

Exploring the relationship between attendees' motivation, satisfaction and loyalty in the context of a home-grown festival¹

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Abstract

Frame of the research: Festivals are events with significant place-related meaning; they play an important role in the tourism industry. Consequently, scholars are increasingly interested in exploring their impact on local economies and on the competitiveness of tourism destinations, not to mention how social and environmental fields are affected.

Purpose of the paper: This study addresses the topic of home-grown festivals, which help to promote local cultural heritage; they also have a social significance beyond tourism. Specifically, this study explores the relationships between attendees' motivations, satisfaction and loyalty.

Methodology: Data were collected from 227 participants at the Maiorchino Festival, which is performed annually in an ancient town in southern Italy. This festival has been handed down over time; it is a local cultural tradition based on a typical product of the area, the Maiorchino cheese. A principal component analysis, a multiple linear regression and three logistic regressions were performed to test the hypotheses.

Findings: The analysis reveals that, contrary to previous studies, festival satisfaction affects destination loyalty, but not festival loyalty. It also confirms that several motivational factors affect perceived satisfaction with the festival, and that socialization as well as experience of local culture are motivations that influence festival loyalty.

Research limitations: Since we analyzed a single case study, the results may lack generalizability. Therefore, further research is encouraged to test the hypotheses within other festival contexts.

Practical implications: This study provides several insights for local managers on how to exploit home-grown festivals as effective marketing tools to expand tourism flow and destination loyalty to small towns, by improving the overall satisfaction in attendee experience.

Originality of the paper: This study further develops the findings of previous research on home-grown festivals, showing that, contrary to previous studies, attendees' satisfaction affects destination loyalty, but not festival loyalty.

Key words: home-grown festival; cultural heritage; motivation; satisfaction; festival loyalty; destination loyalty

¹ Though this paper is the ultimate outcome of a joint effort, it is possible to ascribe sections 1, 2, 5, 6 to Sonia Caterina Giaccone and sections 3 and 4 to Marco Galvagno.

1. Introduction

Festivals are public celebrations with significant place-related meaning (Chen *et al.*, 2019; Ma and Lew, 2012), concerning themes such as music, visual arts, crafts, food, traditions, which are performed periodically and for a limited period of time (Getz, 1991; Grappi and Montanari, 2011).

They have attracted increasing attention from scholars for their implications in the economic field, as well as in tourist, environmental, political, local cultural heritage and social fields (Castellani *et al.*, 2016; D'angella *et al.*, 2021; Getz and Page, 2016; Wilson *et al.*, 2017).

In this study, our attention is focused on a specific type of festival, the home-grown festival, which has been defined as “essentially small-scale, bottom-up and run by one or more volunteers for the benefit of the locality” (O’Sullivan and Jackson, 2002, p. 331). These festivals primarily aim to achieve cultural and/or entertainment benefits for residents and visitors, rather than economic goals (O’Sullivan and Jackson, 2002). The local community is directly involved in both organizing and participating in the festival (Mair and Duffy, 2021), thus, home-grown festivals are also known as “community festivals” (Li *et al.*, 2009; Qu and Cheer, 2020). They are sometimes also referred to as “local heritage festivals”, when based on culture, traditions, and habits located in the area where the festival is performed (Alexiou, 2019; Ma and Lew, 2012). Even if these types of festivals are mainly attended by residents and visitors from Regional surrounding areas, they are a great opportunity to shed light on local tangible and intangible cultural heritage and to pass it on (López-Guzmán and Santa-Cruz, 2016).

To date, literature has mainly addressed large-scale festivals (Crompton, McKay, 1997; Song *et al.*, 2019) rather than small-scale ones (Lee and Hsu, 2013; Mair and Duffy, 2021), and home-grown festivals even less so (O’Sullivan and Jackson, 2002; Li *et al.*, 2009).

Within current literature on festivals, several research issues have been explored, including: festival competitiveness and impacts on the host destinations (D’Angella *et al.*, 2021; Teixeira *et al.*, 2019); attendees’ segmentation (Formica and Uysal, 1998; Hsu *et al.*, 2023; Lee *et al.*, 2004); attendee characteristics, motivations, behaviours, satisfaction and loyalty (Báez-Montenegro and Devesa-Fernández, 2017; Choo *et al.*, 2022; Ho *et al.*, 2022; Johansen and Mehmetoglu, 2011; Payini *et al.*, 2022; Pope *et al.*, 2017).

With reference to home-grown festivals, some studies explored their social utility, highlighting their potential in reviving cultural heritage, developing a sense of community and of place, as well as social capital (Bakas *et al.*, 2019; Qu and Cheer, 2020; Ma and Lew, 2012). Others investigated their role in the choice of tourist destination (Oh and Lee, 2012), or attendance motivations, so as to segment visitors (Li *et al.*, 2009; López-Guzmán and Santa-Cruz, 2016). Some scholars have also attempted to investigate the relations between motivation, satisfaction and behavioural intentions of visitors (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Anil, 2012; Hsu *et al.*, 2021; Lee and Hsu, 2013).

