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The Senses as Experiences in Wine Tourism—A Comparative Statistical Analysis between Abruzzo and Douro

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Abstract: Sensory experiences play a remarkable role in the visitor's satisfaction and behavioral intention to return to a wine tourism unit, so it is important to frequently review the environment in which the experience is lived, to make it memorable. This study aimed to perform a comparative analysis of the perception of sensory experiences between the Abruzzo region in Italy and the Douro region in Portugal. This study also intended to understand the most important sensations sought by wine tourists in each region. A quantitative methodology was used, based on a questionnaire survey that analyses the perceptions of sensory experiences and some variables that characterize the profile of wine tourists. The sample consisted of 199 wine tourists who visited the wine tourism units of the aforementioned regions. The structural equation model results showed that sensory experiences were composed of five factors: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, and sensory experiences manifested with greater intensity in the hearing and smell factors. By comparing the results between the two regions, it can be concluded that smell is the most important factor for wine tourists who visit the Douro region, while for those who visit the Abruzzo region, it is the taste. The obtained results are important, in that they allow perceiving the differences in perception in sensory experiences, which has an impact on the management of companies in the two regions studied. This comparison between two wine regions in two different countries is pioneering work. Different wine regions have different attractiveness factors.

Keywords: sensations; wine tourism; experiences; senses

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1. Introduction

Wine production is an activity that continues to assert itself in a competitive and wealth-generating way for many economies [1], while the connection between the wine produced in a region and its gastronomy adds value and gives a unique character to the region [2]. Wine is undoubtedly a heritage of the past, a product of the present, but also a project with a future, which can be a catalyst for tourism development [3]. That is because wine tourism seems to represent an alternative to economic promotion, where the tourist, during the tours, combines wine with local gastronomy [4].

The wine tourism activity is an extension of the relationship between wine cellars, wine regions, and consumer visitors, and the wine tourist is a person who needs to travel and who likes to visit wine cellars, to obtain sensational experiences of different types of wine, and to discover the region where a wine is produced [5]. Ref. [2] observe that the wine tourism experience has diverse characteristics, which include a lifestyle experience,

education, links with art, wine, and food, tasting and sales in the winery, and tours of farms and wine cellars. These characteristics are incorporated into the image of a tourist destination, also representing the social and cultural values of a territory.

Wine tourism is also certainly related to the hedonic perspective, involving sensations through the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch [6].

Wine tourism has been providing tourists with memorable experiences, capable of being consumed rationally, aesthetically, and emotionally, transporting the tourist to another reality during the experience [7]. Wine tourism trips are moments full of sensations, such as the feeling of meeting the landscape, the feeling of tasting wine in wine cellars, where knowledge passes from generation to generation, and the moment of tasting a typical dish, which are all experiences passed on to tourists [8]. Some consumers discover wine while traveling and living outside their area of residence, generally through cultural experiences (e.g., in Europe, where wine is integrated into the popular gastronomy of a region) when visiting a winery. Others are led to visit wine regions due to their interest in wines, or they will visit wineries and wine regions during trips with different or multiple purposes [9].

The lived experiences aim to increase and cement customer satisfaction and the charm in the local tourist offerings, by making these more diversified and competitive and creating conditions for wine tourism to develop [7]. Furthermore, wine tourism enhances local identity and instills pride in those who work with the land and still value its attractions and history, giving visitors an experience that overcomes cultural differences and also seeks their satisfaction [8].

In this way, more and more indications in the literature have highlighted the relevance of the study of the sensory experiences of wine tourists in more depth. To this end, to confirm the relationship between sensory experience in the winery visit and outcomes (satisfaction, experience, place attachment), and to compare those relationships in two different European contexts, a correlational study was designed with the participation of wine tourists visiting the two top countries in the world ranking of wine tourism [10]: Italy (Abruzzo) and Portugal (Douro).

Thus, the present study aimed to carry out a comparative analysis of the perception of sensory experiences between the two regions under study and to understand which are the most important sensations sought by wine tourists in each of the regions. The results offer theoretical insights and practical applications, including the sensory and socio-demographic determinants of the purchase intentions, satisfaction, and general experience of a place and a region.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Business of Wine Tourism

Wine tourism has a long history, although it may seem quite recent and innovative. Today's visitors are very travelled and seek new experiences, authentic and particular contexts, or exceptional activities [11]. For Ref. [12], the synergy created between wine production and wine tourism is the key to increasing production profits and business assets. These authors understand that wine companies must create heterogeneity in their resources and positioning, different from their competitors, to achieve strong positive positions in the tourism industry. In this line of thinking, there are authors such as Ref. [13] who state that in wine tourism there should be more attractive factors, such as concerts in cellars, music in the vineyards, festivals, gastronomy and wine, and culinary events. According to Ref. [14], wine festivals can create on-site shopping and simultaneously a wine experience when incorporated into leisure activities, offering opportunities for experiences and involvement in activities promoting wine tourism. The intrinsic components of wine tourism products are fundamental to satisfying consumers and developing wine regions, it being necessary to design activities with local identity and harmonization between wine and gastronomy [15].

Ref. [15] verified the success of wine tourism based on the variety of products and services, where wine is the main attraction and investments in technology and sustainable

management practices are the main differentiators against the competition. Ref. [16] that wine lunch/diner events are the ones that seem to promote greater sensory involvement with the product. In those authors' opinion, the managers of wine tourism units should be more attentive to the factors that most impact the experience of visitors, as well as seek to enhance the dimensions of items that were less impactful for visitors.

The wine tourism trend has been consolidated by the quality and diversity of offerings; while wine tourism destinations are becoming increasingly competitive and attractive [17], creating memorable experiences is a way to differentiate the product in the minds of consumers, especially when it comes to a new wine region [2]. There are several distinct market segments in wine tourism, and there are significant variations in the demographics and psychographics of wine tourists in each region, with these differences even more pronounced at a national and intercultural level [18]. However, the absence of intercultural research limits the broader understanding of this market.

Tourism seems to be moving from providing services to providing experiences, and so, co-creation is a central topic in tourism that recognizes the tourists' role in interacting with other tourism stakeholders and the physical environment for the benefit of all involved [19]. Experiences provide lasting benefits, and personalization is the key to creating transformative experiences because, by adapting them to each individual's needs, it is possible to provoke a real transformation in their life [20]. Transformative experiences are different from mere services. The experience economy is seen as an underlying long-term shift in the structure of advanced economies [20].

