Consuming Location: The Sustainable Impact of Transformational Experiential Culinary and Wine Tourism in Chianti Italy

Darcen Esau and Donna M. Senese *

Department of Community, Culture and Global Studies, UBC Okanagan, Kelowna, BC V1V 1V7, Canada; darcen.esau@gmail.com
* Correspondence: donna.senese@ubc.ca

Abstract: Tourists visit wine and culinary destinations for unique, geographically indicated experiences that are place specific. The objective of this research is to understand how the transformational potential of experiential wine and culinary tourism best promotes sustainability in the context of international educational travel. Our case study in the iconic Chianti Region of Italy applies a 'Hopeful Tourism Enquiry' perspective and focuses on participatory, co-transformative learning, and mindful sustainability. A mixed qualitative research strategy was implemented that integrates the results of in-depth interviews with industry experts, excerpts from expository travel journals simultaneously captured during the experience, and focus group dialogues with participating students at the end of the field course. This case study revealed three overlapping thematic results that illustrate the influence of experiential educational tourism on the sensory and cultural experience of sustainable food and wine to produce co-transformative learning. The co-creation of memorable experiences establishes a unique sensual representation of provenance through the interaction with the region through narrative so that not only is the food and wine being consumed, but also the consumption of place through the storyscape of a positive and memorable experience.

Keywords: sustainable tourism; sustainable experiences; tourist experiences; culinary tourism; food and wine

1. Introduction & Objective

Tourists visit wine and culinary destinations for a variety of reasons, often to enjoy a relaxing and hedonistic vacation experience in a beautiful setting. However, the aesthetic and the hedonic value experienced does not drive overall satisfaction and future travel intentions [1], as tourists increasingly use travel as a form of self-actualization, personal transformation, and growth [2]. Transformational tourism experiences are used to develop skills, transform identities, perceptions, and social values [3], and can also provide long-term sustainable benefits to the wine destination by boosting not only the economic, but also the socio-cultural and environmental elements of that region [4]. In this way, transformative travel and tourism creates a symbiotic relationship between the destination and the tourist by facilitating inner transformation of the tourist [2], which benefits the wine destination through place-based regenerative economic and environmental adaptation in which all stakeholders thrive and grow beyond previous expectations [5].

Separately, the literature on sustainble winegrowing, and sustainable tourism has been extensive and is growing [6–12]. Early work that approached sustainability in wine and tourism did so from the perspective of supply side sustainability or the production of sustainable wine tourism [13]. More recently, sustainable wine tourism consumption and the culture of sustainability in wine tourism desinations have been of great interest [14,15], while the idea of building resilience through adaptive capacity in both wine and wine tourism has also been central [16,17]. Since 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted

all forms of tourism, including wine and food tourism, attention has been turned to the transformation of the industry and the tourism experience [2,18] with much of the work turning back to the future perspectives of Hopeful Tourism Enquiry [19]. This case study interrogates the processes of transformative tourism experiences in food and wine tourism and its effects on educating for sustainability. By using narrative storytelling of food and wine terroir, we garner a clear understanding of the potential for co-learning sustainability among both hosts and guests. The overarching research question asks how the transformational potential of experiential wine and culinary tourism best promotes sustainability in the context of international educational travel. We set out to explore the ways in which experiential education in wine and food tourism can boost the well-being of destinations, wine providers, and wine tourists alike [4], and the results point toward a 'hopeful tourism' that is participatory, co-transformative, and mindfully sustainable.

1.1. Hopeful Tourism: Transformational Experiences

To achieve the objectives of this case study, a 'Hopeful Tourism Enquiry' perspective was used that focuses on participatory, co-transformative learning, and mindful sustainability [19]. Hopeful tourism marked a paradigm shift for the industry to harness the social and environmental consciousness of new travel markets for positive change. In approaching the post-COVID-19 pandemic turn for international tourism, hopeful tourism has helped to introduce pathways to sustaining tourism communities through perilous times. Local food and wine landscapes, traditional practices, and sustainable tourism experiences are explored in the case study through the sensory and cultural contexts of food and wine sustainability presented through the narratives of place and landscape during an experiential learning experience in the Chianti wine region of Italy.

