

Customer Rituals

Ethnographic explorations of wine rituals with families and friends

Luigi Servadio

Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Thursday 7 June 2018 at 13.00 in Gröjersalen, hus 3, Kräftriket, Roslagsvägen 101.

Abstract

Marketers are increasingly adopting rituals as a powerful technique to spur product engagement and enhance customer value creation. From a customer perspective, rituals and value creation may entail broader purposes and meanings that go beyond the company's intentions. Service research has extensively studied everyday value creation as emerging in the interaction between companies and customers. Increasingly, service scholars are nuancing understanding toward a more focussed perspective of value creation, which primarily is dominated by customers. By expanding on this burgeoning literature, the present thesis provides an alternative view suggesting that customer value creation in certain instances can be better understood through the lens of rituals. Rituals are customer-centric processes of value creation orchestrated by customers within their realm, with little or no control from companies. Rituals are sacred moments in customers' lives separated from the everyday, in which value creation appears to be not only a mundane action, but broadly these actions are loaded with extraordinary experiences. Rituals are cocreated by broader customer ecosystems, including not only customers and their contexts, but also other subjects and contexts, collectively determining value. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a framework to explore the relationship between rituals and value creation from a customer's point of view by taking a customer-dominant stance on service as a starting point and leveraging insights from a theoretical ritual construct to provide a fuller understanding of how customers create and determine value.

The field of wine is chosen as a fertile empirical context in which to research rituals due to its rich ritualistic connotations. The research adopts ethnography as method of investigation and exploits reflexivity as a strategic asset to elicit and interpret data. Data was collected during a period of 2 years in two sites (Sweden and Italy) to moderate research biases and to broaden the empirical setting. Various techniques, including participant observation and interviews, were chosen in order to obtain detailed descriptions of how families and friends ritualized their value creation through drinking wine.

The thesis provides a customer rituals framework, its main contribution. In adopting this framework, the study illustrates in two ethnographic episodes how wines (i.e. distribution mechanism of service provision) become embedded in customers' lives through rituals. Particularly, value creation in rituals emerges as an ongoing, multilayered process (script-based) exerted by customers meant to feed their needing for rituals. Furthermore, ritualizing customers gather in *communitas*, that is an extended, temporary customer ecosystem, wherein value is intersubjectively and dynamically determined by multiple subjects and contexts. Service providers may benefit from this study by using the framework to better facilitate customer value creation in rituals and to gain interesting insights on product and service innovation.

Keywords: *customer, rituals, value creation, ethnography.*

Stockholm 2018

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-154974>

ISBN 978-91-7797-209-9
ISBN 978-91-7797-210-5

Stockholm Business School

Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm



CUSTOMER RITUALS

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ISBN print 978-91-7797-209-9
ISBN PDF 978-91-7797-210-5

Printed in Sweden by Universitetsservice US-AB, Stockholm 2018
Distributor: Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University

To my beloved family.

“In vino veritas”

Pliny the Elder (AD 23 – AD 79),

Roman author, naturalist and natural philosopher.

Abstract

Marketers are increasingly adopting rituals as a powerful technique to spur product engagement and enhance customer value creation. From a customer perspective, rituals and value creation may entail broader purposes and meanings that go beyond the company's intentions. Service research has extensively studied everyday value creation as emerging in the interaction between companies and customers. Increasingly, service scholars are nuancing understanding toward a more focussed perspective of value creation, which primarily is dominated by customers. By expanding on this burgeoning literature, the present thesis provides an alternative view suggesting that customer value creation in certain instances can be better understood through the lens of rituals. Rituals are customer-centric processes of value creation orchestrated by customers within their realm, with little or no control from companies. Rituals are sacred moments in customers' lives separated from the everyday, in which value creation appears to be not only a mundane action, but broadly these actions are loaded with extraordinary experiences. Rituals are cocreated by broader customer ecosystems, including not only customers and their contexts, but also other subjects and contexts, collectively determining value. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a framework to explore the relationship between rituals and value creation from a customer's point of view by taking a customer-dominant stance on service as a starting point and leveraging insights from a theoretical ritual construct to provide a fuller understanding of how customers create and determine value.

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Keywords: customer, rituals, value creation, wine, ethnography.

Sammanfattning

Marknadsförare använder i allt större utsträckning ritualer som en kraftfull metod för att främja engagemang i produkter och öka kundvärdeskapande. Sett ur kundens perspektiv kan ritualer och värdeskapande leda till syften och innebörder som sträcker sig utanför företagets föresatser. Ingående studier har gjorts inom tjänsteforskning av det dagliga värdeskapande som uppstår i samspelet mellan företag och kunder. Tjänsteforskare nyanserar nu förståelsen och flyttar fokus alltmer mot det värdeskapande, främst kunddominerade, perspektivet. Denna doktorsavhandling bygger vidare på denna framväxande litteratur och tillhandahåller ett alternativt synsätt som föreslår att kundvärdeskapande, under vissa omständigheter, bättre kan förstås om det betraktas ur ett rituellt perspektiv. En ritual är en kundorienterad värdeskapandeprocess som styrs av kunderna i deras miljö, och över vilken företagen har mycket lite eller ingen kontroll. Ritualer är högtidliga stunder i kundernas liv separerade från det vardagliga då värdeskapande blir något mer än en trivial handling, i det stora hela är dessa handlingar laddade med extraordinära erfarenheter. Ritualer samskapas i mer omfattande kundorienterade ekosystem som innefattar både kunder och deras kontexter, liksom andra subjekt och kontexter, vilka gemensamt fastställer värdet. Syftet med denna avhandling är att tillhandahålla ett ramverk för att utforska förhållandet mellan ritualer och värdeskapande utifrån kundens ståndpunkt. Utgångspunkten är att inta en kunddominerad hållning när det gäller service och mobilisera insikter från teoribildningar om ritualer för att ge en bättre förståelse för hur kunder skapar och fastställer värde.

När det gäller valet av verksamhetsfält för att forska på ritualer, utgör området vin en intressant empirisk kontext på grund av förekomsten av en stor mängd rituella inslag. Forskningen genomförs med etnografisk metod där reflexivitet utnyttjas som en strategisk tillgång för att få fram och tolka data. Data har samlats in under en femårsperiod på två platser (Sverige och Italien) i syfte att minimera risken för en felaktig analys och bredda den empiriska inramningen. Olika metoder, inbegripet deltagande observation och intervjuer, har valts för att få detaljerade beskrivningar av hur familjer och bekanta ritualiserar sitt värdeskapande genom att dricka vin tillsammans.

Denna avhandling tillhandahåller ett ramverk för kundritualer, och detta är studiens viktigaste bidrag. Genom att använda detta ramverk visar författaren i två etnografiska studier hur vin (det vill säga distributionsmekanismer för tillhandahållandet av tjänster) blir en naturlig del av kundernas liv genom ritualer. I synnerhet visar sig värdeskapande i ritualer som en pågående, mångfacetterad process (script-based) som kunder utövar för att tillgodose sina behov av ritualer. Dessutom samlas ritualiserande kunder i *communitas*, det vill säga utvidgade, tillfälliga kundekosystem inom vilka värde bestäms på ett intersubjektivt och dynamiskt sätt av olika subjekt och kontexter. Leverantörer av tjänster kan dra nytta av denna forskning genom att använda ramen för att främja kundvärdeskapande i ritualer och få intressanta kunskaper om produkt- och tjänsteinnovation.

Acknowledgements

This doctoral program has been incredible, and my experience has been beyond words. I can say that during these five years, I have learned many things that have enriched me as a professional and as an individual. This monograph deals with wine and if it is not too extravagant (or perhaps banal), I would liken my PhD thesis to tasting wine. This wine has a complex bouquet. It possesses a good balance of acidity (which is usually an indicator of good quality) because throughout the program I had to figure out how to harmonize both the sweet and bitter components. Next came the maturation phase, as it matured after a long period spent in silence and tranquility to let my thoughts become more nuanced but at the same time robust through studying methods and the work of others. Finally, before giving due acknowledgment those who have contributed to this metaphorical wine, let me have one last thought. Typically, the PhD is seen as a journey, which takes one to a final goal. Only now, I have actually realized that instead this journey has just prepared me for a new start. Toward where? I cannot wait to find out.

Just like a wine, this thesis is a product that was possible only because many people have supported it—and in many different ways. Starting this PhD, I encountered an unknown world, one full of amazing, talented people to whom I will now give due recognition because they truly deserve it. I have spent many incredible moments with each of them, as they contributed selflessly to making this “wine” truly special—at least to me.

First of all, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my main supervisor: Prof. Fredrik Nordin. Fredrik was the first person who believed in me. He hired me as a research assistant. Also, he strongly supported my candidature as a doctoral student, guided me along the process, and much more. Jacob Östberg is of great importance as well. He kindly accepted to partake in this journey. He encouraged me to believe in myself and in my ideas and showed me true love for research. Fredrik and Jacob, you supervised me with extraordinary professionalism, academic acumen, scientific rigor, and unsurpassed intellect. You have been such a source of inspiration, and I will model my academic career after your example. You have both been a solid base upon which to lean in those moments of discouragement and a pivot that constantly stimulated me to do better. The doors of your offices were always open to me. Without you, this thesis would have never come to light. Thank you.

Second thank goes to Prof. Ali Yakhlef, who served as my opponent at the final seminar. His pertinent and appropriate comments deriving from his profound experience in research have helped me to finalize this thesis. Likewise, I am also grateful to Dr. Mickelsson, who acted as an external opponent of the final manuscript, Associate Professor Natalia Tolstikova and Associate Professor Anders Parment, who were my thesis opponents in the midterm seminar, and also Dr. Anna Fyrberg Yngfalk and Dr. Carl Yngfalk, who commented on the beginnings of this thesis in the Thesis Proposal Seminar.

There are many other people whom I would like to thank. Each of you has a specific and particular meaning to me. As work colleagues, as doctoral students, you have all contributed to my thesis with your comments during our interesting discussions in the mythical ‘Brow Bag Seminars’

(formerly 'Elaka Seminars'). I could never forget your presence at the marketing sections or at the school, making the work environment more enjoyable and a rich source of inspiration. I hope you won't be offended if I squeeze you in these few rows. I will cite you in sequence, like when the speaker at a stadium announces the squad of a winning football team: Andrea, Elia, and Massimo. Maira, Danilo, Ian, Janet, Steffi, Alisa, Amos, Joel, Nishant, Natalia, Patrick, Emmanouel, Reema, Aylin, Gulnara and Astrid. Mikke, Hans, Anders, Emma B., Emma S., Anna Felicia, Sara, Martin, Johanna, Hanna, Anna, David, Christian, Tony, Niklas, Jonatan, Emelie, Sanaz, Per-Olof, Sten, Solveig, and Håkan. I also include the two new arrivals: Jon and David.

Another special thank goes to Helena Flink, and more generally I would extend my thankfulness to the administrative staff and those who work behind the scenes at SBS to support the work environment. With your help, the process was smooth, efficient, and enjoyable.

A special thank goes to the Swedish Research School of Management and IT, which actively contributed both financially and as a research school to the elaboration of the thesis. The numerous meetings held twice a year in many Swedish universities gave me the opportunity to exchange ideas with other PhD students and prestigious researchers. I received great feedback that allowed me to see my research project from different and interesting perspectives.

Last, but not least, my family. You are a fundamental pillar in my life, one that rests on two bases—Italian and Swedish—though with only one heart. My parents, Paolo and Giancarla, to whom I owe immense gratitude for shaping me into who I am. My son, who is a source of continuous inspiration and motivation. "Dad, when will you finish writing this book?" *Dear Adriano, now I've finally finished writing it.* Veronica, who patiently and gently supported me throughout the PhD and much more than that. To my aunt Silvana, Kerstin, my brothers, Alessandro and Filippo, Carina, Kari, and Karin, thank you for your never-ending love and support.

Luigi Servadio
Stockholm, June 7th 2018

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Prologue

“Friday, 7:00 PM, Sweden. People rush into wine stores to buy a bottle of wine. Åsa is standing in front of the shelves with her briefcase in one hand and dinner in the other. There are many bottles in front of her. She is thinking about a Pinot Noir from Bourgogne. It would be perfect with the ox fillet that Lasse will prepare at home. “Sweeties, Mom is home!” Finally, the family is now together enjoying the Swedish ‘cosy’ Friday. As on every Friday, kids are excited because school is finished and they are allowed to choose what to watch on television. They play around and scream, while Åsa and Lasse taste the wine and talk about some plans for the summer holiday in France. Åsa and Lasse are wine enthusiasts and like planning some holidays where they can discover new wines while at the same time enjoy a family trip with their two beloved children. Now Åsa and her family are sitting on the sofa, munching on some tacos and watching cartoons. The ritual of the Swedish ‘cosy’ Friday has just begun.”

“At the same time in the evening, Gjono and his friends, Roger and Ciano, are meeting up for happy hour. Happy hour is an after work gathering, where friends gather to drink wine. Yet, every-Friday gathering is an important moment in their lives that they had been waiting for since Monday. For them, like for many others, having Friday drinks is a way to have fun, socialize, and enjoy the beginning of the weekend. The three guys always meet at the bar to warm-up with a glass of Prosecco, standing up, swirling their glasses and talking about their lives. Now, it’s 10pm and the three guys have moved to the town square crowded with people enjoying wine and socializing with one another. Customers and bartenders, students and workers, all together, drinking, chatting, and mingling, as they were just one group of friends. Gjono is texting a message with his mobile to rally his

friends, “Guys! Time to eat!” The three friends dispersed in the crowd meet again to go to the restaurant. The Italian happy hour ritual has just begun.”

The above vignettes describe two common examples of rituals that are so pervasive in markets. From a company perspective, ritualization is a powerful marketing technique that brands implement to increase customer engagement, thereby rendering their products even more valuable. According to Jon Howard (a brand strategist), “*if you ritualize it, they [customers] will stay*” (Living Brands, 2011). For instance, Stella Artois, in a famous advertisement, promotes a 9-step pouring ritual to enjoy beers (Stella Artois, 2010). Corona introduced a quite popular ritual of putting a piece of lime into the bottle’s neck to make the taste more memorable (Corona, 2016). Oreo has a three-steps ritual to enhance the pleasure of eating their cookies, the “twist, lick, and dunk ritual” (Oreo, 2011). Though, looking closely, ritualization seems to be more than just a marketing technique. From a customer’s perspective, ritualization may be more meaningful, entailing other purposes that go beyond the company’s intentions. For Åsa and her family, the ritual of drinking wine on a cosy Friday is a way to nurture what it means to be a family. For Gjono and his group of friends, cheering with wine in the happy hour ritual is instead about friendship. Either way, from a customer’s perspective, rituals are not just about ritualizing a product as such. It is also about feelings and emotions that customers attach to products because it allows the pursuit of important projects in their lives. Still, a ritual is about developing private relationships and coordinating each other through caring and sharing. It is about being together, as customers’ rituals tend to unite people in an extraordinary moment in life, separated from their ordinary days. When I reflect upon my own life, I see much of my daily activities as permeated by a sequence of actions and gestures that seem to be always equal to themselves, almost mundane. Though, at the same time, these actions are so meaningful because they are charged with increased feelings and emotions. Wearing a particular suit for an important meeting, enjoying the *Fikarast* (e.g. the café pause) every Thursday from 2.45pm to 3.30pm with my colleagues from the Marketing Department, reading a book to my son every night before putting him to bed, and cheering on my Italian football team on Sundays, are much more than just ritualized actions related to a product or a service. Instead, they are important events in my private everyday life, without which I would not enjoy my life in the same way.

So, overall, the above utterances emerging from my preliminary fieldwork have spurred and inspired the present doctoral study. Particularly, it is the recognition that for me as well as for many other customers, ritualization is not only a marketing trend. Rather, it is about our lives. But, how so? How do rituals come about? How do rituals help to construct our lives and transform commercial goods into beloved things that turn our lives into memorable moments? These questions popped up in mind when observing people drinking wines as the initial vignettes depict. I wanted to know more about the process through which customers engage in the marketplace to cocreate rituals. For this reason, I designed this study, which aims at exploring how rituals and value creation are linked.

Research Problem

In marketing, there is one central matter: value. It is fundamental to comprehend how customers create value and what value means for them (Gummerus, 2013; Payne and Holt, 1999). By drawing on previous seminal works suggesting that value is situated in interactions between providers and customers (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Normann, 1991; Normann and Ramirez, 1993), service logics (Grönroos, 2006; 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008; 2011; Lusch and Vargo, 2006 and further evolving studies) is an evolving body of knowledge advancing a customer's perspective on value. Broadly speaking, service logics recognizes value creation as the sum of two conceptually distinguished sub-processes (Grönroos and Ravald, 2011): the provider's processes of creating potential value for customers through delivering offerings and the customer's processes of creating value through the usage of these offerings. Locus of value creation does not dwell as much in the provider's processes, but rather it is a customer's sovereign initiative, since value is created and always determined by the customer.

Looking carefully, the above body of literature still presents some shortcomings that need to be addressed to further advance knowledge toward a more complete customer perspective of value. Customer value and its creation are to a certain extent implicitly understood in favour of the logic of service providers, who somehow structure customer processes and assessments of value. Rather, what this thesis aims to illustrate is that value may be more on the customer's side, as it may emerge in customer realms beyond purposes defined by service providers. Although several alternatives to the provider-dominant perspective have been advanced lately (e.g. Heinonen et al., 2010; Anker et al., 2015), there is a need to further nuance conceptualizations of how value emerges beyond interactions and control of service providers. As will be soon explained in detail, the way some service literature describes the agentic character of customers in value creation to a certain extent seems to constrain a thorough understanding on how value emerges in customer realms. This, in turn, may hinder a fuller understanding of both how customers create (process) and determine (the outcome of) value.

Service scholars provide different models to understand customer value as embedded in service. Despite differences in perspectives and some conceptual and definitional overlapping, these can be summarized as follows: *value-in-use*, *value-in-context*, *value-in-social-context*, and *value-in-cultural-context*. Overall, although these conceptualizations describe service as a process meant to support customer value creation, nevertheless, the perspective still seems to be fairly in favour of the provider's logic. For instance, Payne et al. (2008) propose that in order to develop service for customers, providers should pay attention to how to manage their cocreation platforms to better involve customers. Similarly, although Lusch and Vargo (2014:12) conceptualize service "as doing something for another" (i.e. customers), who will benefit from that, service is still explained in terms of a "firm's activities inputs for the customer's resource-integration, value creation activities" Vargo (2008:214). Yet when viewing service from the customers' eyes, service might be more complex than a cocreation platform or a firm's activities meant to support customer value creation. Strandvik et al. (2012:137) interestingly observe that sometimes customers "do not buy what the seller sells." Grönroos and Gummerus (2014) have also recently claimed that service from a customer's perspective may be broader than as intended by the provider. This propensity to focus on service from a company's point of view may lead to viewing customer value as a mere epiphenomenon that a company activates and that customers respond to accordingly. Rather, the perspective of the present thesis stands in the way of fully appreciating service in the customer's complex life worlds in which value creation takes place regardless interactions and interventions of service providers. As a rebuttal to this point, some theoretical arguments found in service literature (e.g. Venkatesh et al, 2006; Penaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Schembri, 2006; Cova et al., 2001; Jakkola et al., 2015), scholars have suggested the need to explore service in the customers' life and business more closely to expand actual understanding of the concept of service not only from the provider's frame of reference, but more importantly, from the customer's perspective. The above general observation boils down to two more specific gaps. The first relates to the way customers use the provider's offerings to create value (i.e. the process). The second is connected to who and where customers determine value over these offerings (i.e. its outcome).

With regards to the process, service scholars have increasingly adopted social practices as a theoretical lens to understand value creation. Importantly, social practices are

viewed in terms of customers' standard routines and habits as they display their common activities (e.g. Korkman, 2006; Korkman et al., 2010; Vargo, 2008; Akaka et al., 2013). Indeed, from a provider's perspective, this is important to recognize because the view of social practices as routines allows one to systematically understand how large groups of customers use resources to create value. Nevertheless, customer-wise value creation is not only about routines, it is also about individual experiences (e.g. Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schembri, 2006) and identities (Holttinen, 2010). Gummerus (2013:15) goes further and explains that not only social practices, but also experiences are important to recognize because when engaging resources, customers do not only act, they also "sense and think." Recognizing the intertwined nature of social practices and individual experiences in value creation is an important matter because as Helkkula Kelleher and Pihlström (2012b) point out, on the one hand, social practices capture patterned behaviours in value creation, and on the other hand, customer experiences highlight individual preferences and judgments of the customer about a provider's offerings. Therefore, scholars are increasingly calling for more research dealing with value creation from a multi-layered theoretical perspective, one that is able to not only capture patterned behaviours (i.e. social practices), but at the same time, delve into customers' individual preferences (i.e. experiences), regarding these as both contributors to value creation (e.g. Penaloza and Mish, 2011; Helkkula Kelleher and Pihlström, 2012b; Jaakkola et al., 2015).

With regards to value as an outcome, the main gap refers to where value assessment takes place and who determines value. Importantly, the above value models recognize the customer as the beneficiary of this process, as she or he uniquely determines what is valuable (Vargo and Lusch, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2014). Nevertheless, from a customer's perspective, determining value may be also collective, shared among other customers (Rihova et al., 2014). Edvardsson et al. (2011) also recognize the socially constructed nature of service contexts wherein value is determined *in-social-context*. Akaka et al. (2013) go further, adding brand-related subcultures as partaking in the construction of the contexts wherein value is determined *in-cultural-context*. Although, these studies give due recognition to value as determined in relation to other subjects, the focus of these perspectives mainly lies on the provider's side because it is understood within a service context or in relation to a brand. Thus, the above value conceptualizations may neglect to a certain extent a fuller understanding of where value

assessment takes place (i.e. only in service encounters?) and who determines value (i.e. only the targeted customers?). Other studies instead suggest that determination of value might take place in customer ecosystems (Voima et al., 2011). This seems to be an important point to consider because when focusing on customer ecosystems, it can be viewed that value determination is shaped by a larger group of customers, which takes place in their own contexts, beyond service provider encounters. Therefore, research should address determination of value in relation to multiple subjects and multiple contexts including, but not limited to those intended by the service provider (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015).

Interestingly, the problem of acquiring an in-depth customer perspective on value is gaining increasing legitimization within service literature. Heinonen et al. (2010) and further elaborations (e.g. Heinonen, Strandvik, Voima, 2013; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015) have advanced a customer dominant logic (henceforth, CDL) view on value. CDL is most concerned with moving from a provider-dominant logic to a true customer-dominant logic. This concern can be summarized with the following statement: “The centers of interest are not exchange and service as such, but how a company’s service is and becomes embedded in the customer’s contexts, activities, practices, and experiences, and what implications this has for service companies” (Heinonen et al., 2010:533). As for the present thesis, CDL’s claim for the need to recognize service as a process carried out beyond the rationalizing logic of the provider is instead viewed as a more emergent process where customers are in charge of it. This thesis is to further develop the burgeoning body of CDL service literature and to contribute to it by advancing a new theoretical approach that holds great potential for shedding new light on the abovementioned limitations. Further, it aims to provide empirical evidence that will strengthen the above argumentations even further that, although very well grounded, remains largely conceptual.

A ritual approach to customer value creation

One possible solution to address the above shortcomings is to implement a theoretical construct of rituals into service logics to view customer value (i.e. both the process and its outcome) from an alternative perspective. Rook (1985) defines rituals as a customer-

centric process that is orchestrated by customers within their realm. Otnes and Lowrey (2004) further explicate that customer rituals are not narrowly aimed at using products and services as intended by providers. Broadly, when ritualizing customers transform provider's products and services into memorable moments of value creation that are shared within a collectivity (e.g., family and friends). A ritual approach may open up interesting possibilities to take service into customer realms and see how customers implement it in their life and business. It may better capture the complex and nuanced customer's world, where value is created and determined. As such, rituals may be a formidable theoretical lens, which can help to provide an alternative conceptualization of customer value. Moreover, rituals can be beneficial in understanding customer value creation as a complex, emerging process because rituals pertain to a multi-layered theoretical construct that is script-based, intertwining both social practices and individual experiences (Tetrault and Kleine, 1999). McGrath, (2004:96) echoes this multi-layered theoretical approach by arguing that "a ritual occasion is at once both social and cognitive." The intertwined, multi-layered character of rituals has thus the important feature of enhancing our understanding of value creation, as it focuses on how a larger group of customers integrate resources, while at the same time capturing individual preferences and judgments reflecting customers' identities. In addition, rituals are fruitful for broadening understanding on where and who determines value. Rituals are aimed to a larger audience, including those who do not have a specific ritual role (Rook, 1985). Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) report that the American Thanksgiving ritual is a moment of universal connection shared among a larger group of people, sometimes including pets. Similarly, Arnould and Price (1993) found that river rafting is a ritual holding together customers who include service personnel as part of the customer group. Altogether (i.e., customers, other subjects related to customers, and sometimes service providers) experience a sense of communion, which unites them emotionally in *communitas* (Driver, 1991). As such, rituals are promising in shedding more light on value as determined not only by customers, but also including other subjects and service providers, who the customers include in their customer ecosystems.

In sum, a ritual due to its customer centric approach may open up interesting possibilities to fully appreciate the concept of service in the customers' realms beyond interactions and interventions of service providers. In addition, the multi-layered

theoretical construct may help to provide an alternative view of how customers create (process) and determine (its outcome) value from a more complex and nuanced perspective.

Why bother?

In addition to the above theoretical argumentation, rituals are of great interest for practitioners alike because in the literature, they are linked to increased customer engagement and higher degrees of satisfaction. Traditionally, marketing and management scholars view customer engagement and satisfaction as a company's ability to structure its offerings in favour of the customer's expectations or needs. From a ritual perspective engagement and satisfaction are instead enhanced by customers, who reconstruct the provider's service offerings in order to nurture the flow of joy elicited by the sacred character of ritual behaviours. Droogers (2004) argues that rituals are festive. They are very much playful because they are connected to the idea of enjoyment of life. Arnould and Price (1993) interpreting river rafting as a ritual experience found that customers engaged with the provider's offerings through the "spontaneous letting be of the process," which is claimed to be at the core of customer enjoyment in service encounters. In addition, Belk et al., (1989) argue that ritualization enhances customer satisfaction. Their seminal study concludes claiming that customers when using products and offerings in a ritualistic manner are enticed to judge their value as ecstatic. Psychologists echo the same findings. Vohs et al. (2013) experiment with ritual behaviours and demonstrate that the group of consumers who have engaged in ritualized behaviour evaluated chocolate as more valuable compared to the group that did not.

The above studies are interesting because they offer a customer's inside-out perspective on the subtle link between customer engagement and satisfaction. This perspective seems to suggest that rather than structuring offerings by managing customers' expectations and needs, the key point is to feed customers' need of rituals. This inside-out customer perspective is also shared by recent conceptual developments in service literature (e.g. Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). For example, Strandvik et al. (2012) argue that in the industrial service setting, customers' needs are much more important than the provider's offerings. To fulfil customers'

needs, companies should open their service encounters toward customers and let customers be engaged with organizational strategies and operations, for which there is evidenced of increased satisfaction. Rihova et al. (2014) advance the same argument in the tourism field. Tourist organizations may be more successful in customer engagement and satisfaction if they promote customer needs.

In sum, the study of rituals is of relevance also from a managerial perspective because it facilitates comprehension of customer engagement and satisfaction from the customer’s point of view. Examining rituals seems to be important, as previous studies on rituals seem to suggest that when customers ritualize, their engagement and satisfaction become significantly enhanced.

Purpose of the thesis

The above theoretical argumentations supported with insights from preliminary observations and personal reflections (i.e. the background) lead to the general thesis’s purpose. As depicted in Figure 1 below, the broader objective of the thesis is to investigate the relationship between rituals and value creation from a customer’s sovereignty perspective. As such, the general purpose of the thesis can be formulated as follows:

“To provide a framework explicating the role of rituals in value creation from a customer perspective”

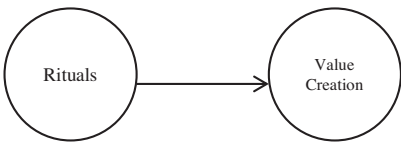


Figure 1: Illustration of the research purpose.

To pursue the above purpose, the present study is primarily grounded on service logics considering four main conceptualizations. *Value-in-use* (e.g. Grönroos, 2011; Grönroos and Ravald, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Heinone et al., 2010; Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013) focuses on value creation and value as mostly linked to the usage of resources and interactions. *Value-in-context* (Vargo, 2008; Chandler and Vargo, 2011; Gummesson, 2006) and its further elaborations, such as *value-in-social-context* (e.g. Edvardsson et al., 2011) and *value-in-cultural-context* (e.g. Akaka, Vargo and Lusch, 2013; Akaka et al., 2014; Akaka, Vargo and Schau, 2013) provide guidance to the study in relation to the context, since they postulate that value creation and value are also tied to context.

Rituals are implanted into service to leverage insight from rituals that can be exploited from a service perspective. This theoretical implantation is aimed at acquiring specific knowledge from rituals that is absent in service literature. The ritual theoretical construct mainly draws upon consumer culture studies (CCT) (e.g. Rook, 1985; McCracken, 1988a; Belk et al., 1989; Tetrault and Kleine, 1999; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991; Gainer, 1995; Treise et al. 1999; Otnes and Lowery, 2004), which is a body of literature that is considered a natural ally to service logics in terms of understanding how value is created and determined (Arnould, 2007). Some other theories from the sociology of rituals are also considered (e.g. Douglas, 1966; Turner, 1969; Cheal, 1989; Driver, 1991) to delve more into the theoretical root of consumption rituals.

Positioning of the thesis

In sum, this thesis deals with introducing a ritual perspective on service logics and its implications for understanding customer value. The thesis is well anchored to the ‘service logics’ perspective in marketing and more precisely positioned within these perspectives and CDL. Yet, since rituals remain largely unaddressed, rituals theory is borrowed from another body of literature, namely CCT. The following will clarify the positioning of the thesis in relation to the research area, which lies in the intersection between service literature and CCT (see figure 2, below).

Although there is one service perspective on value, that perspective is understood through different logics; likewise, the logics through which service literature understands value may vary and overlap (Gummerus, 2013; Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014). Service logic (e.g. Grönroos, 2008; 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014) explores value creation to provide a narrowed view. This view advances that locus of value is based on the usage of resources. The logic of service is one of *helping* customers to achieve goals in their everyday life. Service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008; 2011; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; 2014) provides a wider understanding on value creation as it zooms out to the broader context to which value is tied. Accordingly, Service-dominant logic puts more emphasis on the locus of value as *in-context*. Service-dominant logic posits that service is the application of knowledge and skills, which aligns with service logic. The former differs due to its broader perspective that allows one to conceptualize service as the primary meaning underlying transactions and exchange in markets (Vargo, 2008). Recently, a CDL perspective has been put forward (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015), the foundation of which centers on value towards the customer even further. As such, the primary driver is not as much in the provider's logic of service, but rather on how service becomes embedded in customer lives'. This is how Heinonen et al. (2010) define service from a CDL perspective: "A CD [i.e. customer dominant] marketing logic here refers to a view that positions the customer in the centre, rather than the service" (p. 534). The present thesis resonates with customer dominant logic of service. Service is just one of the possible means through which customers make sense of their lives. As this thesis will show, ritualization is a customer process that is entirely orchestrated by the customers and that takes place in their realms beyond the service provider's visibility and control. Further, when understanding a customer's point of view on value, this thesis acknowledges that value, although tied to usage, implies a form of utility-related value and at the same time may be richer, more symbolic. If one returns to the introductory vignettes, although implying usage of resources, from a customer's point of view, ritualization is a way to construct family and friendship. These are important aspects suggesting that although implying service use, value may be broadly understood.

The ritual theoretical construct is not new as such. Drawing on 20 years of investigations, Arnould and Thompson (2005) include rituals in CCT as important symbolic processes of value creation. Particularly, Rook (1985), McCracken (1988; 1989) Belk et al. (1989), Arnould and Price (1993), Treise et al. (1999) have developed a large body of knowledge grounded on rituals. This body of knowledge is not finished yet as Rook (2008) has recently claimed. In today’s marketing researches, rituals are still used as theoretical lenses to understand contemporary consumer culture (e.g. Brandford and Sherry, 2015; Torres Quintao and Brito, 2015). Though, this thesis is not a CCT study. Indeed, this thesis takes theoretical insights from this body of literature, but it is not intended to be placed in this map. Rituals from this thesis’s perspective diverge from CCT because, as Heinonen et al. (2010:533) explain, these studies do not recognize the “structural fit between a service and a customer’s life.” Concluding, as figure 2 below depicts, this thesis intersects service (i.e. CDL) with CCT. It draws on CCT to leverage insights, concepts, and preliminary understanding about ritual, but the focused literature to which the research would contribute is service, which is depicted as full-colour and with a solid line.

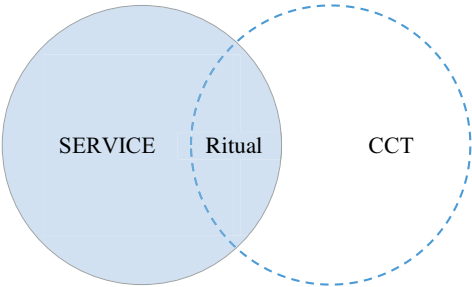


Figure 2: Positioning of thesis.

Study background

In this section, an overview of empirical work underpinning this thesis is offered. The aim is to provide a brief introduction for choosing wine consumption as fertile empirical setting to research rituals (for a thorough discussion about research design and approach please consult the methodology chapter). Further, this paragraph is an opportunity to give more information about myself, my personal interests, and my relationship with the topic—wine.

In general, there could have been many empirical contexts in which to delve into a study on rituals, as rituals are so pervasive in many aspects of customers' life (Otnes and Lowrey, 2004). Personal care (Rook, 1985), gift-exchange (Curasi, Arnould and Price, 2004), work (Solomon and Anand, 1985), festivals (Bradford and Sherry, 2015) are just a few examples of the pervasiveness of rituals in today's society, all of which offer a wide range of alternatives to conduct a study on rituals. However, the introductory vignettes drawn from my preliminary fieldwork illustrate how wine may be viewed as an interesting empirical context in which to research customer rituals. In addition, there can be many other illustrations supporting the strong relationship between wine and rituals. Let us consider for example the connoisseur wine ritual. This ritual unfolds through a step-by-step process (generally five, but it may vary from expert to expert) through which wines are tasted. First, connoisseurs have great care in choosing the glass in which wines are poured. Pouring wine is not done in a hurry. Rather, wines are poured with respect, taking caution to decant wines into a bowl. Afterwards, they tilt their glass to first inspect the wine and subsequently swirl it around the bowl (not more than three spins) to get the aromas of the wines. Connoisseurs are now ready to sniff the wine and take the first sip. They may rotate wines around the tongue and gargle before eventually spitting it out without swallowing it. Yet, if one spends some time observing people drinking wines (for example, in a wine bar), she or he would surely note that the above gestures are also quite common among individuals. De Gaiarine and De Gaiarine (2011) explain that the ritual of drinking wines in France is a way to construct an important part of what is called the French identity. Gusfield (1987[2003]) provides vivid utterance on how drinking a glass of wine on a Friday evening is a way to distinguish the end of the work week and the beginning of the leisurely weekend. Nevertheless, not only is drinking wines imbued with ritual

connotations, Anne Tyler Calabresi (1987) captures the social and cultural dimension of the ritual of harvesting wine grapes. In her ethnographic study on the *vendemmia* in a Tuscan farmhouse, harvesting is about friends, relatives, and neighbours gathering together and working hard under the sun. When the sun comes down, this community of people celebrate the harvest with a rich banquet made of special dishes (that are not typically consumed during the year) and engage in folkloristic dances, strengthening the cultural belongingness of this community to a sociocultural territory.

In addition to the above argument, my research interest on wine stems from my personal background. Before applying for a Ph.D. program, I worked for five years as consultant for an Italian wine company. This work experience allowed me not only to gain specific knowledge about wine markets, but also develop a wide network of business and personal acquaintances in this field from which I have strongly drawn my pre-understanding of this empirical field. Last but not the least, being a native of Italy has given me great familiarity with the wine topic. The theme of familiarity as an important asset to be exploit in research will be thoroughly explained in the methodology. However, here it may be pertinent to discuss how being Italian provided me with a special interest for this study. In Italy, wines are an important part of what it means to be an Italian, especially for the inhabitants of the region where I come from (Veneto), where wine production is one the main budget items of the local economy. Particularly, my family and my personal acquaintances have been great sources of inspiration for this study. One of my first memories in fact relates to the little vineyard situated in the backyard of my grandfather's house. It was not a farm, rather a family house situated in the countryside. Like many Italians, my grandfather 'Sante' used to make wines for domestic consumption, and I still remember that acrid smell of the must and that feeling of crushed wine grapes on my foot. We would get together to process the wine grapes in mid-October every year. Unfortunately, that vineyard was removed after my grandfather's death in 1981. At the age of 12, I was collecting wine labels, and at the age of 14, I had my first taste of wine, a glass of water mixed with some drops of Merlot. Only now after having delved into rituals, I can realize that that was a cultural ritual (quite common in my region) that somehow marked the passage from the childhood to the adolescence. From that point onward, I kept on going with my interest on wines. I met Nicola who I consider not only as a good friend, but also the person who really

helped me to enhance my understanding of the business of wine. He can be described as a small wine entrepreneur who shows a contagious passion for his job. His talent is also quite acknowledged, looking at the prizes adorning the meeting room of his winery. I then moved to Sweden in 2009, where I discovered another way of understanding wines. In Sweden, wines have other connotations that sometimes have to do with alcohol content. That is not to say that Swedish people view wines solely as alcoholic beverages. In fact, I was quite surprised about how knowledgeable Swedish consumers are about wines. Moreover, the wide range of international bottles that can be found in Sweden made me understand my parochial view of wines. In addition, wines are such an interesting topic here in Sweden. TV programs, books, and Internet blogs are overwhelmed by the experts who discuss wines from many perspectives. Much of my conversations with Swedish friends and colleagues are about wines. Wines are becoming the primary motivation to plan a holiday. Thus, I found it extremely interesting how different meanings rooted in different cultures can actually shape how we do same things. Particularly, I noted that when in Italy (consciously or unconsciously) I tend to ritualize my drinking behaviours according to a certain sequence of actions, gestures, language, and of course meanings. When in Sweden, the same ritualistic behaviour took place differently, which for me constructed a different perception of wine and its value. That was exactly the backdrop that inspired and spurred this study. However, just to be clear from the beginning, this is not a study that will spot differences between Italian and Swedish consumers about their wine rituality. This is a study about wine rituals conducted in a broader empirical setting including Italy and Sweden. In addition, considering data collection in Sweden and Italy helps to strategically manufacture cultural distance, thereby avoiding some pitfalls and biases (this is further discussed in depth in the research design).

Key concepts and definitions

Customer: In marketing, a customer is defined as the “purchaser of products or services” (American Marketing Association). This thesis stretches the definition of customer even further and frames a customer not only as an acquirer of a provider’s offerings, but also broadly as a user of products or services. This perspective could be advocated to overlap with the terms ‘consumer’, as they both share an important concept. The AMA defines a consumer as the “ultimate user or consumer of goods, ideas, and services.” This definition put at the centre the concept of usage, as the perspective of *customer* does. Nonetheless, it does not recognize the economic fit with providers. That is, the term *customer* suggests an economic transaction, which instead seems to be neglected in the above definition of consumer. Since this thesis firmly grounds on service logics, which acknowledges both usage and exchange as intertwined in value creation (e.g. Grönroos, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2011), it follows that the adoption of customer becomes the logical consequence to conceptualize a subject that purchases and uses a service provider’s offerings.

Ritual: Ritual has different etymologies, which in turn imply different meanings (for a deeper discussion about the etymology of rituals, please refer to Chapter Two). The Oxford Dictionary of English (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>) defines rituals as “a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.” In marketing, a *ritual* refers to “actions or behaviours performed by consumers to create or affirm desired symbolic cultural meanings” (AMA dictionary). The two definitions are different in the sense that the first one associates rituals to religion, while instead the second definition relates rituals to a behaviour implying consumption. Nevertheless, both definitions touch upon the strong symbolic connotations associated to ritual behaviours, whether understood in terms of religion or culture. Thus, in general, *ritual* refers to a set of actions, carried out to achieve meaningful goals in life although not necessarily linked to consumption. This definition will be further developed in the thesis. (see Chapter Two)

Delimitations

The thesis takes a radical perspective of value and its creation from the customer's ritual point of view. Consequently, it accounts for customers and their lives as the main focus to understand value creation. Nevertheless, since service has a business to customer perspective (B2C) on value creation, this thesis indirectly includes providers and other business actors (such as wine producers, local institutions, wine experts) not as the main focus, but rather as part of a cultural milieu that is examined to better understand the market forces shaping customer rituals. A business-to-business perspective (B2B) is completely disregarded in this thesis, which basically means that the thesis does not include a discussion on the transactions among companies, such as, for instance, product development, value supply chains, and retail. The ritual lens allows one to delve into the symbolic dimension of value and its creation. This implies that the emphasis of value and its creation is on its interpretative dimension; thus, the discussion is more focused on what is being represented and implied by customers rather than their immediate purposes. That is, drinking wines in a ritualistic manner implies a focus on what this could mean for customers beyond the functional act of drinking. Another delimitation is the theme of alcohol. The thesis will delve into drinking behaviours. Though, by no means will this thesis will touch upon and discuss health-related problems associate with alcohol consumption.

Thesis Outline

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter Two (i.e. literature review) forms the theoretical framework of the thesis. It is divided into two parts. The first part extends problematization by critically reviewing four main conceptual models through which value creation and its outcome are understood by actual service logics studies. It goes on in the second part to review ritual literature and to conceptualize a preliminary version of the ritual framework. The chapter ends by formulating two research questions that will be afterwards answered in Chapter Five. Chapter Three discusses methodology (i.e. ethnography) together with study design, data collection, analysis, reliability, and validity. Chapter Four present findings that are organized according to two ethnographic episodes: family rituals and friends' rituals. These findings are

thematically organized and analysed according to the preliminary ritual theoretical framework. The chapter ends by offering a table, which recaps key findings, and also it serves as input to the next chapter. Chapter Five analyses and discusses the ritual framework from a service perspective in three sections. In section one, a final version of the customer rituals framework is firstly introduced. Afterwards, the framework is discussed more in depth in two separate sections by answering the two research questions previously formulated (i.e. section two answers to RQ1 and section three answers to RQ2).

Chapter Six concludes the thesis and summarizes its contributions. It does so by firstly discussing at a more general level the relationship between rituals and value creation and how this new perspective may contribute to service. Subsequently, it circumscribes a more detailed level thesis' contributions. The chapter concludes by elaborating on managerial implications, identifies thesis limitations, while at the same time invoking for further research.

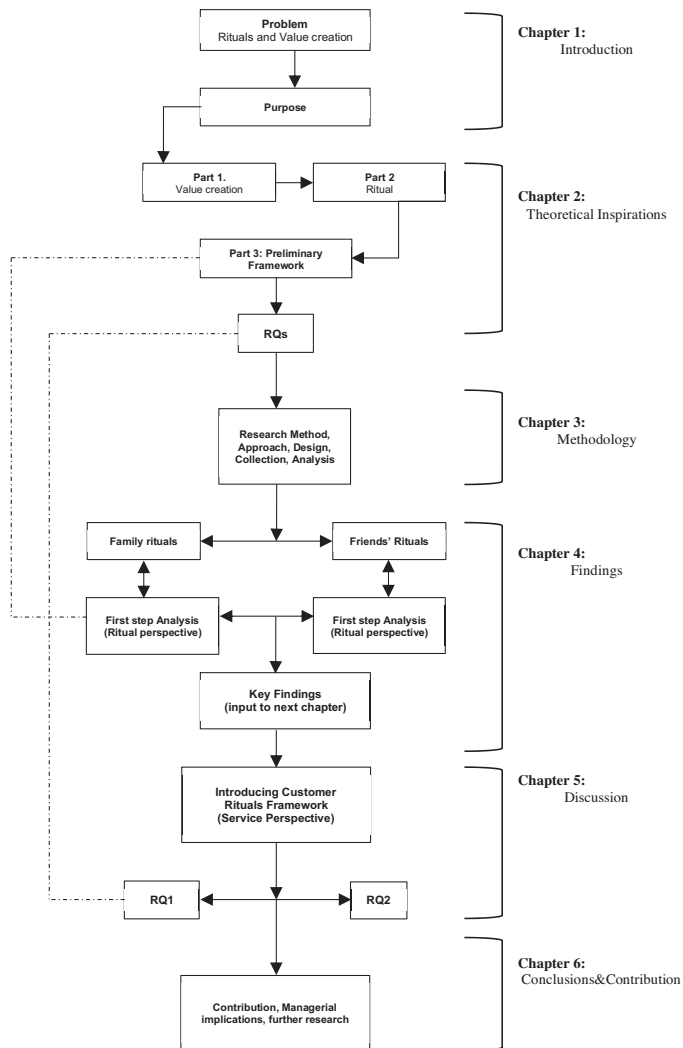


Figure 3: Thesis outline.

CHAPTER TWO – THEORETICAL INSPIRATIONS

The literature review is divided into two main parts. The first part problematizes service logics literature by reviewing four central conceptual value models (i.e. *value-in-use*, *value-in-context*, *value-in-social-context*, *value-in-cultural-context*), the goal of which is to show that so far the ritualistic approach to value creation remains largely unaddressed. Nevertheless, revisiting these models is important because they provide important guidance in explicating the relationship between rituals and value creation. The purpose of the second part is to gather knowledge of rituals from a theoretical perspective and to construct a preliminary version of the framework adopted in this research to study customer rituals (see sections one and two). In addition, at the end of the second part (section three), the research questions are formulated. The main reasons for formalizing the research questions at the end of the theoretical framework rather than right after the problem formulation is because a deeper review of the theories can better inform a closer understanding of what needs to be researched in order to fulfil the initial purpose.

Part One—Service approach to value creation

Marketing scholars have paid much attention for several decades to the understanding of how customers create and determine value (Payne and Holt, 1999). Service scholars have offered the important contribution to this debate by giving due recognition to customers as cocreators and beneficiaries of value. Nevertheless, there is no general consensus among service scholars either about how to conceptualize the process of value creation or what constitute value for customers (Gummerus, 2013). Rather, models aiming at capturing customer value creation from a service perspective often overlap one another, thus providing nuances in definitions and viewpoints on how value is created and determined by the customers. One way to organize a review of these models is to look at how service logics perspectives on value creation have developed over time. Accordingly, four main value conceptualizations can be identified. Firstly,

value is understood as tied to the usage of resources or as *value-in-use*. This conceptualization has been increasingly refined and expanded by further specifying its characteristics and relevance in capturing a more narrowed view of how providers and customers engage in value creation. Building upon the concept of value-in-use, another conceptualization of value creation has been advanced. That is: *value-in-context*. In this view, value-in-use is not discharged. Instead, it serves as a backdrop from which one can broaden the understanding toward a more networked perspective of value creation among actors. Accordingly, the locus of value and its creation is not narrowly viewed as tied to usage, but broadly as nested in contexts (i.e. micro, meso, and macro). The *value-in-context* has also received much attention from service scholars, proposing further elaboration, such *value-in-social-context*. By drawing on social-construction theories, it recognizes concepts, such as the social positions and roles of actors in creating value. Therefore, value creation is understood from a social construction approach, which substantially recognizes the presence of asymmetries in the way value is perceived and assessed by customers. Building upon value-in-context and its further elaboration as ‘in-social-context’, another conceptualization has been advanced. That is: *value-in-cultural-context*. This conceptualization implants consumer culture as an added lens and thus emphasizes the shared understanding of value creation. The recognition of multiple levels in markets (i.e. networked, social, and cultural) adds that value creation and its determination may be heterogeneous and dynamic across cultures. The chapter concludes by offering a table (Table, 1), which summarizes and highlights differences among the four value conceptual models.

Value-in-use

Grönroos and Gummerus (2014) define value creation as a cumulative process evolving over time and intersecting three main spheres (see figure 4). Conceptually, the model aims at capturing the customer value creation, but by depicting the process of value creation as an arrow starting from the service provider toward the customer, it implies that value creation may be mediated by the service providers. Though, the emphasis on value creation is within the customer sphere, as it is primary in this sphere that value is determined.

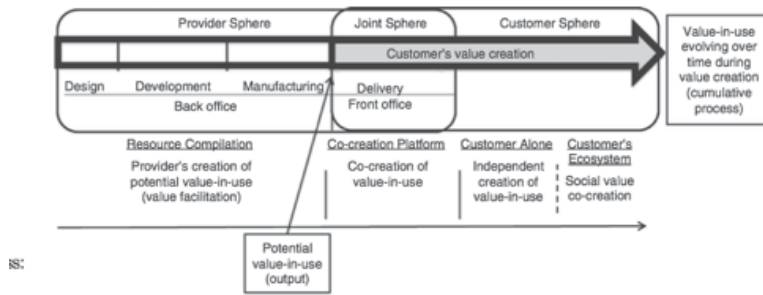


Figure 4: Value-in-use (from Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014:218)

By mainly drawing from Grönroos and Voima (2013), the bulk of this value model can be identified in two main concepts: usage of resources and interactions. As for the usage of resources, value-in-use postulates that value is obtained when customers use a combination of resources, including service personnel (Gummesson, 1991), customers (Grönroos, 1984), and knowledge and skills (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Möller, 2008) that are integrated to create value. Further, value-in-use provides a perspective that shifts away from the traditional view according to which value is embedded in goods or products (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Grönroos, 2006). Instead, it postulates that goods are transmitters of service or distribution mechanisms for service provision and that service is the process through which customers use goods in combination with other resources to gain value.

Resources are used through customers' actions, such practices or activities. Korkman (2006:27) introduces a practice theoretical approach to service use, defining customer practices as "more or less routinized actions, which are orchestrated by tools/know-how, image, physical space and a subject who is carrying out a practice." This definition acknowledges customer practices as the main unit of analysis from which one can understand customer value creation by focusing on how large groups of customers interact with the surrounding context. The main implication of this theoretical approach is that value is understood in customers' practices since value emerges when a customer carries out a practice. In other words, the point of interest is not as much on who is doing what, but rather on how these actions are carried out and developed over time

(cfr. Korkman, 2006). Mickelsson (2014) has also advanced actual understanding on usage of resources as based on activities. Activities are defined as a micro subset of customers' actions directed toward an end and that are determined by their motives and influenced by conditions. As such, customers' activities are more experiential, in the sense that usage of resources is driven by customers' cognitive understandings and by the context in which these activities are carried out. Importantly, a customer activity framework reveals the network of other activities that are connected to usage of resources, thus expanding value-in-use toward other separated activities that are linked to the usage of resources. Finally, utilizing resources is also understood as an experience-based process (Helkkula, Kelleher, Pihlström, 2012a). Herein, *experiential* refers mainly to two concepts. Experience as a cognitive sense-making activity (mainly in a customer's mind) through which one comprehends the use of servicescapes (Pareigis, Echeverri, Edvardsson, 2012). In addition, *experiential* may also refer to the phenomenological interpretation of service use (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In this sense, the usage of resources and value are viewed as more idiosyncratic because it emphasizes how individual customers process service use and experience it holistically. Though, service experience may also be understood in relation to other customers (Jakkola et al., 2015). Accordingly, value creation and its determination rather than referring to one single customer are viewed as collective in terms of a shared experience (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015).

Interactions comprise the other fundamental concept in value-in-use mentioned above because value creation requires interaction between providers and customers. Gummesson (2001) introduces the concept of "part time marketers" to highlight the importance of handling interactions with customers, as it is precisely during interactions that value is created. Previously, Grönroos (1982) had in fact observed the centrality of the "interactive marketing" knowledge to capture what Normann (1983) had previously defined as the "moment of truth" of value creation. Eventually, Grönroos and Voima (2013) specify that interactions between providers and customers take place through a dialogical process. *Dialogical* refers to a type of process according to which two parties (e.g. a firm and a customer) actively engage in a reciprocal dialogue and through this dialogue influence each other. The dialogical process is not understood as linear but is rather dynamic. According to Payne et al. (2008), *dynamic* refers to the fact that

depending on the sphere of interaction, providers and customers play different roles, which in turn have implications in the way value is created or cocreated. The centrality of interactions implies the carrying of different roles between providers and customers, which in turn may vary depending on the spheres where they interact. In provider spheres, firms function as value facilitators by offering value propositions to customers. Traditionally, service literature has depicted the provider's sphere as a 'back office', in which a provider supports its customers through a set of activities and resources (such as, for instance, research and development, marketing, production), that work out of sight (Shostack, 1982; Bitner et al., 2008). The firm has full control of these processes that are carried out with the main goal of producing goods and offerings, which are offered to customers (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Nordin and Kowalkowski, 2010). As such, the role of providers is to offer value propositions through goods, which embed potential value-in-use for customers (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Grönroos, 2006; Vargo, Maglio and Akaka, 2008; Möller, 2008).

