



The role of social identification and hedonism in affecting tourist re-patronizing behaviours: The case of an Italian festival

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 January 2010

Accepted 5 October 2010

Keywords:

Social identification

Hedonism

Festival

Emotions

Satisfaction

Re-patronizing behaviour

ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s Europe and other continents have been organising a significantly larger number of festivals with the objective of stimulating tourism and exploiting potential economic opportunities. The prominence of these events has led to intense competition between festivals in attracting visitors and it has become important to analyse factors which might influence attendees' retention. Drawing on existing literature on retail and service sectors, this study aims to identify the role played by emotions, hedonism, satisfaction, and social identification in mediating the effects of environmental factors on attendees' re-patronizing intention. This study includes an on-site survey of 449 visitors attending an Italian festival gaining in popularity, and analyses data using a structural equations model. Results suggest that hedonism and social identification are key-facilitators between environmental cues and attendees' re-patronizing intention.

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1. Introduction¹

In recent years, festivals have become prominent events in many cities throughout Europe and elsewhere. Reasons for this proliferation may lie in a series of inter-connected factors such as new approaches to urban management, the use of culture-led policies to positively restructure wealth creation, structural changes in economic production, and the progressive culturalisation or symbolicisation of traditional economic sectors (Quinn, 2005; Scott, 2000). All of these factors have led to a re-conceptualisation of festivals as an effective strategy for cities to adopt in order to gain several potential economic, social, and cultural benefits (Frey, 1994; Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004; Long & Perdue, 1990; Mc Kercher, Mei, & Tse, 2006; Quinn, 2005). For example, festivals are considered to play a crucial role in improving the image of the host city in a relatively short period of time (Getz, 1991). They are also thought to enhance both the appeal and attractiveness of a destination to tourists (Kim, Borges, & Chon, 2006) and to increase visitor satisfaction (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001).

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¹ The authors would like to thank Michelina Borsari, Scientific Director of the *Festival della Filosofia*, the students from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia for their precious assistance during the data collecting process, and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

This proliferation of festivals has increased the level of competition between different cities wishing to organize festivals and attract potentially interested visitors. It seems increasingly important, therefore, to understand which features of a festival enhance its attractiveness and increase attendees' retention. Several previous studies in the field of tourism have investigated what might induce people to attend a festival. Such research has highlighted different factors like individual motivation (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Dewar, Meyer, & Li, 2001; Formica & Uysal, 1998), satisfaction and perceived authenticity (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003), cultural consumption patterns (Prentice & Andersen, 2003), and environmental value and motivation (Kim et al., 2006).

Drawing also on previous literature on retail and service atmosphere (e.g., Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman, 1994; Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002; Bitner, 1992; Richardson, Dick, & Jain, 1994), this research study focuses on the role of environmental features and cues in enhancing a festival's attractiveness and its attendees' retention. For instance, Lee, Lee, Lee, and Babin (2008) showed that positive environmental cues lead to positive attendee behaviours: if the programme content is interesting, staff are polite and professional or if the overall environment of a festival is pleasant, attendees' re-patronizing behaviours will increase.

Lee et al. (2008) also showed that the relationship between environmental cues and customer behaviour may be mediated by other potentially significant variables such as emotions. The present study aims to evaluate the role that hedonism and social

identification play in mediating the effects of relevant environmental factors on attendees' re-patronizing behaviour. Hedonism represents consumer returns such as enjoyment and playfulness (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Since events are experiential, intangible, and emotionally-charged contexts (Colbert, 2007; Lovelock, Patterson, & Walker, 1998), the level of hedonism perceived by attendees during a festival experience may be a key variable in explaining their behaviours. The present study also investigates the potential mediating role played by attendees' social identification, or the sense of connection that a festival's attendees feel with other visitors (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Tajfel, 1978). The suggestion is made that the greater the degree of identification with a particular social group – i.e. other festival attendees – the more customers will be disposed to return to a festival.

The present study examines the case of the *Festival della Filosofia* (Festival of Philosophy), which is held every year at Modena, Sassuolo, and Carpi, three neighbouring cities located in the north of Italy. The study includes an on-site survey of 449 visitors attending the Festival of Philosophy and analyses data using a structural equations model.

The article consists of four sections: the first explains the theoretical background underpinning the study, the second illustrates methodological decisions, and the third presents data and findings. The final section discusses the results and their implications.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Festivals and the issue of attendees' retention

The term festival covers a multitude of events (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2006). Smith (1990) defines the term as the celebration of a specific theme to which the public is invited for a limited period of time. This celebration can be held annually or less frequently, and includes single events. Arts and cultural festivals, in particular, involve the celebration of themes relating to creative activity or arts and cultural areas (e.g., poetry, painting, philosophy, opera, photography, etc.). Over the last two decades, festivals have increasingly been considered as effective tools for urban policy and are aimed at halting the decline of a geographic area, positively regenerating its image, or increasing both its appeal and attractiveness to tourists (e.g., Getz, 1991; Kim et al., 2006; Quinn, 2005).

In order to exploit a festival's potential benefits, festival planners and managers have to manage all the activities involved in the creation and development of a festival efficiently. In particular, they have to adopt strategies which are the most effective in increasing customer retention. Repeat attendees, in fact, represent a key asset, because they are likely to speak more positively about the festival than occasional visitors, pay less attention to offers by competitors, and are more tolerant of low levels of satisfaction (Hume, 2008; Keaveney, 1995; Petr, 2007). However, although it is generally agreed that loyal customers can play a crucial role in the long-term survival of festival organizations (Andreasen & Belk, 1980; Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2002), what still remains in question is understanding the predictors of customers' re-patronizing behaviour and intention (Hume, 2008). Following Oliver (1999), a re-patronizing intention can be defined as a pledge to re-purchase (re-patronize) a product (service) in the future, despite situational influences aimed at causing switching behaviours. Several researchers have investigated the potentially relevant role of loyal customers in supporting organizational success in art and cultural contexts – such as the Festival of Philosophy analysed in this study (Grappi & Montanari, 2009; Hume, 2008; Petr, 2007; Rentschler et al., 2002). Cultural industries, in fact, represent complex, experiential,

and emotionally-charged contexts (Colbert, 2007; Hume, 2008; Lovelock et al., 1998), and may “not easily align to the current understanding of repurchase intention” (Hume, 2008, p. 42). Furthermore, the variety seeking theory (McAlister, 1982) suggests that consumers are often driven by the need for novelty and variety in their consumption choices. Variety seeking refers to “the tendency of individuals to seek diversity in their choices of services or goods” (Kahn, 1995, p. 139) and typically appears within the context of switching among options. It is possible that this is especially relevant in cultural consumption contexts (and, in particular, in festival patronizing behaviour) since novelty seeking may represent a central component of attendees' motivation (Jang & Feng, 2007).