The unprecedented disaster for global tourism brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has been followed by hopes for recovery that have reignited scholarly discussion on transformational change and a new normal for the tourism industry [2]. The potential for wine tourism to propel transformational change was introduced by Senese [20] in a supply side assessment of winery stakeholders in mountain regions; however, the opportunities for co-transformational relationships between host communities and individual tourists [21] is not well understood. Sigala [4] describes collaborative models that benefit both individual tourists and the community at large through spiritual engagement in winescapes. In particular, it is thought that experiential educational travel in regions that produce wine and food presents a potential for transformational [22–24] or hopeful tourism [19] that has not been explored in terms of its realization of reciprocal partnerships for co-learning among hosts and guests. Experiential educational travel has become a cornerstone of western university mission statements, where conflation of the good intentions of internationalization and global citizenship increasingly encourage international place-based learning. However, travel and learning has been a neglected area of tourism scholarship [25], especially where it lends itself to the sustainability of destinations.

Italy is one of the most important destinations for study abroad, or educational tourism in the world, and the Province of Tuscany is an epicenter of study abroad experience in Italy, with more than 50 international campuses in the City of Firenze alone. Experiential educational tourism in food, wine, and wine tourism is at the heart of many study-abroad experiences in Italy, where the centuries- old wine and food industries have adapted to crisis and change in innovative ways that are essential to their sustainability [26]. The capacity to adapt and sustain rural destinations that host wine and food tourism forms the basis for our geographic case study at Castello Sonnino, near the small village of Montespertoli in Tuscany (See Figure 1 for a photograph of Castello Sonnino). In 2013, an experiential, international field course in sustainable food, wine, and tourism was developed at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada, with the goal of providing a transformational tourist experience that trains students to understand, account for, and respect the places, cultures, and traditional knowledge that sustain food and wine systems. The UBC field course has now run four times, instructed by co-author Senese and hosted

by the de Renzis Sonnino family at Castello Sonnino Education Centre in Montespertoli, in Tuscany, Italy.

Figure 1. Photograph of Castello Sonnino within the landscape of Montespertoli, in Tuscany Italy.

1.2. Storytelling

Place of origin and geographical indicators are central to place making in the production of food and wine, and food and wine tourism. The idea of place of origin, or provenance is often articulated through storytelling in wine and food tourism destinations. In wine regions, provenance has been enshrined politically and culturally through declarations of terroir, a uniquely sensual representation of provenance that is defined by the human ability to sense its existence [27]. Excellent storytelling is capable of expressing a sense of place on many levels, and for wine and food destinations it is, therefore, used extensively to define terroir. Storytelling has been examined in research that explores the nature of authentic cellar door experiences in wine tourism [28]. More recently, Frost et al., [29] set out to understand how storytelling lends itself to establishing identity at the cellar door. In efforts to establish identity, an association of the winery with local heritage and tradition is often the trademark of cellar door storytelling. This kind of storytelling often serves to patrimonialize place, or act as a surrogate for quality in both New and Old World wine regions where it takes place [30]. As a wine growing nation with significant tourism interest and capital, Italy, has a deep, rich heritage of tradition and terroir to exploit as a tool for regional branding at many scales. The Province of Tuscany, in particular, staunchly persists in its adherence to traditional and typical oeno-gastronomic production, using the lifestyle associated with such production to identify it clearly as a tourism destination. The influence of the slow movement, rooted in an Italian resistance to globalized food, stands in defense of local production and the culture of farm life and lifestyle which remains central to both the tourism and agricultural industries. The principles for sustainable community planning and the Slow movement coalesce in Tuscany under the broader umbrella of an eco-gastronomic lifestyle, including attention to authenticity, quality, education, conservation, and protection in partnerships between local agents [31].