As has been observed (Li *et al.*, 2009), current studies identify different attendee motivations with regard to different types of festivals. For this reason, we specifically aim to identify the motivations of visitors attending home-grown festivals, in order to compare them with those of participants at other types of festivals. A limited number of studies on home-grown festivals have considered the relationship between motivation and/or festival satisfaction and festival loyalty. Even less attention has been paid to the relationship between festival satisfaction and destination loyalty (Sung *et al.*, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2017). In order to fill this gap, our research investigates, in the context of the home-grown festival, the relation between attendee motivations, festival satisfaction and loyalty, considering the latter both with regard to participation at another edition of the festival (festival loyalty), and to the willingness to return to the destination where the festival is performed, regardless of the event (destination loyalty).

Therefore, this research brings together studies addressing the motivations that encourage individuals to attend festivals (Lee *et al.*, 2004; Lee and Hsu, 2013; Maeng *et al.*, 2016) and those investigating the relationship between motivations, satisfaction, and the dynamics that stimulate individuals to return (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Lee and Beeler, 2009; Hsu *et al.*, 2021; Lee and Hsu, 2013; Savinovic *et al.*, 2012; Tsaour *et al.*, 2019; Vassiliadis *et al.*, 2021; Yoon *et al.*, 2010).

In particular, our study aims to disentangle first the relation between attendees' motivation and festival satisfaction; then, it investigates the relation between motivation and festival loyalty. Finally, the research explores the relation between satisfaction and both festival loyalty and destination loyalty.

The study provides several theoretical contributions and managerial implications, which can positively influence attendee satisfaction and loyalty. Specifically, it provides several insights for both home-grown festival organizers and destination managers.

2. Theoretical background

Home-grown festivals can play a significant role for the local economy of host towns, attracting visitors and tourists, who otherwise would not choose to visit a certain place (Oh and Lee, 2012; Vesce and Botti, 2019). Such festivals also provide socio-cultural benefits, nurturing a sense of community, social cohesion, local cultural identity, solidarity and well-being (Ma and Lew, 2012; Mair, Duffy, 2021; Patwardhan *et al.*, 2020; Qu and Cher, 2020; Woosnam *et al.*, 2018). They celebrate and reinforce local cultural identity, contributing to enhance the image of a destination (Hernández-Mogollón *et al.*, 2018; Patwardhan *et al.*, 2020). These festivals can offer visitors extraordinary immersive and co-creative experiences in the life and culture of the place (Alexiou, 2019; Tung and Ritchie, 2011), thus stimulating an emotional connection with the destination (Patwardhan *et al.*, 2020). Regarding specifically local heritage festivals, Ma and Lew (2012) emphasize that they are shaped by local identity, uniqueness and authenticity, being rooted in specific historical and geographical contexts.

Consistently, Johansen and Mehmetoglu (2011) stressed the relevance of the "habitat", i.e. the physical landscape of the festival, as a factor in the perceived satisfaction of participants attending an indigenous Norwegian festival of the Sàmi.

Numerous studies have investigated motivations encouraging people to participate in festivals (Lee *et al.*, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2009; Mohr *et al.*, 1993; Mair and Weber, 2019; Moretti *et al.*, 2017; Savinovic *et al.*, 2012; Yoon *et al.*, 2010). Such motivations were mainly traced back to attendee needs and purposes, such as the willingness to explore new places and learn about new cultures, escape from the daily routine, and meeting people (Alexiou, 2019; Mohr *et al.*, 1993). Ralston and Crompton (1988) in their seminal article identified a variety of motivations for taking part in events. Later, Crompton and McKay (1997) focused on motivations such as novelty, socialization and cultural exploration. Subsequent research further explored this topic, highlighting attendee motivations related, for instance, to the festival itself, the desire to be together with the family, and the desire to get away from it all (Maeng *et al.*, 2016). Although a number of recurring motivations have been identified with regard to various types of festivals, some studies proposed event-specific motivations associated with different types of festivals (Báez-Montenegro and Devesa-Fernández, 2017). Moreover Li *et al.* (2009) noted that, although motivations of festival attendees are similar, participants at local festivals are mainly motivated by internal rather than external factors.

As underlined by Crompton and McKay (1997), the relevance of motivations is not limited to the first phase of the experience; in fact, perceptions and motivations also affect post-consumption assessment (satisfaction) and product loyalty. Therefore, motivations are important as they can generate attendee satisfaction (Almeida *et al.*, 2019; López-Guzmán and Santa-Cruz, 2016; Yoon *et al.*, 2010), stimulate the intention to return (Savinovic *et al.*, 2012; Shen, 2014; Son and Lee, 2011; Tanford and Jung, 2017), and differ depending on the type of festival. For this reason, we first investigated motivations related to festival attendance.

