

Rural Tourism as a Driver of Territorial Attractiveness and Well-Being

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Abstract

This study examines whether French wine tourism constitutes a distinctive model that can simultaneously have a balanced impact on regional attractiveness and community well-being. In this context, well-being is defined as a multidimensional construct including self-esteem and not only individual but also collective satisfaction with this activity; together, these dimensions reflect the overall satisfaction of the community. By integrating a bibliometric analysis of 204 publications with sectoral data and comparative case studies in Burgundy, the Loire Valley, and Alsace, the results reveal that wine tourism operates according to four theoretical mechanisms: social recognition resulting from tourists' validation of wine expertise, economic resilience through diversification, positive spillover effects for residents in terms of amenity, and ecological feedback loops accelerating sustainable transitions. Empirical data from sector surveys show a high level of job satisfaction among winegrowers involved in tourism (8.7/10), while case studies document tangible results, including heritage preservation, landscape quality improvement, and job creation. However, this study acknowledges that the overall empirical measurement of community well-being remains underdeveloped in the literature, with most existing studies focusing on tourist satisfaction rather than outcomes for residents. The specificity of the French model lies in its roots in pre-existing production systems, in collective territorial coordination through mechanisms such as the 'Vignobles & Découvertes' label, and in the integration of authenticity into the diversification of experiences. The study proposes an integrative framework of 'rural vitality' while calling for more rigorous research on well-being outcomes at the community level.

Keywords: Wine Tourism; Viticulture Heritage; Rural Territories; Community Well-being; Sustainable Rural Development

Le Tourisme Rural Comme Levier D'attractivite Territoriales Et De Bien-Etre

Résumé

Cette étude examine si l'œnotourisme français constitue un modèle distinctif pouvant avoir simultanément un impact équilibré sur l'attractivité régionale et le bien-être communautaire. Dans ce contexte, le bien-être est défini comme une construction multidimensionnelle incluant l'estime de soi et la satisfaction non seulement individuelle, mais aussi collective à l'égard de cette activité ; ensemble, ces dimensions reflètent la satisfaction globale de la communauté. En intégrant une analyse bibliométrique de 204 publications à des données sectorielles et à des études de cas comparatives en Bourgogne, dans la vallée de la Loire et en Alsace, les résultats révèlent que l'œnotourisme fonctionne selon quatre mécanismes théoriques : la reconnaissance sociale résultant de la validation par les touristes de l'expertise viticole, la résilience économique grâce à la diversification, les retombées positives pour les résidents en termes d'agrément et les boucles de rétroaction écologiques accélérant les transitions durables. Les données empiriques issues d'enquêtes sectorielles montrent un niveau élevé de satisfaction professionnelle chez les viticulteurs impliqués dans le tourisme (8,7/10), tandis que les études de cas documentent des résultats tangibles, notamment la préservation du patrimoine, l'amélioration de la qualité du paysage et la création d'emplois. Cependant, cette étude reconnaît que la mesure empirique globale du bien-être communautaire reste peu développée dans la littérature, la plupart des études existantes se concentrant sur la satisfaction des touristes plutôt que sur le retour des résidents. La spécificité du modèle français réside dans son ancrage dans des systèmes productifs préexistants, dans la coordination territoriale collective grâce à des mécanismes tels que le label « Vignobles & Découvertes » et dans l'intégration de l'authenticité à la diversification des expériences. L'étude propose un cadre intégratif de « vitalité rurale » tout en appelant à des recherches plus rigoureuses sur les résultats en matière de bien-être au niveau communautaire.

Mots-clés : Tourisme Vitivinicole ; Patrimoine Viticole ; Territoires Ruraux ; Bien-Etre Communautaire ; Développement Rural Durable

1. Introduction

Rural regions across Europe confront systemic challenges that threaten long-term viability: economic stagnation as productive activities concentrate in metropolitan centres, demographic decline driven by youth out-migration, and erosion of cultural heritage as traditional practices lose practitioners. Tourism is frequently advanced as a revitalization strategy for these regions (Adenidji, 2019). However, such claims demand critical examination, particularly given evidence that tourism-derived benefits often fail to distribute equitably across rural populations (Woo et al., 2023).

Rural tourism's employment potential underscores its macroeconomic significance. The sector sustained approximately 900,000 direct and indirect positions annually across Europe, generating €150 billion in gross income during the early 2000s (Lane, 2013). Contemporary research confirms this scale, revealing that rural accommodation hosts across eight European countries earned €4.06 billion in 2024 alone (Digital Tourism Think Tank, 2025). While these aggregates demonstrate substantial economic contribution, they obscure crucial questions concerning intra-community distribution and actual improvements to residents' quality of life.