1.3. Summary of Conceptual Framework

This introduction provides a conceptual framework for this case study and outlines three key concepts that make up the framework of the research: 'Hopeful Tourism Enquiry', transformational experiential tourism, and storytelling, which influences sustainable behaviors and attitudes. In Figure 2, the concepts are synthesized to demonstrate how each of the elements can be operationalized to explore the potential of experiential wine and culinary tourism, as well as narrative storytelling, to encourage co-learning of sustainability among hosts and guests.
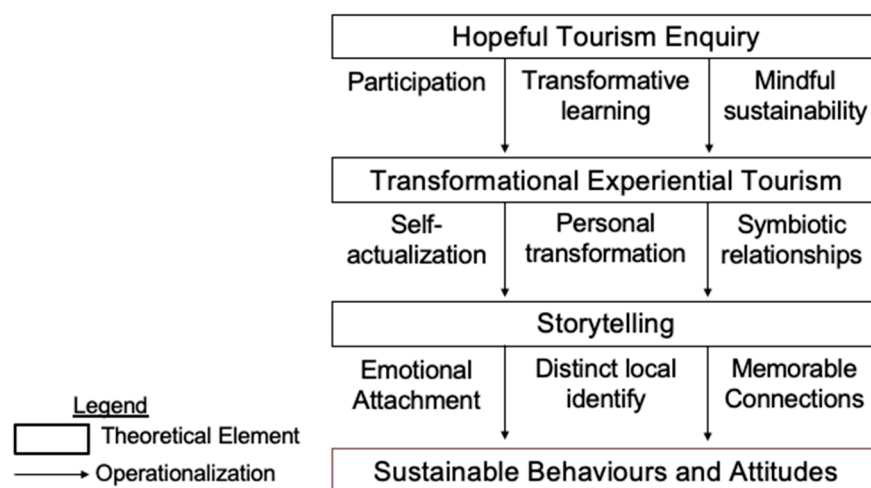
Figure 2. Conceptual framework: Developing sustainable behaviors and attitudes through storytelling and transformational experiences.

2. Materials and Methods

This exploratory, mixed methods case study [32] captures the results of a unique opportunity to integrate the lived experiences of landscape ethnography detailed through storytelling. While mixed qualitative method case studies are certainly not unique [33], the multiple perspectives detailed in this case study as provided by the instructor, who designed the experience, the students who participated in the experience, and the storyteller participants who performed the details of the experience are both rare and revealing. Tourism is a trans-disciplinary area of research [34] that requires multiple and mixed approaches to research, and studies that seek to understand both the science and the art of sustainability [35] in tourism require holistic approaches to be effective. Therefore, this mixed qualitative research strategy integrates the results of 10 in-depth interviews with industry experts during the field course experience, excerpts from expository travel journals simultaneously captured during the experience, and focus group dialogues with 19 students at the end of the field course.

Landscapes are symbolic environments that people create to give meaning and definition to their physical environments, and ethnographic landscapes are areas of geographic space that have been given specific cultural or social meaning by people associated with them [36]. The landscape ethnographies completed by students in this field course were documented in travel journals, modeled after Taylor's [37] assessment tool that provides an embodied picture of what students learn and how they learn it. The reflective observations compile descriptive and expository entries by all students in the course and the instructor to respond to what they have seen, done, felt, or read during the field experience. These landscape ethnographies were then synergized with deliberative dialogues harvested in student focus groups at the end of the course, largely to summarize the key conceptualization of food and wine sustainability experienced during the course. Lastly, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with food, wine, and hospitality industry experts who participated in the educational experiences as guest lecturers, workshop facilitators, or hospitality

managers and hosts. Theses interviews took a fluid conversational approach that lasted approximately 1 h, depending on the expertise and interest of each subject. Seven topic areas were used to guide each conversation: wine region environment, short and long-term sustainability, organic/biodynamic farming practices, the impacts of food and tourism, and the process and impact of the wine label.

In terms of synergizing the results of the multi-method research plan, the excerpts of landscape ethnographies recorded in the travel journal format were particularly revealing when held up against the educational intentions of the industry experts as revealed in the interviews. All interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded with the outcomes from the landscape ethnographies in NVivo 12.7.0 qualitative analysis software [38]. The process of synergizing storytelling as storyscapes from all forms of participation, is iterative as the sensory experience of the course emerges as a multi-dimensional experiential dialogue that reveals the perceptual changes evident in conceptualizing sustainability, a key learning outcome of the course. Together, the industry interviews and the student cultural experiences and expectations of landscape change and sustainable food and wine tourism, provide further insight into how sustainable practices and the consumption culture of wine and food can be used and communicated for reciprocal transformational change during the tourism experience.