As regards the satisfaction of festival attendees, various antecedents related to festival attributes, such as location, accessibility, program, amenities, authenticity, entertainment and experience quality, have been identified by previous studies (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Gannon *et al.*, 2019; Johansen and Mehmetoglu, 2011; Ma and Lew, 2012; Wan and Chan, 2013; Wong *et al.*, 2016). In this context, some scholars explored the relationship between motivations and satisfaction of festival attendees, showing that festival satisfaction is directly influenced by motivations (Albayrak and Caber, 2018; Formica and Uysal, 1998; Lee *et al.*, 2004; Tsai, 2021). Nevertheless, others found that attendee motivations only produce indirect effects on satisfaction (Kim *et al.*, 2008). As a result, a further investigation into this aspect is needed, and research should also seek to delve deeper into a hitherto less explored type of event, i.e. home-grown festivals.

Based on these premises, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: In the context of home-grown festivals, attendees' motivations significantly influence their degree of festival satisfaction.

The construct of loyalty has been defined as the commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a favored product or service in the future, despite situational influences that could encourage switching behavior (Oliver, 1999). Indeed, two different types of loyalty have been identified (Oliver, 1999) which highlight an objective and a subjective dimension respectively, namely behavioral loyalty, which involves the repetition of purchasing behavior, and attitudinal loyalty, which comes from a positive attitude (intention) toward repurchase.

Building long-term relationships with customers has become a crucial goal also in the field of events and festivals, where loyalty has been identified through criteria such as repeat intention, willingness to pay more, positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and intention to recommend (Báez-Montenegro and Devesa-Fernández, 2017; Lee and Hsu, 2013; Yoon *et al.*, 2010).

Many studies have focused on determinants of festival loyalty, including e.g., festival quality, involvement and satisfaction (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Choo *et al.*, 2022; Ho *et al.*, 2022; Yoon *et al.*, 2010). For instance, recently Choo *et al.* (2022) explored the “direct, indirect and moderating role of involvement in the satisfaction, quality and loyalty relationship among local food festival tourists” (p. 57), demonstrating that involvement influences loyalty relationship among local food festival tourists, both directly and indirectly, via satisfaction and quality. In addition, the role of intrinsic motivational factors to attend a festival and to return has been considered. In particular, Grappi and Montanari (2011) found that “hedonism and social identification are key-facilitators between environmental cues and attendee repatronizing intention” (p. 1128). In light of current studies investigating the relationship between motivation and festival loyalty, we explore this relation with specific regard to home-grown festivals, to understand if intrinsic or extrinsic motivation prevail in influencing festival loyalty. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: In the context of home-grown festivals, attendees' motivations significantly influence festival loyalty.

Moreover, some scholars highlighted that attendee overall satisfaction can be considered important, driving the intention to return to the festival (Ho *et al.*, 2022; Hsu *et al.*, 2021; Lee and Hsu, 2013; Son and Lee, 2011; Wan and Chan, 2013). With specific regard to small local festivals, Akhoondnejad (2016) observed that perceived quality influences satisfaction, which in turn positively affects festival loyalty; while Lee and Hsu (2013) showed that motivations directly affect satisfaction and indirectly affect loyalty to festivals. In this vein, Anil (2012) identified a number of festival features, i.e. food, festival area, and convenience, as effective antecedents of visitors' satisfaction and intention to return to attend festivals.

However, the relationship between festival satisfaction and destination loyalty is still unclear and not completely explained. Indeed, only a few sparse measurement attempts have been conducted in this regard, mainly with reference to other types of events, e.g. international sport festivals,

food and wine festivals (Jeong and Kim, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2017; Sung *et al.*, 2016). Thus, we believe that a further research effort is desirable, with specific reference to home-grown festivals. In this vein, for example, Patwardhan *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that place attachment as well as emotional solidarity experienced with local residents positively affect festival visitors' destination loyalty.

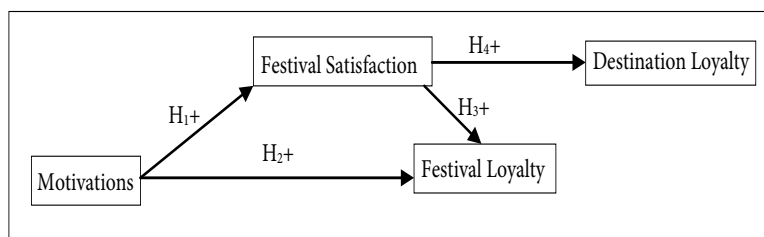
Based on extant literature, we specifically aim to understand if, in the context of home-grown festivals, festival satisfaction better predicts festival loyalty or destination loyalty. Therefore, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H3: In the context of home-grown festivals, attendees' festival satisfaction significantly affects festival loyalty.

