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Touristic Authenticity and Value Co-Creation: An Exploration of Two Local Wineries in Southeastern Arizona, USA

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Abstract

Local wineries typically generate revenues and increase product exposure through touristic activities and strategies. Moreover, tourism represents an opportunity for local wineries to purposefully engage customers in the co-creation of products and services, which in turn promotes greater customer loyalty (Hollebeek & Brodie 2009). In this paper, we explore the intersection of touristic authenticity (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999) and value co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a,b) at two local wineries located in the Sonoita-Elgin Wine Region of Southeastern Arizona, USA. Our findings indicate that touristic authenticity is enhanced through the application of the four core principles of value co-creation —dialogue, accessibility, risk assessment, transparency. Based on the findings, a value co-creation guide is proposed as a practical tool to be used by local wineries to empower tourists as value co-creators. Equally important, potential spillover effects of such empowerment on the rural communities and economies in which local wineries exist are considered.

Keywords: Touristic authenticity, value co-creation

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1.0 Introduction

The various implications of tourism on the community and economic development of rural regions have been widely studied. While there is some debate over the social and economic costs and benefits of tourist activities on rural development (e.g., Koutsouris, Gidarakou, Grava, & Michailidis, 2014), tourism is largely viewed as a strong contributor to the overall vibrancy and vitality of rural communities and regions (e.g., Fleisher & Tchetchik, 2005; Komppula, 2014; Vaughn, Farr, & Slee, 2009). More specific to the current study, wine tourism has been shown to be a powerful input to regional development campaigns (Boyne, Hall, & Williams, 2003; Jackson & Murphy, 2006). At the organizational level, tourism has been shown to be effective in building consumer loyalty toward local wineries, which often lack the capacity to compete in large-scale retail environments (Lockshin & Spawton, 2001). The types of tourism experiences offered through on-site activities and events directly influence the loyalty tourists develop to both the wineries and the rural regions in which they are located (Espejel & Fandos, 2009; Getz & Brown, 2006; Galloway, Mitchell, Getz, Crouch, & Ong, 2008). In the current study, we take a novel approach to the exploration of authenticity of tourist experiences offered by local wineries. Specifically, we explore how, if at all, the application of value co-creation principles (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a,b) may enhance touristic authenticity at local wineries and thereby develop stronger consumer commitments to both the wineries and the rural economies they help support. We draw on the insights generated through the exploration to propose a practical, yet strategic local winery value co-creation guide.

In the contemporary industrialized economy, the delivery of services by businesses often takes precedence over the provision of products (Buera & Kaboski, 2012; Edvardsson, Tronvoll, & Gruber, 2011; Flint, 2006). Therefore, customers are increasingly likely to become active participants in service exchange and thus co-creators of value (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009). From this contemporary business-customer dynamic emerges the concept of value co-creation. Generally defined, value co-creation is the interactive, dialogue-based process that occurs between businesses and customers with the value of services being determined and enhanced through the direct experiences and feedback of customers (Bellantyne, 2004; Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008).

Value co-creation is a now a common component of tourism marketing (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Hollebeek & Brodie, 2009; Rihova, Buhalis, Moital, & Gouthro, 2015). Yet, there is a paucity of research on the relevancy and application of value co-creation strategies specific to local wineries. These wineries frequently struggle to meet the scale of production that is required to compete in large-scale retail environments (Sun, Gomez, Chaddad, & Ross, 2014) and thus commonly pursue self-distribution models with tourism serving as a central marketing strategy (Yuan & Jang, 2007). Accordingly, the empowerment of local winery tourists as value co-creators and the potential implications on both the wineries and the rural economies in which they exist warrants scholarly attention.