Study Area: Castello Sonnino

Castello Sonnino is an ancient wine estate in the Chianti district of Tuscany and provides the setting for this case study of educational tourism as a conduit for sustainability (see Figure 3). In development of the International Education Centre, the de Renzis Sonnino family has envisioned an experiential setting that sustains the future of rural communities by preserving the agricultural, wine, and culinary traditions of the past [39]. Castello Sonnino is part of the iconic Tuscan landscape that is so important to the destination identity of rural tourism in the province today. The landscape itself took on its appearance during the *mezzadria*, or sharecropping era of Italian economic history, with a typical landscape made up of merchant *villas* surrounded by a scattering of sharecropper *case coloniche* or farmhouses, set amidst mixed crop farming and woodland [20]. This coveted landscape of the Tuscan hills, which is now composed of large ancient villas surrounded by gardens, parks, farmland [40] with renovated farmhouses, and small villages surrounded by olive orchards and vineyards— forms the setting for our experiential field course in sustainable wine, food, and tourism.

Figure 3. Location of Castello Sonnino located within Chianti DOCG, Montespertoli, Italy.

3. Results

Results of the culinary and wine tourism case study reveal three overlapping thematic results that illustrate the influence of experiential educational tourism on the sensory and cultural experience of sustainable food and wine to produce co-transformative learning. First, the results show that the sensory experience of food and wine products are influenced by an emotional connection to the narrative of place and the process of production. Second, the idea of sustainability in food and wine landscapes can be improved through the narratives and participatory experience of a local circular economy. Lastly, there is a transformation in the conceptualization of sustainability itself, which is drawn out of the experience of place, and by the ability of hosts to create a meaningful narrative and positive emotional connection around how sustainability is incorporated into food and wine production and business.

3.1. Consumption of Place through Storyscapes

Interacting with a place through narratives can enhance a wine tourism experience, changing the way we consume and enjoy food and wine. Chronis [41] defined a 'storyscape' as a commercial environment where narratives are negotiated, shaped, and transformed through the interaction of producers and consumers. In this way, a tourism experience is altered by the story and narratives heard during consumption, which make it a more extraordinary and memorable tourism experience [42]. The stories heard in a wine destination create an essential memory about the experience, while also establishing an emotional connection to an environment that enables a tourist to develop a sense of place with a unique identity [43]. The ability to interact, participate, and engage with a place while hearing the stories empowers the consumers to become co-creators of the experience [44], which in turn allows them to consume not only the food and wine, but also the place through the storyscape that has been established.

One of the most influential experiences for students was a vertical tasting of Sangiovese at one of the wineries where they were encouraged to taste the difference in terroir from different vintages. The winemaker referred to himself as "the last peasant farmer in Tuscany". He welcomed students while wearing his work clothes and gave them a tour of his winery, which also happened to be his farmhouse. While offering tastings of his wine in the basement of the house, which was also his wine cellar, he put the students at ease and curated an experience by saying, "I want you to taste the emotion, not just the wine". While students were experiencing the place and listening to the stories, they were also interacting and engaging with the landscape, the winemaker, and the wine. The impacts of climate change on the vineyard were described scientifically by the winemaker, and then demonstrated through the 2014 vintage which had been exposed to excessive heat too early in the growing season. Students were encouraged to hold their wine glass up to the light and view the small, tasteless particles that were present due to the winery having to pick the grapes earlier in the season. The "heat" of the wine described by the winemaker was a result of the higher alcohol percentage resulting from grapes developing quicker and converting higher sugar contents. The students were fully engaged with the story of the wine and able to participate in the narrative that was being presented to them. In this way, they were able to taste the terroir in their glasses and gain an appreciation for the importance of sustainable best practices to producing wine, which can impact the taste and enjoyment.

