri, 2012); educating consumers (McGehee & Kim, 2004); building companionship with guests; pursuing a hobby/interest; as well as using on-farm resources (Nickerson, Black, & McCool, 2001). Ilbery, Bowler, Clark, Crockett, and Shaw (1998), for example, note that tourism ventures are considered the most popular diversification

strategies in the northern Pennines. Sharpley and Vass (2006) identify in their study on farm tourism diversification in north-eastern England a number of factors driving tourism diversification, notably economic need for diversification, demographic and lifestyle factors, support of the public sector, geographical characteristics of the farm as well as farmers' perceptions of tourism as a viable diversification option. Similarly, Comen and Foster (2006) establish in their research a direct link between the success of diversification and a number of factors, including the farm's location, strong connection with the local community, strong social skills, and a passion for learning.

Due to the continuous development of the agritourism industry, farmers have increasingly embraced this opportunity and started to invest in and develop agritourism activities at their farms. Some farmers, however, have limited or even resisted agritourism diversification. A number of reasons why farmers resist diversification as well as the various challenges and problems arising from agritourism diversification have been outlined in the literature (e.g. Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Burton, 2004; Northcote & Alonso, 2011). The main reasons why farmers choose not to diversify are predominantly linked to attributes such as lack of capital, unfavourable location, lack of extra labour, high marketing costs (Northcote & Alonso, 2011), high establishment costs, farmers' lack of skills (Burton, 2004), tenancy restrictions, and land-use planning controls (Ilbery, 1991). These attributes refer to what I like to call the *tangible* reasons for resisting diversification. Beside these *tangible* reasons, scholars have started to recognise the importance of farmers' *intangible* reasons for resisting diversification. Brandth and Haugen (2011), for example, note that farmers could perceive tourism diversification as a betrayal of their agricultural profession or even as a threat to or loss of their farmer identity. Farmers see their role as 'food provider for the nation' (Sharpley & Vass, 2006) and tourism diversification would thus be interfering with their occupational identity.

The concept of identity – as *intangible* reason for resisting diversification – has, however, only received limited attention within the (rural) tourism literature (Ohe, 2018). This is quite surprising, due to the fact that identity is recognised as 'an important contextual dimension of agriculture', and crucial for understanding the social context of diversification, as new venture activities are often driven by the identity of farmers and farm families (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018). Accordingly, this study draws on social identity theory to show how social identities affect winery owners' reluctance to pursue agritourism diversification.

### 2.2. Farmers' social identities

Social identity theory (SIT) has its roots in social psychology and is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1974 p.69). In other words, individuals gain their social identities from group membership as they categorize themselves and others into various social groups, such as occupation, family, gender, age groups, religious institutions, and organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). People who are similar to the self are classified as in-group, while people who differ from the self are seen as the out-group. In this instance, "having a particular social identity means being at one with a certain group, being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group's perspective" (Stets & Burke, 2000 p.226).

Burton and Wilson (2006) highlight that individuals often identify strongly with their occupation, thus developing a salient *occupational* identity. This holds particularly true within the agricultural context, where farmers strongly identify with their occupation. Farming is not just seen as a job but as a passion and a way of life (Groth & Curtis, 2017). The occupational identity, that is the 'farmer/producer' identity, thus becomes salient through farmers' "affective commitment to agricultural production and the sense of place the farm environment provides" (Burton & Wilson, 2006, p.99).

Within the literature, scholars have mainly been interested in

exploring whether farmers' engagement in diversification leads to changes, tensions and conflicts in farmers' social identities, or whether they are resistant to such changes (Brandth & Haugen, 2011). There is a general belief that tourism diversification requires new/post-productivist roles, skills, behaviour and attitudes, and as farmers are transitioning from their agricultural profession to becoming a provider of services, farmers are likely to reconstruct alternative identities (Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Burton, 2004; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Burton and Wilson (2006), for example, conducted a research on farmers' identities in the Marston Vale area of Bedfordshire and revealed that 78% of farmers maintain a strong agricultural/producer identity albeit having diversified into tourism. Brandth and Haugen (2011) illustrate that diversification and farmers' engagement in tourism activities can strengthen as well as threaten farmers' agricultural identities. Their study also reveals how tourism became an important source for farmers' identities, constructing and displaying a strong host identity. Similarly, Vesala and Vesala' (2010) conclude in their study that diversified Finnish farmers displayed much weaker agricultural/producer identities compared to conventional farmers, while primarily constructing entrepreneurial identities. Bryant (1999) put farming identities on a continuum from *traditional* to *entrepreneurial*. While referring to the traditional farmer as a "living representation of ... [the] agrarian ideology", entrepreneurial farmers are depicted as proud, market-driven farmers, aiming for improvement and growth through diversification (Bryant, 1999: 244). The author uses the terms of *contemporary*, *progressive*, *technologically advanced* and *market-oriented* to refer to farmers' newly constructed entrepreneurial identities. Entrepreneurial farmers have thus changed their perceptions from seeing "farming as a physical labour and a way of life", to considering "farming as a business and profit making opportunity" (Bryant, 1999: 252–253). They want to be recognised as entrepreneurial and progressive farmers, adapting to the changes in the external environment and investing in new business opportunities.

