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**The mutual aspect of the experience value: tourists and residents celebrating weddings in the Italian village of Petritoli**

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**Abstract**

This study focuses on the experience value of tourism in those cases during which tourists and residents come into close contact with each other. The aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the concept of experience value in terms of reciprocity and relations-building.

Drawing upon central concepts from the co-creation literature, tourist-resident interactions are discussed. Through an ethnographic investigation, a case study concerning the wedding tourism experience in an Italian village is conducted.

The findings suggest that experience value can be qualified as mutual, depending on a common denominator that can be associated with humanistic values and other aspects that are complementary to each other, and occurs mainly through spontaneous interactions in common arenas.

Keywords: experience value, co-creation, wedding tourism

## 1. Introduction

This study concerns those tourism cases characterized by close interactions between tourists and local residents, and the related experience value and co-creation process. The research question is how, in these cases, can the experience value be understood as mutual.

This study's underlying assumption is that the long-term success of a destination relies on the engagement and benefit perspective of all the actors involved, and such a benefit perspective includes an experiential aspect. As a result, tourism experiences are better investigated by adopting a relational approach. Here, the concept of experience value is referred to the tourists as well as to the community hosting the tourists.

Several studies investigate the interactions between tourists visiting a destination and the local residents, and highlight the importance of a pay-off situation in terms of net benefits for both (Bimonte & Punzo, 2016). Some scholars have further investigated this aspect, suggesting that these interactions are more than transactions characterized by advantages and disadvantages, and can be better viewed as complex relationships in which the distinction between the two parties is blurred (Sherlock, 2001; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2012; Yu & Lee, 2014).

These studies suggest that the experiential aspect of tourism concerns not only tourists but also residents. Here, the focus of the literature has been mainly on the residents' perception and attitudes towards tourism development and tourists. An example is the Irridex model that describes the phases through which residents can respond to tourism and tourists, from an initial euphoria to apathy, annoyance and antagonism (Teye, Sonmez & Sirakaya, 2002).

Drawing on the scholarly contributions from the service literature concerning value creation, this study explores the mutual aspect of the experience value in the case of wedding tourism in small-sized destinations. More specifically, it investigates the emergence and meaning of the wedding tourism experience value focusing on the couples and the local residents. The empirical component of this study concerns the international wedding destination of Petritoli, a village located in Marche (Italy).

The paper is structured as follows: the first chapter explores the literature on: a) tourist-resident interactions, b) value and value creation, and c) experience value and co-

creation in tourism, with a specific focus on wedding tourism. The third chapter outlines the qualitative method adopted to pursue the objectives of this work. In the fourth chapter the main findings are depicted, followed by a discussion and then conclusions are drawn.

## 2. Theoretical background/framework

### 2.1. Tourist-resident interactions

The experiential aspect of tourist-resident interactions is rarely investigated in reciprocal terms. Bimonte and Punzo (2016) note that the nature and quality of tourist-resident interactions are determinant for the experience of both tourists and residents. Among the studies that embrace this view are those by Trauer and Ryan (2005) and Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2012). These studies highlight the sense of closeness that can emerge between the tourists and the locals through contacts over time, shared common goals and experience of the place. Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2012) mention that the following factors can enhance such sense of closeness: the tourists' and residents' equal status, their belonging to cultures that support contact, and the existence of common arenas where they can know one another as friends.

Still, among the studies focusing on this reciprocal experiential aspect, Yu and Lee (2014) identify three types of experience: reflective, comparative and comprehensive. The first concerns self-identity development, while the second and the third concern the extension of the perception one has of his/her culture in relation to another specific culture or cultures in general. It is important to note that all three types of experience are related by these scholars to the tourists and residents.

This study proposes to further explore the experiential aspect of tourist-resident interactions, adopting a value-creation perspective in which the value is viewed as mutual and both the tourists and the residents are value creators and beneficiaries.

