

Festival quality, theory of planned behavior and revisiting intention: Evidence from local and small Italian culinary festivals

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Festival quality
Local festivals
Attitude
Behavioral intention
Theory of planned behavior

ABSTRACT

Starting from an assessment of the main features of local and small culinary festivals, this study analyzes their main quality dimensions by examining their effects on visitors' attitude and integrating the theory of planned behavior. In so doing, the study suggests that small culinary festivals rediscover tangible and structural aspects by exploiting basic and essential service characteristics. The study employed an on-site survey of slightly fewer than 700 attendees of three local and small Italian culinary festivals to test the hypotheses. The results of structural equation modeling suggested that food and beverage quality, staff service and information strongly determine attendee attitude toward local festivals and their revisiting intentions. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

During the last two decades, studies on festivals have become central to the event management literature and broader tourism management research (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Davis, 2016; Lee, Arcodia, & Lee, 2012; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Quintal, Thomas, & Phau, 2015; Lee, 2016; Song et al., 2012, 2014; Thrane, 2002; Wan & Chan, 2013). Although local and small events have rarely attracted scholars' attention in the past (Baptista et al., 2010; Getz & Page, 2016b; McKercher, Mei, & Tse, 2006), it has recently been recognized that small events can have significant impacts on small communities and their economies (Agha & Taks, 2015; Getz & Page, 2016a, 2016b). Moreover, it has been clarified that in local festivals, food or beverages are often the primary reason for the festival celebration (Kalkstein-Silkes, Liping, Lehto 2008), thus representing the core product/service of the festival (Getz, 1991).

Crompton and Love (1995) initiated the investigation into festival quality. Baker and Crompton (2000) analyzed the relationships among quality, satisfaction and loyalty. More recently, scrutinizing festival quality, Lee, Lee, Lee, and Babin (2008, p. 57) introduced the concept of the *festivalscape*, “the general atmosphere experienced by festival patrons”, to emphasize the holistic experience of a festival. Since then, a new and autonomous field of research in the event management literature (Bruwer & Kelley, 2015; Bruwer, 2014; Chang, Gibson, & Sisson, 2014; Gratton & Raciti, 2014; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Oakes & North, 2008; Quintal et al., 2015) with a broad focus on large festivals has been developed, demonstrating a shift from a materialistic

perspective to an immaterial perspective in identifying the key dimensions of festival quality.

Consequently, in the literature, two significant deficiencies can be outlined. First, local festivals, despite their recent increase in number and value, are not sufficiently examined in the literature (Massidda & Etzo, 2012; Thrane & Farstad, 2011); more specifically, few empirical studies focus on the causal relationship between the main quality characteristics of local and small culinary festivals and the decision-making process of local tourists. Second, the growing interest in the environmental impact of festivals has translated into a broad focus on the intangible dimensions of the festivalscape, which not only devalues the importance of material elements (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012) but, at times, associate the concept of “scape” with collateral services that hinder the relevance of core and basic elements. Consequently, the ongoing development of this mindset has prevented researchers from identifying the core and main quality dimensions of local and small festivals and their link with the psychological aspects of consumer behavior.

Therefore, to fill these gaps, the goal of the current study is twofold. First, starting from the assessment of the main features of local and small culinary festivals, the study focuses on the quality dimensions of local and small culinary festivals. More specifically, consistent with the assumption derived from the analysis of small culinary festival characteristics this study suggests that in local and small culinary festivals, quality can be assessed through a reduced number of variables related to basic services and core products. Second, the study introduces and

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2018.10.003>

Received 18 May 2017; Received in revised form 8 October 2018; Accepted 13 October 2018

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incorporates the proposed quality dimensions of local and small culinary festivals into one of the most popular theories describing the psychological aspect of human behavior, the theory of planned behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1991), with the aim of evaluating the impact of main local and small culinary festival cues on visitors' attitude toward revisiting a festival.

Consequently, this study scrutinizes the quality dimensions of local and small culinary festivals and assesses their relationship with visitors' behavior. The assessment of these quality dimensions may advance the festival research, offering a better understanding of the core dimensions of small culinary festivals. Moreover, this study is the first to extend the TPB by integrating the quality dimensions of local and small culinary festivals and examining the relevant characteristics of small culinary festival that shape the attitudes of local festivalgoers. Extending the TPB to the context of local and small culinary festivals offers and represents a useful tool for implementing strategies and tactics consistent with the decision-making process of festival attendees.

2. Review of the related literature

2.1. Local festivals: characteristics, value, and types of tourism

Despite festivals' variety, diversity, and evolution, Getz and Page (2016a, p. 67) describe them in a very simple way as “themed, public celebrations”, which highlights the ability of festivals to provide cultural and fun opportunities beyond everyday experiences. As Robinson and Getz (2014) suggest, food tourists seek regional and authentic experiences, and they are willing to travel for food if they can enjoy other cultural and sightseeing activities.

Although research on festivals has been rapidly increasing (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Davis, 2016; Lee et al., 2012; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Quintal et al., 2015; Lee, 2016; Song et al., 2012, 2014; Thrane, 2002; Wan & Chan, 2013), a broader definition of local festivals has not been found in the literature. Analysis of local festival characteristics shows that they are narrowly focused on neighborhoods and minority communities and are often local in nature. They promote a “hit and run” type of tourism – “with tourists visiting the site just for a few hours” (Ruoss & Alfarè, 2013, p. 7) - and provide opportunities for people who live in the surrounding areas to rediscover scents and ancient culinary traditions. Both national and international tourists, especially for local events located near tourist destinations, represent only a potential and incremental user group that can generate value for both organizers and visitors (Agha & Taks, 2015; O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). Consequently, local festivals do not require that particular attention be given to all of the tangible and intangible aspects of consumption that are part of major events (McKercher et al., 2006). Rather, local festivals need to focus only on core service characteristics. In fact, local festivals have emerged with the specific objectives of celebrating local culinary traditions, establishing business and trade of local products, and fostering domestic and regional tourism (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Stevenson, 2016). Specifically, some scholars (Hall, Mitchell, & Sharples, 2003; Kneafsey, 2000) have observed that food festivals play a significant role in the development of many rural areas and in the adoption of branding strategies. Thus, local festivals often represent niche events (Einarsen & Mykletun, 2009) that are organized around, e.g., special dishes, specific vegetables, meat products, seafood, beer and wine (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Einarsen & Mykletun, 2009). Consequently, food or beverages represent the core service that provides a foundation for the positioning of the event. Small and local culinary festivals are normally arranged directly by the municipalities or country authorities or by non-profit organizations to enhance the interests of the organizers, who sometimes receive support from the public sector (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009). Furthermore, these festivals generally have low levels of professionalism among staff and of capital investment, as they are often staffed by volunteers. Thus, the success of a festival is dependent on the passion and actions of these volunteers,

who are involved in a wide range of activities, such as cooking and serving food and setting up tents and other facilities (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009). Consequently, staff service represents a crucial issue to analyze with respect to its influence on customer attitudes and behavioral intention. Similarly, Gursoy, Kim, and Uysal (2004) claim that small events do not rely on expensive physical development and instead exploit the existing infrastructure; in addition, they do not require substantial capital investment (for instance, souvenirs are normally not available).