Therefore, with these considerations in mind, this paper aims to analyse the main predictors of festival attendees' re-patronizing behaviour. It proposes a comprehensive model which, drawing on extant literature on retail and service ambience, identifies the role played by emotions, hedonism, satisfaction, and social identification in mediating the effects of environmental factors on festival attendees' re-patronizing intention. The study focuses on three objectives:

- 1) to identify the role played by environmental cues on attendees' re-patronizing intention, the dependent variable of the model;
- 2) to analyse the mediating role played by emotions experienced during the festival consumption experience and the level of hedonism perceived by attendees;
- 3) to examine the role of two key-variables: attendee satisfaction and social identification.

2.2. Environmental cues

Environmental theory defines environmental cues as stimuli which may influence emotions and feelings that consumers experience within an environment, and suggests that these emotions and feelings affect behavioural outcomes (Isen, Means, Patrick, & Nowicki, 1982; Liljander & Strandvik, 1997; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). For example, the atmosphere of retail environments is considered capable of influencing pleasure and arousal responses, which in turn affect customer approach and avoidance behaviours toward stores (Davis, Wang, & Lindridge, 2008; Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001).

This study focuses on the role played by a festival's environmental cues in affecting its attendees' experience and behaviours. The term festival cue represents each specific environmental component characterizing the festival, such as the location of the festival, information and facilities available, range of merchandise, promotional material, or personnel. All the environmental cues of a festival work together to shape the general festival ambience (Lee et al., 2008), and therefore may affect, for example, the way attendees perceive a festival (Darden & Babin, 1994; Lee et al., 2008), their satisfaction, and their loyalty (Lee et al., 2008). Therefore, festival cues play an important role in affecting customer perceptions and behaviours, and it is important that festival managers understand these variables in order to enhance positive customer responses (Bitner, 1992). According to Lee et al. (2008), a festival's environmental characteristics can be divided into three broad categories: ambient conditions, space/facilities, signs, and symbols. This study borrows from previous research on retail and service atmosphere (e.g., Baker et al., 1994, 2002; Bitner, 1992; Chang & Wildt, 1996; Richardson et al., 1994) and festival environment (Lee et al., 2008) focusing on the following cues relevant in affecting a festival attendees' experience: programme content, staff behaviour, locations and atmosphere, information and facilities, hotel and restaurant offer, and souvenir availability.

2.3. Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction can be defined as a positive reaction resulting from a favourable appraisal of a shopping or consumption experience (Babin & Griffin, 1998). It results from a comparison between the expected performance and the perceived one (Oliver, 1999), and includes transactional (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Kelley & Davis, 1994) and cumulative measures (Fornell & Johnson, 1993; Jones & Suh, 2000). The level of satisfaction that customers experience is based on a comparison of their expectations of what might occur in the service experience with their perceptions of what actually occurs (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Analysing the potential relationship between satisfaction and loyalty, Oliver (1980) states that the former is a determinant of the latter, and suggests that building a long-term relationship relies on creating satisfaction. Research in marketing literature (e.g., Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Fornell, 1992; Lee et al., 2008; Oliver & Swan, 1989) demonstrates the positive influence of consumer satisfaction on behavioural intentions and future behaviours, and highlights its pivotal role in establishing long-term client relationships (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Collopy, 1996). Highly-satisfied consumers are less susceptible to offers from competition and are more amenable to re-purchasing behaviours (Fornell, 1995; Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996; Oliver, 1999; Preis, 2003). Consequently, the fulfilment of attendees' needs (i.e. satisfaction) may represent a key condition for the development of re-patronizing intention also in a festival context.

2.4. Emotions

Emotions represent critical aspects in describing a consumer's consumption experience (Babin, Darden, & Babin, 1998). Emotions are mental states of readiness that arise from cognitive appraisals accompanied by physiological processes and often expressed physically (e.g., facial features) (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). One important feature of emotions is that they mediate relationships between cognitions (e.g., a product or service's perceived performance) and key outcomes such as consumer satisfaction and retention (Oliver & Westbrook, 1993; Westbrook, 1987). Thus, an exhaustive explanation of consumer behaviours cannot only consider rational elements, but should also take emotions into account.

Most studies analysing consumption experiences identify emotions as important predictors of consumers' evaluations and behaviours; in so doing, they take into account their valence distinguishing two dimensions: positive and negative (e.g., Lee et al., 2008; Yoo, Park, & MacInnis, 1998). The role played by emotions in affecting different consumer behaviours has been demonstrated by several studies. For example, Hume (2008) demonstrates how emotions influence art consumers' intention to re-patronize; Arora and Singer (2006) show how affective elements influence hedonism perceived by consumers in a services context; Babin, Griffin, and Boles (2004) and Babin, Lee, Kim, and Griffin (2005) highlight the role played by emotions in enhancing both customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.5. Hedonism

Hedonism is the aspect of consumption experience that relates to the multi-sensory, imaginative, and emotive elements perceived by consumers (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Hedonism is an important dimension in an individual's evaluation of a consumption experience (Babin et al., 1994). In fact, a significant part of the value of a product or service perceived by consumers depends on the level of hedonism they obtain (Babin et al., 2005), and within the consumption experiences described as amusing and pleasurable, the most important benefit consumers receive is hedonic worth. In

such contexts (e.g., the festival consumption experience), the more a consumer anticipates that performing a behaviour will deliver significant hedonic benefits, the more s/he will place high value on that behaviour, and the more likely s/he will be to exhibit that behaviour (Higie & Feick, 1989; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; McQuarrie & Munson, 1987). According to previous research, this study defines the hedonism perceived by a consumer as the dimension reflecting the emotional value of their consumption experience, and representing returns received in terms of enjoyment and playfulness (Babin et al., 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

This study draws on previous research which demonstrates that hedonism plays an important role in mediating the relationship between emotions and consumer behaviours in a services context (Arora & Singer, 2006; Babin et al., 2005; Maio & Eases, 2001), and investigates its potential role within festival consumption contexts. Since the predominantly experiential nature of festival consumptions makes pleasure the core benefit obtained by a consumer (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982), hedonism may play a key role in increasing a consumer's re-patronizing behaviour and mediating the influence of emotions.

2.6. Social identification

Social identity theory suggests that individuals classify themselves in various social categories in order to facilitate self-definition within their own social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). In general, social identification is the perceived connectedness to various human aggregates (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), and shapes individual identity (Tajfel, 1978). Previous research suggests that the more an individual's identification with a social entity (e.g., a group of consumers or organizations) becomes self-defining for them, the more they attempt to forge strong links between themselves and the entity in order to develop the desired identity (Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson, & Kamins, 2006; Gioia, 1998; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). As a result, the degree to which people identify with different social groups may affect their behaviours (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). For example, previous research demonstrates that, within brand communities, a consumer's identification with other members positively affects their intention to re-purchase the brand (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004). Consumers' identification with others can be very powerful not only within brand community contexts (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Dholakia et al., 2004), but also in contexts with no formal membership (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Social identification may include customers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Scott & Lane, 2000), employees of organizations (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994), members of museums (Bhattacharya et al., 1995), and sports fans (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; 1995).