Although there is a widely held belief that farmers are actively constructing their identities (e.g. Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Bryant, 1999; Burton, 2004; Burton & Wilson, 2006), it has been argued that these identities are simultaneously influenced and regulated by various social and institutional forces (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014). The following section therefore highlights the need to consider these various forces when examining farmers' social identities.

### 2.3. Identity regulating forces

Formal as well as informal institutional forces influence and regulate the construction of farmers' identities, where the former refers to governments, the European Union (EU) and lobbyists, and the latter relates to customers and the local community (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014). Within the EU, the different reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have led to a reorganisation of farmers' roles and positions (Vesala & Vesala, 2010). Besides engaging in their main production activities, farmers are increasingly encouraged to perform a variety of tasks, such as preserving the rural landscape and safeguarding natural resources (Vesala & Vesala, 2010), as well as contributing to the balanced territorial development through agricultural or non-agricultural diversification (European Commission, 2013). In this instance farmers' engagement in diversification is encouraged both at the European and national level, which is likely to impact on farmers' agricultural/producer identities.

On the other hand, informal institutions, such as local farming communities, have been identified as influencing and regulating the construction of farmers' identities. Farming communities "create a platform for group members to share a common life with other 'in-group' members and develop their identity based on those interactions (Groth & Curtis, 2017: 367; Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodriguez, & De Weerd, 2002). Farming communities are generally perceived to display a strong reluctance and resistance to change (e.g. entrepreneurship,

diversification). It has been argued that "the social pressures (not to be better/different than others), prevalent, especially to rural areas, makes it difficult for farmers to succeed as entrepreneurs" (Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005: 792) and thus construct entrepreneurial identities. In this instance, farmers might be reluctant to engage in diversification and adopt entrepreneurial identities, as they fear to lose their status of 'good' farmer within the community. Scholars argue that especially after the diversification process, farmers might struggle with their identity of being a 'real' farmer. Burton (2004) uses the term of 'social loss' farmers may experience when diversifying, meaning that farmers may lose their status as 'good farmer' within the local farming community. In some cases families have built up this status over numerous generations. Similarly Brandth and Haugen (2011: 37) note that.

"to share identity with a collective means that there is a common understanding of what occurrences and objects mean. Individuals accept the symbolic meaning of behaviours of the group to which they belong, and a failure to display the symbols of group belonging may result in social disapproval and a corresponding decrease in self-esteem".

Accordingly, farmers have to deal with the unwritten prejudice that a diversified farmer implies a failed farmer (Burton, 2004). Diversification is seen as "a betrayal of the agricultural profession" (Brandth & Haugen, 2011: 35). Being a 'real' farmer means that they adhere to the social norms and follow the tradition in order to preserve their social status within the local community, thus aiming for recognition and acceptance (Burton, 2004).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research setting

This paper uses the Italian wine region of *Langhe* as case study to examine how winery owners' social identities affect their resistance to tourism diversification. *Langhe*, situated in the southern part of the Piedmont region (see Fig. 1), has been recognised for its long-standing tradition in winemaking, its interaction with the environment and the aesthetic qualities of the area. The region secured its reputation during the early 1990s when *Barolo* was recognised as 'one of the world's great wines' (Rosso, 2014), which led to an increased interest by tourists – initially from central Europe – in visiting these places of wine



Fig. 1. Langhe map.

production. The inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014 generated an increased international visibility and further enhanced Langhe's reputation as an internationally renowned tourism destination. In fact, the region continued to attract enogastronomic tourists from around the world – as demonstrated by an 81% growth of tourist arrivals to the region between 2006 and 2016 (DMO Piemonte 2017).

