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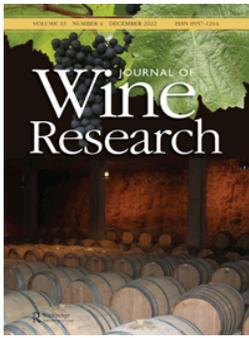
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Wine farmworkers, provenance stories and ethical value claims

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ABSTRACT

The article extends past research on ethical value claims in two ways. First, research often centres on certifications as mechanisms of ethical claims-making; in contrast, we focus on provenance stories as devices of wine brand differentiation and ethical value creation. Second, while value claims are broadly understood as co-creative outcomes involving producers, intermediaries, and consumers, we focus on manual farmworkers, who are largely absent, as story subjects and storytellers, in agri-food provenance stories and value claims. Focusing on the South African wine industry, we sought to identify alignments between winery brand stories and farmworker heritage stories as a potential route for farmworkers to contribute to and be more securely included and recognized within premium wine value chains. Analysis of a comparative sample of South African, French, Italian and Australian winery websites identified provenance as the dominant frame for ethical value claims, family as a primary anchor for provenance, and South Africa's distinctive prevalence of representations of farmworkers in winery communications. Two 'storytelling workshops' with Cape Wineland farmworkers generated resonant themes – community and familiness; expertise and pride – that aligned with dominant market expectations and credence cues, and could potentially serve as credible, authentic anchors for South African wine value claims.

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Introduction

Considerable research has investigated drivers and implications of increasing consumer interest and engagement with ethical and sustainable consumption (e.g. Joshi & Rahman, 2019; Schäufele & Hamm, 2017). In parallel, research has examined how ethical value can be effectively communicated and leveraged through traditional and experiential marketing, to achieve differentiation and secure competitive advantage, as well as to drive sustainable consumption (Weber et al., 2021) and sustainable development (Touri, 2020). Overton et al. (2019) propose the concept of 'Ethical Value Networks'

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as a useful framework for bridging these two concerns. The notion of ‘Ethical Value Networks’ builds on work in economic geography (e.g. Goodman et al., 2012) exploring how value is constituted discursively and aesthetically, and not just via material labour, and calling attention to how the accumulation of value is distributed across global commodity chains. The complex nature of global value chains tends to obscure and occlude particular nodes and actors in those chains, meaning that some actors are precluded from benefiting from the value to which they have contributed, materially, symbolically, and discursively. Understanding ethical value in this way trains attention on the multiple moments – at and between nodes in global production networks – at which ethical principles are actioned, claims to ethicality are articulated, and ethical value may be realized. At the same time, this highlights the potential for some actors to be side-lined in the process due to opaque, lengthy chains of interdependence, and to conventional discourses that spotlight some actors and actions while rendering others invisible.

An ‘Ethical Value Network’ framework thus invites an unpacking of the multiple moments and actors across production networks at which ethical principles are applied and ethical claims are made. Looking specifically at agri-food networks, Overton et al. (2019) identify justice, sustainability, and provenance as three ‘constellations’ of ethical value claims. Justice-oriented claims cluster around compliance with ethical and legal employment practices and policies, and may extend to material commitments to worker wellbeing and social justice. Sustainability-oriented claims focus on protecting biodiversity, reducing harmful chemicals, practicing responsible water and soil management, and may extend to global-scale commitments such as reducing carbon emission. Provenance-oriented claims are clustered around commitments to safeguard the distinctiveness of places and local origins, and may extend to commitments to transparent producer-consumer relations.

The empirical context for our research is the wine industry of South Africa (SA), for which value creation and ethics are especially pertinent issues. Since the late 1990s, the number of SA wineries markedly increased, with a strong push towards a ‘quality era’ of winemaking; nevertheless, SA wine export performance is weaker than other New World producer peers and remains dominated by bulk and ‘basic quality’ bottled wine (Vink et al., 2012). Reflecting the post-apartheid transformation agenda, SA was an early advocate of justice-oriented ethical certifications (e.g. the first Fairtrade certified wine; Moseley, 2008). However, despite Black Economic Empowerment initiatives, Black-owned wine enterprises and farms remain a tiny fraction of the industry (Ewert, 2012; Robinson, 2020a, 2020b). Furthermore, wine farmworkers often face profound social and economic disadvantage, particularly for casual and seasonal farm workers, with exploitative working conditions and social pathologies still shaped by the apartheid era (Bek et al., 2007; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hastings, 2019; Herman, 2014; Moseley, 2008; SOMO, 2020; Vink et al., 2012).

Overton et al. (2019) offer a critical appraisal of certification schemes as mechanisms for articulating, regulating, and guaranteeing justice ethical value claims. In the SA context, several industry-wide and/or global multi-stakeholder initiatives – many with associated certifications – serve to communicate wine production ethical values to consumers (Flores, 2018; Moscovici & Reed, 2018; Overton et al., 2019; Priilaid, 2007), including:

- Justice: Fairtrade; Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trade Association (WIETA)

- Sustainability: Sustainable Wine South Africa (SWSA); Integrated Production of Wine (IPW); Biodiversity & Wine Initiative (BWI)
- Provenance: Wines of South Africa (WOSA) and certification under the Wine of Origin Scheme.

