

Family-centred Motivations for Agritourism Diversification: The Case of the Langhe Region, Italy

Abstract

This paper examines the motivations underlying family wineries' decisions to diversify into agritourism. Empirical evidence is provided by a sample of North Italian family wineries that have recently engaged in agritourism. While the majority of studies have adopted an economic-noneconomic dichotomy approach when examining the motivations for agritourism diversification, this paper highlights the limitations of this approach, outlines the complexity of motivations and argues for the need to take the family context into account. Drawing on the socioemotional wealth (SEW) framework, we offer a conceptual model and derive a set of propositions to show how family owners' motivations for agritourism diversification are primarily driven by family-centred goals. This paper thus contributes to a better understanding of diversification in general, and of farming families' motivations for agritourism diversification in particular. Practical implications at the European and regional level are discussed.

Keywords: Agritourism, Wine Tourism, Diversification, Socioemotional Wealth, Family Business

Introduction

Academic interest in agritourism as a field of study has developed since the 1950s (Oppermann, 1996), with scholars largely perceiving agritourism as an efficient means for alleviating socio-economic problems at the regional, local and farm level (Sharpley and Vass, 2006). Although to date, agritourism is a well-established phenomenon and is likely to receive increased attention in the future, a shared understanding of the concept is more recent (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013; Schilling et al., 2012). For the purpose of this study we adopt Gil Arroyo et al.'s (2013, p.45) conceptualisation, defining agritourism as “farming-related activities carried out on a working farm or other agricultural settings for entertainment or education purposes”.

When studying diversification, scholars have identified farmers' economic as well as social motivations for adding agritourism to their working farms (Ainley, 2014; Barbieri et al., 2019; Tew and Barbieri, 2012). Limited academic attention, however, has been paid to the family unit and to how family involvement in the farm affects agritourism diversification (Hansson et al., 2013). This is quite surprising given that most farms are family-owned and managed (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018). Neglecting the direct role of the family on diversification in the agricultural sector might limit our understanding of the motives driving family farms to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018). Accordingly, we aim to contribute to the literature by examining individual farm families' experiences and meanings to reveal the fundamental assumptions influencing agritourism diversification. Our research question therefore is: *What drives farming families' motivations for engaging in agritourism diversification?*

Using qualitative evidence from a sample of Italian family wineries, which have recently engaged in agritourism diversification, we draw on the socioemotional wealth (SEW) framework and develop a number of propositions. These suggest that families' motivations are

driven by a complex web of family-centred goals, which influence farm-based decisions - notably the decision to engage in agritourism. In doing so, we respond to calls for more research on the noneconomic motivations and benefits (e.g. personal, family, social, etc.) for engaging in agritourism diversification (Schilling et al., 2012; Tew and Barbieri, 2012).

This paper is structured as follows. First, we explore the extant literature on agritourism and agritourism diversification, before outlining the socioemotional wealth (SEW) concept as the main theoretical framework underpinning this research. Then the research setting and the qualitative approach adopted to conduct this study is discussed, followed by the analysis and discussion of the empirical findings. The paper concludes by providing some theoretical and practical implications as well as offering directions for further research.

Literature Review

Agritourism

Agritourism, under the form of hosting tourists in farmhouses, originated during the early twentieth century in the Alps and England, and progressively expanded across Europe, particularly France, Italy and the Benelux countries (Canoves et al., 2004). 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 et al., 2004) to alleviate a number of problems, such as economic decline, out-migration, market fluctuation, and loss of rural identity (Phelan and Sharpley, 2011; Sharpley and 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 et al., 2009; Busby and Rendle, 2000). Indeed, there is a general belief that agritourism, as a strategy of economic growth and diversification, can act as a potential economic panacea in rural areas, both at the local and individual farm level (Sharpley, 2002;

Sharpley and Vass, 2006). From a local perspective, agritourism has been promoted as a beneficial rural development strategy that is able to diversify the rural economy, reduce outmigration (Oppermann, 1996), re-populate rural areas, allow for cultural exchange between the local community and tourists (Colton and Bissix, 2005), as well as improve local services such as education, health care and public transport (Canoves et al., 2004). At the individual farm level, agritourism has largely been perceived as a survival strategy, bringing additional income to the farm household (Ainley, 2014; Comen and Foster, 2006; Tew and Barbieri, 2012). 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.

Motivations for Agritourism Diversification

Initially, the main research theme in agritourism has been on examining and revealing the economic motives and benefits driving farmers to engage in agritourism. Key economic reasons for engaging in diversification are believed to be generation of additional income (Barbieri and Mahoney, 2012; McGehee and Kim, 2004), long-term security in farming (Sharpley and Vass, 2006) and new employment opportunities (Nickerson et al. 2001, Yang, 2012). Weaver and Fennell (1997), for example, conduct a study on the vacation farm sector in Saskatchewan, Canada, where financial motivations dominated. Sharpley and Vass's (2006) English case study on agritourism diversification provides similar findings: about 87% of farmers are motivated to diversify for long-term financial security. Their primary motivations are generation of additional income and financial survival of the farm. Similarly, within a wine-producing context, it is suggested that agritourism is a short-term, beneficial strategy to increase cellar-door sales (Charters and Menival, 2011; Tomljenovic, 2012).