2.0 Literature Review and Theory

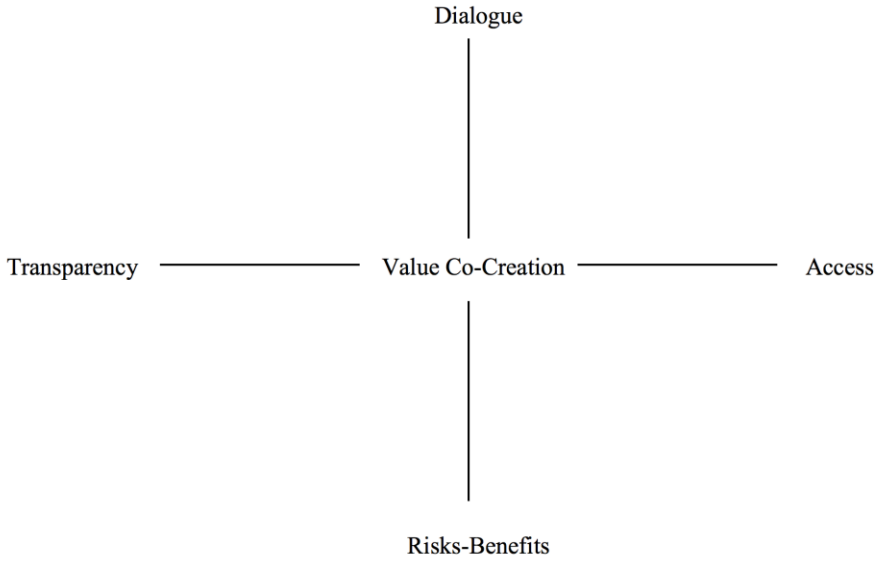
The concept of value co-creation originates within the service-centered marketing literature (e.g., Vargo & Lusch, 2004; 2008). In general, value co-creation occurs through business-customer interactions that facilitate the exchange of information relevant to the challenges, opportunities, and preferences associated with products and services (Gronroos, 2011; Gummerus, 2013; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008). Value co-creation strategies can be particularly effective in shaping initiatives designed to enhance the experience-based reputations of businesses that include tourist activities and experiences (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007). Tourism is inherently focused on the delivery and consumption of experiences. On one hand, value co-creation strategies can be particularly effective in building and enhancing the brands of local wineries that rely heavily on tourism as a marketing mechanism (Hollebeek & Brodie, 2009). On the other hand, empowering tourists to be value co-creators can help them mitigate the aesthetic uncertainties—for example, attributes of taste and quality, food pairing—that accompany wine consumption (Lockshin, Rasmussen, & Cleary, 2000).

Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004a, b) D.A.R.T. framework is used to analyze the integration of value co-creation mechanisms in the tourism strategies of local wineries. We consider the likely variations in how local wineries engage such strategies based on degrees of customer interaction (Zhang & Chen, 2008). Lastly, touristic authenticity (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999) and agritourism typology (Flanigan, Blackstock, & Hunter, 2014; Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010) guide our understanding of the dynamic between the authenticity of touristic experiences and value co-creation at local wineries.

2.1 Value Co-Creation and the D.A.R.T. Framework

Prahalad and Ramaswamy's framework is composed of four constructs, which provide the basis for the interactions between businesses and customers that foster value co-creation. The four constructs are: dialogue, access, risks-benefits and transparency (D.A.R.T). 'Dialogue' involves engaged and purposeful interactions between businesses and customers that promote shared learning, joint problem solving, and a strong sense of co-ownership. 'Access' occurs when businesses make operational information available to their customers and customers make their views on products and services known to businesses. The exchange of knowledge and perspectives allow businesses and customers to engage in meaningful' risk assessment'. For example, such risk assessment may involve vintners weighing the threats associated with changing a recipe to tourists working to overcome aesthetic-based uncertainties associated with wine consumption. Lastly, 'transparency' refers to the degree to which businesses openly describe their business practices, strategies and challenges and customers freely share their criticisms of products and services. As Figure 1 illustrates, value co-creation occurs when all four constructs converge through purposeful business-customer interactions.

Figure 1. D.A.R.T Framework.



Variations in the implementation of the D.A.R.T. constructs can be categorized according to three models that together form a business-customer interaction continuum (Zhang & Chen, 2008). The *Traditional Model* treats customers only as passive participants. Businesses that adhere to this company-centric model disproportionately influence customer experiences and leave no opportunities for value co-creation. Some businesses have over the past several decades modestly integrated customers into some operational tasks—for example, self-checkouts. However, this *Partial Interaction Model* provides customers with a minimal role in the creation of value. The *Value Co-Creation Model* involves businesses providing customers with meaningful insights on and opportunities to collaborate in operational processes.

2.2 Touristic Authenticity

The notion of authenticity has long been used to understand the nature and impacts of various touristic experiences and models (MacCannell, 1973). Touristic authenticity is largely treated as a socially constructed concept that is shaped by how 'real' or staged experiences are perceived to be by individual tourists (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999). The impacts of authenticity have been heavily considered specific to the myths and realities conveyed through cultural tourism and the subsequent perspectives and understandings of artifacts developed and held by tourists (Halewood & Hannan, 2001; Lacy & Douglass, 2002; Taylor, 2001; Uriely, 2005; Wallby & Piche, 2015). In this regard, authenticity is a primary focal point of critiques of the commodification of cultural phenomena through tourism enterprise. Touristic authenticity has also been considered in the context of consumer behavior relevant to heritage seeking versus leisure seeking motivations (Chang, 2006; Mitchell, 2013; Mitchell & Vanderwerf, 2010; Qun, Mitchell, & Wall, 2012).