The role of ethical certification as part of a rigorous process of ensuring social and ethical compliance cannot be undervalued or ignored.¹ Nevertheless, research highlights several shortcomings of certifications as devices for product differentiation and value generation. First, while buying ethical goods may offer a ‘feel good’ factor and positive self-affirmation (Schoolman, 2019), certifications may also be counterproductive, creating consumer confusion and/or eliciting scepticism that can undermine the promise to generate trust (Annunziata et al., 2011; Capitello & Sirieix, 2019). Second, certifications may not be fit for purpose in terms of protecting against the abuses that they ostensibly regulate (MSI Integrity, 2020). Third, the evidence is mixed as to the effect of certifications on assessments of value and purchase behaviour: some research indicates a willingness to pay associated with justice-oriented certifications (Saayman & Saayman, 2019; Wang & Chen, 2019) and provenance-oriented (origin) quality signals (Boatto et al., 2011), while other studies indicate that eco-oriented certifications may actually be associated with negative quality assumptions (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2015). Fourth, consumers’ uses of certifications may also not fit their intended purpose: research suggests that certifications are often taken as a proxy for quality production rather than as guarantees of ethical practices per se (Flores, 2018; Forbes et al., 2009; Schäufele & Hamm, 2017). Fifth, producers may regard certifications as too restrictive and/or expensive (e.g. Berghoef & Dodds, 2013). Furthermore, certifications may not be worth their associated effort: the administrative and organizational costs of securing certifications do not necessarily generate superior premiums in the marketplace as compared to those generated through self-declarations (Fanasch & Frick, 2020).

In light of the above challenges and limitations, we shift attention to *stories* as mechanisms for realising ethical value. In this, we pick up on research that suggests how stories can be powerful mechanisms for achieving product differentiation and competitive advantage for premium wineries (e.g. Downing & Parrish, 2019; Warman & Lewis, 2019). In particular, we focus on provenance stories, which we understand as outcomes of co-creative processes involving multiple actors or stakeholders all along the wine value chain (Bjurklo et al., 2009; Merz & Vargo, 2009). Research on provenance stories and value creation has typically centred on wine producers (brand owners and winemakers), intermediaries (such as critics and retailers), and consumers as key actors. In contrast, our research concerns the potential contributions of *manual farmworkers* to the co-creation of ethical value. Farmworkers supply essential labour that makes winemaking possible (e.g. pruning, harvesting, vineyard maintenance, tank cleaning, bottling, labelling), yet they remain a largely absent and unacknowledged group of stakeholders in the communication of ethical value claims. Moreover, in the specific context of SA’s history of racialized repression, segregation, and exploitation, and continued white-dominated patterns of ownership of wineries, farms, and land, farmworkers are often *unrecognized* as a group of stakeholders at all, and thus denied recognition, dignity, and respect (Fraser, 2000) as contributors to the value chain (The Farmworker Rights Charter, 2017). This situation is acknowledged through various SA official industry bodies and strategies, such the

Wine Industry Strategic Exercise (WISE) and the Wine Industry Value Chain Roundtable (WIVCRT), which set specific targets and actions to redress these historic imbalances. We are thus interested in provenance stories not only as conduits for generating ethical value claims, but also as a means of fostering ethical value creation: that is, devices for the creation of value in ways that are more inclusive and representative of the actual labour of agri-food production.

Market differentiation and ethical value claims

The global wine market is an intensely competitive environment. As in any market, competing brands must find ways to set themselves apart in the eyes of consumers, in order to secure a competitive advantage, build brand value and generate sales. Wine brands face significant challenges in achieving differentiation due to the sheer number of global producers, and overall improvements in viticulture, bottling and distribution mean that producing 'quality' wines alone is not enough for differentiation (Olsen et al., 2016).

Two key levers for differentiation, and drivers of wine consumers' purchase decisions (Mintel, 2020), are price and taste. Price is a relatively straightforward signal to send to consumers; taste is not. In the absence of past sensory experience with the product, building a consumer's 'trust in taste' requires complex communicative signals, and intersects with a host of cultural conventions. Extrinsic cues and credence qualities (e.g. country of origin labelling, health claims, or ethical certification) are of crucial importance for bridging the trust and knowledge gap for food consumers (Fernqvist & Ekelund, 2014). Concurrently, consumers' perceptions and experiences of wine taste are shaped by their socio-cultural background (Priilaid, 2007) and established cultural hierarchies of legitimacy that associate some wine varieties, styles and producing regions with notions of good taste and legitimacy (Smith Maguire, 2018a). Thus, the product alone is not enough; differentiation for wine brands requires credence cues that build trust between consumer and producer/brand, in ways that align with registers of cultural legitimacy that are resonant for particular groups of consumers.

Overton et al.'s (2019) constellations of justice, sustainability, and provenance ethical value claims usefully highlight three credence cue categories that have tangible, material ethical dimensions, and reflect preferences of high-status food consumers, for whom ethics is increasingly central to notions and performances of 'good taste' (Carfagna et al., 2014; Huddart Kennedy et al., 2019). Certifications are one way to communicate provenance, justice and sustainability credence cues. However, as discussed, evidence is mixed as to the efficacy of such certifications to build consumer trust in taste, deliver positive differentiation, and ensure competitive advantage. Following other research that underscores the potential for value creation through stories and brand self-declarations (Downing & Parrish, 2019; Fanasch & Frick, 2020; Warman & Lewis, 2019), our research is concerned with *stories* as the vehicles of wine brand differentiation and ethical value creation.

Of Overton et al.'s (2019) three constellations of value claims, we are particularly interested in provenance stories (which might overlap with and communicate justice and sustainability stories). Research on differentiation and brand value (Downing & Parrish, 2019; Smith Maguire, 2018b; Warman & Lewis, 2019) underscores the primacy of provenance-based stories for premium wines, and – more so – the importance of *evidence-led, credible,*

authentic provenance stories. Provenance stories can ostensibly draw on any and all components of a wine's origins from creation to consumption; however, research points to a number of recurrent anchors, including forms of biographical specificity ('wines with a face'), heritage and tradition, and geographic specificity and terroir (Ballantyne et al., 2019; Downing & Parrish, 2019; Spielmann et al., 2014; Triana, 2019). Closely related research concerns family stories, which are found to contribute to family companies' competitiveness and sales by enhancing consumers' perceptions of a firm's commitment, trustworthiness, credibility (e.g. in contrast with 'big brands' or 'big corporations') and brand authenticity (Zanon et al., 2019). These perceptions enhance brand trust and loyalty while offering consumers opportunities for self-identification and communitarian identification, which in turn can drive sales (Andreini et al., 2020; Binz Astrachan et al., 2018). This dynamic is found in wine markets around the world, including Italy (Gallucci et al., 2015), Australia (Strickland et al., 2013), the US (Triana, 2019) and Canada (Voronov et al., 2013). Family is not only understood as kin (relations by blood and marriage), but also as 'familiness': ways in which employees (if not also customers) are adopted to become 'like' family (Smith Maguire et al., 2013), and 'family storytelling' may construct a business identity regardless of family-organization ownership (Canziani et al., 2020).