Interestingly however, while economic benefits have been revealed as the prevailing reasons and motivations for farmers to engage in agritourism diversification, some scholars highlight the fact that agritourism contributed only marginally to farm revenue (e.g. Busby and Rendle, 2010; Sharpley and Vass, 2006; Tew and Barbieri, 2012). In some cases, farmers only earned a small additional income from agritourism activities compared to the time, effort and money they invested (e.g. Opperman, 1996), while in other cases, farmers' expectations were far too high and were not met. They encountered far more problems than expected, which resulted in high disappointment (Hjalager, 1996). After having engaged in agritourism diversification, personal and social goals tend to be highly accomplished, whereas economic drivers (e.g. additional income) showed much lower levels of accomplishment, even though these motives were initially ranked as most significant (Barbieri, 2010).

Hence, agritourism diversification has increasingly been recognised as consisting of a complex web of both economic and noneconomic goals (e.g. Flanigan et al., 2015; Hansson et al., 2013; Schilling et al., 2012; Tew and Barbieri, 2012). Examples of noneconomic motivations include, living in the right environment; providing farmers with a challenge; enjoying a good lifestyle (Getz and Carlsen, 2000); maintaining rural lifestyles; increasing awareness and preservation of local customs (Tew and Barbieri 2012); educating the consumers (McGehee and Kim, 2004); building companionship with guests; pursuing a hobby/interest; and efficiently using farm resources (Nickerson et al., 2001). Getz and Petersen (2005) analyse the attitudes and goals of agritourism business owners in Denmark and Canada and classify them accordingly into growth- and profit-oriented entrepreneurs (economic motivations) or lifestyle entrepreneurs (social motivations) and reveal that lifestyle entrepreneurship dominated in both countries. The factors receiving the highest value are 'living in the right environment', 'providing me with a challenge' and 'being my own boss'.

While prior work started to recognise the complexity of motivations underlying diversification,

there is still a shortage of studies considering the context-dependency of farmers' motives and goals, particularly the family situation (Hansson et al., 2013). One of the first studies to criticise the economic-noneconomic dichotomy approach adopted within the literature was Hansson et al.'s (2013) research on farmers' motives for diversifying their farm business in Sweden. The authors highlight the context-dependency of farmers' motivations for diversification and emphasise the need to consider the social context, notably the context of the farm family. Similarly, Tew and Barbieri (2012) note that some motivations are family-centred, as respondents in their study indicated that agritourism diversification was important for the farm family, particularly for enhancing the quality of life of the family and for keeping the farm in the family. As most farms are family-owned and managed, it is quite surprising that only limited attention has been paid to the crucial role of the family in the management of the farm, which calls for a more thorough investigation.

Accordingly, our study draws on the socioemotional wealth (SEW) framework, to show how family involvement in the farm leads to a complex set of family-centred goals driving farming families' motivations for agritourism diversification. To the best of our knowledge, the socioemotional wealth framework has not yet been adopted within the tourism literature.

Socioemotional Wealth

Within the family business literature, it is now well understood that the involvement of the family in the firm leads to a complex set of goals and motivations (Sharma et al., 1997). Indeed, family businesses tend to predominantly value noneconomic goals and affective endowments, which have been grouped together under the concept of socioemotional wealth (SEW). SEW has been defined as the “non-financial aspects of the firm that meet the family's affective needs, such as identity, the ability to exercise family influence, and the perpetuation of the family dynasty” (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007, p.106). The SEW model implies that family firms are

predominantly motivated to sustain their socioemotional wealth. Hence, family firms are believed to be fundamentally different from nonfamily firms, due to the fact that they are predominantly concerned about family-centred noneconomic goals (Berrone et al., 2012).

The SEW model encompasses five dimensions, which are likely to influence family firms' decision-making process, notably family control and influence; family members' identification with the firm; binding social ties; emotional attachment; and renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession (see figure 1) (Barrone et al., 2012). The first dimension is concerned with family members' desire to keep control and have influence over the firm. The family needs to be in control of the firm to preserve their socioemotional wealth. Engaging into diversification, as in this case, agritourism diversification is likely to reduce SEW, "by having to appoint nonfamily members to various business units, reducing family influence over the units, decreasing centralization of decision making, and the like" (Berrone et al., 2012, p.260). It might require family firms to hire external employees and/or managers who might be more educated and possess enhanced managerial knowledge and skills. Having to involve outsiders in the family firm and decision-making processes is likely to threaten family control (Jones et al., 2008; Schmid et al., 2015). The second dimension relates to the family's identification with the firm. Organisational identification is especially prominent if family members are intimately tied to the firm. It is believed that a family's identity is closely linked to the family firm if it carries the family name (Berrone et al., 2012). The third dimension of 'binding social ties' is concerned with family firms' social relationships, whereas the fourth dimension expresses the importance of emotions linked and attached to the family business. The final dimension of SEW – the renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession – relates to the family's intention to transfer the firm to the next generation (Berrone et al., 2012; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011). This dimension is particularly important for the founders of family firms. Even though founders are commonly referred to as entrepreneurs creating new ventures and recognising

