

Article

Literary Tourism and Cultural Sustainability: The Landscape of Beppe Fenoglio in the Langhe, Italy

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Abstract: This article explores the niche sector of literary tourism with a focus on the works of Italian writer Beppe Fenoglio in the Langhe-Roero and Monferrato area of Piedmont, Italy. It questions whether literary tourism can contribute to the cultural sustainability of a landscape. Nowadays, this area is already a well-established tourist destination known for its food and wine; however, Fenoglio's work offers a different perspective, highlighting a specific heritage comprising the area's rural life, local culture, and history of the Resistance movement. The research used a mixed method approach with documentary analysis, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews. "Fenoglians" (tourists motivated by Fenoglio's life and works) were identified, and their characteristics were explored. The results cannot be generalized, as the chosen sampling method does not provide sufficient materials for broad application. While being a small group, these special interest tourists represent an opportunity for tourism diversification. This article concludes that Fenoglio's literary tourism offers a distinctive experience, fosters new interpretations of the landscape, and strengthens collective memory of the Resistance. It highlights the importance of local communities in understanding how fictional narratives shape tourist perceptions of a destination as well as their role in preserving the community's collective memory and landscape.



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1. Introduction

This article presents the empirical research on a specific segment of cultural tourism [1] inspired by the literary works and the figure of the Italian writer and partisan Beppe Fenoglio (1922–1963) in the Langhe area in Piedmont, northwestern Italy. This study investigates how literary tourism inspired by Fenoglio's works contributes to cultural sustainability, the preservation of historical values, and the diversification of tourism offerings in the Langhe area. More precisely, this article questions the role of literary tourism [2–6] as a niche and special interest sector [7]. This sector lies right at the frontier between heritage and media tourism [8] (Agarwal and Shaw, 2018), relating it to the larger realm of cultural tourism, as analyzed during the SPOT project [9,10] (Štátná and Vaishar, 2025; Rech and Migliorati, 2021).

The southwestern part of Piedmont (named Langhe, Roero, and Monferrato) is well known internationally for its food and wine tourism offerings [10–12] and outstanding hilly

landscape [13]. In 2014, the “Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato” was the first Italian winemaking cultural landscape to be inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List as a serial site [14–16]. In 2017, Alba, the main town in the area, was named UNESCO Creative City for Gastronomy [17]. From the perspective of international recognition, this landscape demonstrates its distinctiveness [18] through its association with the development of vineyards, Italian history, and literary and industrial heritage, all of which contribute to the challenge of sustainability [19] in its multiple dimensions.

The present research investigates the underlying motivations for tourist visits, testing the hypothesis that the Langhe area and its landscape also constitute a tourist destination as the land of the neo-realist writer and partisan Beppe Fenoglio. Indeed, Fenoglio was born in Alba on 1 March 1922, living in and writing from the center of the town close to Piazza Rossetti; he spent his last days in the hills of Alta Langa, before dying at only 41 years old in a hospital in Turin [20]. When he passed away, his name was known among a small circle of Italian readers; however, today, more than 60 years after his premature death, his prestige as a major contemporary Italian writer is an undisputed fact. Among Fenoglio’s most significant life experiences, his personal involvement in the partisan struggle against fascist domination at the end of World War II was an essential subject for literary interpretation. Local history and traditions, peasant roots, customs, and community folklore were other themes that accompanied the narration of the complexity of human experience in his poetics and literary works. As noted by the Italian literature scholar Palmieri [21], Fenoglio’s poetics are not so much new objects to be told but new ways and times of representation. As the historian Bendotti [22] emphasizes, this writer recognized “sooner and better” than even historians themselves the most significant aspects of the Italian civil war. His works, while remaining highly poetic, are at the same time truthful, illustrating how the private sphere can take on the role of profound historical commentary. In his texts, it is possible to see how dedication to the local and the particular finds the strength of universal storytelling [22].

This research argues that literary tourism is a possible approach to multilayering and coping with the cultural sustainability of a landscape [23–27]. This approach has the advantage of creating a connection between the present and the past; it may broaden current knowledge of the literary heritage [28] of a destination that has been mostly branded through its excellence in local products [29]. Sociological research questions are developed on three levels: the transmission of historical and cultural values, the contribution to preserving the landscape, and the diversification of the local economy.