However, this significant increase in tourist numbers may have been somehow unexpected and it could be argued that while some local winery owners recognised the importance and potential benefits of tourism, and engaged in diversification through developing tourism-related activities, others have limited or even resisted tourism diversification at their winery. One reason being that wineries in Langhe get their income from wine/grape sales and wine export and are not dependent on tourism for their economic survival, while others believe tourism to be diametrically opposed to their core activity and identity as winemakers. The question therefore is how winery owners' identities influence their decisions to engage in or resist agritourism diversification.

### 3.2. Research methods

To address the research question, a case study approach is adopted to examine how social identities influence and drive winery owners' resistance to agritourism diversification. This qualitative approach is the best way to respond to *what*, *how*, and *why* questions, when investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context (Yin, 2003). The main objective of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of how winery owners construct their social identities, to reveal the fundamental assumptions influencing their reluctance to engage in and pursue tourism diversification.

The winemaking system in Langhe is largely based on small-sized, family-owned wineries (exclusively run and managed by family members), with an annual wine production ranging between 30,000 and 100,000 l. No data is available regarding the total number of wine businesses (both winemaking and grape-cultivating businesses) in the region, although it is estimated that the total number could be as high as 1000. The criteria for the sampling strategy were as follows. First, winery owners were contacted who have recently engaged in agritourism diversification. A snowballing sampling approach was adopted in which a small number of winery owners led the researcher to others through their personal contacts. While in some cases a snowball approach may be considered a limitation of the research due to the lack of control and potential limited representativeness of the study population, in this case snowball sampling turned out to be efficient. It allowed the researcher to meet and interact with a greater number of winery owners ( $n = 20$ ), as well as reach owners who opposed and/or limited tourism diversification at their winery, which would not have been possible otherwise (see Table 1).

This process also enabled the researcher to build empirical knowledge, as each winery was experienced first-hand and the owners interviewed in situ, which meant the depth of the understanding of the issues and local circumstances developed as the research process matured.

Accordingly, data was collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 20 winery owners in the region, which allowed for theoretical saturation to be reached. Interviews lasted for an average of 40 min, with the shortest one taking 23 min and the longest one for about 1 h 15 min. Table 2 features the main research themes addressed during the interviews, notably: wine tourism development, involvement in tourism, and motivations for tourism involvement. Interview questions relating to the theme of 'motivations for tourism involvement' focused on winery owners' lived experiences in particular. The majority of participants revealed their motivations for engaging in tourism by narrating stories of personal experiences with tourists during winery visits and wine tastings. Depending on participants' reactions, comments and utterances, subsequent questions were either consistent with

other interviews or were changed or dismissed. Similarly, additional/new questions might have emerged during interviews depending on specific responses, in order to guide participants towards elaborating on topics important to them. In this way I was able to learn about business owners' daily challenges, family histories and traditions as well as their lived experiences of and attitudes towards tourism diversification.

Interviews were conducted in Italian and subsequently transcribed and translated. The translated data was transferred into the NVivo qualitative data analysis software, which was perceived to be more efficient in coding, organizing and recalling data compared to manual methods and facilitated the identification of links, connections and relationships between different themes and sub-themes (Gibbs, 2002).

### 3.3. Data analysis

The analysis of the data was an iterative and reflexive process (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis was adopted to identify themes within the empirical data (see Fig. 2) and to gain a better understanding of the content of winery owners' accounts. First, I familiarised myself with the data, used open coding, and developed and altered the codes as I worked through the coding process (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Winery owners' accounts were organised and grouped together into various codes using headings such as *priority of working on the land*; *tourism interference with profession*; and *non-diversified winery owners have lower positions in the society*. When the coding process was finished, I had initial ideas about the codes. For example, agricultural lifestyle and passion for the winemaking profession was a matter that kept coming up (in all the interviews) and was particularly relevant to the study's research question. Second, the codes were examined and grouped together into initial themes. For example, several codes that related to the importance of the winemaking profession were combined into an initial theme called *winemaking priority*. Fig. 2 shows all the initial themes that were identified. The third and final step of the thematic analysis consisted of refining the themes, that is, to "identify the essence of what each theme is about" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 92). This was done by asking the following questions: *What is the theme saying?* and *How do the themes relate to each other?* (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This allowed me to regroup initial themes that fitted together and develop the final themes of *occupational identity* and *institutional force*.