Drawing on these theoretical premises, this study aims to investigate the role played by social identification, which is defined as the degree to which a consumer feels a sense of connection with other consumers, and the emotional and evaluative significance of this perception in a festival context (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Tajfel, 1978).

2.7. Hypotheses

In accordance with the environmental theory discussed above, environmental perceptions may affect emotions felt during the festival consumption experience (Lee et al., 2008) and hedonism perceived by visitors, since consumers often find environments filled with pleasure-oriented cues to be intrinsically rewarding (Babin et al., 2005). In other words, if the environment of a festival

is perceived to be pleasant, the degree of positive emotion and hedonism should be higher, and that of negative emotion should be lower. In more formal terms, the following first two hypotheses are proposed:

H1: More positive perceptions about festival environmental cues lead to more positive and less negative emotions

H2: More positive perceptions about festival environmental cues lead to more hedonism

Furthermore, according to previous studies on the emotions–hedonism relationship (e.g., Arora & Singer, 2006; Babin et al., 2005; Maio & Esses, 2001), it is possible to propose the following hypothesis:

H3: More positive (negative) emotions lead to more (less) hedonism.

In line with previous literature on satisfaction, it seems that customer satisfaction is affected by both emotions (Babin et al., 2005; Dubé, Bélanger, & Trudeau, 1996; Liljander & Strandvik, 1997) and the hedonic level perceived by consumers during the consumption experience (Babin et al., 2005; Caruana, Money, & Berthon, 2000; Hume, 2008). Therefore, the fourth and fifth hypotheses can be enunciated as follows:

H4: More positive (negative) emotions lead to more (less) satisfaction.

H5: More hedonism leads to more satisfaction.

Moreover, emotions and hedonism may play an important role in the relationship between a festival's environmental cues and its attendees' social identification. Festival attendance comprises a strong social element since individual attendees are not isolated during the festival period, but experience it in the company of other attendees. In other words, each individual visitor experiences frequent interactions with others while, for example, queuing, attending or discussing performances, or having lunch. For these reasons, the degree of emotional gratification derived from the environment may affect attendees' social identification. In fact, since a consumer's social identification represents the emotional and evaluative significance of their membership of a group (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Tajfel, 1978), the more an individual enjoys the social experience of a festival and obtains hedonic and emotional rewards, the more s/he will be inclined to define her/himself through affiliation with other attendees, thus increasing their level of social identification. In more formal terms, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: More positive (negative) emotions lead to more (less) social identification.

H7: More hedonism leads to more social identification.

According to previous studies, emotions (Babin et al., 2004; Desai & Mahajan, 1998; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Sherman, Mathur, & Smith, 1997) and customer satisfaction (Cole & Illium, 2006; Lee et al., 2008; McDougall & Levesque, 2000) are likely to affect attendees' re-patronizing behaviour.

H8: More positive (negative) emotions lead to more (less) re-patronizing behaviour.

H9: More satisfaction leads to more re-patronizing behaviour.

Finally, in line with previous studies on social identification and its influence on re-purchasing behaviour (Bagozzi & Dholakia,

2006; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Escalas & Bettman, 2003, Grappi & Montanari, 2009), the tenth hypothesis is proposed. This hypothesis focuses on whether a relationship exists between a visitor's identification with other attendees and their re-patronizing behaviour. If individuals perceive patronizing a festival as a worthy part of their social profile, they will be more likely to attend the festival in the future.

H10: More social identification leads to more re-patronizing behaviour.

Fig. 1 summarizes the model presented in this study.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Study context

The *Festival della Filosofia* (Festival of Philosophy) is held in early autumn every year in three neighbouring cities in the north of Italy: Modena, Sassuolo, and Carpi. The city of Modena, founded in the third century BC, possesses a number of historical and cultural sites; including the Cathedral, completed in 1184, and the annexed *Campanile* (bell tower); the Town Hall, completed in the eighteenth century, faces the main square of the city. The three sites are UNESCO world heritage sites. Modena is renowned internationally as 'the city of engines' since the headquarters of Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Maserati are located here or in the surrounding area. Sassuolo is also important industrially as the centre of the Italian tile industry. Among the main cultural sites of Sassuolo is the Ducal Palace, completed in the seventeenth century, the summer residence of the Duke of Este. Other noteworthy sites are the central square of the city, *Piazza Garibaldi*, and the park around the Ducal Palace. Carpi is an important centre of industrial activity and commercial exchange, and has various historical and cultural sites, such as one of the most renowned squares of Italy, *Piazza dei Martiri*.

Modena, Sassuolo, and Carpi host the Festival of Philosophy every year. The festival lasts three days and fundamentally consists of *lectio magistralis*, seminars and workshops held by leading philosophers and scientists. Each year the festival covers a specific topic: in 2001, the first year of the festival, the theme was happiness, while in 2009 the festival addressed the theme of community. Other events (e.g., concerts, exhibitions, and film screenings) related to the current philosophical topic are held simultaneously in the most renowned locations of the three cities (squares, theatres, palaces, etc.). The Festival of Philosophy represents an interesting case because of the peculiarity of the theme addressed. Philosophy, in fact, does not represent a popular (and accessible) theme *per se*, and the Italian media have expressed surprise that a Festival, of which the 'core activities' are represented by *lectio magistralis*, seminars and workshops held by philosophers, has enjoyed such success. The festival, in fact, is very well-known throughout Italy and also abroad, the last edition attracting approximately 130,000 attendees. Therefore, despite its rather narrow focus, the Festival of Philosophy is an interesting case to analyse in order to understand better the variables that affect the intention to re-patronize such an atypical festival.

3.2. Measures and data collection

To generate the items, we conducted an extensive literature review, which produced 48 items matching our model's variables: environment cues (26 items), positive and negative emotions (seven items), hedonism (four items), social identification (four items), satisfaction (three items), and re-patronizing intention (four items).