Based on the statements discussed above, the authors define a local and small culinary festival as a public and themed celebration often arranged directly by municipalities (or county authorities) or by non-profit organizations; they are based in rural areas or small towns and built around beer, wine, meat products, seafood, local dishes or particular vegetables, with the aim of attracting visitors especially from neighboring municipalities. Their duration is normally from 3 to 7 days. As mentioned above, these festivals are presented in rural areas in small villages where trading (namely, of souvenirs, gifts, etc.) is not well developed or is still in its infancy.

In conclusion, the literature on local festivals, though small and fragmented, seems to indicate that the main characteristics of local and small culinary festivals are as follows: (1) local festivals are organized around a typical food or beverage, (2) they are based on voluntary staff contributions, and (3) they do not can count on large investments in capital or communication. These three characteristics logically represent the main features of local and small culinary festivals and are the drivers on which we based the development of this study.

2.2. The festival quality

The investigation of festival quality started with Crompton and Love (1995): they assessed festival quality through a list of 22 quality attributes (e.g., quality of food and beverage, quality of entertainers, information booths giving site direction, feeling of safety, number of sit places to sit down and rest, cleanliness of the festival site, decorative lighting, friendliness of people, and indoor performances). Based on the work of Crompton and Love (1995), Baker and Crompton (2000) assessed festival quality by investigating four dimensions: generic features of the festival (which represent the general characteristics of the festival), specific entertainment features of the festival, information sources, and comfort amenities.

Subsequently, based on the *servicescape* proposed by Bitner (1992), Lee et al. (2008, p. 57) introduced the *festivalscape* as “the general atmosphere experienced by festival patrons”. More specifically, they proposed seven dimensions that appear relevant for defining the *festivalscape*: “program content, staff demeanor, facility availability and quality, food perceptions, souvenir availability and quality, convenience, and information availability”. In so doing, Lee et al. (2008) adopted the term “*festivalscape*” to assess the festival quality. Although Lee et al. (2008) introduce the atmosphere dimension in the *festivalscape* definition, atmosphere is never directly measured. Moreover, in accordance with Bitner (1992), Lee et al. (2008) clarify that the *festivalscape* includes many features, and the tangible ones influence consumer attitudes and behavior. The introduction of the *festivalscape* represented a shift in the assessment of festival quality (namely, big festivals) from a materialistic perspective to an immaterialistic one, as demonstrated by the dimensions of *festivalscape* measurement used across times and contexts (see Table 1). In fact, although the *festivalscape* comprises many cues, the importance, relevance, and perception of particular dimensions may vary across space (Baker, 1986) and time (Organ, Koenig-Lewis, Palmer, & Probert, 2015), and defining an all-encompassing list of these cues is a difficult and perhaps even impossible task (Lee et al., 2008). Consequently, the *festivalscape* itself also seems to be context dependent. As demonstrated by the studies in Table 1, in which the reported dimensions vary from a minimum of three to a maximum of seven, modifying study context and festival

Table 1
Main dimensions of the festivalscape in different contexts.

Authors	Festival attributes	Number of attributes	Study context
Lee et al. (2008)	Convenience, Staff, Information, Program content, Food quality, Facilities quality, Souvenirs	7	International Andong Mask Dance Festival, South Korea
Yoon et al. (2010)	Informational service, Program, Souvenirs, Food, Facilities	5	Punggi Ginseng festival, Yeongju, South Korea
Lee, Lee, and Choi (2011)	Festival program, Informational services, Souvenirs and food, Convenient facilities, Natural environment	5	Boryeong Mud Festival, South Korea
Grappi and Montanari (2011)	Programme content, Staff behaviors, Places and atmosphere, Information and facilities, Hotel and restaurant offers, Souvenir availability	6	Festival of Philosophy, Modena, Sassuolo and Carpi, Central Italy.
Mason and Paggiaro (2012)	Fun, Food (quality), Comfort	3	Friuli DOC, Udine, North East Italy
Anil (2012)	Festival area, Staff, Food quality, Souvenir, Informational adequacy, Convenience	6	Vize History and Culture Festival, Vize, Turkey
Bruwer (2014)	Generic festival features and service staff, Entertainment and catering, Comfort amenities, Venue and information.	4	Winery Walkabout Festival, Rutherglen Wine Region, North East Victoria, Australia

characteristics influences the number and type of dimensions that compose the festivalscape and are used to assess festival quality.

Although festival quality research in general (Kitterlin & Yoo, 2014; Sohn, Lee, & Yoon, 2016; Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010) has undergone continuous development, an independent stream of research regarding local and small culinary festivals nonetheless remains lacking, and few empirical studies have assessed the quality of local and small culinary festivals. Investigating a small, local, municipality-organized festival focused on the city history and culture, Anil (2012) concluded that food, festival area (including the events within the festivals), and convenience are the only three factors that significantly affect traveler/visitor satisfaction.

However, the festivalscape measurement frameworks proposed in the literature, although adapted to different contexts, are not satisfactorily adapted to the local and small culinary festival characteristics discussed in the previous section. First, local culinary festivals are designed to promote the rediscovery of local food and beverages, and thus, food and beverage quality represents a fundamental dimension to investigate, with culinary offerings as the main focus of the festival. Second, local and small culinary festivals have little professionalism among staff and a low level of capital investment, as they are often staffed by volunteers. As the success of a festival depends on the actions of these volunteers, who are involved in a wide range of activities, such as cooking and serving food (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009), staff service represents a crucial factor that determines visitors' attitudes. Third, local and small culinary festivals are narrowly focused on neighborhoods and essentially target people who live in the surrounding area; however, they do not rely on expensive physical development. Consequently, investigating signs and signage effectiveness is another critical issue to understand visitors' attitudes toward festivals.