The depiction of authenticity specific to agritoursim help guide our exploration of how the authenticity of wine tourism experiences empower tourists to act as value co-creators. *Agritourism* spans the many different forms of agricultural enterprise that involve serving customers directly at production sites—for example, outdoor recreation, education experiences, hospitality services—(Bernardo, Valentine, & Leatherman, 2004). The interface between agricultural production and consumption, especially that involving food and beverage, is a primary focal point of agritourism. Consistent with the preceding slice of literature specific to cultural tourism, the authenticity of agritourism experiences has been mostly studied in the context of rural culture and agricultural heritage (Daugstad & Kirchengast, 2013; Frisvoll, 2013). We contribute a new perspective by considering how authenticity can be strategically leveraged by local wineries to empower customers to act as value co-creators with deeper loyalties to both the wineries and the rural regions within which they are located.

Agritourism typology guides our identification of the staged and authentic touristic experiences that influence value co-creation at local wineries (Flanigan, et al., 2014; Phillip, et al., 2010). Staged touristic experiences are planned and standardized. Wine festivals, scripted vineyard tours, and structured tasting room activities are examples of staged local winery experiences. Authentic touristic experiences are spontaneous and fluid. The impromptu participation in grape harvesting and vinification—wine making—processes by tourists is an example of authentic local winery experiences.

3.0 Methods

In this study, we qualitatively explore the ways in which touristic authenticity at two local wineries in the Sonoita-Elgin Wine Region (SEWR) of Southeastern Arizona (AZ), USA empower tourists to act as value co-creators. We ask the following two questions:

1. How, if at all, do local wineries in the SEWR engage the principles of value co-creation during touristic activities?
2. How, if at all, does touristic authenticity influence the degree of engagement in value co-creation by local wineries in the SEWR?

3.1 Research Design

Our research involves a multiple case study (Creswell, 2007) that is bounded within the SEWR of AZ, USA. The SEWR is located in Santa Cruz County, which is a 1,238-square mile county located in the southeastern portion of AZ along the USA-Mexico border. Arizona currently has a total of 92 licensed wineries and vineyards, which together grow over 20 types of grapes (Western Farm Press, 2014a). The AZ wine industry is composed of three primary grape-growing regions: the SEWR, the Verde Valley, and the Willcox area. The SEWR is the oldest of the three regions having been founded in 1983 with the opening of Sonoita Vineyards (Western Farm Press, 2014b).

Theoretical-based and heterogeneous sampling techniques (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007a,b) guided the selection of the two SEWR local wineries as our cases. First, theoretical-based sampling was used to limit our case selection to SEWR

wineries that operate on a local scale and engage in some type of on-site tourism activities. Second, heterogeneous sampling was used to identify local wineries that vary in terms of touristic approaches and models—that is, staged versus authentic—(Flanigan, et al., 2014; Phillip, et al., 2010). Final case selection was made following a pilot analysis—that is, website scans, informational interviews, unplanned site visits—of the nine wineries that make up the SEWR. In order to provide anonymity, we identify the two wineries we ultimately selected for our study by the following pseudonyms: *Mustang Winery (MW)* and *Sky Island Vines (SIV)*.

3.2 Participant Sample Selection

Our study includes two participant sub-samples. The first sub-sample is composed of three managers from each winery (n=6) and the second of tourists (n=27) with 17 being from MW and 10 from SIV. The tourists were intercepted on-site without previous researcher contact and thus had no prior knowledge of the study (Bush & Hair, Jr., 1985; McCormack, Adams, & Anderson, 2013; Sheskin, 1985). The tourist visitation rates at each winery are sporadic and unpredictable, which ultimately limited the size of each of the two tourist sub-samples. However, interviews were conducted over multiple visits to each winery until response trends became evident. The exploratory depth achieved through the in-person interviews enhanced the trustworthiness of the response trends despite the relatively small sub-sample sizes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Each participant was randomly assigned a pseudonym in order to protect his or her individual anonymity.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected primarily through individual, semi-structured interviews and secondarily through naturalistic observations. The manager and tourist interview protocols were designed to explore touristic authenticity (Flanigan, et al., 2014; Phillip, et al., 2010) of each winery, the manifestation of the four D.A.R.T value co-creation constructs (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a,b) at each winery with particular attention directed at tourism activities, and positioning of each winery along the business-customer interaction continuum (Zhang & Chen, 2008). The interview protocols were piloted at another SEWR local winery with one manager and three tourists being interviewed. The insights gained through the pilot were used to refine and finalize protocols. All interviews, which lasted on average 40 minutes, were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Additionally, over 80 hours of naturalistic observations (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000) of manager-tourist interactions and tourist interactions with the 'servicescapes' of the wineries (Bitner, 1992) were conducted and recorded in handwritten field notes.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed both deductively and inductively. Deductively, we utilized a structured coding framework per the recommendations of Miles and Huberman (1994). Specifically, the characteristics of staged and authentic touristic experiences (Flanigan, et. al., 2014; Phillips, et al., 2010), the four D.A.R.T value co-creation constructs (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, b), and the three business-customer interaction models (Zhang & Chen, 2008) composed the analytical framework. We independently and collectively analyzed the data at the idiographic—individual data sources—and nomothetic—across data sources—levels. Idiographic analysis revealed patterns and trends specific to the individual