### 2.2. Value and value creation

In the service literature, the concepts of value and value co-creation have received extensive analysis (Grönross, 2012; Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014; Gummesson & Grönroos 2012; Ng & Smith, 2012; Saarijärvi, Kannan, & Kuusela, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2012). Several

scholars view value as contextual. Some scholars investigate the sociocultural circumstances that can influence participation in value creation and the results of adopting various concepts, such as servicescapes, interactions, service encounters and ecosystems (Akaka & Vargo 2015; Akaka, Vargo, & Lusch, 2013; Grönroos & Voima 2013; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008; Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011; Spohrer & Maglio, 2008; Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

Value is also investigated using the concept of sense-making, the process through which the individual attaches meaning to an experience (Edvardsson, Trondvoll, & Gruber, 2011; Helkkula, Kelleher, & Pihlström, 2011). This process can be viewed in relation to the relevance of the individual dimension of value creation (Ulaga, 2003). With regard to this, some scholars argue that the perception of value is always filtered not only by contextual conditions but also by the individual's previous and current lived and imaginary experiences (Helkkula et al., 2011; Sandström, Edvardsson, Kristensson, & Magnusson, 2008).

In addition to being qualified as contextual and idiosyncratic, value is also described by some scholars as mutual (Ramaswamy, 2011). Two of the central premises of the service-dominant logic by Vargo et al. read as follows: 'All social and economic actors are resource integrators', and 'value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary' (2008, p. 7). From here, it can be stated that, according to this logic, all the people involved in social and economic interactions can be viewed as resource integrators and thus potential active value creators and beneficiaries. Thus, the value co-creation process can be viewed as an interactive process in which the two traditionally identified parties— supplier/provider and customer—have not very distinct roles. Eventually, they can merge, having as a common purpose the creation of value often through direct interaction (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Grönroos, 2011; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

In line with this position, Frow et al. (2014) use some metaphors to illustrate value co-creation. In particular, the metaphors of 'invitation to play', 'bridge connecting our worlds' and 'journey to a destination' highlight the relational and mutual aspect of the value-creation process. A similar type of interaction is presented also in the relationality framework developed by FitzPatrick, Varey, Grönroos, and Davey (2015). Here, the potentials of value creation are viewed as increasing along with the actualization of relationality. The highest actualization is described by a 'we mindset' according to which interactions are not viewed as tools, but as a way of living characterized by several humanistic values such as interpersonal engagement, responsibility, dignity and interdependence.

*2.3. Experience value and co-creation in tourism*

A growing number of theoretical and empirical studies from tourism literature adopt and discuss the concepts of value, experience value and co-creation (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Campos, Mendenes, Oom do Valle, & Scott, 2015; Li & Petrick, 2008; Lugosi & Walls, 2013; Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2014). Some studies focus on the individual level. An example is the individual tourists' resources as influential components of the experience value creation (Prebensen, Vittersø, & Dahl, 2013). With regard to the social dimension, Rihova, Buhalis, Moital, and Gouthro (2013) identify various relevant social layers characterized by different temporary durations, flexibility, a sense of unity and feelings of togetherness: 'detached customers/tourists', 'social bubble', 'temporary *communitas*' and 'ongoing neo-tribe'.

Other tourism scholars include the social dimension of value emergence and creation in a broader context. This is, for example, the case of the experiencescape model by Mossberg (2007). Here, the tourist experience is viewed as occurring through the interactions with people, in particular, other tourists and personnel, and the objects and the physical environment that sustain a main theme or story that frames the whole tourism experience.

*2.3.1.  Experience value creation in wedding tourism*

Wedding tourists travel to get married or participate in the wedding of a relative, friend or acquaintance (Bertella, in press). Wedding tourism is a relatively new phenomenon and the few relevant studies in this context are focused on planning and management issues (Bertella, 2017; Blakely, 2008; Del Chiappa & Fortezza, 2013; Major, McLeay, & Waine, 2010; Schuman & Amado, 2010).

In her study concerning wedding tourism in Tuscany (Italy), Bertella (2015) investigates various wedding destinations applying some concepts from the service literature concerning value and value creation. The concept of co-creation is used to indicate the process through which the experience value emerges based mainly on the social interactions between the couples and wedding planners. Also, the concept of experiencescape is applied by Bertella (2015), with the main theme of the wedding tourism experience being identified in an idealized Italian-style caring family. The same study suggests that different perspectives on

the possibility of interacting with local people exist, with the wedding ceremony being a private moment, while the rest of the holiday is arranged and performed according to the wishes of the tourists to have an authentic Italian experience. Interestingly, several local wedding planners still describe these weddings as 'islands of foreigners in Tuscany', an aspect that compromises the objective authenticity of the experience and reminds of the social layers defined by Rihova et al. (2013), characterized by limited contact between tourists, and the local culture and people.