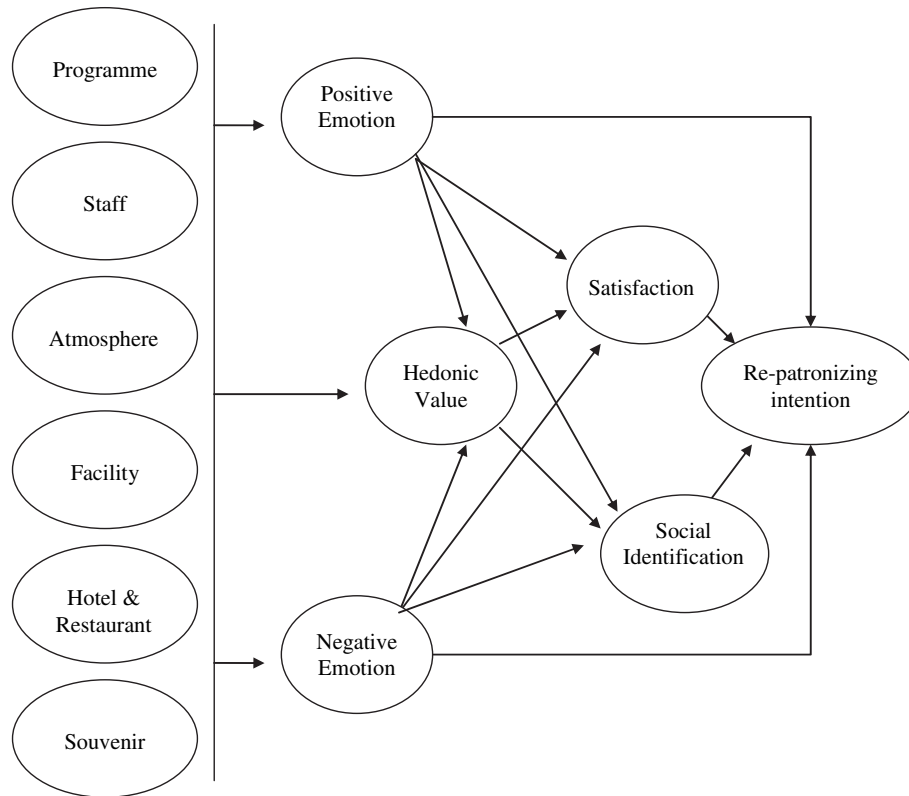


Fig. 1. The proposed model.

Festival environment cues

The list of measurement items was generated through a review of the related literature (Bitner, 1992; Kim, Shon, & Lee, 2003; Lee et al., 2003; 2008; Sherman et al., 1997; Yoo et al., 1998). We identified 26 of the most prominent environment cues of the festival (see Table 3), and for each we asked the respondent’s opinion on a seven-point (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) scale.

Positive and negative emotions

These dimensions were assessed by two independent variables. Seven 7-point items (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) were selected based on previous literature (e.g., Lee et al., 2008; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In particular, we used four items to measure positive emotion (happy, pleased, energetic, excited), and three items for negative emotion (bored, angry, annoyed).

Table 1
Results of factor analyses for hedonism, social identification, satisfaction and re-patronizing intention.

Factors and Items	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained %	Reliability coefficient
Hedonism				
This experience was truly enjoyable	0.87	3.02	75.58	0.89
I truly felt it like an escape	0.89			
I enjoyed the experience for its own sake	0.85			
I truly felt delighted	0.87			
Total variance explained				
Social identification				
Attachment to the group of other attendees	0.86	3.19	79.76	0.92
Feeling of belonging	0.91			
Similar identity with that of the usual attendee	0.90			
Feel close to the usual attendee	0.91			
Total variance explained				
Satisfaction				
Satisfied with my visit to this festival	0.90	2.46	81.86	0.89
Feel very good about this festival	0.92			
Satisfied with this festival	0.89			
Total variance explained				
Re-patronizing intention				
Visit this festival again next time	0.60	2.61	65.35	0.71
Recommend it to my friends and neighbours	0.91			
Encourage friends and neighbours to visit it next time	0.85			
Say positive things to other people	0.91			
Total variance explained				

Table 2
Results of factor analysis for emotions.

Factors and Items	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained %	Reliability coefficient
Positive emotion		3.28	46.83	0.91
Happy	0.86			
Pleased	0.89			
Energetic	0.90			
Excited	0.86			
Negative emotion		2.04	19.17	0.78
Bored	0.68			
Angry	0.93			
Annoyed	0.81			
Total variance explained			76.00	

Hedonism

The level of hedonism perceived by attendees was measured employing a four-item, adapted subset of PSV scale developed by Babin et al. (1994): “Compared to other things, this experience was truly enjoyable”, “I had a good time because I truly experienced it as an escape”, “I enjoyed the experience for its own sake”, “I truly felt delighted”. For each statement we ask the respondent’s opinion on a seven-point (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) scale.

Social identification

This variable was assessed by means of four seven-point items (1 = not at all; 7 = very much) to capture the extent to which an attendee feels a sense of connection with other festival attendees

(Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006): “How attached are you to the group of other attendees of the festival?”, “How strong is your feeling of belonging to the group of other festival attendees?”, “How similar is your identity to that of the usual festival attendee?”, “How close do you feel to the usual festival attendee?”.

Satisfaction

This variable was measured by three seven-point items (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) selected from previous research (Babin et al., 2005; Babin & Griffin, 1998; Lee et al., 2008): “I am satisfied with my visit to this festival”; “I feel very good about this festival”; and “Overall, I am satisfied with this festival”.

Re-patronizing intention

Consistent with the related literature (Lee et al., 2008; Zeithaml et al., 1996), re-patronizing intention was assessed by four seven-point items (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree): “I would like to visit this festival again next time”; “I will recommend this festival to my friends and neighbours”; “I will encourage friends and neighbours to visit this festival next time”, and “I will say positive things about this festival to other people”.

Visitors were approached as they left festival venues and were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and the questionnaires were distributed directly by the authors and six students from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia who had received prior training. In an attempt to obtain a reasonably representative sample, the survey was conducted for the three-day period of the festival with an equal proportion of the time of day (morning, early afternoon, and early evening). Half of the questionnaires were completed in Modena

Table 3
Results of factor analysis for festival environmental cues.

Factors and Items	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained %	Reliability coefficient
Programme content		8.33	32.02	0.92
Interesting programme	0.84			
Well-organized programme	0.83			
Good-quality programme	0.88			
Stimulating programme	0.87			
High-quality additional events	0.79			
Consistent and adequate additional events	0.78			
Outstanding guests/protagonists	0.79			
Staff behaviours		2.05	7.87	0.92
Good knowledge about the festival	0.76			
Quick responsiveness to requests	0.78			
Kind staff	0.75			
Places and atmosphere		2.38	9.14	0.90
Pleasant atmosphere	0.78			
Comfortable festival sites	0.62			
Striking festival sites	0.57			
Adequate festival sites	0.67			
Easy to reach festival sites	0.58			
Festival sites intensify the festival's essence	0.59			
Warm welcome to the festival	0.60			
Information and facilities		2.05	7.87	0.79
Adequate and available information (festival guide, signs, etc.)	0.64			
Adequate transport services	0.78			
Adequate parking places	0.80			
Hotel and restaurant offers		2.60	10.00	0.92
Restaurants adequate for my needs	0.88			
Pubs adequate for my needs	0.88			
Hotels adequate for my needs	0.84			
Souvenir availability		1.97	7.57	0.82
Good keepsake of the festival	0.74			
Variety of souvenirs	0.76			
Value for money	0.80			
Total variance explained			74.47	

(where the majority of festival events occurs), while the rest were completed with an equal proportion of the other two cities (Carpi and Sassuolo). A total of 449 usable questionnaires were collected during the event.

