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Destination beliefs, event satisfaction and post-visit product receptivity in event marketing. Results from a tourism experience

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ABSTRACT

Hosting special events can be a unique opportunity for boosting the touristic development resulting in loyalty and attachment toward the destination and its assets. Understanding the variables that influence event tourism behaviours within the context of recurring special events has not been widely observed in the event and tourism literature. The study extends this research area investing whether destination beliefs, event satisfaction and tourist motivation can predict revisit intentions and receptivity of products made in the territory hosting a special event in Italy. The findings contribute to advancing the theory and empirical studies on event-related experiences. Moreover, the importance of collaborations between tourism sector and productive system is discussed along with the significance of satisfaction and motivation as drivers of behavioural intentions.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, events have become a new and alternative typology of tourist attraction for both mature and emerging destinations. The roles and impacts of planned events within tourism have been clearly recognized. The events industry has undergone an extraordinary growth that has put the issue of their contribution to the economic development of the host territory in the spotlight. To some extent the effects of the economic crisis, which have changed consumption and travel patterns, have contributed to this positive performance. In many cases, festivals and events have become a formula for evasion and more accessible entertainment. Goldblatt (2002) defined festivals as a “kaleidoscope of planned culture, sport and political and business occasions: from mega-events to community festivals; from small meetings to huge conventions and competitions”. If well-designed and implemented, an event can revitalize the host country, allowing the tourist potential to emerge, an aspect which often is not fully appreciated. Therefore, policy makers recognize the event as a valuable tool capable of powering virtuous processes in the development of the local economy thanks to the attraction of visitors and tourists, the improvement of the destination image, and the increase in its visibility (Anil, 2012; Getz, 2008; Rao, 2001). This latter aspect is acquiring a peculiar relevance dictated by a competition between territories that increasingly involve intangible variables also linked to conveyed images.

Following this perspective, the tourism marketing literature is

devoting increasing attention to the relationship between destination image and tourist experience. In the tourism sector, experience is recognized as a key to success, innovation and competitiveness (Ellis & Rossman, 2008). In the social science literature, most scholars focus on the sharp contrast between the tourist experience and daily experience, with leisure and tourist experience often being viewed as unique and special (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987), extraordinary (Morgan, Lugosi, & Ritchie, 2010), or as “peak experiences” outside the “usual environment” (De Geus, Richards, & Toepoel, 2016).

Tourist experiences are created through a process of visiting, learning and enjoying activities in an environment away from home. Currently, tourists seek appealing, unique and memorable experiences moulded by their motivations, prior travel experiences, ways of interacting with the environment, and beliefs about the destination (Correia Loureiro, 2014).

In fact, one of the most investigated areas within tourism destination image (TDI) research is the influence of image on travelers' choices in terms of both satisfaction and post-visit behaviour (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002). As stated by Chen and Tsai (2007), tourists use the perceived image of a destination as a factor to form expectations before the visit and compare these with the results of the travel experience. Therefore, a positive destination image will increase the propensity to positively judge the stay and enhance intentions to return and recommend the destination. The relevance of such issues is also witnessed by recent efforts to extend consideration to the potential impact that the tourist trip can exert on purchasing patterns by visitors. Such a

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relationship has been posited by Kleppe and Mossberg (2005) and Hallberg (2005), who found that international travel experiences lead to changes in consumer attitudes toward products associated with the host country. In a more recent work De Nisco, Mainolfi, Marino, and Napolitano (2015) found that both destination beliefs and tourist satisfaction can influence international tourists' post-visit intentions, not only by increasing the willingness to visit again, but also by raising the desire to buy products made in the tourist country.

Although the above-mentioned TDI research seems to provide reliable support to the relationship among destination image, tourist satisfaction and post-visit behaviour, so far event marketing studies have dedicated little attention to the interactions between destination image, satisfaction and behavioural intentions toward the products manufactured in the hosting destination. Event practitioners have begun to refer to event marketing as “experiential marketing”, but the literature on event experiences is still scarce and fragmented. A more holistic attempt at conceptualizing the event experience was made by Morgan (2008: 81), who posited that “festivals provide a space and time away from everyday life in which intense extraordinary experiences can be created and shared”. Nonetheless, studies have not yet sufficiently investigated the effects a memorable event experience can have in terms of persuasion and post-visit attitude changes (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2013). This condition is probably partly due to the relatively recent origin of the event marketing literature. According to a review from Wan and Chan (2013), the most investigated topics within event studies include the motivation for attending events (Li & Petrick, 2006; Yuan, Liping, Morrison, & Linton, 2005; Crompton & McKay, 1997), the relation between events and destination image (Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, & Ridinger, 2012), the evaluation of visitor's satisfaction and revisit intentions (Osti, Disegna, & Brida, 2012; Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Lee, Lee, Lee, & Babin, 2008; Anwar & Sohail, 2004), the measurement of event quality (Cole & Illum, 2006; Crompton & Love, 1995), and ways to organize a successful event or festival (Einarsen & Mykletun, 2009; Hall & Sharples, 2008; Litvin & Fetter, 2006). Therefore, considering past research the nature and intensity of relationships between destination image and event-related experiences and how their interactions can impact the competitiveness of both local tourism and the productive sector are still unclear. Moreover, what is interesting to note is that even if the issue of the economic impact of tourist events is gaining relevance among scholars (Tyrrell & Johnston, 2001), the analysis of the event-related expenditures has not yet investigated the phenomenon in terms of consumer behaviour implications.

Such gaps call for further research. First, in event research contributions have mainly focused on the influence of event satisfaction on destination image, while few studies have investigated the antecedent role of destination image (Kim, 2014; Pike, 2002), thus neglecting the “pull side” of destination beliefs held by visitors. Second, previous research has pointed out the importance of tourist motivation as an antecedent of event satisfaction. However, aside from some studies on food events that have investigated the influence of interactions between motivation and event satisfaction on visitors' purchasing choices (Organ et al., 2015; Kim, Suh, & Eves, 2010; Luchini-Rigatti & Mason, 2010; Yuan et al., 2005), there is a lack of knowledge about the effects exerted by tourist motivation on post-event behaviour related to consumption choices.