> "You get to have a comparison across different [wines] for these three years. They'll taste completely different not because it's a different blend or a different type of grape it's just because you know it was rainy, it was very sunny, you know they're more rocks, fewer rocks like his you could taste it."
>
> Student Focus Groups

The proprietor family at Castello Sonnino has also planted biodynamic plots to understand how this practice can be used to develop more sustainable vineyards, and to teach

students about the potential of this farming technique to produce more sustainable wine. During the field course, students visited several organic wineries, and one that provided an in-depth tour of their biodynamic farm as well. The biodynamic farming processes were presented as a more holistic approach to agriculture including farm animals, woodlot, waste, and a watershed to facilitate a sustainable natural ecosystem within the vineyard. The tour became most interactive when it allowed students to participate in the stories of the farm and its natural processes as they learned about the products of the farm by siphoning wine out of a barrel and passing the wine around to experience how biodynamic wine tasted and felt.

> "And then we went there, and he literally takes the wine out of the barrel and just hands around a glass. So, everyone, like you see like the difference in how . . . they want to present the wine, like who they're directing it towards"

Student Focus Groups

Afterwards, they were brought wine in glass pitchers with no labels or information so that they could focus on the 'feeling' of the wine, rather than focusing on intrinsic qualities such as vintage, varietal, or alcohol percentage.

> "The wine was served in glass pitchers without any context or information because the winemaker told [us] he did not want them to judge the wine based on the label, bottle, vintage, or varietal. Instead, he told [us] he wanted to judge the wine based on 'taste and feel'."

Student Focus Groups

The wine tourism experience is impacted by the interaction with the wine, the natural environment, the cultivated environment, and the people telling the story about the place, which can create an emotional attachment and lasting memory [44]. Using stories and themes to structure information encourages sustainable behavior and attitudes in tourists [45] and they build this connection and appreciation for the place, which is an amalgam of all these social relations that establishes a meaningful 'meeting place' in the minds of visitors [46]. Beyond listening to the stories, tourists are able to interact, participate, and engage with a place to develop a storyscape, which transforms their experience and empowers them to consume the place with which they have established a personal connection.

> "Sustainability means social . . . making food for other people, caring for others, environment, building positive community."

Industry Interview

3.2. Wine Is Food Culture: Achieving Sustainability through Local Circular Economies

Associating a wine region with local foods that are unique can help create an identity for a region. Food symbolism has the ability to establish a culinary heritage in a given area [47], and it is these local foodways that provide a distinctiveness to a wine region [48]. Tourists seek food traditions as a way to connect to the culture and places they visit [49], which can provide a memorable experience that helps make a unique association with the destination [50]. Throughout Italy, there is a growing movement where farmers are reducing production of undifferentiated foods and are focusing more on quality and traditional items that reflect the area [51]. This approach to agriculture and food tourism is important because it can support the needs of a local economy while encouraging sustainable stewardship of the environment through a slower, smaller, and more interconnected food system [52].

While living at the Castello Sonnino estate at the edge of the small town of Montespertoli, the students were given the opportunity to experience a living circular-socio economy where the basic ingredients of daily food are found in surrounding farms and then processed in place, at the local grist mill, butcher, baker, and the local market. The value of the circular economy was impressed upon the students through the centrality of food from the farm through the supply chain to the plate. Students were asked to produce

food maps within travel journals to demonstrate their experience and understanding of the circular-socio economy at Castello Sonnino (see Figure 4 for an example of a student participant food map). During the field study, students received a tour of the local grist mill where they were able to understand the impact of developing a short food supply chain. The tour was conducted by a man who was proud to introduce himself as an eighth-generation mill operator in Montespertoli. He went on to explain a collaboration with researchers from the University of Florence, who were able to isolate the eleven ancient grains that have been historically grown in the region, and which are shown to contain less gluten and more minerals than industrially produced grains from outside of the region. These grains are now being grown exclusively at local estates like Castello Sonnino, shaping the modern landscape of food through traditional products and processes that have transformed the local food supply. The flour from the mill is used by the local bakeries to make products for the local community, including pasta that is now used for school lunches. All local bakeries proudly show their participation in the ancient grains project through storefront banners, signs, and other forms of labeling. Grains not used for baking or pasta are used to make food for local livestock, where the waste is used to make compost for the local soil system, and the straw is used to make hats for local consumers and tourists. Students recognized the sustainable impact of creating a small circular food economy, while also appreciating the unique identity it created for the region by producing unique and healthy foods.