Thus, the essential characteristics of small and local culinary festivals can be identified as follows: local food and beverage quality, staff services and relational features of staff, and service communication.

As a result, this study borrows from previous works on festival quality and focuses on only three dimensions for assessing the attitudes of local and small culinary festival visitors in line with the local and small culinary festival characteristics previously discussed. These dimensions include the core product/service (*food/beverage quality*), service interactions (relational features of *staff*) and service communications (*information adequacy*).

2.3. Customer loyalty

It is possible to identify three main approaches to the study of customer loyalty: the attitudinal approach, the behavioral approach and the mixed approach (Bowen & Chen, 2001; Zins, 2001; Oppermann, 2000). The attitudinal perspective aims to estimate the possible favorable disposition of a consumer toward a service, an attitude that

translates into actions such as purchase recommendations to other clients or the commitment to spread a positive judgment about the service tested (Gremler & Brown, 1996).

In contrast, the behavioral perspective appears more stringent than the previous one, since it tends to strictly control only the repetition of purchases: in this manner, the loyalty should be measured only by tracing the “history” of the purchase and repurchase transactions of each customer. However, it has been noted that this greater computational rigor does not necessarily imply greater precision in the analysis of the construct. In fact, research has shown that excessive focus on the behavioral aspect could result in overestimation of loyalty (Zins, 2001).

The mixed approach combines the purely numerical aspect of repurchase with the intention to repurchase. Pritchard and Howard (1997) noted that this approach could be used to more thoroughly investigate the consumer's fidelity behavior, but in the tourism literature, many studies adopt the three described approaches without a distinction.

This study adopts an attitudinal perspective in measuring loyalty, considering the intention to revisit the festival (Oppermann, 2000). In particular, similar to other studies in the festival management literature (Choo, Ahn, & Petrick, 2016), this study measures loyalty as the likelihood of revisiting the festival as expressed by actual visitors.

2.4. The theory of planned behavior (TPB)

The TPB (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) is a popular behavioral framework employed in studies about tourist motivations and in studies predicting a wide range of behaviors and intentions (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Kaplan, Manca, Nielsen, & Prato, 2015; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Quintal et al., 2015; Sparks, 2007).

The theory asserts that behavioral intention is determined by attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). *Attitude* encompasses the beliefs and feelings, both positive and negative, that are associated with engaging in a specific behavior. In particular, *attitude* “refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). *Subjective norms* refer to a social factor that encompasses the perceived social pressures to accomplish or not accomplish a certain behavior. *Perceived behavioral control* represents the individual's perception of his or her capacity to perform a certain action, i.e., the extent to which a potential buyer has complete control over his or her decision to purchase.

Some scholars have recently adopted the TPB model to examine visitors' behavioral intention in the wine context. Sparks (2007) proposes a research model that involves three environmental dimensions which, as empirically shown, condition attitude. The study also hypothesizes that attitude, subjective norms and behavioral control contribute to the intention to take a vacation in a wine region. Quintal et al. (2015) assess an empirical winescape scale by testing the role of

winescape attributes as direct predictors of wine tourist attitude and as indirect predictors of behavioral intention, i.e., willingness to revisit and the likelihood of recommending the winery to others. Similarly, Horng, Ching-Shu, and Siu-Ian (2013) develop a segmentation model for food festival visitors based on the TPB. In a more recent study, Leng and Chiu (2016) propose an adaptation and integration of the concepts of festival quality and satisfaction with the TPB to theorize a model of festival revisit intentions.

Thus, the present paper proposes an extension of the TPB to investigate the direct effect of the selected local and small culinary festival quality dimensions on tourists' attitude and consequent behavioral intention to revisit a festival.

In summary, the TPB approach has been selected in this context because it can be hypothesized that local tourists have some beliefs regarding the environmental cues of local festivals that may produce a relative attitudinal judgment that influences and determines certain behaviors with respect to a festival.

Therefore, it is assumed that the integration of the two embraced frameworks, the quality assessment and the TPB, permits deeper insight into the phenomenon of local and small culinary festivals and leads to an understanding of how local tourists' decision-making processes result in a positive intention to revisit a small culinary event.

3. Model proposition

The current study proposes a direct relationship between three small culinary festival attributes and festival attendees' general attitudes toward a local festival. The effect of attitudes toward the local festival, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms on behavioral intention (i.e., revisiting intention) is also tested (Fig. 1).

As derived from the literature review, the three quality dimensions are assumed to comprise three structural dimensions (one tangible and two intangible): (1) food/beverage quality (core service), (2) staff (service interactions) and (3) information adequacy (service communication).

Core service is defined herein as the quality of food and beverages offered at a local festival. According to Fornell (1992), the quality of products has a direct influence on customer attitudes and is directly reflected in customer satisfaction. Similarly, Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994) contend that quality positively influences overall customer attitudes and satisfaction. In a study on wine tourism, Sparks (2007) assesses the influence of winescape dimensions on the intention to visit a wine region. Specifically, the core wine experience, which

captures the distinctiveness of the wine tasting opportunities offered by a specific wine region, has been found to affect attitudes. Similarly, also in the wine tourism context, Dodd and Gustafson (1997) report that wine quality (taste, reputation, etc.) is a good predictor of wine tourist attitudes.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Food and beverage quality positively influence visitor attitude toward revisiting a local festival.

In line with Lee et al. (2008), the term staff encompasses the service providers' degree of politeness and knowledge, both of which are necessary for successful interactions with consumers.

Bitner (1990) evidence the relevance of the amount of time a customer directly interacts with a firm in terms of its effects on the customer's evaluation of the firm's service. The tourism literature posits that employees' personal skills, such as helpfulness, friendliness, and attentiveness, increase service quality, which results in favorable evaluations (Griffin & Loersch, 2006) and positive behavior, such as repatronizing intention (Bruwer, 2014). Lee et al. (2008) observe that the work staff dimension of the festivalscape has a significant impact on negative emotion. Similarly, Quintal et al. (2015) find that the staff dimension of the festivalscape is one of the most influential factors in affecting wine tourist attitudes. Examining which restaurant experiences prompt customers to engage in positive electronic word-of-mouth behavior, Jeong and Jang (2011) find a positive relation between service quality, defined as attentive, friendly, helpful employees and dependable, consistent service, and the expression of positive feelings, which are prompted by a positive consumption experience. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Staff behavior positively influences visitor attitude toward revisiting a local festival.