In general: effective, compelling provenance stories communicate where a wine was produced, by whom, how and when, rendering these attributes as tangible, legible and credible for consumers (Smith Maguire, 2018b). Brand stories are key devices through which that rendering happens, such as through marketing communications on labels and websites, or the frontline storytelling of cellar door staff and retailers (Aqueveque, 2015; Boatto et al., 2011; Charters & O'Neill, 2001). Yet, despite the evidence that multiple, diffuse networks of stakeholders contribute to the cultural production of credible, effective provenance stories, farmworkers (and agricultural labour more broadly) remain conspicuously absent from brand provenance stories, and related academic research (for exceptions, see Herman, 2014; Touri, 2020; Weiler, 2022).

While farmworkers are focal subjects in *justice*-oriented certifications and stories (e.g. Fairtrade), they are generally missing from provenance stories, and as provenance storytellers. The recurrent emphasis in the premium wine market (Downing & Parrish, 2019; Triana, 2019) on stories of 'wines with a face' and of the human element of winemaking – winemakers, wine making families, the *savoir faire* of a regional population, the hand-crafted dimensions of viticulture – makes the absence of farmworkers all the more striking.

In our approach to provenance stories as devices of value creation, we understand differentiation – and brand value more widely – as 'co-created' through the interactions 'among the ecosystem of all stakeholders' (Merz & Vargo, 2009, p. 338). This 'service dominant' approach (Bjurklo et al., 2009) is mindful not only of the company (the winery) in creating brand value, but also the host of other organizations and actors, including industry regulatory bodies and professional associations, critics and retailers, awards and wine fairs, cellar door staff and visitors (Allen & Germov, 2011; Aqueveque, 2015; Strickland et al., 2013). Yet, conceptualizations of, and research on, the wine stakeholder ecosystem is typically restricted to producers (e.g. brand owners and winemakers), intermediaries (e.g. critics and retailers), and consumers as key actors in value co-production; those performing the bulk of manual labour are marginalized or absent. Herein lies a further

rationale for focusing on stories rather than certifications as vehicles for ethical value creation: stories and storytelling have significant potential to facilitate inclusion of non-traditional voices and marginalized groups. As research by Tacchi (2009), Touri (2020), and others has demonstrated, storytelling can be a highly democratic and inclusive cultural form that draws on existing oral, visual, textual and, increasingly, digital practices of recording and sharing one's experiences. Our focus on storytelling is thus motivated by an ambition to include new – typically marginal, silenced, or absent – actors in understanding the co-creation of winery brand value.

Research context and design

Our research was concerned with the potential SA wine farmworkers' heritage stories might hold for contributing to the premiumization of SA exports, as a lever for helping secure farmworkers' recognition within, and access to the SA premium wine value chain. At present, SA exports are overly focused on bulk wine (which is then packaged and sold by retailers elsewhere, notably the UK, Germany, and France; SOMO, 2020). Bulk accounted for 57% of exports in 2020 (SAWIS, 2020). SA producers thereby miss out on much of the value chain. Similarly, exported bottled wine is among the lowest priced in the world (SOMO, 2020).

Two phases of research – focused on brand stories and farmworker stories, summarized in Table 1 – sought to identify potential alignments between farmworkers' heritage stories, and the registers of worth already in place in premium wine consumer markets. Such alignments represent opportunities for SA wine producers and farmworkers to capture more economic value from the global wine production network, directly in the form of increased value of exports, and indirectly via the proportion of export levies directed into transformation initiatives that support Black-owned wine enterprises and farms (Robinson, 2020b). Additionally, Hastings' research (2019) suggests how major export market actors may contribute to driving and enforcing justice-related ethical practices, specifically in the SA wine context. In researching the competitive environment for SA wines in export markets, we focused on the UK, SA's primary export market by value and volume (SAWIS, 2020).

In phase one, we looked at how wine ethical value claims are currently communicated to UK premium wine consumers. Authors one and two generated a fixed sample of wineries, oriented to typical case sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) and reflecting our attention to high involvement UK consumers, comprising 30 SA wineries, and 10 each from France, Italy, and Australia, across three premium price points (thus attempting to overcome any Old World/New World divisions in communicative practice). To identify the sample, we audited 18 'top-ranked' (according to *Decanter* (Mason, 2020) and our local university environs) independent UK wine shops/retailers, and purposively selected wines available in multiple shops, and from the three price points. We collected the winery websites' Home pages and, where present (in 49 of the 60 wineries) the 'About Us' pages; these represent prime sites for brand storytelling through which ethical value – as for credence values more generally – are 'rendered,' that is made tangible, legible and credible for consumers (Smith Maguire, 2018b). Author two carried out a qualitative content analysis following Zhang and Wildemuth (2009; see also Berg, 2001), treating the website communicative data (text, visuals, layout) as an integrated whole (rather than atomising

Table 1. Data collection and sources.