> "I don't know, like just being here, I realized all the ingredients are a lot . . . less processed, I feel like their tomato sauces taste a lot better. Like, I understand that the grains are a lot better for us. So . . . if you think about that aspect, then you would assume the wines are organic, or better quality than what we would have back in North America."
>
> Student Focus Groups

> "The way they did the things that they're trying to do [and] they've accomplished like using the old grain and the biscuits . . . I found it was very very innovative and I'm thinking . . . it was kind of much more . . . traditional since there's still a very luxurious feeling to it which is like, I mean, I think in terms of like what a lot of tourists come looking for."
>
> Student Focus Groups

The contrary goals of quality and quantity were demonstrated in vineyard management workshops and biodynamic gardening workshops, while the important idea of heritage was continually shown in the historic archives and the student living quarters of the Sonnino estate. This demonstrated that food can be an artisan product capable of showcasing a region's complex sense of place [53] and integrated into the local culture. North American students in the field study had a preconceived cultural perception of food and wine products as luxury items on one end of a spectrum, and a cheap vessel for indulgence on the other end. The experience of living within the local food supply chain of Montespertoli normalized wine as a food product that builds community and relationships.

> "And even food here is, like, more appreciated. I don't know how to explain it. It's more proportion and it's more of an experience instead of just like the act of consuming and filling your stomach"
>
> Student Focus Groups

> " . . . wine has become kind of synonymous with wealth, so if you're looking at the difference between the peasant wine and that kind of thing, it is really interesting because it shows the roots of wine and how wine was always something that was driven by everyone and was consumed by everyone no matter what their social status was"
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> Student Focus Groups
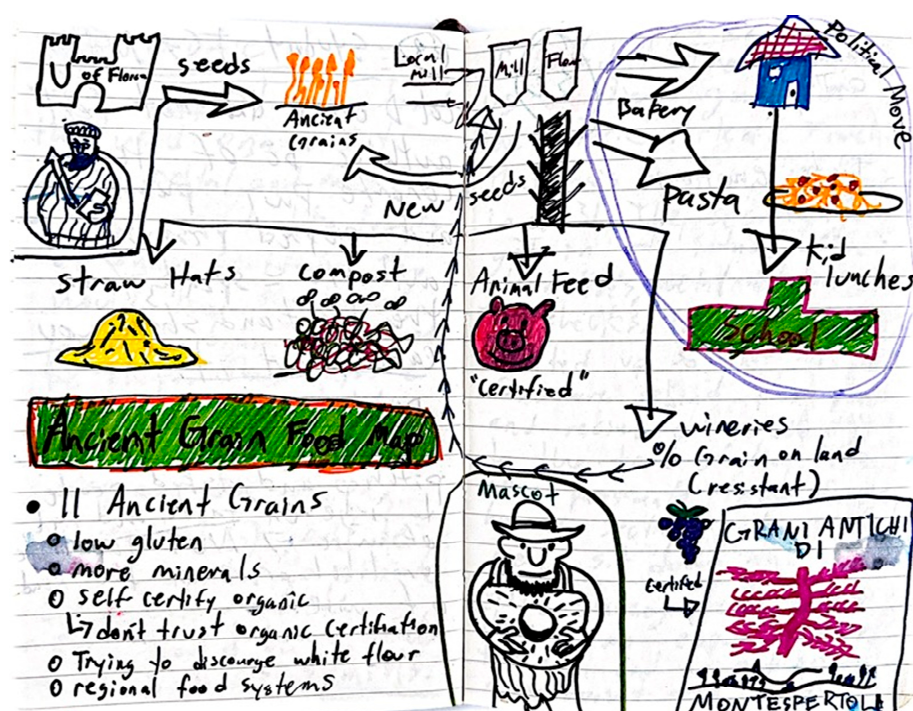
Figure 4. Autoethnographic reflection of the circular-socio economy surrounding Castello Sonnino in a local food map.

One of the ways that Tuscan culture integrates wine into the fabric of society, making it more accessible and normalized as food, is through the circular economy for table wine sold in bulk at local stores called "Vino Sfuso". These stores provide a short, local supply chain for the community to access local wines by bringing their own container to fill up on tap. The short supply chain and personal storage vessels ensure that the local wine is cheap and accessible for the community, while creating a unique and memorable experience for wine tourists.