Finally, behavioural intentions to revisit a destination have been a consistent topic in the tourism literature (Chen & Tsai, 2007). More recently, research has also focused on the impact exerted by the tourist visit on the purchasing patterns of visitors. Some recent studies have found that the visit experience may activate purchasing by tourists and advocate the products made in the sojourn destination (De Nisco et al., 2015; De Nisco, Papadopoulos, & Elliot, 2017). Similarly, destination image was found to influence both destination and product receptivity (Elliot, Papadopoulos, and Kim (2011)). Such studies have contributed to gaining an understanding of the interactions among destination beliefs, tourism satisfaction and attitudes toward products made in the

hosting destination within the tourism marketing literature. However, the same cannot be said for the event marketing studies. Even if events can offer an ideal space for investigating the potential outcomes of visitors' experiences on after-visit intentions toward the typical productions of the event destination, research so far has not extended the interpretative boundaries of the post-event behavioural patterns to also include product receptivity. In fact, studies evaluating the relationship between destination image, event satisfaction and post-event behaviours have centred on event loyalty and positive word-of-mouth as the dependent variables (Allameh, Pool, Jaber, Salehzadeh, & Asadi, 2015; Hallman & Breurer, 2010; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lee & Hsu, 2013), while the potential impact on behavioural intentions toward products from the host destination has never been explicitly considered.

There is unanimous agreement on the fact that events allow direct and interactive connections with the host destination and foster local consumer-product encounters. However, up to now studies have neglected the evaluation of metamorphic impacts deriving from participation in an event – and the consequent contact with local communities – in terms of consumption choices.

Starting from the above-mentioned research, this study aims at providing additional knowledge on the effect of destination image and tourist motivation on event experience and post-visit behaviours by investigating: a) the impact of destination beliefs on event satisfaction and post-visit attitudes toward the event and the products from the host destination; b) the interaction between tourist push motivation and event satisfaction, and their influences on intentions to return and recommend the event and to purchase products made in the host destination.

Festivals and events are playing an increasingly crucial role in affecting the competitiveness of destinations, and thus it is essential to gain a better understanding of potential outcomes from visitors' experiences. To do this, it is necessary to bridge the gap between the tourism sector and the productive system by analyzing more deeply the potential synergies than can be activated during event-related experiences as well as extending insights obtained from the tourism literature to event marketing research. The characteristics of the event make it an ideal space for investigating the links between on-site and after-visit stages. As stated by Aho (2001), drawing from Schmitt (1999), thanks to a positive and memorable on-site experience, the post-trip stage could activate transformational impacts not only related to body or mind enrichment but also to a search for tangible items (i.e. products) capable of replicating a practice or maintaining a bond with the host place.

The study assesses the impact of event-related experiences focusing on behavioural outcomes from interactions between destination beliefs, event satisfaction and push motivation. Consequently, the major findings from this study have meaningful managerial implications for both public and private practitioners as well for local companies that aim to improve their marketing strategies and brand awareness.

The next section presents the research model and the theoretical background underlying the hypotheses investigated in this study. The subsequent section describes a survey conducted during an event taking place in an Italian town on a sample of 395 visitors intercepted at the end of their visit experience. Finally, the article ends with a discussion of the contribution to the literature in the field and the related managerial implications, also providing suggestions for further research.

2. Theory and hypotheses

The importance of destination image has been widely acknowledged in the tourism literature (Echtner & Ritchies, 1991; McKay & Fesenmaier, 2000; Pike, 2002; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Destinations compete more and more through their image in the competitive tourism market. Several studies have demonstrated that the destination image held before visiting is a decisive factor in purchase decisions (Buhalis, 2000; Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008). Destination image is also considered

a relevant topic in the event marketing literature. Events are often used by destination and local tourism marketers as an effective image building and enhancing tool (King, Chen, & Funk, 2015) capable of generating unique experiences.

Most studies have sought to assess the impact of events on destination image from the visitors' perspective in terms of: reinforcement of the place image (Hall & Hodges, 1996); correction of a negative image (Ahmed, 1991), or even repositioning of the destination image (Getz, 1997). Following this perspective, several studies have also verified the influences exerted by the event experience on intentions to revisit (Jung, Ineson, Kim, & Yap, 2015; Koo, Byon, & Baker, 2014). Tourism scholars unanimously agree with the dynamic nature of destination image resulting from both image formation and subsequent modification over time. However, within the event marketing studies this “fluid” process has been restricted to the assessment of changes in image due to event experience, disregarding the role played by features of the hosting destination in the antecedents of the event experience. Such an approach compromises a full understanding of the attractive power exerted by the event destination, distinct from the event itself (King et al., 2015). Moreover, as regards outcomes deriving from event participation, apart from the analysis of event loyalty and word-of-mouth effects, relatively little has been reported in terms of attitudes toward the products made in the host place and with which visitors come into contact.

Special events, for example, bring customers into a multi-stimuli environment where, beyond the specific object of the event, they can also be engaged with the local community in terms of the exploration of local products and traditions. Pine and Gilmore (1999) offered a framework for understanding and evaluating experiential consumption that has theoretical and practical importance for the tourism industry, since experiences are the essence of that industry. The expectation and subsequent fulfillment of a pleasant and memorable experience is what motivates consumers to purchase products and services (Tsaour, Chiu, & Wang, 2006). Only a few, more recent, studies on food festivals (Kim et al., 2010; Organ, Koenig-Lewis, Palmer, & Probert, 2015) have demonstrated that the event experience was able to break habitual behaviour in consumption choices and arouse curiosity about products made in the host place (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012). In a review of the event tourism literature, Getz (2008: 421) maintained that there is still a need to understand the meaning visitors associate to their experience and what influences their future attitudes and behaviour.

Our study contributes to this call for research by examining, from a unitary perspective, the relations existing simultaneously among destination image, event satisfaction, tourist motivation and behavioural intentions.

From the theoretical point of view, the research model proposed in the study integrates common issues, drawing from three streams of research: tourism destination image (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Del Bosque & San Martín, 2008; Gallarza et al., 2002; Lindblom, Lindblom, Lehtonen, & Wechtler, 2017), tourist satisfaction (Baloglu, Pekcan, Chen, & Santos, 2008; Bowen & Clarke, 2002), and tourist motivation (Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008), which have dealt more extensively with the effect of destination image on visitor behaviour. The model builds on studies dealing with the influences of tourist motivation and event satisfaction, and their interactions, on post-visit behaviour (Bigné, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Mansfeld, 1992). The structure of the model is pictorially represented in Fig. 1. The main underlying hypothesis is that destination beliefs toward a specific place have a positive effect on event satisfaction and can predict post-visit attitudes toward the event and toward local products. Destination beliefs are directly observable, descriptive and measurable (Walmsley & Young, 1998). Moreover, as King et al. (2015) suggested, cognitive images are quite stable over time, and thus they may provide concrete and interpretative meaning regarding the distinctiveness of a destination (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Xie & Lee, 2013). According to Gartner (1993: 193), cognitive components indicate the set of beliefs and attitudes about an object

(destination) leading to some internally accepted picture of its attributes. Cognitive images help create in the visitor's mind an interpretative space capable of guiding the understanding of the factual elements that characterize the distinctive features of a tourist destination (Stylos & Andronikidis, 2013).