According to Ref. [21] model, the experiential marketing experience and activity involvement are precedent variables of satisfaction and loyalty intentions. Thus, each experiential marketing experience has a certain emotional effect and, in turn, influences the visitor's assessment and consequently their behaviors. So, a favorable and memorable experiential environment leads customers to a positive emotion, which affects satisfaction and consequently the behavior intention [22]. Some of the experiences may be visits to wine landscapes, wine tasting, knowing the wine production process, and the presentation of wine products, as increasing the satisfaction level of tourists can grow the intentions of loyalty [21].

Ref. [23] found that the experience of visiting the winery has a positive influence on recommendation intentions, but not on loyalty. However, the visit recommendation seems to be a more important consequence than loyalty, as it is natural that it will generate more visits from future wine tourists. The study conducted by those authors also found that only sight showed a significant relationship with the intentions to recommend, which may imply that general appearance, aesthetics, and physical facilities have a predominant role in pleasing visitors.

2.2. Sensory Experiences and Impressions in Wine Tourism

In the literature, several authors consider wine tourism to be much more than wine tasting, as by opting for this experience, the wine tourist can live gastronomic and cultural experiences [2,3,11,15,24].

Ref. [25] report that gastronomic tourists and wine tourists are visitors who know the theme and seek to increase their knowledge and enjoy to the fullest both the wine-tasting experience and local gastronomy through travelling. Thus, it is essential that there be different types of tastings, to enhance the importance of the wine tastings [26]; in both gastronomic tourism and wine tourism, the products and services consumed are focused on sensations and experiences [25].

For Ref. [2], wine tourism should be seen as a holistic experience, where multiple aspects are included in a visit to a wine-producing region, with its lifestyle and culture. This holistic experience can be offered in a variety of ways, usually at events such as festivals, cultural heritage visits, dinners, hospitality, education, tasting, winery sales, and winery visits. Ref. [27] identified four factors that play an important role in a memorable wine-tasting experience: winery attributes, activity themes, novelties, and training. Moreover,

Ref. [28] point out that the label's attributes influence the pleasure and satisfaction in the attachment to the brand, and that prior attachment to the place and the associations/links of the place to the brand enhance the effects of the touristic experience. Ref. [29] found that the image of the destination, personal involvement, and attachment to the place precede visitor loyalty, although this relationship is mediated by satisfaction levels.

Satisfaction mediates the effects of pleasure and excitement in the loyalty to the brand, while what most affects brand loyalty is the willingness to pay a price premium [30]. Loyalty is stronger in positive environments (when pleasure, excitement, and satisfaction are high), and when the brand has positive personality dimensions.

Ref. [21] found that satisfied customers develop a moderate level of emotional connection with the touristic destination and only posteriorly become loyal to that destination. Visitors who share wine experiences usually have a very positive outlook, especially when it is linked to an educational experience, which can lead to recommendations for other visitors. Wine tourism enhances escape experiences, involving immersion in the visited territory, such as natural and cultural landscapes, cultural events, and activities in vineyards [31].

In a study carried out in the wine tourism units in the Tejo region (Portugal), tourists gave importance to their intention to share experiences [6]. On the other hand, according to Ref. [32], the Italian consumer is attracted by the organoleptic and characteristic properties of wine, which are associated with the concept of terroir.

Because the main product of tourism is the experiences, the experiential dimension is placed at the center of tourist consumption, and the winery is the center of wine tourism experiences that allow owners the opportunity to provide authentic and memorable experiences, contributing to creating opinions about the producer, the wineries, and the destination of the wine region [33]. Besides that, quality services in the cellar door have a strong and positive impact on the visitor's satisfaction, which directly and indirectly affects future behavioral intentions and brand extensibility [34]. Ref. [35] note that, for wineries, the beauty and good conservation of the facilities, as well as attentive and friendly service, are essential and inescapable aspects.

For Ref. [36], wine tourism is a hedonic experience that involves the senses and emotions. That author states that wine tourism experiences are complex and need more scrutiny and investigation. As for the senses involved, music is a powerful formative stimulus in wine tourism experiences [37]. But there are other stimuli such as the effect of color, texture, temperature, aroma, flavors, and the shape of the glass [38,39]. In wine tourism, wine tasting is an integral part of the sensory stimuli that leave a lasting impression on wine tourists [36]. In their attraction to each region, tourists take into consideration not only the wines but also the natural beauties and the local population. The structure of the wine industry is relevant when comparing different wine tourism regions [40].

Ref. [41] analyzed the sensory impressions of global tourists in rural areas and concluded that all sensory themes present at least some reference to three external human senses, that other senses besides sight contribute to the recall of tourist experiences and can play an important role in encouraging tourist behavior towards destinations, and that sensory impressions are reported considering the five senses as a reference, aiming to capture specific qualities of the destination in loco and the post-visit phase (e.g., natural light, animals, bird song, silence, the smell of fresh air, local food, "sand" texture).

According to the above-presented background, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. (H1): *Sensory experiences (H1a: Sight, H1b: Hearing, H1c: Smell, H1d: Taste, and H1e: Touch) have a positive effect on satisfaction with the wine tourism experience.*

Hedonism, knowledge, participation, and novelty are the factors that underscore a memorable and satisfying experience in wine tourism [11]; these emotions and the joy generated by the touristic experience reinforce the creation of memories in the tourists'

minds [42]; positive and pleasureful emotions are important memories for the intention of recommending a touristic destination. Moreover, the positive impacts of personal involvement in the touristic destination's image impact their behavioral intentions [43]; therefore, the attachment to the place dictates a relationship between the destination's image and behavioral intentions.

Ref. [44] underlined that the perceived congruence between a hotel's architecture, the local landscape, and the cellar's brand image has a positive impact on the visitors' emotions, excitement, and pleasure. Excitement and pleasure are emotions that enhance the behavioral intentions of the visitors.

Considering all the elements in the literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 2. (H2): *Satisfaction has a positive effect on wine tourist attachment.*

A favorable and memorable experiential environment influences the visitors and their behaviors [21,36], and increasing satisfaction increases loyalty intentions and recommendation [6].

Hypothesis 3. (H3): *Satisfaction has a positive effect on the wine tourist's behavioral intentions.*

Loyalty is stronger when satisfaction is high [30]. Personal involvement and attachment to the location precede the visitor's loyalty, and the relationship is measured by satisfaction levels [29]. The visitor's satisfaction directly and indirectly affects future behavioral intentions and brand extendibility [34].