## 4. Findings

How do winery owners' social identities affect their resistance to agritourism diversification? In order to answer this question the paper examines how owners' social identities are constructed and how these identities influence and shape their attitudes towards tourism diversification, which ultimately explains their resistance to diversification. Although all participating wineries had engaged to some extent in agritourism diversification, the majority of winery owners (65%) revealed their reluctance to pursue diversification and invest in additional tourism-related activities. The empirical data shows that due to wineries' high export level, which can reach up to 85% for some wineries, wine producers are economically stable and diversification into tourism is not recognised a necessity, and therefore not primarily linked to financial motives. In addition, one can observe that these winery owners' strongly identify with their occupation/profession. Winery owners' lifestyles, as well as their passion for the job, and their attachment to the local place of production (Groth & Curtis, 2017), result in a strong identification with their occupation and the construction of a *producer* identity (Table 3). Interestingly, the results show that these owners engaged in tourism diversification solely by providing winery visits, wine tastings and cellar door sales. Larger tourism-related investments, such as B&Bs and restaurants were not considered (see Table 3 – highlighted in grey).

**Table 1**  
Sample.

Case #	Location	Foundation of winery	Annual production	Wine Tourism-related activities			
				Winery visits & tastings	Cellar-door sales	B&B	Restaurant
1	Barolo	1919	30.000	✓			
2	Barbaresco	1958	30.000	✓	✓	✓	
3	Barolo	1885	80.000	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Neive	1950	21.000	✓	✓		
5	Neive	1964	120.000	✓	✓	✓	
6	Barbaresco	1948	20.000	✓	✓		✓
7	Neive	1965	65.000	✓	✓		
8	La Morra	1941	45.000	✓	✓		
9	Diano d'Alba	1927	30.000	✓	✓		
10	Dogliani	1975	70.000	✓	✓		
11	Serralunga d'Alba	1953	85.000	✓	✓		
12	Veza d'Alba	1957	110.000	✓	✓		
13	Castiglione Falletto	1979	180.000	✓	✓		
14	Barbaresco	1971	50.000	✓	✓	✓	
15	La Morra	1959	120.000	✓	✓		
16	Serralunga d'Alba	1896	110.000	✓	✓	✓	
17	Treiso	1982	45.000	✓	✓		
18	La Morra	1878	110.000	✓	✓		
19	Barolo	1945	65.000	✓	✓	✓	
20	Monforte Roero	1970	350.000	✓	✓		

4.1. Producer identity

The construction of a strong producer identity relates to winery owners' affective commitment to wine production and the sense of place the land provides (Burton & Wilson, 2006). It is generally agreed in this literature that communities who live and work on the land develop a strong attachment and identification to that land and place. Winery owners in Langhe have generally grown up there, and their passion for making wine typically plays a central role in their everyday lives. The Langhe region witnessed a significant increase in tourist numbers over the past decade and while numerous winery owners have taken advantage of this opportunity and started to invest in tourism-related activities (e.g. winery visits, tastings, cellar-door sales, B&B, and/or restaurants), others have resisted agritourism diversification, seeing it as antithetical to their core activity and identity as winemakers.

Our work is to do wine not hospitality (Case 10).

Our primary activity, and it is important never to forget that is winemaking (Case 17).

This is not a public institution but it is a business (Case 20).

Through engaging in talk about their profession, winery owners actively construct a producer identity and want to be recognised as such. They strongly identify with their winemaking profession, whereas tourism diversification is not regarded as a profession and is likely to threaten owners' sense of self. The winery owner in case 20, for example, actively positions his winery apart from what he considers to be a 'public institution'. He reveals his reluctance to change and/or adopt a different/non-producer identity.

In some cases, owners display their commitment to being a conventional wine producer. They focus on their agricultural role (e.g. 'you

**Table 2**  
Semi-structured interview questions.

Research themes	Sample interview questions
Wine tourism development	Which trends have you witnessed in visits to your winery?  - What changes have you noticed? - What are the reasons for these changes? What are the impacts of tourists on your winery?  - Can you provide some examples? How do you manage these impacts?
Involvement in tourism	How did you open your winery to tourists  - Can you tell me how it happened? - What exactly did you do? - How did your family feel about this decision? - What kind of financial help did you receive?
Motivations for tourism involvement	What happened when you first received tourists at the winery. How do you think tourists experienced your winery. For example, were they appreciative/respectful of your working traditions and way of life? What has been the best thing about opening your winery to tourists?  - Can you provide some examples? How do you feel now about the decisions you have made with regards to opening up to tourists? What challenges have you faced/are facing as a winery who has opened up to tourists? How do you see the future for your winery, and is tourism part of that future? How do you feel about further developing your tourism activities?