market opportunities, they tend to lose this entrepreneurial attitude when the business starts to grow and mature (Hall et al., 2001) and as a result prefer not to take any risks but are concerned about the survival of the family firm (Zahra, 2005). Therefore, family firms tend to focus on longer-term projects (Sirmon and Hitt, 2003) involving the next generation and hand the control and business over, as a way of guaranteeing transgenerational sustainability. The importance of these five dimensions is however likely to vary for each family. While some families may put increased emphasis on the continuity of the family business by transferring business control to the next generation, other families might stress the emotional attachment to the business (Cennano et al., 2012). Thus, these key dimensions lead to family-centred motivations with the ultimate goal of preserving and increasing the family's socioemotional wealth. In other words, family firms' decisions (as in this case agritourism diversification decisions) are not driven by an economic logic, but are taken in the light of their SEW (Berrone et al., 2012).

Figure 1 near here

Methodology

Research Setting

We use the North Italian wine region of *Langhe* as case study to explore the motivations underlying family wine firms' decisions to engage in agritourism diversification. Over the past two decades, Langhe has developed as an agritourism destination and has become increasingly popular internationally. The high point for agritourism development was in 2014, when a number of vineyards in Langhe were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The region has been recognised for its long-standing tradition in winemaking, its interaction with the environment and the aesthetic qualities of the area. Especially in relation to the tourism industry, the inclusion on the UNESCO world heritage list is seen as an encouragement for the local area

to develop this sector (Colombini, 2015), which has witnessed an 81% growth of tourist arrivals to the region between 2006 and 2016 (DMO Piemonte, 2017). As a response to this increase in demand, local wine firms started to take advantage of this opportunity and diversified into agritourism through investing in and developing a number of tourism-related activities, such as winery visits, wine tastings, cellar-door sales, B&B accommodation and/or restaurants.

In Italy, a national law on agritourism diversification was established (Law no. 96/2006), claiming that farming activities have to remain the main occupation of farmers, while agritourism can only become a supplementary commercial activity (Contini et al., 2009) and can only be carried out by farming families (Lupi et al., 2017). To date, Italy is the only country in the European Union (EU) to have a law on agritourism (Santucci, 2013). In 2016, the National Institute for Statistics (Istat, 2017) counted over 22,000 agritourism farms, with the majority of farms being located in the northern and central parts of Italy.

Research Methods

An interpretivist approach was adopted to understand the complexity of motivations driving family wine firms to engage in agritourism diversification. Family owners, who hold the decision-making power and actively run the family business on a daily basis, were selected for this research (see table 1).

Table 1 near here

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with family owners from 28 family wine firms, which have diversified to a greater or lesser extent into agritourism (see table 2). Interviews lasted between 40 and 85 minutes. The majority of participants revealed their

motivations for engaging in agritourism by narrating stories of personal experiences with tourists during winery visits and wine tastings.

Table 2 near here

We adopted a snowball sampling approach in which a small number of winery owners led us to others through their personal contacts. This approach was very efficient, as it allowed us to meet and interact with a large number of winery owners (n=28), which we would have been unable to reach on our own. This process also enabled us to build empirical knowledge as each winery was experienced first-hand and the owners interviewed in situ, which meant the depth of our understanding of the issues and local circumstances developed as the research process matured. Interviews were conducted in Italian and subsequently transcribed and translated into English.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this research, four criteria were addressed: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Credibility was achieved through a prolonged engagement and continuous observation on site to generate valuable and credible data (Krefting, 1991). Having visited the research site for the past 7 years allows for a thorough understanding of the social context. As there is no credibility without dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) “a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (p.316). Transferability was achieved by providing thick and detailed contextual descriptions, for the reader to judge whether the findings may be applicable and relevant to new, analogous situations (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Confirmability was obtained through reflexivity. Having adopted an interpretivist approach, we are aware that our values and preconceptions have to be accounted for as they influenced the research process. Accordingly, we recognise our role of co-constructing knowledge (Langdrige, 2007).

Data Analysis

We used an inductive approach for analysing the qualitative data. The data was transferred into the NVivo qualitative data analysis software, which was used to code and organise the data and facilitated the identification of links, connections and relationships between different themes and sub-themes (Gibbs, 2002). Subsequently, thematic and discourse analysis (DA) were used to analyse the empirical data. While thematic analysis revealed the content of family managers' discourses and was considered the first step of the analysis process, DA allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. DA underlines the essential role of language in qualitative research and analysis and is defined as "the study of language in use" (Gee, 2014, p.17). DA was used as it allowed for an in-depth analysis of family owners' accounts, with a particular focus on how and why they are producing these discourses in context. We argue that the family context plays an important role in understanding the motivations underlying wine-producing families' decisions to diversify into agritourism.