H4: In the context of home-grown festivals, attendees' festival satisfaction significantly affects destination loyalty.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of the research.

Fig. 1: Conceptual model



Source: our elaboration

3. Methodology

3.1 The research context

The research context is the Maiorchino festival. It is performed annually in an ancient Sicilian mountain town named Novara di Sicilia.

The Maiorchino cheese is a typical local product, particularly appreciated for its quality deriving from the high-altitude pastures. The festival originates from the ancient tradition which dates back to the XVII century, according to which molds of Maiorchino cheese were thrown into the air to check their degree of maturation. It is based on a competition among teams of local players, which takes place in the month before the Carnival. The teams compete in a series of launches of whole cheeses, along the streets of the historic center of Novara di Sicilia, where the race course is marked out. The Maiorchino race, which is part of the local cultural heritage, is folkloric and spectacular both for the skills of the players in throwing the cheese after having rolled it up in a rope, and for the fact that the ancient cobbled streets sometimes create unexpected trajectories for the rolling cheeses.

The ludic community of the Launch of Maiorchino from Novara di Sicilia has participated for several years in the “Tocati International Festival of Street Games”, held annually in Verona (Italy), which aims to safeguard ancient and traditional games as an intangible cultural heritage, and has been under the patronage of UNESCO since 2016². (Castellani *et al.*, 2016)

Every year, about 2,000-2,500 people attend the Maiorchino festival, enjoying the joyful atmosphere of the race. The festival attracts mainly domestic flows of visitors. In fact, usually, more than 90% of participants come from the surrounding areas or from other Sicilian cities, while less than 10% come from other Italian regions or from foreign countries.

The festival is organized by a local no-profit association, named “Circolo Sportivo Olimpia - Il Maiorchino”, which in April 2022, as proposed by the Ancient Games Association (AGA) of Verona (Italy), applied to join the European Association of Traditional Games and Sports, whose purpose is the management, promotion and preservation of traditional games and sports.

Private sponsors support festival organizers with their economic contribution. The local tourism office provides support with regard to giving visitors assistance and information during the festival.

The local community is highly involved in the festival, taking part in the competition, cheering for the teams, and voluntarily offering support to the festival organizers. The residents' obvious attachment to their local cultural heritage is demonstrated by their enthusiastic participation as well as their desire to keep tradition alive through the festival, and to give tourists insight into the local cultural heritage.

3.2 Data collection and measures

An empirical investigation was carried out by administering a questionnaire to a sample of participants at the Maiorchino festival in 2019.

The survey aimed to identify the socio-demographic profiles of the participants; to explore the motivations behind their attendance and the factors influencing their degree of festival satisfaction; to evaluate their intention to return to the festival, as well as to the destination, regardless of the festival. Participants' motivations were measured through a scale containing 13 items, 10 of which were taken from previous studies on the topic of tourist motivation in attending festivals (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Lee *et al.*, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2009), while the others were adapted with regards to the specific characteristics of the festival under consideration (Maeng *et al.*, 2016). These items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1: not important; 7: very important).

² In March 2021, the Italian National Commission for UNESCO approved the candidacy of the Tocati Network, which includes the ludic community of the Launch of Maiorchino, in the Register of Good Practices for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, with the official name of “Tocati, a shared programme for the safeguarding of traditional games and sports”. The Tocati project, which includes also Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia and France, intends to protect traditional games, rooted in the daily life of communities and fully falling within those social practices capable of becoming expressions of daily life, rituals and festive contexts common to large areas of Europe.

A single-item question was used to measure attendee overall festival satisfaction. It was measured by a 10-point scale, in which 1 corresponded to “very unsatisfied” and 10 corresponded to “very satisfied”. Intention to return to another edition of the festival and intention to return to the destination regardless of the festival, were measured with dummy variables (0=no and 1=yes)³.

Before administering the survey, we pre-tested the questionnaire on a group of 10 graduates, in order to fine-tune it. We paid particular attention to checking the clarity and understandability of the questions, as well as the appropriateness of the vocabulary used, in order to avoid misunderstandings when completing the questionnaire.

Non-resident adults were eligible for the survey, which was self-administered. A team of field assistants was available to provide respondents with clarifications on the questionnaire. A convenience sample of respondents was recruited using the street interception method (Graham *et al.*, 2014). The administration of the survey was done on each of the days the competition was held. The staff distributed the questionnaires in some areas of the circuit where visitors were more likely to stop for a while. In order to avoid selection bias in recruiting respondents, the fixed line method was applied (Voas *et al.*, 2006). The staff approached one potential respondent every three passers-by, showed the goals of the research and asked them to dedicate a few minutes to fill in the anonymous questionnaire.