Moreover, it is hypothesised that event satisfaction can positively affect both post-visit attitudes toward the event and product receptivity. It is also hypothesised that a positive and direct relationship exists between tourist push motivation and event satisfaction, and between tourist push motivation and post-event behavioural intentions (De Nisco et al., 2015; Meleddu, Paci, & Pulina, 2015; Opperman, 2000). Evidence supports the fact that push factors provide major influences on motives to visit a special event as well as a cultural attraction (Lim, Kim, & Lee, 2016; Meng et al., 2008; Richards, 2002; Silva, Abrantes, & Lages, 2009). Finally, we also test whether destination beliefs and tourist push motivation positively affect post-visit attitudes toward the event and product receptivity via event satisfaction.

Building on a review of the relevant literature related to each of the selected research streams, the most robust constructs were assessed and a choice made based on their theoretical relevance and expected predictive validity for the object of the study. As a consequence, the following constructs were included in the model:

- destination beliefs*, resulting from the cognitive judgments that individuals integrate within their holistic impressions of the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Del Bosque & San Martín, 2008);
- event satisfaction*, defined as the overall enjoyment experienced by the visitor, resulting from the event's ability to meet customer expectations and needs (Baker & Crompton, 2000);
- tourist push motivation*, depicted as internal forces, coming from an unsatisfied need that pushes the individual to become involved in a specific tourism experience (Meng et al., 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005);
- attitudes toward the event*, measured both in terms of event loyalty and of positive word-of-mouth (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Osti et al., 2012);
- product receptivity*, defined as the conscious or unconscious readiness to buy products coming from an area which is different from the visitor's territory of origin (Dhar & Kim, 2007).

The following sections illustrate the research hypotheses and the related theoretical assumptions.

2.1. Influence of destination beliefs on event satisfaction, post-visit attitudes and product receptivity

Tourism is an industry that increases competitiveness and reinforces its identity thanks to place image. The notion that the image of a place can affect consumption intentions is a principle in the tourism destination image literature. Destination image has been found in many studies to be a direct antecedent of satisfaction, intention to return and willingness to recommend the destination (Bigné et al., 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008; Court & Lupton, 1997; Park & Njite, 2010; Prayag, 2009). As stated by Chen and Tsai (2007), tourists use the perceived image of a destination as a parameter to form pre-visit expectations that will be compared with the results of the travel experience. As a consequence, a positive destination image will increase the propensity to make a positive evaluation of the trip and strengthen the intentions to return and recommend the destination.

Researchers agree in interpreting the image as a multidimensional construct comprising two main dimensions: cognitive and affective. Cognitive evaluation describes the set of beliefs and knowledge about an object, whereas affective dimension refers to feelings about the object (Ayyildiz & Turna, 2013; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Gartner, 1993; San Martín & Del Bosque Rodríguez, 2008). Regarding destinations, cognitive evaluations can be described as the beliefs and knowledge that people have about a place. Affective elements instead refer to what

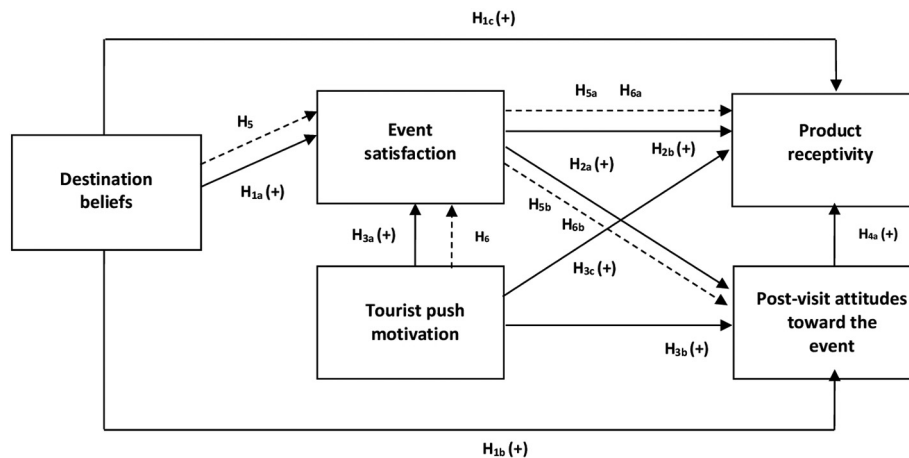


Fig. 1. Conceptual model and hypothesised relationships.

people feel about a place. Gartner (1993) suggests that affective components come into play at the stage when different travel alternatives are evaluated. Recent studies have emphasized the need to add to this dual perspective by adopting a tripartite structure that includes a third conative dimension (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). According to recent empirical evidence, conative destination images may be interpreted as the idealized and desired future situation (visit) the individual wants to gain for himself (Stylos, Vassiliadis, Bellou, & Andronikidis, 2016; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

An understanding of destination image formation and modification can definitely benefit from this tripartite structural perspective in terms of tourists' perception comprehension. Despite this reflection, the investigation of this framework is still limited. Moreover, even the dual perspective showed evident limits in terms of empirical examination, probably due to the lack of suitable measurement scales. Results from Pike's (2002) review showed that only 6 studies out of 142 published during the period 1973–2000 deepened the affective dimension. Recently, more researchers have been inclined to explore the role of the affective components. A recent study by Zhang, Fu, Cai, and Lu (2014) found 13 studies where tourists' feelings toward the destination were examined. However, doubts still remain about the appropriateness of semantic-differential scales for measuring emotions. These kinds of issues have also been highlighted in the vast literature on country image (Brijs, 2006; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Verlegh, 2001). Following this perspective, the present study focuses on the cognitive components of the destination image, namely destination beliefs, that can benefit from validated measurement scales.