According to information-integration theory (Anderson, 1981), exposure to informational stimuli is an important factor. For example, previous research has found a relation between the quantity and quality of information and attitudes toward a product (Loda, Norman, & Backman, 2007).

The festivalscape literature (Darden & Babin, 1994; Lee et al., 2008) emphasizes the relevance of this dimension, usually defined as signage or information availability, with respect to its influence on festival attendees' degree of loyalty, satisfaction, and perception of the festival. In addition, the communicative sphere of a local and small festival can be conceptualized as the adequacy and clarity of the promotional tools

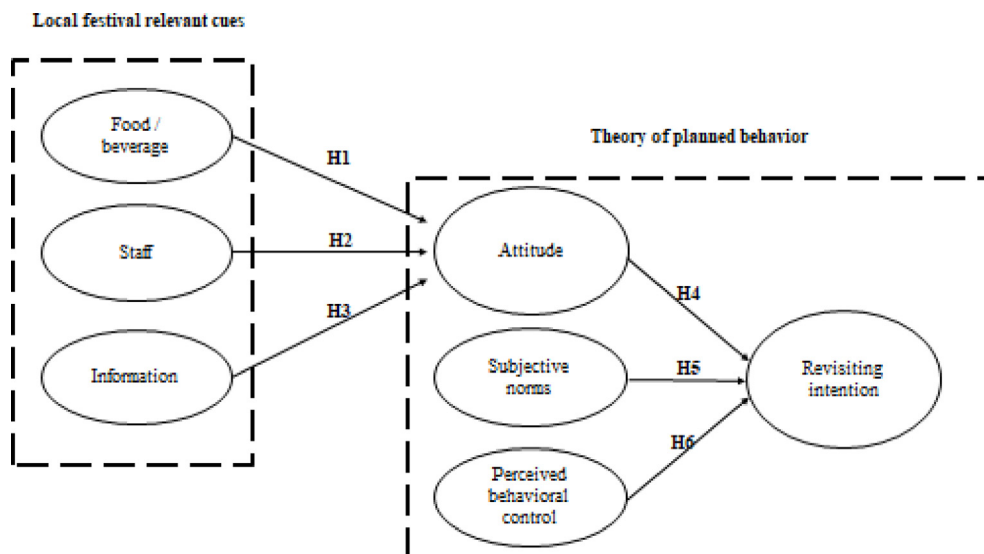


Fig. 1. Research model and hypotheses.

that are adopted to guide tourists to a proper realization of the service, thereby illustrating the consumer role and transmitting the desired image intended by the festival organizers (Thomas, Quintal, & Phau, 2010b). In addition, Getz and Brown (2006) emphasize the important role of a set of consistent messages and information instruments within the service setting to improve brand image and influence behavior. For this reason, the availability of information carries considerable relevance and weight in the context of small events. In fact, in the wine tourism literature, Griffin and Loersch (2006) find a positive effect of winescape (well-located and informative) signage on tourist attitudes. In a recent study, Quintal et al. (2015) also propose that signage has a positive effect on wine tourist attitudes.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Information adequacy positively influences visitor attitude toward revisiting a local festival.

Furthermore, consistent with the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), individuals' attitude toward a certain behavior affects their behavioral intentions, such as willingness to revisit. Exploring factors inspiring tourist intentions to use urban bike sharing for cycling while on holiday, Kaplan et al. (2015) find that attitude influences tourists' behavioral intention in certain cases. More precisely, studying green hotels, Han et al. (2010) demonstrate the positive, direct link between attitude and hotel customers' visiting intention. Finally, in the wine tourism context, research shows that a favorable attitude toward a winery positively influences wine tourists' revisiting intention (Quintal et al., 2015).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. There is a positive relationship between visitors' attitude toward revisiting a local festival and visitors' willingness to revisit it.

Starting from the proposition of the TPB that subjective norms influence customers' behavioral intention, various empirical studies have inspected the link between these two variables. For instance, Lam and Hsu (2006) and Hsu and Huang (2012) find that subjective norms positively influence visitors' willingness to revisit a certain destination. Similarly, in a wine tourism study, Lee, Bruwer, and Song (2015) demonstrate the relevance of subjective norms in influencing behavioral intention.

Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5. Subjective norms affect positively the behavioral intention to revisit a local festival.

Elaborating on the TPB, Ajzen (1991) asserts that customers' perceived behavioral control can condition their desire, behavioral intention, and actual behavior. In fact, in a tourism study, Lam and Hsu (2006) find that perceived behavioral control is an antecedent of willingness to revisit. More specifically, in a festival context, Song et al. (2014) suggest that the more behavior control an individual believes he or she possesses, the higher the individual's revisiting intention is. Conversely, in a recent study on festival revisiting intention, Leng and Chiu (2016) find no relation between perceived behavioral control and revisiting intention. However, Conner and Abraham (2001), who contend that an individual's behavior is affected by his or her self-esteem in his or her capabilities to carry out the planned action, reinforce Ajzen's (1991) theoretical assumption regarding the relevance of perceived behavioral control in influencing behavioral intention. Therefore, we find support for the influence of perceived behavioral control on patronage behavior, and conforming to the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), we assert that perceived behavioral control will influence behavioral intention. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on behavioral intention to revisit a local festival.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research context

The research context is local and small culinary festivals held in the Campania region of southern Italy between July and September 2015. Annually, approximately 100 small drink and food festivals are held during this period. In line with Organ et al. (2015), respondents were taken from three small food and beverage festivals that were chosen because they constitute a balance between food-based and beverage-based events. The Sant'Antonio Abate "Oro Rosso" local festival is typical of food events: it is held annually and focuses on various ways of eating and cooking tomatoes. Attendees of this rural event can taste traditional dishes that have tomatoes as the main ingredient, rediscover colors and scents, and watch authentic preparations of foods, where they learn to peel tomatoes the way they were peeled in the past. The Terzigno beer festival and Okdoriafest in Angri are local beverage events centered around the tasting of local craft beers. During the evenings, selections of beers are proposed, and local foods are available on the streets of the village or the ancient town. Okdoriafest is a town-based event, while the Terzigno beer festival is a rural event.