participants. Nomothetic analysis of the data was then performed multiple times at three different levels in order to reveal emergent trends—or meta-themes—across the sub-samples. First, data collected from the managers and tourists of each winery were compared and contrasted several times. Next, data collected from both winery sub-samples were compared and contrasted multiple times. Finally, data across the entire sample were compared and contrasted. The purpose of nomothetic analysis in qualitative research is to reveal emergent trends—or meta-themes—rather than to generate generalizable findings (Gelo, Braakman, & Benetka, 2008). Furthermore, the richness and contextual detail of the data included in a particular qualitative study is more important to the identification of meta-themes than is sample size (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Thus, sub-sample size did not prevent or limit our capacity to perform nomothetic analysis. Inductively, we conducted open coding to reveal any trends or patterns in the data relevant to our research questions, but not reflective of the coding framework (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Throughout each level and round of analysis, the data was reduced and synthesized to reveal the most salient trends and patterns relevant to our two guiding questions.

3.5 Positionality, Trustworthiness, and Limitations

The lead researcher of this study was raised in the SEWR and has worked at multiple local wineries and wine-related festivals. This community membership and experience enhanced the wineries' support of our research and increased our access to participants. This positionality also brought to the analysis a deeper understanding of the area's wine industry, economy, and culture. However, the same positionality also left the opportunity for bias, which we worked to limit and thereby strengthen the trustworthiness of the analysis and overall findings. Specifically, data were collected from multiple sources and analyzed both independently and collectively at the idiopathic and nomothetic levels, allowing for triangulation and the establishment of credibility (Berg & Lane, 2014). Also, an audit trail specific to instrument development and application, raw data collection, and analytical procedures and processes was systematically kept over the course of the study in order to strengthen the dependability and conformability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We established by the audit trail by individually and comparatively journaling and memoing all of the analytical steps taken and decisions made throughout the entirety of the study. Overall, the establishment and maintenance of the audit trail enhanced the trustworthiness and overall credibility of the study by making the analytical process transparent and replicable (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

4.0 Findings

4.1 Touristic Authenticity

Tourism is a central component of the business models at both MW and SIV. Yet, there are important differences in how each winery engages tourists in on-site activities and experiences. Specifically, the three MW managers, Emma, Tonya, and Sherri, mostly describe staged touristic experiences at their winery. For instance, Emma states, "Tastings are offered daily from 10am to 4pm. The tours need to be scheduled beforehand since we are a working farm… I have to make sure that my winery and production area where I give tours are clean." She also describes a distancing of tourists from production when commenting, "we don't

want them [tourists] messing with any of the heavy equipment or touching anything that they shouldn't touch."

Despite Emma's description of staged tourism, Sherri provides evidence that the MW tourism model includes by necessity some authentic elements. She says:

> We have no time to shut down. We'll get a lot of those marketing people wanting to sell us the pre-recorded tour, and I'm like, we can't have a recorded tour. You know what I mean? Because it's [winery activities] always something different.

Sherri also points out that during the week when there is less tourist traffic, the winery will sometimes give spontaneous tours that include, for example, a closer look at the barrel room.

The MW tourists overall describe having encountered a staged experience while touring the winery. Yet, two tourists, Kevin and Heather, do mention an authentic, spur-of-the-moment experience, in which the vinification area was opened for people to explore. Heather says:

> Yesterday they opened the wine making area. That's really cool, a lot of people don't really know about the process. We didn't before we just started asking, everyone has been very open to share and to educate people in the process.

Despite the occasional impromptu experience such as that described by Heather, the touristic experiences offered by MW remain primarily staged. While informative, one risk of these staged experiences is leaving tourists somewhat detached from the reality of the winery and its products. For example, Chris says, "One thing I'd like to do some day, do like a tour of the actual how they make the wine."

The SIV managers, Ashley, Krystal, and Danielle, also describe variations in the experiences they offer to tourists. The staged components of their tourism model center on the monthly festivals they host, which range from concert campouts to grape stomp festivals. On one hand, Danielle, the winery's vintner, explains how some of their major events, such as the grape stomp, are staged to provide customers with the experiences they want:

> During our grape stomp events, we use table grapes. It's just giving people the experience they want. People have this idea about wineries that's romantic and that it's just fun and drinking and all that stuff. That's not quite the case, but we give them that when they come to our events.

On the other hand, she also describes the authenticity of the experiences tourists are provided when the winery solicits help in harvesting or weeding the vineyard. Danielle exclaims this type of experience is "as real as it gets!" She also describes instances when she has randomly offered samples of wine that she is currently working on blending and bottling to tasting room visitors. Danielle's intent in

providing such spontaneous offerings is to both enhance the openness of the winery's setting and garner customer feedback throughout the product development process.