It should also be noted that since the early studies by Hunt (1975), the tourism marketing literature has extensively developed and tested theoretical models aimed at interpreting relations and interactions between destination image (mostly cognitive image), satisfaction and post-visit behaviours covering several geographical areas and typologies of destinations (Alcañiz, García, & Blas, 2009; Baloglu, 1999; Hallman, Zehrer, & Muller, 2015; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Puh, 2014). Many studies have investigated the influence of destination beliefs on tourist satisfaction. It has been suggested that a positive evaluation in terms of beliefs about the destination positively affects tourist satisfaction (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Bigné et al., 2001). Moreover, studies have found that positive links exist between tourists' intention to recommend and image components. By surveying tourists on two Spanish islands, Bigné et al. (2001) found a significant, positive relationship between overall image and satisfaction, intention to return, and positive word-of-mouth. In a study of the Maiden's Tower destination, Özturk and Qu (2008) stated that destination beliefs positively affect perceived value and intention to recommend the destination to others. A more recent study by McDowall and Ma (2010) on international tourists in Bangkok revealed that destination beliefs exerted a

significant influence on tourists' intention to recommend Thailand to friends and relatives. Therefore, studies concur that the post-consumption behaviour of tourists can be influenced by the destination image.

However, some recent studies have extended the analysis of behavioural outcomes by considering the potential impact that the tourism experience can exert on purchasing attitudes. For example, by interviewing international tourists, De Nisco et al. (2015) found that destination beliefs and travel experience positively influence both intentions to revisit and to buy products associated with the visited country (product receptivity).

However, the contribution of knowledge gained in this field has not yet been adequately replicated in the context of event marketing, even if event experience could offer a perfect area of investigation.

Only a few studies have addressed these issues by proposing integrated frameworks capable of highlighting the role played in event satisfaction by destination image, and by their interaction on event-related behaviours. For example, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) found that participants in sports events who had more positive images of the destination were more likely to return for a visit. Again, with regard to sports events, Chen and Funk (2010) demonstrated the influential role that destination evaluation had on the revisit intention of the European Athletics Championship. However, these studies neglected to investigate potential influences exerted by destination image on intentions to buy products from the hosting destination. It appears evident that such issues need to be further investigated by expanding the boundaries to other kinds of special events, for example, cultural events, which undoubtedly can create a stronger link with the territory. In line with the above observations, we hypothesise that the cognitive components of destination image (destination beliefs) can influence event satisfaction and post-visit behavioural intentions toward the event in terms of revisits and positive word-of-mouth, thereby leading to positive intentions toward the products of the territory hosting the event. Therefore, we propose that:

H₁. Destination beliefs positively influence event satisfaction (H_{1a}), post-visit attitudes toward the event (H_{1b}), and product receptivity (H_{1c}).

2.2. Influence of event satisfaction on loyalty and product receptivity

In recent decades the tourism marketing literature has investigated the behavioural consequences of the tourist's experience by showing the existence of a significant link between satisfaction and post-visit behaviour. Several studies have confirmed that a positive tourist experience increases the chances of revisiting the same destination in the future (Lam & Hsu, 2006; Park & Njite, 2010).

Results also confirm that the level of service quality and satisfaction perceived by tourists positively influences future attitudes toward the destination: these latter are operationalized in terms of expected loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (McDowall, 2010; Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010; Yuan & Jang, 2008; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Oom do Valle, Silva, Mendes, & Guerreiro, 2006; Bigné et al., 2001). Tourist behaviour does not end with the consumption of the “tourist holiday” but extends to future travel choices. Recent studies have focused the attention on the revisit intentions of tourists from a time perspective, verifying how intention changes over time. The results indicated that satisfaction is a direct antecedent of short-term revisit intention, but not of mid-term or of long-term revisit intention (Jang & Feng, 2007). However, even if post-visit behaviour does not have a long-term impact, they seem to have a wider coverage also in terms of attitudes toward local products. Recent studies (Hallberg, 2005) have shown that tourist experience also affects consumer attitudes, intentions and consumption-related behaviour regarding products from the hosting destination. Through a survey of international tourists visiting Italy, De Nisco, Mainolfi, Marino, and Napolitano (2012) demonstrated that tourist satisfaction can significantly affect destination loyalty both in terms of intention to revisit and positive word-of-mouth. Results also showed that the tourism experience positively affected attitudes toward products made in the vacation destination. Satisfied visitors declared they would increase their purchases of Italian products once they returned to the country of origin.

Following similar patterns, event marketing studies have provided reliable support to the notion that event satisfaction, defined as “a sum of experiences the attendees had at the event” (McDowall, 2011), plays a significant role in post-event attitudes. It is hoped that visitor satisfaction with the event experience will result in the increased chance of that visitor recommending the event to others as well as repeating the tourism experience.

Cole and Illum (2006) found that visitor satisfaction can result in a repeat visit and positive word-of-mouth. Similarly, Kaplanidou and Chang (2008), analyzing the Olympic Games in Athens, found that 97% of the respondents indicated they recommended the Games as an event to attend to their relatives and friends and that most of them intended to revisit the Olympic Games. Through a survey of tourists at the Macau Food Festival, Wan & Chan (2013) showed that the event-related satisfaction positively influenced both the intention to revisit the festival and the decision to recommend participating in the event to friends and relatives. However, the relationship between event satisfaction and attitudes toward the products of the hosting destination did not receive the same attention from the event marketing research.

Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H₂. Event satisfaction positively influences both post-visit attitudes toward the event (H_{2a}) and product receptivity (H_{2b}).

2.3. Influence of tourist push motivation on event satisfaction, post-visit attitudes and product receptivity

Motivation is the leading force behind actions. Motivation stimulates behavioural processes that allow people to satisfy needs in the presence of a feeling of deprivation. It represents an internal force originating from an unsatisfied need that requires a specific behaviour (Pratminingsih, Rudatin, & Rimenta, 2014). Tourist motivation can be analyzed as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Motivational processes are rooted in internal motives such as needs, cognitions and emotions, and/or external events that come from the environment, society and culture. Crompton (1979) developed the push-pull model of tourist motivation characterized by specific push and pull effects on destination choices and behaviours. Push factors are related to a set of internal psychological needs that stimulate the interest of a person in traveling and participating in a tourist activity (Kim & Eves, 2012), whereas pull forces induce tourists to visit a specific place that

possesses attractive attributes (Lee & Hsu, 2013; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Iso-Ahola (1982) identified two basic motivational forces - escaping and seeking - that help to explain leisure behaviour in the context of tourism. On the one hand, people engage in leisure activities because they want to escape their ordinary life, and on the other choose to engage in a specific experience because they expect personal rewards (Doran, Larsen, & Wolff, 2014).

Empirical studies indicate that tourist satisfaction is significantly affected by motivation. Schofield and Thompson (2007) analyzed the influences of push and pull motivation on satisfaction and behaviour intention. The results showed significant effects of motivation factors on both satisfaction and loyalty. The intensity of the loyalty is testified to by the intention to revisit the destination and the willingness to recommend it to others (Opperman, 2000).