A convenience sampling method was adopted because no adequate sampling frame was available. To reduce implicit sample bias, we extracted a series of random numbers; adopting the method currently accepted in wine festivals (Bruwer & Kelley, 2015; Bruwer, 2014; Bruwer & Sigala, 2016), we applied said numbers by counting the people as they were buying a ticket for beer or food tasting and asking the ones – who matched our pre-selected number – to complete the questionnaire. When the selected person refused to fill out the questionnaire, the researchers moved on to people matching the next random number. For the same reason and to reduce the possibility that researchers or other people would influence the answers, a self-administered questionnaire was provided (Nederhof, 1985). The questionnaires were distributed directly to the respondents by ten field researchers.

Finally, to abate social desirability effects, as suggested by Nederhof (1985), statements in the questionnaire that referred to the same dimension were expressed as neutrally as possible and were randomly placed, thus avoiding adjacent statements about the same dimension. The survey was administered throughout the duration of the selected festivals for an equal amount of time and at specific times, namely, early evening, late evening, early night and midnight. In all, 695 visitors completed the questionnaire. To test for systematic non-response bias, Armstrong and Overton's (1977) test for non-response bias was adopted, where the respondent sample was divided into the first and fourth quartiles on the basis of the age distribution. The responses of all relevant variables of these two groups were statistically compared: no evidence of response bias was found (see Table 2).

4.2. Measures

In line with Churchill (1979) and Kline (2005), all constructs in this study were measured with multiple items. A preliminary list of the measurement items was generated after an extensive review of the literature. Subsequently, preliminary open-ended interviews with key informants (festival organizers and festival staff) were conducted to select cues and items that are meaningful for local and small culinary events. The aim was to keep the questionnaire as short as possible in order to obtain more cooperation from the respondents and prevent them from refusing because it was too time-consuming (Crompton, Lee, & Shuster, 2001). Three young researchers in the field of tourism marketing checked the questionnaire for clarity and wording. Then, the survey instrument was pre-tested on several students who had visited local and small culinary festivals in the past. We produced 20 items matching our model variables: food and beverage quality (2 items), staff interactions (3 items), information adequacy (3 items), attitude (3

Table 2
Sample characteristics.

Description	N.	%	Description	N.	%		
Sample	695						
Gender	Female	368	48.3%	<i>Status</i>	Single	342	49.2%
	Male	344	51.7%		Married	353	50.8%
	Total	695			Total	695	
Age	< =20	146	21.0%	<i>Occupation</i>	Blue collar	83	11.9%
	21–30	257	37.0%		White collar	135	19.4%
	31–40	104	15.0%		Executives	29	4.2%
	41–50	89	12.8%		Unemployed	182	26.2%
	51–60	62	8.9%		Businessmen/ Self-employed/ Professionals	103	14.8%
	Over 60	37	5.3%		Retired	16	2.3%
	Total	695			Students	85	12.2%
			Housewives	62	8.9%		
			Total	695			

items), subjective norms (3 items), perceived behavioral control (3 items), and revisiting intention (3 items). We adapted food and beverage quality items from the winescape scale proposed by Thomas, Quintal, and Phau (2010a, 2010b, 2011) and tested by Quintal et al. (2015). Staff interactions were measured using a three-item adapted subset (staff behaviors) of the festival environment cues scale developed by Grappi and Montanari (2011). The level of festival communications was assessed using three items to capture the extent to which an attendee perceives the signage and pamphlets prepared for the festivals to be adequate and clear (Lee et al., 2008). Revisiting intention

Table 3
Descriptive statistics and normality tests of the constructs in the model.

Description	References	Test for non-response bias (Independent sample t-test)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Local Festival relevant cues						
<i>Information</i>						
Information inside the festival area is adequate	Lee et al., 2008; Yoon et al., 2010	-.097 (.922)	3.70	1.724	.030	-.993
Directional signage to the festival is clear		.759 (.448)	2.92	1.605	.431	-.942
Prepared pamphlets are of good quality		1.029 (.304)	4.23	1.520	-.100	-.844
<i>Staff</i>						
Staff are kind and supportive	Lee et al., 2008; Yoon et al., 2010	.781 (.435)	5.96	.972	-.732	.157
Staff respond quickly to requests		.218 (.828)	5.60	1.029	-.517	.056
Staff have good knowledge about the festival		-.671 (.503)	5.92	.944	-.542	-.387
<i>Food/Beverage</i>						
This festival offers food/beverages of high quality	Lee et al., 2008	1.071 (.285)	5.75	1.038	-.588	.030
This festival offers local products of high quality		.651 (.516)	5.30	1.400	-.970	.730
<i>Perceived Behavioral Control</i>						
Nothing can prevent me from visiting this festival	Ajzen, 1991; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Song et al., 2014; Quintal et al., 2015	-.057 (.955)	6.24	1.107	-1.804	3.952
Visiting this festival is entirely within my control		-.534 (.594)	6.18	1.065	-1.434	2.216
I have enough resources (money) to visit this festival		.655 (.513)	6.38	.968	-1.921	4.690
<i>Subjective Norm</i>						
Most people who are important to me recommend that I visit this festival.	Ajzen, 1991; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Song et al., 2014; Quintal et al., 2015	-1.319 (.188)	5.24	1.321	-.550	-.043
People whose opinions I value would prefer me to visit this festival		1.378 (.169)	4.98	1.623	-.609	-.246
Most people who are important to me agree that I should visit this festival		-1.109 (.268)	5.10	1.610	-.776	.033
<i>Attitude</i>						
My attitude toward visiting this festival is:	Ajzen, 1991; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Song et al., 2014; Quintal et al., 2015	1.511 (.132)	5.58	1.083	-.561	.515
Bad – Good		-.258 (.796)	5.59	1.106	-.424	-.192
Unenjoyable – Enjoyable		-.377 (.706)	5.73	1.037	-.621	.321
Dissatisfied – Satisfied						
<i>Behavioral Intention</i>						
My intention to revisit this festival next time is:	Lam & Hsu, 2006; Kim et al., 2011; Quintal et al., 2015	.648 (.517)	5.60	1.091	-.704	.847
Likely – Unlikely		-.048 (.962)	5.52	1.137	-.592	.353
Impossible – Possible		-1.154 (.249)	5.60	1.146	-.841	1.192
Certain – Uncertain						

was measured by adapting three items suggested in the related literature (Abubakar, Ilkan, Meshall Al-Tal, & Eluwole, 2017; Kim, Kim, & Goh, 2011; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2015). Measures for the TPB constructs, using three items for each one, were selected and adapted from existing scales (Ajzen, 1991; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2015; Song et al., 2014). For all constructs, except for attitude and revisiting intention (which were measured on a semantic bipolar scale), seven-point Likert scales were adopted: interviewees were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement/disagreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale.