Hypothesis 4. (H4): *Attachment has a positive effect on the wine tourist's behavioral intentions.*

Attachment to the brand and location reinforce the effects of the touristic experience and precede the visitor's loyalty [29].

3. Methodology

3.1. Population and Sample

The target population of the study was wine tourists who visit the wine tourism units of the Abruzzo (Italy) and the Douro (Portugal) regions, and the sample consisted of 199 wine tourists who visited the wine tourism units of the aforementioned regions. In data collection, the participants were selected using the non-random convenience sampling method, since wine tourists who visited the wine tourism units were invited to answer the questionnaire voluntarily. This method was used due to the ease of access to the sample members and the low cost.

The Douro Demarcated Region extends along the Douro River and its tributaries over about 250,000 hectares. The vineyards were built in a territory marked by steep slopes and by the almost non-existence of arable land and water. The vineyards that cover the great slopes rise from the Douro River and set up an immense staircase of terraces and landings that are an admirable achievement of human work.

In 2020, the Douro Demarcated Region represented 36% of the wine production in Portugal with designation of origin and 20% of the total wine production. According to the Ref. [10], Douro and Port wines (in 2020) represented 69% of exports, corresponding to 113 million liters, of which 57% were Port wines. As for the organoleptic characteristics, the red wines are rich in color and aroma, they are velvety and pleasant to taste, and they age nobly, while the white wines are fine, light, fresh, pleasantly acidic, and very aromatic.

Located in central-southern Italy, the Abruzzo wine region extends from the heart of the Apennines to the Adriatic Sea, over a predominantly mountainous and wild area. The wine-growing area in the Abruzzo region is concentrated in particular on the coastal hills and in some hilly areas of the interior. The permeable and dry soil, the climate, and the protection from cold and humid winds are very favorable conditions for Abruzzo

viticulture, from whose cultivation excellent quality wines are produced that go well with the typical traditional dishes of the area.

The vineyard area in Abruzzo is about 32,500 hectares, of which almost 96% is located in the hills, while 4% is represented by mountain viticulture. Total wine production exceeds 2.6 million hectoliters, of which over 30% are from DOC and DOCG denominations.

3.2. Data Collection Instrument

In this study, a quantitative methodology based on a questionnaire survey was used. The questionnaire was presented to participants in three languages (Portuguese, Italian, and English) and was divided into four parts.

The first characterized the tourists' visits to wine tourism units (see Table 1), asking the number of times they had already visited wine tourism units in the region, the activities in which they participated during the visit to the wine tourism unit, the number of nights they spent away from home, and with whom they had visited.

Table 1. Characteristics of wine tourists from both regions.

		Region			
		Abruzzo (IT)		**Douro (PT)**	
		n	**%**	***n***	**%**
How many times have you visited wine tourism units in the region?	Never	26	28.0	43	40.6
	1 time	19	20.4	33	31.1
	2 times	14	15.1	13	12.3
	3 or more times	34	36.6	17	16.1
With whom are you participating in the visit?	Alone	3	3.2	11	10.4
	With family	32	34.4	31	29.2
	With friends	40	43.0	27	25.5
	With co-workers	5	5.4	15	14.2
	Organized group (tour)	13	14.0	22	20.8
Activities in the wine tourism unit	Tour	30	32.3	69	65.1
	Wine event	15	16.1	6	5.7
	Wine tastings	33	35.5	70	66.0
	Lunch/wine dinner	18	19.4	8	7.5
	Other	2	2.2	18	17.0

Source: Own elaboration.

The second part consisted of 21 items (see Table 2) adapted from Ref. [16] and analyzed perceptions in terms of the sensations experienced by wine tourists during the visit to the wine tourism units (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch). To measure the 21 items that assessed the perceptions in terms of sensations experienced by wine tourists during visits to wine tourism units, a Likert-type scale of 7 points was used (1—Totally disagree to 7—Totally agree).

The third part analyzed the satisfaction, attachment, and behavioral intentions of wine tourists. Satisfaction was analyzed using three items: (1) overall satisfaction with the experience of visiting the wine tourism unit, evaluated on a 7-point scale (1—Not at all satisfied; 7—Totally satisfied); (2) evaluation of the experience of visiting the wine tourism unit taking into account expectations, evaluated on a 7-point scale (1—Far below expectations; 7—Far above expectations); and (3) after imagining an ideal or perfect experience, assessing to what extent the experience of visiting the wine tourism unit approached this ideal, also analyzed on a 7-point scale (1—Far below ideal; 7—Far above ideal).

Table 2. Comparative analysis of the items on the perceptions of sensory experiences scale between regions.

	Region				Test
	Abruzzo (IT)		Douro (PT)		
Items	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***t***
SE1. Landscape observation	5.88	1.20	5.73	1.49	0.81
SE2. Observation of wine kites/barrels	5.58	1.42	5.23	1.52	1.69
SE3. Observation of glasses and tableware	4.86	1.73	4.97	1.62	−0.47
SE4. Wine-tasting space decor observation	5.51	1.32	5.07	1.56	2.13 *
SE5. Observation of architectural aspects	5.30	1.46	5.08	1.55	1.05
SE6. Sound of opening the bottle	4.96	1.65	4.78	1.62	0.75
SE7. Sound associated with pouring wine into a glass	4.85	1.71	4.73	1.70	0.51
SE8. Toast sound (cups, voices, and tinkling)	4.66	1.88	4.59	1.68	0.24
SE9. Sounds of the outside/nature	5.25	1.61	5.16	1.62	0.38
SE10. Wine aromas	5.91	1.17	4.92	1.71	4.81 ***
SE11. Smell of the countryside	5.63	1.44	5.09	1.64	2.48 *
SE12. Smell of the cellar (kites/barrels)	5.65	1.36	4.97	1.62	3.15 **
SE13. Smell of food (cheeses/bread/cold cuts)	5.29	1.61	4.59	1.83	2.83 **
SE14. Wine flavor	6.14	1.00	4.98	1.85	5.60 ***
SE15. Cheese flavor	5.01	1.83	4.42	1.99	2.19 *
SE16. Bread flavor	4.88	1.84	4.73	1.93	0.58
SE17. Taste of cold cuts	5.05	1.84	4.61	1.97	1.62
SE18. Touching the wine kites/barrels	5.00	1.79	4.86	1.61	0.59
SE19. Touching the food (bread, cold cuts, cheeses, etc.)	4.66	1.87	4.82	1.94	−0.61
SE20. Touching the wine glass (feeling the hot/cold temperature)	4.72	1.78	4.90	1.69	−0.71
SE21. Touching the ground/nature	4.59	1.87	4.74	1.64	−0.58

Legend: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$. Source: Own elaboration.