4. Analyses and results

A structural equation model was used to test our proposed framework. The Lisrel programme was employed for this purpose (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). The goodness-of-fit of the model was assessed with the chi-square test ratio, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), the normed fit index (NFI), the non-normed fit index (NNFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI). Discussion of these indices may be found in Bentler (1990), Browne and Cudeck (1993), MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara (1996), and Marsh, Balla, and Hau (1996). All analyses were performed on covariance matrices (Cudeck, 1989).

Participants in the study were 449 attendees of the festival (sample error $\pm 4.6\%$ with a 95% confidence level; $p = q = 0.5$). Their demographic characteristics are as follows: 158 men (35.2%) and 291 women (64.8%); the age range was 16–75 years ($M = 36.04$ years, $SD = 16.14$). Graduate or higher educated respondents accounted for 46% of the sample, followed by respondents with a high school education (32.1%), or less (21.9%). The statistics showed that 61% of total respondents were from outside the three cities' area.

4.1. Measurement reliability and validity

Factor analysis was performed on data prior to further analysis. The principal component analysis was rotated by an oblique procedure, and factors were identified from eigenvalues greater than one. Separate analyses of hedonism, social identification, satisfaction and re-patronizing intention revealed one factor each, accounting for 76%, 80%, 82%, and 65% of the total variance respectively (see Table 1). All the reliability coefficients exceeded the minimum standard for reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Two factors were identified through the factor analysis of emotion constructs (see Table 2). These factors explained 76% of the variance of the sample data. Reliability coefficients were .91 and .78 for positive and negative emotion respectively. Finally, six dimensions of festival environment cues were obtained from factor analysis (see Table 3) explaining 75% of the variance of the data: programme content, staff behaviours, places and atmosphere, information and facilities, hotel and restaurant offers, souvenir availability. All the 26 environment cues were retained. The reliability coefficients for all the measures exceeded the minimum standard of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The validity of the measures was examined through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Bagozzi & Foxal, 1996; Bollen, 1989). Results (Table 4), as interpreted by the goodness-of-fit measures, show that the model fits the data well, confirming the convergent validity characteristic of the measures ($\chi^2/\text{d.f.} (3363.6/1014) = 3.32$; $\text{RMSEA} = 0.07$; $\text{SRMR} = 0.05$; $\text{NFI} = 0.96$; $\text{NNFI} = 0.97$; $\text{CFI} = 0.97$). As a test of discriminant validity, we checked the correlations among the latent constructs (Table 5): they were significantly less than one and none of the confidence intervals of the correlation-values (± 2 standard errors) included the value of one, providing evidence of discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

4.2. Results

Table 6 summarizes the means and standard deviations for the twelve latent constructs of our proposed model. Means of all of the environment cues are greater than 4, highlighting attendees'

Table 4
Results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

CFA: Factors and Items	Factor loading	SMC (R ²)
Hedonism		
This experience was truly enjoyable	0.79	0.62
I truly felt it like an escape	0.87	0.76
I enjoyed the experience for its own sake	0.78	0.60
I truly felt delighted	0.82	0.67
Social identification		
Attachment to the group of other attendees	0.84	0.70
Feeling of belonging	0.86	0.75
Similar identity with that of the usual attendee	0.84	0.70
Feel close to the usual attendee	0.90	0.82
Satisfaction		
Satisfied with my visit to this festival	0.87	0.76
Feel very good about this festival	0.89	0.79
Satisfied with this festival	0.89	0.79
Re-patronizing intention		
Visit this festival again next time	0.89	0.79
Recommend it to my friends and neighbours	0.89	0.79
Encourage friends and neighbours to visit it next time	0.82	0.67
Say positive things to other people	0.89	0.80
Positive emotion		
Happy	0.83	0.69
Pleased	0.80	0.64
Energetic	0.81	0.65
Excited	0.79	0.63
Negative emotion		
Bored	0.71	0.60
Angry	0.91	0.83
Annoyed	0.83	0.69
Programme content		
Interesting programme	0.82	0.68
Well-organized programme	0.78	0.60
Good-quality programme	0.84	0.70
Stimulating programme	0.86	0.74
High-quality additional events	0.71	0.50
Consistent and adequate additional events	0.70	0.50
Outstanding guests/protagonists	0.77	0.59
Staff behaviours		
Good knowledge about the festival	0.87	0.75
Quick responsiveness to requests	0.90	0.82
Kind staff	0.85	0.72
Places and atmosphere		
Pleasant atmosphere	0.76	0.57
Comfortable festival sites	0.76	0.58
Striking festival sites	0.78	0.61
Adequate festival sites	0.76	0.58
Easy to reach festival sites	0.71	0.50
Festival sites intensify the festival's essence	0.80	0.64
Warm welcome to the festival	0.72	0.52
Information and facilities		
Adequate and available information (festival guide, signs, etc.)	0.86	0.73
Adequate transport services	0.76	0.58
Adequate parking places	0.60	0.46
Hotel and restaurant offers		
Restaurants adequate for my needs	0.88	0.77
Pubs adequate for my needs	0.90	0.80
Hotels adequate for my needs	0.83	0.68
Souvenir availability		
Good keepsake of the festival	0.76	0.58
Variety of souvenirs	0.80	0.63
Value for money	0.72	0.51

$\chi^2/\text{d.f.} (3363.6/1014) = 3.32$; $\text{RMSEA} = 0.07$; $\text{SRMR} = 0.05$; $\text{NFI} = 0.96$; $\text{NNFI} = 0.97$; $\text{CFI} = 0.97$.

Table 5
Correlation-value (standard error).

	Programme content	Staff behaviours	Places and atmosphere	Information and facilities	Hotel and restaurant offers	Souvenir availability	Positive emotion	Negative emotion	Hedonism	Satisfaction	Social identification	Re-patronizing intention
Programme content	1											
Staff behaviours	.59** (.04)	1										
Places and atmosphere	.76** (.02)	.62** (.04)	1									
Information and facilities	.51** (.04)	.62** (.04)	.73** (.03)	1								
Hotel and restaurant offers	.36** (.05)	.47** (.04)	.52** (.04)	.56** (.04)	1							
Souvenir availability	.60** (.04)	.47** (.04)	.58** (.04)	.54** (.04)	.44** (.05)	1						
Positive emotion	.70** (.03)	.49** (.04)	.67** (.03)	.50** (.04)	.42** (.04)	.44** (.05)	1					
Negative emotion	-.55** (.04)	-.37** (.05)	-.49** (.04)	-.33** (.05)	-.37** (.05)	-.28** (.05)	-.57 (.04)	1				
Hedonism	.82** (.02)	.47** (.04)	.73** (.03)	.50** (.04)	.34** (.05)	.54** (.04)	.85 (.02)	-.49** (.04)	1			
Satisfaction	.81** (.02)	.45** (.04)	.65** (.03)	.52** (.04)	.38** (.05)	.54** (.04)	.87 (.02)	-.56** (.04)	-.86** (.02)	1		
Social identification	.58** (.04)	.40** (.04)	.55** (.03)	.37** (.05)	.21** (.05)	.39** (.05)	.67 (.03)	-.43** (.04)	.66** (.03)	.56** (.04)	1	
Re-patronizing intention	.79** (.02)	.48** (.04)	.67** (.03)	.53** (.04)	.36** (.05)	.52** (.04)	.79 (.02)	-.58** (.04)	.60** (.02)	.88** (.02)	.64** (.03)	1

* = $p .05$, ** = $p .01$, *** = $p .001$.