While these economic indicators highlight tourism's promise, conventional approaches often mask significant challenges and unintended consequences, prompting a critical re-evaluation (Özçatalbaş, 2019, 2020; Adenidji & Özçatalbaş, 2022). This study, therefore, proposes a different approach. It examines wine tourism in France, specifically the model developed over decades in regions such as Burgundy, Bordeaux, Alsace, and the Loire Valley, which circumvents many conventional pitfalls. This model is distinguished not just by its focus on viticulture but also by its deep-rootedness in the cultural, agricultural, and social fabric of French rural regions. The main hypothesis is that wine tourism is an integrated, sustainable model capable of enhancing territorial attractiveness and resident well-being simultaneously.

2. Theoretical framework: beyond economic factors

2.1 Conceptualising rural vitality: attractiveness and well-being

Conventional tourism impact assessments use economic indicators, visitor expenditure, employment creation, and multiplier effects while neglecting the voice of rural residents. We propose 'rural vitality' as an integrative concept that captures both a territory's capacity to attract external interest (territorial attractiveness) and its provision of satisfying lives for residents (community well-being). These dimensions are analytically distinct yet empirically interrelated: territories that offer a high quality of life become attractive destinations, while the

revenues and amenities generated by attracting visitors can enhance resident psychological satisfaction and well-being.

Territorial attractiveness draws upon multiple sources: the preservation of picturesque landscapes; the animation of cultural heritage through living practices rather than static exhibitions; the availability of high-quality amenities, including restaurants, accommodations, and recreational facilities; and a distinctive regional 'brand' that differentiates territories in an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. As Lejoux (2006) demonstrated through an analysis of French tourist flows, this attractiveness should not be conflated with productive attractiveness. Southern and Western French regions, characterised by strong natural amenities and viticultural heritage, enjoy substantial net tourist overnight stays per capita, whereas Northern and Eastern regions, with greater industrial productivity, exhibit tourist deficits. This dissociation between production and consumption geography generates significant wealth transfers between territories.

Resident well-being encompasses stable employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, cultural pride, social cohesion, and enhanced living environments. Crucially, this perspective recognises that tourism development must benefit local populations concretely in their daily lives, not merely in aggregate statistics that may mask distributional inequities. The psychological dimensions of well-being deserve particular emphasis: recognition, purpose, and belonging matter as much as income does. Optimally configured wine tourism creates a virtuous cycle in which these two dimensions reinforce each other. Infrastructure investments serving tourists simultaneously improve residents' quality of life; authentic local culture enhances tourist experiences; and tourism revenues enable preservation of landscapes and heritage that attract visitors.

2.2 System specificity in french viticulture

The systems approach developed by Maby (2007) illuminates how viticultural territories spatially organise the production, commercialisation, and touristic valorisation of wine. A wine-producing spatial system comprises all spatial components, whose interactions and relative positions constitute a functional space. This analytical lens reveals that wine tourism success depends not only on wine quality but also on the configuration of and interactions among terroirs, commercialisation structures, landscapes, actor networks, and tourist flows.

French viticultural systems exhibit several distinctive characteristics: a high density of small and medium family-owned estates, contrasting with large corporate operations in 'New World' regions; organisation through appellations d'origine contrôlée (AOC), structuring quality assurance and territorial identity; agricultural landscapes shaped by centuries of viticultural practice, constituting aesthetic resources whose value derives from authenticity; and a wine culture deeply embedded in regional identity, rendering tourist encounters genuine rather than staged. These characteristics distinguish French wine tourism from models in which large estates create self-contained tourist experiences that bypass surrounding communities.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines bibliometric analysis with qualitative case study synthesis. The bibliometric component maps the global research landscape on rural tourism, community well-being, and territorial attractiveness, identifying dominant themes and significant gaps in the existing literature. The case study component draws on published research on specific French wine regions to extract transferable insights regarding the mechanisms linking wine tourism to rural vitality outcomes.

3.1 Bibliometric analysis

A systematic literature search was conducted via Scopus to analyse scientific production pertaining to rural tourism and community outcomes. Two search queries were implemented.

Query 1: TITLE-ABS-KEY (rural tourism AND community well-being), generating 153 documents; after limiting to articles, book chapters, conference papers, and reviews: 148 documents (109 articles, 24 book chapters, 9 conference papers, and 6 reviews).