Altogether we approached 403 people; 72 of them were not eligible, while 61 did not accept to take part in the survey, thus we collected 270 questionnaires. Among them, 227 were sufficiently filled in to be considered for the purpose of the research, and for subsequent elaboration.

3.3 Data analysis

In order to identify the underlying dimensions of attendee motivations associated with the festival, we applied factor analysis to the 13 items, using principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Pre-tests including the KMO test of sampling adequacy, Bartlett’s test of sphericity and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to evaluate reliability were performed.

To test hypotheses, we ran a multiple linear regression to explain satisfaction with the festival, considering the motivational factors resulting from the factor analysis as independent variables. Subsequently, considering festival satisfaction and motivations as independent variables respectively, three logistic regressions were performed to explain intention to return to the festival and to the destination regardless of the festival.

³ The different format of some scales was used to try to reduce the risk of common method bias.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic profiles of respondents

The sample gathered included 45.4% women and 54.6% men. The respondents were between 18 and 80 years old, however 51.5% of them were between 45 and 64 years old. The 94.2% of the sample came from Sicily, while only 5.8% were from the rest of Italy or from abroad. The interviewees reached the festival destination with friends (56.4%), but also as a couple (25.5%), with family (13.6%) or alone (4.5%). Moreover, 68.6% of respondents were attending the festival for the first time, while 31.4% were participating at least for the second time. Furthermore, 70.9% of the sample would return home the same day, while 29.1% would stay overnight in the town of the festival or in the surrounding area (Table 1).

Tab. 1: Respondents' profile

Variable	Category	Distribution (valid percentage)
Gender	Male	54.6
	Female	45.4
Age	18-24	5.7
	25-34	15.5
	35-44	12.9
	45-54	24.2
	55-64	27.3
	>64	14.4
Education	High school or less	49.1
	Graduate	42.6
	Post-graduate	8.3
Place of origin	Surrounding areas	50.2
	Rest of Sicily	44.0
	Rest of Italy	4.4
	Abroad	1.3
Returning visitor	Yes	31.4
	No	68.6
Accompanied by	None	4.5
	Partner	25.5
	Family	13.6
	Friends	56.4
Overnight stay	Yes	29.1
	No	70.9
Overall Satisfaction	Mean	8.3
	S.d.	1.41
Intention to return to the Festival	Yes	91.6
	No	8.4
Intention to return to Novara regardless the Festival	Yes	93.0
	No	7.0

Source: our elaboration

4.2 Attendee motivations

To explore the main motivations of the festival attendance, factor analysis was carried out applying the method of the main components (Varimax rotation) to the 13 motivational items. The Bartlett sphericity test, which was significant ($687.950 < .001$, $df = 78$), as well as the KMO

sample adequacy measure of .821 (> of .60), confirmed that the factorial analysis conducted was appropriate. All the variables but one revealed a commonality greater than 0.50, thus demonstrating a good overall significance of the analysis, which generated a structure of 4 factors, with 12 items⁴. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for each of the factors was sufficient (with a range between .53 to .76). Lastly, the total variance explained was 61.95% (Table 2).

Tab. 2: Results of factor analysis

Motivation factors and items	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	Variance explained	Reliability coefficient
F1: Search for novelty		4.314	20.41%	.76
I love learning about local traditions	.776			
It is an opportunity to visit the destination where the festival takes place	.756			
It is an opportunity to know new places and have fun	.715			
I appreciate the local cuisine specialties	.689			
F2: Experience of the local culture		1.635	16.98%	.72
It makes me feel part of the local community	.836			
It makes me feel an active part in maintaining traditions	.712			
I like the atmosphere of the Festival	.545			
F3: Festival attractiveness		1.095	14.85%	.64
Participation is free	.759			
I like Maiorchino cheese	.710			
I am passionate about the race between the different teams	.644			
F4: Socialization		1.010	9.71%	.52
Friends recommended it to me	.810			
It is an opportunity to meet friends	.663			
Total variance explained			61.95%	
KMO	.821			
Bartlett's test of sphericity		$\chi^2 = 687.950$ sig = .000		

Source: Extraction method principal component. Rotation method varimax with Kaiser normalization

The first motivational factor, Search for novelty, explains 20.41% of the total variance. It identifies participants who like exploring new places and their traditions, and consider the festival as an occasion to visit a new place. The second factor, Experience of the local culture, explains 16.98% of the total variance. It refers to those festival attendees who love to feel part of the local community, contribute actively in keeping traditions alive, and experience the cheerful atmosphere of the festival. The third factor, Festival attractiveness, explains 14.85% of the total variance. It characterizes those

⁴ Regarding the low alpha value for F4 - "socialization", it depends on the small number of items (n=2). In this case Briggs and Cheek (1986) suggest considering the inter-item correlation, whose acceptable values are between 0.2 and 0.4. In this case the value is 0.355. So, the reliability of the scale is verified. Moreover, Perry and colleagues (2004) report that a value of alpha between 0.5 and 0.7 indicates an acceptable reliability.