Ashley further illuminated the winery's spontaneous approach to authentic tourism when stating:

> We had a girl come in this Thursday and it was her birthday and this is her favorite place… While she happened to be here, my sister [Danielle] was pruning out in the vineyard, and I said, 'Well if you want to go out and prune with her, you can.' So, she got to go out and experience that.

Similarly, Krystal describes how the winery "offers days where, if people want to work in the vineyard, just to see how it works, they can."

The tourists commonly use terms such as "down-to-earth," "approachable," and "honest," to describe their experiences at SIV. The tourists recognize and appreciate the authenticity of the SIV touristic experiences, which Jason captures when stating, "[SIV] realizes it's a small vineyard and it's made its niche. It's always been an incredibly fun time and engaging experience to come here."

Both MW and SIV offer a mix of staged and authentic touristic experiences that include both 'in-the-moment' activities and larger planned events. Overall, however, the activities, experiences, and perceptions described by the managers and tourists at each winery indicate MW is oriented more toward staged experiences and SIV more toward the authentic experiences. Next, we consider the implications of such differences in orientation in the context of the four value co-creation constructs (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, b).

4.2 Value Co-Creation

4.2.1 Dialogue. Considering the MW and SIV business models are both centered primarily on tastings and on-site sales, dialogue between personnel and tourists is frequent and critical at both wineries. At MW, dialogue most often begins in a relatively staged manner with winery staff informing and educating their customers on the products they offer. In particular, the MW managers believe tourists are primarily looking for a greater understanding of the production and local features of the wines. Accordingly, the tasting room is purposefully set up to reflect this assumption. Emma states:

> Typically, if people make the drive our here, generally they're pretty interested…in the actual wine production, how it's made, they like that it's local. They like that they can see the vines and see our equipment right from the tasting room.

MW also features storytelling in their relatively scripted approach to tourist engagement. Emma goes on to say:

> We answer their [customers] questions if they have any or just start telling the story of how Dr. Dutt started the [SEWR] wine industry… If they are not interested and they want the wine, we'll just poor the wine and just kind of leave it at that.

The staged setting and relatively structured dialogue is also reflected in the comments of the tourists, who overall describe somewhat formal conversations with winery staff that are centered on the technical dimensions of the wine and its on-site production. For example, Fallon says, "they're [winery staff] very giving with their information and knowledge."

While relatively structured, the MW managers are attentive to opportunities to depart from staged dialogue and engage tourists in more authentic conversation. Sherri explains:

> On busy days, I would say we probably don't get any one on one real interaction with them, we're just like pouring wine, giving them a short synopsis and moving on. On other days, if they come in, I call them giving customers [tourists] because they're open to telling you where they're from… and they're very interested in the area and the winery and stuff, those conversations can go on like for hours or more.

The generally staged nature of the touristic experiences offered by MW makes such personal and unscripted dialogue the exception rather than the norm.

The fluid and spontaneous approach SIV applies to its delivery of touristic experiences promotes authentic dialogue. For example, Jeff, a return visitor to the winery, enthusiastically describes an impromptu conversation he had during his most recent SIV tour when his guide advised him on how to "pair the wines with normal foods… like pairing Cheetos with this wine. I thought that was very cool." In fact, the winery tailors conversations to the specific interests of tourists, which are revealed through unplanned and unscripted winery-tourist interactions. Danielle explains:

> When I'm working on the winery and customers [tourists] come out there, I love showing them what I'm doing and explaining it to them and then letting people taste one barrel from the next for a kind of side-by-side comparison… things like that are super interesting and educational for us and them.

Moreover, the SIV managers all indicate the distinct terroir characteristics of the SEWR—soil conditions specific to wine grape crops—and the socio-cultural and economic features of the broader region commonly emerge from casual conversations between winery personnel and tourists. Likewise, the tourists commonly develop through such organic conversations an affinity for SIV and its products, as well as the SEWR itself. Thus, the perspectives shared by the SIV managers and tourists indicate authentic dialogue promotes meaningful

interactions helps to more intimately connect tourists to the winery and the surrounding region.

4.2.2 Accessibility. The preceding dialogues are heavily shaped by the accessibility of the wineries to tourists. Specific to value co-creation, access refers to the availability of products and service and, equally important, contact with the processes and dynamics associated with their development. On-site sales generate the majority of revenue for both MW and SIV. Specifically, Emma of MW indicates "about between 94 and 95% of our sales are directly from the tasting room." The remaining five percent of the winery's sales are generated within small boutique liquor stores and wine bars located across AZ, as well as in several high-end grocery stores that are located within the SEWR. SIV relies even more heavily on on-site sales with Ashley estimating "98% of our sales come from our tasting room." The availability of SIV wines outside of the winery is restricted to local restaurants and stores within the SEWR.