Query 2: TITLE-ABS-KEY (rural tourism AND community attractiveness), yielding 57 documents; excluding conference reviews: 56 documents (36 articles, 10 conference papers, 9 book chapters, and 1 review).

The combined and deduplicated corpus comprised 204 documents between 1999 and 2025. Data were processed using Excel for tabular analyses and VOSviewer for bibliometric visualisations (Cobo et al., 2012). The analysis determined annual global and country-level scientific production, identified leading journals and authors, and mapped dominant themes through keyword co-occurrence networks. Visualisation methods combining distance, graph, and chronological representations (van Eck & Waltman, 2014; Cobo et al., 2012) were applied. In these networks, node size indicates occurrence frequency, node proximity reflects relationship strength, edge thickness represents co-occurrence intensity, and node colour denotes thematic clustering (van Eck & Waltman, 2017; Adenidji & Özçatalbaş, 2022).

3.2 Case study selection and analysis

To contextualise global trends within French specificities, a complementary review was conducted using local library resources and specialised publications. Cases were selected to represent diversity across French wine regions while ensuring the availability of rigorous empirical research: Burgundy exemplifies heritage-based attractiveness strategies, the Loire Valley illustrates agroecological transitions driven by tourist demand, and Alsace demonstrates tensions between a strong regional identity and development pressures. These cases were analysed thematically to identify common mechanisms and contextual variations in wine tourism's contributions to rural vitality.

4. Results

This section presents the bibliometric analysis, mapping the existing research landscape to identify critical gaps and biases (e.g., Eurocentric bias, under-representation of well-being metrics) that underscore the necessity of examining alternative models like French wine tourism.

4.1 Research dynamism

4.1.1. Research trend

The bibliometric analysis reveals pronounced geographical concentration in rural tourism studies. Scopus accumulated 1,958 citations across 204 documents, comprising predominantly articles (71.1%) published in English (93.1%). China leads document production, followed by the United States and the United Kingdom. A significant Eurocentric and Anglophone bias pervades this literature, with minimal representation from Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. France appears notably under-represented relative to its prominence as a global wine tourism destination, highlighting the importance of triangulating bibliometric findings with French-language sources.

Temporal analysis reveals three distinct phases in the literature's evolution (Figure 1): sporadic outputs during the foundational period (1999-2012, 6.4% of documents with only 13 publications); modest growth during the consolidation phase (2013-2018, 18.7% with 38 publications); and substantial expansion in the contemporary period (2019-2025, 74.9% with 152 publications). This acceleration reflects both growing policy interest in tourism as a rural development tool and the maturation of sustainability discourses within tourism studies, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which catalysed renewed attention to rural and domestic tourism alternatives. The peak year of 2025, with 38 publications, demonstrates continued momentum in this research domain.

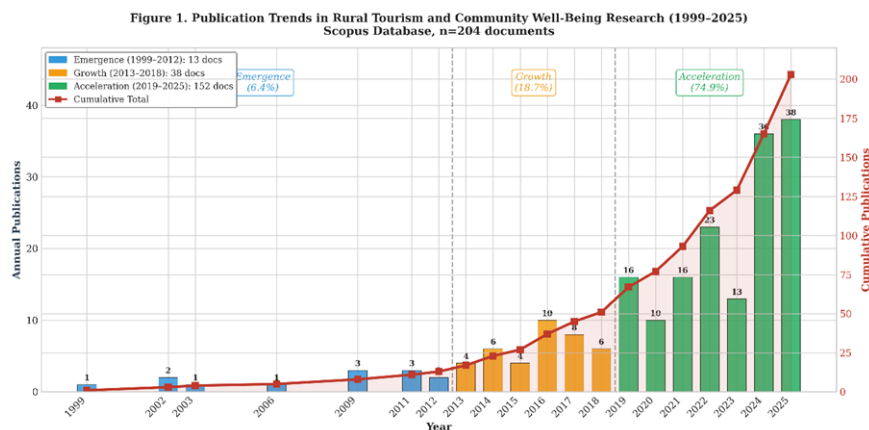


Figure 1: *Publication trends in rural tourism and community well-being research (1999–2025). Bars indicate annual publications colour-coded by period (blue=emergence, orange=growth, green=acceleration); the line shows cumulative growth. Data source: Scopus, n=204 documents*

4.1.2. Keyword co-occurrence network and frequency analysis

The combined network and frequency analysis (Figure 2) reveals the structural priorities of rural tourism. Panel A displays the keyword co-occurrence network with five thematic clusters identified through VOSviewer analysis, while Panel B ranks the top 20 keywords by frequency, providing a quantitative validation of the network observations.