Firstly, the writer’s role in helping produce a sense of place capable of attracting a specific portion of tourism is analyzed. Starting with the classic triad of factual, imaginative, and socially constructed sites [30], which is broadly recognized in literary tourism, this article illustrates how the landscape of literary works represents and eternalizes cultural identities and values [6].

Secondly, the interaction between literary works and the landscape is considered in the context of Fenoglio’s tourists. Following MacLeod et al.’s [31] work, we explore their approach to the landscape, analyzing the figure of the “literary enthusiast as tourist” in an attempt “to understand the tourist activities of these readers and the way they utilize the touring experience” [31], p. 391.

Thirdly, we examine how this form of tourism helps diversify the tourist offerings of a highly developed territory in terms of food and wine to meet the demands of inbound and international tourists [11]. The development of a destination is always a dynamic process where local communities face travelers’ representations that are produced in the contemporary communicative space as well as in other fictional or historical domains.

The first section briefly discusses the state-of-the-art relationships between culture, tourism, literature, and the landscape, arguing that the case illustrates a distinctive example. After a presentation of the material and methods, the article presents the results of the research on Fenoglio's tourism in the Langhe and outlines the characteristics of this proposal regarding the diversification of tourism offerings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural Tourism: Literature as a Niche of Sustainability?

Tourism is a complex human activity that involves individuals; institutions; and natural, rural, or urban environments. It is an activity that challenges the boundaries between economy and culture in the context of the heritage field [32,33]. As culture can be interpreted as both a process and a product, it becomes difficult to present a definition of tourism that can be qualified as cultural. There has been extensive ongoing work regarding the definition of the topic, with many scholars having attempted to define it [1,22].

Nowadays, cultural tourism is a significant sector where tangible and intangible heritage, cultural performances, and events are intertwined: its dimensions and segmentation can be segregated into tourists' and visitors' expressions of core and peripheral interests in cultural attractions or activities [34]. In his old (but not outdated) model of cultural tourists, McKercher [35] considers two central dimensions: the decision to visit a destination and the depths of the experience. In his typology, tourists searching for more profound learning experiences constitute a minority; cultural tourism and its related motivations were considered a theme of special interest and macro-niche tourism [36]. In the case of Fenoglio's literary tourism in the Langhe area, this issue will be of key significance because of the main local drivers of food and wine, which aim to attract a high-spending and international target audience [37]. This target is quite far removed from the passionate readers of Fenoglio's works and, in general, of literature, which has struggled to represent a convincing regional approach in the broader context of Italy [38].

There is still merit in Holden's [39] argument that destinations that are viewed as desirable to visit are highly influenced by cultural perceptions. These cultural perceptions are produced from both sides: the tourist's origin and their destination. Literature and fictional products influence the layering of this imaginarity [40]; for instance, an early form of Italian cultural tourism can be traced back to the practice of the Grand Tour in Europe, and this perception of cultural tourism also had a long-term influence on the Italian understanding of what cultural tourism is [41]. This understanding reflects the focus only on the aspect of cultural heritage that was connected to the listed and protected conservation areas officially recognized by Italian institutions and, in this way, measured (before the pandemics) in the official Italian statistics [42]. The diversification of cultural experiences is an important characteristic of cultural tourism in European countries; it focuses on the authenticity, history, and character of a place, encompassing its cultural, natural, and constructed heritage [43].

Participation is pursued by cultural tourists, and efforts are made to actively engage these individuals, turning them into participants in the local culture [44]. Holden [39] (2005) also relates the rise of ecotourism and cultural tourism, which emphasize "natural" and "authentic" experiences, with a response to post-industrial societies feeling disconnected from nature and pre-industrial culture. This phenomenon is comparable to the popularization of wild landscapes during the Grand Tour era, influenced by Romanticism and urbanization; in both cases, these tourism trends are closely linked to broader societal changes and perceptions. Such changes in cultural tourism understanding have started to be undeniable, especially since a knowledge-based platform [45] characterizes the 21st-century paradigm [46] of tourism.