Attachment was measured using the place attachment scale (8 items), which was adapted from Ref. [45], with the dimensions of place identity and place dependence.

The measurement of the behavioral intentions of the wine tourist (5 items) with the dimensions of recommendation and loyalty, was adapted from Ref. [46]. The items of the place attachment and behavioral intentions scales (see Table 4) were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1—Totally disagree; 7—Totally agree).

Finally, the fourth part was related to the sociodemographic information of the wine tourists (gender, age, level of education, and monthly household income).

3.3. Procedures

To carry out the study, in the first phase, initial contact was made via email through a form to identify the wine tourism offerings of the wineries registered with the wine commissions of both regions, to find out some general information and understand the types of experiences/services they offered to their visitors. Then, to obtain the information about tourists' experiences in terms of the five sensations, wineries that offered experiences/services that fit the scale of sensations being used were chosen, i.e., wineries that had guided tours (of the wineries and vineyards) and wine-tasting services. Authorization was requested from the wineries of the two regions under study that had the indicated characteristics, in order to apply the questionnaires to wine tourists. It should be noted that some of the wineries did not respond to the request, and others responded that due to the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were not in operation to receive visitors. After the acceptance of wineries in the Douro region and in the Abruzzo region, the researchers were present for data collection during some visits that took place during the week and left questionnaires at the wineries so that other visitors could participate. Before the application of the questionnaires, the wine tourists were informed of the objectives of the study, and the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers were guaranteed. The

data collection process took place in the wineries of the regions under study between June and December 2020.

The data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28 and AMOS 27 software. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the sample. Statistical inference techniques were used to compare the items of the sensory experience perception scale between wine tourists from the Abruzzo and Douro regions; more precisely, the Student's *t*-test to compare independent samples was used. According to Ref. [47], we first analyzed the existence of missing cases and outliers and studied the sensitivity of items using the skewness ($|Sk| \leq 3$) and kurtosis coefficients ($|Ku| \leq 7$). To assess the quality of the measurement model and the structural model of sensory experiences, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied and the maximum likelihood estimation method was used.

After applying the CFA, structural equation modelling was applied to examine the effects of the variable satisfaction, attachment, and behavioral intentions in the model of sensory experiences. The structural model was evaluated using the same goodness of fit indices used with the CFA model.

4. Results

4.1. Characterization of Wine Tourists by Region

Of the 199 wine tourists who participated in the study, 93 (46.7%) visited wine units in the Abruzzo region of Italy and 106 (53.3%) in the Douro region in Portugal. The sample from the Douro region was composed of the same number of men and women, whereas the sample from the Abruzzo region was composed mostly of men (54.8%, $n = 51$). In terms of education levels, secondary or lower education levels predominated in both regions. As regards the monthly income of the household, wine tourists visiting the Abruzzo region had higher incomes, and 57% ($n = 53$) earned more than 2000 euros. Wine tourists visiting units in the Abruzzo region were aged between 22 and 74 years, the average being 43 years ($SD = 10.21$), while wine tourists visiting the Douro region were between 18 and 80 years old, with an average of 33 years ($SD = 16.81$).

Table 1 shows that 28.0% ($n = 26$) of wine tourists were visiting wine tourism units in the Abruzzo region for the first time and 40.6% ($n = 43$) were visiting wine tourism units in the Douro region for the first time. During the visit, both wine tourists from the Abruzzo region and those from the Douro region tended to participate in the visit with friends and family. Regarding the activities in which the wine tourists participated during the visit, it was found that wine tastings and guided tours were the ones with the highest frequency, in the samples of wine tourists from both the Abruzzo region and the Douro region.

4.2. Comparative Analysis of the Perception of Sensory Experiences between Regions

Table 2 shows that experiences in terms of sensations are quite important in wine tourism in both regions (average levels higher than the midpoint of the scale). Some items showed statistically significant differences between the two regions under study (see Table 2), such as the observation of the decoration of the wine-tasting space ($t = 2.13$, $p < 0.05$), and the flavors associated with wines ($t = 5.60$, $p < 0.001$) and cheeses ($t = 2.19$, $p < 0.05$). The sensations associated with these items were most valued by wine tourists in the Abruzzo region. Also, the items related to the sensation of smell (wine aromas, the smell of the countryside, the cellar, and food) were more valued by the wine tourists visiting the Abruzzo region, with statistical significance.

4.3. Measurement Model of Sensory Experiences

Applying confirmatory factor analysis to the 21 items, we obtained the fit indices shown in Table 3.

The fit indices of the original model revealed an unacceptable fit. The slightly modified model showed a significantly higher fit quality. The structure of the measurement model of sensory experiences (Figure 1) was composed of five factors: sight, composed of five items (SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, and SE5); hearing, consisting of four items (SE6, SE7, SE8, and SE9);

smell, composed of three items (SE10, SE11, and SE12); taste, composed of four items (SE14, SE15, SE16, and SE17); and touch, with three items (SE18, SE20, and SE21). Figure 1 shows that all the loadings were greater than 0.5 (the minimum value was 0.63).

Table 3. Model fit indices.

Indices	Original Model (21 Items)	Adjusted Model (19 Items)	Cut-Off Criteria
χ^2/df	899.390/179 = 5.025	391.366/137 = 2.857	Less than 3 [47]
GFI	0.689	0.839	Good fit—values greater or equal to 0.90 [48]
CFI	0.851	0.938	
RMSEA	0.143	0.097	Acceptable for values less than 0.10 Ref. [48] and good for values in [0.05, 0.08] Ref. [49]
MECVI	5.133	2.572	The lower the better [48]

Source: Own elaboration.