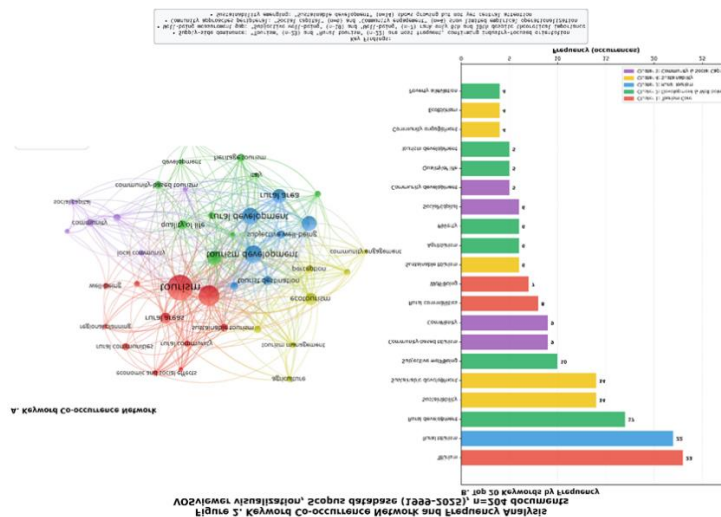


Figure 2. *Keyword co-occurrence network and frequency analyses. Panel A: Network visualisation showing five thematic clusters (node size = keyword frequency; edge thickness = co-occurrence strength; colours = thematic clusters). Panel B: Top 20 keywords ranked by frequency with cluster colour-coding. VOSviewer visualisation, Scopus 1999–2025, n=204 documents.*

Several supply-side tourism terms dominate the corpus. “Tourism” ranks first with 23 occurrences, followed by “Rural tourism” with 22 occurrences, together accounting for 45 instances and confirming a research-focused orientation. It is the main term positioned in the network (Panel A, red and blue clusters), and it reinforces their structural dominance. “Rural development” ranks third (n=17), while sustainability-related terms show substantial presence: “Sustainability” and “Sustainable development” each appear 14 times, ranking 4th and 5th, respectively.

Seriously, “well-being” measurement terms remain peripheral despite their theoretical importance to rural vitality frameworks. “Subjective well-being” ranks only 6th with 10 occurrences, while “well-being” ranks 10th with merely 7 occurrences, together totalling just 17 instances compared to 45 for core tourism terms. This frequency disparity, combined with the peripheral network positioning of these concepts (Panel A, small green nodes), empirically validates the measurement gap identified in recent literature. “Quality of life”, another well-

being proxy, ranks 16th with only 5 occurrences, further confirming the underdevelopment of outcome-focused research.

Community-oriented concepts show similar marginalisation. The purple cluster in Panel A encompasses “Community” (n=9, rank 8), “Community-based tourism” (n=9, rank 7), “Social capital” (n=6, rank 14), and “Community development” (n=5, rank 15), collectively representing 29 occurrences. While “Community-based tourism” shows moderate frequency, “Social capital” and “Community engagement” (n=4, rank 18) together represent only 10 occurrences, suggesting that participatory approaches, while theoretically advocated, have not been systematically operationalised in empirical research. The peripheral positioning of the purple cluster in the network confirms this disconnection from mainstream scholarship.

The yellow cluster represents sustainability and ecotourism concepts, including “Sustainable tourism”(n=6), “Ecotourism” (n=4), and “Community engagement” (n=4). While sustainability terms show growing frequency, particularly “sustainable development” at rank 5, their network positioning remains partially peripheral, indicating that sustainability has not yet achieved full integration with core tourism development discourse. Notably, “Poverty” (n=6, rank 13) and “Poverty alleviation” (n=4, rank 20) appear in the green development cluster, reflecting concern with economic outcomes but limited attention to broader well-being dimensions.

Terms reflecting validated measurement instruments, longitudinal assessment methodologies, or psychometric approaches to non-economic outcomes are absent from both the network and frequency rankings. This absence confirms that the field remains oriented toward economic and developmental metrics rather than rigorous resident well-being measurement, a structural gap that the present study addresses through its theoretical framework while acknowledging the need for future empirical operationalisation.