Tracing the relationships between literature and tourism, Robinson [47] recognizes the act of reading as a prominent activity for tourists who “do ‘read’ sights and signs” [47], p. 41. Digitalization poses some questions about the literary tourism experience and market, including the preeminence of sight in apprehending and experiencing places. Nevertheless, the aforementioned triad distinguishing factual, imaginative, and socially constructed sites remains confronted with fictional and real settings, as well as those constructed sites that deliberately attract, canalize, or spread visitors; in particular, those regarding the typology of “literary landscape trails” [48], pp. 166–167, illustrate the studied case. Multiple reasons motivate the profit of such themed trails, from the possibility of spreading visitors into a broader territory to the necessity of connecting a variety of local actors and stakeholders who are increasingly sensitive to the connections between agriculture, heritage, and tourist demands, as demonstrated by other successful Italian cases [49].

2.2. *The Role of a Distinctive Landscape in Literary Tourism*

There is a general consensus in the social sciences on the importance of shared social values in guiding individual choices and desires in the field of tourism connected to creative activities like the production of artistic works, language, and literature [50]. Tourism and landscape have already been examined in a vast number of publications, as reviewed by Robinson and Andersen [4], p. 21. Squire [6] even went beyond illustrating how tourism experiences are a mode of negotiating and redefining other cultural values: in his specific case, cheerful childhoods and nostalgia for English country life were reflected in Beatrix Potter’s works. In Fenoglio’s case, social values are filtered through the core theme of his poetics: realism, the harshness of poor country life, and a liberation war, all of which are connected to the continuous efforts to preserve the collective memory of the Italian Resistance resistance movement [51,52]. In an attempt to further systematize cultural tourism and examine the manifold vocations of this case study, tourists’ interests can be divided into a keenness for the past and the present, since reminiscence and collective memory are fundamental driving forces for managing societies and social identities [53].

From a sociological perspective, values represent both an objective guide of action and a subjective way of defining what is desirable: a pragmatic approach [54] to values is privileged here, with the cultural values of a tourist landscape being interpreted as constantly negotiated at a local level while also influenced by global factors [18]. Segmentation, specificities, and themes of special interest tourism reflect the different sides of the distinctiveness of the Langhe-Roero and Monferrato landscapes; in this article, distinctiveness is apprehended through the encounter between Bourdieu’s notion of distinction [55], which contributes to choices surrounding cultural products belonging to the realm of literature, and the tourism practices of conveying distinct values and characteristics [56]. The main local driver for tourism (food and wine) is primarily connected to the “celebrification of the culinary field” [57], presenting the tourist landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato as a tourist destination that is open to the continued creation of unique attractions to communicate a high value both online and offline [58].

To examine other cultural motivations for visits to the Langhe-Roero and Monferrato landscape, it is necessary to conduct a critical appraisal of the Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont’s “outstanding value”. As shown by Beel and Wallace [59], in some forms of cultural tourism, there could be an opposition to hegemonic culture; the authors indicate that this generation of cultural capital occurs “from below” in minority communities, in contrast to hegemonic authority “from above”, as theorized by Bourdieu. In this way, the work of local stakeholders challenges traditional notions of cultural capital, distinguishing themselves from the dominant culture. This is an interesting point for considering the Langhe landscape and its diversification of the motivations for literary tourism: Fenoglio’s

works are centered on farm and rural life, and his characters narrate a harsh life after the war [51].

Herbert [28] identifies the key elements of tourists' awareness and satisfaction with the places visited, the relevance of the authenticity of places, and their preservation by elaborating on a theoretical scheme that remains effective; it involves the construction and consumption of cultural heritage places where the tourism experience is a circuit between creators' and users' feedback. In the case of heritage products and discourses, the significance of negotiating and enhancing cultural values belongs more to the present [60] and future [61] than to the past. Nonetheless, present tourism interests in the area are mainly linked to culture expressed in culinary activities and wine production rather than in the rich field of literature, represented not only by Beppe Fenoglio but by several other authors, such as Cesare Pavese and Davide Lajolo [62].

Sustainability is a crucial matter for human activities, especially for mobilities such as tourism: it involves the many well-known pillars of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural concerns [63]. Concerns for future generations are the very focal point of the sustainability paradigm; this means engaging with responsibility (for instance, in the management of cultural and natural resources) and promoting actions that aim to minimize environmental impact and create more equitable and inclusive tourism [64].