Findings & Discussion

The model that emerged is shown in Figure 2. We found evidence that family wineries' motivations for agritourism diversification are driven by family-centred goals. Family owners' accounts are underpinned by the importance of the family unit and their motivations for diversification have been directly linked to the concept of *socioemotional wealth* (SEW). The SEW model has been largely recognised as a useful framework for examining the influence of family involvement on the decision-making process of family firms (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007). The model refers to a set of noneconomic goals and objectives that meet families' emotional needs. Family businesses are perceived to be fundamentally different from nonfamily businesses, as they tend to be more concerned about family-centred noneconomic gains and rewards (Berrone et al., 2012). Family control and influence, family members' identification

with the firm, binding social ties, emotional attachment, and renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession, are depicted in the literature as family-centred goals, influencing family firms' decisions. This was the case regarding families' intentions to engage in agritourism diversification. Drawing on our empirical evidence, we will examine each of these dimensions individually and develop propositions regarding their influence on family wineries' level of engagement in agritourism diversification (see figure 2).

Figure 2 near here

Family Control and Influence

There is a general agreement among scholars that families need to be in control of their business to preserve their SEW (Berrone et al., 2012). Similarly, our findings highlight the central role of the family, which acts as dominant coalition of the firm and establishes management control mechanism to ensure the family's interests and organisational goals are achieved. The majority of participating family wineries are managed and controlled by the nuclear family. Family owners express their desire to exercise and maintain full control of the family winery, manage the day-to-day activities and hold the decision-making power.

This is a **family business** we are only 5 people and **we** take care of all the business, also with the vineyards... **My wife** helps out if she has time, she does also take care of the B&B... Also [name] is **my brother-in-law**, my wife's brother; **he** is the winemaker; so he is more in the vineyards. When I'm not here, **he** takes care of some visits. So **we** try to arrange **ourselves**. It is only **family**. There is also an older woman, that is my **mother-in-law** and [name], my **father-in-law** is working in the vineyards. So it is only the **five of us** (Case 19)

The quote above and the one below highlight pertinent pronouns and family owners' reference to family business in bold. This shows that the family is perceived as the dominant coalition, influencing the decision-making process. This excerpt demonstrates the importance of the family in managing and keeping control of the winery. Sometimes, the dominant coalition of the firm includes the involvement of the extended family, as in this case the in-laws. The extended family manages every aspect of the business, including the wine production, vineyards, winery visits, tastings, the B&B accommodation as well as the commercial and marketing aspects of the winery.

We like to **stay like this**. **We** like to **stay a family business** and **we** would like to manage the visits ourselves, without having to employ a person, who will do the visits for us. **We** believe it to be important (Case 12)

We want to stay small and a **family business** not becoming commercial and move towards promoting the winery to receive mass tourists (Case 9)

The notion of control plays a major role in the construction of these discourses, by expressing their reluctance to employ outside personnel and delegate authority to nonfamily members. The appointment of nonfamily members to various business units, as in this case agritourism-related areas of the business, is likely to reduce family influence over these units and decrease centralization of decision-making (Berrone et al., 2012). The inclusion of family members in the winery, rather than nonfamily employees, is emphasised on multiple occasions as a way of safeguarding the tradition and keeping family control.

We **don't have the intention to grow** bigger. I think as we are now with the agritourism business, the winery, the wine tastings and visits, that is **the maximum we can do** for it to **stay a family business**. We run from the morning to the evening though. But it is very satisfying as we still have **direct contact** with guests and clients from the winery (Case 9).

Families generally express their desire to stay in control of the various tasks in the winery, including the tourism-related activities. Indeed, in this particular discourse, statements, such as '*we don't have the intention to grow*'; '*this is the maximum we can do*'; and '*stay a family business*' relate to family owners' lack of entrepreneurial spirit. In this instance, pursuing agritourism diversification is likely to result in the loss of family control over tourism-related activities. Families tend to preserve personal control over the business and avoid delegation and decentralisation of authority and decision-making. The level of families' engagement in agritourism diversification is thus influenced and guided by the need to keep family control. In this case, the majority of wine-producing families have taken the decision to limit diversification at their winery to a level where they are still able to remain in control. Accordingly, we theorise that:

Proposition 1: Family owners' emphasis on family control and influence reduces their motivation to engage in agritourism diversification.

Identification with the Firm

“Organizational identity describes how organizational members develop a shared understanding of the inner processes, workings and culture of the organization and how this

understanding affects the behaviour of these individuals” (Zellweger et al., 2010, p.57). Berrone et al. (2012) note that organisational identification is especially prominent if family members are intimately tied to the business. Family firms that carry the family name are perceived to have a strong impact on members’ identification with the firm. In this case, the majority of family owners’ developed and displayed a strong identification with the family firm through their passion for the winemaking profession.

Having a family business means you are what you do, you are what you produce and it’s a lot of work (Case 7).