Atmosphere is a core determinant of accessibility with both wineries indicating the importance of creating an atmosphere comfortable enough to compel tourists to make return visits and multiple purchases. MW relies on the physical surroundings of the winery and its on-site vineyard to expose tourists to its production process. According to Emma, "They [tourists] can see the vines and the grapes during our harvest." Alexa expresses an appreciation for being able to see the MW vines, which reinforces her recognition of the wines as locally produced goods. She compares MW with another SEWR winery that was more closed and without a vineyard when saying, "The first place that we went to, we asked questions, like, 'We live in the desert. Where are the grapes grown?' But here, there's vines… It's just cool to see the vines."

Emma does describe how tourists have the most direct, hands-on access to the MW vineyard and the production process during planned events, such as the winery's Harvest Festival when grapes are able to be picked, tasted, and stomped. Regardless, the physical surroundings of MW and the visibility of its vineyard provide tourists with mostly staged access to its production process. This primarily staged environment is consistent with the relatively structured dialogue that routinely takes place in the MW tasting room. In some cases, the limitations of the staged experience left tourists wanting to see more of the winery and learn more about how it produces its wines. For example, Chris says, "I'd like to do a tour of the actual winery to see how they make the wine."

SIV also maintains an on-site vineyard, which provides its tourists with enhanced access to its production processes. Ashley describes the importance of such access to the overall experience the winery is able to offer tourists when saying:

> They have the experience of being in such a pastoral setting and actually seeing where the wine comes from, where it's produced, where it's made. Anybody can go in a grocery and go buy a $10 bottle of wine. Instead, they can come down here and have the full experience of seeing where it's produced and meet the people making it.

Compared to MW, SIV allows for more open access to its vineyard, which helps illuminate the locality and rurality of production. This level of openness also spills

over to the production area. Krystal explains:

> They [tourists] can really see every aspect of the tasting room. We explain how the whole process is. Anytime they have a question, or if they want to see anything, people are always here to help them. Any questions they have, we've got them answered. If they ask about where the wine's made, I'll show them the barrel room, and if Danielle [the vintner] is here, she'll do barrel tastings.

The openness of the winery and its vineyard creates an atmosphere that the tourists describe using terms such as 'real,' 'fun,' 'not pretentious,' and 'unique.' In comparing SIV's atmosphere to MW, Jason states:

> [MW] is great, I've been to events there, like the [special event], and the food pairings, and the wine has been very good. But it's not a fun atmosphere, not like [SIV]. [MW] tries too hard to be somewhere like the California Wine Country, where you have the tradition, the infrastructure, and the legacy, whereas [SIV] realizes it's a small vineyard and it's made its niche. It's always been an incredibly fun time and experience to come here.

The open atmosphere described by Jason and Kayla further enhances the authentic environment of the winery and its representation of the SEWR and the surrounding communities. This openness and authenticity seems to be positively associated with customer loyalty as indicated by Fallon who says, "We've been here many times. It's usually our last stop [along the SEWR trail], so we always enjoy it. Sit back and relax before we head home!"

4.2.3 Risk assessment. No managers or tourists at either winery made mention of conversations that explored known health risks and potential benefits of wine consumption. Both wineries do regularly assess and work to reduce the risks of hosting tourists on their grounds. For instance, Emma describes how MW is highly attentive to the potential hazards that tourists can be exposed to during the different stages of the growing season. She explains, "We [winery] make sure that if any kind of anything has been sprayed in the vineyard that people aren't allowed in it." In general, risk assessment and mitigation in the most literal sense is routine at both wineries.

We did observe risk assessment occurring at both wineries in a more unconventional sense with focus being on the aesthetic qualities of the wine—for example, taste. On the production side, the wineries are notably different in terms of how tourist feedback is leveraged as a tool for reducing the risks associated with customer tastes and preferences. The vintners at both wineries accept and appreciate tourist feedback on their wines. However, Emma, the MW vintner, remains mostly reliant on her personal tastes and those of her staff. In doing so, she chooses to use her own expertise and that of her staff when making the wine, which is an approach reflective of the traditional, company-centric interaction

model. Conversely, Danielle, the SIV vintner, actively incorporates tourist input into the choices she makes when working with new or aging wines, even going so far as to wait on or alter a blend until it aligns with tourist suggestions that are common and/or interesting. Her approach directly embeds tourists in the risk assessment process that shapes product development and the overall strategy for creating wines with greater customer appeal. This approach is indicative of the value co-creation interaction model.

On the consumption side, the notion of risk was observed at both wineries through experiences that aid tourists in becoming more confident in their competencies to select, purchase, and consume wines. Recall that individuals are often intimidated by the sophistication and uncertainties associated with wine consumption (Lockshin, et al., 2000) and that the interactions that take place at wineries can help individuals mitigate the resulting insecurities (Hollebeek & Brodie, 2009). The ease to which tourists are able to ask questions and freely demonstrate their ignorance when it comes to wine vernacular, evaluation, and etiquette stimulated educational conversations at both wineries. These conversations appeared to boost the confidence of tourists to make more informed choices regarding the wines they purchase and consume. For example, Tyson describes how a MW tasting room server helped his parents move beyond the intimidation of being wine novices when saying:

> My parents aren't big wine drinkers, so he was recommending things that were specifically of their liking… going the extra mile. My mom doesn't really taste but he let her taste a couple without charging her the whole tasting fee.