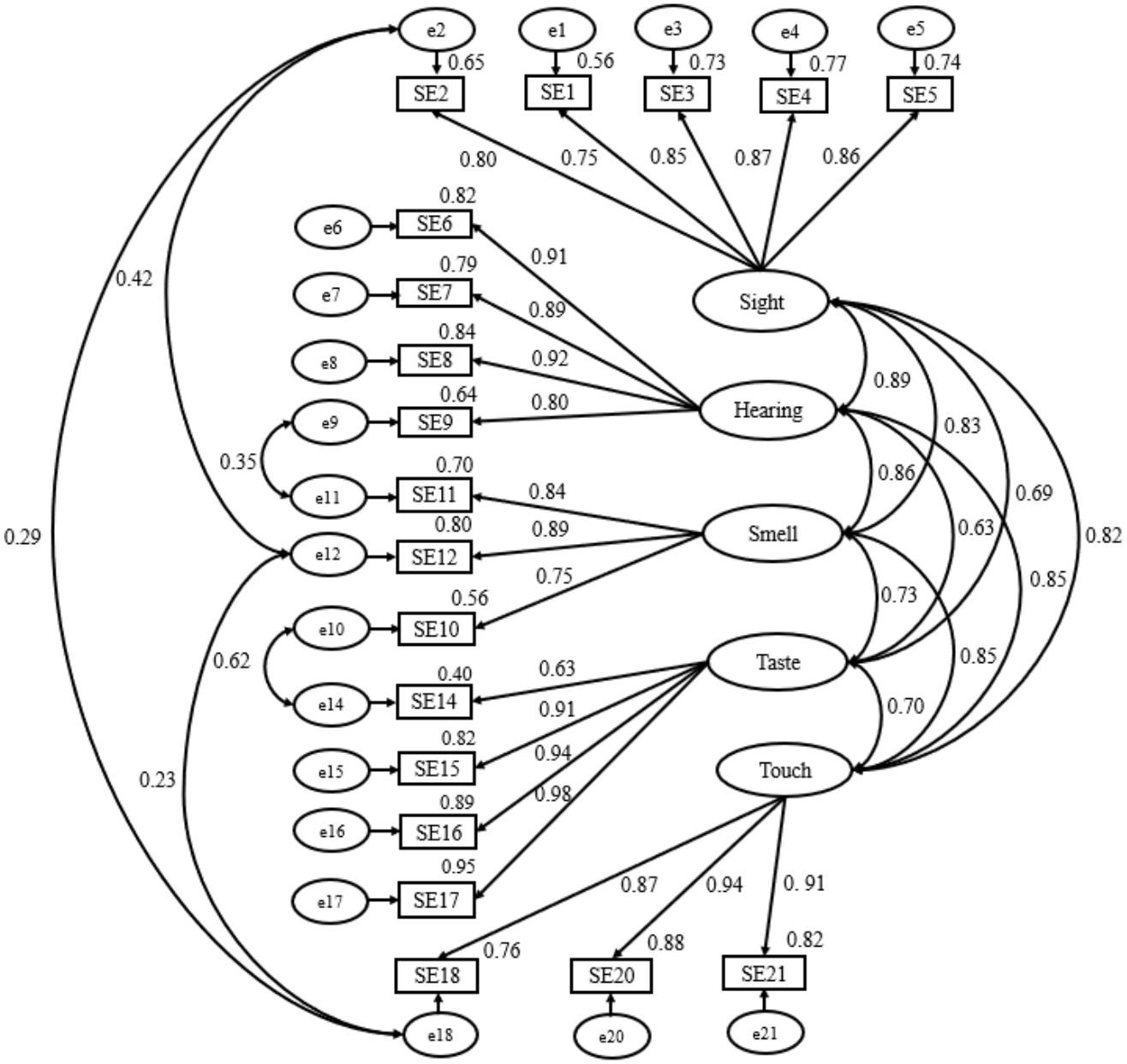

Figure 1. CFA model with the five sensory factors.

Table 4 shows that the factors of the sensory experience perception scale had Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.7, which was an indicator of good reliability [50]. So, it can be stated that the utilized items were reliable to assess the different factors of the sensory experience perception scale. The average variance extracted (AVE) values for the five factors of the scale were greater than 0.5, which indicated adequate convergent validity [50].

Table 4. Correlations between the factors of the sensory experience perception scale.

	Sight	Hearing	Smell	Taste	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Sight					0.917	0.916	0.687
Hearing	0.89				0.929	0.931	0.773
Smell	0.83	0.86			0.891	0.866	0.684
Taste	0.69	0.63	0.73		0.925	0.927	0.765
Touch	0.82	0.85	0.85	0.70	0.928	0.932	0.820

Source: Own elaboration.

The correlations between the various factors of the sensory experience perception scale (Figure 1) were statistically positive and significant ($p < 0.001$) and could also be classified as strong [51]. Therefore, the existence of a second-order hierarchical factor was justified, named sensory experiments, a model of which is represented in Figure 2.