The family history, tradition, memories, as well as ancestors’ success stories are recognised as identity-shaping elements, leading to owners’ strong identification with the family and the family firm. “A family is a ‘world’ of its own, in which selves emerge, act, and acquire a stable sense of identity built by the particular common history” (Zellweger et al., 2011, p.233).

This is a family that is **born here** that started here. Now there are 2 families that continue to manage it, also with the next generation which is still a bit small but will **grow amongst the vines** and so for us family is very important, also for the work... the family is the work, meaning that we are all involved in this work every day of the year... luckily there is no distinction for better or worse (Case 19).

We’ve **grown up in these surroundings** and we are in love with what we are doing, it’s not even work... it’s a passion that grows every day... Also during the time I was still at school, I always went to the vineyards in my free time, ... so it was a very gradual

thing throughout the years. **Since I was a child**, at the beginning it was a game, which then was transformed into a passion and now it is also a workplace, so perfect for me (Case 9).

The quotes above highlight how wine producers have generally grown up in this rural environment and have been exposed to winemaking from a young age (see emphasis in bold). The commitment to the winemaking profession is also revealed in participants' discourses, when referring to their work not as a job but as a passion. Wine producers adopt a certain lifestyle, where work and passion for wine play a central role. Parents transfer their passion and lifestyle to their children already at a young age. Children accompany and help their parents in the vineyards and wine cellars. Through practicing these family rituals, traditions and sharing family stories and values, members are believed to develop a strong identification with the family business. There is a general agreement that as family members closely tie their family identity to that of the firm (Zellweger et al., 2011), they are predominantly concerned about the preservation of family's SEW. Indeed some scholars note that the pursuit of noneconomic goals is intrinsically motivated by family members' strong identification with the family firm (e.g. Berrone et al., 2010; Zellweger et al., 2011). In this instance, family owners are likely to limit the level of agritourism diversification at the winery, as they perceive diversification to threaten their socioemotional wealth, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

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

Our **primary activity**, and it is important never to forget that is **winemaking** (Case 24).

It [*agritourism*] might work as we have the facilities, but opening a restaurant, not at all. That's **not our profession**, so we are **not interested** in doing that (Case 14).

The discourses topicalise words associated with family owners' strong identification with the firm and commitment to the winemaking profession, notably '*work*', '*primary activity*' and '*profession*'. The family owner in case 14, for example, admits to have the adequate facilities to either invest in the construction of an agritourism business or the development of a restaurant, however, her statement "*this is not our profession*" implies her priority for the winemaking profession and her unwillingness to further engage in agritourism diversification. Therefore, we derive the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Family owners' strong identification with the firm reduces their motivation to engage in agritourism diversification.

Binding social Ties

The third dimension of SEW – binding social ties – relates to family firms' intentions to build strong relationships outside the firm. Families tend to strive for a strong connection with stakeholders, such as consumers and tourists. In this case, families share a sense of responsibility to educate consumers and increase awareness of the local territory, while simultaneously aiming to create long-term relationships. These findings are in line with Tew and Barbieri's (2012) findings, revealing that for the majority of respondents, educating the public about agriculture and retaining current customers by providing improved/additional services, was perceived as very or extremely important.

What is important is to receive tourists that are eager to **learn**. They have to come here to **understand** the area. I prefer tourists who don't know the area and our wines and would like to **learn**. I have two maps that I can use to explain the area and the region.

Also during the wine tasting I will explain the different wines. This is very important (Case 15).

So for me it is that people can have an **experience**. So that people can really know the wines, meet the people, have a look at the vineyard and look at the winery. You see the casks and the bottles, no more, so that people can **understand** our style of winemaking. They can have a **cultural experience** (Case 20).

The highlighted verbs in the quotes above show that family owners outline their desire to share their passion with tourists, building long-term relationships, offering a cultural experience, educating tourists, as well as increasing wineries' visibility. Wine-producing families perceive agritourism to be a beneficial strategy to build social ties by sharing their passion with people from all over the world, and build long-term relationships. Agritourism activities give them greater satisfaction, as they are able to share their family history, ancestors' success stories and winemaking traditions with tourists.

So to **create a bond** with people, show the people our way of working, try to explain them our philosophy and our tradition and create this **relationship with the consumer**, who is interested (Case 23).

When people go away and they say thank you they had a good **experience**, a good wine tasting, now I know you, I know your face, I have an idea of your vineyard and for me going back home and drinking your wine I drink with something more. This is the mission of the wine tasting and of the winery visit here (Case 2).

Looking at the previous excerpts, it becomes evident that motivations for engaging in agritourism diversification are underlined by the importance of developing strong ties with consumers and tourists. Indeed, and in line with our findings, previous studies showed that motivations associated with nurturing and serving existing or potential customers are portrayed as very or extremely important among diversified farmers (e.g. Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009; Bowler et al., 1996; Ollenburg and Buckley, 2007). McGehee and Kim (2004), for example, note in their study that one of the main motivations of operating an agritourism business was the opportunity for building companionship with guests and customers (McGehee and Kim, 2004). More often than not do the social motivations of meeting a variety of people outweigh the economic motivations for farmers and their families (Nickerson et al., 2001).