4.1.3. Leading Journals and Publication

The journal *Sustainability* (Switzerland) leads publication output with 10 documents (4.9% of the corpus), followed by the *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* (5 documents, 2.5%), *Societies* (4 documents), and *Tourism Planning and Development* (4 documents). The *Journal of Rural Studies* and the *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management* each contributed 3 documents. This distribution indicates that rural tourism-well-being research is dispersed across sustainability-focused, regional, and specialised tourism journals rather than concentrated in a single flagship outlet, a pattern typical of interdisciplinary fields at relatively early stages of consolidation.

4.1.4. Author and articles citation Impact

Table 1 presents authors with the highest citation impact in rural tourism and community well-being research. Moscardo, Gianna M., ranks first in absolute citations (62 citations across 3

publications), while Lv, Qunchao, and Xie, Xinli, demonstrate the highest per-document impact (25.0 citations per paper), indicating particularly influential individual contributions.

Table 1. Authors with the Highest Citation Impact in Rural Tourism Research

Rank	Author	Documents	Citations	Cites/Document
1	Moscardo, Gianna M.	3	62	20.7
2	Lv, Qunchao	2	50	25.0
2	Xie, Xinli	2	50	25.0
4	Chauhan, Rohit	2	27	13.5
5	Cervený, Lee Karol	2	26	13.0

Note: Absolute citations reflect overall recognition; citations per document indicate the relative impact of each publication. *Source: Scopus database, November 2025. Citation counts reflect cumulative citations at the time of data extraction.*

Table 2. Top 10 Most-Cited Articles on Rural Tourism and Community Well-Being (1999–2025)

Author (Year)	Cites	Central Theoretical Perspective
Acharya & Halpenny (2013)	134	Women-managed homestays as inclusive, low-capital models generating gender equity, local pride, and territorial attractiveness in Nepal
Currie & Falconer (2014)	77	Transport-tourism co-governance as essential lever for maintaining demographic and economic viability of Scottish rural islands
Jamal et al. (2011)	73	Participatory pedagogy and service-learning as generators of long-term human and social capital for sustainable tourism
Argent et al. (2014)	64	Migration-amenity nexus: landscapes and agricultural culture as attractors countering rural exodus in Australia
Cáceres-Feria & Hernández-Ramírez (2021)	59	Linkages between depopulation, community-based tourism, and community resilience in southwest Spain
Moscardo (2014)	56	Local entrepreneurship and governance quality as guarantors of durable economic and social well-being gains
Boukas & Ziakas (2016)	50	Co-constructed heritage as mechanism reinforcing identity, cultural continuity, and subjective well-being in Cyprus
Zhu et al. (2021)	48	Diachronic energy accounting demonstrating compatibility between ecotourism development and ecosystem services
Powell et al. (2018)	45	Community resilience mapping framework for aligning tourism planning with local needs in Vietnam
Cheng & Xu (2021)	42	Benefit-sharing as multidimensional, contextual process determining residents' subjective well-being

Sources: Scopus database, November 2025. Citation counts reflect cumulative citations at time of data extraction.

Regarding the most cited articles, Table 2 below identifies the foundational papers' contributions to structuring international research on rural tourism, territorial attractiveness, and community well-being. The table presents the ten most-cited articles with their theoretical perspectives. These works, collectively exceeding 650 citations, reveal diverse but complementary approaches spanning inclusive participatory models, governance and entrepreneurship, socio-ecological systems, and psychological/distributional dimensions.

A consistent argument traverses these contributions: rural tourism becomes a sustainable vector for attractiveness and well-being only when it is *participatory* (involving communities as co-producers), *equitable* (distributing benefits fairly), and *integrated* (embedded within local socio-ecological systems). This principle, which we term the “PEI framework”, guides our subsequent analysis of the French wine tourism model.

4.2 The French Wine Tourism Model: Empirical Evidence

Analysis of French wine tourism reveals a distinctive model founded upon three interconnected pillars, supported by sectoral survey data providing empirical grounding for theoretical propositions. First, French wine tourism rests upon *terroir authenticity* and direct relationships with winemakers. Atout France (2022) survey data collected from 1,247 winegrower respondents reveal that the highest satisfaction scores concern “sharing around my profession” (8.7/10) and “explaining my work to visitors” (8.5/10), exceeding purely economic motivations such as “additional revenue generation” (7.2/10). These findings provide empirical support for the recognition mechanism proposed in the theoretical framework.