Phase 1: Brand Stories

Data Collection

- Purposive sample of wines readily available to UK high-involvement consumers at three price points (£5–£9.99; £10–19.99; £20 or more), resulting in sample of 60 wineries: 30 South African, 10 French, 10 Italian, 10 Australian
- Collected home page and ‘about us’ (also, ‘our story,’ ‘our history,’ ‘the estate’) webpages (January–March 2020) for each winery

Summary of Data

- Coding schema for webpage text and images with 5 categories:
 - Provenance (definition: who/what/why/how/where wine is made; examples: reference to terroir/vine’s origin, family, winery/vineyard heritage)
 - Sustainability (definition: the responsible use of natural resources; examples: reference to organic, biodynamic, biodiversity, water use)
 - Justice (definition: fair and equitable labour relations; examples: Fairtrade, economic empowerment, social uplift)
 - Farm work/workers (definition: visual image of or explicit textual reference to manual labour in the vineyard, cellar, winery)
 - Certification Logos Used (definition: visual image of or explicit textual reference to formal certification scheme)

Phase 2: Farmworker Stories

Data Collection

- Two focus groups (‘storytelling workshops’) with South African farmworkers (July 2020), approximately 90 min each
 - Group 1: 5 female; average age 37 years; all born, raised, and have worked on farms; all currently working on farms, vineyards or wineries (e.g. restaurant, tasting room)
 - Group 2: 3 female, 1 male; average age 52 years; all born, raised, and have worked on farms; all currently working on farms or vineyards, including some producing under own winery label

(For the purposes of anonymity, respondent details are aggregated; they are identified below by group and respondent number; e.g. FG1-2 for Focus Group 1, Respondent 2.)

- Conducted largely in Afrikaans and recorded; then transcribed and (where needed) translated into English
- One follow-up semi-structured interview with one focus group participant (July 2020), approximately 60 min

Summary of Data

- Transcript, focus group 1 (FG1): 11,362 words
- Transcript, focus group 2 (FG2): 8,696 words
- Transcript, farmworker interview (Farmworker): 8,197 words

the data via discrete search terms or dictionaries, as would be typical of computer-assisted text analysis and other quantitative content analysis approaches). Coding followed a five-part categorical scheme based on Overton et al.’s (2019) three constellations of ethical value, and Smith Maguire’s (2018a) research on wine provenance as an overarching construct within which are nested frames of transparency, genuineness, and heritage (with family, winery, and vine heritage as recurrent heritage referents). An inter-coder reliability check between authors one and two, with an initial sample of 10 winery websites, helped refine category definitions and examples (as per Mayring, 2000; see Table 1). Further differentiating a qualitative from quantitative content analysis approach, coding was oriented to generating descriptive accounts of underlying meanings, rather than frequency counts with statistical significance (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 2, 5), thus

resisting the ‘distorting quantification’ (Mayring, 2000, p. 2) of conflating frequency counts with meaning. Coding patterns within and between self-declarations of ethical value from wineries from SA and three of its main price point producer country competitors thus allowed us to identify resonant themes already present in the premium wine marketplace, with which themes from farmworker heritage stories (the focus of phase two) might align.

In phase two, we sought to understand wine farm provenance from the point of view of Cape Winelands farmworkers, through two ‘storytelling workshops.’ Participants were permanent farmworkers, Black², predominantly female, and ranged in age from 32 to 66 years (see Table 1). We are mindful that our sample is not representative of all farm workers, particularly in light of the deep divide in SA rural livelihoods between permanent farmworkers, who tend to benefit from higher status, skills, pay, and housing security, and their (increasingly more numerous) seasonal, casual and contract labour counterparts (Ewert & du Toit, 2005) – a divide that persists even on farms that adhere to ethical labour codes (Ewert et al., 2005). The relative advantages of permanent farmworkers and the overall decline of permanent positions in the SA wine and agricultural/fruit sectors more widely are intertwined consequences of post-apartheid deregulation, re-integration of SA into global markets, and the institution of legal protections for worker rights, which have incentivized increasing producer use of casual, seasonal, and contract labour (Alford et al., 2017; Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hastings, 2019; Moseley, 2008). The workshops, and a supplemental interview with one of the participants, were guided by open-ended prompts related to growing up on farms, and perceived connections to the farm as place and the wine as the end product. Storytelling as a method enables resilience, reflective practice, and a shared, scalable learning process to underpin future planning for change (Tacchi, 2009). It is an inclusive framework that fosters recognition, builds on existing cultural practices and experiences of voicing one’s own story, and helps break down expert/layperson boundaries, thus bringing to the fore voices that are often marginalized in hegemonic narratives of agricultural heritage and provenance (Touri, 2020). Like oral history interviews (Hagood & Schriemer, 2018), such an approach allows researchers to follow the lead set by respondents, promote open communication and trust, and validate respondent concerns and experiences. The workshops were delivered by the third and fourth authors; due to Covid travel restrictions, the first author attended the workshops via Zoom. A thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to coding workshop and interview data identified recurrent themes.

Findings

Brand stories

By analysing the sample wineries’ Home and ‘About Us’ webpages, we sought to detect the existing, conventional framings of ethical value with which farmworker heritages stories might resonate. Starting from Overton et al.’s (2019) three constellations of ethical value, we coded the dominant framing for each of the 60 wineries. For all four producer countries (and thus both Old and New World producers in our sample), provenance was the primary ethical value frame, given greater prominence in the text and visual content of the pages than either justice- or sustainability-oriented frames (which were

Table 2. Dominant framing of ethical value.

	South Africa <i>n</i> = 30	France <i>n</i> = 10	Italy <i>n</i> = 10	Australia <i>n</i> = 10
Provenance	24 (80%)	10 (100%)	7 (70%)	7 (70%)
Sustainability	4 (13.3%)	0	3 (30%)	3 (30%)
Justice	2 (6.7%)	0	0	0

often co-present, if secondary to the provenance frame; see [Table 2](#)). To note, however, South African wineries were the only ones in the sample to use justice as the dominant ethical value frame (albeit for only 2 of the 30 wineries).