Other MW tourists, as well as those at SIV, expressed similar appreciation for the opportunities to learn about wine consumption through their touristic experiences. In short, touristic experiences at both wineries appear to enhance the capacities of tourists to weigh the pros and cons of various wines before making consumption decisions.

4.2.4 Transparency. While primarily reliant on a staged touristic model, MV is not excessively guarded when it comes to its production activities. The winery allows tourists to observe, through staged experiences, the growing and harvesting of its grapes, as well as view the production area in which the wine is made. This level of transparency extenuates the localization of the winery and its products. The winery does not, however, provide tourists with insights into the strategic vision of the winery nor the challenges it faces as a local, small-scale business. When asked to describe his understanding of MW's future direction, Cody says:

> I'd like to know where they're [MW] going. What are they thinking of in the future? What kind of wines are they planning? What kind of pairings do they want to do? That would be the biggest one, is where do they want to see the winery in 10 years, and what kind of wines do they want to be producing.

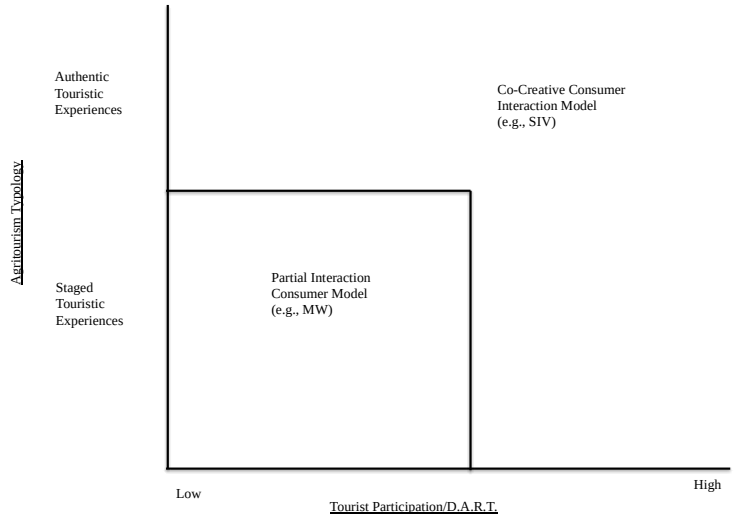
By not discussing current challenges and future plans with curious tourists such as Cody, MW is likely missing opportunities to build brand loyalty and advocate for the importance of local enterprise within the rural economy in which it operates.

SIV's authentic touristic approach makes the winery highly transparent to its tourists. This level of transparency transcends routine production to include the daily challenges that come along with operating a local winery. In describing the transparency of the winery, Ashley states, "If something is happening here, like there's a fire on the property, we post on Facebook, 'Pray for us,' and people feel like are part of it [SIV challenges]." Danielle indicates such transparency encourages some tourists to participate in the creation and implementation of solutions. She exclaims, "They [tourists] love getting dirty, they love being out there. When stuff breaks here, which does all the time, customers [tourists] will jump in and help us. They're a part of it [winery operations]." SIV management is equally transparent when it comes to the future plans for the winery, which was not lost on the tourists. For instance, in describing a conversation had with the SIV tasting room server regarding the current and future plans of the winery Jordan says, "She [tasting room server] was very knowledgeable about the process that the owners are going through. I was not talking to one of the owners." The high level of transparency that occurs through SIV touristic experiences staff promotes meaningful connections between the winery, its tourists, and the surrounding rural community and economy.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

Our findings reveal a synergistic dynamic between the touristic authenticity of the two local wineries and the ways in which each interacts and engages tourists in value co-creation. When deconstructed, this dynamic becomes a practical, yet strategic value co-creation guide for local wineries that engage in tourism activities. Figure two illustrates the overall dynamic and dimensions that together compose the guide.

Figure 2. Local Winery Value Co-Creation Dynamic.



The first dimension composing the guide is agritourism typology (Flanigan, et al., 2014; Phillip, et al., 2010) and, more specifically, authentic and staged touristic experiences (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999). Our analysis indicates that the authenticity of touristic experiences works to empower tourists to act as value co-creators. Recall that local wineries often rely on tourism as a primary sales channel (Phillip, et al., 2010; Yuan & Jang, 2007). Considering value co-creation builds customer loyalty and brand recognition (Kim, Ritchies, & McCormick, 2012), local wineries are encouraged to consider strategies for increasing the authenticity of tourism activities and thereby the likelihood of value co-creation.