In her recent publication on literary fiction tourism, MacLeod [65] associates this niche of cultural tourism with several aspects related to tourism consumption, including cultural capital and commodification [65], pp. 63–64. Sustainability also indicates this aspect of cultural appropriation, because it offers visitors key aspects like the opportunity to connect with cultural heritage and the arts as well as developing strategies against over-tourism [66]. Being involved in trails and walking tours is not only a creative [50] sustainable way of discovering a specific land but also an experience of emotional, affective, and performative heritage landscape experience [67]: in the Langhe area, the tourist may encounter embodied collective memory and local history [53] through modernization [68].

3. Material and Methods

This sociological research, carried out between April and October 2022, was conducted using a mixed method approach that was developed in three sequential stages [69]. First, documentary analysis of a selection of Fenoglio's books was developed to reconstruct the links and references in the works to local territories and cultures. Second, a questionnaire was completed by a convenience sample of the Langhe's tourists; the collection of a total of 198 questionnaires in Italian and English made it possible to quantitatively detect the existence of literary tourists, reconstructing their socio-cultural characteristics, preferences, and attitudes related to visiting. Finally, 17 in-depth interviews with privileged witnesses and some participant observation sessions in the area were conducted. Qualitative tools were used to aid the discussion of the questionnaire results and analyze some emerging aspects of the phenomenon. This combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon helped effectively answer the research question on literary tourism, reaching different people (visitors and locals) and overcoming the limitations of single methods. In other words, in this research, qualitative and quantitative data mutually supported each other and provided a fuller picture of the issue under study [70]. As already mentioned, an absolute and sincere vocation for writing had marked the key milestones in Fenoglio's short life. While he published his first story in 1949, his true artistic debut happened in 1952 with *I ventitre giorni della città di Alba*, followed by *La malora* and *Primavera di Bellezza*. The books that made him a growing and widespread success with the public and critics were published posthumously: *Un giorno di fuoco* and *Una questione privata* in 1963, *Il partigiano Johnny* in 1968, and *La paga del Sabato* in 1969. Based on the idea that

literature is an important source for sociological analysis even when the narrative takes on a fictional character [71,72], these books represented the starting point for this research. Documentary analysis involving literary sources comprised the methodical process of examining these texts, literary works, and related materials to become familiar with the imaginarieness created as well as the historical, cultural, and social context. Special attention was given to references to the landscape, specific places, and geography of the territory. Natural elements such as the hills, the Tanaro River, the woods, and the wind are not merely a backdrop to the narrated events but possess an autonomous substance; the landscape changes and transforms according to emotions and circumstances, making it a central actor in Fenoglio's works. It is precisely for this reason that the literary visitor who travels to these places aims to reach certain specific locations in the area, which are still traceable and recognizable.

During the participant observations, excursions along organized tours on literary trails were attended both as a group and autonomously, with walks around several sites of interest [73]. The study center and archive dedicated to the writer were visited, and participants attended several public events scheduled to celebrate the centennial anniversary of his birth, which coincided with the data collection period of the research. These events included theatrical performances, readings, commemorations, and more, always with the aim of monitoring the presence, attitudes, and characteristics of Fenoglian tourists. Information collected through a questionnaire among convenience samples of the Langhe's tourists was used to identify the "Fenoglians". In the context of this study, this typology represents tourists motivated by the writer and his works; these individuals have an in-depth knowledge of Fenoglio's writing, regard him as one of their literary icons, and see their visit to the Langhe as an experience with significant value in terms of personal and cultural growth. The use of bivariate analysis was effective in testing whether respondents in this category expressed specific attitudes and predispositions to the touristic experience.

Finally, thematic analysis was used as a qualitative method to investigate the data, beginning the interpretation with prior research on literary tourism. The analysis aimed to organize and analyze the data in a meaningful way, including the following different steps [74]: familiarization with the data, which involved listening to the audio recordings and reading the transcripts several times; generation of codes to anonymize the interviews and conceptual thematic nodes; and identification of themes, which involved critically analyzing the codes and grouping them into overlapping themes. Finally, we generated a thematic constellation based on its relevance to the research question. When presenting excerpts from the interviews in this paper, personal data will be anonymized.

4. Results

4.1. Rural Vocations, Agro-Tertiary Economic Development, and Fenoglio's Tourism in the Langhe Area

During the 20th century, these lands saw their connotations change quickly when the production of wine and hazelnuts began to intensify within a few decades after World War II. Since then, several issues have progressively emerged, such as seasonal overtourism, pressure on accommodations, "hit and run" dynamics, mobility and flow management, and growth in real estate value. Given these dynamics, the territories have become sufficiently well known to become a scientific case study, motivated mainly by the debate between growth and sustainability in rural contexts [75,76].