In recent years, more attention has been given to behaviour and choices in relation to events. Getz (2005) suggested that participating in festivals and special events can be an effective way to satisfy visitors' needs and travel motivations. Research in the context of event tourism has investigated motivational issues mainly through the theory of push and pull factors. On the other hand, few studies have examined the relationships among motivation, satisfaction and intention to revisit in the contexts of festivals and special events (Lee & Hsu, 2013; Yuan et al., 2005).

Moreover, even if tourist motivation has been extensively investigated both in the tourism literature and in event marketing, the discussion of motivation patterns has not yet been expanded to product purchase intentions related to the hosting destination. The consumption of products in the event destination can contribute to the competitive advantage of tourist destinations through marketing and promotional activities that can emphasize both attractions and typical productions. For instance, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage of Italy announced that in 2016 tourism spending on typical and handmade products in Italy by both domestic and international tourists averaged 15.8% of total expenditures of 40 billion euros (Enit, 2016).

The present study assumes that tourist motivation – operationalized in terms of push factors – has a positive effect on event satisfaction, post-visit attitudes toward the event, and product receptivity (Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2013). Several contributions state that outdoor recreation is a means of escaping the daily routine and of obtaining satisfaction from recreation, relaxation and appreciation of the environment (Lim et al., 2016). Thus, in the context of an outdoor special event, push factors can have more influence on tourist motivations to visit, and consequently provide interpretative insights into tourist behaviour.

The study attempts to extend the theoretical and empirical evidence on the causal relationships between these three constructs. Therefore, it is assumed that the search for new and “extraordinary” experiences related to an event can create the optimal cognitive and affective mood to enjoy the tourist experience and share with others the overall satisfaction. Motivation can also activate the desire to buy products made in the host destination once the visitor returns home.

Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H₃. Tourist push motivation positively affects event satisfaction (H_{3a}), post-visit attitudes (H_{3b}), and product receptivity (H_{3c}).

H₄. Post-visit attitudes positively affect product receptivity.

2.4. Mediating hypotheses

In tourism destination management, tourist satisfaction is the most essential element for the sustainable development of business. In fact, it is considered an interlinking concept that joins together other relevant tourism phenomena. Previous tourism research has indicated that tourist satisfaction plays a mediating role between loyalty and antecedent variables such as: service quality (Baker & Crompton, 2000;

Table 1
Sociodemographic characteristics of visitors.

<i>Gender</i>	%
Male	49,9
Female	50,1
<i>Age group</i>	%
15–24	26,3
25–34	36,5
35–44	16,5
45–65	18,7
Over 65	1,5
<i>Education</i>	%
Elementary school	1,5
High school	50,2
College	2,3
University	43
Postgraduate education	3
<i>Area of residence</i>	%
Inside region (Campania)	82,8
Outside region	15,7
Abroad	1,5
<i>Frequency of visits</i>	%
First-time	23,5
Repeat	76,5

Bigné et al., 2001; Cole, Crompton, & Wilson, 2002), motivation (Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991) and destination image (Bigné et al., 2001; Mohamad, Ab Ghani, Mamat, & Mamat, 2014). Moreover, a few contributions show that tourist satisfaction can mediate the effect of destination beliefs on product receptivity, thus demonstrating its capability to impact the behavioural patterns of tourists (De Nisco et al., 2012).

However, little has been reported on this topic in the event-related literature (Koo et al., 2014; Chen & Chen, 2010). To date, studies have mainly focused on the mediating role of event satisfaction regarding event quality and event loyalty (Yoon et al., 2010), thus neglecting the empirical evidence found in the tourism literature with respect to the mediating roles of tourist satisfaction. Therefore, it is worth testing the indirect effects of destination beliefs and tourist motivation on product receptivity and post-event attitudes through event satisfaction (Lee & Hsu, 2013).

Based on these arguments hypotheses 5 and 6 are formulated as follows:

H₅. Event satisfaction mediates the influence of destination beliefs on product receptivity (H_{5a}) and on post-visit attitudes toward the event (H_{5b}).

H₆. Event satisfaction mediates the influence of tourist push motivation on product receptivity (H_{6a}) and on post-visit attitudes toward the event (H_{6b}).

3. Method

3.1. Sample and procedure

The present study adopted a quantitative methodological approach, as it seemed to be a better fit for the research objectives. To test the proposed model, a survey was conducted on a sample of visitors participating in the event “Luci d’Artista” (*Artist’s lights*) between November 2015 and January 2016. “Luci d’Artista” is a special event that has taken place at Christmas time in the city of Salerno (Southern Italy) since 2006. The event is characterized by street decorations of light installations created by famous Italian artists, each year inspired by a different theme. The decision to carry out the empirical study during this event was motivated by the fact that the initiative had attracted an increasing number of visitors in recent years, thereby consolidating the regional tourism economy and, most importantly, playing a decisive role in supporting Salerno’s image for tourists. There were > 2 million visitors in 2015, approximately a 20% increase over the previous year

(Tourism Department, City of Salerno, 2015).

In fact, thanks to its extraordinary performances, *Luci d’Artista*, until now considered a local event (Roche, 2000), could become a new and original hallmark event with a huge resonance even at the national level. This situation has significantly improved the visibility and appeal of the city as a tourist destination (Getz, 2005: 16).

The survey instrument was a questionnaire comprising the following issues: destination beliefs, event satisfaction and tourist push motivation, intentions to revisit and recommend, and product receptivity. Face validity was addressed with a panel of three experts (two Italian academics and one tourism expert) to assess the clarity of questions and determine the length of time required and the appropriateness of the questions. Based on this feedback, the questionnaire was modified, with some items deleted and others reformulated to improve the clarity of the topics presented.

Data gathering involved an on-field survey. A systematic random sampling method was adopted that has been widely used in similar studies (Chen & Chen, 2010; Lee, Kyle, & Scott, 2012). The event is characterized by an obliged path that winds through the historical centre and ends in one of the main squares of the city where the main attractions are located.

Respondents were intercepted at the most attractive light installations by a group of trained interviewers. Every fifth person was asked his/her willingness to take part in the questionnaire survey, by attempting to approach one person per group (alternating between male and female) (Matheson, Rimmer, & Tinsley, 2014; Walker, Kaplanidou, Gibson, Thapa, & Geldenhuys, 2013). This systematic random sampling was adopted to ensure there was no particular bias in data collection based on gender (De Nisco et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2013). Interviews were carried out close to the main exit roads to obtain visitors’ opinions at the end of the itinerary.