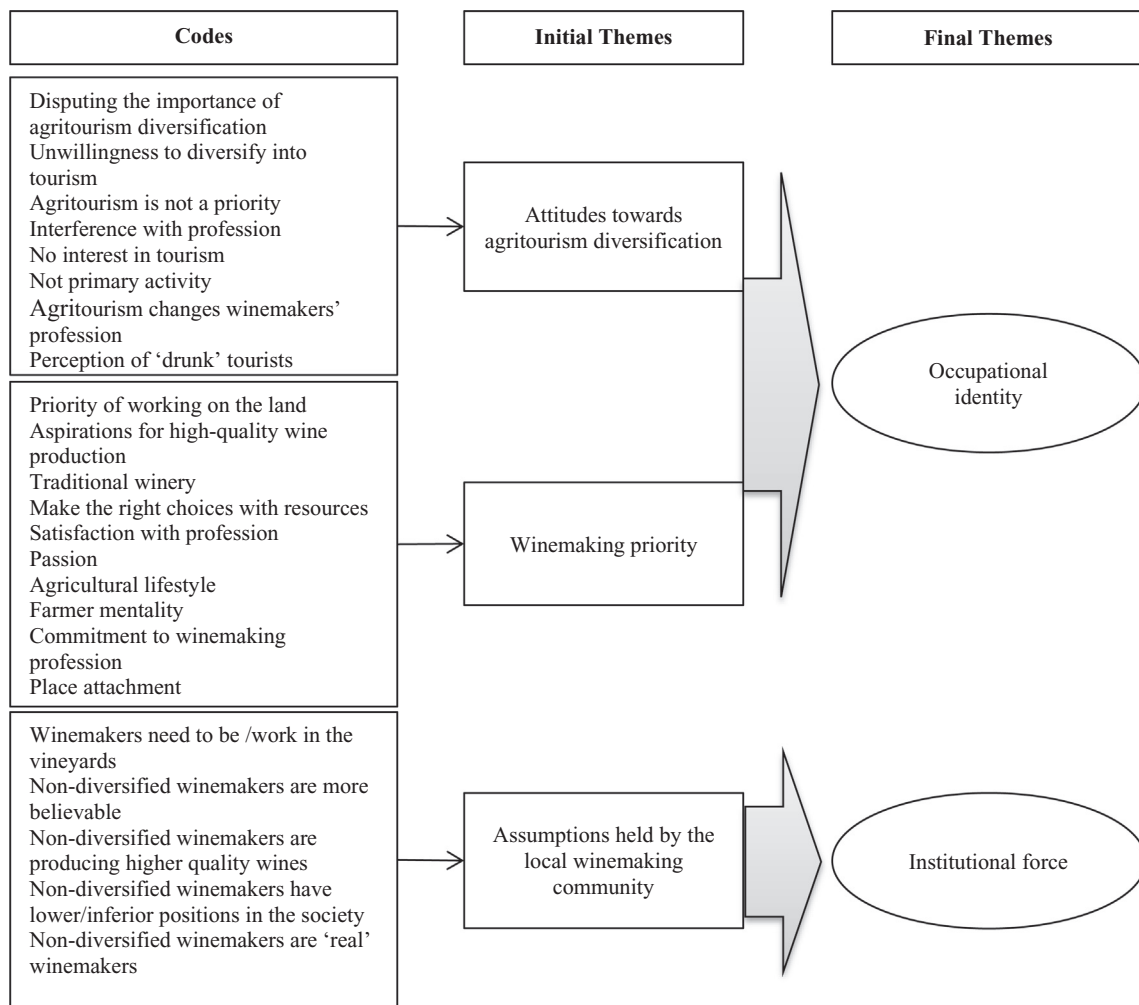


Fig. 2. Data structure.

are what you produce'), the place attachment (e.g. 'we've grown up in these surroundings'), as well as their passion for the job (e.g. 'we are in love with what we are doing'). In this instance, winery owners narrate stories about the family, the place, and their passion for the winemaking profession to actively construct a producer identity.

We don't sleep at night because we're concerned about the harvest, is it going to be compromised by the rain, the season, hail storm. You are doing everything possible so that you have the highest quality wine, because it is your ambition, your passion (Case 4).