participants interested in the festival itself, who are fond of the Maiorchino cheese, and are attracted by the festival program and the race. The fourth factor, Socialization, explains 9.71% of the total variance. It refers to those attendees who take part in the festival at the suggestion of friends or to take advantage of the festival to meet friends. On the basis of these 4 motivational factors identified, in the context of home-grown festivals, the above-mentioned hypotheses H1 and H2 can be articulated as follows:

- H1a: Search for novelty significantly influences attendees' festival satisfaction.
- H1b: Experience of the local culture significantly influences attendees' festival satisfaction.
- H1c: Festival attractiveness significantly influences attendees' festival satisfaction.
- H1d: Socialization significantly influences attendees' festival satisfaction.
- H2a: Search for novelty significantly influences festival loyalty.
- H2b: Experience of the local culture significantly influences festival loyalty.
- H2c: Festival attractiveness significantly influences festival loyalty.
- H2d: Socialization significantly influences festival loyalty.

4.3 Hypotheses testing

In order to test H1, a multiple linear regression model was tested, with overall festival satisfaction as the dependent variable and the four motivational factors, previously identified, as independent variables. The model (Table 3) was found to be significant and with an adjusted R² of .216. Motivations predicting the overall festival satisfaction score are in order: "Experience of the local culture" ($\beta = .345$ with $p < .001$), "Search for novelty" ($\beta = .275$ with $p < .001$), and "Festival attractiveness" ($B = .209$ with $p < .001$); while "Socialization" is not significant. These findings provide partial support for H1. Thus, hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c are confirmed, while H1d is not.

Tab. 3: Multiple regression analysis assessing motivations as predictors of festival overall satisfaction (n =227)

Independent variables: Festival attendee motivations	Overall satisfaction			
	Std. beta coeff.	t-value	Multicollinearity	
			Tolerance	VIF
Search for novelty	.275	4.524***	.991	1.009
Experience of the local culture	.345	5.589***	.961	1.040
Festival attractiveness	.209	3.389***	.961	1.040
Socialization	-.047	-.769	.983	1.017
Overall model	Multiple R = .480			
	R ² = .231			
	Adjusted R ² = .216			
	Model F (4, 222) = 15.736***			

** p < .05 *** p < .001

Source: our elaboration

To test H2, a logistic regression model was tested, in which the intention to return to the festival was considered as the dependent variable (binary variable), and the four motivational factors as independent variables. The model (Table 4) was found to be significant and with an R^2 of .154. The only motivations that predict the probability of returning to the festival are “Experience of the local culture” (Exp (β) = 2.004 with $p < .05$), corresponding to a probability of 66.7%, and “Socialization” (Exp (β) = 1.721 with $p < .05$) corresponding to a probability of 63.2%. These findings provide partial support for H2. In particular, hypotheses H2b and H2d are confirmed, while H2a and H2c are not.

Tab. 4: Logistic regression analysis assessing motivations as predictors of festival loyalty (n =227)

Independent variables: <i>Festival attendee motivations</i>	Likelihood of returning to the festival (festival loyalty)			
	Exp (β)	Wald χ^2	95.0% C.I. for Exp (β)	
			Lower	Upper
Intercept	14.036	76.699***		
Search for novelty	.944	.030	.489	1.819
Experience of the local culture	2.004	5.232**	1.105	3.635
Festival attractiveness	.698	1.506	.393	1.240
Socialization	1.721	4.008**	1.011	2.928
Overall model	-2 Log Likelihood = 108.448			
	R^2 (Nagelkerke) = .154			
	χ^2 (df 4) = 14.939**			
	Hosmer-Lemeshow χ^2 (df 8) = 4.386			

** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Source: our elaboration

To test H3, a logistic regression model was tested, in which the intention to return to the festival was considered as a dependent variable (binary variable), and the overall festival satisfaction as an independent variable (Table 5). The model was not significant, thus the H3 is not supported.

Tab. 5: Logistic regression analysis assessing overall satisfaction as predictor of festival loyalty (n =227)

Independent variable: <i>Overall satisfaction</i>	Likelihood of returning to the festival (festival loyalty)			
	Exp (β)	Wald χ^2	95.0% C.I. for Exp (β)	
			Lower	Upper
Intercept	2.833	.534		
Overall Satisfaction	1.182	.917	.839	1.665
Overall model	-2 Log Likelihood = 116.470			
	R^2 (Nagelkerke) = .010			
	χ^2 (df 1) = .905			
	Hosmer-Lemeshow χ^2 (df 3) = 8.527**			

** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Source: our elaboration

To test H4, a logistic regression model was tested, in which the intention to return to the destination regardless of the festival was considered a dependent variable (binary variable), and the overall festival satisfaction as an independent variable (Table 6). The model was found to be significant and with an R2 of .075. Total festival satisfaction predicts the probability of the visitor returning to the destination, regardless of the festival, with a value of Exp (β) = 1.625 with $p < .5$, corresponding to a probability of 61.9%. These findings provide support for H4.