Agriculture (crops of grapes and hazelnuts) and wine production are the primary and secondary sectors that gave rise to the "boom" of wine and food sectors during the last decade; the area shares this trend with the entire sector in Italy [77]. In internal reports, this driver is also named the "agro-tertiary" sector, which is connected to services

based on the rural resources allocated for tourism and which roughly comprises the wine and food sector, agritourism/holiday farmhouses, and gastronomy. In fact, the Langhe-Roero and Monferrato region is characterized by specific rural tourism vocations and activities [68,78], and the area benefits from specific funding initiatives from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. An analysis of the marketing positioning suggests that it presents the area as more “glamorous” (as declared by the 2021 regional policies), thereby presenting a distinctive dynamic. This area developed a presentation strategy in the wine and food sector that was undoubtedly luxurious; this strategy was also motivated by quality (especially important red wines like Barolo and Barbaresco) and the rarity of products such as white truffle and its preparation in cooking [29].

While it is now known that literature, territory, and tourism together constitute a true “virtuous circle” in Italy [79], the exploratory phase revealed that Fenoglio’s richness, as the protagonist of a product of literary tourism based in the Langhe, was poorly perceived for a long time, and the offering was limitedly structured or unpromoted. The current analysis of the extent and attributes of Fenoglio’s tourism, as well as the value it produces, fuels reflections on new opportunities for entrepreneurship and the involvement of a differentiated audience of potential users. One of the research’s main objectives was to investigate if the phenomenon was integrated into the Langhe Tourism System in the direction of greater sustainability.

In the case of literary tourism involving Fenoglio, this space of construction dates back to the 1980s; it concerns an awareness of the writer’s local influence but, above all, the generational experience of the war and Resistance. Regional authorities have acted sensitively in continuing to promote regional networks to enhance the memory and intangible heritage of the most significant locations in World War II and the Resistance [80]. The work of rediscovering paths of the Resistance was initially organized around some local associations in collaboration with local bodies; these associations aimed to maintain old trails and create thematic itineraries for the literary paths, enhancing the possibility of visiting the lands in Fenoglio’s pages. The territorial actors first addressed their efforts to schools because, until the 2006 secondary school curriculum reform, Fenoglio was one of the authors officially included in literature programs. These initiatives allow this phase to be defined as a form of literary tourism that is strongly characterized by its educational goals, as highlighted by the key informants interviewed (Fen10 and Fen06). Since then, this proposal has expanded to other target audiences, broadening the range of potential users. The trails are a means of organizing the visitor experience by providing a purposeful, interpreted route that can be followed on foot, by car, bicycle, or horseback. It is marked on the ground and on maps, and interpretive material is normally available to guide the visitor [48]. During this research, four literary trails were detected in the city of Alba: Pavaglione’s Farmstead Trail, Mango’s Village Trail, Murazzano’s Village Trail, and San Benedetto Belbo’s Village Trail. Special mention should be paid to the latter village, which is located in the rural area of Alta Langa, one of the locations featured in the writer’s pages. In the center of the village, in May 2022, the Censa di Placido (a traditional grocery store) was inaugurated and renovated thanks to funding from a cultural foundation. Today, it constitutes a multifunctional immersive experience, characterized by highly advanced home automation and designed for self-guided use. It is accessible to people with disabilities, and the guide is available in multiple languages. This represents a Fenoglian location mentioned in several works by the writer from Alba (such as *La malora*) and the backdrop for various episodes narrated in his Langhe tales. The Censa di Placido is the place of meetings, conversations, gossip, aspirations, and tragedies of a small, isolated community, which becomes emblematic of the human condition in the world. From a tourist perspective, it represents a new hub capable of attracting those

interested in the heart of these remote locations for an innovative form of experiential tourism. It helps differentiate between a spatial and an audience perspective. This study highlighted how Alta Langa is characterized by the presence of a largely unspoiled natural system, featuring stunning landscapes, extensive wooded areas rich in biodiversity, and a pleasant microclimate. Visitors who choose this area do so to escape the stress and crowds of more popular tourist destinations; they also encounter a vast array of assets of historical, architectural, and cultural value.