Based on similar studies in event context (Matheson et al., 2014; Osti et al., 2012), during the event, > 500 non-resident visitors were approached. 395 usable responses were obtained after removing incomplete questionnaires, representing a response rate of 79%. This size is well above the minimum of 200 observations recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006) for SEM studies.

A descriptive analysis of the sample showed that it was equally distributed by gender (49.9% men, 50.1% women) (Table 1). As regards the age of the respondents, 26.3% of the sample was aged between 15 and 24 years, 36.5% between 25 and 34 years, 16.5% between 35 and 44 years, 18.7% between 45 and 65 years, with 1.5% of the sample over the age of 65. In terms of the origin of the respondents, the distribution between foreigners and Italians was 1.5% and 98.5%, respectively. Most of the Italian tourists came from the Campania region (82.8%). With respect to frequency of visits, the data shows that most respondents are loyal visitors who joined the event before (76.5%).

3.2. Measures and confirmatory factor analysis

Model constructs were measured based on seven-point Likert scales adapted from similar studies (Table 2). More specifically, destination beliefs were measured through items provided in a study by Del Bosque and San Martín (2008); product receptivity was assessed through a seven-point Likert scale built on items provided in a study by Papadopoulos et al. (2000) and Elliot et al. (2011); event satisfaction was measured based on a study by Baker and Crompton (2000); and tourist push motivation was assessed thanks to the studies by Crompton and McKay (1997) and Meng et al. (2008) on event participants. Finally, post-visit behavioural intentions toward the event were determined through measures provided by Lee (2009) and Lee and Hsu (2013).

According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-stage approach was followed in which the measurement model was first confirmed and then tested. The first stage assessed the internal consistency and reliability of the composite measures (Cronbach’s alpha, construct reliability

Table 2
Measurement scales, confirmatory factory analysis, Cronbach's alpha, construct reliability and AVE.

	Mean (st. dev.)	λ scores (stand. coeff.)	Cronbach's alpha	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Destination beliefs			0.76	0.78	0.72
Pleasant tourist destination	5.52 (1.07)	0.639			
Well organized tourism services	4.88 (1.22)	0.802			
Lots to see and do for tourism	5.07 (1.21)	0.864			
Tourist push motivation			0.70	0.67	0.65
I participated to the event for fun	5.82 (1.30)	0.649			
I like meeting local people	5.42 (1.26)	0.486			
I was searching a relaxing experience	5.50 (1.24)	0.621			
I like to break away from routine	5.60 (1.10)	0.694			
Event satisfaction			0.86	0.80	0.74
In general, I'm very satisfied with this experience	6.05 (1.06)	0.857			
This travel experience exceeded my expectations in terms of overall quality and satisfaction	5.62 (1.35)	0.886			
It is exactly what I was looking for	5.05 (1.41)	0.676			
In comparison to other similar events I have participated before, "Luci d'Artista" is a much better event for tourism and leisure	5.26 (1.38)	0.758			
Post-visit attitudes toward the event			0.83	0.79	0.67
I will surely visit the event again	6.16 (1.18)	0.824			
Once at home, I will suggest that my friends visit the event	6.39 (1.01)	0.837			
Next time I will plan a trip, I will consider Salerno	6.05 (1.12)	0.508			
Product receptivity			0.72	0.69	0.65
I would be happy to own more products coming from the province of Salerno.	5.25 (1.40)	0.615			
I will definitely try products from the province of Salerno	5.72 (1.11)	0.563			
It often happens to me to say positive things about products from the province of Salerno to relatives and friends.	5.60 (1.20)	0.858			

Fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 206.386$ (d.f. 67; $p < 0.001$); CFI = 0.96; AGFI = 0.84; NFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.06.

Table 3
Average variance extracted and squared correlations among constructs.

	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. Destination beliefs	0.72	1.00				
2. Tourist push motivation	0.65	0.470	1.00			
3. Event satisfaction	0.74	0.722	0.435	1.00		
4. Product receptivity	0.65	0.500	0.318	0.366	1.00	
5. Post-visit attitudes toward the event	0.67	0.640	0.410	0.644	0.426	1.00

and average variance extracted). Four indicators provided satisfactory goodness of fits (Table 2): CFI = 0.96 (recommended value ≥ 0.9); AGFI = 0.84 (recommended value ≥ 0.8); NFI = 0.95 (recommended value ≥ 0.9); and RMSEA = 0.06 (recommended value ≤ 0.07). The reliability and validity of each measurement scale was assessed through a test suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Bagozzi and Yi (1988). As reported in Table 2, individual scales were close or above the suggested values for Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.7), construct reliability (≥ 0.6) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998; Hatcher, 1994) and AVE (≥ 0.5). Discriminant validity was examined through a procedure developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), requiring that the variance extracted for each construct exceed the highest squared correlation between all pairs of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results suggested that all the measures employed were clearly discriminated (Tables 2, 3).

Finally, to minimize possible common method variance, preliminary remedies were adopted in the questionnaire design stage. Firstly, an introductory message was used to assure respondents of the anonymity and confidentiality of the study (Chang, van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010). Secondly, the research instrument was pre-tested on a small sample of respondents to confirm the clarity of wording and content validity (Chang et al., 2010). Thirdly, the sequence of questions was defined to investigate the perception of Salerno as a tourism destination, prior to other constructs. In addition, the questionnaire also included questions on top-of-mind awareness of major events in the Campania region. In this way, tourists could not easily combine related

items to cognitively create the correlation needed to produce a common method variance.

4. Results

After confirming the measurement model, the structural model was tested with a system of structural equations using the maximum likelihood estimation method (maximum likelihood). The analysis was conducted with the LISREL 8.80 statistical software. The main indices also showed in this case that the data strongly fit the structural model: RMSEA = 0.065; CFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.96; AGFI = 0.88 (Table 4).

Regarding the first group of hypotheses, H_{1a} posits that a positive judgment toward the destination will result in greater levels of event satisfaction. As expected, this path was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.50$, t -value = 5.03). In contrast, destination beliefs did not lead to revisit intention/actual recommendation and intentions to buy local products. Consequently, H_{1b} and H_{1c} were not supported.

Empirical evidence shows that a greater level of overall satisfaction during the event exerts a significant and positive effect on behavioural attitudes, both in terms of a willingness to revisit the event and the decision to suggest the event to friends and relatives ($\beta = 0.77$, t -value = 7.78). This supports previous studies suggesting that satisfaction predominantly affects behavioural intentions (Kim et al., 2010; Schofield & Thompson, 2007; Yoon et al., 2010). In addition, event satisfaction is also positively related to product receptivity ($\beta = 0.20$, t -value = 1.99). The more I am satisfied with the event experience, the more I will be ready to discover local products. Therefore, event satisfaction is capable of extending its influence to behavioural patterns even outside the specific tourist experience.