Similarly, our findings reveal that agritourism-related activities such as winery visits and wine tastings allow for the creation of a relationship due to the face-to-face contact with consumers. By educating consumers and providing memorable experiences to tourists at their wineries, family members ultimately create binding social ties. Family members nurture these relationships with tourists, not only for economic reasons, but also to preserve their SEW. We therefore suggest that:

Proposition 3: Family owners' emphasis on developing binding social ties increases their motivation to engage in agritourism diversification.

Emotional Attachment

The fourth SEW dimension of 'emotional attachment' deals with the role emotions play in family firms' decision-making process. Emotions are likely to influence family firms' activities.

My grandfather built this winery in 1964, he decided straight away to create a space for hospitality, for receiving clients/tourists; which was inaugurated in 1967. So for us it was normal to receive tourists (Case 8).

Highlighting the importance of the family history as well as the family tradition reveals family members' emotional attachment to the firm. Every generation has contributed to the success of the family firm. Ancestors' success stories play an important role in the construction of family owners' accounts. The fact of running the family wine firm at the present time means that ancestors have taken the right decisions and have managed the winery successfully.

I'm **proud** to be able to drive the company forward and follow in the footsteps of my ancestors. So I'm feeling **proud** (Case 20).

For sure moving forward the tradition from our ancestors with **pride**... seeing that we are following all the tradition so for us it is really important to continue to keep it (Case 12).

Knowing that this company has been passed down from father to son for such a long time is something wonderful. It's a great **privilege** (Case 26).

The positive emotion of *pride* is evident in family owners' accounts. Indeed, it is well known that emotions pervade every aspect of people's life and more often than not dominate over reason and guide their decision-making process (Baron, 2008). Positive emotions, as in this case *pride*, have been found to encourage flexibility and openness in decision-making

(Baron, 2008). Family owners' sense of pride and respect demonstrate a strong emotional attachment to the family firm. Accordingly, in our case we propose that:

Proposition 4: Family owners' strong emotional attachment to the firm increases their motivation to engage in agritourism diversification.

Renewal of Family Bonds to the Firm through Dynastic Succession

The final dimension of SEW – the renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession – relates to the importance of transferring the firm to the next generation to guarantee transgenerational sustainability (Berrone et al., 2012; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011).

I have 2 sisters so we are 3 from the new generation. So for them [*the parents*] it was important whoever decided to join the company that we would have our specific role in order to avoid any fights between my 2 sisters and me. So everyone has his or her own space to be able to express him- or herself... So the business aims to grow, we're currently investing, for example in the construction of the restaurant, we're looking for new vineyards, we're looking for new countries to sell our wines. We're always looking to grow (Case 20).

In this particular case, the family took the decision to engage in diversification by opening a wine shop next to the winery and an agritourism business on the outskirts, to include the new generation in the family firm. Each family member would thus occupy a distinct position within the business. One of the daughters is in charge of the agritourism business, the son is responsible for the wine shop and the youngest daughter follows the oenological part of the winery. The importance of succession resulted in the expansion of the business, through

developing agritourism activities. These findings are consistent with other studies' empirical findings that show how agritourism diversification provides on-farm employment opportunities for family members (e.g. Barbieri and Mahoney, 2009; McGehee and Kim, 2004; Schilling et al., 2012). Barbieri and Mahoney (2009), for example, found in their study that farmers were motivated to engage in agritourism diversification, as a way of continuing the farming legacy and keeping the farm in the family by providing employment for family members.

In our case, the family's priorities are to keep the family together and avoid internal conflicts to guarantee the continuity of the family wine firm. Through developing agritourism activities the family is able to employ all of the family members. In this instance, diversification is perceived as a beneficial means for creating additional employment for the next generation and consequently preserve families' SEW.

Likewise, the importance of succession and the involvement of the subsequent generation lead to the adoption of long-term projects (Sirmon and Hitt, 2003).

In 10 years I would like to finish the extension, finish the B&B, finish the restaurant and that would be already a big project... and frankly this would be what I set for myself to do **in the future** ... and then leave it for my son what I will be constructing **in the next 10 years**. Already this project is very ambitious. It's not a small project for us (Case 13).

Family owners tend to adopt a long-term orientation (in bold above) with the desire to pass on the family firm to the next generation. As is evident in the above excerpt, the family's future projects are ambitious and require a significant amount of investment. The family plans to increase the wine production, restructure and enlarge the winery, and develop an agritourism business as well as a restaurant. The subsequent generation plays an important part in the

current development plans. Current investments in the family wine business serve as future opportunities for subsequent generations, thus highlighting the importance of a generational change. The majority of family owners express their desire to engage in agritourism diversification to guarantee employment for new family members. Family wine firms diversify into agritourism through investing in the construction of wine tasting facilities, B&Bs and restaurants to offer the subsequent generation distinct areas of responsibilities within the firm. The subsequent generation thus plays an important role in family wine firms' development plans. Current investments in diversification activities serve as future opportunities for subsequent generations. Therefore, we propose that:

Proposition 5: Family owners' strong emphasis on the renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession increases their motivation to engage in agritourism diversification.