> "I think, like, the wine guys here do their best or at least are more aware of sustainability, not just in the environmental sense but also in the social and the economic sense as well. Even with things, not just the winery, but like with the meal, for example, [they] wanted ... a situation ... where like the people producing it can afford to buy it."

Student Focus Group

The sustainability of a wine destination can be improved by emphasizing the narratives of a place, but also the specific themes associated with a community [44]. This can be done in part by emphasising the gastronomic dishes that define a region and promoting participatory activities around food and wine that showcase a local identify [54]. These local foodways create a network of activities and it is within a region's circular economy of food and wine that distinctiveness arises [48].

3.3. Consumption of Location: Drinking a Memory

The sensory experience of wine is impacted by the emotional connection of the narrative. These emotions and sensations can be evoked by engaging with a specific place, which produces a memorable destination experience with unique associations [50]. Stories and narratives help wine tourists organize their thoughts and create memories [55], which builds a memorable connection between a place and the food and wine they consume. It is important for a wine region to develop a unique story to tell that will establish an emotional bond with customers and create a memorable experience [56]. Within Hopeful Tourism, these experiences are enhanced through participation, which also contributes to

the co-creation of the memory [57]. This process enables visitors to reproduce the narratives about the destination [58], and this positive, nostalgic attitude builds an enduring link between present moments and past experiences [54].

Students visited an organic winery, Tenuta di Valgiano, where they grow different varietals within the same plot and blend them to produce a wine that expresses a unique terroir. While the winemaker was educating on the merits of organic biodynamic farming practices, he also introduced engaging stories that established an emotional connection to the place and the wine. This experience was curated by telling students that, "quality wine is a feeling in the gut that only your body can tell you", and the connection to place was established by saying, "wine is landscape in a bottle". Importantly, the students were able to relate to the story, which empowers them to reproduce the narrative based on this positive memory when they talk about their experience [58]. Recalling this memory based on the narrative and positive interaction with the place, students associate organic wine that is biodynamically farmed with a product that 'feels' better in their gut and provides a unique feeling from any other wine.

"I don't know, I felt their [bio-dynamic] wine is a lot smoother."

Student Focus Groups

When students purchased wine from one of the wineries they visited, the sensory experience of tasting the wine was connected to the memory they had created through the experience and narrative of the place. The sensory experience of the products is influenced by an emotional connection to the narrative of place and the process of production, and this creates a context where an experience is consumed more so than the product [59]. Individuals often associate positive experiences with cherished memories from their childhood [60], and the establishment of nostalgia in a unique experience is a powerful tool that motivates consumer behavior [61], such as the enjoyment and purchasing of wine. This transformational process results in the association of positive emotional memories with a destination so that a visitor can re-live a past experience through the emotions associated with that event [54]. When a visitor develops this type of nostalgia through the narrative and experience with a place, the visitor tends to feel positive emotions such as warmth and joy when they recall the narrative or recreate the experience [61].

"The wine becomes nostalgic, like your grandma's cookies".

—student

With so many wine destinations, it can be difficult for hosts to create a unique destination identity [62], and one of the ways this can be accomplished is by creating a memorable visitor experience [63]. Importantly, if the tourists can become co-creators of the experience, it is more likely to capture their attention [57] and become transformational. This unique sensual representation of provenance establishes positive and memorable experiences through storytelling. If the story is relatable, the food and wine become intertwined with memories, thereby resulting in the consumption of place and locality, or the drinking of a memory.

"Wine is the only food product that can transcend time and space."

Industry Interview

4. Discussion Conclusions

The case study demonstrates that wine and food tourism extend beyond the aesthetic, hedonistic, and economic impacts of rational tourism inquiry described by Pritchard [19]. Wine and food tourism experiences are formed and shaped out of the cultural fabric of the landscape, including both the foodscape and the winescape's ecosystem [4]. The multi-sensory value of these landscapes as demonstrated through storytelling relate not only to the products, but also to place, the socio-cultural elements, and the people behind it [4]. A storytelling narrative around the food and winescape was created through experiential educational travel to Castello Sonnino in Montespertoli, in Tuscany, Italy, which demon-

strated the possibility of a multi-dimensional, transformational, and hopeful tourism. For our participating student tourists, relatable stories of food and wine production became intertwined with shared memories of consuming product, place, and culture.