Adopting a value-creation perspective in which both tourists and residents are viewed as value creators and beneficiaries, this study aims to further explore tourist-resident interactions and related experiential aspects.

## 3. Method

The research question concerning how the experiential value of wedding tourism can be understood as mutual is investigated by conducting a case study of a small-sized wedding destination where the tourists interact directly with the residents. This destination is Petritoli, a village located in the Marche region, in central Italy.

The case is investigated by applying an ethnographic approach which offered the opportunity to study residents and wedding tourists in their natural setting over 3 years using the twin methods of participant observation and in-depth interviews (Brown, 2009; Fetterman, 1998), with one member of the research team paying several visits to the village in 2014 and 2015. In September 2013, all the members of the research team visited the village and performed the first interviews with the village mayor and his collaborators, the local wedding planner and one of the accommodation suppliers frequently used by the tourists. The village mayor and one of his collaborators were our key informants and acted also as door openers to be introduced to and establish relations with the local people.

After this visit, several interviews and conversations were held with members of the local community, including mainly, but not exclusively, business managers and owners. These businesses include six accommodation facilities, three bars, one flower shop, two beauty salons and three restaurants. Semi-structured interviews were performed face-to-face and via Skype with 5 couples. Additional data were collected through participant observation

of 5 wedding ceremonies, with individuals participating in the events as guests and recording data just after their occurrence (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

The focus of the empirical investigation is on the tourist-resident interactions and the meaning attached to such interactions and the wedding experience in general. The findings of the case study are presented in the following chapter and then discussed adopting the concepts identified as relevant in the literature.

## 4. Findings

### *4.1. Background context*

Petritoli is located in the Fermo province of Marche and has a population of 2,335 (year 2015). Recently, there has been a slow but continuous decrease in the village inhabitants, in line with the trends in the whole Fermo province.

Petritoli is a medieval village perched 360 m above sea level on a hill overlooking one of the main river valleys. This village follows the urbanistic patterns of many neighbouring small towns with the main square at the top housing the clock tower, and the rest of the village stretching down below, built against the rock face. The view from the village stretches from the Sibillini mountains across the rolling southern Marche hills, as far as the Adriatic Sea.

The economy of Petritoli is mainly based on rural activities. Despite the significant drop in production in recent years due to the economic crisis, traditional activities are still important in terms of jobs, with a high percentage of the working population dedicated to agriculture (cereals, grapes, fruits, vegetables and fodder) and animal breeding (cattle, pigs and poultry). Furthermore, Petritoli belongs to the area straddling the provinces of Macerata and Ascoli Piceno where footwear and fashion still represent strong economic sectors (OECD, 2010).

Recently, there has been an increase in agritourism with the setting up of consortia and networks of small entrepreneurs. According to the first interview that the research team had with the mayor of Petritoli, these relations are based on strong traditions about mutual assistance, which is viewed as an integral part of the local farmers' lifestyle and ethics. This is evident in the local expression 'Lu rraiutu', literally 're-help', according to which agricultural practices are shared on a voluntary basis between neighbouring farmers (Bertella & Cavicchi, in press). In particular it is clear that rural entrepreneurship, when explicitly referring to old farming habits like re-help, is still alive among different stakeholders in rural settings and that

it can generate positive externalities for the whole community. In a previous study, Bertella & Cavicchi (in press) interviewed some rural entrepreneurs who affirmed that their type of business model can be defined as 'relational tourism'. This term is related to the open-spiritedness of country people and their capacity to share through actions the *genius loci* or local identity of a region.

### *4.1.1. Petritoli as a wedding destination*

In 2007, Petritoli hosted the first wedding of a foreign couple. A German bride-to-be decided to get married in the village where her parents had just bought a house in order to spend their retirement years in Italy. In 2010, the Petritoli municipality started to invest in the restoration of its local cultural heritage, and some private foreign investors renewed local buildings, both in the centre of the village and in the nearby countryside, in order to use them as second homes. This resulted in a very tidy and still traditional profile of the village and in the presence of several international tourists. Based on such a trend, in 2014 a local group of young entrepreneurs established Tu.Ris.Marche, a cooperative that aims to coordinate and improve the offers of various tourism-related services.