Table 6
Means and standard deviations for latent variables.

Latent variable	M	SD
Programme content	5.76	0.99
Staff behaviours	5.53	1.17
Places and atmosphere	5.47	1.08
Information and facilities	4.85	1.23
Hotel and restaurant offers	4.99	1.27
Souvenir availability	4.04	1.40
Positive emotion	4.97	1.18
Negative emotion	1.46	0.80
Hedonism	5.53	1.39
Social identification	3.78	1.21
Satisfaction	5.91	1.05
Re-patronizing intention	5.98	1.51

positive evaluation of these elements. Positive emotion experienced by consumers during the festival is very high (M = 4.97, SD = 1.18), while negative emotion is low (M = 1.46, SD = 0.80), supporting the positive feeling characterizing attendees' consumption experience within this festival. The perceived hedonism rated by attendees is significant and is very high (M = 5.53, SD = 1.39). Also social identification shows a mean rating that is quite high (M = 3.78, SD = 1.21), emphasizing the significance that attendees attribute to the identification with others during this consumption experience. Finally, satisfaction (M = 5.91, SD = 1.05) and re-patronizing intention (M = 5.98, SD = 1.51) show the highest mean ratings of all the variables of the model.

Fig. 2 shows the main results of the estimate of the proposed model. The global fit of the model is: $\chi^2/d.f.$ (3463.8/1036 = 3.34; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.05; NFI = 0.96; NNFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.97), and the average variance extracted for the latent variables was

adequate (see Table 7). The direct effects of emotions, satisfaction and attendee's social identification explain the majority of variance in re-patronizing intention ($SMC_{re-patronizing\ intention} = 0.83$). As regards satisfaction, the direct effects of positive and negative emotions and hedonism explain most of its variance ($SMC_{satisfaction} = 0.85$). For social identification ($SMC_{social\ identification} = 0.47$), the variance is explained by the direct effect of hedonism and emotions. The direct effects of festival environment cues explain most of the variance for both hedonism ($SMC_{hedonism} = 0.86$) and positive emotion ($SMC_{positive\ emotion} = 0.55$). Finally, the variance for negative emotion ($SMC_{negative\ emotion} = 0.36$) explained by festival environment cues is not particularly high but still adequate. Consequently, we present standardized parameter estimates for ease of interpretation.

4.2.1. Relations of environment cues to emotions and hedonism

Relation of programme content to emotions and hedonism. As shown in Table 7, this dimension has a significant effect on positive emotion (0.52, t -value = 6.21), negative emotion (-0.50, t -value = -5.35), and hedonism (0.47, t -value = 6.19).

Relation of staff behaviours to emotions and hedonism. Contrary to expectations, the staff dimension negatively affects hedonism (-0.12, t -value = -2.79). This dimension does not have a significant effect either on positive emotion (-0.01, t -value = -0.13) or negative emotion (0.00, t -value = 0.07).

Relation of places and atmosphere to emotions and hedonism. The atmosphere dimension has a significant effect on positive emotion (0.20, t -value = 2.10), but does not have significant effects on hedonism (0.12, t -value = 1.78) and negative emotion (-0.12, t -value = -1.12).

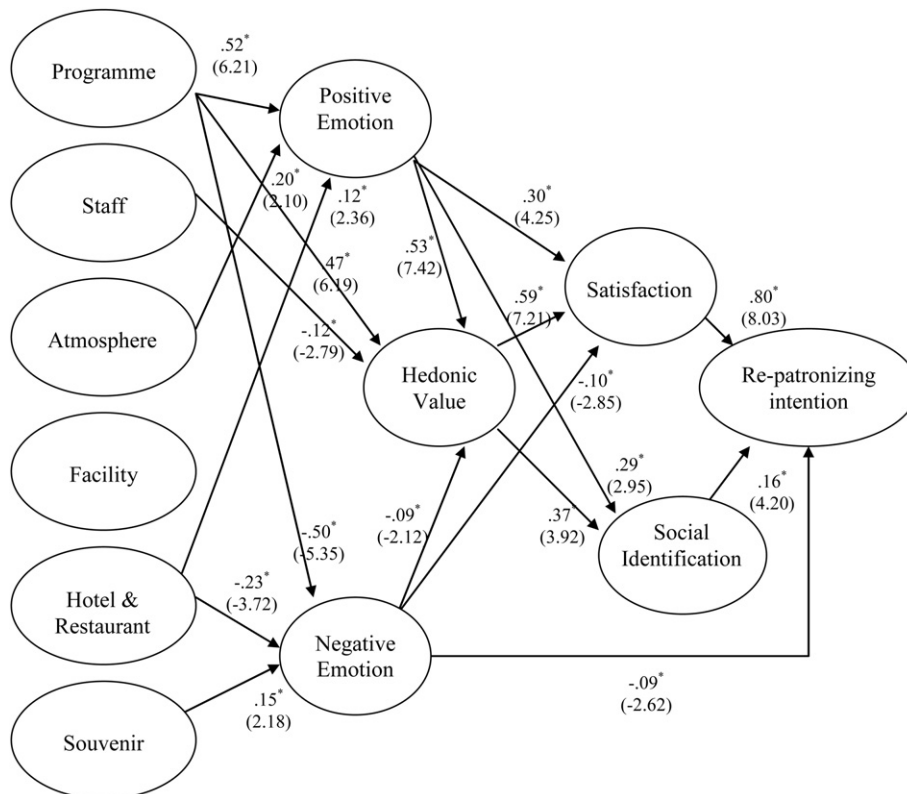


Fig. 2. The main findings. * = p .05. Standardized coefficient (t -value). Only statistically significant paths are reported.

Table 7
Standardized parameter estimates for the model.