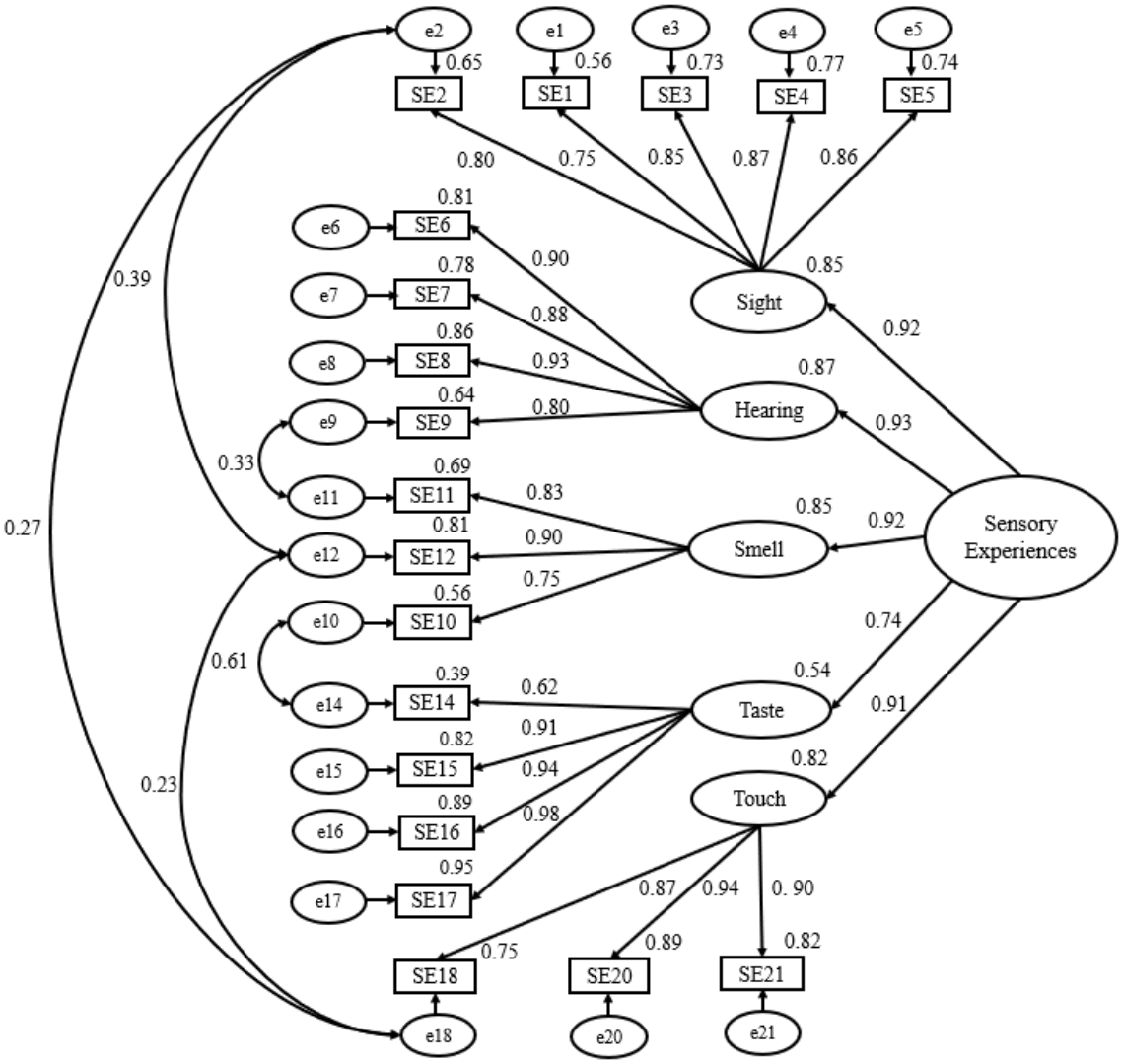

Figure 2. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis model of sensory experiences. Source: Own elaboration.

4.4. Structural Model of Sensory Experiences

The goodness of fit indices of the model presented in Figure 2 were considered good (χ^2 = 410.744, df = 142, χ^2/df = 2.893, GFI = 0.833, CFI = 0.935, RMSEA = 0.098, IC90% = [0.087, 0.109], MECVI = 2.614). It was observed that the sight factor manifested itself with greater intensity in the item that referred to the observation of the decoration of the wine-tasting space (β_{SE4} = 0.87). The hearing factor manifested itself with greater intensity in the item related to the sound of the toast (β_{SE8} = 0.93), the smell factor manifested with greater intensity in the item related to the smell of the cellar (β_{SE12} = 0.90), and the taste factor manifested with greater intensity in the item related to the flavor of the cold cuts (β_{SE17}= 0.98). Finally, concerning the touch factor, it manifested with greater intensity in the item that referred to touching the wine glass (β_{SE20} = 0.94).

The variable of sensory experiences manifested itself with greater intensity in the factors of hearing ($\beta_{Hearing}$= 0.93) and smell (β_{Smell} = 0.92) and with lower intensity in the taste factor (β_{Taste} = 0.74).

Then, using multi-group analysis, the model obtained in Figure 2 was tested for the two regions: Abruzzo and Douro. According to the fit indexes (χ^2 = 751.268, df = 284, χ^2/df = 2.645, CFI = 0.896, RMSEA = 0.091, IC90% = [0.083, 0.099]), the proposed factor model presented a good fit simultaneously for wine tourists in the Douro region and in the Abruzzo region, demonstrating the configurational invariance of the factor model.

The constricted model with fixed factor weights for Douro wine tourists versus those in Abruzzo presented a significantly worse adjustment than the model with free parameters ($\Delta\chi^2(14)$ = 82.042, $p < 0.01$), demonstrating the variance of the measurement model. It was found that the model with fixed structural coefficients differed significantly from the model with free structural coefficients when an invariant model was considered ($\Delta\chi^2(5)$ = 21.946, $p < 0.01$). By applying a Z-test, it could be verified that the structural coefficients between sight and sensory experiences (Z = 1134, $p < 0.05$), between hearing and sensory experiences (Z = −1.133, $p < 0.05$), and between touch and sensory experiences (Z = −0.025, $p < 0.05$), did not differ significantly between the two regions. However, the structural coefficients between smell and sensory experiences (Z = 6.396, $p < 0.001$) and between taste and sensory experiences (Z = 4.299, $p < 0.001$) did differ significantly between the two regions. Thus, it could be concluded that wine tourists visiting the Douro region considered smell to be more important ($\beta_{Douro} = 0.97 > \beta_{Abruzzo} = 0.81$), while those who visited the Abruzzo region considered taste more important ($\beta_{Abruzzo} = 0.76 > \beta_{Douro} = 0.69$).

4.5. Sensory Experiences, Satisfaction, Attachment, and Behavioral Intentions

The model presented in Figure 1 included the variables satisfaction, attachment, and behavioral intentions. Table 5 shows that all the standardized factor weights were greater than 0.5. Satisfaction and attachment scale factors (place identity and place dependence) and behavioral intentions (recommendation and loyalty) showed Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values greater than 0.7, which was an indicator of good reliability, allowing us to say that the utilized items were reliable to assess the different factors of the scales used [50]. The AVE values presented values greater than 0.5 in all constructs, which was an indicator of adequate convergent validity [50].

Table 5. Estimation of the measurement model parameters.

	***M* (*SD*)**	**Loadings**
Satisfaction with experience (α = 0.909, CR = 0.816, AVE = 0.598)		
Overall satisfaction with the experience of visiting the wine tourism unit	5.55 (1.05)	0.799
Evaluation of the experience of visiting the wine tourism unit taking into account expectations	5.39 (1.10)	0.855
Imagining an ideal or perfect experience, assess to what extent the experience of visiting the wine tourism unit approaches this ideal	5.25 (1.11)	0.874

Table 5. *Cont.*

	M (*SD*)	Loadings
Place identity (α = 0.923, CR = 0.841, AVE = 0.570)		
I strongly identify myself with this region's wine tourism units	4.80 (1.74)	0.730
The visits to this region's wine tourism units mean a lot to me	4.61 (1.74)	0.762
I am connected to this region's wine tourism units for their history, culture, and heritage	4.54 (1.89)	0.717
This region's wine tourism units are very special to me	4.58 (1.75)	0.807
Place dependence (α = 0.947, CR = 0.891, AVE = 0.673)		
Visits to this region's wine tourism units are more important to me than other visits	4.07 (1.77)	0.827
I like to visit this region's wine tourism units more than any other places	3.98 (1.80)	0.894
I am more satisfied visiting this region's wine tourism units than when visiting other places	3.88 (1.86)	0.823
For what I like to do, I could not imagine anything better than the conditions offered by this region's wine tourism units	4.04 (1.77)	0.730
Recommendation (α = 0.835, CR = 0.750, AVE = 0.509)		
I will recommend this unit of wine tourism to my friends or family	5.32 (1.60)	0.743
I will share photos/comments on social networks about my experience here	4.48 (1.89)	0.521
I will continue to buy wines produced by this wine tourism unit	4.76 (1.67)	0.839
Loyalty (α = 0.887, CR = 0.735, AVE = 0.583)		
I will visit this farm the next time I travel to this region	4.59 (1.63)	0.696
I will start/continue to be a loyal customer of this wine tourism unit	4.38 (1.65)	0.826

Source: Own elaboration.