Conclusion

This paper set out to examine the motivations underlying family winery owners' decisions to engage in agritourism diversification. The paper has established that the motivations for engaging in agritourism diversification are considerably more complex when the family context is taken into account. Our findings reveal that family firms' motivations for agritourism are dependent on the context of the wine-producing family, and consequently are driven by family-centred goals. As previously mentioned, family wineries in our Langhe case study are both owned and managed by members of the nuclear or extended family. Family owners' accounts reveal the importance of the family when managing the winery. The family is recognised as the dominant coalition that establishes management control mechanism to ensure the family's interests and organisational goals are achieved.

Applying the SEW framework from the family business literature, we show that family wineries' motivations for agritourism diversification are driven by the importance of preserving the family's socioemotional wealth. We find that the five dimensions of SEW (e.g. family control and influence; family members' identification with the firm; binding social ties; emotional attachment; and renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession) are inextricably linked to families' motivations for engaging in diversification. Family owners' accounts are underpinned by the importance of these SEW dimensions. Drawing on our empirical evidence, we outlined a number of propositions and developed a conceptual model regarding the influence of the five SEW dimensions on family firms' levels of engagement in agritourism diversification (see figure 2). The model shows that when families put increased emphasis on the dimensions of family control and identification with the firm, they are likely to reduce their engagement in agritourism diversification. First, as family wineries are predominantly managed and controlled by the nuclear family, they wish to be in control of the winery as well as the various diversification activities. The accounts revealed family owners' desire to exercise and maintain control of the winery, manage the day-to-day activities and hold the decision-making power. The inclusion of family members in the winery, rather than nonfamily employees, is emphasised on multiple occasions as a way of safeguarding the tradition and keeping family control, thus limiting agritourism diversification.

Second, family owners' strong identification with the firm and their passion for the winemaking profession were found to reduce their motivations for engaging in agritourism diversification. Particularly, the family history, tradition, memories, and ancestors' success stories were recognised as identity-shaping elements, leading family owners to strongly identify with the family and the family firm. They are proud to be a part of the family winery and safeguard the winemaking tradition. They highly respect and follow family tradition, with

winemaking practices being at the core of their self-image (Bryant, 1999). In this instance agritourism diversification was perceived as a threat to families' socioemotional wealth.

The opposite, however, holds true for families, which primarily stress the dimensions of binding social ties, emotional attachment to the firm, and the continuity of the family firm through dynastic succession (see figure 2). In this case, motivations for engaging in diversification were underlined by the importance of developing strong social ties with consumers and tourists. Agritourism-related activities allow family members to engage and interact with consumers face to face. Furthermore, they perceive agritourism diversification to be a beneficial strategy to share their winemaking passion and family history with tourists from all over the world, and build long-term relationships. Likewise, family owners' strong emotional attachment to the firm was found to increase their engagement in diversification. Particularly, the positive emotion of pride was evident in family owners' accounts. Past research revealed that developing feelings of pride urges individuals to share the achievements with others and to engage in even greater achievements in the future (Fredrickson, 2001). Finally, family owners also expressed their desire to engage in agritourism diversification through investing in and developing wine tasting facilities, B&Bs and restaurants to employ family members. In this instance, diversification is seen as a beneficial strategy to offer the subsequent generation distinct areas of responsibilities within the business, thus guaranteeing transgenerational sustainability.

Consequently, agritourism was perceived as a means to preserve or even increase families' socioemotional wealth. This paper thus shows that family owners' motivations for engaging in agritourism diversification are predominantly driven by the importance of preserving families' socioemotional wealth. The five key dimensions of SEW emerged from family owners' accounts as important factors driving family firms' motivations for diversification.

Theoretical and Practical Implication

Our findings have theoretical implications for the understanding of the motivations for agritourism diversification. We contribute to the agricultural literature by moving beyond the economic-noneconomic rationale of diversification decisions (e.g. Barbieri and Mahoney, 2012; McGehee and Kim, 2004; Sharpley and Vass, 2006; Tew and Barbieri, 2012) and by considering the context of the farm and the farm family when diversifying into agritourism (Hansson et al., 2013). By drawing on the socioemotional wealth framework, our paper reveals that family winery owners' decisions to engage in agritourism diversification are predominantly influenced and driven by family-centred motivations. Correspondingly, as most farms are family-owned and managed; we believe that a stronger link is needed between the agricultural and family business literatures to gain a better understanding of the complex set of motivations driving agritourism diversification.