Second, successful French wine tourism involves *diversification* beyond cellar-door sales to encompass gastronomic experiences, wellness offerings, cultural programming, and landscape-based activities. Emotio Tourisme (2025) data indicate average wine tourist stays of 4.2 days when territories offer integrated experiences versus 1.8 days for wine-only visits, with proportional increases in local expenditure across accommodation (€127/night average), dining (€89/day), and ancillary services. Third, the French model relies upon *collective coordination* mechanisms, most notably the 'Vignobles & Découvertes' label, currently encompassing 75 destinations comprising 8,704 certified services with 117% growth since 2016. Empirical tracking shows 92% of certified operators report that label membership has 'facilitated collaboration with neighbouring enterprises' (Atout France, 2024).

4.2.1. Evidence from Burgundy, the Loire Valley and Alsace

Table 3: Comparative table of 3 French tourism models

Region	Wine Tourism Strengths	Impact on Attractiveness	Impact on Well-Being	Challenges/Limits
Burgundy	Prestigious heritage; renowned wines; UNESCO inscription (Climats, 2015); Cistercian history	International reputation; high-prestige tourism; global brand recognition	Cultural pride; international recognition; intergenerational confidence	Inequalities between prestigious and regional appellations
Loire Valley	Biodiversity; agroecological practices; landscape diversity; educational focus	'Green' attractiveness; sustainable tourism positioning; differentiation	Health; environmental quality; winemaker pride in stewardship	Coordination needs; promotion of sustainable practices
Alsace	Strong regional identity; Wine Route; 2.5M annual visitors; gastronomy	Cultural/heritage attractiveness; high visitation; residential appeal	Local cohesion; cultural valorisation; service maintenance	Tourist pressure; land artificialisation (+337 ha 2012–18); heritage conflicts

Sources: Scopus database, November 2025. Citation counts reflect cumulative citations at the time of data extraction.

Regarding the table 3, Burgundy exemplifies heritage as the foundation of territorial attractiveness (Rigaux, 2023). Following the UNESCO World Heritage inscription of the Climats in 2015, empirical indicators reflect tangible outcomes: visitor numbers increased 34% in the five years following inscription; 127 heritage interpretation initiatives were launched; and municipal surveys indicate 78% of residents in core appellations report 'pride in territorial recognition' (Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Tourisme, 2021). However, distributional tensions emerge between renowned appellations capturing disproportionate visitor attention and lesser-known villages struggling to convert territorial proximity into economic benefit.

The Loire Valley presents wine tourism as a lever for ecological transition (Rouiaï et al., 2020). Empirical evidence includes 47% growth in organic vineyard area (2015-2023) correlating with wine tourism expansion, premium pricing of 15-23% for wines from tourism-active organic producers, and tourist surveys indicating 82% 'strong preference' for visiting environmentally certified domains. These indicators demonstrate ecological feedback loop operation as theorised; tourist preferences incentivise sustainable practices, generating environmental improvements benefiting residents and visitors alike. Notably, these preferences are most pronounced among younger demographics and environmentally conscious consumers, who both strongly value transparency and sustainability in their travel choices. These segments tend to reward organic practices with higher willingness to pay for products and services that align with their values, suggesting that the demand for sustainability premiums is both segmented and durable.

Alsace illustrates tensions inherent to a strong regional identity confronting development pressures (Muller, 2021). The Route des Vins d'Alsace attracts approximately 2.5 million visitors annually. Empirical documentation of negative externalities is robust: land

artificialisation increased by 337 hectares between the years 2012 and 2018. Residential property values in core wine villages rose 89% (versus 34% regional average), and 67% of surveyed winegrowers express concern about 'loss of territorial character' (Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins d'Alsace, 2022). The Alsace case demonstrates that tourism success without adequate governance can jeopardise its own foundations.

5. Discussion

The convergence of bibliometric mapping, sectoral data analysis, and regional case studies provides different support to identify four mechanisms (The recognition mechanism; The economic resilience mechanism; The amenity spillover mechanism; The ecological feedback mechanism) linking wine tourism to rural vitality. Following established conventions in tourism impact research (Vázquez Vicente et al., 2021), we assess each mechanism according to the strength of theoretical grounding, empirical validation, and identified boundary conditions.