The joint sphere is where service providers and customers come together to cocreate (Grönroos and Voima, 2013) or wherein "cocreation opportunities" are developed (Payne et al., 2008:88) through direct interactions. Particularly, cocreation through direct interaction is when firms' and customers' processes are merged in one integrated process (Grönroos and Ravald, 2011). In this integrated process, customers drive value creation by accepting (or refusing) value propositions from the firm and in doing so play the central role of cocreator. In turn, the provider may influence customers' value creation process and thus function also as a cocreator (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). The main differences between customers as cocreators and firm as cocreators is that customers are always in charge of the process of cocreating, while firms cocreate through having the opportunity to support their processes of value creation (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). The joint sphere also has been conceptualized in service research as the encounter processes, which is defined as "series of two-way interactions and transactions occurring between the customer and the supplier" (Payne et al., 2008:90). In this sphere, firms and customers engage both positively and negatively. A firm's positive interactions successfully influence customers' processes, whereas a firm's negative interactions relate instead to customers' rejection of a firm's value propositions, leading to "value destruction through misuse" (Plé and Cáceres, 2010). Moreover, the lack of a firm's understanding of the customers' processes (e.g. Voima

et al. 2011; Pareigis et al., 2011; Kowalkowski, 2011) and the lack of customer engagement (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016) may hinder cocreation. Therefore, as highlighted by service scholars (e.g. Gummesson, 1991; Bitner et al., 2008), front line employees maintain a fundamental role in enhancing the quality of direct interaction with customers, which in turn enhance cocreation (Payne et al., 2008).

The third sphere is the customer sphere, which is where customers create value and determine value both individually or collectively (Grönroos and Voima, 2011). Heinonen et al. (2010) refer to the customer sphere as the customer ecosystem, which is defined as a “system of actors and elements related to the customer that is relevant in a specific service” (Voima *et al.*, 2011, p. 1015). Despite resonating with the concept of service ecosystems (e.g. Akaka et al., 2013), they differ significantly: the former mainly includes customers and other actors related to customers, such as family, friends, and acquaintances; instead, the latter focuses on institutions and organizations although includes customers. In the customer sphere or customer ecosystem, there are no direct interactions with providers, but rather the focus is on the customer’s mental processes (both visible and invisible) through which customers use products and services to achieve everyday life’s goals (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013). Thus, in this sphere, value can be created only by the customer alone (i.e. creation) or in interaction with the actors forming the social bound of customers (i.e. cocreation).

Finally, determination of value (i.e. value as outcome of usage of resources and interactions) is claimed to be “uniquely experientially and contextually perceived and determined by the customer” (Grönroos and Voima, 2013:146). As explained above, in value-in-use, value creation is understood as a longitudinal process that accumulates over time. As such, value rather than being created emerges through this process. It follows that value determination is a dynamic concept that may vary depending on how customers perceive and experience value creation. Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima (2013) further specify that the dynamic determination of value is also complex due to the presence of customers’ mental process (i.e. feelings, emotions) and other actors (i.e. family members). These aspects can also influence value determination beyond the control or visibility of the service providers. In addition, the presence of other actors adds that value can be determined not only by the beneficiary (i.e. at an individual level), but further by the collectivity. Therefore, since the references that influence the

way customers interpret value are complex and heterogeneous, value determination may vary in range from individual to collective.

To sum up, value-in-use relates to the value as obtained in a cumulative process mediated by the service provider although always determined by the customer alone or within the customer ecosystem. In this cumulative process, the locus of value is in the usage of resources, as resources help customers to achieve goals in their everyday life. Depending on the interactions (i.e. direct or indirect) taking place on each of these spheres, providers and customers play specific roles. In the provider sphere, firms play the role of value facilitator by creating potential value-in-use for customers. In the joint sphere, value may be cocreated when firms and customers interact directly and firms positively influence customers' process of value-in-use. In the customer sphere, customers play the central role as responsible for value creation. Eventually, value is always uniquely assessed by the customer as a holistic experience and determined by the customer, although in relation to and in coordination with multiple other subjects, they collectively comprise the reality of the customer.

Value in context

Value-in-context conceptualizes value creation as framed by the broader context in which networks of multiple actors come together to exchange resources and cocreate value in a systemic fashion (see figure 5) (e.g. Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo, 2008; Chandler and Vargo, 2011; Akaka, Vargo and Lusch, 2012). Value-in-context draws on the notions of business networks (e.g. Normann, 2001; Håkansson et al., 2009) and many-to-many marketing (e.g. Gummeson, 2006) to explicate how the complexity of context frames exchanges among multiple actors in markets. Although recognizing the customer's context as that conceptual space where value is determined, at the same time this conceptualization embraces service providers' activities that are viewed as "inputs" for the customers value creating purposes (Vargo, 2008:214). As such, value-in-context portrays value creation as a epiphenomenon that a company activates and that customers respond to accordingly.

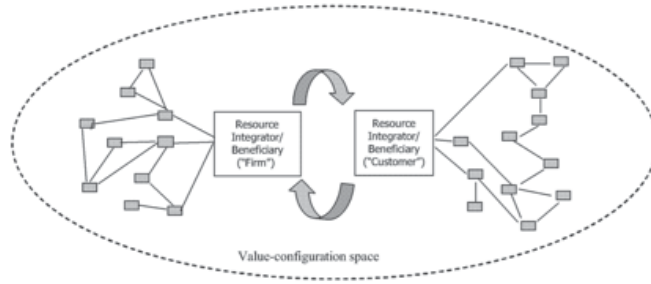


Figure 5: Value-in-context (from Vargo, 2008:214)

Value-in-context is grounded on the value-in-use concept, in the sense that it views value creation as obtained through the usage and integration of operand (e.g. products) and operant (e.g. knowledge and skills) resources. However, it differs in its contextual and macro perspective on value creation. Particularly, value-in-context accentuates the role played by the context in shaping value creation and thus gives more emphasis to the context in which resources are integrated and exchanged (Vargo, 2008). Four main themes may capture this model: 1) the contextual nature of resources with primacy to the operand resources; 2) the concept of service as the unit of exchange that is systematically exchanged in markets among actors; 3) the macro joint sphere of cocreation among multiple networks of service systems; and 4) the view of value as the achievement of a system's well-being. All these characteristic elements of the value-in-context conceptualization are discussed in depth as follows.

In value-in-context, resources are viewed as distinctive: operand (such as goods and tangible things) and operant (such as knowledge, skills, competences, information). However, since value does not dwell in goods (i.e. operand), the centrality of value creation lies on the exchange and integration of operant resources. This is explained in the literature both from a company perspective and from a customer point of view. Companies can achieve sustainable, competitive advantages only by developing critical knowledge and competences, such as marketing strategy (Madhavaram and Hunt, 2008), relationship and network competences (Grönroos, 2011), and brand equity strategy (Zhang et al., 2015). At the same time, customers cocreate value in collaboration with firms by exchanging their own knowledge and skills (Normann and

Ramirez, 1993; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Cova and Salle, 2008). Further, the use of resources is dependent on the context in which they are embedded. Chandler and Vargo (2011) explain that since some resources may be more valuable in certain context and less valuable in others, value creation is embedded in contexts. Resources become as such in the sense that the potential of a resource (i.e. the 'resourceness') to be integrated and exchanged to create value is determined by the context in which these resources are accessed and used (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). For example, Koskela-Huotari and Vargo (2016) make salient how a stone is a potential resource that may become useful in terms of a decorative element if embedded in the Scandinavian context. At the same time, when integrated in the Hawaiian context, a stone changes its resourceness in terms of a musical instrument. Depending on the context, the resourceness of the stone changes as well as the way value is created.

Value-in-context reframes service as the unit of transaction that actors systematically exchange in markets (i.e. service systems) (Vargo and Lusch, 2011). Vargo et al. (2008:149) define a service system as "an arrangement of resources (including people, technology, information, etc.) connected to other systems by value propositions." This definition is the cornerstone in the value-in-context conceptualization because it views interactions and relationships as more complex, yet interdependent concepts. They are complex because they broaden the value configuration space in which actors come together to integrate and exchange resources toward multiple networks of service systems, and they are interdependent because each service system cocreates value depending on the resources of others to survive (Vargo, 2008). Frow and Payne (2011) further explain that service systems are connected through value propositions that can be accepted, rejected, or just ignored by other service systems. However, once the value is proposed and the service made available in the market, it is up to other service systems (e.g. a potential customer) in need of that specific service to decide whether to accept the value proposition or not.

When viewing interactions and relationships from a value-in-context perspective, value creation is not limited to the firm-customer dichotomy. Rather, it extends cocreation among a range of service systems that are connected, both directly and indirectly, in micro, macro, and meso contexts. According to Chandler and Vargo (2011), micro contexts refer to service-for-service exchanges between two actors (e.g. a firm and a

customer). These actors draw upon each other's competences to directly serve one another. Further, service-for-service exchanges are reciprocal in the sense that both actors serve each other. This is an important aspect of value cocreation because both actors are active participants in the exchange process. Macro contexts refer to service-for-service exchange among complex networks (both dyads, triads, and multiple networks). Herein, actors may exchange service both directly and indirectly by leveraging synergies of interactions. *Meso contexts* refer to triads of actor-to-actor relationships. In meso contexts, one actor may be directly connected to two actors, but indirectly serving both actors. The important implication for value cocreation in a meso context is that service-for-service exchanges occur indirectly. Micro-macro and meso contexts are not separate from one another. Rather they are connected through rules and norms, such as practices, routines, activities, and processes that are replicated at each level (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Chandler and Vargo (2011:44) refer to it as a meta context or a sort of 'layer' holding together each level of the context in an overarching service ecosystem. As they put it: "[t]he meta layer covers all the levels of service-for-service exchanges such that they together constitute service ecosystems. The notion of a service ecosystem is a fundamental aspect of value cocreation because it acknowledges how large-scale social structures and institutions evolve relative to the individual service efforts of actors, dyads, triads, and complex networks." The unit of analysis to understand value creation is the value creating practices. For instance, Korkman et al. (2010) make salient the link between value creation and practices in the market of e-invoicing. Similarly, Russo-Spena and Mele (2012) investigate in the relationship between innovation practices and value creation. Rantala (2010) echoes the same view by delving into the cocreation of practicing tourism in the Finnish Lapland forest, and Ots (2010) unravels marketing communication practices in food markets.

The last characteristic element of the value-in-context conceptualization relates to the perspective of value and how value is determined in a context. As value-in-context takes a broader picture on how value is created, it follows that the perspective of value is macro. Vargo and Lusch (2011:7) posit that "value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary." This foundational premise is important because it postulates that evaluation and determination of value is "contextual, experiential and idiosyncratic" (Ibid, 7). That is, value is evaluated by the

beneficiary in a given context in which value is practiced and mediated by experiences (Lusch and Vargo, 2014:16). However, as context is understood as a complex, broader interconnection of actors and their networks, value refers actually to the ability of the entire system of networks to survive and develop. Therefore, value should be viewed not as the achievement of an individual goal in everyday life (as in the value-in-use conceptualization), but rather as a mutual and beneficial exchange among all the actors taking part (directly or indirectly) in that ecosystem. Markets (or ecosystems) are simply collections of individual actors' value, whether positive or negative. Thus, value entails the entire system well-being coevolving and coexisting in mutual self-adjustment (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). The macro perspective on value is also consistent with Gummesson (2006; 2008) and the many-to-many approach. According to Gummesson, value should not be viewed as the satisfaction of customer's needs and wants, but rather it should be viewed as the outcome of all actors involved in value creation. Thus, value creation is viewed as a complex process that does not belong exclusively to a single actor (e.g. a customer or a provider), but rather it is balanced among multiple stakeholders involved in value creation (i.e. balanced centricity), including technology, market and other contextual factors (Nordin, Ravald and Servadio, 2013).

To sum up, although value-in-context lies at the centre of analysing customers' contexts as the locus of value, it understands value creation as still mediated by the service providers. Value creation is in fact understood as a mere epiphenomenon that a company activates and that customers respond to accordingly. Further, it posits that service is the unit of exchange that actors systematically exchange and integrate in markets. When viewing value creation from this perspective, resources, actors' relationships and interactions, and value are understood as balanced. Yet, actors' interaction is conceived as a broader network of interdependent actors always including service providers. Eventually, value is viewed as the benefit of a general system well-being, and not solely the customer's intentions or willingness.

Value-in-social-context

Value-in-social-context emphasizes value creation as a process shaped by social reality (Penaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; 2016; Lusch and Vargo, 2014). As this conceptualization is grounded on the above contextual perspective, it maintains a broader perspective on value creation and thus still portrays value creation strongly mediated by the service provider (see figure 6, below). Particularly, the applied social lens allows one to further elaborate on the following: 1) assessment and integration of resources; 2) actors' interactions and relationships; 3) value determination

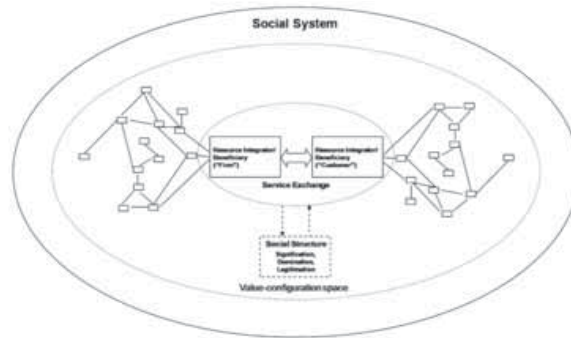


Figure 6: Value-in-social-context (from Edvardsson et al., 2011:333)

Value-in-social-context advances previous conceptualization of value-in-context by postulating that social structures (i.e. norms, values, institutions) frame how resources are firstly assessed and subsequently integrated. Particularly, Edvardsson et al. (2011) postulate that the way actors assess resources depends on the positions and roles that these actors occupy in a given social context. Thus, actors do not necessarily assess and use resources in the same way. Importantly, value-in-social-context, by underscoring social context at the centre of resource integration activities, introduces social practices as the primary unit of analysis through which we study the resource usage. Korkman et al. (2010) argue that customer value is embedded in practices, as customers do not have needs and wants per se, but rather they are carriers of practices, which are intertwined in a range of elements (i.e. tools, know-how, images, and physical spaces) that customers orchestrate to obtain value. Holttinen (2010) puts forward the practice

approach to value creation by highlighting that value creation is socially constructed because customers act being guided by what makes best sense for them in a specific social context. Since context and customer's resources may vary drastically, it follows that segmentation of value-creating practices offers a good understanding of value creation.

The social construction view of value creation advances that social reality enables (or constrains) actors' interactions and coordination in cocreation. Social structures frame actors' interactions because they provide a frame of reference through which actors interpret their roles as resource integrators. Actors implement this frame to learn how to relate to each other by continuously adapting their competences and processes in different situations, in order to align their expectations and roles enactments (Akaka and Chandler, 2011). Therefore, Edvardsson et al. (2011:335-6) posit that actors' social positions and roles within the social system are not static but are rather dynamic. However, actors' interactions and coordination may be also conflictual (Laamanen and Skålén, 2014) and asymmetric (Edvardsson et al., 2011) due to the presence of misalignments of values and norms (i.e. preferences and judgments) in markets (Penaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). For instance, Penaloza and Venkatesh (2006:306-8) draw attention to the dimension of power imbalances and conflicts among actors' interactions and relationships, such as, for instance, between consumers and marketers, but also among consumers' groups and between firms. This in turn leads actors toward codestructing value rather than cocreating it (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). Therefore, when viewing actors' interactions and relationships through the social lens, it is possible to recognize that the collaborative character of cocreation is shaped by social forces structuring the enactment of the actors' roles. The enactment may be fully collaborative when actors align their expectations on cocreation. However, it may also be problematic due to the presence of imbalances and asymmetries among actors and their processes.

Finally, value-in-social-context posits that value is socially constructed and that it is determined at both individual and collective levels. As above described, social structures influence multiple evaluations of resources and frame the interactions and relationships among actors, which in turn have implications in the way value is perceived. Rihova et al. (2013) identify four main "social layers" (i.e. detached customers, social bubble, temporary communitas, and ongoing neo-tribes) representing

heterogeneity of social contexts in which value may be perceived and determined differently. This study demonstrates that social reality provides a set of norms, rules, and values that frame the perception of value that change from social context to social context. Thus, the perspective through which conceptualizing value determination broadens, because it is always related to multiple actors' perceptions shaped by social reality (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Though, differently from the value-in-context, herein there is a particular emphasis on the understanding on how social values shape actors' perception and determination of value.

With a similar logic, social institutions are viewed as those social forces shaping the process of perceiving and understanding value in a broader ecosystem, such as e.g. markets. According to Vargo and Lusch (2016:18) social institutions “work as building blocks (...) for the evaluation of value, as they regulate value creation.” For instance, by drawing anecdotal evidence from the music industry, Edvardsson et al. (2014) explain how regulative, normative, and cognitive institutions have changed over time customers' behaviours about listening music, thereby influencing the perception and the evaluation of value in the consumption of music. As such, social institutions are critical components in value determination because they shape actors' behaviours and perceptions. Another important characteristic is the dynamic character of value determination. Value is not defined as the outcome of one process of value creation. But rather, it is possible to understand value as the outcome of a complex process of value perception and determination that is constantly shaped and influenced by multiple actors. Thus, value determination is viewed as dynamic, i.e. emergent processes changing over time from actor to actor and from context to context (Edvardsson et al., 2011).

To recap, value-in-social-context refers to a social perspective on value creation, as it conceptualizes value framed by social systems. Though, value creation is mainly understood in interaction with service providers and thus, implying that customer's assessment and integration of resources somehow is influenced by service providers. Further, actors' interactions (e.g. providers and customers) are viewed as embedded in a social context where social institutions constrain (i.e. enable or hinder) cocreation. Finally, since value is socially constructed, its determination is viewed as inter-subjective, i.e. reflecting individual preferences and judgments that are always in

relation to the social context. Therefore, the way actors perceive and assess value correspond to a complex process that is dynamically determined among multiple actors and contexts, always including customers, but also other actors (e.g. service providers, institutions), which structure value creation and its determination within the frame of service (social) system.

Value-in-cultural-context

Value-in-cultural-context conceptualizes value creation as a cultural process. (e.g. Penalzoa and Mish, 2011; Venkatesh et al., 2006; Akaka, Schau and Vargo, 2013; Akaka, Vargo and Lusch, 2013) Theoretically, it leverages insights from CCT (e.g. Arnould and Thompson, 2005) by exploiting key conceptual similarities (Arnould, 2006). Therefore, it provides a more heterogeneous perspective on how culture partakes in value creation. In this burgeoning body of literature, culture in value creation is viewed in terms of meanings (Penalzoa and Mish, 2011), system of signs (Akaka, Vargo and Lusch, 2013), or shared practices (Akaka, Schau and Vargo, 2013). All these theorizations approach value creation (and culture) from a broader more collective perspective in the sense that culture is theorized as macro variables permeating at each level of the context (i.e. micro, meso, and macro) in which large groups of customers cocreate (e.g. subcultures) (see Figure 7). Though, this model depicts customer value creation as significantly mediated by the service provider because culture is viewed as embedded in the service provider's offering (e.g. a brand), which mediates a shared understanding of how value is created and determined by brand-related customers.

The cultural perspective on value creation advances actual knowledge on the distinctiveness of resources by positing that cultural meanings are important resources that consumers deploy to pursue different projects in their everyday life (Arnould, 2005). As such, together with knowledge, skills, and capabilities, meanings are also seen as operant resources that act upon operand resources to cocreate value. (Arnould et al., 2006)

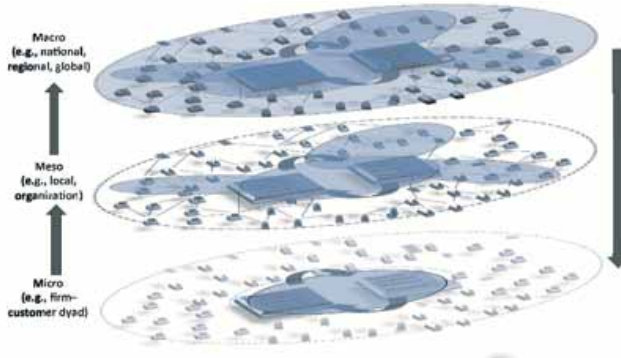


Figure 7: Value-in-cultural-context (from Akaka et al., 2013:10)

Though, cultural meanings and value does not exactly refer to the same level of analysis. According to Penaloza and Mish (2011:22-3), meanings relate to micro, macro, and meso level: “At the macro level, we refer to meaning and value as substantive cosmological categories and principles. At the micro level we feature meaning and value both in the formation and change of individual preference judgments (value, singular for Holbrook) and in the interpretations that occur in dynamic and somewhat malleable discourses and practices. At the mezzo level we direct attention to norms and standards (Holbrook’s value, plural) that flow from and inform macro cosmological principles and in turn support and implement meaning and value at the micro level.” Signs and symbols are also included as operant resources, since markets are constructed through a complex system of signification (Venkatesh et al., 2006). The signs and symbols are not critical for value creation but rather the meanings that actors associate to that particular sign or symbol. For instance, Tynan et al. (2010) make salient how consumers associate luxury brands (i.e. a sign) to different meanings that in turn underlies different types of value: symbolic/expressive, experiential/hedonic, and relational. Further, they suggest that different types of value enable differentiation between various luxury brands. Akaka, Schau, and Vargo (2013), by drawing on Venkatesh et al. (2006), implemented signs and symbols as a broader cultural resource that systematically shape actor-to-actor interactions and exchanges in service ecosystems. As such, signs and symbols are viewed as overarching operant resources that influence value creation at each level of the service system context (i.e. micro, meso, and macro). By zooming out to wholly capture culture in value creation, this

model suggests that signs and symbols can also be viewed as cultural institutions (Akaka et al., 2013; Lusch and Vargo, 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2016) because institutions are formed by national cultures in the sense that they engender ways of thinking from which actors draw their understanding of reality. Signs and symbols are also connected to practices, as the enactment of certain practices contributes to the creation of symbols in markets (Löbner and Lusch, 2014). Particularly, Akaka et al. (2014) provide evidence on how actors draw upon symbols when enacting cultural practices to cocreating. Different interpretations of symbols lead to varied enactments of practices (i.e. coordination, communication, and the integration of resources) that in turn shape the process of value creation.

Another important aspect advanced by the value-in-cultural-context refers to the actors' interactions and the collective cocreation of value. By drawing on subcultures (cfr. Schouten and MacAleander, 1995), Akaka, Schau, and Vargo (2013) posit that shared cultural meanings structure interactions and relationships among actors, which in turn have an important impact on the concept of collaboration. For instance, Pongsakornrungrasit and Schroeder (2011) account for how the myth and the cultural meanings related to a brand (i.e. the Liverpool Football Club brand) are constantly cocreated at a collective level (i.e. the Liverpool's online brand community). The joint cocreation of shared cultural meanings strengthens interaction and collaboration among the members, which plays the double and dynamic roles of providers of service, (e.g. by posting threads that enhance knowledge about the brand or by developing brand identity) and beneficiaries of service. However, when viewing interactions and relationships among actors as culturally shaped, the beneficial character of cocreation may be more problematic (Cova and Dalli, 2009). Carú and Cova (2015) studied collective service experiences and found that collaboration between providers and customers may be uncertain because providers cannot control consumer value cocreating practices. Thus, collaboration may be both conflictual and beneficial at the same time. As a result, it becomes rather difficult from the provider's perspective to manage cocreation. Penaloza and Mish (2011) propound the problematic view of collaboration in the cultural context by adding that collaboration may be complex to manage because actors, if on the one hand interact and coordinate to cocreate value, still the degree of value drawn from this collaboration may be unbalanced among actors. By researching cocreation in the sustainable market context, the authors recognize "the

juxtapositions and contradictions of cultural beliefs in relation to norms and standards, and to judgments and interpretations,” which results in “disjunctions” in cocreation (Penaloza and Mish, 2011: 27). As such, for some actors (e.g. consumers), sustainable value creation is a way to fulfil their identities, which in turn results in a high degree of commitment when cocreating. However, for some other actors (e.g. firms), sustainability is driven by economic values (e.g. production costs) that mediate their degree of engagement. Therefore, it can be argued that cultural meanings nurture actors’ interactions, relationships, and collaboration. Though, the cultural context framing these interactions and collaborations promote divergent understandings and beliefs on the benefits drawn from cocreation, which render the collaboration more nuanced, although still bounded inside the logic of the service provider.

As cultural meanings shape perceptions and expectations on value, the way actors evaluate and determine value may be different. Akaka, Vargo, and Schau (2015:23, table 2) explain that “symbols of luxury (i.e. a cultural meaning), quality and pleasure, frame expectations and guide particular firm-customer interactions. Institutions and practices vary from actor to actor and, thereby, context to context. Thus, each experience is uniquely evaluated, and often re-evaluated over time.” Along similar lines, Akaka, Schau, and Vargo (2013:280) speak about “heterogeneous views on value,” to convey that when viewing value from a cultural lens, its determination is less homogeneous among actors. Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch (2013:9) provide evidence of this heterogeneity of value perception and determination, through an example of the global brand McDonald’s: “Among others, [McDonald’s] often takes on a different meaning as it enters different countries and cultures (...) enact in different cultural contexts reflect the unique experiences and value created through the exchange and integration of particular market offerings.” Although McDonald’s is a symbol that is globally recognized for its unique service offering (i.e. fast food), the evaluation of value may change from context to context. It does so because perceptions on value always relate to the embedded symbolic meanings changing from context to context or from culture to culture. As value perception changes, evaluation of value also changes accordingly. Thus, it can be argued that phenomenological determination of value although heterogeneous is always viewed as framed within the service provider contexts (as for instance McDonald’s.), which mediates customers’ determination of value.

Concluding and summing up, value-in-cultural-context conceptualizes consumer culture (i.e. meanings, signs and symbols, and institutions) as an operant resource framing collective value creation at different levels of the context (i.e. micro, meso, and macro). Though, collaboration among actors may be problematic in the cultural context, since cocreation may be unbalanced between, e.g. providers and customers. Finally, culture frames how value is evaluated and determined among a large group of customers (i.e. sub-cultures). As cultural meanings construct the context wherein value is evaluated and determined and since customers' perceptions and expectations on value depend firmly on these meanings, value determination may change context to context. Thus, value determination may heterogeneous reflect divergent meanings embedded in different contexts.

Summary

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, the service models above reviewed may be interrelated and overlapping one another. Thus, there is no clear-cut characterization of the different models. However, concepts, perspectives, and theoretical references are placed in that box corresponding, most closely, with the model to which they refer (see table, 1). The first column contains the label of the models, while the other columns on the right contain some key features, such as: a) main focus, b) summary definition, c) perspectives on the process of value creation, and d) its outcome. Eventually, in the sixth column key theoretical references are identified.

Value-in-use defines value as created when using resources, and thus it mostly focuses on usage of resources. This model conceptualizes the process of value creation as longitudinal and cumulative along three main value spheres (i.e. provider, joint, and customer). Value-in-use, intended as the outcome of this process, is understood as accumulated over time. Value is holistically determined by the individual beneficiary, but it might be also relative to other individuals that although may not directly benefit from it, nonetheless may influence perception and assessment of value. Therefore, value is determined at both individual and collective levels.

Value-in-context builds upon the notion of usage of resources, but it also posits that value is also tied to context. Context becomes the main frame of reference, through which understanding value and its creation. Context of value creation is defined in terms of broader networks of interconnected actors, and the process of value creation is conceptualized as a simultaneous, continuous exchange of resources. As such, it views value creation as a phenomenon that is not only closely related to customers and providers and usage of resources. Broadly, many actors exchange and integrate resources at three intertwined levels (i.e. micro, meso, and macro). Value (as outcome) is conceptualized as phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary; that is, single actors determine whether or not value is created in a given context.

Value-in-social-context builds upon the former *in-context* and mainly adds a social construction approach. The process of value creation can be summarized as framed by social reality, and it is conceptualized in the literature as dynamic and adaptive process of exchange of resources structured by and within the social system. Value as the outcome of this process is understood as relatively determined, since value can be positively (or negatively) determined by the individual in relation to a given social context. That is, value may be differently perceived and determined from subject to subject depending on the social conditions influencing norms and values from which a collectivity of people is drawn upon to understand what is valuable for them.

Value-in-cultural-context focuses on the lived culture, which is viewed as a system of signs. Slightly different from the previous conceptualizations, this conceptualization approaches value creation from a multi-level perspective, as it is grounded in social and cultural systems. Value creation is thus conceptualized as the enactment of cultural practices among subcultures holding together to cocreate value. The beneficiary, uniquely and phenomenologically, determine value, but emphasis here is in the heterogeneous determination of value, as it reflects the sum of different evaluations performed by groups of customers forming a socio-historical collectivity (i.e. the cultural shared understanding of a product or a service).

	Focus on:	Summary definition:	Value creation (process) conceptualized as:	Value (outcome) conceptualized as:	Key references
Value-in-use	Usage of resources	Value is created or cocreated when using resources.	Longitudinal and cumulative process (i.e. three spheres)	Determined by the individual in relation to other subjects in customer ecosystem or customer sphere.	Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Grönroos, 2006; 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2011; Heinonen et al., 2010
Value-in-context	Network of actors	Value is cocreated in networks and contexts.	Simultaneous, continuous exchange and integration of resources in different contexts (i.e. micro, meso, and macro)	Determined by the beneficiary at any given contexts and time within network-based service systems	Gummesson, 2006; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo, 2008; Chandler and Vargo, 2011
Value-in-social-context	Social structures	Value cocreation is framed by social reality.	Dynamic and adaptive process of exchange and integration of resources framed by a social system.	Inter-subjectively determined by the beneficiary at any given social contexts and time within service/social systems.	Penaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; 2016; Lusch and Vargo, 2014
Value-in-cultural-context	Lived culture	Value cocreation is influenced by lived culture.	Evolutionary and ongoing process of exchange and integration of resources influenced by shared understanding.	Multiple, heterogeneous determination of value at any given cultural context and time within service/cultural systems.	Penaloza and Mish, 2011; Venkatesh et al., 2006; Akaka, Schau and Vargo, 2013; Akaka, Vargo and Lusch, 2013

Table 1: Summary of key characteristics of the main value conceptualizations in service literature.

Part Two—Rituals

This second part of the literature review is devoted to the development of a preliminary ritual framework that it will be used not only as a theoretical basis to discuss the findings, but further it will guide the study in the empirical field to structure the observations (see Methodology chapter, about sampling). This second part is organized as follows. The first section broadly introduces rituals by reviewing key sociological contributions from which CCT studies have drawn upon to capture consumers' rituals. This first part serves to form a first and general understanding of the theoretical domain of rituals. At the end of this part, a table (see Table, 2) is also offered to summarize how the concept of rituals has been used in CCT researches. Afterwards, the preliminary ritual framework is presented. This second section is more narrowed, and it aims at identifying 1) the behavioural characteristics of the ritual and 2) the structural elements of the ritual process. A third section concludes this part, by formulating two research questions that will guide the study.

Section one – Introducing rituals

Rites, rituals, and ceremonies, what is their etymology? According to the Italian linguistic and semiotician Umberto Eco (1984), *rite* may derive from the Latin word *ritus*, which refers to the concept of custom (i.e. a traditional and largely accepted way of behaving). It originated from civil as well religious ceremonies enacted to comply with a set of rules and norms. Martine Segalen (2002:11-2) further explains that the noun *rite* may also relate to the Greek words *artus* and *arthmos* meaning rules, regulations, or harmonization. The Sanskrit root derivation “ar” of these Greek words (ar)tus and (ar)thmos refers to the general cosmological order regulating the relations between divinities and humans. Thus, from an etymological perspective, rites refer to the concept of cosmological order according to which relations are regulated and standardized. Another etymological interpretation of rites refers to *ritual*, which instead refers to the concept of public services as rituals convey the concept of liturgy. According to Matias Augé (1992) liturgy derives from *leitos*, “public,” and *ergon*, “work”. In the ancient Roman Empire, liturgical rituals were public services that rich classes would donate to the poor population, such as, for instance, the Coliseum and

the circus games. Therefore, another important concept in the etymological nature of the word intended rituals to refer to liturgy, which relates to public services and public celebrations. *Ceremony* is an additional term that signifies feasts and celebrations, both religious and profane. Further, according to Segalen (2002), ceremonies also refer to the exasperated appearance of a behaviour, the excess of the ceremony and formality, such as when one becomes “too ceremonious,” to say that when an individual exceeds in politeness. According to this meaning, ceremonies are viewed as a sequence of gestures and formalities that has no value per se because it is repeated over time. This mundane aspect, which is linked to the appearance of a behaviour, may also be referred to as a routinized behaviour. This thesis, although it accomplishes the existence of different etymologies, it does not distinguish between these nouns, and thus adopting rites, rituals and ceremonies are interchangeable.

Rituals as symbols

The concept of symbols in rites can be drawn from the work of Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* ([1912]1995). Durkheim grounds the analysis of rituals as symbols of separation, between the sacred and the profane, which are juxtaposed as they are found in diametrical opposition one another. A sacred thing is such since it is juxtaposed from the prohibitions. On the other hand, profane things are those characterized by prohibitions and need to be separated from the sacred. Around the sacred and profane foundational principle, Durkheim builds upon a threefold classification of rites (namely: negative, positive and *piacular* rituals) around which social life is constructed. Negative rites are those characterized by a sacrifice, such as, e.g. the abstinence from sex, typical of religious rites. Abstinence is a negative connotation underlying physical sacrifice or sorrow, which introduces an individual to religious life. Positive rites instead refer to celebrations or feasts. Positive rites are periodic cults, since the rhythm expressing religious life is at the same time a mirror expressing the rhythm of social life. These (positive) rites are thus generally linked to joy and happiness. A third class of rites is the *piacular*, which refers to the practice of expiatory, such as corporal punishments, which relates to mourning ceremonies through which individuals solve difficult life situations. Typically, although these ceremonies have an unhappy point of departure, often they end up on positive notes:

physical suffering to which an individual is subjected is in fact considered as a means to cure disease. From the above classification grounded on the religion of rites, Durkheim translates its social dimension. Rituals symbolize the sacred things in social life that are distinguished from the profane social life. However, rather than being separated one another, the sacred and profane are intertwined. The sacred cannot exist without the profane and vice versa.

The sociologist Mary Douglas ([1966] 2002) builds upon the concept of the sacred and profane and expands its significance toward the concept of purity and polluted. As such, Douglas's main contribution is the notion of extending rituals outside the religious domain and embracing every human action that is not religious. Douglas views ritualization of everyday life as a process through which individuals assign, evoke, produce symbols, and in which symbols provide meanings to life. Through a quite explicative example Mary Douglas ([1966] 2002:72-3) argues: "without the letters of condolence, telegrams of congratulations and even occasional postcards, the friendship of a separated friend is not a social reality. It has no existence without the rites of friendship (...) it is impossible to have social relations without symbolic acts." Hence, *ritual* refers to symbols or signs through which human actions can be understood beyond their immediate aim. Not every action is a ritual, but every ritual is an action containing a meaning or a symbol. Rituals are where meanings are produced. The ceremony through which symbolic meanings are produced is rather formal according to Douglas. This formality is carried out through a sequence linking the past experience with the present knowledge. Past and present are thus intertwined through ritualization because "rituals [the past] enable knowledge [the present] of what it would not otherwise be known" (Ibid, 104). The sequence of rituals is carried out through a complex set of rules and norms, and it implies much of the cognitive and social mechanisms, as symbols have both the psychological power of remembering the meaning and the social authority of imposing shared values.

Within CCT, Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) is probably the most notable example. The authors mainly build upon Durkheim to explain consumption as an act of separation between the sacred and profane that in certain cases is enacted through ritualization. Particularly, they found that sacred consumption is composed by six

categories, such as places, time, tangible things, intangibles, persons, and experiences. Ritualization is one way (not surely the only one) through which consumers sacralised their consumption objects and more precisely by turning a commodity (i.e. profane object) into a singular or decommunitized object (i.e. sacred thing). In a similar vein, Solomon and Ananad (1985) identify business suits as a sacred object signalling social status, reflecting consumers' identity. Further, although not explicitly referring to the above works of Durkheim and Douglas, influential studies, such as Oswald (2003), Epp, and Price (2008) elaborate on family as a sacred social gathering wherein consumers enact important consumption practices distinguishing home-made food preparation as a sacred thing and pre-cooked market products as profane food.

In conclusion, it can be argued that rituals can be viewed as a symbol of separation between what is believed to be a sacred object from the profane. From a consumption perspective, the concept of sacred versus profane has been applied to explain that consumers, under certain situations, tend to assign good special connotations, or meanings, while instead discharging others. However, if on the one hand rituals can be viewed as a symbol of separation, at the same times it has been interpreted as a process allowing transition. The following section will introduce this interesting perspective.

Rituals as a transition

The main contribution of the Arnold Van Gennep is that one of viewing rituals as a process or a schema according to which one can understand social life. According to Van Gennep ([1912] 1981) what is interesting is not the rites as such, but the archetypal sequences underlying a social meaning: the *transition*. It is through the sequence of gestures, roles, objects, and languages and their interplay that individuals assign meanings in a given (social) context. Van Gennep proposes a three-phase sequence according to which individuals pass from one type of status to another. In a ritual event, the three phases can be distinguished: separation, transition, and incorporation. For instance, in marriages, the phase of separation refers to the stage where an individual abandons the celibate status to be afterward incorporated into a new status (married) to form a new family. In between, the transition phase is important because it demarcates a threshold status in which individuals may remain for a relative period of time. It may

be the case of the engagement, a status in between, in which sometimes individuals are stationed for a while. Van Gennep argues that the achievement of a new status is often performed through the act of *passage*. Despite its metaphorical dimension, these acts mean the acquisition of a new status as argued above, such as the changing domicile and the beginning of a new family life. The Van Gennep's ritual schema holds the important contribution of understanding rituals not only as a symbol or a sign, or to separate sacred things from the profane, but rather as a process based on a cultural script sequence. This process and its meaning cannot be understood in separation from the context in which a ritual is carried out because context and all the elements of the ritual are deeply intertwined.

Van Gennep's ritual model has been largely applied in CCT research. All in all, much of these studies interpret consumption as a rite to transit meanings and/or identities. The work of McCracken (1986; 1988a) furthers upon rituals to explain consumption as symbolic processes to transit meanings from goods to individual consumers. For instance, exchange rituals occur in certain special occasions where one part purchases or donates goods to another part. This consumption activity is viewed as a ritual aimed at transferring certain meanings embedded in an object to the individual that receives it. Possession helps individuals to symbolically transfer the meanings imbued in their own objects into their own lives. As such, the possession through ritualization may help consumers to turn objects from mass manufactured commodities into singular, personalized objects. Similarly, when goods are perishable and thus require cleaning activities, consumers carry out certain grooming rituals to enhance symbolic connotations of the beloved objects. Finally, when individuals give up their goods, divestment rituals occur. The transition is needed to divest personal meanings that were embedded in the goods. This may happen in two separate circumstances. When consumers give away their old objects and when consumers acquire new objects. In the first case, divestment rituals are an effort to remove certain symbolic connotations that stemmed from the previous owner. In the second case, they are instead an attempt to eliminate personal meaning that want to be released before selling or giving away an object. Other notable examples drawing on the rite of passage are on consumption as a symbolic activity allowing the transition of consumer identities. Arnould and Price (1993) examine river rafting and find that it can be interpreted as a moment of

extraordinary consumption underlying two main rites (i.e. rite of passage and rite of integration). As it happens for the rites of passage, river rafting delivers a threefold sequence. In the first (i.e. separation), consumers leave behind their ordinary lives and identities to attend an extraordinary commercial activity. In the second (i.e. transition), carrying out river rafting allowed them to acquire a temporary identity separated from the ordinary. Eventually, *reintegration*, the third stage, refers to the end of the river rafting experience, consumers return home and (re)join their ordinary life and identity, though transformed. Rite of integration is the other means of river rafting. Accordingly, consumers and service personnel are one integrated gathering of people; they also holding together on the basis of shared feelings and emotions. Similarly, Belk and Costa (1989) interpret The Mountain Man as a rite of intensification and as a rite of transformation allowing the *passage* of multiple consumer identities. In the Mountain Man rendezvous, rites of intensification are enacted through exaggerated activities (such as e.g. “conspicuous display of the self through identity-transforming costumes, excesses of alcohol, aversion to formal authority,” Ibid, 234) that are quite dissimilar from ordinary life. Rites of transformations are enacted through transformative play, such as “vernacular speech,” “masquerade,” and various activities typical of the Mountain Man rendezvous. Both rites render this consumption activity an opportunity to step out from the ordinary life, join a temporary identity, and afterwards re-join everyday identities by feeling renewed and changed. Schouten (1991), in reporting about the consumption of cosmetic surgery as a rite of passage, further elaborates on transition. Transition is not only about changing identity; it further implies the changes in consumers’ social roles and consumption. Accordingly, the changed identity enables consumer to transform their behaviours toward goods and services, such as clothing, homes, furnishing, automobiles, and so on.

Rituals as liminal space

By drawing on Van Gennep’s three-stage rite of passage, Victor Turner ([1969] 2008) focuses on the intermediate stage that he defines as the “liminal phase.” The liminal phase is of particular interest, because this is the phase that refers to the marginality or that space in between separation and re-aggregation.

In this space, individuals have no social status, or better, they hold a temporary social position, as they are in an intermediate position. Turner ([1969] 2008:95) explains that “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between.” The liminal individual is not fish or meat, and neither white nor black. These individuals have no social shape because they fluctuate between the social position where they come from and the new position toward which they aim for through ritualization. According to Turner, during the liminal phase, individuals can undergo a painful process, but the pain ends up going toward the acquisition of a new social status. Some forms of liminality (i.e. liminoid) can lead to a sort of anti-social structure, which he defines as “*communitas*.” Communitas are a sub-form of social life that have their own rules and norms and that lay in between the social structure. Turner believes that although these liminal forms of sub-social life are disappearing due to secularization, today they can be tracked down—some *liminoid* forms, which are instead not identical to liminal. These liminoid forms are sub-social structures refusing to be grounded within the social system and thus reject the overarching social order. The “threshold people” or the liminoid Communitas are in opposition to a determined social system and particularly in contrast to certain established cultural values and beliefs, such as e.g. the hippies’ Communitas.

The work of Turner has been adopted in the seminal work of Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) about the ritual of consumption of Thanksgiving Day in North America. According to Wallendorf and Arnould (1991:26), the Thanksgiving enables the forming of a special gathering where “[b]oth gender and age segregation diminish after the incorporating ritual meal, because, when successful, the meal homogenizes such distinctions in a moment of universal connection or *communitas*” (emphasis in the original). Similarly, Belk and Costa (1989) refer to communitas to describe certain rendezvous, such as e.g. Mountain Man. Mountain Man rendezvous can be described as extraordinary consumption experiences where consumers leave behind their ordinary life to meet at an agreed site (e.g. high mountain meadows). This site becomes a “place out of a place,” where consumers detach from their everyday social forms to become flattened groups. According to Belk and Costa (1989:223), “such levelling of participants in an element of communitas (...) it is one element furthering the experience of a time and place separated from everyday reality.” Another example that

can be drawn from CCT studies is Bradford and Sherry (2015). The authors illustrate how *communitas* may emerge in the domestication of public space through the ritual of tailgating (i.e. a ritual consisting of people gathering together to grill, eat, drink, and socialize in advance of an event at the tailgate of their vehicles). The public space is domesticated through different practices (i.e. location, construction, customization, and inhabitation) and allows groups of people to act as a *communitas*, although lasting only for a limited range of time.

Rituals as shared values

Scholars have attributed to rituals another important connotation. Rituals are pivotal for providing social order and increasing social relationships. Cheal (1989:270) claims that “rituals meanings are oriented towards transcendental ends. These ends are ultimate values (...) that are shared by all of the members of a given society (...) and therefore believed to help maintain a cohesive social order by stabilizing commitments to a common set of values.” As such, Cheal points out that the significance of rituals may go beyond their immediate meanings because the very reason why a group of people engage in these ritualized behaviours is instead related to the need to comply with an established social system. Cheal (1989) views rituals from their function (i.e. achieving a “social cohesive order”) that somehow helps to keep society united around a set of shared values that create order in the society.

The underlying argument of social order and shared values is also in Driver (1991). The author advances a theoretical framework that helps to understand the role played by rituals from a functional perspective. According to Driver (1991), there are three functions (or “social gifts”) that characterize any type of ritual. Rituals 1) generate a kind of order in a society; 2) bring people together as they tend to tie people emotionally by experiencing a sense of community; 3) help transform the role of the individuals from one typology into another. Particularly, community and transformation are similar concepts to *communitas* and rite of passage described by Turner ([1969] 2008). Though the perspective according to which Driver treats these concepts is more contextualized in a social system, and these concepts are used to explain the role that every ritual could play in society as a whole.

CCT scholars have extensively adopted the above concept of rituals as socially ordered around shared values of ritual. Treise et al.'s (1999) study on alcohol consumption on college campuses found that binge drinking among students is socially ordered around its spatial (e.g. where to drink, which bars to frequent) and temporal (e.g. when to drink) dimensions. The sharing of ritual values helps students to form communities and roles (e.g. the non-drinker or car pool driver and the drinking people). Further, drinking in a ritualized manner helps students to transform from their actual condition into a sense of escape from the stress of students' life and allows them to achieve the adult age (e.g. drinking means becoming adult). The power of ritual in forging relationships and sense of community is also present in Otnes et al. (2012). Marketplace rituals, such as retail experience, help to reinforce social relationships between service providers and consumers, resulting in ensured customer satisfaction. Brenda Gainer (1995) examines rituals of art attendance and found that these collective consumption activities go far beyond its commercial purpose. In fact, they provide to consumers the added value of being socially interconnected and instilling a deep sense of community. Another important contribution comes from the concept of tribes (Cova, Kozinets, Shankar, A., 2007). Tribes can be assimilated into a community, although with some specific differences. According to Cova and Cova (2001:69), "a tribe is defined as a network of heterogeneous persons – in terms of age, sex, income, etc. – who are interlinked by a shared passion or emotion." As such, their composition is rather uncertain because tribes aggregate around a particular brand or a particular set of product or services from the "link more than the thing" (Ibid, 73), in the sense tribes engage in consumption not so much to use value, but rather for the quality of these offerings that allow a tribe to hold together and hence to satisfy its need of collectivity. Tribes somehow intersect with rituals because "a tribe relies on rituals to pronounce its existence and sustain its membership." (Ibid, 73)

Summary

Although it is always difficult to provide a clear-cut categorization of ritual literature, the below table 2 offers a summary of the key concepts. Particularly, the table recaps the ritual significance reviewed above and the related studies in consumption. Key references are also provided in relation to the box to which they belong more closely. The first ritual significance refers to the importance of rituals in terms of enabling individuals to organize their social life in terms of the sacred and profane. CCT studies adopt this theory to explain why consumers tend to provide more value to some objects compared to other objects. A second significance refers to rituals as transitions. Herein, *transition* refers to the transit of meanings from objects to individuals, and the passage of consumers’ identities when engaging in consumption. In the first case, exchange, possession, grooming, and divestment rituals enable meanings to be moved from consumer goods to individual consumers. In the second case, rites of passage are used to understand how consumption facilitates the construction of consumers’ identities.

Rituals Significance	Applied in CCT Studies	Key references
Rituals as separation	To separate sacred goods from profane.	Belk et al., 1989; Solomon and Anand, 1985;
Rituals as transition	Transition of meanings in consumer goods and passage of identities	McCracken, 1986, 1988b; Belk and Costa, 1989; Arnould and Price, 1993; Schouten, 2001
Rituals as a liminal space	Liminoid space wherein enacting broader cocreation	Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991; Bradford and Sherry, 2015
Rituals as shared values	Satisfying of the need of collectivity.	Gainer, 1995; Treise et al., 1999; Otnes et al (2012) Cova and Cova (2001)

Table 2: Rituals significance and applied CCT studies.

The liminal space is the third significance of rituals. Ritualization implies a liminoid space, wherein consumers aggregate to give birth to a particular form of social bonding: *Communitas*. Within *Communitas* conventional rules and norms, structuring consumption is temporarily resolved in a moment of universal connections among a broader set of cocreating consumers. Eventually, the forth theme addresses rituals as shared values. Consumption is viewed as a way to satisfy the need of collectivity, as products and services embedded a liking value rather than a use value.

Section two – Preliminary ritual framework

The above review of the ritual literature constituted the first theoretical basis upon which to construct a framework to study rituals. This framework relies on a definition, which identifies what a ritual behaviour is and the main structural elements composing a ritual process. Figure 8 is offered as representation of this preliminary ritual framework.

Ritual definition

Scholars (e.g. Tetreault and Kleine, 1990; Rook, 1985; McGrath, 2008) studying rituals point out that ritual behaviours may overlap with social practices although referring to a specific theoretical construct. The overlap between a ritual and practice has been also confirmed in many debates and in discussions and posters presented at scientific conferences and research seminars. Further, the need of clarifying the ritual construct has also emerged during the preliminary field work and data analysis. At the initial stage of the data collection, some observations of consumers engaging in drinking wine appeared mostly as practices. Thus, this paragraph aims at identifying key theoretical characteristics framing a ritual, which will serve also as a starting point for grounding the ritual framework.

The ritual definition adopted was seek to identify the ritual behavioural construct and its structural elements. I mainly draw upon the work of Tetreault and Klein (1990) for the ritual theoretical construct and Rook (1985) for its structural elements.

“A Ritual is a symbolic extraordinary activity detached from the everyday life. It emphasizes the purposive character (i.e. individual dimension), while at the same time reproducing a socially standardized sequence (i.e. collective dimension). The carrying out of a ritual is performed through the orchestration of four structural elements: ritual artefact, scripts, actors’ roles and an audience. All these elements are intertwined in a ritual setting and interacting one another for the creation of value.”

This definition further explains the following paragraphs. Particularly, in the first paragraph, the first part of the definition refers to the behavioural construct. Particularly, three main characteristics are highlighted: 1) the emphasis on both a cognitive understanding of the reality while at the same time reproducing a common way of doing it; 2) displaying of symbolic meanings, feelings, and emotions; and 3) the dynamicity of the ritual behavioural sequence. In the following, the structural elements of a ritual are illustrated and discussed.

Ritual behavioural construct

a) Ritual emphasizes both cognitive understanding and ways of doing things

According to Reckwitz (2002, p. 249), practices are defined as “a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.” The routinized actions displayed by a practice refer to a type of behaviour that is socially situated, as it was learned within social groups and replicating those rules and norms that structure consumption and society at large should be replicated (Holt, 1995). This is not to say that practices do not entail subjectivity or individual interpretations. Practices may vary depending on previous experiences, stock of knowledge, and the degree of involvement in carrying out the practice (Warde, 2005). Individual consumers, having different histories, various knowledge of the circumstances and different mental states, hold their own interpretations according to which a practice is carried out. However, individuals are viewed as carriers of shared culture, which is objectified when they do things (Korkman et al., 2010). Thus, a practice poses its theoretical emphasis in the social dimension of the action and the “teleoaffective structures” that inform a common way of doing things (Holtinen, 2010:110). The enactment of a ritual behaviour goes beyond the action of merely replicating social structures as in the case of a practice (Turner, [1969] 2008). Ritual scripts suggest a thickened theoretical construct, which add “conscious awareness, or cognitive processing, associated with the elicitation of a social behaviour” (Tetreault and Klein, 1990:31). For example, Bradford and Shery, Jr. (2015) explain that

arranging a public place setting for tailgating is more than a just a social routinized action or a practice (such as e.g. a festival) because it implies a set of different types of behaviours that all together are orchestrated to enable an “alternative way of being-in-public.” Accordingly, tailgating is a ritual behaviour (i.e. a vestaval) that “emphasizes communal values of nurturing, sharing, and belonging” as well as the subjective experience of attending the event (Bradford and Sherry Jr., 2015: 147). Along similar lines of argumentation, McGrath (2008:95-6), by studying the ritual of the May Day in western societies, avers that ritual behaviours are constructed by multiple layers involving both the idiosyncratic experience of attending a ritual occasion and a set of social rules displaying the mainstream culture.

Therefore, it can be argued that a ritual behaviour evokes a complex network of cognitive meanings resulting in the idiosyncratic characteristic of an experiential behaviour (Rook, 1985). Further, ritual subsumes a social practice, as these behaviours are structured and orchestrated according to a share understanding of how certain actions should be carried out. The cognitive and idiosyncratic character of attending a ritual and the social practice through which a ritual is carried out are both intertwined in the same behavioural sequence.

b) Ritual display symbolic meanings, feelings, and emotions

Another characteristic that distinguish a ritual behaviour from a practice concerns a symbolic communicative function (Tetrault and Kleine, 1990; Rook, 1985). Bourdieu, ([1979]2001) theorizes that taste is constructed through social practices that communicate a distinctive set of social values. Holt (1995) notes that when attending the game, baseball spectators carry out a number of practices that communicate their type of affiliation, which in turn serve to mark a distinguished set of values related to sport. In rituals, the communicative function is more marked because it is associated to the rites of passage. Belk et al. (1989) explain that rites of passage are exceptional events in our life separated from ordinary life that relate to status transition (Turner, [1969] 2008; Cheal, 1989). For instance, Treise et al. (1999:18) suggest that the consumption of alcohol implies an “inevitable rite of passage,” which sometimes signals the transition from work to leisure. Further, the status transition may include

marriage ceremonies (e.g. Nelson and Deshpande, 2004), getting a job (e.g. Solomon and Anand, 1985), separating the sacred from the profane objects (e.g. Belk et al., 1989), passage of time in life-cycle events (e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991) and family heirlooms (e.g. Curasi, Arnould, Price, 2004). Other times, this symbolic communication of meanings may refer to a more mundane behaviour taking place in our everyday life. The everyday morning grooming rituals, such as hair care activities (Rook, 1985) or street conversations and greetings (Goffman, 1967) are structured around conventions and rules that organize a “flow of messages” (Goffman, 1967:34). This message is symbolic, and it is purposefully aimed at communicating a specific meaning. For example, Goffman (1967:41) postulates that “the ritual of greetings provides a way of showing that relationship is still what it was at the termination of the previous co-participation and typically that this relationship involves sufficient suppression of hostility for the participants temporarily to drop their guards and talk” (ibid, 41). Thus, similarly to practices, ritual behaviours convey the function of communicating meanings.