The structural model was simplified, as shown in Figure 3, and showed a good fit quality (χ^2 =1170.306, df = 533, χ^2/df = 2.196, GFI = 0.750, CFI = 0.914, RMSEA = 0.078, IC90% = [0.072, 0.084]). Sight was the only sense that had a positive and statistically significant effect on satisfaction with the experience (β = 0.41, p < 0.05), which partially supported Hypothesis 1.

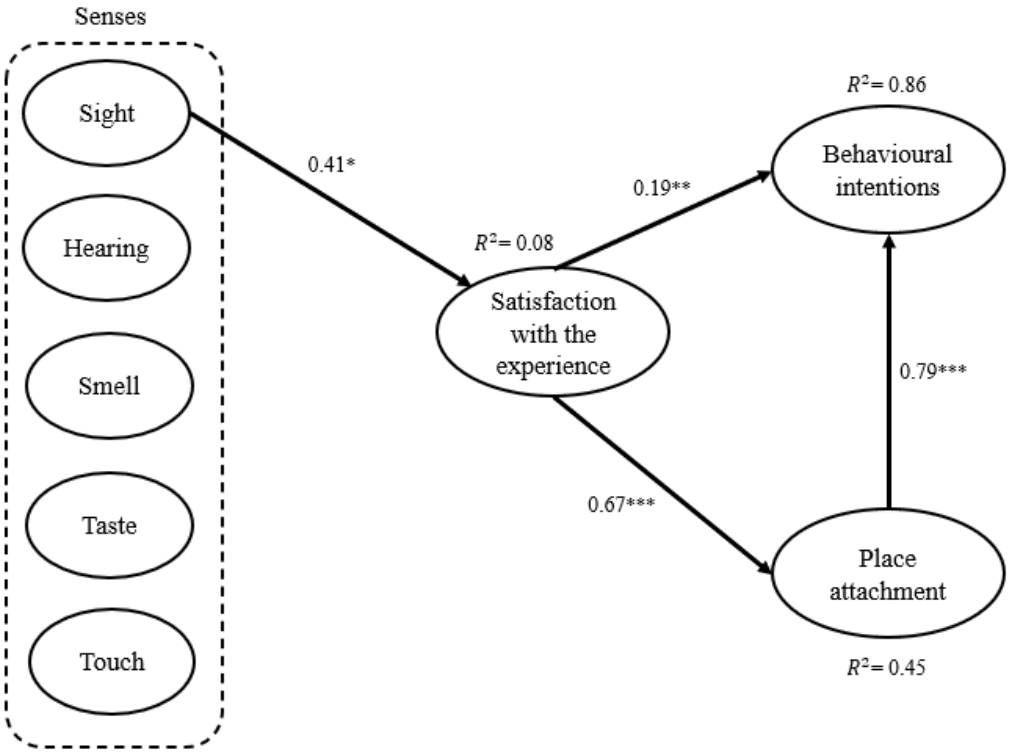

Figure 3. Structural model of sensory experiences with the variables satisfaction, attachment, and behavioral intentions. Legend: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, and *** p < 0.001. Source: Own elaboration.

Satisfaction had a positive effect on place attachment (β = 0.67, p < 0.001), so Hypothesis 2 was confirmed. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were also supported empirically, as both satisfaction (β = 0.19, p < 0.001) and place attachment (β = 0.79, p < 0.001) had a positive and significant

effect on behavioral intentions. Moreover, in this model, 86% of behavioral intentions were explained by satisfaction with the experience and by place attachment.

5. Discussion of Results

Nowadays, in wine tourism, there is a concern with the creation of sensations and remarkable experiences for tourists, namely, through the harmonization of wine and food. There is an increasing interest in wine tourism, which presents diverse characteristics and seeks to incorporate the social and cultural values of a territory, valuing the local identity. Thus, wine tourism should create strong attractiveness factors such as wine experiences, activities with a local identity, and wine and culinary matching events. Experience tourism is a new niche market that can be leveraged by local businesses to create creative tourism opportunities. Creating memorable experiences is a way of differentiating the product, along with an increasing interest in the concept of co-creation of tourism experiences, as these are precedent variables of the intentions of satisfaction and loyalty, which have a positive influence on the intentions of recommendation.

The perceptions in terms of sensory experiences experienced by wine tourists during their visits to wine tourism units, in general, proved to be positive, which was confirmation that sensory experiences are quite important in wine tourism in both regions. Of course, the different items used to evaluate sensory perception may need a more detailed analysis by the managers of the wine tourism units. In that way, they can be more attentive to the factors that most impact the visitors' experience, as well as seek to enhance the dimensions or items that may have registered lower values [23].

The sensory experience measurement model presented in this study revealed the existence of five factors: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. These results were in agreement with the studies of Refs. [6,41], who also considered five sensory impressions. Among the five factors, sight manifested itself with greater intensity in the item that referred to the observation of the decoration of the wine-tasting space. This confirmed the considerations of Ref. [35], who stated that in wine cellars the beauty and good conservation of the facilities is one of the aspects to be considered. The wine cellar is the center of wine tourism experiences that allows the provision of authentic and memorable experiences, allowing tourists to taste the products of the wine cellars [33].

The sensory experiences variable manifested itself with greater intensity in the factors of hearing and smell. These results were in line with what was recommended by Ref. [4] who considered that tourists seek new experiences that enhance other sensations besides the visual one. According to Ref. [4], tourists during the tours combine wine and local gastronomy, so there is a harmonization between wine and gastronomy [11].