Wine producers have generally grown up in this rural environment and have been exposed to winemaking from a young age. The winery owner in case 4 emphasises her commitment to the winemaking profession and actively constructs her producer identity. She aspires to produce 'the highest quality wine' and continuously strives to live up to her expectations. She does not consider agritourism diversification as a viable option and concentrates on her core winemaking activity while pursuing her occupational identity, as she desires to be recognised as a 'real' winemaker.

This is a winery not an agritourism business. I wouldn't be able to also run an agritourism business, because that would be too much. I believe that you have to make choices, if you want your work to be done correctly. It would disturb the other work (Case 8).

Similar to the previous excerpt, the winery owner in case 8 indicates his reluctance to pursue agritourism diversification and invest in the construction of an agritourism business. His statement 'you have to make

choices, if you want your work to be done correctly' implies his priority for the winemaking profession. He assumes that engaging in tourism diversification requires a considerable amount of time and would interfere with being a professional winemaker – meaning that he would not be able to practice his profession 'correctly'. In this instance, business decisions are taken in the light of the winemaking profession. Furthermore, his statements 'this is a winery not an agritourism business' and 'it [agritourism diversification] would disturb the other work' clearly indicates his producer identity and the fact that he wants to be recognised and acknowledged for running a conventional winery, producing high-quality wine and not for providing accommodation facilities to tourists.

On a similar note, some winemakers highlight the fact that diversification into tourism would interfere with their occupation and threaten or even change their producer identity.

I mean for a small winery like ours, you have to choose what you want to do with your resources. So it [agritourism diversification] would change our work and it's not really the work we would like to do (Case 12).

The excerpt shows that the winery owners' decision not to engage in tourism diversification is guided by his assumption about the wine-making profession. He assumes that tourism diversification would "change" his work. This statement can be interpreted in the way that agritourism diversification would not only change his work/profession, but also his identity of being a 'real' wine producer.

**Table 3**  
Illustrative evidence.

#	Illustrative evidence	Tourism diversification activities		Producer identity
		Wine tasting & sales	B&B & restaurant	
1	I think there is mass tourism on its way... This is a wine business and we are not equipped; our facilities are not equipped to receive large groups. And I don't want to receive them. I don't want people who eat, get drunk and chat.	✓		✓
2	We were pioneers in relation to tourism and winery visits ... at that time it wasn't seen as a good position for your winery, if you were open and sold your wines to the public and you received tourists. Everyone wanted to sell their wines only to importers and only to professionals, not to tourists. We however were always open and therefore other wineries would think of us as having a lower position, because we received tourists	✓	✓	
3	So it was very difficult seeing tourists going to a winery, let's say for my parent's generation ... they didn't like it. They were even annoyed. But now ... the arrival of tourists to the winery, in my opinion, works best, and that you need the most	✓	✓	
4	We don't sleep at night because we're concerned about the harvest, is it going to be compromised by the rain, the season, hail storm. You are doing everything possible so that you have the highest quality wine, because it is your ambition, your passion	✓		✓
5	We were the first to open an agritourism business in 1993. My mother was the first to open this in Barbaresco ... The people around here thought she was crazy, because no one would come here to visit this area. But she said they were crazy. Of course people would come to this area.	✓	✓	
6	It (tourism diversification) is very positive, as I have increased my sales...it helps and the products move quicker. People start to talk more about my wines. So this helps a lot.	✓	✓	
7	But nowadays here, people want to have everything, a winery, a restaurant, rent some rooms, you shouldn't exaggerate. I'm doing my work; you need some common sense. Better doing a bit less and being satisfied	✓		✓
8	This is a winery not an agritourism business. I wouldn't be able to also run an agritourism business, because that would be too much. I believe that you have to make choices, if you want your work to be done correctly. It would disturb the other work	✓		✓
9	We've grown up in these surroundings...we are in love with what we are doing	✓		✓
10	Our work is to do wine not hospitality	✓		✓
11	There are people who do this job that don't even know where the vineyards are... that's not a passion. I've always said wine producers who have luggage in their hand 24 h for me are not wine producers. Because you have to be in the vineyard, that's important, and you're more believable ... I only believe in the producers who work in the vineyard	✓		✓
12	I mean for a small winery like ours, you have to choose what you want to do with your resources. So it [agritourism diversification] would change our work and it's not really the work we would like to do	✓		✓
13	I am running the wine business by myself. I am working in the vineyards, in the cellar and in the office, taking care of the administrative duties. That is my job.	✓		✓
14	You go to a winery, you try the wines, you like them, and you speak to people about your experience... A lot of times people arrive because someone else has recommended the winery to them. That is really nice.	✓	✓	
15	You are what you produce and that's all that counts	✓		✓
16	It is definitely more satisfying. If someone comes to the winery to have a tour, try our wines and stay with us for a couple of days, it is more satisfying than someone calling to receive 2 boxes of wine ... there is a relationship, it is nice and more rewarding; also for the self-esteem.	✓	✓	
17	Our primary activity, and it is important never to forget that is winemaking	✓		✓
18	It [tourism diversification] might work as we have the facilities, but ... opening a restaurant, not at all. So that's not our profession, so we are not interested in doing that	✓		✓
19	Even if they say they are open, this mentality still persists; a lot of jealousy...for this mentality to disappear you need a lot of time. And up until now we haven't lost this mentality for sure. The moment we are here we are open; if needed I will also open at night. I'm always open. If you come Saturday lunch time, or Sunday evening at 8 pm we are always open	✓	✓	
20	This is not a public institution but it is a business	✓		✓