We then looked in more detail at those wineries for which provenance was the dominant ethical value frame (48 of the total sample), to unpack the dominant articulations of provenance. While multiple provenance components were often co-present, our qualitative content analysis focused on identifying the framing given most prominence in text and visual content, in relation to family (e.g. the specific word ‘family’ and immediate variations; descriptions of family members; references to generations); winery/vineyard heritage (e.g. ‘heritage’ and immediate variations; history/historical roots of the vineyard, winery, etc.); and terroir (e.g. ‘terroir’ and immediate variations; specificity of vine location, soil, aspect, etc.). The findings ([Table 3](#)) again highlight continuities between the SA wineries and the others (Old and New World) in the sample, with family being the recurrent primary anchor for provenance. Further continuities emerged through an inductive coding of the ‘About Us’ texts (for all wineries for which such a page was available), which identified recurrent themes in wineries’ value claims about themselves, regardless of orientation to provenance, justice, or sustainability. Notions of quality, excellence, innovation, creativity, tradition, and passion were frequent across all wineries in the sample, suggesting a repertoire of conventions in the language of self-declarations, which overlaps with those for ethical value.

Additionally, certifications were an infrequent representational device for communicating ethical value: 85% (*n* = 51) of the total sample made no mention of certifications. Of the nine that did, three were South African, five Italian, one Australian. This may reflect previous research on a dozen different global wine regions (not including SA) that found a marked gap between the number of wineries that adopt sustainable practices (environmental, financial, or social sustainability practices) versus those that actively share what they do with the public (Golicic, 2022). That is, the lack of ethical certifications on the web pages does not necessarily indicate a lack of ethical practices. Rather, the emphasis (at least in the context of the sample) is on self-declarations of ethical practices (Fanasch & Frick, 2020), thus underscoring the worth of examining story-based (rather than certification-based) ethical value claims making.

Table 3. Winery dominant framing of provenance components.

	South Africa <i>n</i> = 24	France <i>n</i> = 10	Italy <i>n</i> = 7	Australia <i>n</i> = 7
Family	9 (38%)	6 (60%)	4 (57%)	5 (71%)
Heritage	5 (21%)	1 (10%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)
Terroir	10 (42%)	3 (30%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)

Finally, reflecting our distinctive research focus: representations of farmworkers or farm work were uncommon across the majority of 60 wineries in the sample. Images of wine-makers, cellar masters and winery owner family were common, whereas only 25% of the entire sample had any depictions of farmworkers: 12 SA winery websites (40% of the SA sample), two French, one Australian, zero Italian websites. Notably, all three value claim frames were evidenced in the SA representations of farmworkers. Images and text relating to farmworkers in the vineyard (e.g. hand-harvest, pruning, working with a plough horse) provided tangible evidence of environmentally sustainable methods of minimal chemical and mechanical intervention, as well as hand-crafted provenance and the biographical specificity of the labour behind the final product ('wine with a face'). Other images and text centred on farmworkers as integral to the winery (e.g. smiling faces under the banner of 'our team' or 'our community'; references to farm families; images of farmworker families in relation to social uplift initiatives on the farm) conveyed both justice-based ethical value principles, such as a commitment to farmworker welfare, and family-oriented provenance-based value claims. The inclusion of farmworkers is a distinctive feature of SA wine brand marketing communications, not only aligning with provenance, justice, and sustainability credence cues, but also humanizing wine production beyond the typical focus on winemakers (and verdant, but human-less vineyards).

Farmworker stories

Through the storytelling workshops, and supplemental follow-up interview with one of the participants, we sought to explore provenance from the perspective of farmworkers, to understand how their heritage stories might align with the dominant ethical value conventions we identified in phase one, and thus offer routes to fostering the ethical creation of value – not simply in terms of wine brands, but also in helping to bring farmworkers more securely into the value chain and foster their recognition (Fraser, 2000; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) as valid and valuable stakeholders in the wine industry. Analysis of phase two transcripts identified two themes – community and familiness; expertise and pride – within farmworkers' experiences that might potentially serve as bridges across the producer/consumer gap, fostering relational proximity and brand value (Weber et al., 2021).

Firstly, there was a recurrent theme of *community and familiness*. All of the respondents were born, raised and had worked on farms, and shared the sense of belonging to a coherent community, along with vivid stories of farm childhoods. As the interview respondent said, 'When you grow up on a wine farm, there is always a story to tell. Always. So, it is never a dull moment. You never get bored of it.' More generally, the respondents repeatedly self-identified through their paternal or material lineage as farmworker families; e.g. referring to themselves as part of 'the D__ family' or 'the K__ family.' These families or 'clans' carry with them particular status and reputation within the farmworker community; belonging to these families thus confers a degree of authority to impart knowledge, values, history, culture, and traditions on farms, or to deal with conflicts.

As respondent FG2-3 remarked, listening to such stories means that 'you will realize how deep the history of this farm is.' Indeed, the cumulative biographies of respondents for the two workshops represented 180 and 209 years of collective heritage: a substantial potential resource for deepening and enhancing wine farm provenance stories. Later in

the workshop, FG2-3 recounted the following story about the older wine farm owner (Oom being a South African term of respect for an older man, much like 'Uncle'):

I grew up on the farm. [...] From my earliest memories I can remember Oom ___. He did not have a wife. We as children always gathered at his place every Saturday evenings. ... Those years, people did not have TV's at the homes like they do now. We would go there every Saturday evening. [...] Girls and boys would enter that small hall to go watch TV. When done watching TV we would not return home. We went around to [Oom's] house. [...] He would open his door and all of us would enter. It always ended up that we would have fun and play. If we were hungry we made something to eat on his stove and we just continued. [...] I will never forget that small house. Oom ___ died many years ago but that small house is still standing. (FG2-3)