Despite the growing tourist flows to Alta Langa in recent years, the region's hospitality capacity, networks, and collective action strategies require strengthening. As will also be illustrated in the conclusion, these elements must be integrated both at the local level and in connection with the lower hills (Fen07, Fen08).

4.2. Fenoglio's Tourists' Behaviors

Shifting from the cultural roots of Fenoglio's literary landscape trails to the tourism demand side, individual factors such as educational level, employment status, income, available time, and family size influence the choice of destinations [81]. Such variables were therefore included in the questionnaire, with the aim of identifying a possible "type" of Fenoglio tourist. The rationale for choosing the questionnaire is because this method allows researchers to cover a large amount of information. The questionnaires, structured in 25 questions, were administered in paper format at the four info points of the Langhe Monferrato Roero Tourist Board: Alba, Asti, La Morra, and Neive. The sampling method followed a convenience criterion, as the questionnaire was offered to all tourists who spontaneously approached the public counters for information. These were supplemented by a survey (with the same questionnaires) during two events related to the centennial of Fenoglio's birth. The questionnaire included both sets of multiple-choice questions and several open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were aimed at individuals who had stated that they were familiar with Fenoglio; they were designed to explore their preferences regarding his literary works and their personal experiences related to the history and themes addressed by the writer.

Following a short period devoted to a pre-testing phase, the administration phase officially started in early May and ended in late July 2022, with a total of 198 completed and validated questionnaires. The objective was to investigate whether the sample of individuals who spontaneously approached the Langhe Tourism Information Points were familiar with Fenoglio and/or were visiting the territories exclusively for the author, partially for the author, or for different reasons entirely (subsequently classified into "*highly motivated*", "*partly motivated*", "*not main objective*", and "*casual cultural tourists*"). Out of the 198 questionnaires collected, regarding the question of whether the respondent had traveled there because of Fenoglio, the percentage of tourists who were *highly motivated* by the connection between the territories and the writer was 11.6%, while 28.3% were *partly motivated* by this connection. In other words, a total of 39.9% of the respondents considered the link between these landscapes and the figure of Fenoglio as an attractive factor that, along with other aspects, motivated them to choose that specific tourist destination.

Different items allowed us to create this typology, identified by the neologism "Fenoglians" (tourists motivated by the writer and his works):

- "What prompted you to come to the Langhe Monferrato Roero?" Participants who had answered "Fenoglian places" as their preference were selected.
- "What activities would you like to do during your stay?" Those who had answered "visit to the Fenoglian places" were selected.
- Three open-ended questions on favorite books, the author's exceptional life, and their personal experiences with Fenoglio's imaginarieness. Participants who had answered at

least one of the subsequential open-ended questions, demonstrating a non-superficial knowledge of the writer, were selected.

In the two tables below, it is possible to observe the behaviors and tourist preferences expressed by the group of Fenoglians in comparison with the results of the entire sample.

Table 1 demonstrates that the pull factors attracting the subgroup of “Fenoglian tourists” to the Langhe are, as might be expected, the places described in the books, the landscapes more generally, and finally cultural events. Unlike the entire sample, enogastronomic factors (wine and food) appear to be less significant. Table 2 illustrates that Fenoglians also appreciate experiences related to food and wine (such as tastings and winery visits) among the activities to carry out during their stay. Nevertheless, the most interesting aspect is that, compared to the values of the entire sample, they show a greater inclination towards trekking and participation in artistic and cultural initiatives, in addition to, of course, visiting Fenoglian sites. The inability to generalize the results due to the sampling method employed could be considered one of the limitations of the research. In addition, the coincidence of the survey with some events related to the centenary may have constituted a bias due to the self-selection of the sample. Furthermore, it was impossible to verify whether accessibility to the questionnaire remained the same and consistent at all points.

Table 1. The Langhe’s attractive factors for the Fenoglians and for the whole sample.

If You Travel for Tourism, What Made You Come to Langhe Monferrato Roero?		
	Fenoglians	Whole Sample
	%	
Fenoglio’s places	27.91	14.50
Landscapes	25.58	33.84
Cultural events	16.28	9.97
Wine and food	13.95	25.68
Proximity to home	9.30	3.93
Not specified	4.65	10.27
Other	2.33	1.81
Total	100	100

Source: authors’ elaboration based on data.