Tab. 6: Logistic regression analysis assessing satisfaction as predictor of destination loyalty (n =227)

Independent variables: <i>Overall satisfaction</i>	Likelihood of returning to the destination (Destination loyalty)			
	Exp (β)	Wald χ^2	95.0% C.I. for Exp (β)	
			Lower	Upper
Intercept	.324	.530		
Overall Satisfaction	1.625	5.679**	1.090	2.423
Overall model	-2 Log Likelihood = 91.225			
	R ² (Nagelkerke) = .075			
	χ^2 (df 1) = 5.902**			
	Hosmer-Lemeshow χ^2 (df 3) = 4.653			

** p < .05 *** p < .001

Source: our elaboration

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to find the underlying dimensions of attendee motivations to go to home-grown festivals, and their relation to festival satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, by proposing and testing four main hypotheses, the study measured the impact of the identified motivational factors first on festival satisfaction, and then on festival loyalty. Eventually, the impact of festival satisfaction on festival loyalty and on destination loyalty was respectively tested.

The analysis allowed four main motivational factors to be identified: Experience of the local culture, Search for novelty, Festival attractiveness, and Socialization. The first result confirms that attendees' motivations are different for home-grown festivals with respect to other types of festivals (Li *et al.*, 2009). Specifically, home-grown festival attendees, contrary to what has been highlighted for large-scale festivals (Li *et al.*, 2009), are more motivated by intrinsic factors, such as Experience of the local culture and Search for novelty, rather than by extrinsic factors, such as Festival attractiveness.

A second result indicates that motivations affect, although differently, both festival satisfaction and festival loyalty. Specifically, both intrinsic (Experience of the local culture and Search for novelty) and extrinsic motivations (Festival attractiveness) have a direct impact on festival

satisfaction, while only intrinsic motivations (Experience of the local culture and Socialization) have an impact on festival loyalty. This confirms the evidence of previous studies underlying the relevance of intrinsic motivational factors as determinants of attendees' festival satisfaction (Grappi, Montanari, 2011; Lee *et al.*, 2017). This result is in line with Lee and Hsu (2013), although they found an indirect relation between motivations and festival loyalty. These results show a distinctive feature of home-grown festival attendance over time, which is not related to the specific content of the festival itself (which is, however, an important motivation to stimulate people to participate for the first time in the festival), but rather related to other aspects of the overall experience in the area where the festival is performed. In particular, the desire of attendees to explore local culture and traditions, by fully immersing themselves in the life of the place, as well as to interact with local people and other participants are the motivations that stimulate participation in the festival over time. In particular, the desire for socialization may also concern those participants, born locally but then emigrated, who take the opportunity of the festival to return to meet relatives and friends.

We believe that the relationship between attendee motivations (i.e. experience of local culture and socialization) and festival loyalty can be explained considering also some specific feature of its participants, such as their geographical origin. As evidenced by the composition of the sample of respondents, as many as 94.3% of the participants come from Sicily, while only 5.7% are from the rest of Italy or abroad. This suggests that the geographical proximity of such a large part of the sample may facilitate the decision to participate in subsequent editions of the festival, given the ease of reaching the destination where it is performed.

Our third result is that festival satisfaction is not important to build festival loyalty. This differs from previous research, which identified attendee satisfaction as a driver of festival loyalty (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Anil, 2012; Girish and Chen, 2017; Ho *et al.*, 2022; Hsu *et al.*, 2021; Lee and Hsu, 2013; Son and Lee, 2011; Sung *et al.*, 2016; Wan and Chan, 2013).

Finally, another very interesting result is that satisfaction with the festival relates to destination loyalty (Lee *et al.*, 2017; Sung *et al.*, 2016). This result builds on the findings of Jeong and Kim (2020) from their study of an international sport festival, in relation to the field of the home-grown festival, and confirms findings from Lee *et al.* (2017).