Path	Standardized coefficient	t-value
Programme content → positive emotion	0.52	6.21
Staff behaviours → positive emotion	-0.01	-0.13
Places and atmosphere → positive emotion	0.20	2.10
Information and facilities → positive emotion	0.06	0.78
Hotel and restaurant offers → positive emotion	0.12	2.36
Souvenir availability → positive emotion	-0.06	-0.97
Programme content → negative emotion	-0.50	-5.35
Staff behaviours → negative emotion	0.00	-0.07
Places and atmosphere → negative emotion	-0.12	-1.12
Information and facilities → negative emotion	0.06	0.62
Hotel and restaurant offers → negative emotion	-0.23	-3.72
Souvenir availability → negative emotion	0.15	2.18
Programme content → hedonism	0.47	6.19
Staff behaviours → hedonism	-0.12	-2.79
Places and atmosphere → hedonism	0.12	1.78
Information and facilities → hedonism	0.02	0.35
Hotel and restaurant offers → hedonism	0.06	1.62
Souvenir availability → hedonism	0.07	1.57
Positive emotion → hedonism	0.53	7.42
Negative emotion → hedonism	-0.09	-2.12
Positive emotion → satisfaction	0.30	4.25
Negative emotion → satisfaction	-0.10	-2.85
Hedonism → satisfaction	0.59	7.21
Positive emotion → social identification	0.29	2.95
Negative emotion → social identification	-0.07	-1.41
Hedonism social → identification	0.37	3.92
Positive emotion → Re-patronizing intention	0.06	0.85
Satisfaction → Re-patronizing intention	0.80	8.03
Negative emotion → Re-patronizing intention	-0.09	-2.62
Social identification → Re-patronizing intention	0.16	4.20
SMC (R ²)		
Positive emotion	0.55	
Negative emotion	0.36	
Hedonism	0.86	
Satisfaction	0.85	
Social identification	0.47	
Re-patronizing intention	0.83	

$\chi^2/d.f.$ (3463.8/1036) = 3.34; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.05; NFI = 0.96; NNFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.97.

Relation of information and facilities to emotions and hedonism. The information and facilities dimension does not have a significant effect on positive emotion (0.06, t -value = 0.78), negative emotion (0.06, t -value = 0.62), and hedonism (0.02; t -value = 0.35).

Relation of hotel and restaurant offers to emotions and hedonism. This dimension significantly affects positive emotion (0.12, t -value = 2.36) and negative emotion (-0.23, t -value = -3.72), but does not have a significant effect on hedonism (0.06, t -value = 1.62).

Relation of souvenir availability to emotions and hedonism. This dimension does not have a significant effect on positive emotion (-0.06, t -value = -0.97) and hedonism (0.07, t -value = 1.57). Contrary to our expectations, this dimension has a positive effect on negative emotion (0.15, t -value = 2.18).

These results give partial support to H1 and H2.

4.2.2. Relationships between emotions, hedonism and satisfaction

The relationships between positive emotion and hedonism (0.53, t -value = 7.42), and between negative emotion and hedonism (-0.09, t -value = -2.12) are both statistically significant supporting, thus, H3. Results also show the statistically significant path coefficients between positive emotion and satisfaction (0.30, t -value = 4.25), and between negative emotion and satisfaction (-0.10; t -value = -2.85), giving support to H4. At the same time, hedonism significantly influences satisfaction (0.59, t -value = 7.21) supporting H5.

4.2.3. Relationship between emotions, hedonism and social identification

The expected relationship between positive emotion and social identification is supported by the statistically significant positive path coefficient (0.29, t -value = 2.95), as is the relationship between hedonism and social identification (H7) (0.37, t -value = 3.92). On the other hand, negative emotion does not have a significant effect on social identification (-0.07, t -value = -1.41). Therefore, H6 is only partially supported.

4.2.4. Relationships between emotions, satisfaction, social identification and re-patronizing intention

The proposed model posited that emotions, satisfaction, and social identification affect re-patronizing intention. The relationship between positive emotion and re-patronizing intention does not find support (0.06, t -value = 0.85). On the other hand, negative emotion has a significant negative effect on re-patronizing intention (-0.09, t -value = -2.62). Therefore, H8 receives only partial support. The expected positive relationship between satisfaction and re-patronizing intention is statistically significant (0.80, t -value = 8.03) supporting, thus, H9. Finally, the hypothesized relationship between social identification and re-patronizing intention (H10) is supported by the statistically significant positive path coefficient (0.16, t -value = 4.20).

5. Discussion and conclusion

Previous literature has acknowledged the important role of festivals in attracting and retaining tourists, thus generating significant socio-economic impacts (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2004; Long & Perdue, 1990; Quinn, 2005; Weiler & Hall, 1992). This paper has attempted to shed some light on the determinants of attendees' re-patronizing intention by analysing the case of a single cultural festival experience. In particular, the study has examined several variables of festival participation – environmental characteristics, emotions, perceived hedonic value, satisfaction, and social identification – in retaining festival visitors, despite the variety seeking tendency which may lead attendees to seek diversity in their consumption choices (Kahn, 1995). In detail, this research emphasizes the importance of these variables in the attendees' decision to re-patronize a festival, rather than switch to different cultural consumption contexts. The recent proliferation of festivals has increased the level of competition between different cities which, in turn, underlines the importance of understanding a festival's elements able to increase attendees' retention. Therefore, the results highlight interesting managerial as well theoretical considerations.

First of all, results would seem to support the hypothesis that a festival's environment plays an important role in affecting its attendees' re-patronizing intention, through emotions and hedonism they perceive during the festival. This study identified six dimensions representing festival environmental cues: programme content, staff behaviours, places and atmosphere, information and facilities, hotel and restaurant offers, and souvenir availability. Our detailed findings highlight that a festival's programme content can affect both attendees' emotions and hedonism more strongly than other cues. This result suggests that festival attendees pay greater attention to the core element of a festival (i.e. the cultural events defining a festival's programme) rather than other environmental cues. Consequently, festival planners and managers may wish to bear in mind this outcome and focus their attention mainly on the quality of their programmes which represent the *raison d'être* of a festival. Staff behaviour also appears to affect hedonism, although effects are less pronounced, while locations, atmosphere, hotel and restaurant offers, and souvenir availability demonstrate an ability to affect emotions. According to these results, it is advisable for

festival planners to give careful consideration to the choice of festival locations because this environmental cue plays a central role in creating a pleasurable festival atmosphere, which may have positive effects on attendees' behaviour.

The information and facilities environment cue requires separate discussion since it appears that this does not play any significant role: available information on the festival, adequate transport services, and parking places do not affect emotions and hedonism. A possible explanation might be that attendees consider these features as detached from a festival and not directly connected with the consumption experience. The unexpected negative effect of staff behaviours on hedonism highlights that this cue decreases the pleasure obtained by attendees during the festival. In the same way, souvenir availability cues increase negative emotion, possibly because they are regarded as unnecessary and even inappropriate for the philosophical theme of the festival. These findings seem to suggest the need to revise the managerial practices adopted for these features in this festival context, in order to prevent negative influences on attendees' perceptions and behaviours. In general, results highlight the need for festival managers to manage effectively both staff behaviours (in terms of improving responsiveness to requests, increasing staff knowledge about the festival, etc.) and souvenir availability (e.g., selecting products more consistent with the characteristics of the festival, increasing variety and availability) in order to decrease attendees' negative emotion and produce positive effects on perceived hedonism.