The combination of all these factors led to the emergence of Petritoli as an international wedding destination. In the period 2007–2015, 50 weddings of foreign couples have been celebrated in Petritoli, with couples and guests coming from many different countries, including European countries, as well as Israel, New Zealand, USA, Australia, Canada and Russia.

## 4.2.    The residents and tourists of Petritoli

During the entire fieldwork period, there were numerous occasions on which the local people showed a positive attitude towards tourists, expressing particular joy, enthusiasm and curiosity. Some of the local inhabitants of Petritoli play a central role in the promotion and development of the village as a wedding destination. These are the mayor, the owner of an historical printing house who has also the role of city councilman for tourism and weddings, the owners of local buildings used as accommodation facilities for wedding guests, and a tourism operator who functions as a wedding planner.

Both the mayor and the owner of the printing house are locals. During the first visit to the village, the research team was given a guided tour of Petritoli. The mayor and the owner of the printing house walked with us along the streets, telling various stories concerning the local people and the village, including the recent presence of wedding tourists. On several occasions, the mayor and his collaborators expressed the importance of facilitating arrangements for the wedding ceremony for couples, making the local public spaces available, and adopting a flexible opening time and rental rates lower than those offered at other Italian wedding tourism destinations.

The owners of a local palace located in the village centre have been involved in the organization of weddings since the first one in 2007. They are a couple originally from Belgium and Croatia and are art and antiques dealers. Their passion is to buy and restore old buildings and bring them back to life, as in the case of the palace in Petritoli that is today the main accommodation facility for wedding guests. Although not particularly interested in tourism, the woman is very engaged in giving tourists the opportunity to enjoy the local cultural heritage.

The tourism operator acting as a wedding planner is originally from Wales. Passionate about the Italian lifestyle, in 2010 she decided to give up her career as a lawyer and move to Marche to pursue another type of career and life. After participating as a guest at a wedding in the nearby region of Umbria, she started thinking about Marche and in particular the village of Petritoli as a possible wedding destination for tourists. Having helped her relatives in arranging some family weddings, due to her language and organizational skills and her familiarity with the local area, she started to work as a wedding planner in Petritoli.

With regard to the tourists, the interviewed couples told us that they had invested quite a lot of time in organizing the wedding. This is quite common, as specified by the wedding planner. This time includes at least one pre-wedding visit to the village, and several e-mails and telephone/Skype contacts with the wedding planner, and some with the owner of the palace and other possible accommodation facilities. Most of the tourists cannot speak Italian and most of the communication relative to important aspects of the ceremony and the party, such as food catering, music arrangements and flower decorations, happens through the wedding planner.

The couples' motivations for choosing Italy and, in particular, Petritoli for their wedding vary. Some have a desire to 'do something different', meaning to integrate the

family celebration with a holiday abroad and explore a destination that is not particularly well known. Others are influenced in their choice by previous personal tourism experiences in the area, and a few by the Italian and sometimes *Marchigiana* origin of their family. Several seem to be motivated by an idealized view of Italy. The latter can be illustrated via an episode that was reported by a Canadian couple. This episode happened when, not yet married, they were visiting Italy and were enjoying a meal in a restaurant. Here, they assisted in an Italian family celebration and decided to get married in Italy. The woman described the event as follows:

> *'We were sitting at our table (…). We started watching the table close to ours: something like fifty people were celebrating what we thought was a birthday. And we noticed this special Italian style to celebrate… so warm, loud and passionate! They said "cincin-salute", that means "cheers", all the time (…) the table was full of food and wine (…) I thought: if I get married I want my wedding dinner to be like this!'*

## 4.3. The tourist-resident interactions

The interactions between tourists and some of the local people, in particular those described in the section above, are numerous. The wedding planner and the woman owner of the palace have regular oral and written interactions with the tourists before the wedding. From the point of view of language, this does not involve any particular problems due to the language skills of both these people. The pre-wedding contacts are focused on the organizational aspects of the event and here the establishment of a trusting and open relationship is considered important. The local actors usually propose solutions and alternatives and, through dialogue, final decisions are made jointly.