The recognition mechanism receives strong theoretical support from Honneth's (1995) framework and moderate empirical support from sectoral surveys. Atout France data demonstrating high satisfaction scores for professional sharing (8.7/10) provides indirect evidence that hosting activities fulfil recognition needs, specifically within Honneth's (1995) third sphere of solidarity, where social esteem derives from contributions valued by the collective. This finding aligns with Winchenbach, Hanna, and Miller(2019)'s conceptualisation of "dignity in relation," encompassing autonomy, status, and social standing in tourism employment contexts. However, the causal pathway from recognition to well-being enhancement remains theoretically plausible but empirically undertested. The cross-sectional nature of available data precludes causal conclusions (Taris et al., 2021), and the absence of validated psychometric instruments measuring recognition-derived well-being in wine tourism contexts represents a significant limitation. Notably, no peer-reviewed study directly applies Honneth(1995)'s recognition theory to tourism hosting, positioning this study's theoretical contribution as preliminary framework development rather than empirical confirmation. Future research employing longitudinal designs with validated recognition and well-being, such as Ryff's (1989) six-dimensional psychological well-being scale (measuring autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance), would be better suited to establish the proposed causal mechanism linking recognition to enhanced well-being.

The economic resilience mechanism receives robust empirical support through multiple indicators: diversification statistics, revenue data, employment figures, and tourist expenditure tracking. These findings align with broader wine tourism economic impact research documenting substantial territorial benefits. For instance, Walla Walla Valley wine tourism generates \$260.4 million in total spending from 528,000 annual visits (Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance, 2024), while Arizona wine tourism experienced 677% growth in visitor

spending since 2011 (Arizona Office of Tourism, 2024). The French data corroborate the Tourism-Led Growth (TLG) hypothesis, though following Vázquez Vicente et al.'s (2021) analysis of Spanish wine routes; we note that while results support the TLG hypothesis for general tourism indicators, employment effects remain less statistically robust. The Vignobles & Découvertes label's 117% growth and 92% collaboration facilitation rate provide institutional-level evidence for collective economic coordination mechanisms. However, economic indicators alone cannot capture whether increased revenues translate to enhanced subjective well-being or merely increased work intensity. A distinction Brandth and Haugen (2011) identify as critical, noting that tourism diversification may destabilise farmer identities even while improving only financial outcomes.

The amenity spillover mechanism receives mixed support, consistent with the broader literature documenting spatially heterogeneous tourism impacts (Li et al., 2020). Positive evidence includes improvements in gastronomy infrastructure, cultural programming, and landscape maintenance—outcomes reflecting what Wilson (2007) terms agriculture's "Non-Commodity Outputs" enhanced through tourism demand. The Burgundy case, with 127 heritage initiatives launched post-UNESCO inscription and 78% resident pride reports, demonstrates amenity benefits extending beyond direct tourism participants. However, the Alsace case reveals that amenity benefits may concentrate spatially while displacement effects burden peripheral residents. This finding echoes Woo et al.'s (2023) critical distinction between direct displacement (physical relocation) and indirect displacement (exclusionary pressures), with the latter generating strong negative effects on community support for further tourism development. The 89% property value increase in Alsace wine villages versus 34% regional average, combined with 67% vigneron concern about "loss of territorial character," suggests that apparent amenity improvements may mask distributional inequities invisible to aggregate measures. As Ammirato et al. (2020) note, agritourism produces both positive and negative effects simultaneously. This acknowledgment is crucial rather than presenting uniformly positive narratives.

The ecological feedback mechanism receives perhaps the strongest empirical support, particularly from Loire Valley data documenting correlation between tourism expansion and sustainable viticulture adoption (47% organic growth, 15-23% price premiums, 82% tourist preference for certified domains). This finding aligns with Mastronardi et al.'s (2015) analysis of 11,200 Italian farms, which demonstrated that agritourism operations exhibit significantly greater biodiversity indicators, higher biological surface area, lower water consumption per hectare, and higher organic certification adoption than conventional farms. The mechanism's theoretical foundation in multifunctionality theory (Van Der Ploeg & Roep, 2003) explains how tourism demand creates economic incentives for environmental stewardship otherwise unrewarded by commodity markets. Robinson's (2024) concept of "regenerative wine tourism" captures this dynamic: diversification into tourism-oriented sustainability "allows for a

divergence from dominant agricultural productivism by recognising and creating new values in the countryside."

Importantly, these results should be interpreted as associations rather than definitive causal pathways. While the theorised mechanism posits that *tourism demand drives sustainable practice adoption* through economic incentivisation, an equally plausible alternative exists: *producers with pre-existing environmental commitments may disproportionately self-select into tourism activities*, generating the observed correlation without tourism serving as causal driver. This endogeneity problem; common to cross-sectional tourism impact research (Taris et al., 2021); cannot be resolved without longitudinal designs tracking producer behaviour before and after tourism engagement, or quasi-experimental approaches comparing matched tourism-active and tourism-inactive operations

Critical Assessment: Evidence Gaps and Limitations

This study must acknowledge significant limitations in the evidence base for community well-being outcomes. The keyword frequency analysis (Figure 2) empirically validates a structural gap: well-being concepts account for only 17 occurrences compared to 45 for core tourism terms, confirming García-Delgado et al.'s (2025) observation that comprehensive assessment of tourism's effects on resident well-being remains systematically underdeveloped. The Atout France data, while valuable, measure producer satisfaction with specific hosting activities rather than comprehensive well-being through validated instruments (a limitation common to sectoral surveys prioritising operational metrics over psychosocial outcomes).