It [*agritourism diversification*] might work as we have the facilities, but ... opening a restaurant, not at all. So that's not our profession, so we are not interested in doing that (Case 18).

Interestingly, looking at this excerpt, the owner (case 18) admits to have adequate facilities to either invest in the construction of an agritourism business or the development of a restaurant, however, his statement '*this is not our profession*' implies his priority for the wine-making profession, indicating that they are '*not interested*' in tourism diversification.

But nowadays here, people want to have everything, a winery, a restaurant, rent some rooms, you shouldn't exaggerate. I'm doing my work; you need some common sense. Better doing a bit less and being satisfied (Case 7).

With his statement '*I'm doing my work*' the winery owner strongly identifies with his occupation, while simultaneously emphasising his unwillingness to pursue tourism diversification. Diversified winery owners, who have invested in the construction of agritourism businesses and restaurants, are depicted in his discourse as '*exaggerating*', while he believes to have '*common sense*'. He seems to be under the impression that focusing on the winemaking activity will ultimately result in greater fulfillment and gratification. The winery owner in case 2 constructs his producer identity by stating that '*having a family winery means you are what you do, you are what you produce and it's a lot of work*'.

Accordingly, these findings show that owners strongly identify with the winemaking profession and actively construct a producer identity when highlighting their reluctance to engage in agritourism diversification. However, what has emerged from the analysis of the data is that institutional forces (e.g. local winemaking community) are also shaping and regulating winery owners' identities.

#### 4.2. Local community as institutional force for identity regulation

The local winemaking community has been identified as an institutional force influencing and regulating winery owners' identities (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014). It has been argued that rural communities generally develop a strong place attachment, display a reluctance to change and therefore tend to perceive tourism development and diversification as a threat to their territory and their occupational identities. This agrarian mentality results in local winemaking communities being very protective of their land, their local culture and values, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

We are more closed. This can be negative or positive. Here, people from Piedmont would never sell their land. Families try to keep their land until the end. If however, this is not possible, because there are no descendants, they sell their land, but in general, only to people from Piedmont. We are very connected to our territory and on one side that's very good. It is important, as it stays in the hands of the local people, in order to keep the tradition (Case 1).

Furthermore, the local community perceives agritourism diversification to be a distraction from and interference with the main wine-making activities. There is a common belief within European wine-making countries that wine producers should primarily focus on the winemaking process, rather than concentrating on other, non-agricultural activities (Charters 2012). Italy and the Langhe area are no exception. The local winemaking community appears to assume that winemakers have to adopt a certain lifestyle where the winemaking profession directs and regulates their daily lives.

There are people who do this job that don't even know where the vineyards are ... that's not a passion. I've always said wine producers who have luggage in their hand 24 h for me are not wine producers. Because you have to be in the vineyard, that's important, and you're more believable ... I only believe in the producers who work in the

vineyard (Case 11).

This excerpt shows the conventional, agrarian mentality adopted by the local winemaking community. Tourism diversification is perceived to interfere with winemakers' core activity and distract them from focusing on the wine production. Particularly the development of an agritourism business (B&B) as a diversification activity has been identified as distracting winemakers from their core activities. Diversified wine producers are thus considered to be 'low-quality' wine producers. The underlying assumption is that high-quality wine producers focus on the core winemaking activities, keep their wineries closed for tourists, and sell their wines predominantly to professionals, such as importers and restaurants.

In this instance, winery owners construct a producer identity in order to preserve their social status within the local wine-producing community.