The ability for students in this case study to participate in a vertical tasting of Sangiovese to understand the impacts of climate change on the fruit produced in a vineyard, while listening to the stories about the place, enabled them to become co-creators of their experience. The interactive experience of sampling biodynamic wine from a barrel while learning about sustainable farming practices helped produce an emotional connection and sense of place with a unique identity [43]. The ability to develop a storyscape encourages sustainable behavior and attitudes in tourists [44], and this positive emotional connection enables them to consume not only the food and wine, but also the place.

The tour of the local grist mill helped students in the case study understand the sustainable impact of creating a small circular food economy, while also appreciating the unique identity it created for the region. The idea of sustainability in food and wine landscapes incorporates a dichotomous respect for heritage, traditional methods, and knowledge, while incorporating modernization and technology that is expressed by industry and local experts. Students gained a clear understanding of the importance of place in the production process (terroir) and, hence, the importance of sustainable best practices to produce quality wine and food products and protect local environments. There were common cultural perceptions of food and wine consumption and production among students apparent in pre-departure meetings and in focus group conversations after the course. Common cultural perceptions among our North American students place food and wine products at two ends of a wide spectrum: as luxury items meant for the elite, on one end of a spectrum, and as a cheap vessel for indulgence, on the other end of the spectrum. Conversely, students also understood the Tuscan cultural experience as an integration of wine and food into the fabric of society, making it more accessible and normalized as sustenance among a wide swath of society. By emphasizing the circular economy of gastronomic dishes that define a region, and promoting participatory activities around food and wine that showcase a local identify [54], a region becomes more resilient through the development of distinctiveness [48], and sustainable behavior and attitudes become more encouraged in tourists [44].

Storytelling is a powerful co-creative behavior in tourism [64] as visitors to a wine destination are searching for meaningful tourism and travel experiences, often driven by the heritage of the region [65]. Hopeful Tourism requires co-transformative learning and views place, space, time, and identity as something that can be relative and constructed [19]. Storytelling can evoke different emotions which produce a specific sense of belonging and identification with a place so that a visitor is consuming the experience more than the product [59]. When a visitor is able to reflect on the participatory experience and stories of local gastronomic and wine tasting, this can create positive attitudes and memories related to the specific place, building important links and feelings of belonging between the present and past moments [54]. This transformational experiential tourism enables visitors to re-live a past experience through the emotions associated with that event [54], developing a nostalgia and unique destination identity [62]. The positive culinary and wine experience and associated memories result in the consumption of place and drinking of a specific and memorable experience.

The results of this first-hand engagement with sustainable methods of rural production in the wine, food, and tourism industries of Tuscany provide a transformational experience that influenced how students perceive wine and food, and a destination that produces wine and food sustainably. Narrative storytelling and experiential wine and culinary tourism can lead to co-learning of sustainability among hosts and guests. The co-creation of memorable experiences helps build a positive emotional connection between a place and the food and wine they consume as well as a distinctiveness to a wine region [48]. This 'hopeful tourism' establishes a unique sensual representation of provenance through the interaction with the

region through narrative so that not only is the food and wine being consumed, but also the consumption of place through the storyscape of a positive and memorable experience.

5. Limitations & Future Research

Two areas emerged as limitations that could be explored in further research. First, this case study explored the host–guest relationship through experiential tourism in a wine destination and applied a 'Hopeful Tourism Enquiry' perspective [19]. The students that participated in an experiential course lived and worked at the Castello Sonnino estate and the transformational experiences described in this manuscript occurred here as well as other wineries and communities throughout Chianti Italy. It would be beneficial to further explore the reciprocal community–guest relationship and examine how experiential wine and food tourism might boost the well-being of these communities and other non-student cohorts through participative, co-transformative, and mindfully sustainable activities. Secondly, the in-depth interviews were performed with food, wine, and hospitality industry experts who participated in the educational experiences as guest lecturers, workshop facilitators, or hospitality managers and hosts. Some of the industry experts did not speak English, nor did the students speak Italian; therefore, a translator was used to conduct the interviews, which may have resulted in some loss of nuance in some responses. Having the interviews conducted in the subject's native tongue may result in more robust responses.

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