4.3. Data analysis

To test the research hypotheses based on the described model, structural equation modeling (SEM) was implemented in Lisrel 8.80. Following the recommendations of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we adopted the two-stage testing procedure, where we ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) estimating the measurement model in the first stage and examined the structural relationships among endogenous and exogenous variables for the model assessment and research hypothesis testing in the second stage.

5. Results

5.1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The key characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1. There were more females (51.5%) than males (48.5%) in the sample. The most frequently reported age group was 21–29 years

(37.0%), followed by respondents under the age of 21 years (21.0%), indicating that food and beverage festivals, which frequently offer music and fun, may attract younger visitors. Approximately one-half (45.8%) of the respondents had a high school certificate, and 25.6% had a middle school certificate, which is considered normal in the rural areas of southern Italy. Slightly more than one-half (50.8%) of the respondents were married, and the sample contained a variety of occupational groups, including 19.4% white-collar workers, 14.8% businessmen/self-employed/professionals, 12.2% students, 11.9% workers and 8.9% housewives. Approximately one-fourth (26.2%) of the respondents were unemployed, which is consistent with unemployment rates in southern Italy.

5.2. Measure validation

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and tests of normality (skewness and kurtosis). We also tested the multivariate normality of continuous variables ($\chi^2 = 1393.85$; p-value = .000) and found that data had a multivariate non-normal distribution. Thus, in this study, we adopted robust maximum-likelihood estimation based on the Satorra-Bentler (S-B) χ^2 (Satorra & Bentler, 2001). This method offers more accurate and stable standard errors when the assumption of a multivariate normality distribution is not supported.

CFA was implemented to assess the reliability and demonstrate the convergent and discriminant validity of all multi-item measures.

Table 3 presents the Cronbach alpha coefficients and standardized factor loading produced by the CFA. Most alpha and composite reliability (CR – see Table 4) values are above the threshold of 0.7, indicating satisfactory reliability for each construct (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994); however, food and beverage quality and subjective norms have values above 0.6, which is nevertheless an adequate level for research purposes in the social sciences (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Several widely used fit indices demonstrate that the measurement model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 248.395$, df = 114, S-B $\chi^2 = 240.230$, $\chi^2/df = 2.107$, CFI = 0.987, TLI = 0.983, NFI = 0.976, SRMR = 0.0319,

Table 4 Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Dimension	Description	Parameter*	T-value	α di Cronbach
Information	Information inside the festival area is adequate	.721	–	.815
	Directional signage to the festival is clear	.862	19.051	
	Prepared pamphlets are of good quality	.731	18.432	
Staff	Staff are kind and supportive	.738	–	.780
	Staff respond quickly to requests	.707	16.067	
	Staff have good knowledge about the festival	.764	17.987	
Food/beverage	This festival offers food and beverages of high quality	.767	–	.677
	This festival offers local products of high quality	.696	13.081	
Perceived behavioral control (PBC)	Nothing can prevent me from visiting this festival	.751	–	.854
	Visiting this festival is entirely within my control	.992	8.064	
	I have enough resources (money) to visit this festival**	–	–	
Subjective norm (SN)	Most people who are important to me recommend that I visit this festival.	.893	–	.658
	Most people who are important to me agree that I should visit this festival	.560	7.950	
	People whose opinions I value would prefer me to visit this festival **	–	–	
Attitude (ATT)	My attitude toward visiting this festival is: Bad – Good	.740	–	.814
	My attitude toward visiting this festival is: Unenjoyable – Enjoyable	.766	19.311	
	My attitude toward visiting this festival is: Dissatisfied – Satisfied	.816	21.141	
Behavioral Intention (BI)	My intention to revisit this festival next time is:			.897
	Likely – Unlikely	.884		
	Impossible – Possible	.873	34.921	
	Certain - Uncertain	.833	29.036	

Table 5 Correlation matrix for latent constructs*.

	ATT	Information	Staff	Food	PBC	SN	BI	CR	AVE
ATT	.775							.818	.600
Information	.350	.774						.817	.599
Staff	.392	.321	.737					.781	.543
Food	.469	.502	.490	.732				.698	.536
PBC	.113	-.112	.170	-.062	.880			.871	.774
SN	.491	.329	.175	.386	.099	.745		.704	.556
BI	.759	.416	.329	.548	.034	.574	.864	.898	.746

and RMSEA = 0.0399 with p-close = .991). As illustrated in Table 4, each average variance extracted (AVE) and CR value is above the minimum criteria of 0.5 and 0.7, respectively (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Hair et al., 2010), indicating that convergent validity is well satisfied. The only exception is the CR value for food and beverage quality, which, though slightly below the suggested criterion, is well above 0.6, indicating an adequate level for research purposes in the social sciences.

To test discriminant validity, we adopted a conservative method using AVE. As shown in Table 5, the AVE from each construct is greater than the variance shared between that construct and the other constructs, indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.3. Hypothesis testing

The relationships among the constructs were assessed by running the overall structural model. Maximum-likelihood estimates for various parameters of the overall fit of the model are provided in Fig. 2. The χ^2 equals 322.563 with 119 degrees of freedom (p < .000); the S-B χ^2 equals 312.981, and the χ^2/df equals 2.630. In addition, the CFI is 0.980, TLI is 0.975, NFI is 0.969, SRMR is 0.0477 RMSEA is 0.0485, and p-close is .640. Thus, we can conclude that the estimated model is a statistically valid model for testing the hypotheses, considering that all the fit indices are in line with their threshold.