Although not fluent in English, both the mayor and his collaborators strive to communicate with tourists. This is also the case for the local community in general. Communication is not limited to verbal interactions. It is, in fact, quite usual that local people join the wedding parties that take place often in public spaces, such as the main square. This is often done in a spontaneous way, with local people bringing their musical instruments and starting to play, and the tourists and local people jointly participating in these improvised dances. In other cases, it is the couple who invites the residents to join the toast at the wedding dinner party. This search for close interactions can also be noted in the quite common practice of inviting tourists to meet *la signora Gina*, the oldest woman living in Petritoli who is viewed almost as an icon of the longevity typical of the local area.

The data suggest that the vast majority of the residents enjoy hosting wedding parties for foreigners in their village. Some minor complaints have occurred related to the necessity of closing the square to traffic during wedding parties and, in some cases, to some episodes in which foreign guests have drunk too much and become noisy during the night. According to the mayor's collaborators, it is extremely rare that people complain to them and they could remember only one episode in 2015 when the wedding party degenerated and caused problems for some of the residents. In general, the local people seem to accept and tolerate the different way that tourists behave at parties in relation to the use of alcohol, although it is quite different from the local custom.

The sense of togetherness that seems to characterize many of the weddings involving both tourists and locals can be also noted in the usual practice of meeting at the local bar for breakfast and coffee, both in the days before the ceremony and the morning after the party.

## 4.4. The meaning attached to the tourist-resident interactions

The data suggest that the residents view wedding tourism as an important economic activity for the village and also as an extraordinary sociocultural event. Weddings are viewed as opportunities to meet people from different backgrounds, show them the village and welcome them as guests of the local community. The latter seems to also be the aspect that couples tend to remember best when thinking about their wedding in Petritoli. This is described in the numerous comments from the interviews with couples, for example:

> '... the sense of community, everyone is very welcoming, very happy for you to be visiting, excited for you to get married and they are very helpful'.

> 'We felt really welcome by the local people, we made the real Italian experience with food, people, culture'.

> 'We felt immersed in the real Italian life (...) from the very beginning, to the dinner at Roberto's place [a local B&B] where there was a big long table full of Italians: very social, amazing food, laughter, music, somebody sang a song to us to wish us good luck for getting married'.

> 'The Italian hospitality is amazing, in my time here I have never met someone who didn't want to help me'.

*'We felt really immersed in a different culture, especially coming from London … because London is very busy, there isn't really any sense of community and it's so big! Here, the local people are so hospitable, they are fantastic. What a fantastic experience!'*

According to the printing house owner, when asked what they liked most about their Petritoli experience, many tourists answer that they like the people and their smiles. Aspects often commented on in the interviews are the authenticity of the place, the local people's generosity and sense of hospitality. For example, one tourist described her surprise at the help received from some local people. She referred to an episode when she was searching for some products and a local woman offered her a lift by car to the local market, and another person collected olive-tree branches for them in order to make some decorations. She commented on this saying that, probably, something like this would never happen in Roma or in other large and famous Italian destinations.

These, and similar episodes, seem to be associated by the tourists with a relation of friendship with the local people, who are often referred to by their first names and, in some cases, with caring expressions, such as for example 'our lovely Giancarlo (the printing house owner)'.

For the residents, wedding tourism is about their pride in their rural approach to life and sociality. This seems to be perceived by the tourists who, ultimately, associate the wedding experience in Petritoli with a sense of conviviality and friendship. During the interviews and conversations with local residents, it was very common to observe comments about the pleasure of 'sharing' their village with people from abroad. The following expressions illustrate this aspect well:

*'We can show them how life in a village, our village, is. We have restored many buildings and they can see that we care about our village'.*

*'We are far from the chaos of the art cities… Firenze and Roma are of course beautiful but it is here that they can meet the Italians; we are the Italians they want to meet. We don't try to sell them souvenirs and similar … we are here to help them have a good time… with us! And it seems that we manage it!'*

**5. Discussion**

As mentioned above, the wedding tourism study by Bertella (2015) suggests that tourists tend to live out their experience in a way that, adopting the framework proposed by Rihova et al. (2013), can be described as in a bubble isolated from the local community. This is not confirmed by the findings of this study which indicate quite a close relation between the tourists and local people. This can be explained by the size of Petritoli, and the local approach of tourists. These two aspects are strictly related, with small-sized destinations usually being more positive towards tourism due to the lack of the challenges related to mass tourism typical in famous art towns and large destinations.