## 5. Discussion

Within the literature, agritourism diversification has long been recognised as an efficient catalyst for the development and regeneration of rural areas and is believed to contribute to the wellbeing of rural communities. Nevertheless, there has been an increased interest in understanding the reasons why some agricultural producers limit or resist tourism diversification (e.g. Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Burton, 2004; Northcote & Alonso, 2011). In this context, scholars primarily outlined *tangible* reasons for resisting diversification (e.g. lack of capital, unfavourable location, lack of extra labour, high marketing costs, high establishment costs, lack of skills, and tenancy restrictions) (e.g. Burton, 2004; Ilbery, 1991; Northcote & Alonso, 2011), while *intangible* reasons, notably the concept of identity, have only received limited attention (Ohe, 2018). In order to address this gap in the literature, this paper examines how winery owners' identities affect their resistance to agritourism diversification. Drawing on social identity theory, *occupation* was identified as the most important group/membership for winery owners to gain their social identity from (Burton & Wilson, 2006). The findings revealed that the majority of participating winery owners developed a strong identification with their occupation, which led to the construction of a *producer* identity. Their commitment and passion for the winemaking profession as well as their attachment to the place of production guided their construction of a producer identity. These findings are in line with Groth and Curtis (2017) and Burton and Wilson (2006), highlighting the fact that especially within the agricultural context, farmers strongly identify with their occupation, leading to a salient producer identity.

In this case, agritourism diversification was perceived as a threat to their producer identity and these winery owners were reluctant to change and/or adopt a non-producer identity, but wanted to be recognised as 'real' winemakers.

In addition, the findings displayed that the local winemaking community, as an institutional force, also shaped and regulated winery owners' identities. The local community perceived tourism diversification to be a distraction from and interference with the main wine-making activities. In this instance, the majority of participating winery owners construct a producer identity and highlight their reluctance to pursue tourism diversification, in order to secure legitimacy for their winery and preserve their social status within the community. Conventional winemakers are depicted as 'real', 'more believable', and 'high-quality' wine producers. They aim for recognition and acceptance within society (Burton, 2004). In order to secure legitimacy for the winery and their producer identity (Stenholm & Hytti, 2014), winery owners highlight their reluctance to pursue agritourism diversification.

Accordingly, this paper showed that an identity-based rationale – drawing on social identity theory – can be seen as a valuable approach to gain a better and deeper understanding of why agricultural producers resist diversification in general, and tourism diversification in



particular.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Practical implications

This study has implications for regional governments and destination management organizations (DMOs) when promoting and presenting tourism development initiatives for rural regeneration. In pursuing economic regeneration, regional governments inevitably aim for social cohesion, sustainability and economic growth. However, the findings of this study have shown that some agricultural producers still limit or resist diversification on the basis of an anticipated loss of identity (Burton, 2004). In this instance, tourism planners and DMOs need to take into consideration agricultural producers' strong identification with their profession, as well as their affective attachment to the place of production, and make sure that their conventional producer identities remain salient. In addition, tourism planners and managers would benefit greatly from understanding which forms/activities of tourism diversification do not threaten agricultural producers' conventional identities. Finally, in order to achieve the right balance between tourism prosperity and rural communities' wellbeing, local authorities and DMOs should offer continuous support and guidance in terms of training and education programs. These programs should provide agricultural producers with an in-depth understanding of tourism planning and development at the local level and highlight not only the economic benefits of tourism, but also the enjoyment and satisfaction this particular type of diversification can bring, without threatening their core activities and occupational identity.

### 6.2. Limitations and future research

The potential limitations of this study could be attributed, first, to the methodological approach adopted. Snowball sampling may be considered a limitation of the research due to the lack of control and potential limited representativeness of the study population. Furthermore, focusing only on wine-producing farms, the findings of this research may be limited to this particular type of farm and not hold true for any other type of farm, such as fruit and vegetable, dairy, and/or livestock farms. Investigating other types of farms may uncover different results. Notwithstanding these potential limitations, this study has significantly contributed to a deeper understanding of how winery owners' identities affect their resistance to agritourism diversification. Future research could build on these findings by adopting an identity-based approach, as there is clearly more to learn about how agricultural producers' identities influence and shape their attitudes and perceptions towards tourism development and diversification. Such research could also be extended to other countries to provide a country comparison in these regards. In this instance, Langhe could be compared to other wine regions within old world wine countries (e.g. France, Spain) and they in turn with new world wine countries (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, Canada).

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