The latter two results, which specifically show that festival satisfaction relates to destination loyalty but not to festival loyalty, are the most relevant findings of our research, as they highlight a clear difference with findings of previous studies on the same topic. With reference to the above, it seems that in the context of home-grown festivals, ensuring attendees are satisfied is more important in order to attract visitors to the destination, rather than to attract visitors to other editions of the festival. A possible explanation is that people attending a home-grown festival, being motivated mainly by the desire to experience novelty and local culture, are interested in exploring new places to discover its traditions, habits, and people. In this regard, home-grown festivals can represent an opportunity to explore new places and their cultural heritage, thus increasing attendee

attachment to the host territory, and developing a sense of place, which favours an emotional and cultural connection between visitors and the host destination and community (Hassanli *et al.*, 2020; Ma and Lew, 2012; Tsaur *et al.*, 2019; Woosnam *et al.*, 2018) as well as the decision to return. This is coherent with Mair and Duffy (2021), who assessed that festivals are “a way to engage in embodied, experiential, affective and emotional activities and practices that facilitate a sense of belonging to the local” (p.176). In this vein, Deng and Tang (2020), highlighted the relevance of creating experiential value with festivals to promote destination image and develop destination loyalty. We believe that holding a home-grown festival may facilitate participants’ attachment to the destination as may the specific features of this type of festival, e.g. the active involvement of local community, as well as their attachment to local culture and traditions and their interest in reviving and communicating them to visitors. Moreover, the limited dimensions and the local setting of this type of event facilitate a closer interaction between visitors and the local community. Furthermore, the predominantly local catchment area of this type of festival can encourage the return to the territory for daily visits. Accordingly, as noted with reference to the Maiorchino festival, the massive presence of participants from neighboring areas is reflected in the fact that less than a third of the participants stay overnight in the festival area.

6. Conclusions

This study provides several theoretical contributions. First, it expands knowledge about home-grown festivals, confirming, also for this type of festival, the relation between motivations and satisfaction. Second, exploring the relation between festival satisfaction and loyalty, this study reveals that, contrary to previous research, in the context of home-grown festivals, satisfaction does not affect festival loyalty, but influences destination loyalty. This evidence leads us to understand that, unlike other types of events, home-grown festivals are an opportunity to make participants aware of the host destination and its tangible and intangible heritage, stimulating interest to return to the destination.

Our findings also offer practical insights for local marketing managers. Home-grown festivals can be effective marketing tools for small towns, providing benefits both for local people and for visitors. Indeed, when based on local cultural heritage and traditions, a home-grown festival can become an integral part of the local heritage, and can be considered an effective “cultural heritage service” (Alexiou, 2019, p.14) to increase awareness of local culture, for residents and tourists. The bottom-up approach and the commitment of residents in organizing and participating in the race, favor the recurrence of the festival over time. This allows both local culture to be passed on while attracting day-trippers and tourists, thus providing clear benefits for the local economy. In this regard, destination managers could contribute in supporting festival organizers, proving e.g. monetary contributions, communication activities as well as services to support festival performance (e.g. security, public order, hygiene). At

the same time, in line with Deng and Tang (2020), also festival managers should strive to create experiential value with the festival (i.e. service quality, aesthetics, playfulness), in order to increase attendees' satisfaction.

Moreover, since festival satisfaction has been found to influence destination loyalty, destination managers could leverage this finding and take care of a number of elements which can improve attendees' overall satisfaction with their experience in the destination, e.g. providing information on cultural heritage and developing opportunities for experiential tourism in the area. Since, as has been highlighted, home-grown festival attendees mainly come from neighboring areas and rarely stay overnight in the festival area, destination managers, who have a broad vision and are in charge of coordinating and managing the development of the local offer, face the challenge of increasing tourist flows in the area. In this regard, enhancing the local cultural and natural heritage, creating new opportunities for experiential tourism, effectively communicating the value of the territorial offer, and encouraging the development of tourist services, could be winning choices to enhance the tourist attractiveness of the area. We believe these policies would, on the one hand, trigger a driving force for territorial development, encouraging local entrepreneurs to offer tourist services (such as restaurants and accommodation services) to seize new business opportunities in tourism; on the other hand, they would stimulate the expansion of tourist flows, and specifically an increase in the average stay of tourists, as well as in return tourism.

Even though this manuscript offers some interesting contributions, it has some limitations. We recognize that we used a reduced number of items to analyze motivations, with respect to other research using more than 13 items (Lee *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, we are aware that exploring a single case study does not allow us to generalize and apply the results to other types of festivals. Therefore, it would be desirable that further research tested our hypotheses in other festival contexts. This would allow to understand if there are, or not, similarities between home-grown festivals and other types of small-scale festivals, with reference to the relations between attendee motivations, satisfaction and loyalty. In particular, future studies are encouraged to further investigate festival attendee behaviour, exploring more deeply the relation between festival satisfaction and destination loyalty, or the mediating or moderating role of festival satisfaction in the relation between motivations and festival loyalty.

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Sonia Caterina Giaccone
Marco Galvagno
Exploring the relationship
between attendees'
motivation, satisfaction and
loyalty in the context of a
home-grown festival

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Sonia Caterina Giaccone
 Marco Galvagno
 Exploring the relationship
 between attendees'
 motivation, satisfaction and
 loyalty in the context of a
 home-grown festival

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Sonia Caterina Giaccone
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Exploring the relationship between attendees' motivation, satisfaction and loyalty in the context of a home-grown festival

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