Table 2. Preference for activities during the stay for the Fenoglians and for the whole sample.

What Activities Would You Like to Do During Your Stay?Jenkins		
	Fenoglians	Whole Sample
	%	
Food and wine tour	28.6	44.4
Trekking	19	11.6
Concerts/artistic events	19	9.1
Visits to Beppe Fenoglio’s places	14.3	8.6
Visit to museums and monuments	4.8	7.1
Shopping	4.8	1
No answer	9.5	18.2
Total	100	100

Source: authors’ elaboration based on data.

5. Discussion

5.1. *A Distinctive Proposal for a Distinctive Landscape*

The analysis of this particular sector of literary tourists reveals a way of dissemination for kindred circles. Considering the sociodemographic profile of Fenoglio's tourists, emerging from both the reprocessing of questionnaires and qualitative analysis, it is possible to reflect on the fact that the cultural, social, and economic conditions are similar in many cases: Italians, primarily adults with some being over 65, high cultural capital, and substantial economic means. This is also highlighted through in-depth interviews where, for instance, young "Fenoglians" are described as "intellectuals" (Fen01). This perspective reinforces the idea that similar practices, including the choice of tourist destination, spread within circles where the cultural codes, value systems, and preferences of these individuals are similar and are connected to their tourist practices [55,59]. One of the participants interviewed about this topic stated:

"The average Fenoglian tourists are not very young, say from 40/45 years old and up. And in pairs, generally in pairs, it is rare that there is the tourist alone, they are often husband and wife, or at least a small group of friends. Somehow they are also passionate about environmental issues, so they appreciate the greenery, the walking, the forest in silence". (Fen10)

The ability of the author's texts to transcend mere literary and entertainment purposes emerged as an interesting finding, predominantly through qualitative analysis. Books are also recognized by these individuals for their cognitive value, which fosters the creation of new meanings, interpretive keys, and novel languages. The function of literature for the collective memory of the Italian Liberation War also emerged sharply. In addition, Fenoglio's books became a reference for different tourism-related positionings (more or less conservative approaches) with respect to the landscape. In fact, authors have generally been mobilized to protect some regions from industrialization, agriculturalization, or other developments that "would damage the quintessential nature that a particular literary work has seemed to encapsulate" [82], p. 383. It would thus seem that, starting from the elements present in the territory, the construction of cognitive associations takes place, creating a reticular system that is expressed in the adherence of the places and communities of the Langa to the Fenoglio narrative. As already outlined, the uniqueness of this proposal is the possibility of going to the specific place of the story as if, by opening a book, one jumped into a page of it.

5.2. *Diversification of Cultural Tourism Offerings*

Exploring how this type of literary tourism can enhance the variety of food and wine experiences offered to international visitors in a well-established tourist region, we based the analysis on Herbert's [28] circuit between creation and consumption: destination development is an ongoing process where local communities must consider how travelers perceive their destination, both in real-time media and in fictional or historical narratives.

The first offerings linked to Fenoglio date back to the 1980s when some cultural associations, in collaboration with tourist offices in Alta Langa and Langa delle Valli, promoted the first conventions and the arrangement of trail networks for the creation of itineraries leading to the places recounted by the writer. Today, 12 permanent literary paths are surveyed, set up with signage, and usable free of charge: they constitute one of the core proposals of Fenoglio's tourism; however, it is often necessary to have professional escorts to access the trails. Nonetheless, the huge increase in initiatives related to Fenoglio's tourism developed precisely in the year of research, with the inauguration in March 2022, which was the year of the centennial of the writer's birth, structured in four seasons and

comprising over a hundred initiatives. Fenoglio's tourism allows diversification along several axes, including a spatial one: from centralization in the best-known localities (the towns of Alba, Asti, Morre, Barolo, and Neive) to the inclusion of decentralized and lesser-known localities (the towns of S. Benedetto Belbo, Bossolasco, and Niella Belbo). This could make these localities benefit from the actual situation of being isolated, low-anthropized territories with few job opportunities and at risk of depopulation.