These results provide full confirmation of hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b} . This research contributes to the academic literature by confirming that event satisfaction can impact consumption choices regarding products coming from the event-hosting destination.

Turning to the third set of hypotheses, H_{3a} , H_{3b} and H_{3c} were all supported. Tourist push motivation has a significant and positive influence on event satisfaction ($\beta = 0.53$, t -value = 5.78), post-visit

Table 4
The hypothesised relationships: standardized coefficients and fit statistics.

	Hypothesised relationships	Standardized coefficients (t-values)	Results
H _{1a}	Destination beliefs – event satisfaction	0.50 (5.03)	Supported
H _{1b}	Destination beliefs – post-visit attitudes toward the event	0.09 (n.s.)	Not supported
H _{1c}	Destination beliefs – product receptivity	0.22 (n.s.)	Not supported
H _{2a}	Event satisfaction – post-visit attitudes toward the event	0.77 (7.78)	Supported
H _{2b}	Event satisfaction – product receptivity	0.20 (1.99)	Supported
H _{3a}	Tourist push motivation – event satisfaction	0.53 (5.78)	Supported
H _{3b}	Tourist push motivation – post-visit attitudes toward the event	0.19 (2.17)	Supported
H _{3c}	Tourist push motivation – product receptivity	0.25 (1.98)	Supported
H _{4a}	Post-visit attitudes toward the event – product receptivity	0.12 (n.s.)	Not supported

Fit statistics: Satorra-Bentler^a Scaled $\chi^2 = 415.764$ (d.f. 109; $p < 0,001$); χ^2 /d.f. = 3.81.
CFI = 0.98; AGFI = 0.88; NFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.065 (p -value for test of close fit = 0.073).

^a The violation of the condition of multivariate normality requires a robust estimation of the chi-square (Satorra & Bentler, 1988).

Table 5
Summary of results concerning indirect effect tests.

Indirect effect tests	β^b	SE ^b	MacKinnon PRODCLIN (95% CI) ^b	
			Lower	Upper
Destination beliefs → event satisfaction → product receptivity	0.11 ^a	0.07	0.08	0.27
Destination beliefs → event satisfaction → post-visit attitudes toward the event	0.39 ^a	0.09	0.18	0.49
Tourist push motivation → event satisfaction → product receptivity	0.11	0.10	–0.05	0.39
Tourist push motivation → event satisfaction → post-visit attitudes toward the event	0.41 ^a	0.08	0.03	0.68

^a Empirical 95% confidence interval does not overlap with zero.

^b These values are based on unstandardized path coefficients.

attitudes toward the event ($\beta = 0.19$, t-value = 2.17), and product receptivity ($\beta = 0.25$, t-value = 1.98). Confirming previous studies (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Prayag, 2012), fulfillment of motives generally leads to high satisfaction, which in turn leads to favorable behavioural intentions about the destination. Tourists' internal forces are able to enhancing satisfaction and return intention degrees to the event. Consequently, the results suggest that visitors' outcomes are most driven by how push motivation and on-site experience fit. If the experience can indulge the desire to break the routine thanks to a pleasant and unique event, the visitor is ready to activate different behavioural responses. Event loyalty and willingness to recommend confirm to be positively influenced by both push motivation and satisfaction (Khuong & Ha, 2014; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Moreover, the study also found a direct effect of push motivation on product receptivity, thus contributing to the knowledge of the potential behavioural outcomes from motivation. Post-visit attitudes do not seem to affect product receptivity; therefore, hypothesis H_{4a} is not supported.

Lastly, indirect effects in the proposed model were further examined to gain in-depth insights into product receptivity and post-visit attitudes toward the event. We tested whether event satisfaction mediates the effect of destination beliefs and tourist push motivation on both product receptivity and post-visit attitudes toward the event. MacKinnon et al. (2002) recommended testing the indirect effect of the exogenous variable using the procedure developed by Sobel (1982). Mediation analyses were conducted through the PRODCLIN (MacKinnon, Fritz, Williams, & Lockwood, 2007) software using the weighted unstandardized coefficients. PRODCLIN provides unstandardized mediated path coefficients using MacKinnon's (2008) asymmetric distribution of product test. Indirect paths were tested for mediation regardless of the significance of the direct effect, given that the effects of predictors on outcomes can be entirely indirect (MacKinnon, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

Results show that event satisfaction scores fully mediate the effects of destination beliefs on both product receptivity ($\beta = 0.11$, SE = 0.07, LLCI = 0.08, ULCI = 0.27) and post-visit attitudes toward the event ($\beta = 0.39$, SE = 0.09, LLCI = 0.18, ULCI = 0.49) (Table 5). The two

direct effects are not significant while the indirect effects are, according to MacKinnon's *ab* product distribution test (MacKinnon et al., 2007) $p < 0.05$. These results are consistent with hypotheses H_{5a} and H_{5b}.

Regarding the mediated effect of event satisfaction on tourist push motivation and product receptivity, the results indicate that this mediation is not significant. However, the indirect effect of tourist motivation on post-visit attitudes toward the event is significant ($\beta = 0.41$, SE = 0.08, LLCI = 0.03, ULCI = 0.68). The total effect was 0.61 (not reported in Table 5) and the mediated effect 0.41. This confirms that event satisfaction only partially mediates the relationship between motivation and post-event attitudes.

5. Discussion

The behavioural patterns of tourists have often been examined to identify the causal relationships between satisfaction, motivation and loyalty. These constructs are considered crucial for a full understanding of the decision-making processes. Adopting this perspective, a significant part of the literature has also emphasized the predictive capabilities of the image of the tourist destination as an antecedent factor of tourist satisfaction (Castro, Armario, & Ruiz, 2007).