The collective, community heritage noted above created the basis of a shared identity as a family that transcended specific kinship ties. Significantly, the concept of family is inclusive and emergent: newcomers are welcomed in and become like family. This was a repeated theme across several of the comments from FG1-5. For example:

I know it is something about people working on a farm and living on a farm. [...] We had that bond that they had where they used to work and I had where I used to work. If you are a true person then you will always have that bond, does not matter who you are white black, and pink or purple, you will always have that bond. (FG1-5)

If we think about us that was born and grew up on the farm know what it is to have difficult times, we know about being happy, we argue and fight but also to come together to talk and resolve differences. [...] Even new people that moves in next door we welcome them. Kids want to know one another so we all learn to know each other and to create a good environment in which all of us can live together. [Later, she elaborates:] So it is a family farm but not just about the ___ family. When newcomers arrive, they are accepted and become part of the family. We are going to make sure we are happy and safe together. We will treat each other with respect and discipline. I believe when I get there and bring people and they behave badly, those part of the farm community will tell them to leave and go to where you come from because here, we stand together. (FG1-5)

Similar sentiments were shared by other participants, in terms of an expansive notion of family (FG2-1) and the practices (such as communication and sharing) that underpin a sense of familiness (FG2-3):

What is unique about [the farm] for me is the fact that we are all family irrespective of child or grandchild. When we walk out with the owner of the farm, we are one. (FG2-1)

If we have a problem with someone on the farm, we talk it out. What I also find unique is that we can communicate with [the farm owners] with ease. I can go and drive dirt away using a tractor. He will not come to me the next day asking me why I did that and that I did not have his permission to do it. Our communication is so easy as if we are a family. (FG2-3)

The stories thus highlighted a bond between members of the farm community, which was meaningful for a sense of self and belonging and, in many ways, a source of positive feelings if not also nostalgic longing. For example, respondents' happy memories of childhoods and work on the farm were juxtaposed with noting how things were changing in terms of the shift from farm families (i.e. permanent farm workers) to the use of seasonal and temporary farm labour.

As an example of nostalgic framing of heritage, FG1-4 noted how a sense of community and family is both welcoming and something that is now felt to be missing or waning:

I miss the work in the vineyard and the things you learn every day. Every day was different. Today you do this, tomorrow you do something different and you learn a lot. I also miss the discussions with other people working with me in the vineyard. Now we are no longer together doing work and talk daily. These are the things I miss. (FG1-4)

More generally, stories of growing up on the farms were focused on fond memories. For example, the same respondent went on:

Here by us the owner always gave us a lovely braai [barbeque] after harvest. On that day we party and dance and go on. Some people get wasted from drinking alcohol. Those were things we loved. [Facilitator: What sort of music was it?]

It was predominantly boeremusiek [folk music]. On Fridays and close to holiday time then we feel like having a nice get together. The driver would wait for all of us then we go and buy chops to braai and have a nice time together. It is those fun times together I remember. (FG1-4)

Similarly, the interview respondent recalled her childhood:

Because we have a local community school in the area, so we took the bus but the bus would drop us by the main road and then we still have to walk and it's like a 15 min walk and you have to walk. And then, you know, you're hungry, you're thirsty, and we would take grapes ... We always picked grapes for us and put it in a plastic bag, the whole bunch, and then we would press it ... we would make grape juice, we would just drink it like that. [...] And we played on the farm and we would play everywhere. If it is a ditch with grass we would take our boards, the divider boards, and we would cut it up for each one to have a seat to sit on. We would put a rope on it and the one person – then we would move each other, so then you go down the ditch, up the ditch, so it was like sailing. [...] It is actually nice growing up on the farm. (Farmworker interview)

In these stories, community, family, and nostalgia are closely intertwined. Such stories are not only marked by sincerity and authenticity, but also foreground specific sites, buildings and people as tangible, credible anchors for provenance stories, and rituals (daily work habits, an annual post-harvest braai, children's games) through which collective heritage and familiness are tangibly embedded in place.

Second, there was a recurrent theme of *expertise and pride*. Many of the respondents referred to the value of learning-through-doing on the farm, and the investments made in their training – both through on-the-job tutoring and mentoring, and through more formal courses. These forms of acquired expertise – for example, in relation to pruning – were sources of pride and identity, as in the following examples:

Me together with a few other women who also did not know what to do and was told to go out in the vineyard to help with the pruning. I did not know how to cut and started cutting for the sake of cutting. Our supervisor noticed after a while and stopped me. He told me: 'This is not the way to cut the vine. Cutting a vineyard is a serious business, there is nothing funny about it.' He showed me and it was a big learning experience. We continued to help with the pruning for a couple of days after that and it became an enjoyable experience. Every day I learnt something different. (FG1-4)

I [worked on the farm] for 22 years. Here I once again learnt a lot. I was sent on a course. I accomplished it and have something behind my name that says I am a qualified gardener and can work with a variety of plants. Vines also counted in that category. I grew up from

childhood with the vine plant. I was 9 years old when I started working in the vineyard. (FG2-4)

Another respondent (FG2-2) recounted learning how to prune from two grown men who became his close friends on the farm: 'They taught me well too. During pruning time they would tell me how to do it the correct way.' In turn, he passes these skills on to others:

There is this little girl at our place and when we prune in the vineyard and I might need to step away for a short while. When I returned I always heard her say: 'You must cut correctly, [] is on his way back.' When I walk down the vineyard row and see somewhere the cut was not done correctly, I would ask: 'This cut is not correct, who cut here?' The other workers may say for example: 'Its ___!' By the time I reach ___ she will show me how wrong she cuts the vine. (FG2-2)

The acquired expertise of pruning may be seen as a form of intangible cultural heritage and critical to successful viticulture; yet, it is largely absent in representations of winery *savoir faire* and ethical wine production, and is poorly served if farmworker training is treated as perfunctory (Vink et al., 2012).