On the other hand, these elements do not completely explain the different findings of the present study in comparison with the wedding tourism study by Bertella (2015) as this previous study also includes, in addition to towns, small villages the size of Petritoli. Another possible explanation can be the specific cultural context of Petritoli. This is explicitly described by several respondents as the local community sense of solidarity and hospitality that derives from a still-alive rural mentality. These values are clearly related to the humanistic values identified by FitzPatrick et al. (2015) in relation to the emergence of a sort of 'we mindset'.

Close relations seem not only to be developed between tourists and those community members who have a clear interest in the development of tourism, such as the wedding planner and the palace owner. The interviews reveal that the tourists speak warmly about several residents. From their perspective, the residents show affection towards the tourists and tolerance in relation to possibly inconvenient elements related to the parties.

The poor language skills of the local community seem not to be perceived as a barrier. An evident sign of the sense of togetherness that develops among tourists and locals are the wedding parties arranged and sometimes improvised in the village square, and the informal meetings at the village bar. What was proposed by Woosnam and Aleshinloye (2012) about the facilitating role played by the availability of common arenas—in this case the village square and the bar—where friendship relations can be developed freely, is here confirmed. The sharing of music, dances, food and drinks seems also to play an important role, and to use the metaphor proposed by Frow et al. (2014), it creates a sort of 'bridge between two worlds'.

Although with regard to contact, these two worlds—those of the local community and of the tourists—can be described as built around two related themes or stories (Mossberg, 2007). The common element concerns the possibility of establishing new friendship relations

with people from a different cultural background. This can be related to reflections on cultural differences, a process that can contribute to their self-identity development as suggested by Yu and Lee (2014) and that has been observed both for residents and tourists.

The difference between the stories as perceived by the local people and tourists can be described as follows. In the case of residents, wedding tourism is experienced as an opportunity to proudly show their territory. The residents' wedding tourism story is a story about local pride. Confirming in part the findings by Bertella (2015), the story that frames the couples' experience of their wedding in Petritoli can be described as a story of romance. Such a story is in part supported by a certain imagery about Italy and also by individual characteristics and direct experiences during the pre-wedding visits and the wedding itself (Helkkula et al., 2011; Prebensen et al., 2013; Sandström et al., 2008).

## 6. Conclusion

This study has investigated how the experiential value concerning tourism forms characterized by direct interactions between tourists and residents can be understood as mutual.

Drawing upon scholarly contributions from the value creation literature and on the basis of a case study concerning wedding tourism in an Italian village, this study concludes that the concept of experience value can be referred to both the tourists and the residents and can be qualified as mutual. The stories framing the wedding tourism experience from the perspective of the tourists and from the perspective of the residents have a common denominator. In this specific case, this can be described as a story of friendship across cultures. This story is identified as a fundamental part of the value of the wedding abroad experience as perceived by both the couples and the residents of the village. On the other hand, some aspects of the experience value are not common to both tourists and residents. In this specific case, the aspect related to the residents' perspective concerns their local cultural pride, while the aspect related to the tourists can be related to their wish to celebrate in what they identify as the 'Italian style'. Although not common, these aspects are nonetheless complementary, as the residents need the tourists in order to externalize their local cultural pride, and the tourists need the residents in order to learn more about and live their Italian dream. The findings suggest also that such stories and the related value creation occur mainly through direct interactions, most of which are spontaneous.

The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding and conceptualization of experience value in tourism. In particular, the mutual aspect of value creation through direct interactions is here presented by referring to the stories which frame the experience from the perspective of tourists as well as residents. The results suggest that the mutuality of the value depends on a common denominator that can be related to humanistic values and other aspects that are complementary to each other.

This study contributes also to the scant wedding tourism literature. Findings from a previously conducted study suggesting the tourism wedding experience as an experience that occurs in a sort of bubble where tourists are isolated from the local context and people are not confirmed. Here, the specific rural culture characterizing the case investigated can have played an important role. Thus, this study suggests that the size and the cultural context of the destination can be a determinant not only in terms of objective authenticity but also in terms of experience value.

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