Wine tourists visiting the Douro region considered smell to be more important, while those visiting the Abruzzo region considered taste more important. In the case of the Douro region, the explanation could be the fact that in a memorable wine-tasting experience, the attributes of the winery play an important role [27], while in the case of Italian consumers, it could be the importance they attribute to the organoleptic properties and characteristics of the wine [32].

Sight had a positive and statistically significant effect on satisfaction with the experience, partially supporting Hypothesis 1. These results were in line with the fact that the lived experiences aimed to increase and cement customer satisfaction and charm through the local tourist offering [7]. Wine tourism, in addition to valuing local identity, provides visitors with an experience that goes beyond cultural differences and seeks to satisfy tourists [8].

Satisfaction with the experience had a positive effect on place attachment, and both satisfaction and place attachment had a positive and significant effect on behavioral intentions, which empirically supported the remaining hypotheses. A favorable and memorable experiential environment leads customers to positive emotions, which affects satisfaction and, as a consequence, behavioral intention [22]. Also, according to Ref. [21], increasing tourists' satisfaction level can increase loyalty intentions. The emotion and joy generated by

the touristic experience reinforce the creation of memories in the tourists' minds [42], and the positive impacts of personal involvement on the touristic destination's image impact their behavioral intentions [43]. Besides that, quality services in the cellar door have a strong and positive impact on the visitor's [34,44].

6. Conclusions

To better understand the impact that the sensory experience of a winery visit has on behavioral outcomes, a cross-cultural study was designed involving cellar visitors in Italy and Portugal.

When travelling, wine tourists from the Abruzzo region are more likely to spend at least one night away from home compared to wine tourists from the Douro region. Regarding the wine tourist samples from the Abruzzo and Douro regions, they both tended to participate in the visits with friends and family. Regarding the activities in which the wine tourists participated during the visit, it was found that wine tastings and guided tours were the most frequent.

Sensory experiences were very important in wine tourism in both regions, as all items on the scale had average levels higher than the midpoint of the scale. It was possible to infer that the wine tourists who visited the region of Abruzzo attached greater value to the observation of the decoration of the wine-tasting space, the flavors associated with the wines, the flavors associated with the cheeses, the wine aromas, the smells of the countryside, the smells of the cellar, and the smells of cheeses/bread/cold cuts, compared to the visitors in Portugal.

The structure of the measurement model of sensory experiences was composed of five factors: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The results showed that the items used were reliable to evaluate the different factors of the sensory experience perception scale.

The correlations between the various factors of the sensory experience perception scale were statistically positive and significant, which allowed the creation of a second-order hierarchical factor, called sensory experiences, with good fit quality indices. The sight factor manifested itself with greater intensity in the item that referred to the observation of the decoration of the wine-tasting space, the hearing factor presented itself with greater intensity in the item related to the toasting sound, and the smell factor showed itself more strongly in the item related to the smell of the cellar. Moreover, the taste factor was exposed with greater intensity in the item related to the taste of the cold cuts, and the touch factor was displayed with greater intensity in the item that referred to touching the wine glass. The variable of sensory experiences was evidenced with greater intensity in hearing and smell factors.

When comparing the model of the sensory experience in the two regions, Abruzzo and Douro, it could be concluded that wine tourists who visited the Douro region considered the smell more important, while those who visited the Abruzzo region considered the taste more important.

When the variables of satisfaction, attachment, and behavioral intentions were included in the model of sensory experiences, it was concluded that sight was the only sense that had a positive and significant effect on satisfaction with the experience. On the other hand, satisfaction with the experience had a positive effect on place attachment, and both satisfaction and place attachment were important variables, as these influenced behavioral intentions.

7. Implications

The results obtained in the present work are important for the management and administration of wine cellars and other companies related to wine tourism because they allow perception of the differences between wine tourists in the Douro region in Portugal and those in Abruzzo in Italy. Thus, this study allows companies in this sector of activity to benchmark and evolve in their differentiation and in the concept of co-creation of expe-

riences in tourism, which are important aspects in the customer intentions of satisfaction and loyalty, as well as in their recommendation intentions.

Experience tourism is a new niche market and business opportunity, which can be used by small local companies [25], and the cultural heritage related to wine is an asset that creates opportunities for creative tourism, as it allows the pairing between local identity, wine, and gastronomy [11].

For Ref. [33], the winery experience is fundamental, as the winery works as a key element in the distribution channel and is an important element in the value chain of wine products. Therefore, it is necessary to provide training and knowledge to employees in the wine industry to improve human capital and its performance [52].

For Ref. [53], it is important to define strategies and marketing efforts to attract visitors to wine regions with tourist potential, emphasizing the resources of each segment, such as the atmosphere of wineries and activities associated with food, wine, and children. Thus, activities can create connections with other tourist attractions, hotels, and restaurants, as well as with other players in the region, to offer an activity package. Imagination, intuition, creativity, innovation, passion, courage, and the ability to take risks are entrepreneurial characteristics in the area of wine tourism that can lead to [24].

Other important experiences are the offer of opportunities for tourists to explore wineries and rural areas in nearby communities and participate in the winemaking process, as these are programs that increase the entertainment and self-expression of tourists [21]. For this purpose, the winery needs to have an experienced team with communication skills, which allows wine tourists to participate in co-creation activities, such as harvesting grapes, bottling wine, or making the wine itself [27].

8. Limitations and Future Work

The results of this study must be considered in light of its limitations; first of all, data collection took place in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and, due to restrictions imposed by governments, some wine tourism units were not in full operation and therefore did not agree to participate in the study. These facts led to a reduced sample size. On the other hand, the study was programmed so that only wineries with guided tours (to wineries and vineyards) and wine tastings would respond, but at the time of data collection, some of the wine tourists had not participated in all the intended events. The nature of the data was cross-sectional, and future studies may be directed at disentangling the causal direction we hypothesized and tested here.

To overcome the limitations inherent to self-administered questionnaires, future research should consider going beyond the correlational design and evaluate longitudinal, cross-lagged, or experimental designs. In a future study, it is advisable to subdivide the items SE13 (Smell of cheeses/bread/cold cuts) and SE19 (Touching the food: bread/cold cuts/cheeses) into the different associated smells/touches. In future work, it will be important to expand this study to other international wine regions, seeking to better know the experiences and sensations that are determinants of the attractiveness of wine tourism. Despite the growing research interest in studying the wine tourism experience, the relationship between the intentions to perform cellar tourism and the actual visits has been less studied. Therefore, that is another possible future line of study.

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