Thus, if on the one hand practices seem to pertain to a circumscribed act of communication that reveals a set of shared values and rules structuring a group of people, on the other hand, a ritual behaviour appears to be more purposive in evoking the extraordinariness of the (ritual) moment. Admittedly, the difference could be a matter of degree of involvement rather in the type of message being communicated. For example, arranging a table for an everyday dinner may be seen as a practice. One might use a tablecloth, set places by putting plates, glasses and cutlery, as usual. The message underlying the enactment of the practice of arranging the table may be related to a set of values and norms regulating everyday family life. However, when arranging the same table for a Christmas dinner, the degree of involvement may be greater. Rather than using the everyday table cloth, you may choose a special one that is decorated with Christmas motifs. The places are purposefully organized around the table and customized with place cards and names. Glasses are divided into water, wine, and Champagne, as well as cutlery may be difficult to decode due to the presence of different types of forks, knives, and spoons. Differently from the practice, the set of values communicated by the enactment of the ritual relates to a special event that has a greater affective power in terms of displaying feelings and emotions. Therefore, the

same action may be interpreted as a practice or as a ritual. Though, the ritual behaviour subsume a higher degree of involvement reflecting increased feelings and emotions through which the action is performed and symbolic meanings are communicated.

c) Rituals are dynamic

Thirdly, dynamicity is another important characteristic of the ritual behaviour that somehow overlaps with practice. A practice is carried out through a sequence of actions implying recursivity and repetition over time, in which past experience influences actual knowledge (Helkkula, Kelleher, Pihlström, 2012b). It can be said that practices have a stock of knowledge accumulated over time (Warde, 2005), which provides a set of rules and conventions structuring how people repetitively do things in certain contexts. Thus, many scholars emphasize that practices are standardized actions that are context dependent (e.g. Korkman, 2006; Holttinen, 2010; Vargo, 2008; Helkkula, Kelleher, Pihlström, 2012b). However, the recursive character of practices does not mean that they are immutable or represent a fixed sequence of doing things repeatedly over time. Practices are instead more dynamic and change over time. Changing a practice is due to the fact that during time, elements of a practice (i.e. objects, meanings or knowledge) change, which in turn have an impact in the way people do things (Korkman, 2006).

Ritual behaviours are also repetitive actions that occur in “bracketed social time and/or place” (Tetreault and Klein, 1990:34). Similarly, Rook (1985:252) defines rituals as “a fixed episodic sequence that tend to be repeated over time.” However, the ritual recursivity does not only refer to a stock of knowledge that is accumulated over time as in the case of a practice. Ritual repetition allows to construct new knowledge and conventions that are different, if not alternative, from ordinary life (Driver, 1991:179). Arnould and Price (1993) report that the ritual of River Rafting allows people to acquire new skills, and experiencing personal growth and renewal of self. Thus, recursivity in practice means a common way of doing things that is context specific and that is learned over time. Whilst, in ritual refers to the creation of new pattern of behaviours that are provisional in time and space and that are aimed at deviating from the ordinary.

In addition, Goffman (1967) as well as Cheal (1989) emphasize that the recursivity in the ritual behaviours does not mean standardized actions, but rather it refers to a line of

actions that is repetitively implemented depending on the situation. Chierichetti (2012:25) further explains that, “A ritual is not the merely mechanical repetition of an act whose form and content is fixed rigidly in advance ... Ritual acts must fit the situation in which they are performed.” Following the above claims, it can be argued that rituals relate to a “repertoire of actions” (Driver, 1991:134) that is dynamic and may vary from situation to situation. The deviance in rituals refers to the improvisation of a performance and which improvisation is subject to the multiple interpretations performed by the participants of the ritual in enacting their roles. As Rook (1985:253) argues: “A ritual is performed by individuals who occupy various ritual roles. Sometimes an individual's ritual role is explicitly scripted, as in wedding and graduation ceremonies. On other occasions, a ritual role may be vaguely scripted, as in formal personnel evaluations.” Arnould and Price (1993) further explain that rituals scripts may be vague and thus sometimes performed with spontaneity and improvisation. That is because “spontaneity distinguishes extraordinary events from everyday routines and contributes to the perception of the event as extraordinary” (Ibid, 26). Therefore, ritual behaviours are dynamic given the great degree of improvisation that individuals have in interpreting their ritual roles and scripts. The different degree of improvisation depends on the extraordinary character of rituals which although mundane is not carried out as a mere routine.

Ritual structural elements

In order to outline the structural elements of the ritual process, the present thesis mainly builds upon Rook (1985), who suggests that a ritual is organized around four structural elements. Rook (1985) is chosen because his interpretation of rituals allows one to identify a ritual around a set of features that are more or less identifiable and recognizable in an empirical field (this aspect is further discussed in the methodology chapter). The structural elements constituting a ritual are depicted in the below Figure 8. Overall, the figure depicts a ritual as composed by of four elements (i.e. artefacts, scripts, roles, and audience), which interplay to create value.

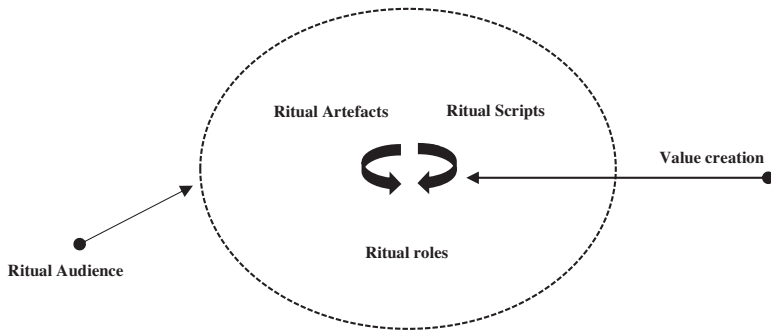


Figure 8: Preliminary ritual framework

a) Ritual artefacts

Rook (1985:253) defines ritual artefacts as “consumer products that accompany or are consumed in a ritual setting,” such as “food and drink, jewellery, diplomas, candles or ceremonial garments.” These tangible things may appear as ordinary and passive consumer’s objects, but instead when introduced in a ritual context they become “sacred objects” (Belk et al., 1989) containing symbolic meanings of the culturally constituted world (McCracken, 1988). The symbolic meanings imbuing ritual artefacts redefine the nature of these objects, as they signal actors’ cosmological beliefs and values (Cheal, 1989:275). For instance, Solomon and Anand (1985) explain that in the everyday ritual of dressing, a female business suit can be more than just a dress: it may signify the achievement of a certain social status. Mehta and Belk (1991) decipher the cultural meanings embedded in certain favourite possession of Indians in India and Indians in North America. Rook (1985:260) describes how grooming artefacts, such as a blow dryer, may be viewed as a symbolic weapon that “empowers [a] young man to mimic peer group appearance norms and assert himself confidently in the social scene.” Sherry et al. (1993) remind us that in the ritual of gift giving, objects reflect the consumer cultural ideology, rather than express fantasy. In the same vein, Treise et al. (1999) interpret alcohol as a ritual artefact displaying the drinking culture of college students.

Hence, a ritual artefact does not only refer to material aspects of tangible things. It also relates to signs and symbols embedded in that artefact that communicate to consumers a certain cultural meaning. As Rook (1985:252) observes: “When used in a ritual context, such artefacts often communicate specific symbolic messages that are integral to the meaning of the total experience.”

b) Ritual scripts

Rook (1985:253) argues: “a ritual script prescribes a consumption paradigm, which may include either extensive or relatively limited product usage.” Certain ritual script may be formally defined (e.g. the script of a marriage), while others may be loosely defined and more casual (e.g. an everyday mealtime with family). The ritual script is thus a sort of set of conventions, rules, and meanings informing the use of the ritual artefacts.

The view of a ritual script as a sort of consumption paradigm is found in Wolburg and Treise (2004:8), who explain how certain drinking behaviours among students are scripted to “dictated how to dress, what classes to attend, which one to cut, what assignment to complete and what to eat beforehand.” Along similar lines of argumentation, Gusfield (2003) clarifies that in the drinking rituals of America, hard liquors (e.g. whiskey and gin) are drunk as a prelude to a meal, while weaker alcoholic drinks (e.g. wine and beer) are used to accompany the meal. Further, Rook (1985:253) defines the ritual scripts as able to “identify not only those artefacts to be used, but their behavioural sequence and by whom they will be used.” For instance, Curasi, Arnould, and Price (2004) found the ritual of family heirlooms in contemporary North America as scripted according to the actions of displaying, using, and storytelling. Moreover, Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) reveal how consumers turn a new house into a home through the ritual script of extensive work of decorating and landscaping.

Therefore, a ritual script guides ritual actors in choosing among different artefactual materials, which are used according to a set of actions carried out according to certain norms, rules, and conventions.

c) *Ritual performance roles*

Rook (1985:253) discusses ritual role as the actor's performance of the ritual script: "Sometimes an individual's ritual role is explicitly scripted (...) on other occasions a ritual role may be vaguely scripted, as in formal personnel evaluations." For instance, in certain contexts of consumption, such as wedding rituals, certain roles are strictly scripted and enacted according to the meaning of the ceremony, while in other contexts, such as the civic ritual of celebrating Christmas Day, the performance roles and their meanings are less defined. More defined ritual roles can be found in Treise et al. (1999:19), who note that, "Ritual performance roles carefully detail what is expected of persons who perform ritualistic behaviours." Accordingly, their investigation on the ritual of college drinking reports the emergence of two main roles: the "designated driver," who is not supposed to drink in order to drive cars, and the "caretakers," who instead take care of the group of students when they decide to walk around bars. More evidence on the ritual performance roles emerge from the investigation of Thanksgiving ritual (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). The authors identified a number of performance roles, including those who are in charge of food preparation, fasting or eating very little prior to the meal, consuming abundant amounts of food at the meal, and enacting togetherness through storytelling and viewing photographs. Similarly, Sato and Parry (2015) make salient two central roles prescribed by the ritual of drinking Japanese tea: the role of serving and the role of being served. In rituals, actor's roles and performances can also materialize as an emergent process that is not strictly scripted in advance, although contemplate the symbolic meaning of the ritual, which is the case of attending sports events, such as Rugby. Rugby fans gather in pubs after the match to socialize and play the role of emulators, that is, emulating the "comrade-like behaviour displayed by the actual players and required by the ethos of rugby" (Gilde et al., 2011:626). Other times, ritual roles are enacted to contest the symbolic meaning of the ritual. In these cases, not attending the ritual is claimed to a role that is enacted to symbolically mark the boundary between themselves and the celebrators (Weinberger, 2015).

Therefore, the ritual performance role refers to the way rituals are enacted by actors. Actors' roles are more or less identified by the ritual script. Sometimes, these roles are strictly scripted and accordingly performed. Other times, these roles are more vaguely

script, and the performance is negotiated among actors, and thus their character is claimed to be more emergent.

d) Ritual audience

Finally, the ritual audience refers to the group of individuals toward which the ritual is enacted and performed. Rook (1985:253) specifies: “a ritual may be aimed at a larger audience beyond those individuals who have a specified ritual-performance role.” According to this definition, the identification of a ritual audience may vary across rituals. For instance, the ritual of the everyday family dinner may be aimed at the components of the immediate nuclear family, while the audience of a graduation ceremony may be intended at a larger base of individuals that goes beyond the immediate family. Driver (1991:154) observes that ritual “not only brings people together in physical assembly, but also tends to unite them emotionally [since] ritual activity is interactive and social by nature.” Gainer (1995) refers to the ritual audience as a social bounding in which individuals through shared consumption enable different ways to construct social ties. Bradford and Sherry (2015:147) make salient that American tailgating is a “vestaval ritual,” in which actors come together to construct “alternative ways of organizing and emplacing public life.”

Turner ([1969] 2008) specifies that these alternative ways of social life are called *Communitas*. These *Communitas* are symbolic social gatherings, that instead of being stable and institutionalized, they are rather unstable and liminoid (i.e. have a threshold). Within this type of symbolic gathering, the individuals develop togetherness by sharing a sense of camaraderie that is embedded in parochial norms and values that deviate from the standard system and that instead reproduce temporal (sub)forms of social life (Douglas, [1966] 2002). Further, when individuals get united in a social assembly or *Communitas*, the sense of togetherness is enhanced. Arnould and Price (1993) explain that river rafting is a ritual experience in which *Communitas* of people gather together to live an extended experience. Wallendorf and Arnould (1991:26) refer to the Thanksgiving Day feast as “a moment of universal connection or *communitas*” and explains that through this peculiar social gathering, gender diversity is homogenized and togetherness is enhanced.

Furthermore, a ritual audience refers to a social gathering in which different actors, come together to enact a ritual event. The boundaries of the ritual audience may be more or less uncertain due to the emergent character of the gathering, which is depicted in the figure with dotted lines. Further, a ritual audience refers to a temporary social gathering, in which individuals develops alternative ways of being together and in doing so enhance their sense of togetherness.

Section three – Research Questions

When comparing the above framework with the value creation conceptualizations discussed in the first part of the literature review, two main research questions can be formulated.

RQ1 # “How do the structural elements of ritual contribute to customer value creation?”

Overall, this question addresses customer rituals from a process perspective, and thus it aims at investigating how the structural elements of ritual may contribute to customers value creation. The framework identifies four structural elements that interplay the structure of a ritual. Particularly, the ritual framework refers to certain ritual artefacts as the customers’ products or offerings that are used in ritual occasions and that convey certain symbolic meanings. In service, ritual artefacts may relate to those resources that are integrated by a customer to obtain value. The second structural element of the framework are the scripts, which are a set of rules structuring those ritual behaviours aimed at using ritual artefacts. In service, these scripts may refer to that behavioural sequence of actions through which resources are integrated or facilitate resource-integrated behaviours. The third element of the ritual process is the roles that ritual actors (both visible and invisible) perform in a ritual occasion. In service, the ritual roles can be viewed as the actor’s role of resource integrators (e.g. a customer, a provider), which interact (directly or indirectly) with one another during the service process. The forth element is the ritual audience or the gathering of ritual actors united to enact a ritual. In service, this ritual audience can be viewed as customers’ ecosystem or sphere wherein they and related members and actors collectively determine value. The main assumption underlying the above research question is that value creation happens in the interplay of these four elements, which in turn frame the way customers generate value.

RQ2 # “How can value be understood from a customer rituals perspective?”

The second research question focuses on value as the outcome of this process. The actual service literature provides different definitions on value. Mainly, value is understood as tied to usage and thus formed through usage or as tied to context, whether social or cultural, and thus emerges from a specific context. These perspectives somehow may include ritual, as from a theoretical perspective, the ritual construct overlaps with social practices, although it pertains to a subset of literature. Nonetheless, the ritual literature review suggests another interesting perspective on value: value as the enactment of a symbolic process aimed at constructing identity. In addition, the value definitions in the service literature are strongly mediated by the service provider’s perspective; thus, although value is claimed to be defined by the customer in her or his sphere, still there is a need to understand how value can be understood from a customer rituals perspective, which is a more customer centric (i.e. beyond the visibility, control and direct interactions with the service provider). Therefore, the main assumption underlying this second research question is that when viewing value from a customer’s radical point of view (i.e. ritual), it may significantly diverge from the conceptualizations reviewed in the service literature; hence, one must research value not only from a process perspective, but also from an outcome viewpoint.

CHAPTER THREE—METHODOLOGY

The present chapter discusses ethnography as the method applied to study customers' rituals. It begins by discussing the rationale of having chosen such a method and explains how and why reflexivity is adopted as a research approach to elicit knowledge. Subsequently, in the research design section, sampling strategies are revealed by discussing *what*, *who*, and *when* to observe. Next, the chapter explicates the data collection. Particularly, I openly discuss access to the field as well as its limitations and problems. Methods for collecting (mainly participant observations and interviews) and for recording data (field notes, transcriptions, and photographs) are also examined. In a separate section, data analysis is discussed with particular emphasis on the process of indexing and coding, together with some techniques implemented to increase data verification. Validity and reliability of the study are thoroughly addressed at the end of the chapter.

Rationale for using ethnography to study rituals

A ritual is defined in the literature as a “formidable, but enticingly variegated multivariate analytical task” (Tetreault and Kleine, 1990:36). As such, the study of rituals can be carried out with the help of various methodological approaches. In consumer research, Rook (1985) views rituals from a socio-psychological perspective and thus combines quantitative techniques of data collection (i.e. large questionnaires) with qualitative in-depth interviews. McCracken (1988a) applies in-depth interviews as a primary method to elicit cultural categories from the consumer's everyday rituals. This thesis conceptualizes rituals as a multi-layered process of value creation that unfolds in the interplay of four structural elements: artefacts, scripts, roles, and audience. This theoretical setting would suggest a more holistic approach, such as ethnography, which allows for a broader understanding. Tetreault and Kleine (1999:36) propound the same argumentation and claim that a “holistic, interpretative hermeneutic paradigm of ethnography” is the best way to understand rituals, since rituals are a multi-

layered theoretical construct. As a rebuttal, Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) note that since rituals are highly contextualized, they require a methodology that facilitates investigations into the broader constellations of elements that articulate the enactment of rituals. There are also many examples in the consumption of rituals literature that have adopted ethnography. Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) composed arguably the most influential study. The authors use ethnography to provide vivid utterance of the American Thanksgiving Day ritual. Arnould and Price (1993) is another key reference adopting ethnography as the primary method of inquiry, which helped the authors to uncover rituals of river rafting. Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) also chose ethnography to explore rituals, as well as more recently Bradford and Sherry (2015) implement ethnography to investigate the phenomenon of American Tailgating rituals.

Another important argument relates to the value of ethnography as a method to elaborate on service and marketing strategies. Regarding service, there is an increasing consensus toward ethnography as a pertinent research method to investigate the logic of value and how it is created. Gummesson (2006) argues for prominence of ethnography to investigate value creation from a service perspective. More recently, Helkkula Kelleher and Pihlström (2012b), Heinonen et al. (2010), and Grönroos and Voima (2013) advocate for ethnographic investigation, as it gives researchers a better chance to enter the customer's realm and capture a vast array of value dimensions and cocreation. Some notable examples are Korkman (2006), von Koskull (2009) Arantola-Hattab (2013). Thus, from a theoretical perspective this study is grounded on the above suggestions and embraces ethnography as a method of investigation to research customers' rituals. From a marketing management perspective, according to Arnould and Wallendorf (1994), there are two key features that characterize ethnography and that render this method particularly fruitful to market-related studies. First, ethnography allows for the systematic collection of data either recorded in a natural setting or in a sociocultural context. Therefore, ethnography may help to capture not only the elements structuring a ritual occasion (i.e. its structural elements), but in addition it helps to contextualize the interplay of these elements in relation to those values and meanings framing their interactions. As such, ethnography may broaden the understanding of rituals because extracting 'thick descriptions' of the phenomenon. In addition, ethnography entails partaking in the phenomenon observed, which in turn

widens understanding. Researchers not only observe reality through a theoretical lens, but they are also part of it since they are invited to partake in the same phenomenon under investigation. Such an invitation can broaden understanding because it implies having a flexible method of inquiry that allows the researcher to follow what is happening in the field. Hence, it is possible to gain more insight because the researcher is not fixed on a pre-constituted hypothesis but is instead open to learn new things beyond what she/he has been planned to study.

Research approach

One of the main assumptions underlying this research is that rituals are a phenomenon that materializes in a natural way and that it cannot be grasped by investigating a pre-constituted hypothesis. Therefore, in this thesis, knowledge is elicited through a naturalistic method of inquiry and more precisely by partaking in customers' ritual behaviours as they happen in a natural setting from June 2014 to March 2016. During this time frame, my understanding of the empirical phenomenon emerged through a circular and iterative dialogue between theories, data and myself, thus emulating the hermeneutic cycle of inquiry (Thompson et al., 1994). The hermeneutic cycle of inquiry is a type of research approach that view consumption activities from a sociocultural perspective. Consumer understanding about consumption situations is influenced by "meanings handed down by cultural traditions" (Thompson et al., 1994:449). Consumers can of course reinterpret these meanings, even contest or negotiate them, but never able to escape these traditions. When it comes to the present thesis research approach, ritual are viewed as that cultural frame of reference that hands down meanings to consumers and somehow informing their understanding on value creation. Recently service research encourage such hermeneutic circle of inquiry to capture the complex and phenomenological nature of value creation. Particularly, Vargo and Lusch (2008; 2011) support service researches to approach value creation as a circular phenomenon, since the phenomenological determination of value includes past, present, and future experiences. More precisely, my investigation starts by 1) immersing in and exposing myself to the realm of wine rituals through active participation; 2) engaging in dialogue and developing relationships with the informants who provide evidence of their ritualized behaviours; 3) letting my investigation be

guided by emergent findings, rather than seeking evidence to prove pre-formulated assumptions. In this way, I permit a rather open-ended and flexible approach to my research, exploring the empirical field by constantly reflecting on the emergent knowledge gained from ethnographic observations.

There is a consistent theoretical underpinning in these research approaches in terms of *reflexivity*, and the consensus among ethnographers is that the ethnographic approach to research entails the use of “reflexivity”, which is a “process of self-reference” (Davies, 2008:4). In other words, ethnographers approach social phenomena to be a part of it, instead of attempting to isolate themselves from the social world (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:14) and in doing so enhance the understanding of “patterns of action that are culturally and/or social rather than cognitive” (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994:485). Further, it has been argued that researchers possessing great familiarity with the empirical may enhance their reflexivity (Johnson and Duberley, 2003) because the researcher acting as an insider ethnographer who may have better access to the phenomenon under study. In addition, by playing a dual role (i.e. researcher and insider) one may be able to enhance the quality of the knowledge production (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). In a similar vein, McCracken (1988b:18-19) argues that “qualitative data are normally relatively messy (...) and the investigator cannot fulfil qualitative research objectives without using a broad range of his or her own experience.”

Before applying for a Ph.D. program, I worked for five years as consultant for an Italian wine company, which allow me not only to gain specific knowledge about wine markets, but also to develop a wide network of business and personal acquaintances in this field from which to potentially collect data. In addition, being a native of Italy has given me great familiarity with wine. In the introduction, I have already touched upon that in Italy, wine is an important part of what it means to be an Italian, especially for the inhabitants of the region where I come from (i.e. Veneto), where wine production is one the main driver of the local economy. Thus, being well-acquainted with the empirical context is an important asset that I have decided to exploit to better experience and evaluate the phenomenon under investigation. In this sense, I fully subscribe to Brannick and Coghlan’s (2007:60) argument in defence of “being native,” which basically means that, “as researchers through a process of reflexive awareness, we are

able to articulate tacit knowledge (...) and that because we are close to something or know it well, that we can research it.”

However, familiarity and closeness to the research topic and field, if, on the one hand, might spur reflexivity and facilitate data collection and interpretation, but might hinder criticism and objectivity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) on the other hand. Therefore, it is of particular importance to demonstrate 1) “theoretical candour”, 2) the way “multiple voices” are listened to (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994:485) and 3) to describe how (i.e. through which reasoning) the researcher has reached a certain understanding (Davies, 2007). The following chapters are thus devoted to describing the strategies that I applied to balance the subjective character of the reflexive knowledge with regard to research design, data collection, and analysis.

Research Design

Locating the field: empirical work in Italy and in Sweden

As explained above, my research approach is characterized by adopting reflexivity as strategic asset to elicit and interpret data. Though, conducting studies in one’s own culture for which one may have much familiarity may cause some problems that need to be taken into account carefully. McCracken (1988b:22) argues: “Those who work in their own culture do not have this critical distance [...] they carry with them a large number of assumptions that can create a treacherous sense of familiarity [therefore] it is necessary to create a critical awareness of matters with which we have a deep and blinding familiarity.” It is, therefore, important to create a sort of cultural detachment to make sure that the researcher does not run into pitfalls and biases. McCracken (1988b) suggests that in order to manufacture “cultural distance,” the researcher should travel to another culture over an extended period of time and then return, to see one’s own culture differently.

In line with the above exhortations, to manufacture cultural distance I strategically planned to collect data not only in Italy (a culture with which I have great familiarity), but also in Sweden (a culture with which I do not have familiarity and one that is distant

from the Italian culture at least when it comes to wine). In doing so, I immersed myself in the Swedish and Italian cultures intermittently by traveling from one culture to the other in short stints. I decided to start collecting data in Sweden first because I consider Swedish culture less close to my background. In fact, starting my data collection in a culture that I know only to a certain extent allowed me to be rather naive toward the Swedish consumption of wine and thus ask explanations to my informants about very ordinary things, such as, for instance, how they buy wine and for what purposes. My lack of background knowledge of Swedish culture made me delve more thoroughly into the phenomenon under investigation and scrutinize things that I would have otherwise taken for granted. Therefore, after initial data collection in Sweden in June 2014, I went to Italy in July 2014 to carry out subsequent data collection. Afterwards, I gathered data three times in January 2015, between June and August 2015, and between February and March 2016.

Not a cross-cultural study

As explained above, the present study is designed to balance research biases deriving from adopting a reflexive approach, and accordingly, data is collected in two different contexts (i.e. Sweden and Italy). This could lead the reader to think that the subtle goal would be that of a typical cross-cultural study aimed at spotting differences or similarities between the Swedish and Italian market contexts. This is not the case in this research.

Differently from traditional cross-cultural studies, the present research sees Sweden and Italy as one whole market-context, in which the heterogeneous production of cultural meanings (both Swedish and Italian) partakes in the construction of a broader context of consumption and thus provides understanding on how culture (i.e. rituals) may frame value creation. This strategy of conducting a (non) cross-cultural study finds strong theoretical and empirical underpinning. In the field of social anthropology, among others, Hankers (1990; 2006) has consistently argued for strategies of locating fields of cultural inquiries, both theoretically and empirically, as a whole instead of the sum of each part. Another influential socio-anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1995:28) claims:

“There are very few countries anymore, and perhaps there never were, that even approximately coincide with culturally solidary entities; Japan, Norway, possibly Uruguay, if you forget the Italians, maybe New Zealand, if you forget the Maoris. State form as Mexican and German, Nigerian and Indian, Singaporean and Saudi Arabian are so enormously various as hardly to be collected under a single term. The foundations of legitimacy of even immediate neighbours, the sorts of stories they tell themselves to account for their existence and justify its continuance. Israel and Jordan, Cambodia and Vietnam, Greece and Turkey, Sudan and Ethiopia are contrastively phrased, scarcely translatable, in no way homologous. The illusion of a world paved from end to end with repeating units that is produced by the pictorial conventions of our political atlases, polygon cutouts in a fitted jigsaw, is just that—an illusion.”

From the service logic theoretical approach, Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch (2013:10) argue for the same need to consider the field of research as a whole, as value is cocreated “across cultures and markets.” They use McDonald’s as one eloquent example of how value cocreation and its evaluation is the outcome of both the globally recognized American idea of fast-food and its socio-cultural re-interpretation in local market-contexts, such as China. In a similar vein, Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2002:17) state that the famous “king of global brands” Coca-Cola is subjected to different “multi-cultural” interpretations when adopted in local market contexts. As such, the evaluation of Coca-Cola value may dramatically diverge across cultures and countries, as it is “imbued with very different meanings and hence reflect very different kinds of preferences.” Nonetheless, the above theoretical considerations, in favour of a view that the field of value creation may be more interesting and attuned to if broadly contextualized, find support also from other empirical studies as, for instance, in food consumption (e.g. Askegaard et al., 2005; Östberg, 2003), drink (e.g. Ger and Belk 1996) and global youth (e.g. Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006). Thus, the focus is not on spotting cultural differences of how Swedish and Italian consumers may carry out rituals but rather on how culture informs rituals by considering a broader empirical field.

Sampling: when, who, and what to observe

The main task when sampling is to “make any criteria employed as explicit and as systematic as possible, so as to try to ensure that data about the case have been adequately sampled” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:35). Particularly, in ethnography, sampling involves the identification of what (the *social context* in which ritual behaviours take place), who (the *people* carrying out ritual behaviours) and when (the *time* during which rituals are enacted) to observe. The following sub-chapters explicate the underlying sampling criteria of the present study.

a. What to observe: the ritual as a social context

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:39) suggest that the context of an ethnographic observation is a location that is understood in terms of social construction. As such, the context in which ethnographers carry out their observations should not be interpreted in terms of physical places but rather as a social context in which people’s behaviours take place. However, if on the one hand the ritual context and its social dimension can be theoretically defined, on the other hand, its empirical identification may be more problematic because rituals may be misunderstood with routinized behaviours. For instance, everyday wine drinking behaviours may be seen as a routine that customers carry out repeatedly without signalling any ritual meanings. Further, in a ritual context different typologies of ritualistic behaviours can be recognized depending on the “primary sources of behaviour and meaning” (Rook, 1985:253-4).

Therefore, there is a need to theoretically define what a ritual context is in order to be able to identify what to observe. In this study, the theoretical framework provided in chapter two guides the definition of what to observe. Figure 9 below depicts the context of observation as the interplay of four structural elements. Ritual artefacts are customers’ products and offerings (e.g. a wine) conveying certain meanings guiding their usage. The study will try to understand how these objects are used and how symbolic meanings frame their usage. Though, with the term *artefacts*, the present study does not only refer to customers’ products and offerings, but broadly physical objects are a part of the investigations, such as, for instance, customer’s clothing, place

of residence, and bar furnishings, as well as those wine related objects used to enact a ritual (e.g. glasses, cork openers). Ritual scripts are the behaviours exhibited by the observed individuals that are viewed as actions aimed at using artefacts. Thus, the ethnographic inquiries will try to understand how products are used, including observations aimed at capturing the image through which these behaviours are carried out as well as the richness of detail and expressiveness of these behaviours. Further, I also observe the behavioural sequence through which artefacts are used and who uses them. Roles are the positions that individuals occupy within a ritual occasion. For example, within a family ritual, some individuals may choose to serve wines, while instead other individuals may prefer to drink wines. An object of investigation is thus the coordinated interactions among individuals that comprise a ritual. Finally, the ritual audience is that larger social group wherein a ritual is enacted in which families and group of friends are the key social groups under investigation. The study will aim at understanding how these groups are formed within a ritual and consider not only those individuals that appear in the observations, but also those that are only evoked or that do not have a specific role in the ritual.

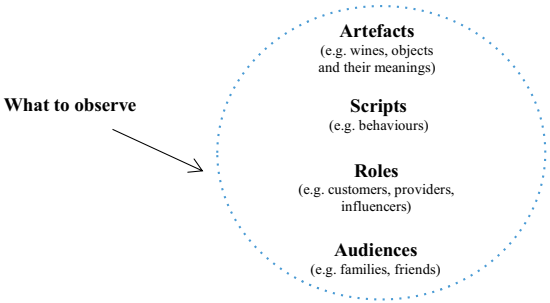


Figure 9: Sampling the social context of the study.

b) Who to observe: Family and Friends

The second aspect of sampling deals with people, and it refers to “an adequate representation of people” involved in the phenomenon under observation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:37). More specifically, in ethnography, an adequate representation

of people can be defined by using “observer-identified categories” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:38), which are theoretically-defined categories. Hence, I determine *who* is observed, by referring to *family* and *friends* as the main social group studied empirically. This choice deserves further explication. As explained in the introduction, the theoretical perspective that this study adopts is one of approaching service from the customer’s point of view. This implies observing customers in their realms and thus collecting data from customers’ life beyond interactions with service providers. One possible choice would have been observing customers engaging in wine rituals at the premises of the service provider, such as bars or restaurants. However, such an approach would not have been fully in line with the purpose of the study due to the influence of the presence of the service provider. On the contrary, the study aims at capturing value creation from the customer’s eyes and how customers in their everyday realm orchestrate and understand value through their rituals. Thus, family and friends are put at the centre of the observation, rather than their interactions with service providers. As it will be illustrated in the second ethnographic episode, sometimes friends tend to gather at bars and restaurants, thus not in their private realm, but rather in the service provider’s realm. Nevertheless, the observations aim at capturing how friends use these service encounters from their point of view and thus how friends use these premises to carry out their ritual process of value creation. This approach of researching customer’s realm, such as families and friends, empirically has strong theoretical support in Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima (2013) and other evidence, e.g. Arantola-Hattab (2013), Mickelsson (2014). These studies prompt interesting findings upon which to elaborate on value creation because by focusing on families as primary empirical unit of analysis, they were able to uncover important elements shaping customers’ value creation that they would not have otherwise been able to reveal if conducted within the service’s provider realm. In addition, conducting research in such social groups is advantageous in terms of data accessibility. However, in ethnographic research, it is often emphasized that data accessibility is the most challenging aspect and yet the most important ingredient to collecting good data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). My family and my personal acquaintances were, therefore, a fruitful point of departure to begin the study and from which I built up the accessibility to the field, by using the technique of gatekeepers. This gave me the opportunity to collect good data. Once I got introduced in a group of friends or a family,

our rapport grew immensely; hence, they were more apt to share information about their actions, thoughts, and feelings. They opened to me the door of their homes and treated me as a friend, allowing me to enter in their realms and inspect their lives.

Though, the voice of some *other* actors has not been completely overlooked. The main theoretical lens used to elaborate on rituals is service logic, which basically conceptualizes value as always “co” created between customers and firms. Nevertheless, the term *firms* does not strictly refer to companies but may be extended to other organizations, intermediaries, institutions, and so on that directly or indirectly partake in the cocreation of value. Therefore, although the purpose of this study is to focus on customers’ rituals, to understand value creation from the customer’s perspective, it is nonetheless important to broadly understand firms and other actors as they also play a role in markets and, consequently, in the cocreation of value. Certainly, these voices are not central in the analysis of value creation as it is stated in the delimitation of the study (see Introduction) and also in the limitations (see Conclusion).

In the next chapter where I discuss the access to the field, I will describe the process through which I recruited informants. However, here it is pertinent to say that I used the technique of the “gatekeepers” that is quite established in ethnography (e.g. De Walt and De Walt, 2011), to access to the empirical field. Accordingly, my main gatekeeper is Gjono, who was recruited mainly to get me access to the wine field in Italy.

c) When to observe: a negotiated temporal sequence

Aspects about time in sampling deals with the issue of when to switch on the recorder to start observing and when to turn it off. The preliminary data collection clearly showed me that the temporality according to which wine rituals are carried out might vary drastically. For example, some wine rituals may begin in private houses, where consumers gather together to warm up by drinking some glasses in advance. Afterward the same consumers move to some bars or clubs in a temporal *ad lib* sequence to drink other beverages such as cocktails, liquor, wine and so on.

Therefore, in order to observe actors' ritual behaviours in a systematic temporal sequence, it would imply not only a huge amount of time in terms of days and nights spent with my observed informants, but also in terms of health-related problems. Thus, in my observations, there is not a clear-cut temporality about when to turn my recorder on and off, but rather observations reflect a temporal casualty depending on the situations and empirical evidence. Nevertheless, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:36) discourage ethnographers from engaging in observations for "long uninterrupted periods of fieldwork," as the key is not in recording whatever happens but in trying to focus on what is really relevant and pertinent to the research question(s). Any attempt to represent the exact temporal sequence of the actor's ritual behaviours in its entirety is hard to sustain and perhaps misleading.

My approach is more selective and it follows a planned observation upon which I organized my participation in the wine rituals purposefully and in accordance with my informants. Hence, I switched on my recorder starting from the moment I met my informants until the end of our appointment. During this period of time that varied substantially depending on the type of ritual and on the availability of my informants, I aimed at providing adequate temporal coverage in observing how the ritual behaviours unfold. That is, I concentrated my attention when the ritual emerged during my participation. As such, I *did not* observe the lines of actions as they happened in temporal sequence, such as, for example, from when consumers get ready for the ritual (e.g. getting dressed at home to prepare for going out in public) until when consumers concluded their ritual (e.g. going back home).

Data Collection

Access to the field

In ethnography, gaining access to the field “involves drawing on the intra- and inter-personal resources and strategies that we all tend to develop in dealing with everyday life” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:41). In accordance with this claim, the access to the field was initialized through the help of gatekeepers, who have been my initial point of contact with the field. Not only did they introduce me into the customers’ realms (i.e. family and friends) by helping me to establish initial relationships with some important informants, they helped me to grasp some key dynamics typical of the wine field as well as important things to be aware of when entering the field (for a detailed description of how I developed my relationships with gatekeepers, as well as for all the informants, see Appendix 1). Overall, I had one main gatekeepers: Gjono. I recruited Gjono in Italy based on my personal relationship with him and based on his great familiarity to the empirical field. Regarding the Swedish fieldwork, Eva Lenneman cannot be properly considered as a gatekeeper due to the fact that there was no formal negotiation between us about her role. I never openly discussed with Eva to be my gatekeeper in Sweden. Nevertheless, I consider Eva more than an informant because her contribution was of great value and shed an important light on the Swedish wine field. In addition, Eva was exceptionally keen in supporting my research, and I consider her as the key informant whom I relied on when some clarifications were required. Particularly, my interactions with Eva were useful in gaining background knowledge of the wine-related behaviours of Swedish consumers (e.g. why Swedish consumers drink wines, what the wine rituals in Sweden are, which wines they consume and why) and capturing the crucial market dynamics and policies structuring the consumption of wine in Sweden (e.g. the role played by the monopoly of alcohol in the Swedish market, importation, and distribution). As such, she opened up the door of the Swedish wine field for me in the sense that she made me aware of where to go to collect key data and which aspects of the Swedish wine rituals one should have some background information in when observing and interviewing consumers.

Moreover, Gjono as my gatekeeper and Eva as key Swedish informant provided me with practical information as well as warnings on how to approach to the field of wine when recruiting possible informants. Both, Gjono and Eva were quite eager to help me break through my data collection by suggesting what to observe and who to talk to. However, after an initial phase of “enculturation” (De Walt and De Walt, 2011) in the field of wine, I managed to become detached from them and be autonomous. This aspect of managing relationships in the field is very much discussed in the literature as a critical aspect for enhancing objectivity (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:63-96). Thus, although my gatekeeper Gjono provided me with important support in the field, this imaginary umbilical cord was progressively cut up. The type of relationship between us after one year of fieldwork was more independent, and I got in contact with them only afterwards to maintain a good personal relationship.

The recruitment of informants

Before starting data collection, I carefully planned the type of informants that I wanted to recruit for this research. More precisely, the deliberate principle that informs the recruitment of my possible informants, before starting data collection was in line with the need to manufacture cultural distance and more precisely to create a wide range of contrasts in the respondents’ characteristics. The ranges of characteristics were as follows: age, status, education, and occupation. However, after having conducted the first stage of empirical work, I discovered that following the above strategy of recruitment was unlikely to succeed or at least that the time frame at my disposal for completing a Ph.D. (i.e. 5 years) would have not been enough to recruit a reasonable number of people to observe. One reason for this is because the ritual of wine implies drinking alcohol, which is such a sensitive topic for consumers that somehow hinders their predisposition to being recruited for scientific reasons. It is not impossible, of course, but the recruitment of informants for such a topic required time to develop a close relationship (e.g. Treise et al., 1999; Mary Douglas, 2003, Wilson, 2005, to quote few). Therefore, having ascertained the difficulties in recruiting a priori the exact typology of informants that I needed for my observations, I had to change my strategy and rely on different techniques of recruitment starting from my personal network of acquaintances and combining with snowballing, and in certain cases, I was guided by

serendipitous occasions. This casual process of recruiting is not rare in empirical fields of research that employ ethnographic investigation in sensitive contexts, such as e.g. drug smugglers (Adler and Adler in Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), Mexican American gangs (Brymer, 1998), and crack dealers (Bourgois, 1995).

A possible alternative could have been having a minor role in the field and thus carrying out empirical ground only to a certain extent, without having to recruit. That would have implied the collection of data from the technique of passive participations (e.g. observing individuals in public spaces) and combining these data with in-depth interviews. However, since my primary goal is to understand a culture in a market-context, I followed Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) when claiming the need to take an active role in the “culturally patterned processes of consumption” as the primary source of data, thus abandoning some pre-constituted theoretical criteria, that although correct, were less feasible to my specific empirical field.

Further, in order to comply with the recommendation of Hammersley and Atkinson in terms of openness and trustfulness, I have also added a shorter description of how informants were recruited i.e. the rationale for choosing the informants and the type of relationship that I had with them (see appendix 1). However, for those informants that have explicitly manifested the intention to be anonymous, I protected their privacy by substituting their true names with pseudonyms. More specifically, I have given to the Italian informants Italian-sounding pseudonyms so they could be easily recognized. Similarly, I have named the Swedish informants with what I perceive to be Swedish-sounding pseudonyms. Other characteristics in terms of age and gender are not mentioned if not expressively authorized. The following table 3 is a data collection summary.

Types of informants	Consumers	19
	Wine producers	7
	Importers/sales/restaurants/sommeliers /journalists	9
	Wine School/Museums	3
	Overall	38
Location of data collection	Italy	26
	Sweden	12
Types of data collection	Participant observations	14
	Interviews	24

Table 3: Summary of data collection.

Overall, the present study draws on material elicited from 38 informants. In order to obtain a wider, balanced view of the wine field, I decided to collect data from different types of informants, whom I classified into four main categories. Mostly, they are consumers (19), from whom I gained one type of story: the drinking. Wine producers (7) permitted me instead to expand my understanding from a company perspective. Particularly, these informants were useful for getting access to how wines are produced and how wines are sold and marketed. A third broader category of informants (9), such as wine importers, sales intermediaries, restaurants, bars, sommeliers provided me with more information and insight into the wine market. From a wine value chain perspective, these informants are located in between the wine producer and the consumers and are thus enormously beneficial in telling me a third story about the wine market. In fact, these informants are normally highly knowledgeable and continually interact with consumers. Therefore, they helped me to understand how and why consumers drink wines the way they do and how and why producers produce and sell wines the way they do. A small category of informants (3) relates to a forth market actor. Schools and museums were important to delve into the history of wine (or alcohol depending on the culture), which somehow gave me a background understanding of the cultural development of the drinking rituals, in both Sweden and in Italy.

The table shows that the majority of data were collected in Italy (26) and partially in Sweden (12). The main reason for this gap is due to the fact that as an Italian, I had better access to the Italian field rather than the Swedish one. If, on the one hand, this difference could be seen as a bias in the data, on the other hand, the study was not designed to spot differences between two markets, but rather to expand understanding of a broader market context, which includes Italy and Sweden. Finally, the table reports the type of data collected. Overall, the data are mainly divided into participant observations (14) and interviews (24). The following chapter will delve into the details of types of participant observation and interviews that were conducted in the field.

Participant Observations

The main task in ethnography is to focus on “sociocultural patterns of action” as they emerge in a natural way (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). As such, it is important in ethnography to be immersed in the empirical field and in so doing participate in real-life events as they occur naturally by observing and recording (De Walt and De Walt, 2011). In this research, I mainly used participant observation to immerse myself in the rituals of wine to provide details about the actors’ ritual behaviours.

Overall, I participated in and observed 14 wine ritual events as they emerged to me in the field (see Appendix 2 for a complete list). More specifically, since the study aims at understanding the natural patterns of culture in framing value creation, I decided not to plan in advance what type of ritual to observe, but to take part in the actors’ wine rituals and observe how their ritualistic behaviours would unfold naturally. In fact, as discussed above in the sampling, a ritual is only theoretically defined as a social context of consumption, but not empirically. As such, I was rather open and curious to understand what Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) defined as the “backstage areas” of the consumption phenomena and where in my empirical setting the cultural meanings underlying these rituals were. I adopted Arnould and Wallendorf’s (1994:486) definition of participant observation as a process of constant learning, in which the researcher gradually learns about the “enactments of culturally patterned consumption norms and values.” In a similar vein, De Walt and De Walt, (2011:80) argue that

participant observations can be viewed as a process of “enculturation,” which refers to a gradual absorption of the researcher into the phenomenon under observation aimed at grasp the “structure of the events” observed. As such, observing and participating refer to “talking the talk” and “walking the walk” (Davies, 2008:80).

In my participant observations, talking and walking as a local person implied mainly two things. First, it means not taking anything for granted (especially in the Italian empirical field, toward which I may have blind familiarity) and thus continuously asking the participants, “Why do you do this? What does that mean?” Second, it means engaging in drinking with the participants. Particularly, this aspect of drinking is a relevant aspect in my participant observation because I would have not been able to get access to the “backstage areas” of the actors’ ritual behaviours if I had not taken full part in the ritual. As discussed in the recruitment of my informants, people tend to hinder their (wine) ritual behaviours if not even refuse to being observed; therefore, there is a need to develop a close relationship with them. One effective way to develop rapport is to perform the ritual script as it is scripted and drink wine.

The studies on drinking cultures that have implemented ethnography as a method of inquiry have largely supported the need to adopt an active role in the participant observation technique for collecting data, i.e. drinking with consumers. For example, in order to describe the “silent language of drinking” among the Spanish consumers in Andalusia, Isabel Gonzales-Turmo (2001) needed to partake in many aspects of their drinking habits and rituals, for instance, drinking in taverns. In the same vein, Thomas Wilson, in revealing how culture unfolds through drinking, claims: “The importance of drink and drinking to ethnographers is clear. We meet informants and share alcohol. We partake of food and drink in rituals and other celebratory events” (Wilson, 2005:7). This intertwined relationship between drinking and culture requires participating fully in the observations and is explained in many ethnographic works of other eminent scholars. Mary Douglas (2003) as well as Heat (2003) put much emphasis on the fact that “drinking is essentially a social act, performed in a recognized social context” (Douglas, 2003:4). Since the ritual in the wine field implies the script of drinking and since drinking is a social act, it is almost impossible to avoid this form of sociality.

Therefore, “talking the talk” and “walking the walk” in my participant observation simply means *drinking the drink*.

Some problems and limitations

One may think that *drinking the drink* may be a funny way to conduct research. Ciano, a member of an Italian group of people that I followed in two separate stints of fieldwork between July 2014 and January 2015, found it “amazing” that I got paid to conduct scientific research on drinking wine. The truth is that *drinking the drink* in order to conduct research may cause some problems and limitations that need to be taken into account seriously. Firstly, partaking in certain rituals, for instance, among friends, implies engaging in extensive alcohol consumption, which is harmful. That is not to say that conducting such field work exposes the researcher to the risk of becoming addicted to alcohol. However, one risk is an increase in triglycerides (i.e. the fatty acids and glucose in the blood), which in turn may expose the researcher to diseases, such as atherosclerosis. In order to control this problem, during fieldwork I periodically underwent blood testing and was monitored by a doctor. Secondly, at the end of the day, conversations, memories, and impressions need to be recorded as soon as possible, and thus a certain degree of sobriety must be maintained. I still remember this problem, particularly in the first round of participant observations, where I found myself trying to record data late at night that I could not clearly remember. Thirdly, depending on the individual, some informants may manifest aversion and suspicion toward the true nature of such scientific investigation. One of my Swedish informants, who agreed to have some drinks with me, confessed to me that the first reaction to my invitation was: “*Why does this guy want to have some drinks with me? Is he trying to understand how much I get drunk?*” Therefore, there is a need to develop some techniques to balance the mandatory nature of partaking in drinking rituals with the above problems to safeguard the scientific rigor of such research and one’s health.

To further explain the critical point of what participant observation means in this research, I find Thomas Wilson’s (2005:6) reflections about his personal experience useful; hence, I have included personal reflections in this study:

“At one point in my doctoral research I thought it prudent to give up the ‘drink’, and when in pub situations to ask for soda water and lime. My field notes improved dramatically, but only in line with some deteriorating social relationships. A few key informants, who had become accustomed to sharing information with me in pubs, simply wondered why I had gone off the drink and were suspicious of my motives. I like to tell myself that in the interest of science, I was forced to go back on beer, after a three-month hiatus, after which the relationships that had been in jeopardy were quickly restored.”

Similarly to Wilson, the main strategy adopted for overcoming problems was to slightly change my role in the participation. Another strategy was to develop some techniques to skip some parts of the ritual script and thus not drink. For instance, after a period of time, I started throwing away wines into the bathroom without my informants noticing it. In so doing, I could appear to be drinking while at the same time staying focused on my research duties. Another technique was being alert of when glasses were refilled. After having developed a good relationship with my informants, they were so keen to share more wine with me. Typically, this happened when my glass was empty. Thus, I decided to keep my glass somewhat full to demonstrate my degree of affiliation with them. I did so by bringing the glass to my mouth but did not swallow. Although these techniques functioned quite well in managing the drinking, managing my alcohol consumption completely was not always possible, as Wilson explains above, due to the need to maintain social relationship with my informants and the overall quality of the data collected. Indeed, these problems have caused, to a vary degree, certain limitations in the quality of the data both because of the technical skills of observing and recording data have increased when comparing the first round of field work to the latest and because in certain situations, I had to downgrade my role in the participant observation and not actively partake in the ritual. Particularly, the latter aspect is of great importance in ethnography, as it impacts on the type of participant observations carried out; therefore, it deserves further elaboration below.

Types of participant observations

As explained above and in the research approach, the reflexive nature of this study suggests a full character of the participant observations. According to Brannick and Coghlan (2007:66), reflexivity implies a “complete membership role” while at the same time being observant. As a result, my main goal was to actively partake in the wine rituals and adopt a membership role as much as possible. However, due to the rather problematic nature related to certain aspects of the observations (i.e. the alcohol drinking), it was not always possible to take a full membership role. The role was instead subjected to continuous negotiations in the field and thus resulted in three types of membership roles field, namely a) complete, b) moderate, and c) non-participation.

Following De Walt and De Walt (2007:25), these three roles can be summarized as follows. *Complete participation* refers to the full membership role of the researcher, who is or at least becomes part of the group being studied. This typology of participation implies that the researcher takes an active part in the phenomenon under investigation by being “on when things go on” (Adler and Adler, 1987 in Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:24). *Moderate participation* occurs when the observers get in contact with the observed only occasionally. The membership role is peripheral and circumscribed in very limited occasions. In *non-participation*, there are no direct interactions between the researcher and the people observed. Data is obtained by gathering information from, e.g. watching individuals do things, or reading newspapers, magazines, and other sources of information related to phenomena or the individuals studied. Thus, the researcher has no membership role.

Particularly, these three types of roles were enabled or hindered depending on my cultural closeness or remoteness to my participants. For instance, in Italy I was able to negotiate and sometimes take a rather active membership-role within a group of people and experience different rituals of wine consumption. In Sweden, the language skill limitations and my relative distance from the local culture hindered my ability to negotiate my role and consequently my membership role, which was sometimes active and moderate other times.

Further, after having partaken in a number participation observations, I decided to take a step back and conduct rather passive participation. The choice of being passive, rather than active, was more tactical, than strategically planned mostly because being always *on* was not possible. In fact, after having realized that *being on* meant drinking, I had to adapt this strategy to *being off* while still *being active* in collecting data. Particularly, I collected data through passive participation mainly in public contexts (e.g. wine bars, wine shops) to observe micro interactions between customers in their rituality (e.g. the ritual of buying wine). Further, I employed passive participations in my private context (my family in Sweden and relatives in Italy) to reflect more in depth about the differences between ordinary wine consumption and a ritualistic one. The technique of displaying differences in what people do under specific circumstances is strongly advocated by researchers who applied market-oriented ethnography and in particular in the field of consumption rituals. For instance, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) used passive participation to understand the differences between everyday household evening meals and the dinner associated with the ritual of Thanksgiving Day.

Interviews

A second source of data that I have collected is interview material. There are two main reasons why I chose this data collection method: on the one hand, the aim is to delve into the ritual behaviours from consumers' emic perspectives; on the other hand, I wanted to gather information about these rituals from the perspective of other actors. As explained above in the research design (i.e. *who to observe*), the criteria followed in choosing the *people* to observe refers primary to family and friends. Though, other actors such as firms, organizations, and institutions, are not completely disregarded. Instead, it is useful to have a broader picture of the ritualistic phenomenon. For instance, in wine rituals, a firm may provide the ritual artefact (e.g. a bottle of wine) and take part in the event, though only indirectly. Nevertheless, the interviews were pertinent to gathering a broader range of information about their perspective of customers' wine rituals and about the wine market in general. The interviews were conducted according to two different techniques. Interviews with consumers were collected through unstructured ethnographic interviews. The interviews with other business actors were

instead carried out adopting a semi-structured protocol. Overall, there were 24 interviews (both unstructured and semi-structured) (see Appendix 3 for further details).

It must be clarified that these oral accounts have some important limitations. In general, Arnould and Wallendorf (1994:493) claim that the main methodological limitation of oral accounts is “their inability to register actual behaviour in context.” Similarly, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:102) make us aware about the bias in collecting oral accounts and the need for contextualization: “All accounts must be interpreted in terms of the context in which they were produced.” Since this research is aimed at understanding the context of value creation through the ritual lens, the need to contextualize oral accounts becomes rather important (Gore et al., 2012). In other words, what is key from my overall data is to provide contextual descriptions of the ritual behaviours, and thus the primary source of data remains the participant observation. Therefore, oral accounts are required in this study to create this dialogue between the *emic* and the *etic* in order to increase understanding of both the subjective experience of a ritual and my interpretation. The following chapter is devoted to discussing the interviews in greater depth.

a) Unstructured ethnographic interviews with the consumers

The unstructured ethnographic interviews were carried out to collect data mainly from consumers to supplement my perspective and interpretations of the observations of ritual behaviours in which I participated. I interviewed Gjono, a gatekeeper, two times: the first time at the beginning of my fieldwork in July 2014 and the second time one year later, after I had gained a better understanding of the rituals. Thus, the content and the structure of my two interviews with Gjono were slightly different. The first time we sat down to talk, I had a vague idea of what to ask and thus conducted a quite unstructured interview. The second time, although still quite unstructured, the interview was focused toward certain aspects of the wine rituality, concepts that I had developed after conducting a number of participant observations. The main interest was to deepen the thematic codes that emerged from my preliminary coding and that needed further explanation.