This study was motivated by the need for research to gain a better understanding of the interactions among destination beliefs, tourist motivation and satisfaction, along with their influences on behavioural outcomes, in an event marketing context. Results from a survey of a sample of visitors intercepted at the end of their visit tour during "Luci d'Artista" (*Artist's lights*) provided support to almost all the hypothesised relationships. Such results suggested that event satisfaction plays a mediating role among some of the antecedent variables, such as destination beliefs, tourist push motivation and loyalty, even in relation to perceptual and behavioural patterns related to a special event, such as "Luci d'Artista". Therefore, destination beliefs reveal a direct impact on satisfaction and an indirect influence on behavioural patterns through event satisfaction. The cognitive image of the place can create positive inspiration and result in a fulfilling experience, leaving to tourist experience and motivation the role of the primary influencers of future

behaviour. These results are consistent with past studies by Kaplanidou and Gibson (2010), Chi and Qu (2008) and Lee (2008), and imply that the importance of destination beliefs on behavioural intentions toward the event is recognized via the mediating effect of satisfaction in special event contexts. Therefore, our study supported the notion that a highly satisfactory event experience can not only affect intention to return and willingness to recommend the event (as reported in previous studies) but induce more positive intentions toward the products made in the host destination. Similar findings can be observed with respect to motivational aspects. The study underlines the positive influence of push motivation not only on loyal behaviour and word-of-mouth but also on the formation of positive attitudes toward products made in the event-hosting destination. In this way, the existence of a significant interaction between tourism and the productive system was confirmed.

This is undoubtedly the most significant result from the study, as it shows the “cross effects” activated by event satisfaction and motivation, which can affect not only the local tourism system, through repeated visit intentions, but also the local production system. Thus, the study confirms - within an event marketing context - what has emerged in a few previous studies investigating the influences of destination image, the tourism experience and the receptivity of national products on tourists' behavioural patterns (De Nisco et al., 2012; Hallberg, 2005).

Based on the above observations, the research model and results presented in this study could suggest several theoretical implications. From the research point of view, this study contributes to the literature on place image and event marketing in at least three directions. First, the empirical research provides a comprehensive framework for investigating the relationship between destination beliefs, event satisfaction and post-visit intentions. Second, to our knowledge this is the first study to consider the mediating role of event satisfaction between destination beliefs and tourist push motivation and both product receptivity and post-visit attitudes toward the event. Third, the study is one of the few to empirically test the impact of event-related experiences focusing on behavioural outcomes from interactions between destination beliefs, event satisfaction and push motivation.

5.1. Managerial implications

From a managerial point of view, the results are of interest to those involved in the management of special events. In order to improve satisfaction with the event experience, event managers must consider the powerful influences that can be exerted by both destination beliefs and push motivation on the fulfillment of a unique event experience.

Tourists' internal sources of motivation affect their event loyalty - which includes revisiting the event and recommending it to others - but also their attitudes toward local productions. Policy makers can use the links between image, satisfaction and push motivation to more deeply understand the perceptual and behavioural dynamics characterizing target visitors in order to match expected quality and experienced quality related to the tourist experience.

The need for studies addressing these issues seems to be even more critical if we consider the growing relevance that events have for the development of local areas.

Moreover, the influences exerted by satisfaction and tourist motivation on event loyalty and intentions to buy local products highlight a concrete space of synergic collaboration between institutional actors and local businesses. Some practical strategies and attitudes can be adopted by special event managers in designing and planning their business, such as providing a variety of learning and cultural experiences. An effective way of organizing a multifaceted event, capable of combining the tourism and productive sector, can be to bring together consumers and producers in a multi-stimuli environment by providing samples and insights into the methods of production of local handicraft or food within an atmosphere of curiosity, exploration and fun (Organ et al., 2015).

Such synergies could favor the development of integrated marketing

strategies aimed at leveraging place image and special events to enhance both the touristic and the productive vocation of the destination. The importance of identifying a centralized governance model clearly emerges, which is aimed at exploiting the vital links between the tourism sector and the production systems, for example, through the adoption of an umbrella place branding strategy. Recently, small- and medium-sized municipalities have been fascinated by the adoption of destination branding campaigns, judged a precious tool for gaining a more competitive place identity. Event practitioners increasingly underline that events can create a deeper and more evocative brand-building connection with visitors through experiences that are enriched, directly or indirectly, by the local cultural heritage. To achieve this, an appropriate destination brand is necessary to help destinations determine the future in terms of making promises to the tourists who visit and interact with local communities, traditions and craftsmanship creations. Destination branding is a powerful tool that can underpin the perceived experience that visitors will have at the event. Welcoming one of the most recent conceptualizations for measuring the response to the brand, that is the brand experience (Barnes, Mattson, & Sorensen, 2014; Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009), place marketers may adopt a more holistic approach in defining the place brand. The brand design should be able to stimulate internal customer responses guiding in a more effective way the impact of destination beliefs on event satisfaction and, in an indirect way, on behavioural outcomes.

Moreover, to gain a competitive regional advantage through differentiation, it is necessary to interpret the place brand not only as a touristic brand but, above all, as an integrated territorial development strategy.

Only in this way can policy makers identify innovative and profitable ways to exploit the synergies between the different territorial assets, also relying on the attractive image of special events.

5.2. Limitations and directions for future research

Several directions for further research can be recommended based on the findings and limitations of the study. First, our model does not incorporate familiarity toward the event. Therefore, the results may differ between tourists who have already visited the event one or more times in the past and first-time visitors. Therefore, a further study could analyze the moderating role of past experience in the relationship between destination beliefs, satisfaction and behavioural intentions.

Second, another possible area of enquiry is image and attitude changes over time. Even if destination beliefs have been shown to be more stable over time than affective components (King, Chen, & Funk, 2012), a follow-up study could assess tourists' post-visit beliefs and, at the same time, post-travel consumption behaviour in order to assess if a positive event experience is able to produce long term effects.

Third, in terms of the behavioural consequences of participation at the event, the research assesses visitors' general attitudes toward products made in the hosting destination. However, previous studies on country-of-origin state that individual product categories create specific quality/value assessments. Therefore, product judgements can be attribute-specific. Further research could investigate specific products by comparing, for example, low and high involvement product categories. Finally, given the absence of official information about the population (visitors participating in the “Luci d'Artista” event), the results cannot guarantee the overall representativeness of the sample.

Future lines of research could embed into the framework other key attributes that have been applied to brand theory, such as destination uniqueness (Netemeyer et al., 2004). The unique image of a destination can be critical in establishing the overall image in consumers' minds. Further studies could investigate the potential interaction between cognitive image, unique image, and the overall image of the destination.

Results showed that events had a greater impact on the behavioural intentions of visitors than did destination beliefs, thus confirming its

noteworthy role for the touristic and economic development of local communities. Future research might provide further insights into a deeper understanding of the fit between destination and event image. There is still a dearth of empirical evidence investigating how the two levels of image interact. Findings in this direction could offer precious insights for destination and event managers whose responsibility it is to create favorable images in the minds of visitors and external observers regarding both the place and the event they promote. The comprehension of interrelationships and interdependencies between destination and event image can help in identifying the right strategies to exploit favorable matches or to manage possible unfavorable mismatches (Florek & Insch, 2011; Kaplanidou et al., 2012).

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