Another important finding concerns the role played by hedonism and emotions. On the one hand, in line with the research of Lee et al. (2008), results confirm that positive and negative emotions are important mediators of the effect of festival environmental cues on attendees' behaviours. On the other hand, one of the most significant findings in this study is related to the role played by hedonism. According to the results, not only do emotions mediate the relationship between an attendee's perceptions about festival environment and her/his behaviour, but the level of hedonism perceived by an attendee during a festival experience acts in the same way. Furthermore, results show that both positive and negative emotions affect hedonism. Therefore, the hedonic level an attendee experiences during a festival acts as a facilitator between her/his judgments of environmental cues, her/his emotions, and her/his behaviours. This result confirms the importance of the relationship between emotion and hedonism in festival consumption contexts, and supports the importance of creating a gratifying and pleasurable environment composed of consistent cues.

Emotions directly affect not only hedonism but also attendees' satisfaction. Hedonism, however, exerts a stronger effect on satisfaction: the more an attendee enjoys the experience of obtaining hedonic rewards, the more they are satisfied with the festival experience. Therefore, the comparison between attendees' expectations of what will occur during a festival experience and their perceptions of what actually occurs (i.e. attendees' satisfaction) is strongly influenced by the pleasure they feel. This means that a festival's consumer basically expects to obtain from this experience pleasure, enjoyment, and delight (i.e. hedonic elements), and the more pleasure they experience, the more satisfied they are.

Satisfaction proves to be the main determinant of attendees' re-patronizing behaviours. In line with Lee et al. (2008), the more consumers are satisfied with the festival experience, the more they are disposed to re-patronize it. The fact that positive emotion is not a significant predictor of attendees' re-patronizing intention suggests that consumers attending a festival have high expectations of feeling positive emotions and these expectations, if not disappointed, enhance satisfaction, which, in turn, affects re-patronizing intention. In other words, the effect of positive emotions on re-patronizing behaviour seems to be fully mediated by the other

relevant variables, in particular by satisfaction. Conversely, negative emotion is a significant predictor not only of satisfaction but also of re-patronizing intention. If attendees' expectations about emotions are not fulfilled (i.e. they feel negative emotions), they experience a sense of dissatisfaction and, at the same time, the negative emotions they feel may directly decrease future re-patronizing intention. These effects of negative emotion demonstrate clearly that festival attendees do not anticipate problems during this consumption experience. If they encounter difficulties, they are not only less satisfied but also directly less inclined to re-patronize the festival.

One of the more interesting results of this research regards the role of the consumer's identification with other festival attendees, which positively affects their re-patronizing intention. In other words, the more an attendee identifies with the usual group of attendees, the more they are inclined to re-patronize the festival in the future. A potential explanation for this result can be found in the fact that in cultural industries consumption preferences represent a means through which people construct their sense of social identity (Goulding & Shankar, 2004). Accordingly, people may decide to patronize a festival not only to attend its events *per se* but also to reinforce their individual self-image, communicate to others their desired identity, and signal allegiance to a desired social group. This result is of particular interest because it emphasizes that even in contexts where no formal membership exists, a consumer's identification with other habitual attendees positively affects their intention to re-patronize. Such a finding is consistent with studies conducted in different contexts (e.g., Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Dholakia et al., 2004; Scott & Lane, 2000), which demonstrate that customers showing a high degree of identification with others are not only aware of this affiliation to a social group, but also ascribe a positive evaluative significance to it. Furthermore, results show that the level of hedonism perceived by an attendee and the positive emotion experienced during the festival greatly enhance identification with other attendees. In other words, as the festival consumption experience is essentially social and shared with other visitors, the degree of emotional gratification that attendees obtain from the environment affects their social identification. The more pleasure attendees experienced from obtaining emotional and hedonic rewards, the more strongly connected they feel with other visitors and, consequently, the more they are disposed to re-patronize the festival to maintain this connection with others. Thus, in order to facilitate attendees' identification, and consequently to enhance their re-patronizing intention, it is critical to manage correctly all the features which sustain the level of hedonism consumers perceive during a festival and the positive emotion they experience. In this way, attendees will be more inclined to identify themselves as members of the group of visitors. In the same way, festival managers should promote social connections among attendees by providing, for example, facilities and spaces to discuss topics with other attendees, fostering relations between attendees, facilitating the exchange of contact addresses through (electronic) noticeboards, and so on. In fact, the possibility of social exchange with other attendees is likely to enhance attendees' social identification and, thus, consumers' re-patronizing behaviour. Similarly, festival managers should also exploit the opportunities offered by the proliferation of social media (e.g., social networking websites, blogs, other official online platforms). Social media represent a communication tool aimed at increasing the interactions with attendees who can post their comments before or after their participation to a festival exchanging comments, opinions, and ideas with other attendees. If it is managed effectively, social media can play a vital role in fostering the awareness of belonging to a social group and, thus, enhance attendees' social identification.

It is clear that this study has a number of limitations which suggest possible areas for further research. First of all, future research would benefit from analysis of other cultural festivals in order to support these findings and make comparisons with other national contexts. It would be fascinating to extend the present analysis also to different kinds of festivals (e.g., gastronomic, street parties, etc.) in order to test the role played by hedonism and social identification in enhancing visitors' re-patronizing intention. Future research would also benefit from greater understanding of the hedonic rewards which consumers obtain from festival events. At the same time, further research should analyse the role of social identification testing, for example, whether it plays a significant role also in non-cultural festivals, or if differences exist between different kinds of festivals.

Despite these limitations, this study presents interesting findings and sheds light on variables which play an important role in mediating the relationship between festival environmental characteristics and attendees' re-patronizing intention. In particular, results could contribute to the body of existent research on tourism-cultural consumption experience in two main ways. First of all, this study demonstrates the significant role played by hedonism within a festival consumption experience. Results support the importance of hedonism in affecting consumer behaviour by showing how it mediates the influences of festival environmental cues and of emotions on attendees' re-patronizing intention. Furthermore, and this is the second contribution, the present study shows that, in festival consumption experience, attendees' identification with other festival visitors positively influences re-patronizing intention. Such results show that, in cultural industries as well, consumption preferences could represent a means through which people construct their sense of social identity. Finally, the fact that social identification is affected not only by positive emotions but also by the hedonism obtained from the festival consumption experience further supports the important role of these variables in this contexts: the more attendees obtain hedonic worth and positive emotions, the more they feel connected with others, and the more they will be loyal to a festival. Therefore, it is important that festival managers not only plan an offer of outstanding quality, but also attend to all festival details which may transmit pleasure and delight to visitors. They need to manage environmental cues in order to shape festival surroundings that heighten positive feelings and sensations, and promote attendees' identification by offering the possibility of social exchange among them. Managing correctly all these strategic levers may enhance attendees' intention to re-patronize a festival and, consequently, attract and retain tourists in the host cities, thus contributing to the generation of positive economic impacts.

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