As for the other respondents, they were recruited only after having developed a relationship with them so there was no strategic plan. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:109) argue that in ethnographic interviews, the researcher needs to construct a relationship with the respondents that, in some cases, is developed through the participant observation. Building relationships was the basis of all of my selected respondents, who agreed to be interviewed only after engaging in participatory observations, which means that they selected themselves for the interview, rather than being selected purposefully.

The interviews were carried out within the respondent's "own territory" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:116) to allow them to relax and let them feel safe. Thus, my respondents chose the location of the interview, e.g. in their house, in their preferred, bar or wherever they wanted to be interviewed. I intentionally planned this strategy of letting my respondents decide the context of the interview because they could also provide insights into their world in being in their own territory. The types of questions asked during the interviews resembled the character of the conversation, in which the main goal was to listen rather than to elicit precise sets of information. Thus, I had no precompiled questionnaire in front of me. Rather, I followed the McCracken's (1988b) long interview and conducted the interviews around thematic questions addressing the different topics of the ritual but without explicitly referring to them.

I combined open questions to let the respondent tell his or her story in a non-obtrusive manner, with fewer open questions to narrow the discussion toward the key aspects of the interview through the "careful exploitation of several features of everyday speech" (McCracken, 1988b:35). The open questions were used to initiate the interview and were carried out as grand tour questions, such as, e.g. "*Why do you drink wine?*" or "*What does wine mean to you?*" After discussing the main topic, I would usually narrow down the questions to some prompts (McCracken, 1988b:36). The prompts were divided into two main categories: "floating prompts" (i.e. using the respondent's own words to gather some pertinent and relevant cultural categories related to the topic of the interview) and "planned prompts" (i.e. when these categories do not emerge spontaneously from the interview, they are "push[ed] off" from the interviewer). For example, in many interviews, my respondents frequently referred to the ritual artefact

as “good” or “bad,” to explain that certain wines were more apt (i.e. good) or less apt (i.e. bad) to carry out the ritual. For me, these were floating prompts, which I used to deepen my understanding by asking: “*What does it mean for you that this wine is good or bad?*” Other times, the respondents were less willing to talk about their wine ritual, so the conversation rambled around personal matters. In order to put the conversation on track, sometimes, I had to be more explicit and ask, e.g. “*Can you explain what is a good wine and what is a bad one?*”

Finally, the time spent in interviewing was very different, depending on many incidental aspects of the conversation, such as the willingness of my respondents to continue the interview or depending on the meeting time we agreed to previously. However, the unstructured fashion of the interview required a one-hour conversation.

b) Semi-structured ethnographic interviews with other informants

The interviews conducted with the other informants were conducted in a more structured fashion, although still no detailed questionnaires were arranged to organize my interviews. The main difference with the unstructured interview is the way in which interviews are carried out. These semi-structured interviews resembled a more formal interview, rather than a conversation. In other words, the main reason why I classify these interviews as semi-structured is because when interviewing businessmen, one may need to be well prepared and use his or her time with parsimony. Normally, these people are quite busy and usually want to know the topic in advance and how much time is needed. Further, the context of the conversation is always a business workplace and thus quite different from the context of a wine ritual. Therefore, these interviews were organized in a semi-structured fashion focusing on certain topics related to wine rituals from a business perspective.

The first semi-structured interviews that I planned to carry out were with wine producers and with some key institutions. When interviewing wine producers, the questions were quite general about the business of wine, aiming to understand the company’s perspective. We touched upon different aspects of the wine business, from production to distribution. The themes about “culture” and “rituality” were never

explicitly addressed because the primary goal was to get an emic understanding of the wine industry and how wine is produced and distributed. I arranged to interview wine producers both at their own premises and during an important wine fair in Italy (i.e. Vinitaly), in April 2015. Regarding the institutions, I interviewed the intendant of the Spritmuseum, Eva Lenneman, on two occasions. In the first interview in December 2014, I prepared a semi-structured questionnaire with the main topics and themes that I wanted to discuss. Particularly, I was interested in understanding the dynamics of a market controlled by the monopoly of alcohol (i.e. Systembolaget) and how wine is imported and distributed in Sweden. Eva turned to be a valuable informant because the Spritmuseum was founded by the Vin&Sprit Centralen, which was a state-controlled company regulating the import and export of the alcoholic beverages in Sweden. The mission of the Spritmuseum is to preserve the cultural heritage of alcohol in Sweden not only from the consumption, but also from production and distribution perspectives. Thus, in the first semi-structured interview conducted with Eva, it was important to understand the Swedish market and to reflect upon who the most important subjects to interview were in this market-context.

I utilized the snowballing technique to recruit wine producers. In Italy, I used one wine producer to get introduced to other wine producers. This technique was rather effective because in doing so I could exploit his reference, which guaranteed me good access to the field. Further, I was also interested in learning more about the perspective of other actors that are in an intermediary position between the firm and the end consumer. Overall, in Italy I interviewed four wine producers, two sales agents (one operating in the internal market and one operating in foreign markets), four restaurateurs and bar tenders, one important editor, who publishes an influential wine guide for consumers, one oenologist, and two sommeliers. As for institutions, I interviewed the individual responsible for the communication for an important Wine School in Conegliano, Italy.

As for the Swedish market, Eva Lenneman helped to identify some key actors from whom to collect information, namely the Systembolaget, wine importers, and some ho.re.ca. intermediate operators (e.g. restaurants, and bars). I had quite a representative picture of the Swedish wine market overall. I could interview only two wine importers. Particularly, one wine importer was Swedish and working for a Chilean company,

which was both a producer and distributor and had a marketing office in Stockholm to operate in the Scandinavian markets. My informant helped me to gather information on the Swedish market as well as more general insights into the global market. The other importer was the product range manager of one of the biggest Swedish wine importers, who operates through other sub-brands. I could not interview Systembolaget and ho.re.ca. (i.e. hotels, restaurants and catering) retailing operators directly. Thus, my data gathering refers only to passive observations that I carried out as private consumer by being there and observing or a third source of information, such as collecting print materials or downloading evidence from their websites.

Recording data

In order to keep track of the empirical work, I implemented different techniques to record my data. Particularly, field notes, audio files, transcriptions, and photographs were primary methods to recording my participant observation and oral accounts, which I discuss below.

a) Field Notes

Field notes are used to record participant observation and oral accounts. De Walt and De Walt (2011:157) use a helpful maxim to express the importance of field notes in ethnography, which I kept in mind since my first day in the field: “If you didn’t write it down in your field notes, then it didn’t happen.” In my study, in order to record participant observations, I applied two main techniques to write field notes. Since my participatory observations implied in most of the cases, alcohol consumption, writing field notes in front of my participants was perceived as too obstructive, which might hinder the enactment of their ritual behaviours. Consequently, I had to record what I observed in a way that was as discrete as possible and relied on two techniques for writing field notes: jot notes and expanded notes (De Walt and De Walt, 2011:160-8).

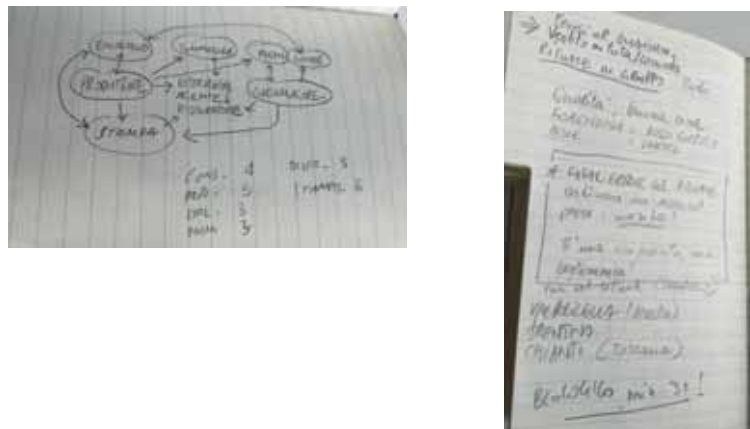
In general, jot notes were sentences, phrases, and words that I recorded during my participant observations as to aid to my memory. It must be noted that given my first experience in the field as an ethnographer, the technique of writing jot notes developed

significantly overtime. The more I practiced jot noting, the better the participant observations were recorded. My past work experience as a journalist when I was a student at the University of Padua (Italy) also helped me pay attention to some key concepts that for me were. I wrote down some key details that could enhance the accuracy and the richness of the observed rituals, paying much attention to the structural elements of the ritual. Accordingly, I recorded details about the ritual artefacts, the enactment of the different scripts of actions, the different roles in the ritual, and the audiences toward which the ritual was performed. Furthermore, I also sketched some figures of the ritual event to better visualize the different interactions among the actors. My jot notes aimed at recording my first interpretations and insights during my participant observations about the ritual and the different aspects of the ritual behaviours. Picture 1 below documents my jot notes for one day of participant observation in Italy where I recorded notes about the structural elements of the ritual, and it sketches some recorded interactions among the observed respondents.

Another important aspect that deserves further elaboration relates to the technique that I implemented in writing my notes. My jot notebook was an agenda that I carried with me in my pocket along with my personal stuff in order to be ready to record whatever information relevant to my research appeared to me. The notebook was pocket-sized, which seemed unobtrusive during my participations and especially suitable for different locations and situation. One specific technique that I developed during my fieldwork and that turned out to be quite effective was the use of bathrooms. Going to the bathroom helped me to have a break during the participant observation in order to be able to write down my notes. Further, it allowed me to control my alcohol intake as mentioned above. Further, I could better cope with the stress of writing jot notes and thus reduce the risk of forgetting or misinterpreting relevant things.

The second technique for taking field notes can be defined as expanded notes. Here, I refer to a second stage of recording my participant observations in which right after having participated in the ritual, I went home (mostly during the night) and devoted normally one hour to expanding my jot notes into complete field notes transcribed on my computer. In practical terms, the jot notes were further organized according to the ritual construct in an expanded fashion and replicated the same logic in organizing the

information according to the ritual structural elements. Further, the jot notes were reviewed in order to start interpreting the information about the ritual in relation to the service literature. For instance, the jot notes about the ritual artefact and the ritual script were expanded and interpreted into the service terminology as operant and operand resources in order to facilitate the next stage of analysis.



Picture 1: Jot notes from my notebook.

b) audio and transcriptions

In order to improve the quality of my data, I audio-recorded the observational and interview data. The technique of audio recording is strongly recommended in ethnography to increase reliability and validity (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; De Walt and De Walt, 2011; Davies, 2008). Though, the process of audio recording could be a constraint in specific circumstances. Particularly, it was not possible to switch on my audio recorder during all my participant observations because in some cases the informants did not want to be recorded. Further, in other occasions, the quality of the audio was really bad due to environmental noises, as these audio-files were recorded in public spaces, such as e.g. bars, restaurants, and taverns. When and where possible, I mainly used my smartphone’s voice recorder, which turned out to be a good choice because it is generally viewed as a less obtrusive technical device, as smartphones are generally part of our daily lives; hence, the respondents were less inhibited to speak in front of a smartphone compared to a professional voice recording

toward with which they do not have familiarity. In addition, since I usually carry my smartphone with me, I could count on a device that was ready to be used in whatever circumstances. The audio files were transcribed as soon as possible. Sometimes, I managed to transcribe my audio records the same day, others only days after. Most of the participant observations took place in the evening, and thus I could work only on my extended notes and not on the transcriptions. The type of transcriptions carried out varied depending on the type of data. Observational data were transcribed only in some parts that I considered pertinent and relevant to the research. As for the interviews, the audio data were fully transcribed, and I found of great support for my analysis to rely on transcriptions about particular aspects of the ritual that I would not have been able to capture only with the support of my field notes.

Finally, another important consideration relates to the language of the transcriptions. I collected data in two different countries and in three different languages depending on the choice of my informants. In Italy, data was recorded in Italian because most of my respondents did not speak English. Further, due to the choice of collecting data in a naturalistic fashion, I preferred to let the informants speak their own language. In some circumstances, my informants spoke standard Italian and in other cases a local dialect. In both cases, the transcriptions were carried out in the same language used by my informants, whether standard Italian or a local dialect. In Sweden, I collected data both in Swedish and in English by letting my informants choose their preferred language. In some cases, they chose English and Swedish with others. The transcriptions followed the same rule applied in Italy; hence I transcribed the data in the same language that was collected. However, because my Swedish is not native, only for the Swedish audio recording did I use a professional translator to transcribe them into Swedish. In turn, the choice of using a professional translator positively impacted the reliability of my data because the lack of proficiency in the Swedish language could have caused a lack in the transcription and analysis.

c) pictures

During my fieldwork, I collected about 546 pictures regarding very different aspects of the wine ritual. Though, it must be clarified in straightforward way that I did not use photographs as mechanical observations (e.g. Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994), but only for three main reasons: to provide illustrations regarding the martial aspects of the ritual, to enhance my memories and to increase the authenticity of the study.



Picture 2: An attempt to document a ritual behaviour.

Regarding the first reason, the photographs were taken to show the material aspects regarding the wine ritual and to help me in remembering important moments or things that otherwise I would have forgotten. There is an increasing tendency in ethnography to use photographs as a primary method to collect data (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; De Walt and De Walt, 2011). For instance, Arnould and Wallendorf (1994:488) suggest that in market-oriented ethnography, recording a photo series may be a technique to be implemented in order to capture “cultural significant moments” in consumption events. However, the degree of objectivity of recording certain types of events through photographs may be over emphasized in some studies (e.g. Davies, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Certainly, in my study, the usage of photographs as a primary method for collecting data seemed to be quite limiting in a ritual setting and less apt at providing proof of this type of reality. Furthermore,

according to Davies (2008:133), “A camera does not record what the ethnographer sees and hears, but a mechanically limited selection of it,” since photographs are “restricted in time and space.”

For instance, in a ritual setting, I found taking photographs to document the enactment of a ritual behaviour to be quite limited. Picture 2 above is an example of a failed attempt to capturing Gjono, my respondent, in drinking the artefact according to a specific ritual script, which implies the rotation of the glass and the use of a three-sensory sequence (i.e. seeing, smelling, and tasting) to evaluate the wine. The above picture clearly does not capture any ritual behaviour or its underlying cultural meanings. Rather, it is only able to capture one anonym frame of Gjono’s ritual behaviours. Therefore, as explained above, the photographs in this study were collected not to record human-object interactions, but only to document material aspects of the rituality and to aid my memory in recovering details of the experienced and observed rituals as seen below in pictures 3 and 4.



Picture 3 (left) and 4 (right) : Photographs representing material aspects of the wine ritual.

As for the second aim (i.e. to aid my memory from the field), the photographs helped me in recovering important aspects of the rituals, such as events, objects, and subjects. This point turned out to be valuable because after taking an active role in the participant observation, there is a tendency to forget what happened in the field. Thus, since one of the main goals in ethnography is to report utterances of the observed facts, by providing detailed descriptions of the experienced culture, photographs had this important characteristic of enhancing memorability. For instance, in the above picture

2, if on the one hand it did not allow one to analyse and interpret any type of behaviours, on the other, it helped me to remember in which participant observation that a particular behaviour took place, who were present in that observations and why Gjono was drinking from that particular glass. All these elements embedded in the photographs provide some utterances that in turn allowed me to construct the detailed descriptions reported in the ethnographic accounts.

Regarding the third aim, the usage of photographs also demonstrated my active presence in the research setting and active participation in the observations. The general purpose was to enhance veracity of the study and more precisely enhance in what Steward (1998:15) refers to as “devotion to the truth.” For instance, picture 5 is a photograph that aims at capturing my active role in the field and particularly in documenting the level of full participation in the ritual in terms of *drinking the drink*.



Picture 5: Drinking the drink. From my participant observation in Italy, July 2014.

Data Analysis

In the present dissertation, the process of analysing data can be viewed as an iterative process of trials and errors in which I constantly combined different sources of data (including my own subjectivity) to find my analytical categories. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:160) describe the above iterative process as “progressive focusing,” a typical characteristic of ethnographic research in which the analysis is never a straight

line. Rather a back and forward process of understanding, doubting, and re-understanding. De Walt and De Walt (2011:179) define this process of analysis as the technique of “reading, thinking, and writing; and rereading, rethinking, and rewriting,” which can be fully applied to my process of analysis as well. The following paragraph is devoted to describe in detail the process of data analysis, which is divided into three main iterative and overlapping sections: data reduction, data display, and verification.

Phase #1: data reduction (indexing and coding)

De Walt and De Walt (2011:181) claim that data reduction is similar, although non-identical, to Grounded Theory, as it refers to “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data”. Nevertheless some substantial differences typical of the ethnographic inquiry do exist. Flick (2009) explains that when implementing grounded theory, researchers should refrain from literature review and instead let the data guide theory explanation. Conversely, the present study adopted ethnography to explore a pre-constituted theoretical framework that has been conceptualized through literature review (see chapter two) and that has been used to guide data collection, analysis, and discussion. However, besides the existence of peculiar differences, the initial phase of the analysis consists of data reduction, in which the purpose was to attach labels and names to data. Data was viewed as a whole corpus organized using the theoretical construct of the ritual, i.e. artefacts, scripts, roles, and audience.

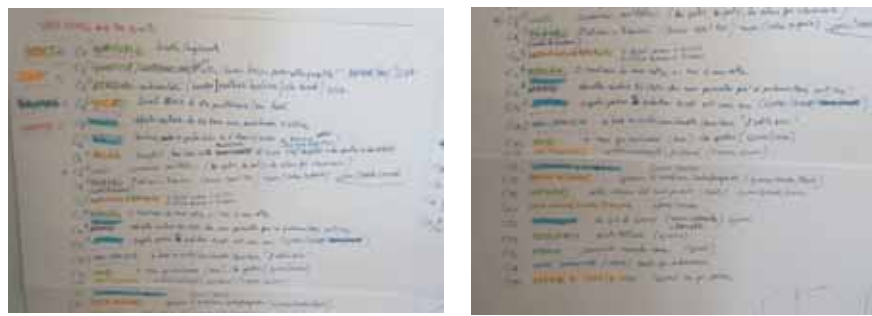
The process of data reduction is divided in two simultaneous phases, indexing and coding. Indexing took place when I was writing my extended field notes (see chapter on recording data). However, it was continuously defined and refined throughout the data collection. Indexing consisted of a process in which I first read the data, both from my extended field notes and from my transcriptions, using the lens of the ritual theoretical frame and afterwards created some categories according to the structural elements of the ritual in relation to the text. Thus, I related pieces of the text (e.g. sentences, expressions, concepts) to each element of the ritual (i.e. ritual artefact, script, role, and audience) in order to organize the texts in a way that they could be read from the ritual theoretical construct. Further, as an integral part of the indexing process, I

selected those photographs that could be representative of thickened descriptions of the different ritual categories. Hence, I started categorizing my data (i.e. both texts and photographs) according to the different elements (i.e. artefact, script, role, and audience) of my actors' ritual behaviours.

The second phase is coding, and it refers to a less a priori categorization of the text and instead looks for patterns. The key goal of my coding analysis was to understand meanings that related to rituals and thus reason on a more abstract level of interpretation of the data. This coding process was a sort of dialogue between the informants' emic perspective and the etic self-interpretation of the ritual phenomena. This dialogue was cantered in looking for patterns that emerged from both sides (emic and etic) and in constantly trying to gather these patterns of ritual behaviours toward some common analytical categories. Each code was combined with other codes that I judged as related one to another.

Another important aspect of indexing and coding relates to the absence of computer software to assist with the task. Although it is highly recommended to use software (e.g. NVivo) to increase data quality (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) and to be able to better manage the great amount of data that qualitative studies tend to produce (McCracken, 1988b), relying on software may create problems and limitations. Particularly, Davies (2008) points out that while computer-based coding offers the possibility to search through data in short periods of time and with great accuracy, they are less able to seek out relevant aspects of the code that may be more complex to capture. Further, data input and interpretations "occurs in the ethnographer's head, not in the computer"; thus, computers are less apt to understand of the data (Davies, 2008:246). I fully embrace Davies's argumentation in the present thesis; therefore, I decided to start my analysis manually to be able to feel my data, so to speak, and to be more flexible and open to interpret them. To strengthen my argument in favour of conducting the indexing/coding activity manually, it must be noted that this research is my first experience in analysing qualitative data, so I thought it would be a good strategy to use this research to learn how to code step-by-step. To use a metaphor, the choice of using a computer to learn how to code would have been like using a computer

to learn how to write. In this sense, it was more beneficial to me to first learn how to code manually. Picture 6 below illustrates the coding process carried out manually.



Picture 6: coding process conducted manually. Picture from my office.

Phase #2: data display'

The second section of the analysis consists of “organizing and presenting data visually in an effective format (...) to support arguments” (De Walt and De Walt, 2011:196). This activity is part of my analysis process because in order to select pieces of data that were representative of my analytical categories (i.e. ritual artefacts, scripts, roles, and audience), I had to review the data again. During this process of displaying data, I was more focused on selecting those *texts* and *photographs* that were best related to my analytical categories. One important methodological note in data display regards the excerpts selected to write the findings. More in details, it refers to the choice of language, which I decided to let emerge. As described above, I transcribed my oral accounts and my field notes according to the language used by my informants, which were afterwards translated into English to render the texts homogeneous. This general rule does not apply for certain language expression, such as slang and dialects, as I decided to report the original text because it is more meaningful in capturing cultural meanings and beliefs.

¹ Those informants appearing in the present thesis have authorized me to be photographed and published. I assured my informants that photographs were used only for this research and published in relation to this research only.

Phase #3: verification

The third section of the analysis process was the most demanding because it basically meant challenging my own understanding of the data. This process of verification was grounded in two main strategies: looking for breakdowns and triangulating data through different sources of information.

The technique of searching for breakdowns or identifying disharmonies in the data is consistently employed in general in ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) and more specifically in market-oriented ethnography (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). The process of verification has to do with the process of ethnographic understanding that follows a peculiar process of continuously going back and forward from data and theories, looking for discrepancies instead of similarities (De Walt and De Walt, 2011, Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Davies, 2008). Regarding the present research, I designed to spur a type of investigation that could enable looking for breakdowns. Particularly, the location of the field in two distant cultural contexts was intentionally created to manufacture cultural distance and to avoid “blind familiarity” (see MacCracken, 1988b), which forced me to not take for granted basic aspects of my empirical field. This way of manufacturing cultural distance in the research setting finds theoretical underpinning in Agar (1986), who defines this way of creating purposive breakdowns as “mandated breakdowns.” Further, due to the nature of the empirical field as such (i.e. wine consumption), I got into a wide range of unexpected breakdowns. As discussed in many parts of the present manuscript, the empirical field of wine implies the consumption of alcohol and the access to what people really say or do is always questionable and controversial. This issue was not clear from the beginning. Rather, it developed over time by constantly reflecting upon my data. As such, data verification in the present study can be viewed as a process of “constant validity check” (De Walt and De Walt, 2011), in which I treated my data with increasing scepticism by using my own self-reflexivity as the main detector for breakdowns.

Triangulation of data is the second strategy applied for data verification. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:183), the process of triangulating is not so much about using different sources of data *per se*, but rather it refers to “an attempt to relate

different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of [the] analysis.” The collection of data from four main categories of informants (see table, 3) functioned as a fruitful triangulation in the sense that instead of producing similarity in the data, it spurred contradictions that were illuminating and important to the general understanding of the value creation phenomena. Further, oral accounts and participant observations provided another triangulation effect. For instance, Alasuutari (1996) provides an interesting account of this contradictory nature of participating and interviewing in alcohol contexts and notes that people tend to drink more alcohol than they report. This study is not an exception. I noted a significant difference in my informants in the way they engage in some ritualistic consumption of wine compared to what they afterwards reported in the follow-up interview. Particularly during interviews, consumers tended to cover or downplay much of the information relating to their ritual script (i.e. the way they drink), compared to the information gained through participant observation, in which they demonstrated willingness to explain and show me more.

Validity/Veracity.

There is wider consensus among researchers about the quality of ethnographic studies. They should be evaluated based on their degree of veracity, rather than validity (Steward, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; De Walt and De Walt, 2011). Veracity in ethnography deals with “devotion to the truth” (Steward, 1998), which can be defined as the “ability of individual researchers to demonstrate the credibility of their findings” (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982:31). In the present study, there are three main issues that may challenge the credibility of the findings: the first relates to the maturity of the research; the second involves the problem of reactivity; and the third deals with the study’s comparability and translatability.

Regarding maturity, I have already addressed in the research design the problem of time, i.e. how long a researcher should stay in the field to be reasonably sure of having observed the phenomena. Le Compte and Goetz (1982:) claim that in order to address this issue, “ethnographers establish long-term residence in their fields—extending from 6 months to 3 years.” My participant observations although conducted in an intermittent

fashion to manufacture cultural distance, covered a reasonably long period in the field from June 2014 to March 2016. Therefore, having carried out my fieldwork for a total of 1 year and 9 month, I can reasonably claim that this study would positively match the Le Compte and Goetz's criteria.

The second threat to internal validity is the problem of the researcher's reactivity. Davies (2008) defines the issue of reactivity as an important aspect in ethnography because what observers see and report may largely depend on the position they occupy within the participant group; precisely, it refers to the adoption of gatekeepers to gain field access. As discussed above, this study relies mainly on one gatekeeper, Gjono, whom I recruited on the basis of my personal acquaintances. Further, although Eva cannot be formally considered as a gatekeeper, much of the pre-understanding of the Swedish data was initiated with her help. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that ethnographers should be open and frank in disclosing the type of relationship with gatekeepers and be careful in relying on the gatekeeper's information. That is because if the relationship between gatekeepers and the researcher is "symbiotic," it may "preclude obtaining data from other than a single source or that distorts data obtained from other informants who are affected by what they perceive as a special relationship" (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982:46). As such, it is suggested that there is the need to establish other relationships in the empirical field (De Walt and De Walt, 2011). In order to address the issue of reactivity, first I devoted a specific appendix (see appendix 1) to reveal my relationship with them, as well as with all the informants. Secondly, I strategically planned to disentangle my data collection from the gatekeepers after one year of field work and thus collected data from other informants who were not influenced by my gatekeepers. However, one should bear in mind that the primary access to field was made possible with the help of Gjono and Eva who have contributed, to a high degree, to the understanding of my empirical field at different levels.

Finally, validity in ethnography may concern issues that "obstruct or reduce a study's comparability and translatability" (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982:51). In my research, comparability and translatability boils down to the issue of how contexts of investigation are selected (i.e. Sweden and Italy) and thus if and to what extent these contexts are comparable one to another. In this study, the choice of Sweden and Italy

as two sites of investigation is supported by the theoretical argumentation that these two countries, rather than being comparable, were selected to broaden the field of investigation (see the above chapter about research design). The arguments herein are also highly supported by important scholars on which this study is based, such as Askegaard and Kjelgaard (2002) as well as Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch (2013). Thus, the choice of conducting a *non*-cross cultural study somehow addresses the issue of comparability because in this study it is assumed that Sweden and Italy are one whole context of investigation and thus are comparable and translatable by definition.

Reliability/Repeatability

In ethnography, reliability refers to the “repeatability of research findings and their accessibility to other researchers” (Davies, 2008:96). In my study, reliability can be assessed through two main criteria. The first addresses the issue of objectivity in the methodological tools implemented to record reality. The second relates to what degree research is disclosed for close inspections from other researchers.

In relation to the first criteria (i.e. objectivity), participant observations were recorded through four main methodological tools: field notes, audio-files, transcriptions, and the use of photographs. These tools recorded data with a different degree of precision, affecting reliability in a distinctive way. Field notes were advocated in the literature (e.g. Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; De Walt and De Walt, 2011) to be powerful instruments in recording reality because field notes are records of live events. At the same time, field notes may lower reliability, as they are very dependent on the researcher’s subjective ability to effectively record real-life data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). My ability in writing field notes has developed over time; thus, it can be argued that the degree of reliability of the recorded participant observation has varied accordingly. Further, as highlighted in different parts of the methodology chapter, the empirical setting of the ritual of wine consumption poses some issues relating the opportunity to writing my observation on the spot in concrete and precise terms. Thus, in order to address these problems of efficacy and efficiency in recording field notes, I strategically planned to rely on jot notes and on the technique of using bathrooms in order to being able to capture basic facts of the participant observations as soon as

possible. Afterwards, to increase the quality of the jot notes, I implemented the technique of extended field notes. Extended field notes refer to a second step, where jot notes were reviewed at home, right after the event of the participant observation, to enhance the details of the records and to further reflect on what I had previously observed. Audio files and transcriptions were also used to record participant observations, when feasible. Particularly, if audio-files and transcriptions possess a high degree in the ability to exactly record what people say or do, at the same time, they are limited in representing reality, as they are normally quite decontextualized from the empirical field (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2008; De Walt and De Walt, 2011). Thus, another technique that I adopted to increase reliability was to complement the audio-files and transcriptions with field notes that were written to provide a better understanding of the context in which they were recorded. Finally, photographs are used in this research mainly to document material aspects of the rituality, to aid in recovering memories from the field, and to increase the authenticity of the study by signalling the presence of the researcher in the field. All of these elements are viewed as features that may increase reliability (Davies, 2008).

In relation to the second criteria, ethnographers (e.g. De Walt and De Walt, 2011; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) are consistent in stating that ethnographic research should be like an open book in which the reader is free to investigate every aspect of the study. Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) argue for the need to show “theoretical candour,” and Stewart (1998) refers to “devotion to the truth.” In the present research, I have strived to explicate in great detail how I conducted my empirical investigation as well as answer why. I tried to be as candid and disclosed as I could by grounding my choices on theoretical bases and when I had no theories guiding me, I forced myself to reveal my implicit assumptions with criticism. The analysis was another part of my research that I carefully addressed and that was reported step-by-step to make it as clear as possible for readers.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

The present chapter deals with the empirical results of the thesis. It is organized as follows. First, I discuss the textual strategy of how the ethnographic account is structured and the text style adopted for the write up. Afterwards, the findings are presented in two ethnographic episodes: 1) family wine rituals and 2) wine rituals among friends. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key empirical insights and a table is offered.

Structure and write-up of the findings

The wine market appears to be a very interesting empirical context through which one can study customer rituals. Though, it was also quite challenging. In fact, the broader context in which the fieldwork was carried out (i.e. Sweden and Italy) and the methodology applied (i.e. ethnography), allowed me to gather a considerable, yet heterogeneous amount of data. This data required much effort to construct a focused ethnographic account that could support the research questions. So, in order to draft this account, two important aspects were considered: the logic underlying the structure of the tale and the choice of the text style.

Textual strategy refers to the need to construct a linear sequence of text that can be functional to the research. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), there are two possible choices: chronological and thematic. In this thesis, a thematic representation of the data is chosen in order to be more focused and narrowed to the ritual theoretical construct. However, portraying this thematic representation of the data through an ethnographic tale has been difficult and challenging, as it required a constant process of writing and re-writing. My initial decision was to be as descriptive as possible, through the reporting of the different wine rituals as they emerged in the empirical field. This strategy was beneficial because it showed a more naturalistic account of the ritualistic behaviours, but it turned out to be problematic; the resulting

text was less pertinent to the aim of the thesis, which was not to describe ritual behaviours as such, but rather to illustrate how rituals can be conceptualized and subsequently linked to value creation. Consequently, my choice veered toward a more theoretical fashion. I decided to be more adjacent to my theoretical framework and thus organize the tale according to the constitutive elements of the ritual (i.e. artefacts, scripts, roles, and audience). This thematic construction of the tale is aimed at providing what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:195) define as the “ideal type” in terms of providing an idealized version of the ritual. This means that in reality, the ritualistic behaviours that I observed did not unfold through the interplay of its constitutive four elements as such. These elements through which the tale was written are my own theoretical interpretation that allow me to reflect in a more abstract fashion of how ritual may link to value creation. These reflections are reported in the discussion chapter, although the findings that follows below are the first part of this interpretative work, which relates to the ethnographic representation of the wine rituals.

Subsequently, the structure of the ethnographic tale is an issue that relates to the contextualization of the ritual behaviours. This mean answering the following question: to which extend does the context of the empirical data relate to the observed ritual behaviours? This problem of connecting behaviours and context is a central issue in ethnography as well as in the field of drinking. For instance, Heath (2003:46) explains that “drinking is embedded in a context of values, attitudes and other norms” that need to be acknowledged and adequately considered. In other words, Heath draws attention to the need to link drinking behaviours (in this case, ritualization) to the context in which these behaviours are embedded, as the context provides meaning for their understanding. Following this argument, I contextualize the wine drinking rituals into two main contexts, family and friends, for two main reasons. First, this linkage emerged naturally from the data itself. Most of my participant observations were conducted in these two contexts of consumption due to the fact that my respondents allowed me to observe their drinking behaviours mainly at home or among friends. Thus, the contextualization somehow reflects the opportunistic aspect of the design strategy and the data collection. Second, from a more theoretical perspective, ritualization is considered to be as a social act that, not always, but mainly takes place within families or among a small group of friends. For instance, Rook (1985), Wallendorf and Arnould

(1991), Moiso, Arnould, and Price (2004), Curasi, Arnould, and Price (2004), and Epp and Price (2008) can be viewed as notable examples of ritualization carried out within the family context. Similarly, Gainer (1995), Treise, Wolburg, and Otnes (1999), Arnould and Price (1993), Goulding et al. (2008), Bradford and Sherry (2015) are prominent examples of observed rituals within a small group of relatives and friends. Thus, having at my disposal a large body of knowledge from which I could draw to interpret my data helped me to learn and reflect more in depth on the cultural significance of ritualization in these two social contexts of consumption. Therefore, the findings are presented in two main ethnographic tales that take place in two separate social contexts of consumption (i.e. family and friends). Within each tale, the narration is introduced by setting the stage of the context to which the ritual refers. Afterwards, the tale is structured according to a thematic representation that follows the ritual theoretical framework and more precisely divides the tale into four subsections that report utterances of the structural elements of this rituality (i.e. the ritual artefacts, scripts, roles, and audience).

In terms of text style, Davies (2008:256-263) argues that ethnography is “intrinsically” linked to its text; thus, there is a need to be aware of the usage of rhetoric in the writing. Particularly, ethnographers need to be aware of different conventions and tale forms among which to choose because as Van Maanen (1998) clarifies, different tale styles may lead to different representations of reality. For instance, Miller, Creswell, and Olander (1998) make salient how a different narration of the same ethnographic account can lead to different interpretations and issues. Further, the choice of the writing style is also important to establish validity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) and authority (Davies, 2008). Following from the above argumentation, my textual strategy aims at reflecting on the adopted research approach, according to which knowledge is elicited through respondents and through self-reflexivity. Both are data sources. From a text style perspective, the strategy is translated by adopting a textual approach that gives due recognition to the voices of my informants and to my own voice. Davies (2007:264-5) calls it “polyvocality,” and it refers the use of different “registers” to better represent knowledge. Following Davies, the main point of such a textual approach is to create a sort of vivid dialogue between me (i.e. the ethnographer) and my informants, in order to provide a wider utterance of my data. As a result, I let my informants express

themselves through their own words, but at the same time, I expressed myself by letting the reader knowing how I experienced the field. Van Maanen (1998:47) summarizes this textual strategy as a type of text written as follows: "*I saw the X do this.*" This means using a style in which the different ethnographic accounts are not reported from an impersonal point of view, but rather the researcher's fieldwork experience is part of this written dialogue.

First ethnographic episode: Family wine rituals

Traditionally, in Italy, drinking wine in family occasions is connected to an ancestral idea of the bygone agriculture era. Mario Soldati (2006), in his seminal work “*vino al vino*” explains that according to Italian popular culture, wine was usually considered to be an agriculture product, just like vegetables and potatoes. Of course, renowned wines, like the *Barolo* or the *Brunello di Montalcino*, have always been considered not as agriculture products, but rather as luxury beverages to be consumed on special occasions or destined for a selected range of people, such as connoisseurs. On an everyday basis, however, wine was considered part of the daily diet, as it still is in certain families. In Italy, families used to cultivate wine grapes in the courtyards, as wine was a homemade product stored in large demijohns, and it was poured in ceramic jugs or decommmodified bottles that were reused over time. Elisa Chiese, an Italian sommelier whom I interviewed in 2013 during an international wine fair in Verona, explained that technically the homemade wines had nothing to do with the wines that we drink today. At that time, wines were “*very poor*” with a low percentage of alcohol; their taste resembled the flavour of sour fruit, rather than the complex bouquet of today’s wines. However, the ritual of drinking wine in an Italian family context does not seem to have changed very much, rather the opposite. Drinking wine, whether luxurious or very poor quality, always implies a rich set of gestures, actions, and artefacts that still have profound cultural and symbolic meanings.

Nevertheless, and to my great surprise, I also found this richness of actions and meanings in Sweden, which has only recently engaged the world of wine. Eva Lenneman, who is the intendant of the Spritmuseum (i.e. the Museum of Spirits) in Stockholm, tells me that since wine was officially introduced by the Swedish government as an alternative to traditional beverages and spirits (in 1950), drinking wine has become an important part in everyday Swedish life. The popularity of wine culture in Sweden is also confirmed by the Systembolaget (the Alcohol Monopoly of Sweden), which verified in 2014 that the consumption of wine had reached 197.8 million litres, which corresponds to 42 percent of the Systembolaget’s total sales by volume. This data seems to be significant for a country in which beer is still considered

to be the traditional everyday alcoholic beverage². Further, according to my observations, in Sweden, the consumption of wine at home during dinners is quite common. When drinking wine, Swedish consumers tend to reproduce the same rich sequence of gestures, actions, and rules that correspond to an Italian ritual as well. Like Italians, Swedes show interest and expertise when opening a bottle of wine. They tend to reproduce certain rules and beliefs, for instance, when pairing wine with food (e.g. red with meat and white with fish) or when choosing particular types of glasses to taste wine (e.g. sparkling wines are served in a flute, while full-bodied red wines are preferred in large balloon glasses).

Thus, drinking wine at home today is still a pervasive ritual, whether it comes from the reminiscence of a past agricultural lifestyle (such as in Italy) or as the outcome of an effective government strategy (such as in Sweden). This ritual may be enacted through a rich set of elements that at first glance may look similar to everyday routinized actions; however, they instead represent a dramatic moment in life that often takes action within a family context, whether Italian or Swedish. The following sections report utterances of the richness of this mundane yet ritualistic event of drinking wine at home, starting from the symbolic meanings of the ritual artefacts.

Ritual artefacts

Wines as relaxation

Daniele is an entrepreneur who runs a small family company installing security and electrical systems. He told me that his work is stressful and hard, and sometimes it is difficult to find time to relax and enjoy his family, even during weekends. He explained to me that every day, he wakes up at half past seven in the morning. After a quick breakfast (just a black coffee drunk quickly with a cookie), he takes his son to school before going to work. For the entire day, until eight o'clock in the evening, he is busy

² In 2015, beer totalled 234 million litres, corresponding to the 49% of the overall consumption of alcohol by volume, which means that beer is the most widely sold beverage in the country. Wines are about 42%. However, when comparing the consumption of wine and beers by value, the numbers are inverted. Wine is 53% of the Systembolaget's total sales, whereas beer is about 20%. This inversion is due to the fact that wine per litre is more expensive than beer; thus, it can be argued that Swedes tend to spend more on wine than on beer, although beer remains the beverage that is most consumed by volume.

with work, dealing with different kinds of issues and problems, such as fixing technical gear, calling customers, negotiating with suppliers, arguing with banks, and so on. His father Piergiorgio, who is a retired electrician, helps Daniele to manage the company by getting new customers or handling some bureaucratic duties. His wife, Daria, is mainly a housewife, but she is also involved in the family business as an administrator, issuing invoices and making payments. Daniele and Daria are both quite active during the day; from early in the morning to late in the afternoon, they are busy with their own everyday work life. But when the evening comes and Daniele is back home, he likes to drink a glass of wine. He drinks in the kitchen while enjoying his family. Daniele, Daria, and their little son, Leonardo, usually all meet together in the kitchen to prepare dinner and talk about everyday matters. Drinking wine while meeting in the kitchen initially appears to me as a sequence of routinized behaviours. We agreed to meet up right outside his house at seven o'clock, so that I could observe the celebration of drinking wine from the beginning of the evening. After having kissed his son and greeted his wife cheerily, he took off his shoes, changed his clothes and just poured a glass of homemade wine that he stored in a handcrafted bag-in-box (see picture 7, below).

When I asked Daniele to explain to me why drinking wine at home was so important to him, his answer was revealing. He explained that drinking wine while gathering with his family in the kitchen was a way of “*leaving behind the stress of my work.*” Further, he added that this was the only moment during the day in which he could “*play with [his] son*” and could “*have [his] private life back.*”



Picture 7: Daniele's handcrafted Bag-in-Box.

At first, these behaviours that I was observing did not seem to resemble what Driver (1991) describes as “magic actions” that transform common things into “sacred objects” (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry, 1989). Upon deeper inspection, though, they actually did. It is true that changing one's clothes and gathering in the kitchen is something rather common that can be observed in many families. However, the glass of wine is the key object here that seems to help Daniele step away from the hard workday and step into his private life. Of course, the glass of wine per se does not mean anything. Yet when the glass of wine is used according to a sequence of actions, such as changing clothes, meeting in the kitchen, playing with his son, and talking about family matters, that glass becomes “magic” and things change. What is a mundane activity now seems to be an exceptional moment in Daniele's life.

This explanation was actually not different from the one I got from Lasse. Lasse is a Swedish worker employed as a service engineer for a global company producing

household appliances. I met Lasse because our sons attend the same class at school. When Lasse learned that I was Italian and that I was studying wine consumption, he wanted to know more. He told me, *“You know, I love Italy! Especially for its wines.”* Lasse agreed to be part of my research by letting me observe his ritual at home. We planned to meet together on a Friday evening because he explained that, *“I normally don’t drink during the work days. You know, in Sweden we drink almost only during the weekend.”* The observations about Lasse that I recorded in my notebook were more or less the same I did for Daniele. When getting home after work, Lasse takes off his shoes, kisses his son, talks with his wife, and gets a glass of wine. However, when I asked him why it is so important to drink wine on Fridays, he explained to me that, *“In Sweden, we have this Fredagsmys stuff, and I can have my glass of wine and feel relaxed.”*

At that time, I knew only a little about *Fredagsmys*, so after the participant observation with Lasse, I did some fieldwork to learn more about it. Literally translated, *Fredagsmys* means “cosy Friday,” which is a sort of ritual in which Swedes enjoy the beginning of the weekend by eating a particular type of food and engaging in some activities, such as watching television. More precisely, Helene Brembeck (2012:128) defines cosy Friday as “a ritual, a necessary practice to mark the difference between the hectic rhythm of working life and the slow speed of family time.” Typically, the common ingredients constructing the meaning of cosy Friday are “foods that are easy to prepare (such as shrimp, tacos, or takeout food), chips, candies, and soda. It is also common to eat in the living room while sitting on the sofa and watching TV.” (Dagens Nyheter, 2011) Besides the tacos or takeout food, Lasse’s *Fredagsmys* includes what he defined *“a well-deserved glass of wine.”* Similar to Daniele, Lasse seems to attach a particular emphasized meaning and importance to that glass of wine, as it helps to mentally and physically move from one type of status (i.e. being at work) to another type (being at home).

Many researchers have claimed the importance of consumption objects in ritualization; in the case of Daniele and Lasse, this object is wine. Solomon and Anand (1985) conceptualize business suits as ritual artefacts that are integral of a “rite of passage,” as these clothes allow consumers to transition from one status to another. Treise et al.

(1999:18) suggest that alcoholic beverages are used to accomplish an “inevitable rite of passage,” which sometimes signals the transition from work time to leisure time (Gusfield, 1987[2003]). Rook (1985) claims that ritual artefacts often “communicate specific symbolic messages that are integral to the meaning of the total experience.” Thus, in this understanding, Daniele’s as well as Lasse’s glass of wine can be viewed as a ritual artefact signalling relaxation. The wine is drunk to become relaxed, and in so doing, it facilitates a transition from work status to family status.

(Not) just any kind of wine is relaxing

Nonetheless, not any type of wine seems to be suitable to perform the ritual of drinking within a family context after a hard day of work. What follows is an excerpt of our recorded ethnographic conversation, in which Daniele describes what kind of wine he drinks.

Me: So, what do you drink?

Daniele: Logically, I am not talking about a more structured wine. This is a wine that comes from here, Veneto. [It’s] easy-going (...) [compared] to drinking a wine that has three or four years. I mean a structured wine. There must be a suitable situation (...) because every situation has its own wine (...). In this situation (...) when I come back home after having worked all day, I just need to relax (...) and if the wine is strong and full-bodied, then it’s gonna be demanding, and it won’t work.

Daniele seems to be rather concerned about the kind of ritual artefact (i.e. wine) that he wants to drink because, as he says, “*Every situation has its own wine.*” It seems that there is a need to have the appropriate wine for this rituality, as if various wines were not equal to one another, but rather differently perceived. The perception of various wines as unique rather than common objects is understood by Daniele in terms of their “*structure.*” As he further explains in our conversation: “*To drink a structured wine, there must be a suitable situation.*” According to Ribéreau-Gayon et al. (2006), the term structure in relation to wine refers to the mouthfeel of a wine, given its acidity, tannins, alcohol, sugar, and the way these components are balanced. Wines with low,

unbalanced levels of acidity or tannin can be described as lacking in structure. Conversely, when the acidity or tannin levels are sufficiently high, a firm structure is the result. Of course, Daniele recognizes wine structure according to his own understanding rather than the technical point of view that is probably more common among sommeliers or winemakers. But it seems rather important for him to use this term in order to distinguish between various wines and refer to a certain moment of consumption. For example, Daniele explains that a structured wine may refer to “*a full-bodied wine*” that is “*demanding*” and thus requires something else, such as a special dish to accompany it (perhaps a T-bone steak or a salmon fillet served with a French sauce). Rather, in this family ritual, “*an easy-going*” wine seems to “*work*” for Daniele. This is a wine that is much easier to drink, and it does not require any special food or particular attention, because, as Daniele said, “*In this situation (...) I just need to relax.*” Wines should not be at the centre because at the centre, there is a moment of relaxation with the family: talking with his wife and playing with his son. Thus, the only wine that seems to work for Daniele is a familiar wine, a wine that “*comes from here, Veneto,*” and this kind of wine allows him to enjoy his family and this moment of relaxation.

In a similar vein, Lasse appeared very careful in the way he selected the right wine for his ritual at home. He told me, “*It is not an expensive wine because you know these wines need to be drunk with great food, may be an oxfilé (...). For me of course, it is a bag-in-box that I buy here in Jakobsberg at the Systemet (...). It is red, and it is good!*” As such, Lasse distinguishes between wines in the same way Daniele did. For him not every kind of wine is the same, or more precisely, different wines require different ways to drink them. “*Expensive wines*” require “*great food,*” such as “*an oxfilé*” (i.e. a fillet of beef). In this way, wine and types of rituals are distinguished. For Lasse, carrying out cosy Friday is a moment of relaxation, and thus a bag-in-box is more appropriate. Surprisingly enough, at least for me, Daniele as well as Lasse attribute those characteristics and meanings that helped them to relax, forget about work, and transition into a domestic mood only to a certain type of wine.

Overall, the above excerpts report utterances of the idiosyncratic relationship between the sacred object (i.e. wine) and the ritual. Specifically, when wine is drunk in a ritualistic way, it becomes a sacred object, and this ritualization allows Daniele as well

Lasse to turn everyday wines into ritual (sacred) artefacts. This observation is in line with Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989), who claim that ritualization is a process through which consumers transform ordinary objects into sacred things. These sacred objects provide “ecstatic” (Ibid, 7) consumption experiences because they are not randomly used; they are rather selected and consumed with great attention and a high degree of involvement. Mary Douglas (2002:78-9) also reinforces this by suggesting that ritualization not only provides meaning to objects, but it creates meanings and objects.

Further, these ritual artefacts or sacred objects are tangible cues, which my informants rely on to carry out ritualization. The wine is a totemic element and may materialize as a “*wine that comes from here*” or a “*bag-in-box*” wine, which suggests the operationalization of certain gestures and performances. It seems that my informants can achieve relaxation only when engaging with their wines. McCracken (1988:74), in researching the role of goods in rituals, found that physical objects substantiate our actions. Curasi, Arnould, and Price (2004) show the role played by ritual artefacts (i.e. family heirlooms) in providing a sense of family, which is not only a state of mind, but also something tangible, such as a cherished possession, be it a jewel or a blurry picture. Of course, the symbolic message in these wines is fundamental to the ritual. If a certain type of wine is used to become relaxed, it is because a certain meaning is attached to the wine. However, as Rook (1985:253) notes, “They [the ritual artefacts] also serve more generally as ritual symbols in the form of mythological characters, icons, logos, or significant colours.” Thus, meaning and its physical representation are both important in ritualization.

Ritual Scripts

Decommodifying scripts

If a wine can be viewed as a ritual artefact signalling certain symbolic messages, the way wines are drunk in a ritual setting refers to a ritual script. Scripts provide norms and rules through which the ritual behavioural sequence is carried out. In some occasions, the ritual script begins with a sort of preparatory ceremony that is aimed at

getting ready to drink the wine by taking care of it and giving it a neat and tidy appearance. The locally produced wine that Daniele drinks is arranged in a way that every sign or symbol relating to the commercialization of these goods is removed. In fact, this wine is not a commercialized bottle of wine, but rather it is an anonymous tap wine that he buys in a local shop, and he stores it by reusing a shabby cardboard carton as a homemade bag-in-box. When the anonymous bag-in-box is empty, Daniele goes to a local shop to refill the plastic bag from a demijohn (see Picture 8, below), and he uses this bag to refill the cardboard carton.



Picture 8: The local wine shop where Daniele buys tap wines from demijohns to refill his customized bag-in-box.

One fascinating aspect of this customized bag-in-box is the poor appearance of its material; it is almost spoiled, it has been used and re-used several times, and it is intentionally de-commercialized. There are no labels, no signs of commercialization, or marketization. Only the name of the wine grape that is used to make the wine stored inside is indicated on this customized bag-in-box. For instance, this can be *Merlot* or *Refosco*, as picture 7 above shows (see previous paragraph). The presence of the wine producer and the marketing signs and symbols that are normally imprinted on this packaging are completely absent or removed so that they can be substituted afterwards.

McCracken (1986) suggests that consumers engage in certain symbolic activities (i.e. “grooming rituals”) to release the commercial meanings instilled in goods and to substitute them with individual meanings. Therefore, the significance of these symbolic actions are aimed at recovering a sense of authenticity from the beloved goods. Similarly, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991:29) explain that consumers are involved in removing the packaging materials from the branded products bought in the supermarket to “actively re-appropriate a sense of satisfaction from manufacturers through decommodifying actions.”

Following the above studies, we can understand that Daniele grooms his customized bag-in-box before its usage through a symbolic activity of eliminating signs and symbols of the commercial world in order to re-appropriate a sense of authenticity and satisfaction based on his local territory.

Other techniques are sometimes used to present wine in such a decommodified manner. One of these techniques is to pour the wine into a carafe before drinking it. By doing so, the brand name and other marketing signifiers are not visible during its consumption. My observation of the above technique of implementing a carafe to pour the wine comes from other fieldwork in Italy. What follows is an excerpt of a conversation between myself, Antonio, and Marco, discussing the script of pouring wine into a half-litre carafe before drinking it at home.

Me: Do you drink during the week at home?

Antonio: Not really! I'd rather dine with a quantity of this glass [i.e. mimicking a small amount of wine]. I found two or three good wines that come in bag-in-boxes.

Me: How do you drink?

Antonio: Bag-in-boxes are very practical, but it is more convenient to take the half-litre carafe, refill it from the bag-in-box and put it in the fridge (...) if it's white ... if it's red, you don't ... and it is good! (...)

Marco: The problem is that for an Italian, it is difficult to see this bag-in-box! C'mon!

Antonio: That is because the bag-in-box has this cardboard that resembles Tavernello (i.e. a cheap Italian wine). But listen, you have to do it like

this: you have to use a half-litre carafe, you put it in the fridge, and afterward you serve it on the table and everybody will say, “Jesus, that is good!” Look, even Piero, who likes Garganega [i.e. another local wine], uses a bag-in-box (....) yummy, yummy!

In the above excerpt, Antonio describes a sort of procedural sequence through which a half-litre carafe is used to facilitate the drinking (i.e. *take the half-litre carafe, refill it with the bag-in-box, and put it in the fridge if it's white; if it's red, you don't*). The reason for adopting such a script seems to be related to the fact that for Italians, wine that comes from a cardboard suggests poor quality. Marco clearly confirms this assumption by stating, *“The problem is that for an Italian, it is difficult to see this bag-in-box! C'mon!”* In other words, it seems that for Marco, the presence of a bag-in-box transmits a negative connotation. Antonio seems to hold the same position, since he also argues, *“That is because the bag-in-box has this cardboard that resembles the Tavernello.”* In Italian culture, Tavernello wine is cheap. Antonio thus suggests to implement a half-litre carafe in a ritual to neutralize those negative cultural meanings related to wine stored in a cardboard carton. The half-litre carafe seems to facilitate the drinking, as it is viewed as an added materiality that is able to redeem the wine. Thus, in order for wine to work in the ritual context, it needs to be cleansed of certain negative market and cultural connotations. In other words, it seems as if the wine does not function in the ritual until it is arranged according to a proper form, such as in this case a half-litre carafe.