The findings also have potential practical implications for rural development policy (e.g. Common Agricultural Policy) at the European level, as well as for governments and destination management organisations (DMOs) at the regional level. First, diversification is recognised as a central objective of the rural development policy across European Union member states, as a means for enhancing the quality of life of rural communities (Hansson et al., 2013; Lopez-i-Gelats et al., 2011). In this instance, our findings provide policy makers with valuable insights on the motivations underlying farming families' decisions to engage or resist diversification. Particularly, we show how their motivations for diversification are inextricably linked to the situation of the farm family.

Second, at the regional level, findings of this study are likely to have implications for governments and DMOs when promoting and presenting diversification initiatives for rural regeneration. When pursuing economic regeneration, regional governments primarily aim for

social cohesion, sustainability and economic growth. We have shown that the development of the tourism industry in Langhe led to conflicting views and perceptions developed by wine-producing families regarding their involvement in agritourism. Regional government officials need to take into consideration the complexity of farming families' motivations for diversification and position their message accordingly to ensure receptivity. Indeed, while government officials might highlight the economic benefits of diversification at the individual, societal and regional level, including increased profits, generation of additional income, as well as employment creation and retention, the findings of this study clearly indicate that a more refined approach is needed, emphasising the family benefits of agritourism diversification. Accordingly, understanding the motivations underlying farming families' decisions to diversify into agritourism can have wider impacts on the rural economy, society and future agritourism planning and development initiatives.

Limitations and Future Research

While the participating family wine firms have all engaged to a greater or lesser extent in agritourism diversification, non-diversified family firms were not included in this research. Even though attempts were made to contact non-diversified family wineries, these were unwilling to participate in this research, which could be seen as a potential limitation of this study. Likewise, prior studies have largely concentrated on the farms that have diversified and overlooked the ones that resisted and opposed diversification (Northcote and Alonso, 2011). Traditionally, scholars argued that the motivations not to engage in farm diversification are predominantly linked to attributes such as lack of capital, location (Northcote and Alonso, 2011), farmers' lack of skills, tenancy restrictions and land-use planning controls (Ilbery, 1991). However, to date there is little knowledge about how the motives differ between diversified and non-diversified farmers in situations where few, if any, of the above constraints apply.

Therefore, we believe that future research in this area should focus on family farms, which have resisted diversification. There is more to learn about non-diversified family farms and their reasons and motivations for resisting agritourism diversification (Hansson et al., 2013). Are their non-diversification decisions driven by similar, family-centred motives or do their accounts reveal different motives? Diversified and non-diversified family farms could thus be compared and contrasted to discover potential similarities or differences.

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Figure 1 - Socioemotional wealth model

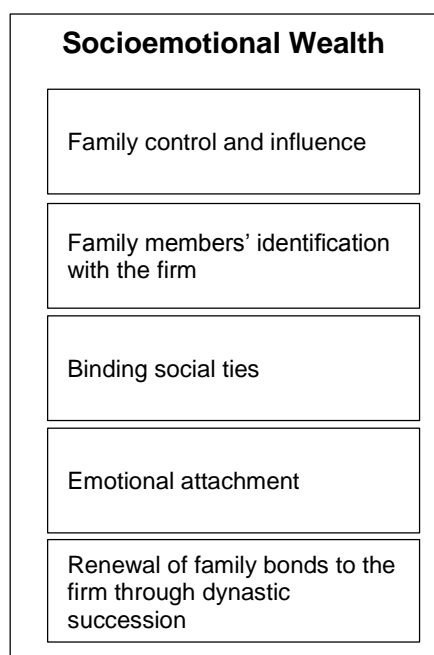


Table 1 - Winery owner sample

Case Number	Foundation of Winery	Generations of Winemaking	Gender of Family Owner	Family Composition (n. of family members working in the winery)
Case 1	1919	3	F	2
Case 2	1958	2	M	3
Case 3	1885	4	M	3
Case 4	1990	2	F	5
Case 5	1978	2	M	3
Case 6	1924	3	M	3
Case 7	1950	2	M	2
Case 8	1964	5	M	3

Case 9	1948	4	M	5
Case 10	1982	2	M	4
Case 11	1965	3	M	2
Case 12	1941	3	M	3
Case 13	1957	3	M	3
Case 14	1878	2	M	3
Case 15	1991	4	F	3
Case 16	1953	3	M	4
Case 17	1927	3	M	2
Case 18	1979	2	M	2
Case 19	1971	3	M	5
Case 20	1959	6	M	4
Case 21	1896	4	M	3
Case 22	1982	3	M	3
Case 23	1878	7	F	3
Case 24	1902	4	M	2
Case 25	1997	1	M	2
Case 26	1945	3	F	3
Case 27	1975	5	M	2
Case 28	1970	3	F	6

Table 2 - Agritourism Diversification Activities

Case Number(s): 1-28	Wine tastings	Winery Visits	Cellar Door Sales	B&B	Other
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	Restaurant
9, 16, 19, 20, 24, 26	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12, 13	✓	✓	✓		Restaurant
4, 11	✓	✓	✓		Sightseeing tours
6	✓	✓	✓		Camping
5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28,	✓	✓	✓		
2	✓		✓	✓	
1	✓	✓			

Figure 2 - Conceptual model