In contrast to reflections on the development of their own skilful practices, several of the respondents noted that the current trend of using temporary workers precluded this passing on of skills and connection, with a negative effect on the vineyard:

___ and I will talk then I will tell her while we are walking through the vineyards: 'These vines used to look green and lush in the past and looks pretty dull now. I do not think any wine will come from this vineyard.' [...] Those people do not get taught what to do. The people get picked up [by truck as daily temporary workers]. [...] So no one learns in the vineyards anymore on how to do things. They are messing up the vineyard. Our production has decreased considerably because they do not use trained people. [...] Nobody gets taught anymore, there is no training on vineyard work. [...] People are simply not trained to prune vineyard. At the end it simply does not make sense. On many farms the wine does not taste the same as before, you never see the people working in the vineyard anymore like before. So the vineyards are not kept neat and tidy anymore, the vines are not cut correctly, the harvest is low. (FG1-5)

In turn, pride in their acquired expertise afforded a route to identifying with, and feeling pride in, the final product of the wine. As the respondent above said, 'I normally argue with people saying the wine maker is the best. It does not start there. It starts in the vineyard because if they don't prune right you will not get a good wine.' She went on to say:

This is also why I say if you have no respect for people working in the vineyard then you too mean nothing, it does not matter if you are the owner or boss on the farm and better off, you mean nothing because those people working in the vineyard works extremely hard and they teach each other.[...] They go on the notion that workers finished cutting or harvesting and that is it. The workers are never told, 'We want you all to come to the cellar because we want to tell you about the wine we are making and what happens in the cellar.' It is always the wine maker and his people that get all the shine. It should not be like that. (FG1-5)

Similarly, the interview respondent drew on her understanding of the entire domestic value chain to articulate the importance of farmworkers being supported to undertake skilled work in which they could have pride: 'I would always say that if you worked in the vineyards market, bottling and labelling, then you grow with the wines. [...] The

quality of the wine, the taste of the wine, because that is actually the way that it started. It starts in the vineyard.'

Discussion

From the analysis of our sample of consumer-facing brand stories in phase one, there emerged several conventions in terms of framing of ethical value and brand ethos: provenance, family, and vocabularies of quality, creativity, tradition, and passion. In addition, while the research design precludes generalizing to all SA, French, Italian and Australian wineries, the analysis suggest that representations of farmworkers and farm work are a distinctive feature for some South African wine brands, and are otherwise nearly absent from winery marketing communications. Such representations were linked not only to aspects of provenance, but also justice and sustainability, underlining that these dimensions are intertwined in practice, and that farmworkers can potentially serve as credible, authentic anchors for a range of value claims. Moreover, this invites consideration of the communicative potential of representations of farmworkers beyond the typically narrow focus on justice-oriented value claims.

The analysis of transcripts from the phase two storytelling workshops with farmworkers identified themes of community and familiness, and expertise and pride. The respondents' accounts not only referred to material, tangible anchors to which these themes were linked (e.g. specific sites, rituals, and practices), but also evoked farm life as a form of collective intangible cultural heritage: a source of identity, belonging, and pride (but also largely unrecorded and thus possibly precarious). We are mindful that these themes do not encompass the complexity of experiences of respondents or farmworkers more generally (which are, on the whole, marked by continuing social and economic disadvantage; Farmworker Rights Charter 2017), nor are they representative of all farmworkers, particularly in light of the divide between permanent and seasonal/contract/casual farmworkers, even on farms that adhere to ethical labour practices (Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Ewert et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the themes are intersubjectively valid responses to open-ended questions about respondents' memories and impressions of farm life (rather than, say, solicited as part of the creation of marketing content, or monitoring of farm employment policies), and thus offer a basis from which to explore one route for genuine inclusion of farmworker experiences and voices in global wine commodity chains.

Looking across the findings from the two phases, we discern potential alignments between the credence conventions already in place in the premium wine marketplace, and the experiences and stories of farmworkers. For example, on the one hand, provenance and family are dominant market expectations and legitimacy cues in the premium market; on the other, farmworkers' stories of growing up and working on the farm hold potential for extending and enhancing a wine farm's heritage stories (e.g. consider how the roughly 200 years of collective heritage present at each workshop might enhance the differentiation efforts of a farmworker winery or winery with new ownership). Additionally, the accounts of the shared bonds of farm families encourages a more inclusive understanding of family (and its capacity to welcome new members) than is typically deployed in winery marketing communication representations of 'family' wineries. Research demonstrates that family firm stories can enhance wine brand reputation,

credibility and authenticity (Andreini et al., 2020; Binz Astrachan et al., 2018; Canziani et al., 2020; Gallucci et al., 2015; Strickland et al., 2013; Triana, 2019; Voronov et al., 2013; Zanon et al., 2019), suggesting the potential for wine farmworker family stories to do the same (and underlining the need for further research to explore that potential).

SA brands might also consider how to amplify their justice and sustainability value claims by framing them *within* the discourse of provenance. Research suggests that ethical certifications are often used by consumers as proxies for quality production (Flores, 2018; Forbes et al., 2009; Schäufele & Hamm, 2017). Framing justice and sustainability cues in terms of provenance (e.g. hand-crafted wines with a face and a family) could therefore potentially amplify the taste-related credence qualities most likely to sway premium wine consumers, while mitigating some of the confusion and/or scepticism generated by certifications (Annunziata et al., 2011; Capitello & Sirieix, 2019). The findings highlight the need for effective communication of provenance, and the potential for effectively communicating justice and sustainability *through* provenance stories. For example, farmworker stories may provide tangible, credible evidence of ethical producer practices related to worker housing, education and security, and at the same time substantiate provenance claims (e.g. the biographical transparency of who prunes the vines and picks the grapes), and demonstrate sustainability practices (e.g. close, careful vineyard management is critical for climate-change-resilient, environmentally friendly, quality winemaking; Vink et al., 2012). Credible stories that intertwine provenance, justice, and sustainability may also offer an enhancement – not just an addition – to provenance-based ethical claims, as a way to address the tension between provenance as a response to a demand for transparency and ethical stewardship of local places, versus a means of enacting market protectionism and premiumization (Overton et al., 2019, p. 2442).