I found some other interpretations of the script of pouring wine into a half-litre carafe during my participant observations in Blekinge, Sweden. Particularly, I participated in a lunch whereby Kerstin was celebrating her 70th birthday at home with her relatives. In my field notes, I wrote the following observation:

Field notes, 2.6.2014 Kerstin bought 2 bag-in-boxes to accompany the food during the lunch. Both are red wines. When I asked her why she bought some bag-in-boxes instead of bottles, which in my view would have more appropriate for such an event, she explained that she did so because “our guests are hard drinkers.” However, she

told me that she would not bring the bag-in-boxes to the table because she wanted to use a half-litre carafe to pour the wine. That was the first time that I saw Kerstin using a half-litre carafe to pour the wine. So I asked Kerstin, “How come you have this carafe? I did not know you had one!” She told me that actually she normally does not use it, but for such an event, it would be nicer to drink from a half-litre carafe instead of a bag-in-box. Here is how she does it: she pours the wine into the carafe in the kitchen (see picture 9), and afterwards she brings the carafe into the room where the lunch is served (see picture 10)

The half-litre carafe in the ritual of drinking wine at a special event it is used according to a similar script that Antonio follows. Kerstin, as well as Antonio, are somehow bothered with the cultural meanings embedded in the bag-in-box. They both argue that a cardboard carton would not be suitable for the ritual and therefore use a half-litre carafe. Thus, similarly to Antonio, Kerstin adopts this script to arrange the wine and prepare it for the scrutiny of their guests. In so doing, the wine is “nicer,” as she said, and perhaps more in harmony with the special event.



Picture 9: Kerstin pouring wine from a bag-in-box into a half-litre carafe in a separate room (the kitchen).



Picture 10: The half-litre carafe on the table where lunch is served (the living room).

Choosing the right glass

Once the appropriate wine has been groomed and arranged, it is time to drink. Rook (1985:253) claims that “much like a cognitive script, the ritual script prescribes a consumption paradigm,” thus providing a rationale for the “product usage.” In this understanding, the script of drinking wine at home is carried out to use the product in a certain way that suitable for this type of ritual. In the below excerpt, Daniele and I are talking about how he drinks his wine.

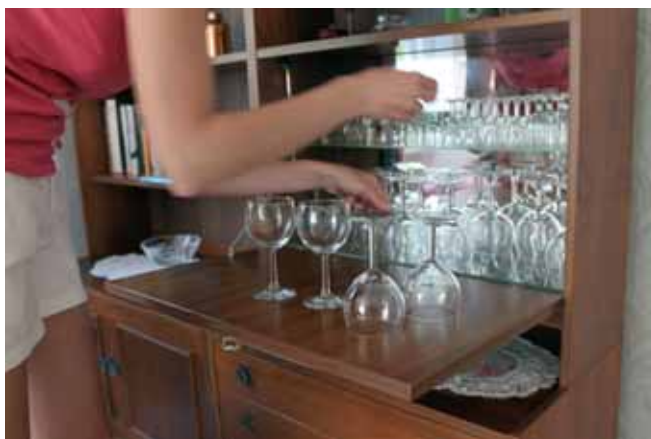
Me: *So how do you drink the wine?*

Daniele: *No special way, I just drink it from a glass that I choose randomly! (...). The wine glass has two levels for me. The first level is when I get home, and maybe before dining, there is my son who wants to play and Daria wants to talk (...), so we talk a little bit about our lives, we exchange some opinions, and so on (...). The second level comes later at a time when I am alone, before going to bed and I stretch out my nerves and I totally decompress myself.*

According to his description, the ritual script, although carried out with a casual mood, unfolds in a sequence of actions and rules that are aimed not as much at drinking the

wine per se, but rather at Daniele's performance of relaxation by enjoying his family while drinking wine from a glass that he chooses randomly. When I asked, "*How do you drink the wine?*" he answered: "*No special way, I just drink it!*" He specifies that the wine glass "*has two levels.*" At the first level, he plays with his son (i.e. "*my son who wants to play*") or he talks to his wife (i.e. "*Daria wants to talk*"). The focus is never on the wine; it is rather on his family. Thus, it seems that the ritual script follows a pattern of actions according to which drinking a glass of wine is not carried out to enjoy the wine per se, but to perform relaxation, which means being in the family by playing with his son or talking to his wife. Similarly, at the second level of the script, drinking wine from a random glass does not imply the enjoyment of the wine, but wine here is rather a sort of medium to achieve relaxation at a more individual level. Daniele mentioned, "*The second level comes later at a time when I am alone, before going to bed, and I stretch out my nerves and I totally decompress myself.*" There is no focus on the family now, but there is still need to find a moment of quiet in this familiar environment, to pull apart the stress of a hard work day.

Other times, drinking various kinds of wine may require the usage of a distinctive glass. In my observations, I have noted that depending on the wine that is drunk, the type of glass may change accordingly. For instance, in the celebratory event with Kerstin, we switched from a red wine to a sparkling wine to toast in honour of her seventieth birthday. Changing the type of wine requires another kind of script because sparkling wines are commonly viewed as primarily for toasting. This script requires the usage of another type of glass that was not the same as we used when eating. In fact, the arrangement of the table was made by her daughter with a particular emphasis on the types of glasses utilized for the beverages: one for water, one for the red wine and one for the sparkling wine (see picture 11).



Picture 11: Kerstin's daughter occupied with choosing wine glasses for the arrangement of the table

This distinction between types of glasses and types of wines follows the same cultural pattern as most formal dinners, such as the Noble Prize dinner, in which the table is normally arranged with a vast range of glasses according to formal rules of etiquette and protocols typical of these kinds of events. However, even though this was a rather domestic occasion, Kerstin decided to replicate this usage. When I asked her why so many glasses were on the table, she explained, “*You wouldn’t drink Champagne out of the same glass in which you just drank red wine.*”

I discussed this aspect of changing glasses depending on the type of wine with Elisa Chiese, the Italian sommelier. In the below excerpt, Elisa explained the technical rules regarding which glasses are used.

Elisa: Red wines need the “big balloon” type of glass due to the structure of the wine. Sparkling wines, instead, require a glass with a more streamline shape, such as a “flute.” That is because it allows you to better see the luxuriance of the Champagne bubbles.

Me: So, glasses are not all the same?

Elisa: Not really (...) because if you have the wrong glass or the glass is too thick, it may change the taste of the wine (...). You may lose certain

scents because the glass may hinder the wine from best expressing itself or conversely because the wine may express itself too much at the same time.

Elisa's answer made me doubt that we were using different types of glasses at Kerstin's lunch to capture the different nuances of wines or to appreciate the "*luxuriance of the Champagne bubbles*;" besides, the wine we were drinking was not a Champagne but rather a less-celebrated sparkling wine. However, it was clear to me that this script of changing glasses was quite important because no one during the lunch dared to question it. It was as if drinking a pretend Champagne, which to me appeared to be rather symbolic, demanded the use of a functional script (i.e. the usage of a flute glass in order to let the wine express itself in the best possible manner). We were somehow replicating the connoisseur's taste ritual that Elisa talks about in the above excerpt, without exactly knowing why we were doing it.

Torres Quintao and Zamith Brito (2015) can clarify the motivations to switch wine glasses like those at Kerstin's party. They explain that the connoisseur taste ritual, albeit based on gestures and accessories that are functional in order to increase the taste of beverages, is also enacted to distinguish everyday drinking from a moment of exceptional consumption. Thus, when replicating the connoisseur taste ritual, consumers are transforming a moment of ordinary consumption into an extraordinary consumption experience. This extraordinary consumption may be referred to what Belk et al. (1989:38) define as an "ecstatic experience [which is] extraordinary, totally unique, and set apart from and opposed to the ordinary profane world." In fact, the script of drinking a sparkling wine out of another type of glass seemed to be an "ecstatic experience," set apart from the ordinary wines we were drinking right before. We did not "*just*" drink a sparkling wine. Now, we were standing with the "flute" type of glass, listening to the toast to Kerstin and waiting for the right moment to drink. It was a short moment of contemplation and silence before drinking that conveyed a sense of respect for the importance attributed to the person toward which the glasses were raised and to the wine that was about to be swallowed.

All in all, these scripts that I observed (some of them were actually familiar to me;

others were by contrast novel to me) displayed the richness of rules, norms, and customs that my informants followed as a taken-for-granted truth. Heat (1987:46) notes that “drinking is essentially a social act and as such, it is embedded in a context of values, attitudes and other norms.” Douglas (1987:11) adds that ritualization implies the observance of certain norms to construct “an ideal world” of how things should be done. As a rebuttal to this point, Driver (1991) explains that rituals provide “order” in society, and they thus help people create “the real world,” which is separate from mundane activities.

Following the above studies, the ritual script can be viewed as a sort of “cognitive paradigm,” as Rook (1985) defines it, and it pertains to a sequence of actions, norms, and rules that my respondents constantly replicated when enacting a ritual. The norms and rules structuring the carrying of the ritual scripts were grounded in certain cultural beliefs that provided meanings to the way wine was used (or drunk), and this helped my informants to construct a special moment of consumption, which was well-distinguished from the ordinary. In other words, the ritual scripts served to instill symbolic meaning in an everyday activity (i.e. drinking); hence, the enactment of a ritual script served to transform a mundane activity into a ritual one.

Ritual roles

Wine is for men

The above ritual scripts are performed by actors interpreting different ritual roles. According to Rook (1985), these roles are more or less defined depending on the meanings framing their enactment. For instance, in the participant observation of the wine rituals recorded in Italy, Daniele and his wife Daria performed two main roles underlying certain meanings. Daria is in the kitchen, and she is taking care of dinner while at the same time looking after her son. Once Daniele and I stepped into the house, she received us with the typical Italian greeting, “*Ciao! How did it go, today? Are you guys staying for dinner?*” Daniele, after changing out of his work clothes and into more comfortable sportswear, came into the kitchen to serve three glasses of wine: one for me, one for Daria, and one for himself.

At a first glance, both roles seem to be rather functional to each other. Daria takes the role of preparing the dinner, while Daniele chooses to serve the wine. However, when digging into the meanings related to their roles, the functional dimension of these roles acquires an interesting symbolic dimension. I asked Daniele why he and not Daria had to pour the wine. Daria jumped into the conversation, explaining to me that when it comes to wines, “*Daniele is the master.*” She would rather take care of other tasks, such as cooking and arranging the table for dinner. At that point, Daniele smiled at me and nodding with his head as to confirm what Daria was explaining. He said, “*She is right! You know Luigi, wine is for men!*” Daniele might have said this last sentence because we both come from Veneto, where people are used to the saying: “*Wine is for men.*” Or perhaps he was actually following this expression and wanted to mark his masculine identity by serving wine. However, this interaction happened after concluding my preliminary fieldwork in Sweden, where I often observed women serving wines, including my Swedish girlfriend. Thus, I decided to question his assumption and open a discussion. I asked him, “*No, I don’t know. Why is it so?*” Daniele answered my question by pointing out that “*wine is for men,*” because various kinds of wine are always addressed with the masculine article “il”, even when they should be instead addressed with the feminine article “la.” He used the example of the Barbera wine, which has a masculine article despite its typically feminine name. Thus, “La Barbera” is turned into “Il Barbera” (i.e. masculine). I can partially confirm that in Italy, men tend to exclusively interpret the role of serving wine as a gesture of *bon ton* and kindness toward women. However, what Daniele pointed out appears to be rather doubtful. I did some research and according to the preeminent Italian Encyclopaedia *Treccani*, wines are generally addressed with the masculine article “Il” due to a grammatical convention. According to this convention, the article does not refer to the name of the wines but rather to the part of speech to which “wine” belongs: it is a noun, and in Italian, the noun “wine” is masculine. Thus, the Barbera wine is masculine because the article refers to the noun *wine* and not to the name *Barbera* (i.e. Il (vino) Barbera). The same grammatical convention is applied not only to wines, but more in general to the name of rivers, lake, flowers, and so on. The story that Daniele told me, therefore, pertains to a myth grounded in certain cultural beliefs that he took for granted.

A similar finding, albeit in reference to the role of buying alcohol, comes from the intendant of the Sprit Museum in Stockholm. Eva Lenneman told me that in Sweden before the alcohol reform, Swedish consumers had to buy alcohol by using a ration book (i.e. in Swedish “*motboken*”). This book was assigned only to men and not to women, so the role of buying alcohol was somehow institutionalized to men by law. Kerstin substantiated what Eva Lenneman told me. During the preparation of food and beverage for her birthday lunch, we touched upon the different roles in her family during the past when she was a little girl. She remembered that her father Edvin had the role of buying alcohol at the Monopoly, while her mother Anna was responsible for the management of the alcohol at home. As such, her mother had the role of making sure that the amount of alcohol her father Edvin bought was enough for the whole week. Some researchers who adopt a ritual perspective corroborate the existence of diverging roles between men and women in drinking rituals. Cantarero Abad (2001) reports the different social roles played by men and women in an ethnographic study of drinking cultures conducted in Spain. Furthermore, the anthropologist Bott (1987) argues that the Kava ceremony of drinking is aimed at making salient the different roles in society between women and men.

Hidden actors

The enactment of a distinctive role between Daniele and Daria in this family ritual seems to be somehow patterned by another hidden actor. While drinking together, I asked Daniele to talk a little bit more about the wine. In the below excerpt, he explains how he learned about the wine we were drinking.

Daniele: It's my father's. He is the expert (...) he knows about wines, and this wine comes from that shop that he told me to go to. I think it's perfect!

In the above excerpt, Daniele's father is “*the expert*,” who “*knows about wines*” and suggests where to go in order to buy “*perfect*” wines. Other scholars have studied the implications of family meanings in contemporary consumption rituals (e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991; Oswald, 2003; Curasi, Arnould and Price, 2004). For instance, Oswald (2003) points out that homemade food recipes embody kinds of domestic

cultural values that are handed down across generations. In this understanding, transmitting homemade recipes is a way of recreating social norms, structures, and relationships that in turn may reflect a more macro social order (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). In a similar vein, Wilson (2005) claims that “we are what we [drink]” and explains that young drinkers learn how to drink from adults. Through this they also learn certain moral values that in turn construct the idea of becoming a drinker. Rook (1985:255) also notes that the role of senior members in family rituals “serves to instruct younger family members in appropriate behaviours and may do so almost invisibly.”

Drawing from the above studies, we can see that the almost invisible role played by Daniele’s father could go far beyond his suggestion of which wine to drink. In addition, Daniele’s father role is symbolic, as he provides a sort of moral order to which Daniele and Daria refer when enacting their own roles. Moiso, Arnould, and Price (2003) argue that the mother’s role is one of providing a type of food that is the “best in the world” because a mother’s food is “a material objectification of a domestic moral order that provides consumers a sense of coherence in family life” (Moisio, Arnould and Price, 2003:379). Similar to a mother’s food, the wine of Daniele’s father in this case possibly embeds a domestic order, providing coherence for the way Daniele and Daria’s roles are divided beyond their functional dimension.

Negotiating roles

Some other ritual roles, although structured within certain cultural norms and beliefs, are instead performed by encountering misunderstandings and trouble, which are due to the presence of divergent cultural meanings. Thus, their enactment is likely to be more emergent, as it requires negotiation among the actors. This problematic yet emergent structure of the ritual roles is seen in some utterances recorded during my participant observation of Kerstin’s lunch in Blekinge.

That day I was awakened by the noises coming from the kitchen. It was Kerstin, who had been busy since 7 o’clock in the morning with preparing food and decorating the home for lunch with the relatives. Since I was there to actively participate in this family

ritual, I thought it would have been a good idea to help Kerstin with the preparations, so I jumped into the kitchen and I asked Kerstin if I could somehow help. She smiled at me but declined my offer. She explained that her sister, Karin, was already helping her with preparing the food and that the kitchen was too small to accommodate three people working together. However, after few minutes, she came back to assign me an important task: taking care of the beverages. She said in Swedish: “*Luigi, du som kan så mycket om vin, kan du välja vin och fixa fördrinkar?*” (i.e. Luigi, as you know about wines, can you please choose the wine and fix the aperitif?)

After having been officially recruited by Kerstin to be responsible for the beverages, we engaged in a long discussion. In this discussion, Kerstin explained to me with great care how the drinks should be placed. According to Kerstin, drinks had to be placed not on the table on which the lunch was served, but on a separate table dedicated especially to the drinks. On this table, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages should be offered. Further, Kerstin told me to make this table “*nicer*” by adding some flowers and other adornments. Although my role was rather strictly scripted according to rules and expectations that Kerstin carefully provided to me, I decided to execute it with a touch of Italian style.

If there is something that I am proud of, it is my Italian aperitif. We call it “*spritz*,” and it is a traditional aperitif that Italians drink before lunch. According to the official recipe, spritz is made one-third Prosecco (a wine originally from my region), one-third Campari, and one-third soda mixed together. However, small variations may exist. For instance, my father used to serve the glass with an olive that is eaten while drinking the spritz. I thus suggested to offer this typical Italian aperitif to the guests as a sort of welcoming and to make it according to the recipe that my father taught me. So, I asked Kerstin if she had the ingredients. However, a seemingly banal aperitif turned into something very problematic. Kerstin and I started negotiating the making of the aperitif. Kerstin showed me a bottle of Hungarian sweet sparkling wine, but unfortunately, there was no Campari or no soda in her home. Kerstin also had doubts about the olive, and instead she suggested that we serve another type of finger food made with salmon and sour cream. I felt very frustrated because I could not serve my Italian aperitif.



Pictures 12 (left): The little table with the “Italiensk fördrink.” (i.e. Italian aperitif)

Picture 13 (right): The “Swedish” table with the beverages.

At that moment, I did not say anything but thought to myself, “How can I make a *spritz* with a sweet wine from Hungary, no Campari, no soda and—the worst of all—served with Swedish salmon in sour cream?” We solved the situation by agreeing to serve the Hungarian sweet wine (I thought, “Oh my god, a sweet wine as an aperitif! If only my father could see this!”) served with a strawberry inside the glass instead of my olives, and the drink was accompanied with Salmon and sour cream. The problems, though, were not finished. Now, we discussed where to serve what Kerstin called “den Italienska fördrink.” After having reviewed different possibilities, we decided to use another small table just for the Italienska fördrink, and we placed it in the garden, outside the house.

According to Wallendorf and Arnould (1991:28), “Serving the meal on special dishes is used to convert processed food into ritual food.” Similarly, my role as the one responsible for arranging and serving the beverages in such a ritual manner aimed at turning everyday drinks (i.e. Hungarian sweet wine) into a ritual drink. Further, because

of an ongoing negotiation between Kerstin and myself, the enactment of my role of being responsible for the drinks was more emerging. McCracken (1988:76) claims that “Cultural principles are substantiated by material culture in general and consumer goods in particular” and that ritualization is a way to enact culture (Curasi, Arnould and Price, 2004). Following this line of reasoning, it can be argued that my role was enacted through a negotiation between my Italian culture, represented by the “Italienska fördrink,” and the Swedish traditions regarding the arrangement and serving of drinks that was instead represented by the Swedish table for the beverages (see Pictures 12 and 13).

Overall, the above interaction illustrates the linkage between cultural meanings and roles in rituals. Sometimes a ritual role is enacted through a sequence of behaviours that more or less tends to exactly replicate those cultural values that are inherited from the past. On other occasions, ritual roles possess a more emergent character because the enactment of these roles requires a sort of cultural negotiation.

Beyond drinking: turning wines into decorations

The enactment of an actor's roles is sometimes not circumscribed within the ritual of drinking; it is rather extended toward additional roles. During the participant observation with Daniele and Daria, I noted that their house was decorated with some objects obtained from recycled wine bottles. Daniele explained that “*Daria is not a devout drinker*” and that sometimes he has the idea that “*Daria is more interested in wine packaging than wine.*” That is not to say that Daria does not drink wine. As I have reported earlier in this chapter, Daria likes to enjoy a glass of wine with Daniele while preparing dinner. Nevertheless, it is remarkable what Daria can do with some empty bottles of wine. “*Everybody is astonished by her craftsmanship,*” Daniele told me with a great sense of pride toward his wife. For instance, a bottle of Merlot was mounted on a surface of cork stoppers that also forms and frames a representation of “*the wine*”, a set of wine corks was transformed into a table centrepiece, and a “Bellavista” wooden crate became an original flower pot (see pictures 14, 15 and 16).



Pictures 14 (left): a wooden wine box turned into a flower pot.

Picture 15 (centre): a table centrepiece made with corks.

Picture 16 (right): a portrait made with wine and corks.

In my discussion with Daria, I asked her how she got the idea of recycling wine bottles to create original decorations. She confessed that she is a thorough reader of internet magazines specialized in furnishing and home décor, which for her are valuable sources of inspiration and knowledge on bricolage, including wine bottles and wine packaging. She explained that engaging in crafting these wine objects “*is a fun hobby,*” and “*it is a way to give a touch of originality to the house.*”

McCracken (1989:180) explains that the crafting of home décor objects is a ritual aimed at endowing the house with particular symbolic properties (i.e. ‘homeyness’) “that help the individual successfully to enact their conception of the family and the roles they play within it.” In a similar vein, Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) argue that the role of engaging in certain rituals of crafting furnishing objects is meant to turn a house into a home, thereby arranging a sacred place wherein sacred things happen. The above utterance echoes these perspectives in the sense that Daria extends her role in the ritual as the person who, beyond drinking, takes care of the context (i.e. the family house) in which the ritual of drinking wine is enacted. More precisely, she turns wines into furnishing objects (e.g. a centrepiece, a wine sculpture, and the flower pot) with the aim

of loading the family house with symbolic cultural properties related to wine. Her role is useful in enabling the context for the enactment of the ritual.

Nonetheless, the role of Daria as home decorator is not limited to the house. She uses wine bottles and packaging to produce customized objects that she likes to give as gifts to friends and relatives. Daniele told me that last year when they got married, instead of buying a prefabricated object to be donated to guests in order to remember the ceremony, she insisted on creating a personalized one. This object was a hand-written parchment that was decorated with a wine cork and a stain of red wine to symbolize happiness, and it was an invitation for everyone to symbolically toast to their marriage.

Ritual audience

Extending the audience through togetherness

All rituals are carried out in the context of a ritual audience. Rook (1985:253) refers to a ritual audience as a group of individuals gathering together in order to enact a ritual. However, he further clarifies that the concept of ritual audience may go beyond those individuals who actively take a role in the ritual because as Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) explain, ritualization implies an emotional state of mind in which individuals experience an extended sense of togetherness. The ritual audience in my participant observation may refer to the family members coming together to enact the ritual of drinking wine. In most of these participant observations, the feeling of togetherness is experienced when gathering for the opening of a bottle of wine.

One may say that opening a bottle sometimes is individually performed and thus the feeling of being together cannot be possible, or it is even avoided. That is, for instance, the case of Silvana, who told me that her wine ritual at home is aimed at enjoying an individual moment of relaxation. This is how she describes it: “*I am alone, at home with my glass of wine (...). I don’t want to see anyone (...); this is a moment for me.*” Some others might also observe that uncorking is just an instrumental action that serves to remove a cork before drinking. Åsa explained to me that when drinking wine at home, opening a bottle makes her stressed and anxious. “*Pulling out traditional corks*

is an action that requires much technique because if you don't know how to do it, you can break the cork (...); it is a mess (...)." For this reason, Åsa prefers bottles with a screw cap because they are much easier to open.

However, in a ritual context, opening a bottle of wine may also pertain to a richer set of meanings. The Italian writer Mario Soldati (2006) suggests that the meaning embedded in the gesture of opening a bottle of wine is rather charged by ritual elements. He explains in particular that when observing carefully, this action appears to be a *"ceremony preceding the libation."* Here is an excerpt from his book in order to provide richer details of this ceremony.

"It is the extraction of the cork, one of the most evocative moments, that leaves the audience almost breathless and waiting to confirm that, for example, the wine is not altered by the 'formidable' smell of cork. (...) In fact, such event would instil in everyone a feeling of disappointment and being disgruntled. (...) But after pulling the cork from the bottle and finding that the wine is in good condition, the faces of those present will be immediately relieved. They will smile, and they all will be surrounded by a sense of satisfaction and common agreement. Now everything is ready to begin. (...) The ceremony of the libation can be initiated with a toast, all together." (Mario Soldati, *vino al vino*, pp. 6-9)

Soldati's narration is probably too evocative, albeit rather effective in providing with great detail this picture of a group of people coming together for the opening of a bottle of wine. Yet something similar can be drawn from my informants. In the below excerpt, Nicola explains why the ritual of opening wine in a family occasion provides this feeling of people becoming united.

Nicola: *Last night the family doctor came to us to visit my father (...), so we opened a bottle of wine.*

Me: *Why did you do it?*

Nicola: *Because drinking wine stands for conviviality. I mean, if you have a guest at home, nothing is more appropriate than opening a bottle of wine ... it gets people closer (...); it is like shaking hands (...).*

The above excerpt is interesting because this gesture allows the doctor to be included in this sense of family togetherness that Nicola expresses with the word “conviviality.” For Nicola, conviviality (or friendliness) is enacted through the act of opening a bottle of wine, which symbolically helps to “get people closer” and “shake hands.” In other words, it seems that the opening of a bottle of wine allows these actors to solve the social distance between Nicola’s family and the doctor, as to gain that level of confidence that allows people to become more united. As a result, the doctor who before the bottle was opened was not considered as a member of the family becomes closer right after the wine is uncorked.

The same effect of togetherness can also be referred to when bottles are not literally opened. This is the case when rather than bottles, the ritual refers to a bag-in-box that is already opened. In my participant observations, the situation of the bag-in-box relates to Daniele’s family. The gesture that Daniele performs was rather different than uncorking, as opening a bag-in-box is more like pushing a button that activates a ball valve that in turn functions as a sort of stopper. However, although the gesture is rather different, the meaning that relates to it remains similar. In fact, despite the fact that I have known Daniele and his family for quite some time (it must be specified that we were not complete strangers on this occasion), the nominal ‘opening’ of a bag-in-box allows us to break the ice and have a much easier conversation. During our conversation about this family ritual, I found myself playing with their son Leonardo and the little toy car he had in his hands. Daria commented on Leonardo and me playing together by saying, “Sweetie! You like to play with uncle Gigi, do you”? Of course, I am not Leonardo’s uncle, and my actual name is Luigi. However, Daria addressed me with closeness and a nickname, as if I were a kind of adopted uncle or an extended member of this family.

Other times, the sense of togetherness is not generated by the physical presence of people gathering together to open a bottle of wine. In these circumstances, the sense of

togetherness is more embedded in the memories evoked through the ritual of opening a bottle wine. In the below excerpt, Antonio talks about his ritual of drinking wine at home.

Antonio: At home we always drink this wine (i.e. Vermentino) that is produced by Bosoni (i.e. a wine producer). He is a family friend. You know wine is a family business; it is about stories of families producing wine for generation after generation (...). When we drink their wine, we always think of them (i.e. Bosoni).

The first notable aspect is that Antonio refers to wine as a “*family business*” or as “*stories of families*.” But in reality, wine is increasingly turning into a global industry (cfr. Spawton, 1990; Anderson, Norman and Wittwer, 2003), and the families’ stories which Antonio mentions may refer to a marketing strategy that through storytelling aims to construct the image of wine in terms of a family brand (e.g. Beverland, 2006). Despite the dynamics of today’s wine market, in Antonio’s mind, however, there appears to be a strong link between wine and family that goes beyond the members of his own family. Antonio and his family “always” think about Bosoni (the family’s friend wine producer), as if Bosoni were symbolically part of the same ritual audience when drinking wine with his family.

All in all, the above excerpts indicate how ritualization tends to include people in a ritual audience, whether these people are physically united (as in the case of Nicola and Daniele’s family) or just metaphorically evoked (as in the case of Antonio). They do so by gathering together in the action of opening a bottle of wine, or more specifically the action of opening wine allows people to construct a sense of togetherness. Driver (1991) claims that ritualization tends to unite individuals emotionally. Wallendorf and Arnould (1991:20-22) interpret this emotional state of mind as a sense of “togetherness” that American families develop in the ritual of Thanksgiving Day through gathering for the meal. Further, the authors explain that togetherness is enacted by a process of “extensiveness” through which the boundary of the family circle is enlarged to other members (e.g. pets and singles). During my fieldwork, I had also experienced and observed this mechanism of inclusion by extensiveness. For instance, I found myself

included as a member of Daniele's family as a sort of added "uncle," or the doctor who was seen as a close member of the Nicola's family, or the wine producer Bosoni who was incorporated into Antonio's family. The ritual drinking of wine was a common element in all of these cases of inclusion.

Marking some boundaries in the audience

Nonetheless, there are limitations in rituals as to who should be included. Marking symbolic boundaries between homemade and commercial wine is one way to enact these limitations. For instance, Daniele explained that for his wine ritual at home, he normally does not drink wine that comes from supermarkets. He rather uses a local wine that is homemade and that he buys from Gino, the owner of a local shop. Below I report an excerpt of this conversation.

Daniele: I know this guy, Gino. He has this local shop where you can get a Merlot.

Me: Why? Wouldn't you find it in some other places? Like a supermarket, or not?

Daniele: No, no, no ... at the supermarket you find other types of wine.

Me: What do you mean?

Daniele: I mean ... At the supermarket, you find something that is more commercial ... these wines all look the same If you want to find local wines that comes from here, you have to go there [i.e. to local shops]. It's a homemade wine; it's a farmer who made it, so you can be sure that is good.

In the above excerpt, "local shop" is a place where "local wines can be bought," while supermarkets offer "other" commercial wines. Daniele particularly manifests his scepticism with emphasis (i.e. "no, no, no ... at the supermarket ...") and therefore distinguishes between local shops and supermarkets. On the one hand, there are the local shops with homemade wines where "you have to go" to be sure to find "good" wines. On the other hand, there are supermarkets where one may find "other types of wine" that "look all the same." Through the juxtaposition of supermarkets and local shops, Daniele is marking symbolic boundaries in the ritual audience and particularly

in the type of actors that have a role in the ritual. Local producers have a role in this ritual because they provide a homemade wine and thus are included in the audience. In contrast, supermarkets do not have any role because they sell commercial wines and thus are excluded from the audience. This juxtaposition echoes the “dynamic tension” between homemade and market-made goods documented by Moisio, Arnould, and Price (2003) in the American domestic rituals of preparing homemade food. Particularly, the symbolic boundaries of the audience drawn by Daniele relates to the origin of the wine. Local wines are original because they are locally produced by a farmer that he knows by name (i.e. Gino). Conversely, supermarkets are places that sell anonymous and standard wines that all look the same and hence are placed symbolically outside of this ritual.

More evidence of how ritual audiences are bounded comes from an inside-out perspective: that of the wine companies. During the interviews with wine companies, it became rather clear that wine firms tend to make clear distinctions between wines to be consumed for a family target audience and wines that are offered for other types of target audiences, such as bars and restaurants. This distinction is made evident by segmenting target audiences into two main categories that are served through distinctive distribution channels.

For instance, in Sweden, the Systembolaget, through their wine shops, distribute wine that is primarily meant to be consumed in private or family gatherings, while importers are market actors that are responsible for distributing wines to other target audiences, namely bars and restaurants. Bars and restaurants could, in effect, go to the Monopoly of Alcohol to buy wines, so they could also be a target audience for this distributor. This is possible because the Monopoly of Alcohol functions also as an importer, yet it is not an active importer, as it is not economical. According to Markus, who works as a product range manager for one of the largest Swedish wine importers, restaurants and bars normally buy wines from private importers because of their lower prices, better business agreements, and exclusive range of products compared to the Monopoly of Alcohol. Thus, in the Swedish wine market, target audiences are in practice clearly differentiated. This distinction is not only peculiar to the Swedish market. Overall, wine producers tend to distinguish between target audiences of their wines. Some wines are

developed and sold through one type of commercial channel, whereas other wines are destined for consumption at home. Luca is a sales manager working for one of the largest wine producers in Italy that sells Chianti worldwide (i.e. Chianti is one of the most famous Italian wines). He explained that today the distinction between target audiences in terms of home consumption and ho.re.ca (i.e. hotels, restaurants and caterings) is fundamental to organizing the distribution channel.

Luca: Today, most of the wine is sold through two channels, which together cover about 90% of the overall market sales. On the one hand, you have supermarkets or what we call “at home consumption,” which is the biggest distribution channel. Through this channel, almost 65–70% of the wines are sold. On the other hand, you have the ho.re.ca channel, whose value is around 25%. Then, you have the local shops, which sell wine in demijohns: ... low quality cheap wines ... this market is disappearing. We don’t serve this market ... Its value is just around 5%.

Me: But the wine you sell in these two main channels (i.e. at home and ho.re.ca.) is the same?

Luca: Not really. I mean it is still Chianti, but with two different labels, two different qualities, and of course two different prices.

Me: Why?

Luca: Because if you are a private consumer, and let’s say you buy this wine at the supermarket that costs three euros, you will get upset if you drink the same wine at the restaurant for 20 euros, know what I mean?

One significant aspect that comes from the above perspective is that the company’s bounding of audience seems to be less symbolic, as in the case of Daniele, and instead it is more functional. The same product (e.g. the Chianti wine) is produced, branded, and distributed differently in order to be offered to two different target audiences. This distinction seems to be discarded by consumers (at least by some of my respondents) who instead bound the ritual audience in a more symbolic fashion, as the drinking ritual requires a different set of values that goes beyond the functional characteristics validated by the companies. For instance, Daniele sets the boundaries of the ritual audience based on authenticity, which in this case is an authentic wine because it was

produced by a farmer and sold by a local shop. In this set of values, local shops are included as part of the ritual audience. On the other hand, companies bound target audiences based on product quality, branding, and price. In their functional bounding, local shops and those types of consumers are excluded. This mismatching may create blurs between the way companies interpret the target audience and the way consumers perform the ritual by gathering together.

Second ethnographic episode: wine rituals among friends

This second set of ethnographic episodes will focus on the ritual of drinking wine among friends. Particularly, the data had been mainly gathered during participant observations, in which groups of friends gather together to feast and socialize through drinking wine.

According to Bernardi et al. (2005), in Italy, the symbolic connotation of the meaning of feasting with wine is anthropologically rooted in the adoration of the god Dionysus, which was depicted as the personification of a vineyard and exhilaration produced by its juice (i.e. wine). The Romans, who to some extent may be considered the Italians' ancestors, were faithful worshipers of Dionysus. The adoration of Dionysus took place through the Four Dionysics Festivals (i.e. the little Dionysics, the loneliness, the ancestry and the great Dionysics). In these festivals, a priestess had the task of pouring wine for the participants, but before they could drink, the fruit of the vine was offered to the statue of the god. After the trumpet sound, the collective drinking could begin, which often resulted in widespread drunkenness. It was believed that through drinking, contemplation of Dionysus provided strength, joy, and freedom. In Viking sagas, wine also has a mythological and symbolic root. The warriors in the Valhalla used to toast to the god Odin by raising large glasses of beer, while Odin could respond with a glass of wine. Thus, according to the Nordic mythology, wines are seen as a sacred drink that can be drunk only by gods, while human warriors could only drink beer.

Though drinking rituals today have by and large no mythological character, still it implies this jovial aspect of celebration and happiness. Often, the ritual of drinking wine among friends may takes place at home, alike the previous set of ethnographic scenes have shown. In addition, friends gather in public spaces, such as bars, restaurants, or more modest taverns, in which they drink and socialize. The following sections report the utterances and scenes of the ritualistic drinking of wine among friends which, as in the case of the family rituals, is thematically analysed according to the four structural elements of the ritual: artefacts, scripts, actors' roles, and audience.

Ritual artefacts

The enactment of a wine ritual among friends may refer to different meanings. There are those who consider wine as an expensive object and difficult to afford, but it is an object that contains important properties that increase social ability. There are those who view wine as a popular drink that eases conversations and enhances networking. There are also those who, although recognizing the strong social character of wine, nevertheless consider wine as an important ingredient to develop business relationships and networks. However, despite nuances or individual idiosyncrasies, all the above aspects can be assimilated into one underlying meaning: when they are drunk in a ritual occasion, wines are perceived as sacred artefacts aimed at socializing. Below, I report some key utterances and scenes of these aspects of wines as ritual artefacts.

Wines as social lubricants

Among friends, various sorts of wine, and kinds of alcohol more generally, are perceived as important artefacts when used on certain ritual occasions. These artefacts (or wines) seem to help to accomplish an important goal related to identity: being more sociable. Nils, a PhD student, explains what wine means within this context of consumption:

Nils: *“It [i.e. wine] is a sort of helper to be more sociable, be in a good mood, and be in touch with people. You know some people drink to disinhibit, to take these social shields down, to find courage, to meet people, to meet girls.*

Molly, another PhD student, seems to share the same opinion:

Molly: *“We [students] still view alcohol as a social lubricant, to a very high degree”*

What it is interesting in the above excerpts is that wine is viewed as a “*helper to be more sociable*” or as a “*social lubricant*” that is drunk not because of the taste, but

rather because it is perceived as a sort of magical potion that transforms a shy student into a more sociable person and for this reason is able to “*meet people*.” Nonetheless, drinking wine as well as alcohol in general can be very expensive, especially among students. As such, these sacred artefacts are often understood in relation to what they cost and particularly to the cost of consuming alcohol to become more sociable. Some students use the interesting acronym *APK* (i.e. alcohol per krona) to define the value of certain wine and alcoholic beverages in general; this means the percentage of alcohol contained in a bottle of wine in relation to the money spent to purchase it. Molly goes even further in explaining why students use the *APK* designation to define alcohol beverages, including wine.

Molly: “This thing of the APK is because if you are a student, you don’t have enough money to buy alcohol, so you want to spend less money for more [i.e. alcohol].”

The same explanation in terms of “*calculating the exact amount of alcohol*” can be drawn from another excerpt. The following excerpt comes from a student with whom I had some drinks in Stockholm. Although he wanted to remain anonymous, he allowed me to disclose his answer:

Student: “APK means that I want to spend the least amount of money on the alcohol that I buy. Back in the day, for instance, in Sweden we had this Italian wine that was very popular because at the Systemet [i.e. the Monopoly of Alcohol in Sweden], it was the strongest wine that you could buy for the least amount of money. I think it was called Marinella or something (...). Roughly it was 18 alcohol/centilitres per krona or something like this.”

More utterances echo this aspect of wine as a social lubricant defined in terms of affordability. Students attending the marketing courses in which I am involved as a seminar teacher, revealed the existence of a website (www.apk.se), which lists all the alcoholic beverages sold by the Monopoly according to the most alcohol per Swedish

krona. This website list is quite well-known among students because it functions as a sort of reference in providing the least expensive wines in terms of alcohol purchased.

There are some other variances in the acronym used among students to define wine in terms of alcohol purchased. One of these is “*fylla per krona*.” Fylla is a colloquial Swedish word that relates to a state of inebriation or to a state of drunkenness. Students use this expression when referring to the cost of alcoholic beverages in relation to its effects in terms of getting drunk. Like the classification of APK, the “fylla per krona” has also its own web site (i.e. <http://billigaste-fyllan.rivision.com>), where it is possible to choose the cheapest alcoholic beverage in order to binge drink.

Although the acronym APK seems to be quite popular among students, some other variances to calculate the exact amount of purchasable alcohol may exist. For instance, Oscar explains how students value the amount of alcohol contained in other types of wines sold in great quantities, such as the bag-in-box:

Oscar: “We [i.e. students] are always calculating the exact amount of alcohol that we buy. For example, with the bag-in-box you are not buying a bottle of wine, but rather you are buying the equivalent of four bottles of wine, meaning three litres!!!”

This calculation (three litres of the bag-in-box being equivalent to four standard bottles (750 mL) can be found on the packaging of every bag-in-box (see Picture 17). At the Systembolaget’s shops, the calculation is even more explicit. Here, pictograms explain this calculation in terms of bottles and glasses. Accordingly, one bag-in-box contains 24 glasses of wine (see Picture 18).



Picture 17 (Left): Bag-in-box sold in Sweden with the pictogram referring to the quantity of wine contained in the box: three litres, four bottles.

Picture 18 (Right): a sign at the Systembolaget indicating the exact amount of alcohol contained in a bag-in-box in terms of bottles and glasses.

Eva Lenneman supports this attitude among the Swedish to constantly compare alcohol (including wines) and its cost. During our recorded interview, Eva explained that, “*In Sweden, the value of the alcohol is much more important than the taste. That is because alcohol in Sweden is costly.*” In fact, the existence of the Monopoly of Alcohol and its taxation system make wine expensive³. This could be one reason for the perception of wine as an exclusive product, compared to beer, which instead is considered as a more popular beverage. For instance, if one eats in a restaurant or bar, it is not unusual to spend more money for a glass of wine than for a sandwich or a single dish. The high cost of alcoholic beverages was also obvious to me as a stranger. Particularly, during some observations, I wrote in my notebook, “*Today, I paid 364 kr for drinks and 250 for the meal.*” Normally, in Italy the relationship between the meal and wine is the opposite: one typically pays more money for a meal rather than for a glass of wine.

³ Although the aim of this research is not to delve into the relationships between Swedish alcohol taxation policy and Swedish consumer behaviours, it is worthwhile to remember that on average, taxes on an alcoholic product in Sweden amount to more than one third of its cost. For instance, if a bottle of wine costs 91 SEK, 25.17 SEK of that are taxes.

Enhancing conversations and networking

Despite some different nuances, the ritual of drinking wine among friends in Italy is perceived with the same meaning: wine is perceived as an artefact that increases sociability. However, the relationship between wine and money in terms of affordability is less marked in Italy than in Sweden because wine in Italy costs less on average. Nevertheless, wine is still perceived as an important artefact that is used to socialize and get together. The below excerpt recorded during a participant observation with my key informant Gjono and his group of friends is perhaps the most representative of this socializing aspect attributed to wines.

Me: What is wine for you?

Gjono: It's about socializing, feasting, being with and among people (...). You talk to people, you drink together and at a certain point you feel a little bit inebriated, and the more you drink, the more you socialize and talk. It's like a way to escalate socializing and drinking.



Picture 19: Wine as social lubricant, spurring conversations among friends.

While observing and being in the field as a part of this groups of friends, I thought of Driver (1991), who claims that ritual artefacts are like magic objects because they allow transformation. In a similar vein, among friends, wine seems to have a kind of magic power because it works as a social lubricant. In fact, as Gjono described, after a couple

of drinks, I found myself more sociable and was thus more inclined to converse with strangers. This ritual is not really about being drunk and losing control over one's actions. It is rather more about the social climate in terms of conviviality that the performance of the ritual establishes among the participants. Wine seems to spur sociability by stimulating conversations about the wine that is being drunk. The first words that two strangers normally say after drinking the first sip together are comments on the taste of wine. In my fieldwork, I noted that it was quite unusual to find someone drinking wine without commenting on it. I have observed that when people drink together, they typically introduce a conversation by saying, "*Oh, it's good*" or "*Uhm, this wine is nice.*" Afterwards, the flow of conversations and the chatting might become more fluid and intimate. The gathering around a glass of wine may become more crowded as more and more people tend to come and join the conversations. It is fascinating to note the increasing intimacy and sharing of stories and feelings between two or more people, perhaps complete strangers, after a couple of glasses.

Even for those who drink for professional reasons, wine is perceived in the same way. For instance, this is the case of Luca, a wine salesman whom I have already introduced in the previous set of ethnographic episodes. Luca is a sales manager working for a wine company. Among other duties, he organizes some wine events, such as wine tastings, in which he invites potential customers, journalists, and wine experts to promote his wine portfolio. I asked him the same question that I asked Gjono; below is his answer.

Me: *What is wine for you?*

Luca: *I normally drink only for work, but wine is always an important ingredient that accompanies conviviality (...), and it is also an indispensable companion in expanding friendship and networking.*

In the above excerpt, Luca is not referring to the ritual of drinking as a feast among friends. In these wine events, drinking is not the main purpose. Rather, wine is only tasted without being swallowed. The main goal of attending these ritual events is to do business. Nevertheless, Luca points out that sharing the experience of tasting wine with people is a way to maintain and develop business connections with potential clients or

partners. For him sharing wine is a symbolic means of removing certain social defences that regulate formal business relationships. Wines somehow function to ease interactions among people and to further develop his network of acquaintanceships. In the literature on rituals, this aspect of attending certain social events to develop business relationships finds theoretical support. Gainer (1995) describes that the symbolic meaning of attending arts events is one of maintaining and developing social relationships among buyers. Similarly, Luca uses the wine not only as a commodity to be sold, but more symbolically to facilitate social relationships and networking.

Wine as an individual pleasure

For some other respondents, drinking wine pertains to a more individual ritual. For these consumers, wine is not a social lubricant as much as a passion that is not shared with others; it is rather drunk in moments of individual consumption. Though, it must be noted here that both in Sweden as well as in Italy drinking wine individually is understood as an activity that has undesirable connotations. People who drink alone are generally viewed as having alcohol or psychological problems. For instance, Eva Lenneman from the Spritmuseum explained that drinking alcohol individually in Sweden is highly avoided because it may project the image of a person with alcohol problems. Similarly, in Italy, popular culture rejects wine as a beverage intended for individual consumption. There are many proverbs in Italy promoting the drinking of wine as a social activity that is meant to be, such as e.g. “*one who drinks alone, dies alone*” or “*wine and friendship*.” Nevertheless, on certain occasions, wine may be drunk in solitude because of an individually nurtured passion. That is the case of Paolo, who is an Italian restaurateur who drinks wine with his customers mainly for professional reasons. Yet, he also considers drinking wine to be an individual pleasure and a passion that he rarely shares with others.

Me: *Why do you drink?*

Paolo: *When I drink, I don't need friends around. I would rather say that often I drink alone and that is even better because in this way I can establish a direct relationship with the bottle (...). I can focus only on the wine to*

better appreciate its characteristics (...); friends sometimes distract me from wine tasting.

Greta also confirms that wine does not always mean socialization. She likes to open a bottle of wine and enjoy a moment of individual consumption.

Greta: (...) Sometimes I say to myself “fuck it”! I don’t want to wait to be with friends to have the excuse to open a bottle of wine that they may not appreciate or don’t have a clue about!

Despite the social and cultural rejection of wines as objects of individual consumption in some contexts, neither Luca nor Greta appeared to be alcoholics or affected by psychological problems. They are probably not even rare exceptions: by hanging around in bars and taverns in the last two years to collect data, I quite often observed individuals sitting alone at the bar completely absorbed in their thoughts and tasting wine. Other times, they would also chat with strangers or with the bartender. Paolo and Greta view wine as a pleasure-seeking yet sacred object, and their rituals may be a symbolic attempt to differentiate themselves from the “other” consumers who do not understand wine in the same way that they do. Torres Quintao and Brito (2015) explain that for connoisseurs, coffee is one such sacred object, and tasting it requires the enactment of a ritual, which is also a way to mark the differences between the connoisseurs and the standard consumers. This aspect of coffees could also be related to wines: on the one hand, it mitigates the view of wines as a shared object functioning as a social lubricant. On the other hand, this aspect brings to the surface a dimension of wine as an individual pleasure.

Overall, the above utterances and scenes may suggest that the ritual of drinking wines in certain social contexts (e.g. friends) is carried out to socialize. Mary Douglas (2003:4) claims that the ritual of drinking is “essentially a social act, performed in a recognized social context (...) involving the consumption of alcohol imbibed.” Wine is accordingly a ritual artefact symbolizing socialization that is understood in terms of alcohol affordability, conviviality, or as an object able to broaden business relationships. Despite nuances in interpretations, wine in these contexts of consumption

is a ritual artefact that means socialization in which meaning seems to be moved from the “culturally constituted world” (McCracken, 1986), or popular culture, to consumer goods itself (wine in this case) and afterward from the goods to the individuals. As Treise et al. (1999) suggests this trajectory is made possible through the ritual of sharing that allows individuals to change their everyday existence by becoming exceptionally more sociable. In other occasions, however, the transference of a popular culture meaning of wine as a social lubricant does not penetrate the symbolic sphere of consumers’ lives, in which wines are instead viewed as sacred objects that are contemplated in the moment of individual consumption to mark a social difference. Consequently, wines are not shared but rather enjoyed individually.

Ritual scripts

Like the previous ethnographic episodes, the enactment of a ritual implies the carrying out of a script, which consists of a set of rules and norms defining the usage of the ritual artefact. In the following section, I delve into the image of these scripts and describe how the enactment of these script behaviours projects an image that is aimed at expressing symbolic meanings. The below utterances and scenes focus on two gestures that seem to be loaded with significant symbolic meanings among friends: the script of swirling wine glasses before drinking and the language used to describe the taste of the wine after sipping it.

The dance of swirling wines

During data collection, I rarely found people drinking wine as if it were a glass of water. If a glass of water is normally swallowed, drinking a glass of wine requires instead a particular sequence of actions, implying particular gestures, and a proper language which, when observed externally, may seem unusual if not bizarre in certain occasions. Of course, there are many ways in which consumers drink wine. Most wine drinkers have their own style, which may change from place to place. Drinking wine in a renowned restaurant may require a particular etiquette to be followed, while the same action in a tavern may not imply a particular set of formal rules. Yet drinking wine is not necessarily an easy-going action, whether is carried out in a three star Michelin

restaurant or in a tavern on the outskirts of town. Drinking wine is certainly not performed with indifference or nonchalance. A closer look reveals that drinking wine is a ritual in itself, as it implies the enactment of a sequence of gestures underlying a strong symbolic meaning. Isabel González Turmo (2001:142) suggests that drinking wine is almost a silent language with “powerful identification mechanisms.” As a rebuttal to this point, Marion Demossier (2005) reports that utterances of the manner in which wine is consumed in France indicate that wine is seen as an act performed with carelessness and a sense of aesthetic, as it is aimed at defining one’s identity and social position. This leads to two intriguing questions: how do consumers drink when they gather together? How do they carry out the act of drinking wine when they are in a restaurant or perhaps in wine bars or even taverns?

To begin, let us consider the following observation that I recorded in my notebook after having shared a couple glasses of wine with Helene.

Field notes, 21.3.2015: Helene seems to have a deep relationship with her glass of wine. The way she handles it shows care and caution. She does not hold the glass with the palm of her hand but rather by the stem. Afterwards, she swirls the glass, but not too fast or too strong. Just two or three times, as to stir the wine and shake it. She brings her nose to the glass, but without diving too much, just enough to smell the fragrance. Now she is hesitating. It seems that there is something is wrong with her wine, she seems to think. Does she like it? Is this what she expected? A few seconds have passed, and now it seems she is ready to drink. She is bringing the glass to her mouth. But she is not really drinking. Rather, she takes just a little sip to taste it slowly. She rotates the wine into her mouth, as if she is looking for something. A few more seconds, and now she is swallowing the wine. Helene seems to be satisfied. A smile comes to her face. “That was good!” – she says.



Picture 20 (left) and **21** (right): Example of drinking wine like a sommelier.

The above sequence of gestures and actions, such as swirling, smelling, and sipping, may recall an image of a sommelier when performing a tasting ritual. Helene, like many consumers, consciously or unconsciously, tends to replicate these motions when drinking wine (see pictures 20 and 21). The image of drinking like a sommelier has also inspired popular culture, particularly in Italy. The famous Italian comedian Antonio Albanese devoted a set of popular sketches to this phenomenon, in which he mocks sommeliers when enacting this characteristic tasting ritual. In one of these sketches (*Riso fa buon sangue*, 2012), Antonio Albanese is particularly bothered with the gesture of swirling, which seems to be particularly representative of the sommeliers' wine drinking. Through a hilarious performance, the comedian replicates the gesture of swirling while dancing and shaking the wine as to imitate a centrifuge. After having danced and shaken the glass for minutes, he stops the action in order to focus on the smelling of wine. A few seconds of concentration preludes the final evaluation of the wine, precisely as reported in the above observation of Helene. However, in this case, the comedian pronounces his evaluation by claiming, "It's shaken!"