In addition, 85.7% of the Fenoglians "have already been to the locality", which is a fact that might suggest a certain tendency of the writer's fans to return to the territories. Likewise, they respond to the characteristics of de-seasonalization; in fact, those who visit for cultural reasons choose the period in which to travel based on different criteria than usual (e.g., according to a calendar of local initiatives). To the question of "will you travel to the significant places of books and life?", the majority of the respondents stated that they "haven't thought about it", which illuminates the possibility of a better publicity campaign aimed toward these proposals. On the other hand, the group of "Fenoglians" appears to have greater awareness with respect to the possibility of visiting book locations thanks to the trail networks, with more than 70% of responses being positive.

The Fenoglians turned out to be extremely aware of what they would find in the territories and their history "so much so that sometimes they know things in greater depth than the guide itself". (Fen06)

6. Conclusions

This study has analyzed the role of writer Beppe Fenoglio in shaping a sense of place that attracts a particular segment of the tourism market. Drawing on the well-established framework of factual, imaginative, and socially constructed sites, the typology of literary landscape trails has turned out to serve as a repository of cultural identity and values [6] (Squire, 1994). An investigation into the potential of Fenoglio's literary works to attract tourists to the Langhe area in Piedmont has revealed that literary tourism focused on Fenoglio can contribute to the multilayering and cultural sustainability of the landscape for multiple reasons. First, Fenoglio's portrayal of the Langhe landscape creates a sense of place that can attract tourists who are interested in experiencing the world depicted in his works. Second, literary tourism based on Fenoglio can contribute to preserving the cultural heritage of the area, including its history, local customs, and traditions. Third, this form of tourism can also help diversify the tourist offerings of the Langhe, which is currently heavily focused on food and wine.

For more than a decade, at the center of the European agenda has been the issue of sustainable tourism growth and the differentiation of territorial tourism "loads". In this context, cultural tourism represents an interesting and promising field of analysis. Investigating the existence of tourism related to Fenoglio allows for a reflection on how this specific sector is perceived and integrated within the local touristic system. Such reflections are also highly topical when read in light of the lively debates that have taken place, even recently, on the complex relationship between tourism, cultural events, environmental protection, and economic spin-offs for territories.

For local policymakers and stakeholders, several suggestions can be made on the basis of this study's findings:

- It is necessary to strengthen the network among the entities involved in literary tourism and promote initiatives related to the writer, including local authorities, the "Beppe Fenoglio" study center, associations, tourism boards, civic societies, and increasingly the private sector. Greater coordination and more participatory governance would help avoid the risk of overlapping and the fragmentation of tourism offerings aimed at a market sector that, to date, remains rather limited.

- From an infrastructural point of view, reaching the case study area and exploring the different places and villages remains quite difficult without private (or rented) vehicles, as similarly highlighted by the results of the questionnaires. A more sustainable transport system goes beyond local-level direct powers; however, it represents an important stake to be endorsed for greener and lower-carbon-producing mobility, starting from the network of footpaths and cycle paths [83].
- The need to strengthen the integration of the Alta Langa territory with the “lower” Langa has emerged. Both are destinations for Fenoglio-related tourism but have two completely different and imbalanced tourist profiles: one has a tourism vocation that needs to be significantly strengthened, while the other is considered to have a flourishing ecosystem. This research has shown that it is possible to effectively integrate the Alta Langa territories into the Langhe tourism system, aiming for an extension that allows visitors to combine wine-related tourism with other cultural and literary activities and experiences. This synergy would also contribute to greater sustainability on both environmental and social levels.

This study highlights that Fenoglio tourists, a subculture of individuals with marked literary sensibilities, are in line with changing preferences for short-range or proximity-based experiential forms of tourism, characterized by attention to the specificities of place. Focusing on this specific tourist segment helps gain a greater understanding of how it is possible to embrace sustainability-driven considerations in contexts where some forms of tourism with negative impacts seem to be out of control. It also became clear over this project that deeply held and deeply felt literary associations with certain locations not only inspired emotional and intellectual affect but also influenced the perceptions and management of these places’ ecologies and ecosystems on both personal and political scales [82]. In conclusion, although Fenoglio tourism exists to a limited extent, it enriches the tourist offerings of Langhe Monferrato and Roero. In this respect, such a phenomenon fosters both a greater understanding and a subjective experiencing of such “significant” natural places in an area that is involved in an important process of socio-economic and environmental transformation, often taken as a reference point by other areas in the Italian peninsula.

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