Our findings thus point to strategic opportunities to rethink how to communicate SA wine brands' distinctive features and core values via greater inclusion of farmworker voices and stories, and how provenance stories and certifications might work in concert. Further research and market testing is required to explore and evidence the potential for farmworkers, farm families and farmworker stories to contribute to ethical value claims making, and in turn ethical creation of economic value. Doing so offers an opportunity to challenge the prevailing marginalization of farmworkers as a group of actors in ethical value networks, disrupting a view of farmworkers as merely the object or recipient of justice-oriented ethical practice and codes, and instead fostering recognition of them as active co-creators of ethical value, in relation to justice, sustainability *and* provenance.

While the main focus of the research was on demonstrating potential for economic value creation via ethical value claims making, there was indisputably a human development dimension to this research, linked to the capacity of storytelling to afford recognition to farmworkers' typically marginalized or silenced forms of cultural heritage, to create spaces for voicing experiences, and to validate those experiences through the communicative relations between speaker and audience, thus enhancing human dignity and respect (Fraser, 2000; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Tacchi, 2009; Touri, 2020). For example, FG2-3 remarked at the end of the workshop: 'It was lovely remembering so many things of our past' and FG2-4 added 'It was very useful sharing our memories with

someone else.' Fostering inclusion of farmworkers in ethical value claims making is thus intertwined with a concern with ethical processes of value co-creation.

This brings us, in closing, to suggesting two rationales for further research exploring means for and implications of fostering recognition of farmworkers as legitimate contributors to the narratives of South African wine, as actors (not simply targets and recipients) of ethical practices, and as stakeholders in wine global value chains. First, enhanced farmworker recognition may contribute directly to the competitive capacity of the SA wine industry. As Vink et al. (2012, p. 435) note, investment in human development for farmworkers is essential for the SA wine industry, both for long-term environmental sustainability (farmworkers are at the frontline of responding to climate destabilization through observation and diagnosis in the vineyard, both of which require knowledge and skills) and for long-term financial sustainability, because 'it is very difficult to produce 'world class' wine without an educated labour force.' Additionally, enhancing farmworker recognition can help to empower farmworkers to be better equipped to contribute to the formulation of industry codes of practice and to monitoring adherence to those codes (Ewert et al., 2005). This, in turn, can enhance the reputation of brands, and the industry more generally, in export markets, particularly those (such as the UK and Scandinavia) that demand and monitor producers' ethical credentials (Hastings, 2019).

Second, enhanced farmworker recognition has a potential ripple effect on other wine industry stakeholders. As noted in previous research utilizing oral histories with agricultural workers, such stories may not only affirm the storyteller's dignity and identity, but also transform the audience: stereotypes of unskilled labour are confounded, while invisible or derided labour is humanized and recognized as meaningful and a source of pride (Hagood & Schriemer, 2018, p. 34). Changing industry, government and NGO mindsets may help build support for widening protections that currently extend only to permanent farmworkers, and for widening the category of farmworkers recognized as permanent, as per the recommendation in The Farmworker Rights Charter (2017, p. 9, *passim*) for a 'permanent seasonal' designation to reflect that many work for decades in a seasonal capacity without ever obtaining the rights and securities afforded to permanent workers. This widening lens of recognition could also help to address the deep, and deepening rural divide between permanent, and seasonal, casual and contract workers (Ewert & du Toit, 2005). Furthermore, as Ewert et al. (2005) found in their evaluation of SA wine farm adherence to ethical labour codes, it is generally a socially responsible mindset that precedes, and thus drives, code adherence. Ultimately, therefore, full recognition of farmworkers is needed for achieving a wine industry that complies with ethical codes of practice; codes, certifications and monitoring are not enough. This research has suggested how farmworker stories might play a role in building that recognition, with the potential to generate forms of economic, social, and ethical value, foster dignity in work, and affirm community and individual identity and cohesion.

Notes

1. A good example of the critical role of certifications in SA is the Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trading Association (WIETA) Ethical Code of Conduct and its auditing monitoring framework, which strive to go beyond the legal compliance to labour, health and safety requirements but also ensure that its members' management systems reflect ethical principles, policies and

practices (WIETA, 2021a, 2021b). Critical features of this process are the active incident investigations and workplace mediations that follow when non-compliance complaints are received from farmworkers. These processes support the certification audit process and empowers WIETA to work outside the strict audit process to deal with social and ethical matters as and when they arise. This process is officially referred to as the Agriculture Referral Network Mechanism. This referral system involved broad consultation and discussion with wine and fruit industry stakeholders to explore a collective response to rural and farmworker disputes and conflict as a mechanism that could assist in building trust and cohesion within the agricultural sector and to explore creative and innovative means to respond to workplace and rural conflict. WIETA also places strong focus on regular ethical leadership training for management and training with farm workers on the WIETA codes. Certification undergirded by ongoing surveillance and tracking of best practices assists members of WIETA to be and become compliant when there are shortcomings. We will have to see in the long term if ethical bodies can move beyond audits and certifications to hold businesses socially and ethically compliant.

2. As an effect of the apartheid era Coloured Preference Labour Policy, permanent farmworkers are more likely to be Coloured (Frederikse, 2015; see also Ewert & du Toit, 2005; Hastings, 2019); however, we did not ask respondents for their ethnic self-identification.

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