Despite the amusing interpretation of these behaviours that Antonio Albanese superbly performed, the sketch points out that tasting wines refers more to a symbolic purpose rather than a technical function. Undoubtedly, there is a functional reason for the performance of certain gestures with the right glass. According to Elisa, the tasting ritual for sommeliers is the result of an international protocol that is arranged to judge

wine quality. For instance, the aim of the gesture of swirling the wine before drinking is oxygenating the wine in order to capture the different organoleptic characteristics. Nevertheless, among ordinary consumers, the enactment of these gestures, such as swirling, does not refer only to their technical purposes (to the extent that ordinary consumers are even aware of these purposes), they may serve to signal a meaning: the performance of the gesture could be aimed at expressing the status of a wine connoisseur. I discussed this aspect of non-expert consumers projecting the sommelier image, for instance, swirling their glasses, with Nicola, who is a wine producer and expert. When going out with friends and drinking together, Nicola mentioned the following:

Nicola: Certainly, swirling the wine is kind of cool nowadays, although they (i.e. the ordinary consumers) don't really know why swirling is so important. I'd say that rather than swirling, most of them are literally centrifuging, as they do this gesture with too much emphasis. But you know today it has become a must (...); everybody has become an expert, but it is quite rare to find someone that really know about wine. It is obviously an aesthetic attitude: I swirl thus I know about wine. People do not know that you want to swirl a wine because a wine needs to be oxygenated. They probably saw it from some sommeliers, and thus they assume that this is the right way to do it. But it depends. For instance, I saw people swirling a glass of Champagne or a Franciacorta. That is so wrong! Never ever swirl a sparkling wine because if you do so, you may damage the perlage of the wine. (i.e. the fizz)

The interesting point raised by Nicola that echoes the above points is that the script of swirling is somehow iconic among consumers. It encapsulates an image that is symbolically projected by the gesture of swirling. Undoubtedly, as confirmed by Elisa who is an expert in wine tasting, swirling pertains to the technique of oxygenating the wine; hence, it does not automatically mean that swirling is a symbolic act. Nevertheless, when people swirl their wine, they endeavour to communicate a symbolic meaning: “*I swirl, thus I know about wine,*” as Nicola states. Mars and Altman (1987:273) describe the gesture of toasting not only as the start of a feast, but with more

symbolic connotations, namely toasting is a way to claim “idealized social values.” According to the authors, the toasting script may signal the acquisition of a social status that is celebrated and made evident through the gesture of toasting. Following this interpretation of the toasting script while extending it to the performance of swirling, the enactment of this gesture is aimed at claiming a social status: that one is a wine connoisseur. Wine connoisseurs, such as sommeliers, swirl wines. Similarly, consumers replicate the gestures not only to construct their identity, but also to communicate this identity, to make it evident and recognizable among the other consumers.

Ironically, it is in the technical defection of the gesture that one may grasp the strong symbolic character of swirling. As Nicola notes in the above excerpt, since consumers do not understand the technical reasons related to the swirling gesture, mistakes may accompany their swirling. An example of one such mistake is the swirling of sparkling wines. Sparkling wines should not be swirled. That is because the gesture of swirling may damage one key characteristic of these sparkling wines: the *perlage*. Nevertheless, the gesture of swirling is so loaded with symbolic meaning that it is instead carried out with much emphasis, thus resulting in a sort of centrifuge rather than a stir.

Defining the taste of wines

After having swirled the glass, or rather centrifuged it, a wine is then tasted. As for swirling, tasting wines can be viewed as a technical yet symbolic ritual script consisting in the act of describing its characteristics in order to define a taste. According to Alessandro Torcoli, member of the Institute of Masters of Wine (i.e. the most important international wine organization, based in London, which actively promotes professional excellence by fostering the best wine experts in the world), describing a wine is a key activity in sommeliers’ wine tasting ritual in order to define a wine. Technically, a wine’s taste is defined according to the territory in which it is produced, and it is rated according to five main characteristics (i.e. sweetness, acidity, tannin, fruit, and body), which are described through a set of wine descriptors, such as petroleum, citrus, asparagus, pepper, leather, and so on. For instance, Picture 22 below, the Systembolaget’s wine experts describe Chianti wine as “*an Italian wine, nuanced, full-*

bodied and spicy flavour of dark cherry, liquorice, cinnamon, chocolate, lager leaves and vanilla.”



Picture 22: A shelf label at a Systembolaget that defines the taste of a Chianti wine.

Consumers similarly replicate the same script aimed at expressing an image that serves to describe a wine's taste by narrating the terroirs and related fragrances. Let us consider the below excerpt. It is a conversation, recorded verbatim, between Greta and the waiter. When going out with friends, Greta likes to order wine and taste it before it is served. Greta is a wine enthusiast, as she defined herself, albeit not an expert.

- Bartender:* We would recommend this wine from Sicily.
- Greta:* Uhm, Sicily! In these wines, you can feel the saltiness, the lemons ... not bad.
- Bartender:* Otherwise, we have something from Piemonte, a more structured wine, full-bodied or if you like aromatic.
- Greta:* Something more?
- Bartender:* Well, I might offer you a younger wine in terms of body, like this one that comes from Veneto (...). It has a fresh bouquet of violets, or as an alternative choice there is this wine from Cavignana del Surcis, which is an extreme wine, in the sense that it is cultivated on a sandy soil, and it has a very mineral taste.
- Greta:* Uhhh ... I like this name ... Cavignana del Surcis ... let's see the label?
- Bartender:* Yes, here it is ... it is from Sardegna.
- Greta:* Ah! The Sardegna! Beautiful region!
- Bartender:* Shall we try?
- Greta:* Yes, let's try this ...

(The bartender pours the wine, and Greta tastes it.)

Greta: *Yes! You can feel the Sardegna in this wine: the sand, the sun, the minerals*

Me: *So, how is it?*

Greta: *Smooth ... I mean it is good ... but it is too smooth!*

Me: *What do you mean?*

Greta: *I mean it was good and smooth (...). But tonight I had in mind something different like black cherry or pear, apples (...). Instead that was like something scratching my tongue, you know? It was like those days when the sun heats you so much that you have this feeling of the warm wrapping up all around you, and then you come back to the room, and it is fresher and you feel something like the tongue of a cat scratching you (...).*

As if she were a sommelier, Greta engages with the bartender in describing the wines she tastes. The description is made by comparing the territory in which wines are produced (e.g. *Sicily, Piemonte, Sardegna, etc.*) and a set of wine descriptors that she struggles to specify (e.g. *the sand, the minerals, black cherries, pears, apples, etc.*). She is probably trying to be as sophisticated as a wine expert, as sophisticated as the image that she portrays in describing the last wine tasted as “*the tongue of a cat scratching you.*”

The attempt to appear extremely sophisticated in replicating the sommeliers’ tasting ritual script sometimes seems too exaggerated, and it is thus potentially understood by other expert consumers as “*foolishness.*” For example, Paolo, who is a restaurateur and a sommelier, seems to be quite suspicious about the real knowledge of his customers when trying to describe the taste of the wines he serves. Below is a recorded conversation.

Paolo: *Honestly, I never understood this trend of describing a wine, as if it were (...) I don’t know. It’s foolishness! It is just an image!*

I have to say that some of my colleagues, sommeliers, have a bit of responsibility in that. A few years back, it was the fashion to drink these Parkerian wines (i.e. Robert Parker is an American sommelier and a world leading figure in the field of wine) that were fruity and mature. Today, the keywords are acidity, mineral, seasoning (...) what that

means, nobody knows! The minerals are odourless; it is impossible to capture them with the nose. Then, of course if you drink a Riesling, it may taste like petroleum, but not because of the territory, since a Riesling, whether it comes from Alsace (in France) or from Trentino (in Italy), always smells the same and thus it means that it depends on the grape variety rather than the soil.

Similar to the script of swirling, the importance of the symbolic character of the script of describing can be drawn from the mistakes committed by some consumers that Paolo emphasizes in the above excerpt. For him, minerals cannot be described because they are simply odourless. Territory may also play a limited role in constructing a wine's taste since certain fragrances are embedded in the characteristics of the wine grapes and not in the soil in which these grapes grow. As a result, Paolo is more inclined to explain the sophistication in the consumers' scripts as something that is "*just an image*" today and not something that comes from direct knowledge. According to Paolo, by describing the taste of wine with extreme sophistication, consumers aim to project a self-image of a sophisticated wine connoisseur.

The symbolic character of the script through which a wine is described is sometimes so pervasive in the marketplace that it has affected other type of beverages whose taste descriptions are not supposed to be sophisticated, but rather simple. For example, this is the case of the *brännvin*, the typical Swedish aquavit, the taste of which is normally described as a beverage that simply tastes like alcohol. In the below excerpt, Eva Lenneman, from the Spritmuseum, discusses the pervasiveness of the script of describing the *brännvin* as something new in Swedish culture.

Eva: *When you drink it (i.e. the aquavit), it reminds you of a medicine. It is something that tastes bad, you take it quick, it is more like opss (i.e. imitating a shot) that nowadays is very much different because today if you look at the Systembolaget, they describe everything: the wine, the taste, the aroma, and blahblahblah. And now they also describe the taste of the brännvin, and they would never had done that before, no no no brännvin drack man mest för alcohol skul (i.e. brännvin was something*

that you drank mostly for the sake of alcohol), the traditional way to do it was to put it in the fridge ... just like taking medicine. It was nothing that you would discuss. And now they talk about brännvin, as if it were a wine!

The interesting point Eva raised is the need to attach a sophisticated image to a drink, such as brännvin, which by its nature is not sophisticated because it is normally defined as a “*medicine*,” or as something that simply “*tastes bad*.” That is, the implementation of the script to describe a beverage makes the taste of the brännvin sophisticated, so as to raise its image, and thus, as Venkatesh et al. (2006) claim, to spectacularize its consumption. Venkatesh et al. (2006) argue that consumption today is a process of spectacularization made of images and symbols. The descriptive script in that sense has the role of creating a symbolic image through a typical language of the wine experts that consumers replicate and implement in certain fields (i.e. the brännvin) other than the original one (i.e. the wine).

In all, the above data reports how the script of describing a wine pertains to a social practice that is reproduced by consumers. The enactment of this script is a way to be socially distinguished among friends. As Bourdieu (1979) states that symbolic social practices (or ritual scripts) help consumers to distinguish themselves by defining their taste for objects (in this case a wine), and this taste is derived from the culture of the field experts (i.e. the wine connoisseur). Hence, by drawing from the experts, consumers tend to project sophisticated images of these scripts and thus seek an extreme definition of the taste (and of themselves), which, according to some data, appears to be spasmodic, if not in some cases, even bizarre. However, consumers do not blindly rely on experts. In fact, as stated by Quintao and Brito (2015:270), ritualization may help consumers to develop an individual taste. Similarly, the adoption of such ritual scripts aimed at describing a taste is also aimed at acquiring a distinguished image, meaning distinguished in the way consumers engage in describing their own taste, even when the taste may be difficult to describe and thus distinguish, as in the case of brännvin. In this case, the adoption of a ritual script that comes from the wine field is aimed at acquiring the sophisticated image of a connoisseur of brännvin.

Ritual Roles

A ritual is performed by actors who may occupy different ritual roles. Particularly, the social aspect implied in drinking rituals among friends poses significant questions regarding the nature of roles among friends. Are friends all equal before a bottle of wine? Do friends have the same role when drinking?

Hierarchy of roles

At first glance, the role played by friends in a ritual occasion seems to be quite hierarchized. For instance, when confronted with a waiter's question of "who chooses the wine?" or "who is the first to taste the wine?" the problem is frequently solved by the friend who possesses the better wine knowledge. In the below excerpt, I describe Nicola's experience regarding the different roles and hierarchies among his friends.

Nicola: Nowadays, wine has made it so that we all have become shamans or sommeliers. Years ago, not many I would say, when going to a bar, one ordered just a glass of red or white wine. That was it. Today, we are all experts. I mean, beside the real knowledge that one may have about wines, it is very "figo" (i.e. cool) among friends to say, "Guys let's taste this amazing bottle that I found here." We've all become talent scouts of wine. We are all experts.

Me: Why do you think that is so?

Nicola: Well, because socially, it gives you a plus. Being an expert in my town means being a cool guy (...), even though I really know very few of my friends who can really say, "Hey, I know about wines!"

The importance of the role of a wine connoisseur among friends that can be drawn from Nicola's excerpt seems to reinforce the social status of the role of being the expert of wines among friends. In Italy "*fare il figo*", as Nicola reports, refers to a person who boasts about their achievements or possessions. Hence, showing off one's knowledge of wine that one may have (or may not have, as Nicola points out) has the objective of

representing, expressing, and displaying a certain social status that somehow organizes the hierarchy among friends in terms of knowledge.

Like in Italy, in Sweden there is also an increasing popularity among consumers of wine-tasting courses. There are many reasons why one attends these courses, for example, to socialize. Someone else may just be looking for something fun to do in their free time. Nevertheless, the curiosity and need to acquire wine knowledge and status among friends and relatives is undoubtedly relevant. It is, for instance, the case of Laura, who, according to her own report, is a point of reference among her friends because she is the one “*who knows about wine*” and has “*an interesting hobby*.” Eva Lenneman from the Spritmuseum also confirms that being a wine expert in Sweden is fashionable, as wine and its culture project an image of coolness.

Eva: Wine has been always the “finnaste,” the most exclusive beverage in Sweden, and the first smakare kultur (tasting culture) belonged to wine. If you go back in time, wine was exclusive, and still it is. Lots of people like to learn about wine.

The ritual does not only organize the hierarchy of roles in terms of knowledge. It also reinforces gender classifications that regulate social relationships between a man and a woman. As we have seen in the previous ethnographic episode (i.e. wine in a family context), choosing and pouring the wine involves a subdivision of roles in terms of gender that is sometimes implicitly assumed by the actors. In the ritual among friends, a kind of hierarchy is reinforced but with different nuances. For example, in the interview with Nicola, he reports the following opinion about gender roles.

Nicola: Just the fact that if you go out to dinner with a woman and prove to be completely ignorant about wines, it's a bad thing. On the contrary, if you prove to be passionate or experienced, it gives you another status (...)

Regardless of what a man would think about their superior role as wine connoisseurs (especially among the Italians among whom Nicola is a typical example), women have

a profound knowledge in terms of wine and this fact can create some problems in the hierarchies. For example, Laura, who we have already previously seen, is the one who normally chooses wine among her friends. This role of being the expert of wines could sometimes cause problems among her male friends and because of that they sometimes feel embarrassed. To solve this embarrassment, often Laura lets men act out his dominant role.

Laura: When I'm in a restaurant and dating a man, let's say, I let the man take the initiative on wines. I mean men are supposed to choose wines, and I ease the situation by letting him play the role. Otherwise, he gets embarrassed.

The excerpt reminds us that in some cases knowledge is hidden in order to foster the stabilization of the identity of others. Goffman (1967:70) cites a paradigmatic case in this regard that emerged from sociological research in which he found that American college girls, in conversations with their male counterparts, often pretended to have less expertise on subjects for the purpose of letting men playing the role of the expert.

So far, we have seen how the roles of the ritual are hierarchized around a bottle of wine. Paradoxically, the ritual seems to also undo some hierarchies as a result of the social connotation that is implied in the meaning of the ritual of drinking wine among friends. Particularly at the beginning of this set of ethnographic episodes, I brought into light the manner in which wine can be perceived as a symbolic ritual artefact that helps to “*take these social shields down*” or is a symbolic “*social lubricant*.” This perception has an important impact on the social hierarchies that normally organize everyday life in the sense that ritualization tends to undo social differences among actors.

During my observation with Gjono and his friends, I observed that a ritual based on wine is typically carried out by actors who, despite different social classes, are all united together in an assembly of people with no hierarchy of class. In ritual occasions, respected professionals, doctors, lawyers, but also workers, pensioners, and students socialize and enact their role of drinkers with no differences in terms of class. It must be highlighted, however, that in certain circumstances, the social title of a social actor seems to remain as an important symbol to the ritual. For example, when Gjono

introduced me within his group of friends, he often said something along the lines of, "Luigi, let me introduce Marzio to you; he is a famous lawyer." Or "You have to know Antonio, a physiotherapist and great drinker." Curiously enough, the aspect of wine as a sort of democratic aggregator does not completely eliminate these formal social barriers that normally regulate ordinary social life. The lawyer is always addressed as a lawyer, with a sense of respect. Similarly, Antonio is the physiotherapist. However, at the time of the ritual, we are all actors with the same status: wine drinkers. In Sweden, the flattening of the social hierarchy among roles in a ritual occasion is perhaps even more marked. Professors sit alongside students during after-work rituals and symbolically divest themselves of their official roles by sipping wine with students, who supposedly have a lower social status. Similarly, school coordinators and secretaries or newly graduated PhD students play the same role when all together drinking and socializing.

The coordination and adaptation of roles

The differences in terms of hierarchy among roles raise the subject of coordination and adaptation among different roles. I have previously reported this aspect of adapting roles in family rituals by highlighting its cultural aspects. In the ritual among friends, similarly, I have provided utterances and scenes that describe how actors interact with one another to cope with other actors, thereby demonstrating how they construct a sort of order in the ritual. For example, in Sweden, the Systembolaget plays a key role of providing some important rules that shape the temporal order of drinking rituals among friends. The Systembolaget decides when the drinking ritual between friends may begin by forcing other actors to organize and coordinate themselves around these rules. Nils is a PhD student. In our participant observation, we discussed his experience of attending some parties and dinners with friends and colleagues. In the following excerpt, he discusses with me the role of the Systembolaget and its relevance in the ritual through its "opening hour policy"

Nils: *"The opening hour policy means trouble! I mean, for instance, if you are invited for a dinner on a Saturday afternoon, you are fucked! Because you go to the Systembolaget, and it is closed!"*

- Me: *I mean, can't you go somewhere else to buy wine?*
- Nils: *No ... I mean you can always buy a non-alcoholic beer at the supermarkets. They are open 24/7. But if you want some alcohol, well, there are no other options. So, the policy makers are basically saying, "You should plan your alcohol consumption ahead of time."*

In reality, the Swedish Alcohol Monopoly is not always viewed as a problem, as reported above by Nils. Instead, it is a quite established actor among consumers, and it plays an important role. More precisely, the Systembolaget is an actor that provides a norm (i.e. the opening hour policy), enabling the temporal order within which alcohol should be bought, thus spurring consumers to adapt to it by planning their *"alcohol consumption ahead of time."* I can also confirm the script of planning *"alcohol consumption ahead"* to my own experience. When I moved to Sweden in 2009, I was not used to making plans to consume alcohol in advance. In fact, in my own country, the need to plan the purchase of alcohol in advance is less scripted, as in Italy there is no time-based policy for the sale of alcohol; thus, one can buy a bottle of wine on Saturday evening or on Sunday morning by going to the supermarket.



Picture 23 (left): The opening hours at the Systembolaget: on a regular day.

Picture 24 (right): The opening hours at the Systembolaget during mid-summer.

However, I realized quite soon that the Systembolaget's opening hour policy played an important role in my rituality by indirectly forcing me to plan my alcohol consumption

in advance. In fact, as Nils points out, ignoring the Systembolaget's opening hour policy in Sweden may cause some trouble. Hence, in order to cope with the opening hour policy, I also started planning my wine consumption ahead by taking pictures of the Systembolaget's opening hours (see Pictures 23 and 24), to plan my alcohol purchases. The coordination among actors can also occur by changing the nature of the role in the ritual. This can happen, for example, because of the presence of certain rules that regulate the consumption of alcohol when driving cars. Accordingly, if one has to drive, then the actor must modify his or her role by abstaining from drinking. This does not mean that these roles are any less important. Rather, these roles can be of great importance in the ritual, as their enactment is symbolically aimed at facilitating the drinking of others. One example of coordinated roles can be interpreted in Molly's case.

Molly: “(...) You know we have this policy of 0.2% alcohol [as the legal limit for driving] and if you drink one glass of wine, it is too much (...). So, for example, if my friend Alma, who loves wine, invites me for a dinner and I know that she is going to drink, then I don't drink because I might drive her home, and for this reason I don't drink (...).”

Molly seems to coordinate her role in the ritual by changing her position from a drinking role to a non-drinking role. She abstains from taking a full participatory role in the ritual in the sense that she abstains from consuming alcohol. The changing nature in her role, however, is of no less importance, rather the opposite. Molly's role of the designated driver serves to facilitate the drinking of other actors, such as her friend Alma.

Sometimes, the coordination of roles emerges in a more spontaneous fashion as a result of unexpected circumstances. Adaptation in these cases is achieved by co-opting other actors into the ritual. The coordination with these ritualistic roles that are co-opted seems to be important, even though the co-opted actors do not take part in the ritual. In the below excerpt, Laura provides some utterance of this role.

Laura: “A technique is to sleep at a friend's house. For example, last week we went to the city to drink and dance, but I was too drunk to drive back home (...), so I called Marta who lives in the city and she agreed to let me sleep

at her house to cool down. I didn't want to drive and take the risk, so we agreed on this thing, and the morning after, I could go back home."

As Laura says, her friend Marta plays the role of accommodating Laura. Marta is an actor who did not take a role in the ritual because she did not join Laura in drinking and dancing. Nevertheless, in order to adapt to the emergent circumstances, Laura co-opts Marta in the ritual as an actor who helps her to "cool down," and thus facilitates her coping with the alcohol regulations. Driver (1991:132) reminds us that one of the "social gifts" of a ritual is the provision of social order: "the reinforcement, if not the actual creation, of social order is perhaps the most obvious of ritual's functions." Further, Cheal (1989:269) explains that this social order provided by ritualization is "homeostatic" and thus refers to the actors' roles and their interactions, motivated to achieve an equilibrium among different interests and preferences in society. Following the above studies, the enactment of the above roles can by and large be interpreted with the aim of providing a sort of order to comply with certain norms and rules. In turn, the order around which the ritual roles are organized (e.g. certain actors drink, while other abstain from alcohol to be able to drive) influences the different interests and preferences among actors in the ritual; these differences are resolved through coordination and adaptation, which happens through planning the role (such as in the case of Molly and Nils), or it emerges in a more spontaneous fashion (as in the case of Laura and Marta).

The involvement and extensiveness of roles

The theme of adaptation leads to a discussion of the degree of involvement through which actors enact their role. As described in the family rituals of drinking, actors may perceive their role as symbolic, unique, almost sacred. Rook (1985:253) explains that the symbolic character of the ritual's role may incentivize actors to "opt for an extensive involvement," thus spurring actors to play roles that may go beyond the immediate purpose for which they are called to perform.

In this regard, it is interesting to observe the role played by bartenders in the ritual among friends. Normally, by serving wine, bartenders play the important role of being a service provider. In a ritual occasion, however, bartenders may not limit their role to

providing wines and beverages to customers. They may instead opt for an extensive interpretation of their role and join customers in drinking and feasting together. Symbolically, bartenders overcome, so to speak, the counter of the bar behind which they usually place themselves and sit side-by-side with customers. Hence, bartenders act in the same way as customers do by commenting and even criticizing the wine brands that they sell themselves. The extensiveness in the role played by bartenders can be viewed in the below observation that I recorded after having taken part in the ritual of drinking with Gjono and his friends at Simone's wine bar.

Field notes, 10.6.2014: After receiving our glasses, we went outside the bar and started a conversation about the wine that we were drinking: a Friulano (i.e. a wine from Friuli Venezia Giulia). The bartender, Simone, poured a glass of the same wine and literally jumped from the bar counter to our table and joined the conversation. Surprisingly, at least for me, Simone was rather critical toward the wine he had just served, and he questioned the quality of the Friulano that can be found in the market nowadays. He explained to us that years ago, the name of Friulano was Tocai, but the producers had to change it to Friulano due to a legal dispute with another wine from Hungary with a similar name (Tokaj). According to Simone, the changing of the name of the wine badly affected its taste. He said, "This is not as good as it used to be (...) they (i.e. Friulano's wine producers) can tell me whatever they want, but the wine is not the same anymore—you can only water the plants with this one."

Equally interesting is the role of wine retailers in constructing the contextual environment in which the ritual takes place. Particularly, the contextual environments in which wine rituals take place (e.g. bars, taverns, or even restaurants) are decorated with hand-crafted objects obtained from wine-related elements, such as corks, bottles, or wine boxes (see Pictures 25, 26, and 27).

In some cases, these environments are decorated with hand-crafted objects that require several years to be collected, selected, and assembled. For instance, Paolo explained me that it took decades to decorate his restaurant with wooden wine boxes, corks, and even old bottles. Some of the bottles that are shown in the entrance to Paolo's restaurant caught my attention. His father bought these bottles decades ago, but today they are no longer drinkable. In fact, according to Paolo "*if one drank them, they would probably taste like vinegar!*" However, the decomposition of the content of these bottles did not mean that these artefacts were discarded, rather the opposite. Paolo as well as his wife Patrizia, who helps him operate the restaurant, invested a great deal of time and energy in grooming these old bottles by collecting, cataloguing, and placing them at the centre of the restaurant in a wine cellaret obtained from shabby sideboard that had been restored for this purpose. These old bottles of wine are placed as a primary attraction that is central to the restaurant, and it gave me the feeling of a long tradition in the knowledge of wine; it says that the owner of the local restaurant has worked with wines since ages, and the dust covering these bottles is tangible proof of this.



Picture 25, 26 and 27 clockwise: Hand-crafted objects obtained from wine-related elements.

Other locations to purchase these objects are flea markets. In these markets, it is not unusual to buy old bottles for a cheap price along with collections of wine labels and even hand-crafted objects assembled with elements of wine bottles. Matteo, bartender and owner of a wine bar in Milano, possesses a unique clock obtained from a bottle of Dom Pérignon (see Picture 28). I discussed with Matteo the origin of this object, and an excerpt from this conversation is below.

Matteo: I bought it at a flea market in Treviso. It was covered in dust, and it was halfbroken. I gave him 5 EUR, nothing! I restored it, I made it functional and now it's here (...). My customers like it very much, it is almost the main attraction of the local (...). It's a Dom Pérignon bottle, you know (...).

Despite Matteo's arguable taste for objects and furnishings that decorate his wine bar, most of which appear to me rather kitsch, the role played by the clock is clear from the above excerpt. As he claims, he purchased the clock with the purpose of attracting customers. However, the symbolic meaning seems to relate more to the idea of a glorious tradition in wine culture represented by the brand of the bottle (i.e. Dom Pérignon), which is generally acknowledged as the most prestigious wine label in the market. The interesting point in this excerpt as well as in the previous utterance from Paolo and Patrizia is the incredible amount of time and work invested by my respondents in grooming these objects and using them to enhance the appeal of the contextual environment for their patrons.

McCracken (1986:79) suggests that the meaning underlying certain grooming rituals is the loading of extraordinary meanings onto the object "so that it, in turn, may transfer special heightened properties to an owner." Although McCracken is referring to the grooming rituals for objects that need to be maintained in order to express their meaning (such as, for instance, cars), the symbolic significance of these wine-related objects follow the same logic. Accordingly, Paolo and Patrizia as well as Matteo spend ample time and energy to cultivate wine objects in order to acquire meaningful features from them in terms of wine culture. Dom Pérignon means wine culture, and the grooming of the Dom Pérignon clock conveys the meaning of Matteo's bar as a local establishment

that possesses a glorious wine culture that is acknowledged worldwide. The same interpretation can be extended to Paolo and Patrizia.



Picture 28: The bottle of Dom Pérignon turned into a clock that Matteo bought.

The effort and time spent to decorate their restaurant by collecting old bottles and creating hand-crafted objects is aimed at charging the restaurant with a special connotation related to an ancient wine culture coming from the past.

Ritual audience

This section aims to describe and interpret the ritual audience or the group of friends who gather together to enact the ritual of drinking wine. In contrast to the previous ethnographic accounts in which I focused more on the values framing the ritual audience, here I instead delve into the relationship between audiences and places of consumption by drawing on other kinds of social bonds. In this sense, I seek to understand why and how friends choose to gather in certain places, such as wine bars, taverns, or even public spaces, such as the *piazza* (i.e. a town square). The underlying questions are the following: Are places of consumption all the same? How do places of consumption and the gathering of friends relate to one another? In answering the above

questions, this ethnography considers three different types of places for gathering: the piazza, wine bars and taverns, and what I call the wandering places.

The Piazza

When observing the gathering of people who are drinking together, the main point of the gathering may not be the drinking or tasting wine itself. Drinking rituals are rather performed to celebrate the social character of being together and sharing. In the previous chapter, the enactment of a family wine ritual aims to extend the symbolic meaning of sharing through the extensiveness of the gathering, including more people as family members, even when they are not actually related. The flattering of hierarchies among actors' roles, reported in the previous section, is another observation that suggests the strong character of sharing and being together in a whole assembly of friends, which is defined in this study as the ritual audience.

Nevertheless, besides the extensiveness in terms of individuals, there are other characteristics related to the ritual audience that can be reported. More precisely, the important characteristic that is particularly marked among friends relates to the physical context in which the ritual audience gathers.

Let us consider the below observation recorded in Italy.

Field notes, 15.7.2014 *We ordered a wine inside a little bar. The bar is quite narrow with just a bar counter and a little space where people queue to order the drinks. There is no space for sitting at a table, so once we got our glass of Prosecco, we went outside to the piazza. Oh, the piazza! Such a beautiful place to enjoy a glass of wine. Now, we are at Piazza delle Erbe, surrounded by ancient palaces. To the left, there is the Palazzo della Ragione, the medieval town hall of the city that back in the Middle Ages was used by the Republic of Venice to judge the condemned who were afterwards publicly executed right in this square. To the right, the*

characteristic houses of the old Jewish ghetto with all the beautiful cobblestone alleys. It's Friday, the piazza is crowded by one hundred, maybe more people. People stand all together with a glass of wine, drinking and chatting, laughing and screaming. As if the piazza was a huge bar without walls, surrounded by a magic atmosphere made by arts, history, and tradition.

This observation aims at describing the physical context surrounding the ritual of the Italian aperitivo. The gathering friends commence at a little bar where wines are ordered and paid for. However, the key physical context in which the wine is actually enjoyed is the piazza (i.e. the square), which can be viewed as an extension of the little bar where the gathering had previously begun. Of course, the use of the piazza as the primary physical context in which the wine ritual is carried out is necessary because of the rather narrowed premises of the bar that would not allow more than few people to be gathered inside. As such, the gathering people are somehow forced to enjoy the wine outside. Nevertheless, the piazza can be viewed as an extended context of the little bars, and together with the bars, it forms one single context wherein the ritual audience gathers.



Picture 29: Italian aperitivo in Piazza.

Further, this broader context and its audience are symbolic in the sense that people gather not so much for drinking as for togetherness. Drinking in the piazza is rather a way to pursue the ritual of being together without formalities and social barriers, to

share extraordinary experiences and emotions in a moment of universal connection (cfr. Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). This interpretation echoes the liminoid space introduced by Turner (1969), which is defined as “a place out of a place,” wherein “rites of integration” (Belk and Costa, 1998) help to reverse everyday conventional norms and rules. According to Turner, the liminoid space is composed of three stages: pre-liminoid stage, liminoid-stage, and post-liminoid stage.

In the pre-liminoid stage, the gathering is framed with formalities and distinctiveness. Consumers order wines at the bar according to formal rules of conduct, and the drinking occurs right outside the premises of these bars. Conversations among consumers are rather formal and separated between different groups and different wine cultures. On the one hand, men in white collars with their beautiful ties well-knotted around the neck drink fine wines served in big balloon glasses. Casually, dressed students enjoy cheap wines served in plastic glasses. The atmosphere is still quiet, the tone of voices is low, and the flea markets surrounding the square have just started dismantling their stands to go home.

The drinking goes further and the gathering seems to flow slowly but inexorably toward the liminoid stage. At this stage, everything starts transforming and taking another shape. The flea markets are no longer in the piazza, and people merge all together standing with glasses of wine and enjoying the act of drinking by which informality overcomes social barriers. In a sort of “spontaneous letting-be of the process” (Arnould and Price, 1993:41), wine is informally ordered at the bars to be enjoyed at the centre of the piazza and thus far away from the premises of the bars. Bartenders join the gathering, and they drink together with customers, so the formal barriers that normally characterize the relationships between a service provider and the consumer are somehow disabled in favour of a more casual atmosphere. The broader physical context enables conversations and socialization despite the presence of different social statuses among consumers and their distinctive views on wine culture. People dressed in business suits and drinking from sophisticated balloon glasses join students who instead are casually dressed and drinking a more modest tap wine. The absence of walls and doors produce a feeling that enlarges the audience because it invites more people to freely partake in the ritual.

It is now 10 o'clock in the evening. Time to go somewhere else, perhaps to the restaurant for something to eat or perhaps to some other bars to join friends. The gathering reaches the post-liminal stage, which means that everyone goes back to his or her everyday life, but they are somehow transformed by having experienced the piazza. Some people expand their circle of friends or acquaintances, or they even meet new people to date. Gjono accounts for this: "*I met Giulia in this piazza (...) afterwards we start dating.*" Others have increased their knowledge of wines by talking with other consumers and trying new wines. Stephen has perhaps the most representative account: "*Last week we tasted these biodynamic wines (i.e. organic wines obtained by employing biodynamic methods). Not that bad I'd say.*" Even the piazza is transformed. Once the crowd has left, there remain broken glasses, cigarettes butts, and even personal objects on the ground that some consumers have lost or perhaps just forgotten during a moment of universal connection.

Wine bars and taverns

The above description of the piazza as a homogeneous liminoid place is not always the public location in which friends gather to drink wine. Ritualization may be enacted in different physical contexts that underlay different types of ritual audiences and that in turn suggests distinctive ways of enacting ritualization. Some places target those people that Gjono defined as "pretending to be wine experts" and who interpret the ritual with formalities and conventions, while some other places are more suited for "spontaneous drinking" among other types of consumers, such as students. The 'Baessato wine bar' can be viewed as an example of those places where "*cool people go.*" It is located in one of the most renowned streets in the heart of the historical city centre of Padua, Italy. The atmosphere is quite formal, suggested by the white uniforms worn by the waiters. The owner of the wine bar explained to me that lawyers, businessmen, and trendy people are frequent customers, even though the fine reputation of the bar may attract a varied range of people. In these formal places, such as Baessato, ordering a glass of wine implies a more formal script. When gathering inside the bar, people wait to be seated at tables. The wine choice is made from a list that is normally well organized according to the type of grape (e.g. red, white, and sparkling) and the country of origin, if not in certain cases the terroir (e.g. Italy, Piemonte). The wine choice is eventually

collected by the service personnel who afterwards come back to the table to serve the wines with care and formality. The social interactions within the audience may follow the same mood. First of all, the fact that the waiters are dressed in a uniform renders the atmosphere of the place quite formal. It is clear who the client is and who the server is. Further, although the wine bar is often quite crowded and noisy, which could suggest a chaotic atmosphere, in reality a group of friends is clearly divided at separate tables. It is in fact quite rare to observe a mixture of people randomly chatting to one another at the bar counter or standing in the centre of the place while drinking. People are normally grouped at a table and interact with each other but within their assembly of friends. The furnishing of the bar also expresses this formality of the ritual script. Prestigious bottles of wine decorate the wall of the bar. These bottles are illuminated by the spotlights that emphasize their sophisticated label, while large punch bowls filled with ice and bottles of champagne show the methodical care with which certain wines are stored in order to be served according to the right temperature. Glasses are collected in a precise formal order that follows the type of wine being served: big balloons for red wines are on one side, separate from shallow glasses for white wines and flutes for sparkling wines.

On the other hand, the ‘Severino’s enoteca’ is a place that can be viewed as an opposite example of where other types of people gather together. Severino’s is a tavern from the last century, located in the proximity of the university campus. The atmosphere is rather informal, almost domestic, wherein the service personnel dress in casual clothes and cannot be distinguished from the customers. An interview with the owner of the bar, who everybody friendlily calls by his strange nickname “Wolf,” revealed that “*the usual customers here are students.*” However, “*it is not uncommon to serve more mature customers who used to come here when they were students.*” Drinking a glass of wine at Severino’s means standing with it since it is rather narrow inside, and there are no tables and no chairs. People usually order wine at the bar counter and afterwards the glass is drunk outside the local, right in the proximity of the street, where cars and motorcycles sometimes have to honk to make space among the customers. Marco, a frequent customer, describes why people normally come to this place and order a glass of wine.

Marco: *At Severino's, it is fascinating because in this place, time seems to have stopped. Normally if you want to order a wine you chose among a list of wines that are handwritten on a blackboard standing on the main wall of the bar. Wolf (i.e. the owner) is an incredibly easy-going guy. He knows everything about wines. He can tell you why that wine has this name, where it comes from, what the story behind it is, and so on. I think he is great in getting you fascinated by wines, and it actually works!"*

As Marco reports, the interactions among people are rather direct, and the socialization is rather spontaneous. It is difficult to distinguish groups of friends because people often mix with each other in a very friendly fashion, resulting in a typically chaotic Italian atmosphere. Severino's furnishing style is quite modest, suggesting another type of script compared to Baessato, the previously described wine bar, in the sense that wines are randomly stored on a wine shelf yet generally divided between red wines on the right side of the shelf and white wine on the left. The wine list is mainly composed of local wines with some exceptions. The few French Champagne bottles are exposed on a separate shelf, and they are almost hidden by the door entrance. As the image of a tavern from last century taverns would suggest, it is quite dark inside the bar, and there is strong smell of wine that pervades the whole space of the tavern. There are no large punch bowls to chill the wine; wines are rather cooled in a refrigerator and served right at the bar counter. At Severino's, the choice of glasses is not methodical; regardless of the type of wine served, the glass does not change.

Despite the striking differences between the two local bars described in the above description, the common denominator is that these are not just places where my respondents are habitués; they are rather special places that pattern a certain ritual audience: "*Cool people go there,*" while "*students are the normal group at that bar.*" Maffesoli (1990:215) interprets these places as "holy places in the religious sense of the term, where different forms of cult take place." More precisely, Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999:40) suggest these places are "postmodern common places" and refer to them as places in which "it is possible to recognize oneself, while identifying oneself with a community." These places, each one with their surrounding physical context,

enable the enactment of the ritual in which different processes of group identity are nurtured. In other words, it can be argued that these places are sacred, symbolic places where people identify with a community. This identification is expressed or displayed through a certain way of performing the ritual that finds its modus operandi through the physical context surrounding the act of ritualization. In some places (e.g. Baessato), the ritual of drinking is formal, as the surrounding context would suggest. In other places (e.g. Severino's), some rituals are carried out in a more casual fashion, as casual as the context in which people gather. Thus, what at first glance could just be seen as an idiosyncratic choice of the context for enacting a ritual, it turns out to be more symbolic in the sense that the physical context is not only functional to construct a certain type of ritual, but the context shapes a certain way of doing and expressing identification with a particular community.

The wandering places

More utterances of the context of the ritual audience bring to surface another facet of the places surrounding the ritual audience: a mix of private and public places in which ritual audiences constantly assemble, disperse, and re-assemble to enact a ritual of drinking wine. Gatherings of friends rotate among different places, such private houses, public wine bars, or even cocktail bars; eventually many gatherings fade away late in the night at some other places. Each of these places underlies fragmented forms of ritual audiences that constantly join and re-join according to different meanings and scripts. Nevertheless, although they are fragmented, these audiences stay together through a common sense of being together in different places at different points in time. Thus, this section on what I call the 'wandering places' aims to capture the itinerant dimension of certain rituals among friends in which a community of people, albeit disperse, are mentally united as one single audience that transcends the state of physical assembly.

The aspect of wandering places can be seen in the excerpt below. It is an interview recorded during my participant observation with a group of friends (i.e. graduate students at Stockholm University). The informants are Nils, Molly, and Oscar, and this excerpt refers to their own description of how friends conduct the after-work drinking ritual on a Friday evening.

- Nils: *Normally, me and a small group of friends gather at Oscar's place or at my place. Doesn't really matter. Everybody brings some wine, usually a bag-in-box, and we warm up for the night.*
- Molly: *Yes, I mean the bag-in-box is the cheapest wine you can buy at Systembolaget. I mean considering the quantity of wine you purchase, and it is not that bad*
- Nils: *Yes, it is true we all like wines here (...). I mean I would never drink from a bag-in-box, but at home I always have one bag-in-box ... you never know ... if someone shows up, at least you have something to drink ... but I normally use it for cooking*
- Me: *So, after this what do you do?*
- Nils: *We go to some bars here in Södermalm. There are plenty of bars. Some other students maybe join us (...). We text each other and we agree on a place.*
- Me: *What you drink in these bars?*
- Oscar: *Let's say that in these bars wine is not the key beverage. Here we drink beers, maybe some cocktails ... you know ... not everyone likes wine and in these bars, wines are really expensive. For the same amount of money, you may get two beers instead of a glass of wine*
- Nils: *Well, it's not that true. I still keep on going with wines*
- Molly: *Whatever the purpose is to get drunk. There are those who drink wine, those who drink beer, and some others like a gin & tonic ...*
- Me: *What do you do in these places?*
- Nils: *Well, some dance, some others chat, we have fun! But the funny thing is that at a certain point, let's say around midnight, these bars are so crowded that you won't be able to find your friends. Last night, I thought I was alone. I could not find my friends anymore. So, I texted Oscar, and he was already in another bar!*
- Molly: *Yeah! You come together, and afterwards we may split to other places.*
- Oscar: *For sure, I normally end up late in the night in this bar (i.e. the bar called "Lemon") because the queuing at that time has faded away, and you may get in quite easily. That would not be possible let's say at midnight when the queue is really huge!*

The discussion among Nils, Molly, and Oscar describes a common ritual among friends. Of particular interest is the order through which friends seem to pattern the places of gathering. Driver (1991:132-4) argues that "the reinforcement, if not the actual creation, of social order is perhaps the most obvious of a ritual's functions, [and ritualization produces] pathways or channels along which human behaviour may move without always having to redesign its course." Following Driver, the above excerpt

states utterances of how ritualization implies a sort of temporal and spatial order that orchestrates the gathering of the ritual audience in different ways at different times. At first, friends gather as a small group to “warm up.” Later, the audience moves on to another place, typically a bar in the city centre to aggregate with a larger group of people. Eventually, the audience may disaggregate only to later aggregate again into small groups that now gather at another place.

Further, there is another interesting aspect emerging from this excerpt. The friends imply that different scripts are carried out at different places. Treise, Wolburg, and Otnes (1999:23) find a close connection between the places where college students pattern their drinking rituals and the type of beverages they drink and activities in which they engage in these places. My informants reported similar correlations. At home, friends drink from a bag-in-box because it is “cheaper” and because the gathering is comprised of individuals who “*like wine*.” The use of a bag-in-box implies the script of drinking to “*warm up*.” Subsequently, the drinking is carried out in other places, such as bars located downtown. In these bars, friends drink different types of beverages, not only wine, but also cocktails or beers; thus wines are only one of the possible alternatives because, as Molly says, the purpose in these places is “*to get drunk*,” rather than to warm up like at home. Eventually, the last place in which a smaller group of people gather together is another bar. However, at this point the ritual script is not framed by different beverages. These places are rather chosen because queues are shorter and thus “*it is easier to get in*.”

When comparing the wandering places and the piazza, some correlations may be drawn. Similar to the piazza, the wandering places underlie the liminoid characteristic that is more structured and ordered. On a whole, private and public places around to which friends rotate are neither fully private nor public; they are instead one whole place, fragmented into different places. Nevertheless, each place offers the location of a liminal stage, wherein friends detach from everyday reality, become together as one whole audience, and finally be reintegrated into their everyday reality. At home, the warm up situation is the pre-liminal stage in which a small and distinctive group of friends get together to initiate the ritual. Warming up here can thus be interpreted as a sort of initial mental state of being detached from everyday life. The core ritual enacted through gathering in “other bars” can be viewed as a liminal stage, as the initial

narrowed group of friends is enlarged to include other friends. Further, this is the stage wherein the mental state of being together as one whole gathering is at its peak. Beverages are heavily shared, and the effects of alcohol reinforce this mental state of extraordinary experience and detachment from the ordinary. Eventually, the final stage or the post-liminal stage may coincide with the group of friends dispersing to other places, where queuing is shorter, so getting into these bars is easier. The shorter queuing here may refer to that moment in which the sensation of feasting is fading away and the perception of that extraordinary moment of detachment from reality is coming to an end. Further, the splitting up of the gathering may also suggest the disaggregation of the sense of togetherness that just moments before was at its peak with dancing and sharing alcohol.

The transformation effect provided through ritualization is completed at this stage. After having experienced extraordinary moments of alcohol consumption, participants come back to reality and report an enhanced sense of friendship owing to sharing alcohol. Nils, Molly, and Oscar state that they became “*good friends*” after having shared alcohol in such occasions. In other similar excerpts, Gjono and his friends provide the same account when describing their friendship as “*grounded in these moments of drinking wine together.*” These latter statements from my respondents may recall Douglas (1987) when referring to drinking as strong element of social cohesion. In these terms, the wandering places (as well as the piazza or the other distinctive places mentioned above) not only allow friendships to commence and facilitate a sense of togetherness, but they furthermore serve to instil meaning and enhanced qualities in these relationships that persist over time in some cases.

Summing up the findings

This chapter concludes now summing up the main findings and setting the stage for the second step of the analysis (which is carried out in the next chapter). Each structural element of the ritual process is presented in the proposed framework in Chapter Two is first related to service terminology and concepts, and subsequently connected to a selected empirical utterance. The key findings of each structural element are then summarized. A table at the end of the chapter (i.e. table 4) is offered, which serves as input to the next chapter, where each element of the ritual process is further discussed in detail within service literature and with insights from ritual literature.

Ritual Artefacts: symbolic resources

In the preliminary version of the theoretical framework, ritual artefacts are defined as those consumer products and objects in general that are used in a ritual setting. These ritual artefacts convey symbolic meanings communicating a symbolic message. From a service perspective, the ritual artefacts and their symbolic messages are resources that are used to obtain value. Particularly, in service consumers' products are the service providers' offerings communicating certain value propositions, thus relating to the potential idea of value that customers transform into a realized value.

In the ethnographic episodes, these ritual artefacts are wines, which are viewed by the customers as sacred symbolic resources allowing status transition. In the family rituals, wines are drunk to "*get relaxed*" and thus symbolically viewed as a means to transit from the work to the family status. In the rituals among friends, wines are used to "*become more sociable*" or even to be "*a cool guy*." In this sense, the findings report utterances of how in a ritual context, customers tend to attach to wines many feelings and emotions that in turn transform an ordinary wine into something special because when used in a ritual occasion, these wines permit the construction of identity related projects.

In addition, the material aspects of these wines are importantly recognized by the informants. In family rituals, wines for relaxation materialized through certain

organoleptic characteristics (e.g. “not demanding”), packaging (e.g. shabby cardboards, half-litre carafes), and even the surrounding physical environment—like the informants’ clothes—are arranged in a way to form a sense of “homeyness” thus making the symbolic idea of wine more salient. Similarly, in the rituals among friends, certain wine bottles, the pairing of wine taste with certain food, the shape of determined glasses, the physical environment of certain bars utters a symbolic idea of wine, thereby helping informants to make a symbolic idea of wines among friends more salient.

Therefore, the findings report utterances of customers’ products as symbolic resources. Customers imbued wines with feelings and emotions, transforming regular wines into symbolic wines and allowing the construction of identity related projects. Emphasis on the material aspects of these products (and objects in general) is reported as these material aspects render explicit those symbolic connotations expressing customers’ symbolic idea of value.

Ritual Scripts: processes of resource integration

Ritual scripts are customers’ behaviours aimed at using artefacts. They prescribe customers’ behavioural sequence through a set of conventions, norms, and rules guiding the usage of artefactual materials. From a service perspective, ritual scripts may be viewed as customers’ processes aimed at integrating resources while interacting with the surrounding context.

In the ethnographic episodes, drinking rituals are carried out through certain scripts that are framed by and within a mainstream culture. In the family rituals, scripts are anchored to certain general family beliefs according to which wines are bought only in certain shop and subsequently decommodified from market signs to recover a sense of authenticity (e.g. grooming the wine or implementing a half-litre carafe to pour the wine). The procedural sequence through which wines are drunk also pertains to the choice of appropriate glasses or food or even dresses. In the rituals among friends, scripts are drawn from certain general beliefs according to which wines are drunk, imitating the connoisseurship taste ritual. Accordingly, glasses are swirled, and wine taste is defined before engaging in drinking by using connoisseurship language. Similar

to rituals in families, the choice of appropriate glasses and the pairing of food with the wine taste are important norms blindly followed among friends.

Though these behaviours do not only reproduce blind observance of a mainstream culture, but also a high degree of improvisation and spontaneity is emphasized to symbolically project customers' identities. In family rituals, the script of drinking wines is carried out in a casual fashion to perform relaxation and to enjoy the family, which signals the acquisition of the family identity. In the rituals among friends, swirling glasses and taste definitions are not only blind observance of the connoisseurship taste ritual, but these scripts are performed with a high degree of spontaneity and improvisation to affirm individual preferences and thus evoke subjective symbolic identities.

Again, the findings report utterance about ritual scripts as symbolic resource integration behaviours structured by and within a mainstream culture. Nevertheless, customers exhibit spontaneity and improvisation to signal their subjective identities.

Rituals roles: interactions and coordination among resource integrators

Ritual roles identify the different performances that actors carried out within a ritual. These roles and their performances may be rigidly or vaguely scripted depending on the expectations of the ritual. In turn, expectations regulate interactions and coordination among actors. They can be generally translated into service as roles, like resource integrators (i.e. customers, providers, institutions) interacting and coordinating each other to create value.

In the previous ethnographic episodes, rituals roles emerge in symbolic interactions among different roles and actors. In the family rituals, different roles interact by rigidly reproducing certain social structures according to which “*wines are for men*” and thus serve wines. Women instead “*take care of other stuff*” like arranging the dinner. Interactions of other roles may be more negotiated and mediated by different social realities and structures (e.g. the role of arranging the table of aperitifs as mediation between the Swedish and the Italian social order). Yet, roles may be also extensively

performed and thus stretch the interactions beyond the structures of drinking as such (e.g. informants playing an extended role of decorating the home with wine-related objects). In rituals among friends, roles and their interactions may be structured within certain social hierarchies (e.g. gender). Yet, in some rituals, roles and interactions may be also more flattering as social positions, such work status, are dissolved when actors become more sociable. Extensiveness of the role and interactions are also reported with regard to bartenders, who join customers to drink wine or to restaurateurs, who, similarly to family rituals, engage in decorating to acquire special connotations.

The existence of a fragmentation of roles brings up different expectations of the ritual, which are symbolically coordinated beyond reciprocal differences through feelings and emotions (e.g. taking care of others). Feelings and emotions enhance involvement and spur collaboration among actors. In the family rituals, the different expectations on how to perform the role of arranging the table for the aperitifs are successfully coordinated because of the importance of the ritual. Actors manifest enhanced emotions and feelings toward the ritual, which in turn enhance the degree of involvement and willingness to collaborate. Therefore, they manage to overcome differences and agree on how aperitifs should be served. In the rituals among friends, coordination among different expectations are facilitated through certain ritual roles (e.g. caretakers, host-roles), and whether spontaneously or more or less pre-planned in advance, actors engage these roles with the aim of taking care of others without necessarily obtaining benefits in return.

Therefore, findings report utterance on the emergence character of roles of resource integrators, interacting and coordinating each other in a symbolic fashion. Feelings and emotions are key as they facilitate coordination among actors carrying different expectations of the ritual.

Ritual Audience: Customers symbolic ecosystems

The ritual audience refers to a group of individuals and related contexts in which a ritual is carried out. Ritual audiences gather symbolically in liminoid contexts, where *communitas* of actors develop alternative ways of being together (i.e. *communitas*).

From a service perspective, a ritual audience refers to customer's realm or customers ecosystems wherein customers and other actors (e.g. service providers) gather together to cocreate value.

In the ethnographic episodes, ritual audiences are social groups united in a symbolic gathering (i.e. *communitas*) to enact wine rituals. In the family rituals, *communitas* refer to the extension of family members toward "other members." Daniele's family extended toward me, Antonio's family extended toward the wine producers, and Nicola's family extended toward the doctor. These family *communitas* temporarily hold together by sharing a feeling (e.g. conviviality, shaking hands, being together) to cocreate. The physical places wherein families coalesce are also virtually extended toward other premises (e.g. family premises extended toward the wine producer's vineyards), which are viewed as extraordinary places wherein informants leave their work status behind to engage in collective family identities. In the rituals among friends, *communitas* refer to the extension of friendships toward "other members" (e.g. bartenders, other customers). These *communitas* of friends temporarily hold together by sharing a feeling (e.g. being together) to cocreate. The physical places wherein friends convene (e.g. wine bars, taverns) are also virtually extended toward other premises (e.g. the town square "la Piazza" or the wandering places), which are viewed as extraordinary service places, wherein informants leave their ordinary life behind to engage in collective friendship identities.

Hence, the findings report utterance of the symbolic customer ecosystems (i.e. *communitas* assembled in liminoid time and places) as extraordinary gatherings of people and contexts holding together physically and virtually through sharing a feeling (i.e. togetherness). In these symbolic ecosystems, customers and other actors develop collective identities.