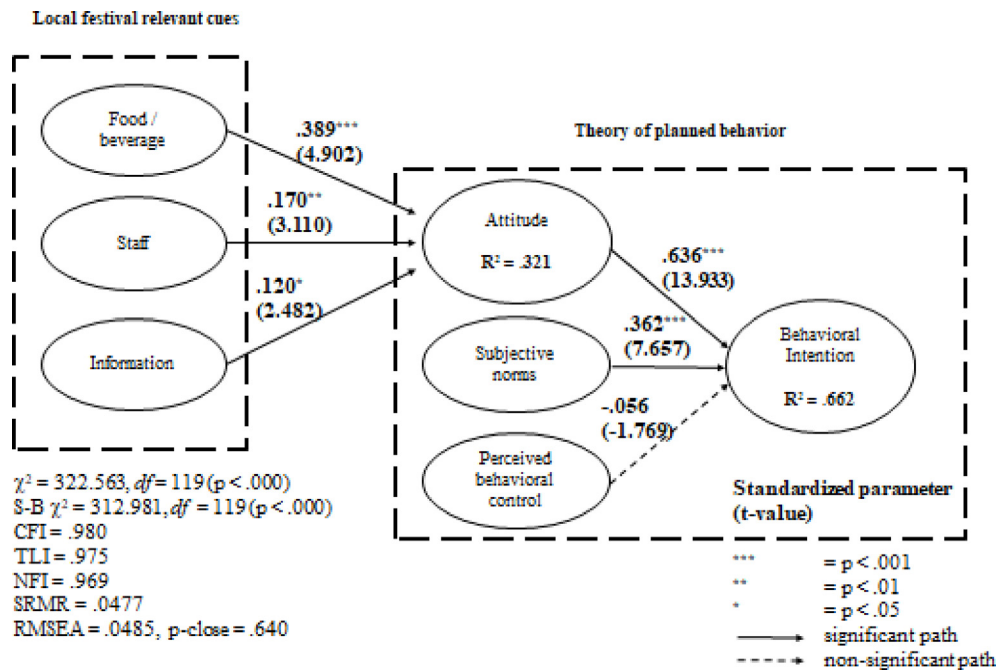


Fig. 2. Results of the path analysis.

The standardized coefficients for the various model paths with associated t-values are provided in Fig. 2. According to the study results, five of the six proposed hypotheses are supported.

Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 address the influence of the three small culinary festival quality dimensions on attitude toward revisiting intention. The results indicate that food and beverage quality (path coefficient = .389; $t = 4.902$; $p < .001$) has a significant and positive effect on tourist attitude toward visiting local events. Furthermore, staff interaction and services have a positive impact (path coefficient = .170; $t = 3.110$; $p < .01$) on visitor attitude toward visiting festivals, and information sources also have a significant and positive effect (path coefficient = .120; $t = 2.482$; $p < .05$) on visitor attitude toward visiting the local festival. In addition, the model explains a substantial amount of the variance in attitude, as the squared multiple correlation (SMC) reveals (SMC = 0.321).

H4, H5 and H6 are derived from the TPB: all predictor variables, with the exception of perceived behavioral control, are statistically significant in predicting revisiting intention, as demonstrated by the parameters for attitude (path coefficient = .636; $t = 13.933$ $p < .001$), subjective norms (path coefficient = .362; $t = 7.657$ $p < .001$) and perceived behavioral control (path coefficient = - 0.056; $t = -1.769$). These findings are consistent with those of previous tourism studies (Han et al., 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2015), and they therefore indicate that attitude and subjective norms play relevant roles in determining a specific behavioral intention of local festival tourists. In particular, two constructs (AT and SN) present a strong link with the formation of local festival visitors' revisiting intention. By contrast, PBC is not an antecedent of revisiting intention. This result seems plausible given that local and small culinary festivals are normally not expensive, and therefore, they generally attract people from surrounding areas and are held in the evening so that the majority of people can attend. It is possible that respondents did not focus much on their control over their behavior and that this variable, therefore, did not produce an effect on patronage intention. Finally, the SMC for the structural equations describing the relationships involving revisiting intention was high, with over half of the variance (SMC = 0.662) explained by the effect of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control.

6. Discussion of results

To date, little has been written about local and small culinary festivals and the behaviors and decision-making process of those who attend this type of festival. Consequently, based on the assessment of local and small culinary festival characteristics and the related literature (Agha & Taks, 2015; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Einarsen & Mykletun, 2009; McKercher et al., 2006; O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Stevenson, 2016), the first aim of the current work was to assess the relevant quality dimensions that affect visitors' behavior in the context of local and small culinary festivals. The second aim of the study was to evaluate the causal relationships between these relevant quality dimensions and local tourists' decision-making process. Thus, by proposing and testing an extension of the TPB, this study assessed the impact of local and small culinary festival quality on visitors' attitude toward revisiting a festival and integrated endogenous factors (psychological aspects of festival visitors) and exogenous factors (the perception of the quality of the festival that the visitor attended).

With reference to the results of the empirical research reported in the previous section, this study confirms that visitor attitude toward revisiting local and small culinary festivals is affected by the physical and contextual features of the local festival environment, namely food and beverage quality, service interactions (the relational features of staff) and service communications (information adequacy). In particular, food was determined to be the most influential factor in predicting attitude toward behavioral intention. In line with festival and culinary tourism studies (Lee et al., 2012; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Organ et al., 2015), this finding suggests that the core service dimension of the local and small culinary festival (food) is fundamental in forging favorable visitor attitude toward revisiting a festival and fostering their revisiting intention. These data not only confirm the pre-eminence of basic elements in the formation of attitude but also reveal that local festival visitors' motivations are particularly tied to a satisfying core experience (Quintal et al., 2015). Even if characterized by weak coefficients, the link between staff service quality and attitude is supported. This finding is consistent with the results of a few tourism studies (Quintal et al., 2015) showing that good service interaction and adequate staff behavior occupy a salient position in determining tourists' attitude toward revisiting festivals. Similarly, the positive influence of informational

services on attitudes is also supported. This result is consistent with previous work (Cockrill et al., 2008; Newman, 2007), which postulates that information sources and signage are important when they are required for consumption or for service realization. The fact that the influence of staff interaction and informational services is not always confirmed in the previous literature (Lee et al., 2008; Yoon et al., 2010) corroborates the assumption that the type of festival and the type of setting could significantly alter customers' behavior (Kruger & Saayman, 2012; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001). The relevance of staff interaction in the context of local and small culinary festivals is likely determined by the fact that the interactive dimension particularly motivates domestic tourists that are the target of this type of event (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Stevenson, 2016). Moreover, the results emphasize the necessity that festival managers should provide sufficient information that directs people to the festival area, and they should ensure the provision of high-quality food and the availability of courteous, knowledgeable staff.