The distinction between output indicators (visitor numbers, revenues, employment) and outcome indicators (resident well-being, community cohesion, quality of life) requires more rigorous attention in future research. As Ferreira et al. (2022) demonstrate through structural equation modelling with North Carolina farmers, self-efficacy mediates between social capital and entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.63, p < 0.05$). Yet such psychometric sophistication remains absent from wine tourism impact studies. While Cheng and Xu (2021) and Lv and Xie (2017) provide methodological templates for measuring subjective well-being and place attachment in rural tourism contexts, their approaches have not been systematically applied to wine tourism populations. The cross-sectional design precludes temporal analysis of how well-being evolves as tourism develops within territories. The cross-sectional design precludes temporal analysis; as Ohe (2022) notes, farmer identity transformation toward "enlarged identity" correlates with economic efficiency gains, but whether tourism causes identity evolution or attracts those already predisposed to expanded self-concepts remains indeterminate.

Regarding transferability, the identified mechanisms possess differential applicability. Recognition benefits transfer readily to contexts where tourism validates historically devalorised occupational identities. a condition met in wine regions but potentially absent where agriculture lacks cultural prestige. Economic diversification transfers to contexts with producer-consumer proximity, enabling direct sales, though Ferreira et al. (2022) caution that

"external self-efficacy was not significantly associated with farmers' entrepreneurial intentions, which may be attributable to ambiguous agritourism policy". This suggests that regulatory clarity moderates transferability. Powell et al.'s (2018) community resilience framework suggests that territories with pre-existing social capital and institutional capacity are better positioned to capture tourism benefits, a condition the French wine regions studied here largely satisfy through established interprofessional organisations. The collective action dimension presents the greatest transferability challenge, requiring either pre-existing institutional density or deliberate institution-building that the "Vignobles & Découvertes" model exemplifies but cannot guarantee in contexts lacking comparable governance traditions.

Conclusion

This study proposes that French wine tourism operates through four interconnected mechanisms: social recognition, economic diversification, amenity spillovers, and ecological feedback. They potentially generate rural vitality, understood as the combination of territorial attractiveness and community well-being. The theoretical framework, grounded in recognition theory, capabilities approaches, and spatial systems analysis, provides a coherent explanation for observed patterns. Available empirical evidence, including sectorial surveys documenting high producer satisfaction with hosting activities, economic data tracking tourism-driven revenue diversification, and case study evidence of heritage preservation, landscape improvement, and sustainability transitions, provides partial support for the proposed mechanisms.

However, this study acknowledges that comprehensive empirical measurement of community well-being outcomes remains a significant gap in the literature, a finding reinforced by the peripheral positioning and low frequency of well-being concepts in the keyword analysis (Figure 2). The distinction between theoretical plausibility and empirical confirmation warrants careful attention: while the recognition mechanism is theoretically compelling and indirectly supported by producer satisfaction data, direct measurement of well-being enhancement through longitudinal designs employing validated psychological instruments remains necessary.

For scholars, the study offers 'rural vitality' as an integrative framework directing attention beyond aggregate tourism metrics toward questions of benefit distribution, recognition dynamics, and institutional conditions. Priority areas for future research include longitudinal studies tracking territorial indicators over decade-plus timeframes using validated well-being instruments; disaggregated analysis examining how benefits distribute across gender, generation, class, and territorial position; and research designs directly measuring resident psychological well-being alongside economic indicators.

For practitioners, concrete recommendations emerge: invest in producer-visitor interface infrastructure enabling direct encounters; develop territorial coordination mechanisms with quality certification; implement proactive land-use planning preventing tourism-induced

displacement; design benefit-distribution mechanisms addressing intra-territorial inequities; and ensure resident participation in tourism governance. The French wine tourism model's distinctiveness derives from its anchoring in pre-existing productive systems, collective territorial coordination, and integration of authenticity with experiential diversification, structural characteristics whose translation to enhanced community well-being requires more rigorous empirical investigation than currently available.

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