Ritual Structural Elements	Selected Empirical Utterance	Key Findings from a Ritual Perspective
Ritual Artefacts (i.e. Symbolic Resources)	<p><u>Families' rituals</u>: wines facilitate relaxation and the transition from work to family status. Material aspects of wines (e.g. shabby cardboard, half-litre carafe) the surrounding objects (e.g. home furnishing), and the informants' clothes are important to express this symbolic idea of wine.</p> <p><u>Friends' rituals</u>: wines help one become more sociable, or to be a cool guy. Material aspects of wines (e.g. certain bottles, pairing wine with food, the shape of glasses) and the physical environment of bars are important to express a certain symbolic idea of wine.</p>	Customer's feelings and emotions transform products into symbolic resources allowing construction of identity related projects. Emphasis on materiality as it renders explicit those symbolic connotations expressing customer's symbolic idea of value.
Ritual Scripts (i.e. Processes of Resource Integration)	<p><u>Families' rituals</u>: carrying out scripts is framed by and within a mainstream culture according to which wines are bought in certain shops, and subsequently deconstructed (e.g. grooming or adopting a half-litre carafe). Though, scripts are also performed in a casual fashion to signal transition of family identity.</p> <p><u>Friends' rituals</u>: friends carried out their scripts by following blind observance of certain rules and norms drawn from the connoisseurship taste ritual (e.g. swirling and defining wine taste). Though, these scripts are also performed with improvisation and spontaneity to signal subjective preferences.</p>	Scripts as symbolic behaviours structured by a mainstream culture but also spontaneity and improvisation are emphasized, as they signal customers' subjective identities.
Ritual Roles (i.e. Resource Integrators Interactions and Coordination)	<p><u>Families' rituals</u>: Interactions among ritual roles may be rigidly framed to replicate social structures (e.g. wines are for men) or more negotiated (e.g. arranging aperitifs) or extensively interpreted (e.g., decorating home with wine-related objects). Coordination among fragmentation of roles and expectations is a matter of feeling and emotions enhancing involvement and collaboration.</p> <p><u>Friends' rituals</u>: Interactions among ritual roles may be rigidly framed to replicate social structures (e.g. gender) or more flattered when actors become more sociable (e.g. resolved work status). Extensiveness of ritual roles and interactions among friends can be viewed with bartenders joining customers to drink wine or restaurateurs decorating restaurants to acquire special connotations. Coordination is facilitated through certain actors manifesting particular feelings and emotions in terms of caring for others (e.g. caretaker, host roles) without necessarily obtaining benefits in return.</p>	Emerging roles of resource integrators interacting and coordinating one another in a symbolic fashion. Feelings, emotions, involvement facilitate coordination and spur extensiveness of roles.
Ritual Audience (i.e. Customers Symbolic Ecosystems)	<p><u>Families' rituals</u>: temporal gathering of extended families (e.g. Daniele, Antonio, and Nicola symbolically extending the boundaries of their families toward other members) united by sharing a feeling (e.g. conviviality, shaking hands, being together). The gathering takes place in extended contexts (e.g. the extended family premises), which are viewed as extraordinary places wherein families leave behind their ordinary life to engage in collective identities.</p> <p><u>Friends' rituals</u>: temporal gathering of extended friends (e.g., bartenders, other customers) united by sharing a feeling (e.g. togetherness). The gathering takes place in extended contexts (e.g. town square, wandering places), which are viewed as extraordinary places wherein friends leave behind their ordinary life to engage in collective identities.</p>	Customers symbolic ecosystems (i.e. liminoid) as extraordinary extended gathering of customers temporarily detached from the ordinary (i.e. communitas). Holding together, physically and virtually, through the sharing of a feeling (i.e. togetherness).

Table 4: Summary of the key findings.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

The discussion in this chapter is aimed at answering the two research questions formulated in Chapter Two. The chapter is organized into three sections. Section one further elaborates on the preliminary conceptual framework previously introduced in Chapter Two and also provides a figure for comprehension (i.e. figure 10). Subsequently, the framework is evaluated in depth in sections two and three. Particularly, section two examines each structural element of the ritual framework and addresses research question one (*How do the structural elements of ritual contribute to customer value creation?*) Table 5 is offered at the end of the section. This table summarizes the analysis in relation to each element of the framework and identifies key knowledge drawn from a customer rituals perspective. Section three answers research question two (*How can value be understood from a customer rituals perspective?*) by portraying value from a customer rituals perspective. The discussion in section three is recapped in table 6, which concludes the chapter.

Section one – Introducing customer rituals framework

The customer rituals framework draws attention to value creation as an emerging process that unfolds in the interplay of four structural elements. In brief, the elements identified in the framework are as follows:

- 1) Symbolic resources, i.e. configurations of feelings, emotions, and material elements;
- 2) Customer processes of product usage and resource integration, i.e. multi-layered and script-based
- 3) Roles of resource integrators, i.e., interactions and coordination among customers;
- 4) Customer symbolic ecosystems, i.e. *communitas* or that extended, self-selecting, and temporary ritual context wherein value is created and determined.

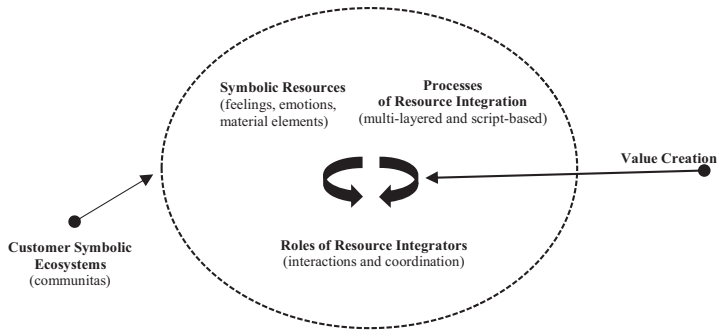


Figure 10: Refined version of the customer rituals framework.

As it will be discussed more in depth in the next section, customer rituals rely on certain artefacts, which are service provider offerings. When used in a ritual context, these offerings are not only perceived for the proposed value; broadly, these offerings are imbued with symbolic connotations. Rituals are sacred, extraordinary moments of value creation that customers separate from mundane value creation because rituals are linked to the construction of a temporary identity (i.e. status transition). As such, customers develop special feelings and emotions toward both provider offerings and which feelings and emotions transform provider value propositions into symbolic resources. Nevertheless, material aspects of these offerings, and more in general of the objects surrounding the ritual context, are also important to recognize because from a rituals perspective, material elements help customers to render more explicit a symbolic idea of value. The framework identifies symbolic resources as customer feelings and emotions as key resources applied to provider offerings to create value. In addition, symbolic resources also refer to material elements of provider offerings and other objects surrounding the ritual context as co-contributors to value creation.

The second structural element refers to customer processes of resource usage and integration. These processes are defined as script-based and multi-layered. Scripts draw on cosmological beliefs of a mainstream culture, that broadly frame carrying out a

collective practice almost always equal to itself. At one layer, these scripts structure value creation by portraying a common way of how resources are used and integrated. Though, carrying out a ritual script is not only blind reproduction of a collective practice. Spontaneity and creativity are also important features that characterize these processes. Compared to mundane value creation, ritualization is more involved and experiential. It implies being observant of the details in the way resources are used and integrated, which is substantiated through customer spontaneity and creativity. In addition, spontaneity and creativity are ways to express one's identity in relation to the collective. Thus, at another layer, ritual scripts are more cognitive, involved, and experiential and refer to customers' individual preferences and judgment about value creation. These two layers, collective value creating practices and subjective experiences, are intertwined in the same behavioural sequence of action and both contribute to value creation.

The third structural element primarily refers to customer ritual roles. Altogether, these roles are understood as roles of resource integrators. Some of these roles are rigidly scripted, as they are framed by certain social norms and values structuring their interactions. Some other roles are instead more vaguely scripted, allowing for extended interpretations about role enactment and interactions. Particularly, this fragmentation of roles suggests that in rituals converge a broader range of resources, expectations, and interests on cocreation. This fragmentation of roles, expectations, and interests are successfully coordinated through feelings and emotions that are manifested through altruistic interactions. These altruistic interactions, more than the calculative service-for-service interactions, are key in rituals to coordinate customers toward cocreation.

The fourth structural element is the customer symbolic ecosystems. These ecosystems entail an extended group of customers gathering together for ritual cocreation. As the figure depicts, they also include not only individuals, but also resources, processes, and roles. Though, the key element characterizing customer ecosystems is the group of customers and other related subjects (i.e. family members, groups of friends). The customer ecosystem is defined as symbolic because it refers to the concept of liminality (i.e. liminoid), which is an ambiguous social situation typical of rituals, where everyday social norms and values are temporarily suspended in favour of a homogeneous

aggregation of individuals. This homogeneous aggregation of individuals refers to a type of gathering defined as *communitas*. *communitas* are both physical and virtual interconnections between customers wherein value is created and determined. *communitas* are self-selecting (i.e. spontaneous gathering) temporarily extended (i.e. stretched to other members, such as, for instance, providers) and last just for the moment of the ritual, where the glue is the shared feeling of togetherness. Further, customers' symbolic ecosystems also include service contexts (e.g. houses where family gather together or wine bars where friends assemble). These service contexts are not only physically used for the service they provide, but broadly they are viewed as ritual places in which a need for togetherness is satisfied. The extension of cocreation toward others individuals and contexts render the boundaries of these customer ecosystems less certain. This is the reason why the above figure portrays customers' symbolic ecosystems with a dotted line. Finally, the two converging arrows depicted in the figure refer to the interplay of these four structural elements described above and to the creation and determination of value as it unfolds in the interplay of these four structural elements.

Section two – Customer rituals as an emerging process

This section answers the first research question: “*How do the structural elements of ritual contribute to customer value creation?*” To answer the above question, each structural element is analysed and discussed separately. Though, it is important to note that when ritualizing, these elements are not really separated from one another. Rather, customer rituals unfold in the interplay of the four structural elements. Nevertheless, discussing elements separately is useful for identifying key characteristics in relation to each element and understanding how each element contributes to value creation. At the end of this second section, a table is offered, which summarizes the most important aspects emerging from the analysis conducted from a service perspective with insights from the ritual lens. In addition, the table highlights key knowledge that this framework may help to uncover in relation to each element.

Symbolic resources

The customer rituals process relies on ritual artefacts that are goods and offerings embedding value propositions from service providers. Though, when used in a ritual process, customers attach feelings and emotions to goods and offerings, thereby transforming value propositions into symbolic resources, conveying a symbolic idea of value. The following section is aimed at discussing how and why goods and offerings become symbolic resources from a customer rituals perspective. Further, it explains the role played by material aspects of goods and objects in value creation.

Symbolic resources as configuration of feelings, emotions, and materiality

The customer rituals process of value creation pays much attention to goods and offerings not as value propositions, the embedded knowledge and skills of provider offerings (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), but as a means to achieve important goals in the customer’s life. Moreover, goods and offerings from a customer rituals perspective are not only instruments delivering value propositions (Nordin and Kowalkowski, 2010). As Heinonen and Stradvik (2015) suggest, this is in fact the service provider’s perspective. In rituals, these goods are instead viewed as sacred artefacts allowing the

pursuit of identity projects (e.g. Rook, 1985; Belk et al., 1989) through feelings and emotions that customers attach to goods and offerings transforming service providers' value propositions into customers' symbolic idea of value. This implies that from a customer rituals perspective, goods are important not only for the instrumental service they provide, but broadly, customers perceive provider offerings as symbolic resources.

Altogether, the ethnographic episodes account for the above analysis. Wines are not only perceived as a means to drink. Broadly, wines allow status transition, such as, transitioning from work to family status; wines may also be important in one becoming more sociable among friends or to gain new identities, such as being one of the "cool guys" among a group of friends. As such, what is key is not so much the instrumental promises that a service provider may offer to customers (e.g. drinking), but that customers' perceptions, feelings, and emotions are of key importance in transforming wines into a symbolic artefact used to pursue customers' identity projects (e.g. status transitions). This perspective is emphasized also in Heinonen and Strandvik (2015:478) when suggesting that "the offering is essentially a recipe for how a provider can be involved in a customer's value-in-use, driven by the *customer's configuration of activities, perceptions, and emotions*" (emphasis added). Though, the rituals perspective takes this observation one step further. The material appearance of goods and offering is just as important to recognize because material elements of resources substantiate, make salient, a symbolic idea of value.

For instance, in the first ethnographic episode, for Daniele, the wine for acquiring a new identity (from work to family) is not a commercial wine. It is shabby cardboard box wine that it has been arranged in particular setting to appear as an authentic, household wine. Thus, labels and signs reminiscent of market connotations are stripped away to recover this aspect of authenticity in relation to domestic consumption. Similarly, Antonio and Kerstin both use a half-litre carafe to pour wine from a bag-and-box because bag-and-boxes are provider offerings communicating certain value propositions, which are not in line with the customer's symbolic idea of taste. The implementation of a half-litre carafe serves on the one hand to hide bad market connotations related to a bag-and-box; at the same time, the half-litre carafe helps to make evident the desired taste of wine. This intriguing, fluid role of wine ranging from the materiality in partaking of it to the explication of related symbolic meanings can be

viewed not only in wines. Broadly, all the physical aspects surrounding the ritual process help to make salient this symbolic idea of taste. Drinking wine at home requires the recognition of a household environment, an appearance of “hominess,” as it has been interpreted in the findings (McCracken, 1989). The hominess connotation is made evident by several tangible things: the casual clothes that Daniele wears before starting the ritual; the ornaments and objects made with bottles of wines, corks, and other elements that furnish the house, including the physical presence of the family members. Everything in the surrounding context is arranged in a way that does not only communicate a certain symbolic idea of value, but it expresses that idea and makes it more salient. Utterance from the drinking rituals among friends echoes the same logic. The shape of certain glasses, the pairing of certain foods and wines, and the physical environment of certain wine bars compared to others, display a certain culture of drinking wine and that somehow helps to be expressed. Wine for socializing is not only a shared meaning among friends. The sociability is concretely articulated when wines are swallowed, implying visible gestures, such as shaking hands. The tones of voices are higher, conversations are improved, and a shy person becomes confident and cool, able to talk to foreigners.

The above interpretations find further validation in ritual literature. According to Douglas ([1979] 2002), material aspects of consumer goods do not only communicate an idea of taste—they prove it. As Douglas ([1979] 2002:51) explains: “The proof of a pudding is in the eating. If no one ever ate the food, they would be no way of judging one opinion truer than another. Physical consumption allows proving, testing, or demonstrating that the experience in question is feasible.” McCracken (1988:71) echoes the above claim, when stating that ritualization relies on objects, such as “clothing, transportation, food, housing exteriors and interiors, and adornment [and which objects] all serve as media for the expression of the cultural meaning that constitutes our world.” Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) add to this point an important empirical argument. They found that the American Thanksgiving ritual is not only a meaning. It is also about displaying material abundance, such as meals, dresses, and furniture. With no display of such material abundance, the meaning of this American ritual would not be the same. When interpreting the above observation with respect to service literature, the following can be noted. Vargo and Lusch (2004) posit that customer goods and objects in general are a rather passive resource (i.e. operand

resource) because value is not embedded in goods. Rather, value is obtained only when knowledge, skills, feelings, and emotions (i.e. operant resources) are applied to goods. Nevertheless, the above observations drawn from a rituals perspective provide instead a more holistic view on the role of these resources, as material appearance of goods also help customers to make more salient a symbolic idea of value. In a way, it seems that goods, although they do not provide value per se, they are not solely passive recipients upon which customers apply their own resources, either. Nevertheless, knowledge, skills, feelings, and emotions are decisive for obtaining value over goods. From a customer rituals perspective, material aspects of goods, together with knowledge, skills, feelings, and emotions all partake to obtain value. This observation is also confirmed at some point in service literature. Campbell et al. (2013:6) point out that goods are in fact not always passive resources, as they “work on operand resources [alike] operand resources also work on humans in many ways.” Grönroos (2011) suggests the same thing when noting that although value lies in the application of knowledge and skills, physical or tangible things may also be useful to transmit service value.

Summary of the analysis:

Goods and offerings are not only value propositions (which is a service provider's perspective). When used in a ritual context, goods and offerings are symbolic resources (i.e. configuration of materiality, feelings, and emotions) allowing the pursuit of customers' identity projects. Material appearance of goods and objects together with feelings and emotions in general are important to recognize because the material aspects of goods help customers to render more explicit those symbolic connotations forming a symbolic idea of value.

Added knowledge from the customer rituals perspective:

Customers pay much attention to material aspects of goods and offerings because together with feelings and emotions, such aspects partake in more explicitly rendering a symbolic idea of value.

Processes of resource integration

In the previous section, it was discussed that rituals rely on perception of goods and offerings as symbolic resources. This perception enables the carrying out of a ritual behaviour aimed at using provider offerings while integrating other resources. In the following section, the nature of these behaviours is analysed. Ritual behaviours are script-based and multi-layered. At one layer, scripts rigidly frame repetitive actions, as they are well anchored to a mainstream culture. As such, they objectify a common way of integrating resources among a large group of customers. At another layer, scripts are interpreted at a more subjective level. Customers spontaneously and creatively interpret processes of using and integrating resources. This layer reflects more of an experiential, sense-making process through which resources are integrated. Both layers are intertwined and emerge during usage and integration of resources.

Repetitive and structured sequence of behaviours

Ritual scripts are customer processes of product usage and resource integration. Exhibiting these behaviours are framed at one layer by scripts prescribing usage of provider offerings handed down by cosmological beliefs of a mainstream culture. The anchoring of scripts to mainstream culture is numerous in the data. Daniele's family ritual is probably the best example. For Daniele, drinking wine at home is structured within certain family beliefs according to which wines need to be authentic and the drinking is carried out through certain scripts aimed at turning commercial wines into authentic ones (i.e. not commercial). Similarly, among friends, drinking rituals mean blind observance of the connoisseurship taste ritual, which provides a cosmological frame of reference repetitively reproduced. The script of drinking is structured according to a sequence of behaviours according to which types of wines have to be paired with certain types foods (e.g. white wines go with fish; red wines go with meat), glasses are swirled, and taste is defined by mimicking the language of the wine experts.

In service, the above utterance can be explained in terms of value creating practices. Korkman et al. (2010:237-8) define customer practices as a sequence of patterned behaviours framed by values and aiming at integrating resources. Helkkula, Kelleher,

and Pihlström (2012b:560) echo this view by further explaining that since practices are framed by values, they objectify how resource are “used in a particular way in particular contexts due to the shared understanding and knowledge of the collective.” The emphasis provided by this view understands the repetitive sequence of actions or doings as driven by values, while instead the above drinking rituals seem to suggest a more structured character. The difference seems to be a matter of perspectives, with important theoretical consequences. From an emic perspective, respondents cannot explicate how they carry out the drinking. Rather, they use unarticulated expressions that tend to emphasize what they do by exaggerating. For instance, Daniele when describing his behaviours of drinking wines at home, he uses such verbal expressions as “*dressed up for drinking*.” Similarly, friends use exaggerated claims to explain their behaviours, such as “*Never ever drink red wines with fish; it is like blasphemy*.” From an etic perspective, Arnould and Wallendorf (1994:491) claim that these glosses are symptomatic of taken for granted beliefs because when a meaning is so deep in the respondent’s mind she or he cannot explicate what they are doing. McGrath (2004:96) would also argue that ritual scripts are structured by overarching cosmological beliefs of a mainstream culture. Therefore, although value creating practices, like scripts, are both structured by a shared understanding, the former suggests a more contextual dimension, while instead the latter implies a higher hierarchical structure because it refers to a set of cosmological beliefs grounded on a mainstream culture. Penaloza and Mish (2011:22-3) also confirm this when asserting that values act at a more contextual, mezzo level, while instead cosmological beliefs belong to a more macro level because they function as overarching principles.

But also spontaneity and improvisation

At another layer, ritual scripts refer to the spontaneous character and freedom of interpretation through which scripts are carried out. The gesture of swirling—as described and analysed above—is strongly structured by the cosmological beliefs grounded in the connoisseurship taste ritual and according to which wines need to be swirled before drinking. Though, the swirling is often carried out with high degree of improvisation, spontaneity, and freedom to act. Some informants constantly rotate glasses, as wines were in a centrifuge; some take just a half spin; others still swirl when

it should not be done because it compromises the organoleptic characteristics of a wine. This 'dance of swirling wines' as it has been described in the findings, shows that rotating glasses is not only a blind reproduction of a cosmological belief, but it is also an aesthetic gesture that displays the sensationalism of drinking wines in a ritual occasion. Swirling is an experience that shows enhanced feelings and emotions that customers attach to this gesture, which, in turn, projects the idea of being a connoisseur of wines. Moreover, overall, if one compares everyday drinking with these ritualistic behaviours, it can be noted that the latter appears as a richer representation of idealized drinking behaviours. Drinking is not just a matter of imbibing a beverage while at the same time integrating a number of resources. Drinking in a ritual occasion is a more visible representation in the sense that customers tend to emphasize what they do by portraying a behavioural image, which is constructed by taking care of details and personalization. For instance, drinking wines at home is performed by a set of behaviours portraying an image in terms of being at home, such as dressing up with casual clothes, talking to family members, playing with children, and stretching one's legs while sitting on a sofa. Still, drinking wine at home entails using household wines from a shabby, hand-crafted, cardboard box and pouring wines into a common glass. All in all, these actions are rich and a visible manifestation of an extraordinary activity aimed at achieving status transition.

Arnould and Price (1993:26) explain that ritual scripts can be spontaneous because "spontaneity distinguishes extraordinary events from everyday routines and contributes to the perception of the event as extraordinary." McGrath (2004:96) further states that ritual scripts "provide a rich set of cognitive cues that reinforce personal identification of an individual to a group." Thus, scripts entail not only blind observance of a mainstream culture, which structure their sequence. Further, at another layer, scripts involve enhanced emotions and feelings that are manifested through visible representations of how these scripts are carried out. Particularly, spontaneity and creativity are emphasized in the analysis. The spontaneous and creative character of these scripts substantiate an action that although repetitive, in the ritual context become rather experiential.

The above explanation converges with recent development in service literature. Holttinen (2011) observes that value creating practices are composed not only by

structures, such as rules of conduit, but also by the “teleoaffective structures,” consisting of “moods, emotions, feelings, and passions” (Holttinen, 2011:100). These teleoaffective structures functions as sort of “subjective versions” of the practice that at the same time structure resource integration and change it because the way value is created is “the result of one’s identity or identity goals and also of other projects, goals, and ideals in life” (Ibid, 100). The point raised by Holttinen is interesting because similarly to the ritual literature, it links subjective spontaneity to identity projects in a customer’s life, in the sense that the spontaneous character of the scripts is symbolically aimed at expressing his or her identity. Venkatesh et al. (2006) further explain that the aesthetic aspects through which resources are integrated and used become a central feature of customer’ behaviours because today’s consumption is “a matter of celebrating one’s life in terms of realizing one’s identity and social position” (Ibid, 258). Thus, scripts are not only structured by a mainstream culture, but at the same time, these scripts manifest subjective experiences. This experiential dimension is linked to customers’ enhanced feelings and emotions toward an extraordinary experience separated from mundane everyday actions.

Summary:

Ritual scripts are multi-layered processes of usage of resources. At one layer, these behaviours are anchored to cosmological beliefs of a mainstream culture. As such, they provide a shared understanding of how a large group of customers commonly use and integrate resources. At another layer, scripts are carried out with degree of creativity and spontaneity reflecting subjective feelings and emotions toward an extraordinary experience linking customers’ identities.

Added knowledge from the customer rituals perspective:

Resource integration in a ritualistic fashion is a multi-layered process, intertwining both collective value creating practice (one layer) and individual experiences (another layer). These two layers are important to recognize as they both contribute to value creation.

Roles of resource integrators

In the ritual process, actors (i.e. customers, providers) play the role of resource integrators. Some roles may be rigidly scripted, while others may be more negotiated or extensively interpreted beyond formal expectations. The rituals perspective provides a fragmented and complex picture of actors (i.e. customer and providers) and their roles, who sometimes hold divergent interests and expectations on cocreation. Though, despite these divergences, actors seem to be able to successfully coordinate each other due to altruistic behaviours spurring collaboration among actors. That is because collaboration seems to be driven not as much by instrumental service-for-service exchanges, but rather the extraordinary character of rituals stimulates actor involvement and willingness to coordinate. The following paragraphs discuss separately first how and why actors enact their roles of resource integrators by focusing on their interactions. Subsequently, I cover how and why actors, despite their divergent views on cocreation, nonetheless manage to coordinate each other.

Symbolic interactions among actors

Rituals tend to structure the way actors interpret their roles. Driver (1991) argues that one of the main gifts of the ritual is providing social order, as it creates a social structure toward which actors conform their behaviours. Therefore, carrying out a certain role in a ritual is not always a deliberate act, but sometimes it is prescribed by overarching norms and rules (e.g. gender, class) that regulate the performances and interactions among actors.

For example, family ritual provides social order in the way actors choose and enact their roles. Daniele interacts in the ritual by pouring wines because “*wines are for men.*” Similarly, Daria interacts in the same ritual by instead arranging the meal; thus, her role in the ritual consists of “*taking care of other stuff.*” The social order structuring actors’ roles and their enactment can be also viewed among friends. Greta, despite her deep knowledge in terms of wine, let men enact their role of wine experts to enable the reproduction of a social order in terms of gender and wine.

Recent development of service literature converges toward the symbolic dimension on actors' interactions and roles. By drawing on social construction theories, Edvardsson et al. (2011) postulate that social reality enables actors' interactions in a symbolic fashion because when actors interact, they symbolically reproduce those social structures upon which they drawn on to integrate resources. Following this reasoning, family can be viewed as a social reality shaping actors' role and interactions. In a family ritual, "*wines are for men*" and "*taking care of other stuff*" is for women. Thus, when interacting, customers tend to reproduce certain social structures accordingly. The same logic can be applied to friends. In the ritual among friends, the example of Laura is perhaps even more representative. Despite her ability and knowledge about wines, she intentionally lets men enact their masculine role. Somehow, she allows replication of social structures in terms of gender.

In rituals, social reality does not only enable actors' interactions, but in certain cases, it hinders interactions. That is the case of certain actors playing the role of providing norms and rules that may constrain interactions and role enactment. In the findings of the Systembolaget case, the "opening hour policy" limits the purchase of alcohol within certain hours. As such, Systembolaget regulates interactions and integration of resources among friends. Another example is with the legal norms regulating the consumption of alcohol. Accordingly, when drinking wines, cars cannot be driven and thus the integration of certain resources (e.g. wine and cars) is forbidden. Both, the Systembolaget and the government can be viewed according to Edvardsson et al. (2012) as two regulatory institutions, which constrain acquisition and integration of resources. As such, the rituals perspective provides more utterance that corroborates the actual view in service literature according to which social reality shape actors' role of resource integrators and their interactions. Particularly, social values and institutions are two important structures of this social reality that at the same time enable and hinder actors when interacting to integrate and exchange resources.

Further, within a ritual occasion, interactions and role interactions may be more negotiated, which is the case when roles and interactions are framed within two diverging social systems or orders. For instance, in the family ritual, there is the vivid utterance of the role of "arranging the table for the *fördrinkar*" (i.e. aperitif). In a certain

social reality (i.e. the Swedish family), the enactment of this role is framed within certain values that guide exchange and integration of resources in a certain way. As such, the Swedish *fördrinkar table* may mean in certain circumstances a sweet, Hungarian sparkling wine, served with strawberries and slices of Swedish salmon. At the same time, within another social reality (i.e. the Italian family), the enactment of the same role is framed within certain other values that guide exchange and integration of other resources. The Italian *fördrinkar table* means an Italian sparkling dry wine, served with an olive and slices of Italian ham. The two different social realities framing role enactment trigger a process of negotiation that results in an emergent interpretation of the role of the *fördrinkar table*.

The above data could be explained with Edvardsson et al. (2011) and the concept of asymmetries in cocreation. Echeverri and Skålén (2001) further explain that asymmetries in cocreation may lead to co-destruction due to incongruent interactions. Yet, the above utterance reports that despite asymmetries in cocreation and incongruence in interactions, actors do not co-destruct, but still cocreate. In fact, Penalzoa and Mish (2011) explain that in markets, values and meanings are constantly negotiated between different actors (i.e. providers and customers) and thus portrays actors' interactions and role interactions as a more emergent process. Feeding from this latter study, actors' interactions among resource integrators can be explained as a more emergent process. Though, differently from Penalzoa and Mish (2001), the negotiation of actors' roles is not about providers and customers having different expectations on products and services in terms of standard values and individual preferences. As can be drawn from the above example, negotiations in rituals may pertain to customers (or family members) having divergent meanings on how to enact a similar role.

Other times in rituals, some interactions and role enactments overcome order, as some actors enact their role beyond what one would expect. In the ethnographic episodes, a good example is the case of the wine retailers, such as bartenders, who extend their roles beyond that one of being service providers. More precisely, bartenders do not only interact with customers by serving wines; they join customers to engage in drinking and to comment on wine producers as if they were customers. Grönroos and Voima (2013) explain that interactions between service providers and customers are framed by

two distinct roles: one role (i.e. service providers) is aimed at facilitating value creation; another role (i.e. customers) is aimed at creating and determining value. This explanation accounts for the above utterance only to a certain extent because, on the one hand, bartenders act to facilitate value creation by serving wines. At the same time, they act as customers. They join customers and comment on wines, such as “*not good as it used to be*” and somehow partake in determining the value of wines. Recent development in service literature on actors’ roles and interactions may contribute to explaining the above utterance a little further. Akaka and Chandler (2011) conceptualize actors’ roles as a social resource that is exploited in cocreation to gain more resources. They exemplify this conceptualization with customers as enacting double roles of determining value and offering value propositions depending on the context in which they interact. Following this reasoning, it can be argued that bartenders are actors playing a double role because they partake in both providing value propositions and determining value. Though, bartenders’ changing role seems to be an extended interpretation of their role that is not aimed at exploiting resources. Rather, they seem to be included by customers in their ritual, thus acting as customers in customer rituals. From a rituals perspective, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) explain that ritualization provokes a sense of “extensiveness of inclusion” in the sense that within a ritual event, actors’ roles and interactions are extended beyond formal social structures because a ritual occasion tends to unite people emotionally (Driver, 1991). Therefore, the extensiveness of bartenders’ role can be interpreted with Akaka and Chandler (2011) only to a certain extent because the change in role is not aimed at exploiting more resources, but it is instead extended to construct togetherness. Thus, from a rituals perspective, actors’ roles and interactions may be more emerging and fragmented. Customers and providers do not always interact in accordance to their distinctive roles. In rituals, these roles are more emergent, giving birth to a fragmented spectrum of roles that are at the same time frame and are framed by rituals.

Symbolic coordination among actors’ roles

In the previous paragraph, I discussed a fragmented picture of the range of actors’ roles and interactions emerging in rituals. The fragmentation of roles and interactions implies the presence of different interests and expectations on cocreation, which lead the

discussion toward the theme of actors' coordination in rituals. Broadly speaking, in service, as well as in rituals, coordination is matter of exchanges in the sense that it is through the exchanges of resources that actors coordinate each other. Though, if from a service perspective, coordination is conceptualized as grounded in service-for-service exchanges (cfr. Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In rituals, coordination is more about feelings and emotions. This is further discussed below.

The example of the *fördrinkar* table can be representative to introduce the discussion. Despite the fact that actors hold two completely different views on cocreation due to divergent meanings, nonetheless actors manage to coordinate each other to cocreate an aperitif. Another example is with car drivers. In the drinking rituals among friends, some friends do not drink, while other friends engage in drinking. Despite quite diverging views on the ritual, friends manage to coordinate each other, and in doing so, they successfully cocreate. Ritual literature emphasizes that taking part in a ritual occasion is not an ordinary event (e.g. Rook, 1985; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). The extraordinary character of the ritual occasion generates enhanced feelings and emotions that, in turn, increase involvement in coordinating each other to cocreate. That is, coordination seems to be less the result of speculative service-for-service calculations and rather, more grounded on the willingness of customers to taking care of each other. As the above utterance reports, offering drinks to family members or driving friends home underlies a type of altruistic behaviour aimed at taking care of others, without necessarily expecting anything in return. The above explanation converges with service literature at some points. Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008) argue that from a provider's perspective, managing cocreation is about customers' emotions and feelings, "which emphasizes attitudes and preferences" (Ibid, 87). Though, differently from the above study, the findings account for cocreation from a customer's perspective. Particularly, rituals perspective emphasizes feelings and emotions not as attitudes and preferences, but instead as willingness to taking care of each other. Heinonen et al. (2010:541) support the rituals perspective and claim that coordination "does not consist only of cognition, calculation and overt behaviour, but it is also subjective and thus "inseparable from feelings." These findings and the insights from a rituals perspective provide theoretical support for Heinonen et al. (2010), in the sense that they give due recognition to the fact that the motivations

underlying the coordination of actors to cocreate is not only objectified in the instrumental integration and exchanges of resources, but rather it can be also explained in terms of customer experiences of partaking in a ritual, which seem to be equally motivating and involved.

Summary:

Roles of resource integrators are fragmented and emerge in symbolic interactions. The presence of a constellation of actors and roles brings different expectations and interests into cocreation. These divergent views are successfully coordinated through feelings and emotions that enhance actor involvement beyond service-for-service exchanges.

Added knowledge from the customer rituals perspective:

Interaction and coordination among actors (e.g. customer, providers) may be more fragmented and emerging. Involvement is central to successfully coordinating different expectations and interests in cocreation.

Customer symbolic ecosystems

A ritual audience can be identified as an extended, self-selecting, social gathering wherein *communitas* assemble to cocreate rituals. The social gathering can be referred to as customer ecosystems (Voima et al., 2011) wherein value is determined. As it will be discussed below, customer ecosystems are interpreted as symbolic because they refer to the liminoid character of rituals. The liminoid character suggests an extended cocreation among a larger group of individuals (i.e. *communitas*) and contexts, which partake in the determination of value

Communitas

The ritualistic perspective brings attention to the symbolic character of cocreation. Symbolic refers to the concept of liminality (i.e. liminoid), which is a particular social situation, wherein everyday social values (those norms and value framings social relationships such as, class, gender) are temporarily resolved in favour of a “moment of universal connection” (Turner, [1969] 2008; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). The temporary dissolution of everyday norms and values solves social distance, thereby deconstructing cocreation toward a broader interconnection of subjects in order to extend social gatherings. When gathering in a liminoid fashion, individuals hold together through a shared feeling, which has been interpreted in the findings as ‘togetherness’ (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). More precisely, in the findings, respondents refer to togetherness in terms of “*conviviality*,” “*shaking hands*,” or “*being together*.” As a result, more members are included in the audience to cocreate, thus symbolically extending the boundaries of the gathering beyond their everyday structure.

For instance, in the findings, Antonio tends to include in his domestic ritual audience the wine producer, which is symbolically included as an extended member of the family. Nicola, when opening the bottle of wine, tends to include the doctor as one of the family, thereby symbolically extending the boundaries of the family. Another example can be viewed with Daniele’s family ritual. Daria, Daniele’s wife, when talking to her son Leonardo, referred to me as the “*Uncle Luigi*”; thus, she symbolically includes me as an added member of the family. As a result, the wine producer, the

doctor, and myself are all members of the family and thus extend the boundaries of this social bonding. Similarly, the gathering of friends in the Italian “Piazza” tends to include more members in the cocreation of the ritual regardless of formal distinctions in terms of class, age, or occupation. They all share a sense of togetherness, flattering social distinctions. As a result, the boundaries of the friends’ gathering are widened toward strangers.

In service, Akaka, Vargo, and Schau (2015:210) have recently introduced subcultures as cultural service ecosystems. That is, “a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of shared commitment to a particular product class, brand or consumption activity.” The present study supports only to a certain extent the above conceptualization. Drawing on empirical evidence, friends and families are indeed a distinctive subgroup of society that emerges through sharing a feeling (i.e. togetherness). Though, the social bonding seems to be less structured around a particular product class, brand, or consumption activities, and instead suggests a shared feeling as the glue that holds actors together in a ritual. Grönroos and Gummerus (2014:209) have recently refined the customer sphere as: “where the customers independently create value and may socially cocreate value with actors in their ecosystem.” Heinonen et al. (2010) exemplify families and friends as customer ecosystems framing cocreation and value determination. Differently from subcultures, customer ecosystems portray the boundaries of cocreation as a more emergent, shaped by emotions rather than by provider offerings, such as brands. The findings of the present study echo this latter conceptualization by providing utterance in terms of togetherness. Though, ritualization implies not everyday life, but it is instead a rather exceptional moment in life. Rituals provide that temporary detached reality (i.e. liminoid) that, by resolving everyday rules and norms, open up cocreation toward extended families or friends. In other words, the observed social groups are not family or friends in their formal, everyday composition. Symbolically, they are extended toward *other* subjects or groups.

The liminoid character of the ritual audience points toward the concept of *communitas*. In service, Rihova et al. (2013:8) refer to *communitas* as a particular social bonding, which is characterized by social ambiguity (i.e. liminoid), and it is often associated to a temporal group association in leisure and tourism. In line with the above

conceptualization, *communitas* can be interpreted as customers' symbolic ecosystems wherein value is determined inter-subjectively and dynamically because determination of value emerges not only in relation to a single subject or to a definite social group (family, group of friends). Differently, value determination emerges in multiple subjects, as an extended, self-selecting group. The reality of the subject is always related to the emergent collective reality of the *communitas* that gather for the ritual in an extended fashion. For instance, Daniele's determination of value emerges at a collective and at an individual level. At the beginning, wine drinking is collectively evaluated because it is framed within an extended family (i.e. including myself). Nevertheless, he explains that the same ritual has another more subjective evaluation, which is related to a moment of individual pleasure. He refers to that moment as important as the collective: "*I stretch out my nerves and I totally decompress myself.*" Alike among friends, ritual value emerges dynamically in combination between subjects and collectivity. Some subjects drive cars that imply individual evaluation of ritual value as "*not drinking.*" Others instead interpret wine rituals as collective "*binge drinking.*" Nevertheless, whether it means at a subject level "*not drinking*" or at a collective level as "*binge drinking,*" evaluation when drinking among friends is always multiple and evaluated in relation to ritual context.

The inter-subjective nature of value determination does not fully subscribe Vargo and Lusch (2008) when they claim that value is "idiosyncratically determined by the beneficiary." Rather, it gives due recognition to Edvardsson et al. (2011), who explain to us that value may be inter-subjective because it is framed by social reality. That is, "an individual's value perceptions are, at least in part, dependent on the relative position of the individual within the wider social context" (Edvardsson et al., 2011:334) Thus, value is determined not only in relation to one subject, but subjects determine value in relation to other subjects and contexts. Though, as described above, rituals may temporarily resolve social reality by including more subjects in cocreation beyond formal social affiliation. Determination of value in rituals is thus influenced by a broader, uncertain interconnection of subjects holding together as *communitas*. According to the above findings, determination of value may evolve in multiple subjects ranging from single to collective. As such, the multiplicity of subjects and collective points towards Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima (2013:112), who instead posit that value may be determined in "configuration of different actors." Though,

differently from Heinonen and colleagues, the present study also puts emphasis on the idiosyncratic character of value as phenomenologically determined by the single beneficiary. Therefore, value determination in rituals seems to evolve as an ongoing process within *communitas*, which is an extended social reality where individual idiosyncrasies and the collective understanding of reality are constantly negotiated and balanced.

Service contexts as ritual places

Another characteristic emerging from the findings relates to the physical environments constructing service contexts where rituals take place. Regarding subjects, the liminoid character of ritual extends service contexts including other contexts, both virtually and physically, in order to form one ritual place. Some interesting utterance may be drawn from Antonio's family ritual. The physical environment surrounding the family ritual transcends the traditional domestic premises that are virtually extended toward the vineyards. Hence, the family house and the vineyards is one place wherein Antonio and his family symbolically gather to cocreate a ritual. Another example can be drawn from the friends' rituals. Friends initially gather in bars and taverns, which are service contexts providing support for their rituals. Though during ritualization, the traditional premises of these service contexts are extended toward the '*Piazza*,' which is viewed as an added premise (in this case in a physical extension) of the surrounding bars, without walls and barriers. As such, bars and *Piazza* form one single place in which the ritual is carried out.

The above utterance suggests that ritual audiences consider family houses or bars not as traditional service contexts (e.g. Bitner, 1992). In a more transcendental or evocative sense, these contexts are understood as extraordinary places. In other words, from a rituals perspective, service contexts transcend their service purposes to become social places, wherein togetherness and a sense of community are nurtured. In service, the transcending character of context in cocreation is well acknowledged (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2011). Particularly, Chandler and Vargo (2011) importantly recognize that cocreation can transcend direct face-to-face contact because contexts and actors are always directly or indirectly connected through service systems. Though, the

transcending character in rituals refers to a customer's mental state, not really to a service-for-service logic. In rituals, customers view service contexts as sacred places where they carry out rituals. Thus, the service context from a customer rituals perspective transcends everyday service usage. In ritual literature, Arnould and Price (1993) describe certain service encounters (i.e. river rafting) as sacred places, wherein customers enact rites of integration. In these sacred places, conventional behaviours, resources, and values are temporarily subverted. Similarly, Otnes et al. (2012) report utterance of retail provider encounters as ritual places, wherein customers engage in dramatic experiences detached from their ordinary usage. This rituals perspective somehow converges with other service research and more specifically with Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999), who suggest that service contexts should be understood as "linking value places," wherein customers satisfy a need of collective. Therefore, service contexts and their premises from a rituals perspective are assessed beyond their ordinary usage. Broadly, they become "linking places" helping customers to satisfy their need of sociality, being together. The ethnographic episodes pinpoint the same argument. Antonio's house is extended toward the vineyards and thus forms one place to exercise social links between himself and the wine producers. Similarly, bars are extended toward the town square (i.e. the Piazza) and link larger groups of friends.

In line with Heinonen et al. (2013) and Akaka et al. (2013), the present study suggests that value determination emerges dynamically in multiple contexts embedding different perceptions of resources, enacting different practices that simultaneously shape and are shaped by different experiences. In the first stage, rituals among friends takes place at the premises of the wine bars surrounding the Piazza. In this environment, wines are ordered and drunk according to formal norms and rules of conduit, shaping the experience of the ritual. In the second stage, the ritual continues into the Piazza. Here, the context shaping value determination is different, embedding other practices, activities, and resources. Wines are self-served ordered and drunk according to a more "spontaneous letting-be of the process" (Arnould and Price, 1993) which shapes another type of experience. Similarly, in the wandering places, friends gather first in a private house (i.e. one context) to warm up. This implies drinking from a bag-and-box. Afterwards, friends gather in bars (i.e. another context) suggesting different activities and resources, such as drinking cocktails and mingling with other friends. Eventually,

the group of friends disaggregate into a different context, where the ritual means drinking and dancing. Overall, the evaluation of (ritual) value emerges as the sum of multiple contexts, embedding different practices, activities, and resources that shape and are shaped by different experiences. Thus, contexts wherein individuals gather are also extended, physically or virtually, to form one sacred ritual context. These ritual contexts are viewed not as much as for the service they render, but rather because they help “link” people together (Cova and Cova, 2001). Since contexts embed different resources, practices, and activities, value determination in rituals emerge in multiple contexts, although these contexts are assembled in one ritual place.

Summary:

Customer symbolic ecosystems refers to an extended gathering of individuals and contexts wherein value is determined. The liminoid character of rituals suggests that when gathering for a ritual event, individuals assemble as communitas, extending cocreation toward multiple interconnections of actors and contexts. Within customers' symbolic ecosystems, value is dynamically determined by multiple subjects and multiple contexts referring to a sense of togetherness.

Added knowledge from the customer rituals perspective:

Customer symbolic ecosystem can be viewed as communitas. Service contexts are not used only for the service they render, but in a more symbolic way, they are sacred places wherein customers satisfy their need for being together. Value is dynamically determined by multiple subjects (both individually and collectively) and contexts embedding different perceptions of resources, enacting different practices that simultaneously shape and are shaped by different experiences

Ritual Process Structural Elements	Analysis (Rituals + Service)	Added knowledge from a customer rituals perspective
Symbolic Resources (i.e. feelings, emotions, material elements)	<p>Goods and offerings are not only value propositions. When used in a ritual context, goods and offerings are symbolic resources allowing the pursuit of customers' identity projects.</p> <p>Material appearance of goods and objects in general are important to recognize together with feelings and emotions.</p>	Customers pay much attention to material aspects of goods and offerings because together with feelings and emotions, they partake in more explicitly rendering a symbolic idea of value.
Processes of Resource Integration (i.e. multi-layered and script-based)	Ritual scripts are multi-layered processes of usage of resources. At one layer, these behaviours are anchored to cosmological beliefs of a mainstream culture. As such, they provide a shared understanding of how a large group of customers commonly use and integrate resources. At another layer, scripts are carried out with degree of creativity and spontaneity reflecting subjective feelings and emotions toward an extraordinary experience linking customers' identities.	Resource integration in a ritualistic fashion is a multi-layered process, intertwining both collective value creating practices (one layer) and individual experiences (another layer). These two layers are important to recognize, as they both contribute to value creation.
Roles of Resource Integrators (i.e. interactions and coordination)	Roles of resource integrators are fragmented because they emerge in symbolic interactions. The presence of a constellation of actors and roles brings different expectations and interests into cocreation. These divergent views are successfully coordinated through feelings and emotions that enhanced actor involvement beyond service-for-service exchanges.	Interaction and coordination among actors (i.e., customer, providers) may be more fragmented and emergent. Customer involvement is a central feature in successfully coordinating different expectations and interests in cocreation.
Customer Symbolic Ecosystems (i.e. <i>communitas</i>)	Customer symbolic ecosystems refers to an extended gathering of individuals and contexts wherein value is determined. The liminoid character of rituals suggests that when gathering for a ritual event, individuals assemble as <i>communitas</i> , extending cocreation toward multiple interconnections of actors and contexts. Within customer symbolic ecosystems, value is dynamically determined by multiple subjects and multiple contexts referring to a sense of togetherness.	Customer symbolic ecosystem can be viewed as <i>communitas</i> . Service contexts are not used only for the service they render, but in a more symbolic way, they are sacred places wherein customers satisfy their need for being together. Value is dynamically determined by multiple subjects and contexts embedding different perceptions of resources, enacting different practices that simultaneously shape and are shaped by different experiences.

Table 5: Summary of the key conceptual themes and knowledge from a customer rituals perspective.

Section three – Value from a rituals perspective.

So far, I have discussed value creation as a ritual process orchestrated by the customers, through the interplay of four structural elements. Now, the main theoretical concepts are recapped to answer research question two (i.e. *How can value be understood from a customer rituals perspective?*). The focus of this third section is on value and how value is portrayed from a customer rituals perspective. A general value model, drawn from Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima (2013) (cfr. also Heinonen, 2004) is used as a tool to organize the discussion. More specifically, according to the model, value can be portrayed through answering five questions: *how, when, what, who, and where* is value created and determined? Answering these questions provides understanding of how can value be understood from a customer rituals perspective.

How is value created?

In rituals, value emerges through a multi-layered process script-based. Overall, ritual scripts are customer processes of product usage and resource integration. Similarly to value creating practices (Korkman et al., 2010; Vargo, 2010), scripts anchor to cultural beliefs, norms, and rules handed down from a mainstream culture. At one layer, ritual scripts objectify how a large group of customers processes product usage and resource integration (Helkkula Kelleher and Pihlström, 2012b). Though, ritual scripts are not only repetitive behaviours reflecting blind observation of rules and beliefs. Scripts are also experientials showing a high degree of customer involvement. Involvement that is substantiated by a spontaneous and creative letting be of the process (Arnould and Price, 1993) is referred to as a customer's identity. As such, scripts are equipped with another layer, which is more experiential at an individual level because they are subjectively interpreted.

When is value created?

Value creation unfolds in an extraordinary, temporary timeframe. The extraordinary character of value creation refers to a liminoid mental state (Turner [1969]2008)

evolving longitudinally during usage in a three-stage process (i.e. pre-liminoid, liminoid, and post-liminoid). In this temporary timeframe, usage of resources emerges in multiple points in time and contexts giving birth to emerging interpretations of the usage of resources (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013) and of roles of resource integrators (Akaka and Chandler, 2011). That is, value-in-use evolves continuously in relation to each liminoid stage, which in turn frame interactions, behaviours, and resources that shape and are shaped by different experiences.

What is value based on?

In rituals, value is based on customer configurations of feelings, emotions, and material elements that are integrated and experienced holistically. All in all, these are the resources partaking in value creation. From a service perspective, value is mainly based on the application of knowledge, skills, and meanings on goods (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2008). In rituals, however, material aspects of goods and objects are also emphasized (Douglas, [1979]2002; McCracken, 1988a) because material elements of resources help customers to express and make more salient a symbolic idea of value. The perception of the symbolic (i.e. sacred) resources of goods activates a multi-layered process intertwining both activities and experiences.

Who determines value?

Determination of value emerges dynamically in multiple subjects and contexts. From a rituals perspective, determination of value is undoubtedly made at a collective level because it fulfils the need of collectivity (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). Though, rituals may also pertain to a moment of individual pleasure; therefore, determination of value may be also idiosyncratic. Nonetheless, customers do not determine value in isolation, but they constantly relate value within the reality of the ritual. Edvardsson et al. (2011) recognize value determination as framed by social reality; thus, positing that value may be inter-subjectively determined within everyday norms and rules. However, rituals by emphasizing the extraordinary character of value creation extend the inter-subjective character of value determination not as framed by everyday norms and rules, but differently by the reality of the customer (Heinonen et al., 2010). Customers' reality

is the ritual, which is detached from everyday life (Arnould and Price, 1993; Belk and Costa, 1998). The extraordinary character of rituals thus unties everyday social frames and invites more individuals (customers and providers) and contexts (homes and vineyards) to cocreate. This mechanism of inclusion extends (physically and virtually) value determination as decided by multiple subjects and contexts.

Where is value determined?

Value is determined in the customer symbolic ecosystems (i.e. *communitas*). The rituals perspective brings attention to value creation as a process orchestrated by the customer in her or his realm (Rook, 1985; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). Particularly, the study accounts for customer rituals as a broader social gathering that may take place at a customer's premises (e.g. at home) or where service provider encounters take place (e.g. bars, town squares). In both cases, from the rituals perspective, service is not the focal point, but rather customers and their need of nurturing togetherness (Aubert-Gamet, and Cova, 1999). Voima et al. (2011:1015-6) conceptualize customer ecosystems as "as systems of actors related to the customer that are relevant concerning a specific service." This conceptualization views customers not as the target of service, but vice versa, customers target service in relation to their lives. Consequently, customer ecosystems are where value is dynamically determined within a larger group of customers, such as families and friends and beyond the interactions with providers (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013). The rituals perspective reverberates customer ecosystems and adds a symbolic connotation because it views customer ecosystems as a gathering temporarily extended to other customers (physically and virtually), all acting together as *communitas* in multiple contexts. *Communitas* are self-selecting and formed based of feelings and emotions, not as much based on brand affiliation (Akaka et al., 2013). In addition, the composition of customer ecosystems is more uncertain compared to everyday communities of family and friends (Heinonen et al., 2010). The liminoid character of rituals unties standard social values, thus allowing more customers and context to be included in the customer ecosystem. These also partake in cocreating and shaping the determination of value.

HOW	Value emerges through a multi-layered process, script-based. Collective practices and individual experiences are intertwined and both contribute to value creation.
WHEN	Value emergence unfolds in an extraordinary, temporary timeframe (i.e. longitudinally in three liminoid stages).
WHAT	Value is based on customer configuration of feelings, emotions, and material elements that are integrated and experienced holistically.
WHO	Determination of value emerges dynamically in multiple subjects and contexts.
WHERE	Value is determined in customer symbolic ecosystems (i.e. <i>communitas</i>).

Table 6: Summary of how value can be understood from a rituals perspective.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

Thesis Contribution

The present thesis has problematized service literature and suggests that there is need to advance knowledge towards a more complete customer perspective of value: to better appreciate the concept of service in the customer's complex world, where value is created and determined. Customer rituals were first conceptualized and subsequently implanted into service logics to leverage insights in order to explore value creation from a customer rituals perspective. Two specific research questions were formulated to guide the study: *RQ 1# "How do the structural elements of ritual contribute to customer value creation?"*; *RQ 2# How can value be understood from a customer rituals perspective?* The main general contribution of the thesis lies in providing a ritual conceptual framework presented in the previous chapter (i.e. Figure 10). This framework views value creation as an emergent process that unfolds through the interplay of four structural elements: symbolic resources (1), which are used and integrated through a sequence of multi-layered and script-based processes (2) and roles (3) that configured within customer symbolic ecosystems (4). Particularly, the study, grounded on two ethnographic explorations, illustrates that customer value creation in rituals comes about as an ongoing, multi-layered, script-based process. The ritual script is a practice shared among a large group of customers, who follow a set of rules and norms to use and integrate resources (one layer). At the same time, carrying out a collective practice is interpreted at a more subject-level expressing individual preferences and judgment about how resource are used and integrated (another layer). The two layers (collective and subject) are intertwined, constantly negotiating and contributing to value creation. Customers are neither sovereign cognitive agents nor passive carriers of a collective way of doing. Instead, while anchoring to the shared understanding of value, customers exert value creation, more or less spontaneously and creatively, to affirm their individual preferences and judgments about (ritual) value. The above general contribution is now delineated in the following paragraphs by first

discussing how this new perspective may impact in the understanding of the concept of service in customer value creation, considering the three main literature streams (i.e. service dominant logic, service logic, and customer dominant logic). Subsequently, more detailed contributions are discussed in relation to the process of using resources and in relation to determination of value from a rituals perspective. Managerial implications, limitations, and further research conclude the chapter as well the thesis.