Among the elements that affect behavioral intention, attitude has the most significant impact, while subjective norms have a weaker effect. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies (Han et al., 2010; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Quintal et al., 2015) that identify both constructs as key concepts of the TPB model at the expense of perceived behavioral control. The meaningfulness of the interrelation between subjective norms and behavioral intention indicates the effect of social pressure on the behavioral intentions of local visitors. Finally, the finding regarding the link between perceived behavioral control and revisiting intention is partially inconsistent with the previous literature. However, this result confirms what Leng and Chiu (2016) state in a recent study regarding festival revisiting intention. They argue that the pressure and relevance of “others” in the decision-making process likely change the perception of one's perceived behavioral control. Another possible explanation is that the change in the effect of PBC is strictly related to the characteristics of local festivals, which are mostly frequented by people who live in the surrounding area and are often inexpensive. Perceived behavioral control may therefore not affect patronage intention. Additionally, this finding is consistent with the study of Lee et al. (2015), who find that in the context of a Korean wine festival, PBC does not influence behavioral intention. They conclude that “wine tourists tend to consider their resources or opportunities for a wine tour at the stage of forming a desire and not at the stage of forming a behavior” (Lee et al., 2015, p. 14). Future research is needed to better understand this phenomenon.

7. Theoretical and managerial implications

Overall, the assessment of three relevant aspects of local and small culinary festivals – namely, core service (represented by food/beverage quality), service interactions (represented by relational features of staff) and service communications (represented by information adequacy) – not only represents a possible advancement in the small festival literature but also offers some interesting insights into festival visitors' decision-making processes. Such insights can be useful for predicting tourist behavior and can thus generate both theoretical and practical implications.

Concerning theoretical implications, the assessment of local and small festival features proposed in this study enriches festival quality research in general (Bruwer & Kelley, 2015; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009; Kitterlin & Yoo, 2014; Lee et al., 2008; Sohn et al., 2016; Yoon et al., 2010). The research model proposed in this study is likely the first quality measurement model developed specifically for local and small culinary festivals; thus, it advances the current understanding of the role of festival characteristics in determining visitor attitude and behavioral intention in this context. As a result, this study proposes an approach hereafter defined as “back-to-basics” to mean that only core dimensions are relevant for assessing the attitudes of local and small culinary festival visitors. More specifically, this study suggests that the

structural dimensions (core dimensions) are more relevant than the interactive dimensions in the context of local culinary festivals (Bitner, 1992). This conclusion is consistent with the assumption derived from the analysis of small festival characteristics that basic and essential service characteristics are especially important in small festivals.

The study integrates the proposed quality dimensions of local and small festivals with the TPB and may be the first to employ a well-established theory as the foundation for testing the antecedents of attitude toward behavioral intention and, indirectly, those of behavioral intention in the context of local and small culinary festivals. The results of this study provide strong evidence regarding the importance of quality cues in shaping attitude and behavioral intention, adding new insights into the behavior of local and small culinary festival attendees. Thus, the study addresses the research gaps identified herein. Moreover, the back-to-basics view proposed herein permits a departure from an approach that overrates the importance of immaterial aspects of service (typical in evaluating quality with the festivalscape approach) that are often confused with collateral.

From a managerial perspective, better understanding festival tourists' behavior can help managers identify the factors that influence revisiting intention. In fact, the operationalization of quality dimensions with a small, albeit sufficiently explicative number of components can also help local and small culinary festival organizers better understand how each type of stimulus can shape behavioral intention, stimulate satisfaction, and affect festival attendees' behavioral intentions. Festival organizers manage a multitude of factors when selecting and designing their event locations to make them places where customers will choose and be willing to recommend. Therefore, identifying only the factors with the strongest impact on customer attitude can help foster effective decision making. The current work finds that core service (food and beverage quality) and interactive service (staff behavior) are the most influential cues with respect to the impact on attitude and intention to revisit the event. Thus, these results have certain implications. First, local festival organizers must focus on providing high-quality food and beverages, which directly leads to a favorable attitude toward the event and stimulates affective loyalty. Good food is, in fact, an essential component of customer satisfaction, especially in the restaurant industry (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Sulek & Hensley, 2004); thus, the results confirm that offering high-quality food should take primacy over any other strategy.

Second, festival organizers should dedicate efforts and resources to the selection of highly motivated staff. Servers, cashiers, host/hostess and other service employees should be able to anticipate customer needs to provide a better service experience. Furthermore, particular attention should be given to providing the staff with adequate training in the skills that are essential in the local festival delivery service area, such as communication, courtesy, and kindness.

Finally, the findings suggest that festival organizers should support their festival with adequate and available information, as such information has a positive effect on local festival attendees' attitude and thus indirectly affects revisiting intention. Moreover, organizers should not only disseminate pamphlets rich with information about the festival but also have clear signage inside the festival indicating, for example, the locations of food areas, beverage areas, and ticketing areas. Such signage is necessary because local and small culinary festivals are often extremely crowded and because adequate signage helps bring order to the event and elevates the quality of the event. This finding is somewhat similar to Ford (2003) finding that customers' perceptions of communication account for significant variations in customer satisfaction, which in turn predicts customer loyalty and behavioral intentions. Consequently, it is fundamental and essential for local festival organizers to emphasize the informative dimension in terms of both general advertisements and satisfactory event signage when planning and designing an event.

8. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study provides unique reflections on conceptualizing the quality dimensions of local and small culinary festivals and evaluating the willingness of festival attendees to patronize festivals based on the relevance of these quality dimensions to shaping attitudes. Although the results are consistent with the TPB model, similar to most study findings, they should be explained carefully because of the limitations of this work.

First, the sample adopted in this study comprises only festival attendees in a confined geographic area. Future studies, such as cross-cultural studies that compare different geographical locations while incorporating the selected quality dimensions into the TPB, would contribute to generalizing the results to a wider population and improve the external validity of this study.

Second, the research design follows a positivist deductive approach. The constructs are measured using widely known and accepted items, with the advantage of being valid and reliable in the research contexts within which the scales are refined, but the results may not extend to other countries or cultures. For this reason, given that local and small culinary festivals are a worldwide phenomenon, future research should concentrate on the assessment of quality components in emerging countries and various cultures.

Moreover, future research can extend the model by including other variables that capture in depth the intention formation process, such as the willingness to recommend, word of mouth, perceived value, and image (Anil, 2012; Chen & Chen, 2010; Lee et al., 2008).

Finally, an additional research area arises directly from the findings. Specifically, food and beverage quality and staff behavior have been identified as the two most significant attributes that shape the attitudes of attendees toward local and small culinary festivals. Thus, it may be beneficial to analyze these two characteristics individually and extensively in order to understand more clearly the specific features of those factors that influence the attitudes and behavioral intentions of the attendees of small culinary festivals.

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