The second dimension of the guide is tourist participation. The data reveal that the more directly engaged tourists become during activities and experiences, the more likely value co-creation is to occur. Conversely, the more detached tourists are from the true operational models and practices of local wineries during tourism activities and experiences, the less likely value co-creation is to occur. Furthermore, the more authentic—or less staged—tourist experiences are, the more meaningful touristic interactions become. Accordingly, we next recommend strategies for the purposeful application of the four value co-creation constructs (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, b) throughout the development, implementation, and enhancement of authentic touristic experiences at local wineries.

Dialogue can be made more impactful by minimizing the scripted presentation of product information and fostering unplanned, informal discussions between a local winery and tourists. The authentic dialogue that results is likely to stimulate the free exchange of ideas, shared learning, and joint problem solving. Authentic dialogue also increases opportunities for the demystification of the local winery's production processes and the consumption of its products. This demystification can be particularly powerful in unmasking the sophistication of wine consumption, which often leaves individuals overwhelmed by the many intricacies related to taste, quality, pairings, etc. The resulting clarity achieved through authentic dialogue can empower tourists to the point of adopting a symbolic position of co-ownership in and sustained sense of loyalty to a local winery.

Local wineries should not focus authentic dialogue just on their operations, products, and strategies. Instead, such dialogue should involve discussions of the surrounding wine region and the communities within. Research on the intersection of destination and local brand loyalties indicates that customer commitments to local providers and products strengthen as connections to 'place' are made (Hede & Watne, 2013; Murray & Kline, 2015). Thus, the infusion of community and regional contexts within authentic dialogue has the potential to bolster tourist affinity and loyalty to both the wineries and their rural locales.

Accessibility can be increased by making product information and relevant recipes more available to tourists through a wider variety of on-site print materials and web-based media. Accessibility can also be expanded specific to production by designing the operational components of local wineries and vineyards to be as freely open as possible to tourist traffic and, when possible, participation. In doing so, local wineries can purposefully integrate the routine presence of tourists in daily activities. This integration is likely to further promote the authentic experiences that foster tourist participation and co-creation. Local wineries should also be more attentive to opportunities to illustrate the relationships between themselves and surrounding communities throughout touristic activities. In doing so, the community context in which the wine is produced becomes more apparent

and accessible to tourists. This symbiotic approach represents a strategy for developing tourist affiliation with and loyalty to both the local wineries and surrounding rural communities and economies.

Risk assessment can be promoted in the most literal sense through more in-depth discussions of alcohol content and the associated health effects. However, the notion of risk assessment should also include more aesthetic-based conversations that educate tourists on the pros and cons of one wine variety over another, the implications of pairing certain wines with certain foods, etc. Such conversations can help tourists overcome apprehensions and uncertainties related to their knowledge of wine consumption and etiquette, as well as provide local wineries with individualized customer input relevant to future product development. Additionally, conversations that promote the benefits of experimenting with local wine varieties over well-established mainstream brands may also enhance the willingness of tourists to choose locally produced products over mass-produced alternatives.

Transparency can be increased through the authentic dialogue and open access previously described. In particular, local wineries are encouraged to engage tourists in discussions of the opportunities and challenges that influence their production choices and shape their business strategies. In doing so, tourists can gain a more intimate and holistic understanding of the wineries, as well as the challenges and opportunities its faces specific to local production. In turn, these tourists are more likely to develop empathy, enthusiasm, and loyalty for the winery.

The preceding value co-creation guide is informed by the touristic experiences at two local wineries. However, the applicability of the guide can extend beyond individual local wineries to include having influence over the touristic strategies deployed at the regional level. Indeed, wine regions work to develop distinct and easily recognized identities (Festa, Vrontis, Thrassou, & Ciasullo, 2015). Consistent with the recommendations of Contini, Scarpellini, and Polidori (2009), the coordinated promotion of touristic authenticity within and between local wineries has the potential to foster systemic value co-creation and region-wide brand development. Neither MW nor SIV managers discussed inter-winery collaboration. However, existing regional events and resources—for example, Sonoita-Elgin Wine Guild—suggest some coordination and collaboration exists across the SEWR. Regardless, the strategic application of the value co-creation guide proposed here at a regional-level warrants the consideration of those community leaders who work to bolster the economic impact and overall presence of local wineries within specific regions.

Further analysis of additional wineries within both the SEWR and other regions is needed to further develop and refine the local winery value co-creation guide we have just proposed. Research on the effectiveness of the guide in fostering value co-creation and the vitality of local wineries and the rural communities and economies in which they exist is also warranted. Lastly, we anticipate the concepts and principles that frame the guide are also applicable to local food enterprises that involve various types of touristic experiences—for example, farm/ranch recreation, you picks—, as well as local food systems that are similar to wine regions seek to create distinct identities and systemic brands (see Alonso & Liu, 2012; Che, 2006; Montanani & Staniscia, 2009). We encourage future research that examines the applicability and utility of the guide in local food contexts other than wineries and wine regions.

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