A Ritual Perspective on Value Creation in Service

The study, by investigating value creation from a customer rituals perspective, has discovered that value may not always tied to immediate usage of resources, but sometimes, (i.e. in a ritual occasion) the usage of resources may be extended to other means. The reason for this is because customers through a ritualized process load providers' products and services with symbolic connotations connected to the construction of a temporary customer's identity. For example, the ethnographic tales describe how wines do not only serve in an instrumental fashion to drinking with family or among friends. When ritualized, wines may be also symbolic as the drinking is a way to develop a family status, like how friendship is nurtured while drinking together among friends in a ritualized fashion. Certainly, from an emic perspective the informants do not refer to drinking wines as a ritual process that it is symbolically carried out to construct their identities. Though, from an etic perspective, the ritual theories clearly link value creation and rituals with a symbolic connotation. When turning to this observation from a service perspective, the main consequence of this view is that the concept of service may be enriched. From a service dominant logic perspective (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008) service (i.e. the application of specialized knowledge and skills or competences) is the basis to exchange resources in markets. From a rituals perspective, although service is implied in the exchange, nonetheless this is not the most important purpose. From a customer rituals perspective, rather than service being the 'dominant logic,' it is instead one of the possibilities chosen by the customers. Instead, what seems to be central according to this study, is not the service as such, but service renders possible the creation of symbolic value (i.e. ritual value), which is obtained through the customer ritual process. Thus, the creation of a ritual value is key, not the service as such. In this sense, the thesis is aligned more

to service logic (e.g. Grönroos, 2011), which stresses the concept of service as an enabler facilitating customer value creation, whatever it is. Particularly, the thesis supports recent development of service logic and particularly, it shares Grönroos and Gummerus' (2014:211-2) statement, according to which "service is a facilitator (...) it remains only a proxy for the ultimate basis of business." That is to say that service is indeed a perspective through which one can understand value creation, but value creation remains the central matter for customers (Grönroos and Ravald, 2011:15)

Nevertheless, the ritual perspective somehow challenges the above perspective, as it shows that service providers may not always facilitate value creation. Particularly, by providing agency mainly to customers, it discovers that value creation is predominately supported by customer rituals, not as much by service providers. A wine is, for example, a service provider's resource, which indirectly serves (i.e. facilitate) customers in the construction of their identity projects. Though, the key resource that customers apply to achieve their identities is the ritual, not the wine as such. Ritualization is in fact a resource drawn from the customers, which is exploited by customers through a process that is orchestrated by customers, beyond and sometimes despite the service provider's intent to help or facilitate. The service provider may offer a wine, and intention facilitates customers' creation of value. Though this assistance is most of time mediated or altered by customers, as providers' wines need to be adjusted to comply with the requirement of their rituals. Accordingly, labels of wine producers are stripped away or their packaging are inexorably manipulated. Similarly, half-litre carafes are implemented to pour wines into glasses, a substitute for commercial bag-in-boxes. The purpose of these scripts (i.e. decommodifying scripts) is to turn a commercial wine into a ritual wine because the presence of the service providers, although indirect, constrain value creation from a customer rituals perspective. Eventually, the wine is transformed by allowing the pursuit of an identity project perceived as "*nicer*." More examples may be drawn from friends' rituals. When friends gather in bars, they drink outside the service encounters and more precisely in the town-square to satisfy the need of the collective. In this sense, it seems that drinking within the service provider's premises would hinder the nurturing of being together. These utterances may show that under certain circumstances, i.e. in ritual occasion, value creation is not always facilitated by the service providers, but rather customer rituals facilitate value creation. As such, the

thesis supports the concept of service as intended by CDL (e.g. Heinonen et al., 2010). Heinonen and Strandvik (2015:474, emphasis in original) stress the perspective of service as “how customers *embed* service in their processes.” That is: viewing service from the customer’s eyes.

Based on the above argumentation, the present thesis aligns and contributes to CDL literature by providing additional theoretical arguments (i.e. the customer rituals framework) and empirical evidence (i.e. the ethnography of family and friends’ wine rituals) on how customers bring service into their life. In order to better appreciate the concept of service from a customer’s perspective, CDL poses the important topic of delving into customers needing rather than the needs. Precisely, Heinonen and Strandvik (2015:478) propose: “A key issue is to focus on needing and not needs (...), where needing is a customer-focused concept that corresponds to the provider-oriented offering concept and that demonstrates what the customer intends to achieve and to acquire.” By exploring customers’ lives, this thesis explains that ritual value is that needing that customers want to achieve. This needing is accomplished through the logic of the customer rituals process, which is conceptualized in the framework presented in Chapter Five (see figure 10). If we go back to the beginning of this journey, and precisely in the prologue, I reported the words of a brand specialist stating: “If they ritualize, they (customers) will stay.” This is exactly a company perspective in seeking customer needs or in trying to persuade customers on how to be engaged with their offerings. Instead, what this study emphasizes is that ritualization implies the needing of being together, sharing the feeling of doing something together and that is achieved through the customer rituals process.

The above discussion on the concept of service in customer value creation will be now further elaborated and narrowed in relation to the process of creating value and its determination. In brief, value creation emerges through ritual behaviours, which is a new multi-layered behavioural domain through which one can understand the usage of resources. The emergent character of value creation viewed from customer ritual behaviours accounts for extended interpretations of service usage that sometimes go beyond the intentions of service providers. Further, I will explain that in rituals value is determined by multiple subjects and context configured within a customer symbolic ecosystem, with particular reference to the concept of *communitas*.

Value formation through ritualistic usage of resources

Grönroos and Gummerus (2014:209) define value-in-use as “the value for customers, created by them during their usage of resources.” Thus, the concept of *value-in-use* captures value creation as tied to processes aimed at using resources. Though, usage of resources refers not only to processes aimed at creating value, but broadly at forming value (e.g. Korkman, 2006; Heinonen, Strandvik, Voima, 2013). The noun ‘formation’ stresses the concept that value is not only functional to and mediated by service providers (i.e. created), but it can be also more symbolic, because reflecting customers’ multiple perspectives on usage, beyond the purposes of the service provider (Heinonen et al., 2010; Strandvik et al., 2012; Grönroos and Voima, 2013).

Building upon value formation as possibly tied to customers’ symbolic usage of resources, this thesis offers a contribution by describing symbolic usage of resources as emerging through ritual behaviours. More specifically, this thesis advances ritual behaviours as a rich theoretical domain that is multi-layered and script-based (e.g. Tetrault and Kleine, 1999; McGrath, 2004). The first layer of the ritual behaviours refers to routines, implying a repetitive sequence of actions embedding a shared understanding of a mainstream culture. As such, the first layer captures how a large group of customers use resources, as enactment of a mainstream culture. The second layer refers to the conscious awareness or the sense-making activity associated with the elicitation of this shared behavioural sequence. A ritual behaviour, although repetitive is not mundane, it is not an everyday action. It is a ‘sacred’ moment in life and thus highly involved. Rituals are bracketed in an extraordinary moment in life, separated from the ordinary, wherein customers pursue sacred (symbolic) goals in their lives, such as identity construction (e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991, Otnes and Lowery, 2004). As such, the second layer captures the customer’s feelings and emotions, which are substantiated through the spontaneous and improvised usage of resources. The repetitive character of rituals although referring to routinized actions (i.e. one layer), it is at the same time loaded by extraordinary connotations linked to customer cognitions (i.e. another layer). The combination of this multi-layered behavioural sequence contributes to an increased understanding of usage of resources. For example, the ritual of drinking wines is indeed an action framed by the mainstream culture of drinking wines like a sommelier among friends. Therefore, it entails a sequence of doings and

saying through which customers integrate a number of resources and that appears almost equal to itself overtime. Nevertheless, this sequence of doings and saying is not only a blind observance of the mainstream culture. Drinking wines in a ritual occasion is a more visible representation in terms of enhanced feelings and emotions, which render this sequence more involved and enjoyable. Customers do not only blindly follow a sequence of actions, they interpret these doings or sayings by portraying a behavioural image, which is constructed by taking care of details and personalization. Drinking like sommeliers is sometimes interpreted with emphasis and flow of gestures that are exaggerated and that sometimes give birth to ridiculous interpretations. Glasses are not just swirled two or three times to better appreciate the wine taste. They are centrifuged. Wines are described with bizarre wine descriptors, such as “*a cat scratching your tongue.*”

Helkkula, Kelleher, and Pihlström (2012b) pose the important challenge in service research to bridge the existing gap of distinguishing value formation between shared routines and more cognitive interpretations. This work is crucial because as the authors explain, on the one hand, shared routines are important for tracing patterned ways of understanding value creation; at the same time, cognitive interpretations can uncover unique value formation. Understanding how one complements another is key to having a complete picture of the processes through which resources are used and value is formed. Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima, (2013:108-9) echo the same need and encourage new researches to understand value formation with richer theoretical constructs, as the usage of resources is not only tied to behaviours, but also tied to mental processes. Similarly, Grönroos and Voima (2013) indicate the centrality of both practice and experiences in value formation when claiming “The locus of value creation is the customer’s physical, mental, or possessive activities, practices, and experiences in multiple individual and social contexts.” (p. 138). To date, few studies have purposefully provided explanations on how practice and experiences are intertwined in value formation. By drawing on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice, Ellway and Dean (2016) propound the temporal intertwinement of practice and experience that can be appreciated if analysed through the concept of Habitus. Differently, the present study provides another explanation about the intertwined nature of practice and experience as appreciated in ritual behaviours that is a multi-layered and script-based sequence, as above described. The emphasis on ritual behaviours is not in the temporal

intertwinement of practice and experience, but in the extraordinary character of the ritual that render an everyday sequence of actions more involving and experiencing because bracketed in an extraordinary moment in life, separated from the ordinary, wherein customers pursue sacred (symbolic) goals in their lives, such as identity construction.

In addition, the ritual theoretical construct by inspecting customer's life allows to look further. Particularly, the thesis accounts for the emergent usage of resource as more extended, that is, beyond the intentions of the service provider. Drinking wines in a ritual manner is not only about imbibing a beverage in integration with other resources (e.g. food). The joy of the ritual as well as its sacred character enable customers to extensively interpret their roles as resource integrators beyond drinking. The ethnographic tales well-document customers engaging in other activities connected to wine, but at the same time beyond drinking. Broadly, wines are used to decorate houses or even restaurants. Others interpret wines in terms of elements from which new objects, such as gifts or portraits, are created. The rituals framework spurs customers to reconstruct the meaning of the provider's offerings (i.e. a wine) through extensive usage of resources. Hence, they give birth to broader interpretations of the process of creating value beyond providers' initial intentions. In other words, the process of value creation from a rituals perspective is not only tied to the immediate, instrumental usage of resources as intended by the service provider (such as e.g. drinking). Largely, customers reconstruct the means of usage by creating new resources and new value beyond the intentions of the service providers. If, on the one hand, there is a vast consensus in service literature that customers, similar to producers, are resource integrators and thus are able to enhance the value of provider offerings (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Grönroos, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Grönroos and Ravald, 2011); at the same time, the rituals perspective seems to add something different. Particularly, this insight is similar but not identical to the concept of working consumers (e.g. Cova and Dallı, 2009; Pongsakornrungrasri and Schroeder, 2011). Similar to the working consumers, customers (individually or collectively) create new value by integrating their own resources (i.e. mainly feelings and emotions) beyond the provider's intentions. Nonetheless, it is different in the sense that they do not work to transfer this value to the market. Value remains largely within the customer domain. Cova and Dallı (2009) illustrate the concept of working consumers through the example of the vintage

car community and arguing that this community of consumers by means of immaterial labour have “restored value (and soul) to the product. The vintage car, once properly restored, is assigned a price. The vintage car market is, however, almost like a second-hand market – there are no companies and/or intermediaries, with the exceptions of a few small ones. The market is strictly linked to the community.” The market connotation is the element that is missing from a rituals perspective, both empirically and theoretically. It is indeed true that the community (or *communitas* as it will be further explained below) retains these objects and their value within the group of friends or family members. Though, according to the empirical evidence collected, these objects and their value are not destined to a second market, nor the community seems able to properly function as “brand curator” (Ibid, 332) that regulates how objects are created. Rather, customers create these objects to nurture their needing for rituals. In addition, from a theoretical perspective, rituals are advocated to be a domain that is situated outside the market (Douglas, [1966]2002; Curasi et al., 2004), if not alternative to it (Belk et al., 1989; Moiso et al., 2004). Therefore, from the perspective of this study, ritualization enables richer interpretations of value creation that emerge not only within the means of the service provider, but broadly in multiple customers’ interpretations of using resources that go beyond the intentions of the service provider.

To conclude, the emergence of value creation in rituals stems from a richer process that is multi-layered and script-based. Ritual behaviours consist by a set of collective routines embedded in the ritual practice (one layer) and individual mental cognitive processes (another layer). These two layers are intertwined and underlie the usage of resources in a ritualistic fashion. The usage of resources in a ritualistic fashion is also substantiated by extended interpretations of customers’ roles as resource integrators. Customers by applying their own resources not only reconstruct the means of value embedded in service use, but in addition, they extend value beyond the intentions of the service providers that are retained within the customer rituals domain.

Customers determination of value in rituals

Service literature claims its customer centricity by recognizing that only customers can uniquely determine value over providers' offerings (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Accordingly, value determination is understood as phenomenologically determined by the customer (Vargo and Lusch, 2011) in a given context (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Instead, the ritual lens adopted to provide increased agency to customers can recognize and emphasize the collective nature of value determination, as evaluation of value in rituals is rarely done in isolation (both at subject and contextual levels). For example, in both ethnographic episodes, determination of wine rituals is found within a family and its surroundings. Similarly, among friends, wines are evaluated as a shared pleasure, which is embedded in different contexts (e.g. the Piazza, the wandering places). Nevertheless, rituals may also be evaluated at a more subjective level, implying the evaluation of a subjective experience. Representative of this is the case of Daniele, who although enjoys wines at home with his family, nevertheless, he appreciates drinking at another level when his wife and his son go to bed. He refers to that moment as very important because "*I stretch out my nerves and I totally decompress myself.*" Similarly, Paolo interprets his wine rituality as a "*moment of individual pleasure.*" Yet, the reality of the ritual is always interrelated to the reality of the family or one of the friends, who co-construct the ritual at multiple levels and contexts. Particularly, the theoretical framework of the present thesis broadly conceptualizes the ritual gathering as an audience (e.g. Rook, 1985). The ritual audience refers to the group of individuals and related contexts—both physical and virtual—wherein a ritual is cocreated. Ritual audiences gather in a liminoid space wherein *communitas* of customers find themselves removed from ordinary time and place and develop alternatives ways of being together (e.g. Turner, [1969]2008; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). In family rituals, *communitas* refer to extended families because they temporarily include "other members." Daniele's family extended toward me, Antonio's family extended toward the wine producers, and Nicola's family extended toward the doctor. These *communitas* hold together temporarily by sharing a feeling (e.g. conviviality, shaking hands, being together) to cocreate. The physical places wherein families gather are also virtually extended toward other premises (e.g. extended family premises toward the wine producer's vineyards). In the rituals among friends, *communitas* refers to extended

friends and thus includes “other members” (e.g. bartenders, other customers). These *communitas* of friends hold together temporarily by sharing a feeling (e.g. being together) to cocreate value. The physical places wherein friends gather (e.g. wine bars, taverns) are also extended toward other premises (e.g. the town square ‘la Piazza’ or the ‘wandering places’), which are viewed as extraordinary servicescapes, wherein customers leave beyond their ordinary life to engage in collective rituals.

From a service perspective, *communitas* may refer to customers ecosystems (e.g. Voima et al., 2011; Heinonen et al., 2010), wherein a community of customers and other related subjects partake in cocreation and thus all together determine value. Though unlike the above customers ecosystems, the concept of *communitas* is more self-selecting and thus less definable. They are not communities in the sense that either they are permanently formed nor systematically definable. They are not families or friends, but extended families or extended friends that last only for the moment of the ritual. Once the ritual is over, these extended groups of customers and contexts return to their original composition. When it comes to the theme of *who* and *where* value is determined, this particular characteristic is important to recognize because it stretches even further the boundaries of value determination. The intersubjective and dynamic character of determination of value is not only visible in terms of the “reality of the family” or friends (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013:111-2). Differently, value is determined by the reality of the *communitas*, which are more symbolic because they are liminoid, self-selecting and thus composed by an uncertain number of invisible subjects partaking in the ritual, thereby extending the composition of customer ecosystems. They also shape how value is determined. Similar to sociocultural contexts in which value is embedded (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Akaka et al., 2013), these are also extended by the reality of the ritual. From a rituals perspective, value determination although intersubjective, is less framed by the wider social system in terms of norms, rules, roles, and positions that regulate everyday social life. That is because ritualization implies a moment of universal connection in which the key dimension that determines value is the need to be together, which extends social roles, positions, norms, and values as described above. As such, contexts wherein value is determined are also understood as extended. Recently, Rihova et al. (2013; 2014) touched upon the concept of *communitas* to conceptualize the intersubjective determination of value within a tourist

customer ecosystem. The above conceptualization is reverberated in this study. In addition, the present thesis contributes to it by providing another theoretical perspective by conceptualizing *communitas* in rituals. Further, the present thesis expands the work of Rihova and colleagues by providing empirical verification in another field (i.e. wine), which strengthens even further the validity of the concept of *communitas*.

To conclude, determination of value in rituals gives due recognition to the intersubjective determination of value as done by multiple subjects and contexts. Rituals provide that temporarily extended social reality detached from everyday life, within which value is evaluated and determined. Value is not evaluated and determined only in isolation by one single subject at a given context, but at the same time it is shared within *communitas* of customers, momentarily linked (physically or virtually) for the cocreation of a ritual. The present thesis aligns with the customer ecosystem view of value determination (e.g. Voima et al., 2011; Heinonen et al., 2010), although it emphasizes its symbolic, extraordinary character because it is liminoid. Hence, a rituals perspective stretches the boundary of the customer ecosystem wherein value is determined because it includes a wider number of subjects and contexts that are temporarily interconnected for the moment of the ritual event.

Managerial implications

Typically, marketing managers view ritualization as a powerful marketing technique to increase customer engagement and satisfaction, which are predictors of customer loyalty. In the prologue, the present thesis has also reported some examples about brands teaching customers about how to ritualize their products. Of particular interest was the statement of an influential brand specialist explaining the power of rituals: “If they ritualize, they (customers) will stay.” This is a company’s perspective on customer rituals according to which customers are viewed as passive recipients of marketing techniques, such as rituals, to influence and somehow manipulate their purchasing behaviours. However, the present study accounts for the customer’s perspective on rituals and found that customers are not only a rather active part in the way provider offerings are used and evaluated. Further, they are the primary source of value creation, and subjects have the sovereignty to determine if they want to stay. In other words,

what providers intend for ritualization seems to be different from how customer actually ritualize. Rituals are culturally situated within the customer domain. Rituals are a sort of schema that customers operationalize to organize their social life. As such, customers implement rituals as a key resource to reconstruct and sometimes subvert the value propositions delivered by providers through their offerings to satisfy their needing for being together, feasting, and sharing the feeling of doing something together. This needing is achieved through the customer rituals process and because of that, they will probably stay. As Mary Douglas (2002[1966]:77) says, “As a social animal, man is a ritual animal.” That is to say that without rituals, human beings would not have any social life. Paraphrasing Douglas, rituals are important because they help customers to manage their consumption activity. Thus, it is fundamental not in terms of delivering a ritual to customers as a marketing technique. Rather, what is important is feeding the customer’s inner needing for ritual. Instead of prototyping rituals in the provider’s sphere, providers should first understand what a ritual means from the customer’s perspective. The present thesis may offer managers a framework to understanding customer rituals. Through this framework and a customer rituals perspective, managers can concretely benefit in three different ways.

- 1) In primis, the framework presented in figure 10 can be used by managers to study customer rituals. That is not to say that the framework can be used to map typologies of rituals to segment products and customers. This study shows that rituals are emergent: who attends a ritual and where rituals take shape unfold in a rather uncertain fashion. Instead, the framework can be beneficial to identify the structural elements guiding a ritual process and thereby analyse how a ritual unfolds through the interplay of its elements. Committing to this process could give companies a deeper comprehension of customer rituals and better facilitate the customer’s ritual value creation. As argued above, much of the marketing technique mimicking rituals focuses only on one structural element: the product or the service. This framework adds more. First, it conceptualizes provider’s products and offerings as symbolic resources. Symbolic resources are not only the focal product or service offering but also related elements (both tangible and intangible) that are used by customers in ritual fashion, such as objects, languages, knowledge, physical environments, and so on. Secondly, the

framework can identify certain ritual scripts that are rules for framing customer behaviours about how artefacts are used and by whom. The third element is the ritual roles. Ritual roles are important because it is possible to recognize the position, types of relationships, and intensity of interactions among customers. Finally, the customer symbolic ecosystem may shed light on the broader interconnection of customers who partake or do not partake in a ritual, both physically or virtually. From a methodological point of view, it is important to highlight that in order to fully understand rituals, managers should implement interpretative methods, such as ethnography. Many scholars argue that rituals represent a “complex gestalt” (Tetrault and Kleine, 1990) that can be better captured only if adopting a holistic method of inquiry. Ethnography not only embeds these characteristics, but market-wise ethnography is very apt to facilitate the comprehension of a wider range of consumption situations (Arnould, Wallendorf, 1994; Arnould and Price, 2006). These can be used to conceive market-related strategies to facilitate customer rituals.

- 2) Secondly, ritual events can be leveraged to target *communitas*, toward which marketing activities are delivered. Traditionally, marketers use income, demographics, and personal or social traits to target customers. However, as reported in this study, ritualization could imply a temporary gathering of customers that holds together as *communitas*, disregarding the above characteristics. The common denominator is the sharing of a passion, which is nurtured through rituals. Nevertheless, targeting a *communitas* that gathers for a ritual is not an easy task due to its unstable character. As argued above, *communitas* are not framed by social structures, either they are focused on a brand in particular. They are self-selecting on the basis of sharing a feeling toward which they assemble to perform a ritual event. Once the ritual event is over and the needing of being together is satisfied, they disassemble. Therefore, the best way of targeting a *communitas* is to focus on events to feed customers’ needing of rituals (see also Cova and Cova, 2001; Cayla et al. 2013). The ritual event can be leveraged to deliver marketing activities to capture this particular type of cohort. Nonetheless, the ritual event should be organized around a fundamental characteristic: the extraordinary character. Most of the research conducted from

a rituals perspective (e.g. Arnould and Price, 1993; Belk and Costa, 1998; Rihova et al., 2014) shows that customers are willing to attend an extraordinary consumption experience, which implies detachment from everyday life. The detachment from everyday life unfolds in three liminoid stages: pre-liminoid, liminoid, and post-liminoid. It is key that companies facilitate customers at all three stages. Rihova et al. (2014) provide important insights in the tourism field that can be replicated in the wine field as well. Particularly, in the pre-liminoid stage, marketers should attract customers by designing value propositions able to engage with customers through vague expectations. Vague expectations are intrinsically linked to extraordinary experiences (Arnould and Price, 1993). In the liminoid stage, focus should be on feeding social relationships among customers by providing ritual artefacts (e.g. wines, glasses, technical language and knowledge, physical environment), promoting ritual behaviours (gestures, sequence of actions) and by stimulating the enactment of different ritual roles, all with the goal of achieving a temporary feeling of being together in a ritual audience. This is also well documented in consumption studies as the enactment of a rite of integration (e.g. Arnould and Price, 1993), wherein individuals homogenize into one *communitas*. Eventually, in the post-liminoid stage companies should feed the re-engagement among customers by facilitating long-lasting customer relationships. For instance, by using social media to recover those memories of having been part of an extraordinary experience. This, in turn, will predict customer loyalty to re-attend ritual events, but also to adopt the brand that has promoted the extraordinary ritual of the consumption experience.

- 3) Thirdly, the study of rituals can provide insights on product and service innovation. Particularly, with regards of using rituals as a way to expand the meaning of consumption toward other related products or services. In a completely new and unexpected way, the field work herein brought up a number of activities, objects, and services related to rituals. These are completely glossed over by companies, since customers act in a sort of do-it-yourself fashion to satisfy their need for rituals. Just as an example drawn from the wine field, customers are very much keen to learn more about the *terroirs* (i.e. the territory) where a wine comes from. In fact, there is a vast consensus among wine experts

and companies to feed this needing by describing their wines and its organoleptic characteristics in terms of the terroirs (see e.g. Van Leeuwen and Seguin, 2006; Bruwer and Alant, 2009). A ritual is that characteristic of the terroirs that is most of the time missing from the marketing activities and that could have great potential for expanding the meaning of consumption further. Wine companies should actively work with tour operators, local institutions, and other stakeholders to design customer services not only in terms of promoting the ritual of wine in combination with food. Widely, they should embrace the multiple meaningful interpretations that relate wine and rituals in the broader wine ecosystem, such as social practices, crafts, architecture, history, music, festivals, dialects, customs, traditions, nature, landscapes and even politics.

Limitations and further research

The present study has a number of theoretical and empirical limitations that may spur further investigations. First, in this thesis, rituals have been interpreted as a customer process of value creation. This is a narrow perspective that has been useful in focusing on zooming into processes of the customers, through which value is created. Though, rituals can be also broadly studied to understand market-logics. Recent development in service literature expands the dominant logic of service toward institutions (Edvardsson et al., 2014; Lusch and Vargo, 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Particularly, Vargo and Lusch (2016:18) explain that institutions in service are important because they provide the “rules of the game” of market value creation. Edvardsson et al. (2014) further explain that institutional logic matters because it facilitates coordination among broader interconnections of actors, thereby providing the key point of reference for market actors in the way resources are integrated and value assessed. Thus, an interesting way to develop the ritual framework of the present thesis in service research is to view rituals as that broader cultural institution framing value cocreation among a broader set of actors in markets and also including other institutions. One possible set of research questions that could drive this further investigation are as follows: how can rituals as a cultural institution enable (or constrain) resource integration in markets? What is its role in the assessment and determination of value? How can rituals as a cultural

institution relate and coordinate to other non-cultural institutions (such as governmental or technological institutions) in market cocreation?

A second limitation that may spur new research relates to the empirical ground. Particularly, the thesis data was collected in the field of wine. It has been argued that this field was particularly attuned to studying rituals because drinking is a social activity that is strongly ritualized. Nevertheless, there are other possible empirical fields that possess similar characteristics toward which this research could be extended to strengthen verification. Food is a field that although different to wine, nevertheless it is dominated by rituals (cfr. Marshall, 2005; Moiso, Arnould and Price, 2004). As such, this empirical ground may secure a pertinent empirical ground by extending verification of this research, which could lead to new, interesting insights.

Finally, another interesting way to further develop this thesis and its theoretical framework would be to explore the glocalization of rituals. Rather than conducting further research spurred by its limitation, this third point stems from the particular research design of the thesis. This study has been designed by no means to perform a cross-cultural study, although, data collection occurred into two sites (i.e. Sweden and Italy). Nevertheless, this particular research design has allowed one to observe that rituals are born local and often globalized to be afterward glocalized by other local cultures. The interesting thing is that during this process that leads to glocalization, the meaning of the ritual and its structural elements may change depending on the local context. Since service literature is moving forward to “conceptualizing the complexity of the context that frames international and global exchange systems” (Akaka, Vargo and Lusch, 2013:1), the present study could evolve toward this direction. More specifically, it could be possible to use this framework implanted into the service systems logic to more deeply understand it in terms of adaptation of the global exchange systems across markets. That is, studying the trajectory of the ritual structure and its related meanings from local, to global, and finally to glocal facilitates such understanding. Therefore, it may be possible to strengthen the presence of the service perspective into the international marketing debate.

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Appendix 1 – Complete list of informants

Informants names	Type of actor	Geographical Location	Technique of recruitment	Description and rational for recruiting
Kerstin	Consumer	Sweden	personal acquaintance	Kerstin is a 74 years old woman. She is mother of my partner Veronica. She lives in Eskilstuna but grew up in Karlkrona. Kerstin allowed me to collect data when partaking in the celebration of her birthday, which took place in Karlskrona.
Silvana	Consumer	Italy	personal acquaintance	Silvana is 78 years old woman living in Padova. She is retired. I got to know Silvana through personal acquaintances. She demonstrated interest in my research and she proposes herself as my informants. I interviewed Silvana on her wine rituality in general.
Gjono,	Gatekeeper (consumer)	Italy	personal acquaintance	Gjono is 42 years old and he is my gatekeeper in the consumer-actor category of informants. Gjono is part of my personal acquaintance in Italy: we were bachelor students, frequenting the same University in Padova. Beside his official work as bank account in Italy, he is the Italian representative of an international organization promoting the culture of slow food. For this reason, he has an in-depth knowledge in wines, both local and international. He likes to define himself as wine enthusiast. Gjono is a solid point of reference for all his friends when it comes to drink or buy wines. He has a profound knowledge in the wine and food semiology spending hours in talking about wines and their rituality. As Gjono says: "bars are my first family house" and for that reasons it is said among his friends that he spends more time in drinking at the bars and talking about wines comparing to the time spent at home.
Roger	Consumer	Italy	snowballing	Roger is about 50 years old. I got to know Roger through Gjono. He works in public services and he frequents the same wine bar where Gjono goes regularly. He accepted to be observed in his everyday wine rituality.
Ciano	Consumer	Italy	snowballing	Ciano is about 55 years old. I got to know Ciano through Gjono. He works in public services as Roger. Ciano together with Gjono and Roger frequent the same wine bar. He accepted to be observed in his everyday wine rituality.
Laura	Consumer	Italy	serendipitous	Laura is 32 years old. She works as tourist agent. I got to know Laura in a bar in Padova. We share some drinks in

				this bar and she accepted to be interviewed by me.
Silvano	Wine School	Italy	opportunistic	Silvano teaches Marketing in a wine school in Conegliano, Istituto Cerletti. I visit the school and during my visiting I interviewed Silvano about consumer's wine rituals and the production of wine.
Stephen	Consumer	Italy	serendipitous	Stephen is 38 years old. He works as graphic designer in a web agency. I got to know Stephen in a bar in Padova where I sat down to observe consumers. While we were sharing some drinks, we engaged in a conversation in which he told me about his everyday wine ritual.
Vasco	Consumer	Sweden	personal acquaintance	Vasco was born in Portugal, but he moved to Sweden to complete his studies in Chemistry. I got to know Vasco during my master in Marketing, that he left quite soon, but we remained good friends. He is now working as Researcher in a Marketing agency. He allowed me to participate in a Fredagsmys ritual in his company. He also agreed with me to be interviewed about this private occasion.
Eva	Alcohol Museum	Sweden	opportunistic	Eva is the intendant of the Sprit Museum in Stockholm. The mission of the museum is to preserve the Swedish drinking cultural heritage and to explain through different thematic patterns the historical relationship between the Swedes and the alcohol. Therefore, the Spritmuseum represents to me important source of information due to its specific knowledge in the Swedish drinking culture and more precisely in the historical relationship between the Swedish wine consumers and their rituals. I interviewed Eva in December 2014 and she acculturated me in the Swedish alcohol culture by informing me about the typical alcohol behaviours of the Swedish consumers and about the market structures and policies that to me were unknown.
Hanna&Christian	Wine Producer (marketing office)	Sweden	snowballing	Hanna is a sommelier working in the Marketing department of an important Chilean wine Importer and producer in Stockholm. I got to know Hanna through Christian, which my personal acquaintance. Christian and I are good friends and sometimes we play football. I already knew that Christian worked as Financial manager in this Company and as such I asked him for an interview. He managed to help me in getting a meeting with Hanna for a

				lunch. During the lunch I had the opportunity to interviewed Hanna about the Swedish wine market and the wine consumption in Sweden from the importer perspective.
Veronica	Consumer	Sweden	personal acquaintance	Veronica is 38 years old and she is my partner. She is originally native from Sweden, but at the same time she lived in Italy for almost a decade. She is equipped with an interesting characteristic and that is the one of being knowledgeable about the Swedish and the Italian wine cultures. As such, Veronica represented a pertinent informant to this study due to the variegate nature of the cultural meanings that frame her everyday wine rituality.
Lasse	Consumer	Sweden	personal acquaintance	Lasse is the father of one of my son's playmates and married to Åsa. We developed our friendship by talking about wines. After having known that I was conducting this study on wine consumption Lasse accepted to be interviewed on his everyday rituality. Particularly, I found Lasse pertinent to my research because he is a working class consumer and he is a wine enthusiast. Often, when Lasse travels for leisure, he likes to discover the local wine culture of the countries that he visits. During our interview he told me about a typical Swedish ritual in which consumers goes abroad to buy alcohol, including wines.
Irene	Sommelier	Italy	snowballing	I got to know Irene, through my gatekeeper Gjono. Gjono suggested me to talking to Irene because she is a sommelier working in the business of food and wine catering. As such, Irene was pertinent to the study due to her particular perspective of being an expert in wine, working in between the product offering and the consumer demand. She is also a strong influencer in consumer's choices and thus she is knowledgeable about what kind of wines consumers drink and how they drink.

Barbieri	Consumer	Italy	snowballing	Mr. Barbieri is a 86 years old man that Gjono introduced me during a participant observation in Salboro, a little village outside Padova. I accepted to interview Mr. Barbieri because he spent his career in wine business as broker. During our recorded interview, Mr. Barbieri told me that he was writing a book about the history of the trade of wines in Padova, since he considers himself a witness of the historical changing in the way the wine was traded in this specific geographical area and more in general in Italy. I recorder our ethnographic conversation.
Barbieri's friend	Restaurateur	Italy	snowballing	Through Mr. Barbieri I got to know one of his best friends, who was also one of his best customers. This man who more or less has the same age as Mr. Barbieri, was a restaurateur and now helping his son in carrying on the Restaurant. Together with Mr. Barbieri, we engaged in the ethnographic conversation, in which he explained me the history of the wine trade in Padova from the restaurateur perspective. Particularly, his contribution was useful in reporting how some Italian wine rituals has dramatically changed over time from the second World War when he opened the Restaurant till the actual days. Further, the interview was pertinent to the study in unraveling the relationship between the Italian food culture and the everyday wine ritual.
Simone	Bartender	Italy	snowballing	Simone is the owner and the bartender of the bar that Gjono usually frequent. We develop our relationship during my participant observation with Gjono. He became my informants providing me information about the bartenders' world, their business logic and he also helped me to understand consumer's ritual behaviours frequenting his bar. Simone share with Gjono the passion for the semiotic of food and the historical significance of the different symbols present in the food culture.
Luca	Sales Intermediary	Italy	opportunistic	Luca is the manager director of the sales department of one the most important wine producer in Italy and which wine brands are well known around the world. Through a common friend, Chiara, I was able to interview Luca about the wine trading between the producer and the different typologies of resellers active in the Ho.re.ca and in the FMCG distribution channels. He also was useful in providing some insights about the wine ritual of end consumers.

Paolo	Restaurateur and Sommelier	Italy	opportunistic	Paolo is the owner of a Restaurant in Teolo (Italy) and he is also a graduated sommelier. I got to know Paolo because I sometimes have a dinner at his restaurant when I am in Italy and in such occasions we always spend some time to talk about wines. He agreed to be interviewed by me about the consumer wine rituals from his perspective of restaurateur. Further, due to his profound knowledge in the making of wines (he owned a little vineyard where he produces small quantities of wine intended for domestic consumption) Paolo was useful in providing specific information about the production of wine and how wines are commercialized in Italy.
Antonio	Consumer	Italy	snowballing	Antonio is Gijono's father. I engaged with him in one ethnographic conversations about his everyday wine ritual at home.
Nicola	Wine Producer (owner)	Italy	personal acquaintance	Nicola is a young entrepreneur (42 years old) that I got to know because he was my former client back in the time when I worked in Italy as in an advertising agency as Account Manager. Particularly I was involved in developing a number of marketing activities for his company. Beside our professional relationship we became good friends and when I spend my holidays in Italy we usually meet up to talk about the wine market. I choose Nicola as my gatekeeper due to his great potentiality in providing me access to the field. More specifically, Nicola can boast a wide network of professional and personal acquaintances that cover almost all the professionalisms that characterizes the value chain in the wine market, from the producers to the intermediaries, including end consumers. Further, Nicola holds in his company the role of export manager. As such he provides me with important knowledge in the foreign wine markets such as Europe and the new world (i.e. Chile, Cuba and the Caribbean, South Africa, Australia and China).

Daniele	Consumer	Italy	personal acquaintance	Daniele is an entrepreneur. Daniele comes from my hometown, Padova and he is my personal acquaintance since many years. We are good friends but we don't share the passion for wine, because he never showed me any interests on wines. Due to his lack of specific interest in wines, I found Daniele interesting for this research and particularly in the opportunity to obtaining information from a type consumer that over time showed me a low degree of involvement in the consumption of wines. Further, due to our friendship I had the opportunity to get great access and availability in collecting data by partaking in his everyday wine ritualty at home with his family.
Greta	Consumer	Italy	serendipitous	Greta is a jewellery designer living in Castelfranco Veneto. The idea was to collect data in this little village located in Nord East of Italy because it is well known for its wine culture and precisely because in this area it is produced a famous wine: the Prosecco. Accordingly I went to Castelfranco Veneto three times to talk to consumers and bartenders to grasp the cultural meaning of drinking wines in a area where wine is part of its historical cultural heritage. During my observation I got to know Greta who accepted to be observed and interviewed about her wine ritualty in a significant moment of consumption such as the "aperitivo".
Alessandro	Wine Journalist	Italy	opportunistic	Alessandro is a journalist and a publisher of an important wine magazine. He is also enrolled in the Master of Wine Institute, which provides the most prestigious title in the world of wine. As such, Alessandro represents a pertinent informant in terms of market influencer and knowledgeable in the market dynamics at the institutional level.
Oscar	Consumer	Sweden	serendipitous	Oscar is a PhD student at Stockholm University. I got to know Oscar between January and March 2014 at Stockholm University. I asked Ivo to be part of wine drinking rituals and having the possibility to collect some data for my research. I had with Ivo one participant observation
Nils	Consumer	Sweden	snowballing	Nils is a student at Stockholm University that I got to know through Oscar during our participant observation. Nils was available and willing to share with me some drinks after work. I conducted with him one ethnographic interview.

Molly	Consumer	Sweden	snowballing	Molly is a PhD student at Stockholm University. Nils introduced me to Molly, and suggested to invite her for the participant observation. I agree with Nils to include Molly. With her I had one ethnographic interview together with Nils.
Helene	Consumer	Sweden	snowballing	Helene is a post doc researcher at Stockholm University. She is not originally from Sweden, she travels around the world since she was bachelor student. I got to know Helene through Ivo who suggested me to get in touch with her since Helene is wine enthusiast. Helene and I agree to have one participant observation by sharing some drink after work. During our participant observation I carried out one ethnographic interview with her.
Elisa	Sommelier	Italy	snowballing	Elisa is a professional sommelier working as enologist for a number of wine producers around Italy. I got to know Elisa through my gatekeeper Nicola during the International wine exposition in Verona, April 2015. I conducted with Elisa one semi-structured interview on the consumers wine rituals. I found the information provided by Elisa pertinent to the research and interesting to understand the role played by the sommeliers in terms of market influencers.
Marco	Consumer	Italy	snowballing	Marco is wine a 40 years old enthusiast consumer that I got to know by frequenting Severino's. He lives in Treviso although travelling quite often to Padova for work reasons. He agreed with me to be interviewed in September 2015 about his everyday wine ritual. Marco represents a typology of consumers that combine his leisure travels with the discovering of international wines around the world. Marco is believed to be an expert in wines and because of that he functions as influencer within his close group of friends.
Luciano	Wine producer (Farmer)	Italy	snowballing	Luciano is a farmer working in the vineyards owned by Nicola. I took part in a wine harvesting in September 2015 in which Luciano was the director of the harvesting and coordinating a team of about 20 farmers. I found pertinent to the study partaking in the harvesting to understand the making of wine and the related cultural meanings. With Luciano I had one ethnographic interview.

Nadja Karlson	Employee at the Alcohol Museum	Sweden	snowballing	Nadia is employed at the Spritmuseum. After having met and interviewed Eva, I wanted to collect more data in relation to the gender consumption of wine. That is because during my data collection I observed that the ritual of drinking wine is often characterized by gender segregation. In fact, in Stockholm it is quite common to see a gender gathering of women drinking rosé wine. I wanted to know more about it and I found pertinent to go back to the Spritmuseum to check whether this peculiar Swedish gender rite could have to do with some cultural meanings. Eva suggested me to talk with Nadia and so I did.
Matteo	Bartender	Italy	serendipitous	Matteo is a bar tender and owner of a wine bar in Milano. I got to know Matteo in a serendipitous occasion, as he works in a bar that I frequent when in Milano. I asked Matteo to be interviewed for my research and he accepted. The interview was carried out in his bar, before the opening hour.
Franco Zanovello	Wine Producer (Owner and wine maker)	Italy	snowballing	Franco Zanovello is a leading enologist and he is considered one of the father figures of the modern Italian wine making. Franco Zanovello is well-known among wine producers for his talent and passion as well as for his wines. Nicola Barollo (my gatekeeper in the Firm-actor domain) suggested me to interview Franco Zanovello due to his profound knowledge on wine-making and how the techniques to make wines have changed in the last decades to adapt to the different consumer tastes around the world due to the globalization of the wine markets. Nicola helped me to get in touch with Franco Zanovello and settle a meeting that took place in February, 2016.
De Stefani Alessandro	Wine Producer (Owner and Wine maker)	Italy	opportunistic	De Stefani is wine maker and owner of wine firm located in an area (East of Italy) highly devoted to the production of wines. His firm exports 90% of the production and he is also quite active in the Swedish market since 2002, which is also the main reason why I wanted to interview Alessandro De Stefani. I contacted Alessandro via Email and asking for an interview particularly to understand more about the Swedish market from a producer perspective and more in general to understand the dynamics of global wine market. We met one time in February, 2016

Massimo Poloni	Wine Producer (CEO)	Italy	opportunistic	Mr. Poloni is CEO of one of the leading wine firm producing Prosecco: Valdo Spumanti. Founded in 1926 Valdo Spumanti is nowadays part of an international group which goal is to become global product leader in the Prosecco segment. Since Prosecco is today considered as the most popular sparkling wine both in Sweden and in Italy, and since Valdo is a key player, I planned to interview this firm to gain more information about the market dynamics of this product segment. I managed to have an appointment with Mr. Poloni, which I met in March, 2016.
Lorenzo Vavassori	Wine Producer (Export Manager)	Italy	snowballing	Vavassori is export manager for CAVIT, which is considered to be a global wine industry due to the great amount of bottle produced every year that are sold all over the world. Since my gatekeeper Nicola Barollo maintains business relationships with Mr. Vavassori, he helped me to arrange a meeting that took place at CAVIT headquarter in Trento, in March, 2016. The interview was useful, because it expanded my understanding of the wine market from the industry perspective, touching upon different issues along the entire value chain: global market trends, mass production, digital marketing, public relations, sales and industry acquisitions.
Markus	Swedish Importer	Sweden	snowballing	Markus Berg works as Product Range Manager in Sweden. Markus helped to understand more about the Swedish consumers behaviours, the Swedish value chain and the new wine trends in Sweden. We met one time in March, 2016.

Appendix 2 – List of participant observations

Participants names	Geographical Location	Type of participant observation	Description of the participant observation and data recording
Kerstin	Karlskrona, Sweden	complete	In June 2014, I partake in the Kerstin's 70th birthday celebration. Kerstin lives in a small city, Eskilstuna, but originally comes from Blekinge, in the south of Sweden. Here she still own a house, where she grew up. In order to celebrate her birthday Kerstin organized a family re-union with her brother Lasse, her sister Karin, her daughter Veronica and some other relatives. In this event I had a full participatory membership role in which I was involved in the preparation of the lunch and in serving drinks to the guests. Data was recorded through jot notes at the place of the observation and afterwards some other extended field notes were written the same day. Some pictures of the context of consumption (i.e. the house where the ritual took place) were taken.
Antonio	Padova, Italy	complete	I participated in the Antonio's everyday ritual of dinning and drinking wine in his family context at the end of June 2014. My role was active in arranging the dinner and in serving the wine. We ate together and we discussed about his wine rituality at home. Data was audio recorder and transcript verbatim. Field notes also were written after the participation. No pictures were taken.
Gjono	Padova, Italy	complete	Gjono allowed me to take part in his after-work ritual of drinking wine (i.e. the Italian Aperitivo). I engaged in this participatory observation three times between the end of June and the beginning of July 2014. I took a full participatory role in this ritual drinking and sharing wine with him and her girlfriend Giulia. Data was recorded only through jot notes at the place of the observation and afterwards some other extended field notes were written the same day. Some pictures of the context of consumption (i.e. wine bars, squares) were taken.
Gjono, Roger and Ciano	Selvazzano, Italy	complete	In July 2014, I negotiated with Gjono, Roger and Ciano my participant observation in drinking the "aperitivo" on after work occasions. The participant observations were four carried out during two weeks. Our "aperitivo" was itinerant, meaning changing different places and meeting with different persons. As such, I act as a member of the group and thus taking a full participatory role. Data was recorded through jot notes that were written on the field. Afterwards extended field notes were also written at home after the participant observation. Some pictures of the context of consumption (i.e. wine bars, squares) and of different elements of the ritual (e.g. artefacts, behaviours ecc) were taken.
Laura	Milano, Italy	moderate	Laura is 32 years old. She works as tourist agent. I got to know Laura in a bar in Milan, where I planned to carry out passive observations on the Italian "aperitivo" ritual. At the beginning we had some drinks together and we started talking about her wine rituality. Afterward we developed our relationship becoming "friends" and thus acting with a moderate role. I followed Laura and her friends in their after work rituality in three different sections between July 2014 and June 2015. Data was recorded through jot notes that were written on the field. Afterwards extended field notes were also written at home after the participant observation. Some pictures of the context of consumption (i.e. wine bars, squares) and of different elements of the ritual (e.g. artefacts, behaviours etc.) were taken.

Stephen	Verona, Italy	moderate	Stephen is 38 years old. He works as graphic designer for a web agency. I got to know Stephen in a bar in Padova, where I sat down to observe consumers. My role was moderate, as I occasionally met Stephen. Though, we were sharing some drinks. We engaged in a conversation in which he told me about his everyday wine ritual. Data was recorded through jot notes that were written on the field and extended field notes. No pictures taken and no voice recording.
Lasse	Stockholm, Sweden	moderate	I followed Lasse in his everyday wine ritual at home between January and February 2014. I negotiate my participation with Lasse, which I know though my son (Lasse is the father of one of my son's playmates). I was invited by Lasse to attend two dinners at his place with his family. Data was recorded through jot notes that were written on the field. Afterwards extended field notes were also written at home after the participant observation. No pictures and no voice recording was possible to record
Irene	Selvazzano, Italy	moderate	In January 2015 I participated in the drinking wine rituals with Irene and her friends Simone and Antonio. I negotiated a moderate participatory role in two observations through the help of my gatekeeper (Gjono) who introduced me to the group. The observations took place in a bar in Selvazzano and in Restaurant located in another little village close to Vicenza, Italy. During these participant observations I carried out three casual conversations. Data were partially voice recorded when possible. Jot notes and Extended field notes were also written. Some pictures of the context of consumption (i.e. the venue) and of different elements of the ritual (e.g. artefacts, behaviours etc.) were taken
Nicola	Padova, Italy	complete	In January 2015 I took part in the Italian <i>aperitivo</i> , which is an after work ritual, with Nicola and his group of friends. My role in this participant observation was active but not full, since I was not a full member of the group, but only close to Nicola. However, the "aperitivo" was itinerant, meaning changing different places and meeting with different persons. Data was recorded through jot notes that were written on the field. Afterwards extended field notes were also written at home after the participant observation. Some pictures of the context of consumption (i.e. wine bars, squares) and of different elements of the ritual (e.g. artefacts, behaviours etc.) were taken. No voice recording was feasible
Daniele	Padova, Italy	complete	Due to our long-term relationship I was able to negotiate with Daniele active participatory observations on his everyday ritual at home. I classify this participant observation as active since I did not take any membership role in participation, as I am not a member of his family. Overall I carried out my observations 3 times in January 2015. Data was recorded through jot notes that were written on the field. Afterwards extended field notes were also written at home after the participant observation. Some pictures of the context of consumption (i.e. wine bars, squares) and of different elements of the ritual (e.g. artefacts, behaviours etc.) were taken as we all our ethnographic conversations were fully recorded and transcribed.
Greta	Treviso, Italy	complete	I took a full membership role in this participant observation about the ritual of the drinking aperitivo with Greta. The observations were recorded in January 2015 in Castelfranco Veneto, Italy. I engaged with Greta two times in drinking the aperitivo. Participant observations took place only in one wine bar, where Greta is used to go. Data were collected and

			recorded through jot notes and field note. Further our ethnographic conversations were audio recorded and verbatim transcribed.
Nils, Molly and Oscar	Stockholm, Sweden	moderate	I managed to take active role in observing and participating in after work ritual of drinking wine with this group of students. I firstly negotiated with Oscar my participation and through him I got access to Nils and Molly. We share some drinks in two bars in south Stockholm. Our ethnographic interviews were recorded and verbatim transcribed. I wrote field notes afterward the participant observation, as it was not possible to take jot notes in the bars. No photographs taken. The data collection was performed in February 2015.
Helene	Stockholm, Sweden	moderate	My participant observation with Helene happens in March 2015. I followed Helene in her wine ritual with whom I conduct also an ethnographic interview that was recorded and verbatim transcribed. The information elicited were exceptionally pertinent and interesting to the study, because she is originally from Bulgaria, but she moved permanently to Stockholm only recently (2 years) That help me to observe a kind of multi-cultural ritual, as she implemented some aspects of the Swedish ritual (e.g. she learned how to plan her wine ritual ahead in Sweden) with a no Swedish cultural background and thus having another attitude toward alcohol consumption. No photographs of the participant observation were taken.
Luciano	Preganziol, Italy	passive	This participant observation does not refer to a ritualized consumption activity, but rather to a grape harvesting in Italy. It was conducted in September 2015 with the purpose of understanding some other typology of ritual as the harvesting. The data collection carried out during the harvesting gave me the opportunity to talk to a rather interesting typology of consumers (i.e. the farmers) that work with the production of wine, but at the same time have developed a particular relationship with wine. Further, the observation of a harvesting provided me with important insights in relation to the wine market in general. Data was recorded through extended field notes that were written the day after the harvesting. During the harvesting photographs were taken mainly to document the event from an emic perspective and to help to remember different aspects of this ritual.

Appendix 3 – List of interviews

Date	Participants names	Type of informant	Geographical Location	Type of ethnographic interview
June 2014	Gjono,	Consumer	Italy	unstructured
June, 2014	Simone	Bartender	Italy	semi-structured
June, 2014	Antonio	Consumer	Italy	unstructured
June, 2014	Nicola	Wine producer	Italy	semi-structured
July, 2014	Silvano	Istituto Cerletti (Faculty of Agronomy, Conegliano)	Italy	semi-structured
July, 2014	Luca	Sales Intermediary	Italy	semi-structured
July, 2014	Paolo	Restaurateur	Italy	semi-structured
August, 2014	Stephen	Consumer	Italy	unstructured
December, 2014	Eva	Spritmuseum	Sweden	semi-structured
December, 2014	Veronica	Consumer	Sweden	unstructured
January, 2015	Irene	Sommelier	Italy	semi-structured

January, 2015	Barbieri	Consumer	Italy	unstructured
January, 2015	Barbieri's Friend	Restaurateur	Italy	unstructured
January, 2015	Alessandro	Journalist and publisher	Italy	semi-structured
March, 2015	Hanna&Christian	Wine producer (marketing office)	Sweden	semi-structured
April, 2015	Elisa	Sommelier	Italy	snowballing
September, 2015	Marco	Consumer	Italy	unstructured
September, 2015	Nadia	Employee at the Spritmuseum	Sweden	semi-structured
December, 2015	Matteo	Bar tender and owner	Italy	semi-structured
February, 2016	Franco Zanovello	Wine Producer and owner	Italy	semi-structured
March, 2016	Alessandro De Stefani	Wine producer and Owner	Italy	semi-structured
March, 2016	Massimo Poloni	Wine Producer, CEO	Italy	semi-structured
March, 2016	Lorenzo Vavassori	Wine Producer, Export Manager	Italy	semi-structured
March, 2016	Markus Berg	Importer, Product Range Manager	Sweden	semi-structured

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| 4 | 1971 | Lönnstedt, Lars | <i>Operationsanalys i börsnoterade företag.</i> Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen. |
| 3 | 1970 | Gullander, Staffan | <i>En studie i produktionsplanering.</i> Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen. |
| 2 | 1970 | Engwall, Lars | <i>Size Distributions of Firms.</i> Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen. |
| 1 | 1969 | Bergendahl, Göran | <i>Models for investments in a road network.</i> University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration. |



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Doctoral theses (2003-)

1. **Baraldi, Enrico (2003)**, *When Information Technology Faces Resource Interaction: Using IT Tools to Handle Products at IKEA and Edsbyn*. Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, Doctoral Thesis No. 105.
2. **Wang, Zhiping (2004)**, *Capacity-Constrained Production-Inventory Systems: Modelling and Analysis in both a Traditional and an E-Business Context*. IDA-EIS, Linköpings universitet och Tekniska Högskolan i Linköping, Dissertation No. 889
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4. **Lindh, Cecilia (2006)**, *Business Relationships and Integration of Information Technology*. School of Business, Mälardalen University, Doctoral Dissertation No 28.
5. **Frimanson, Lars (2006)**, *Management Accounting and Business Relationships from a Supplier Perspective*. Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, Doctoral Thesis No. 119.
6. **Johansson, Niklas (2007)**, *Self-Service Recovery*. Information Systems, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Communication and IT, Karlstad University, Dissertation KUS 2006:68.
7. **Sonesson, Olle (2007)**, *Tjänsteutveckling med personal medverkan: En studie av banktjänster*. Företagsekonomi, Fakulteten för ekonomi, kommunikation och IT, Karlstads universitet, Doktorsavhandling, Karlstad University Studies 2007:9.

8. **Maaninen-Olsson, Eva (2007)**, *Projekt i tid och rum: Kunskapsintegrering mellan projektet och dess historiska och organisatoriska kontext*. Företagsekonomiska institutionen, Uppsala universitet, Doctoral Thesis No. 126.
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