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Expectations and satisfaction at low-season events: a comparison of two cases

ABSTRACT

This paper adopts an “importance-performance model” to explore the gap between consumers’ expectations and actual satisfaction at cultural events. The geographical setting is Sardinia (Italy) where two important cultural events are held in the low season: the *Cavalcata* (held at end of May) and the *Sartiglia* (held during Carnival). In order to run a comparative analysis an identical survey was run during each event. Based on a Principal Components Analysis, the empirical findings show that the events were able to generate levels of satisfaction higher than initial expectations. The findings provide directions to local policy makers to adopt focused strategies to boost strengths and to contrast weaknesses of low season events.

Key words: cultural events; expectations; perceived performance; principal components analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Governments often support cultural events given their positive externalities for local economies, such as job creation or opportunities for entrepreneurial and innovation activities (Borges et al, 2016). Events generate economic impacts obtained, among others, by visitors' expenditure behaviour (Wang and Davidson, 2010). In the tourism context, impacts of planned events have been widely studied and are key elements for destination competitiveness (Getz, 2008). To these considerations, recent research has stressed the strategic role of events to solicit "tourist demand" in low season periods through the involvement of the population mainly resident in the adjacent territories of the event (Connell, Page, e Meyer, 2015).

Despite including some tangibles elements, such as food & beverages and souvenirs, events are essentially a service comprising intangible experience (Getz et al, 2001). In particular, cultural events offer opportunities for attendees to gain positive experience such as social, educational, psychological, cultural, entertainment activities and/or art (Rigatti-Luchini and Mason, 2010). Events therefore allow a value-generation process, the measure of which is more or less effective in relation to the ability to involve people on the cognitive, emotional and sensory level (Lavidge and Steiner, 2000; Lambin, Schuiling 2012) offering them the possibility of living an experience according to their needs and desires, in a manner consistent with their expectations (Resciniti and Fortuna, 2007).

An increasing number of studies highlights the contribution of cultural services and involvement from a welfare perspective (Bandarin et al., 2011). The generalized higher level of education enhances a higher level of culture fruition (Silberberg, 1995; Lord, 1999; Mulcahy, 2006). This positive trend increases the number of people visiting cultural attractions such as events, festivals, artistic performances as well as activities

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3 related to eno-gastronomy, fashion, language and religion. Understanding the role of
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5 events as an economic driver for local communities has become an increasing interest of
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7 research. In this respect, scholars are devoting more attention to examine the
8
9 determinants that influence the fruition of cultural goods and services from a
10
11 multifaceted perspective (economics, public policy, management, marketing). A
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13 consumer perspective implies to identify who travels for events, when and why, what do
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15 and spend at an event (Getz, 2008).
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18 Researchers are also interested in assessing attendees' perception about whether
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20 event represents local culture, local tradition, the opportunity to experience local culture
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22 or if the event is merely a tourist event (McCartney and Osti, 2007; Brida et al, 2012).
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24 As in other contexts related to service experiences, quality at events is a measure of the
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26 range to which the service delivered meets customer's expectations. Therefore,
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28 understanding customers' preferences, characteristics and needs is of particular
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30 importance in economics (Agbor, 2011). This is accentuated even more in the context of
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32 cultural events that are part of a tourist itinerary and for that reason its cultural and
33
34 economic importance need to be assessed (Borges et al, 2016). As destinations market
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36 the dynamic nature of their cultural heritage, a deeper understanding of visitors'
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38 perceptions becomes of particular importance (Tiberghien et al, 2017). Literature has
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40 long highlighted many aspects of the nature of events, the potential for the territories
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42 that host them, and how to look at them. However, each event has features specific to
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44 the particular space-time context. This makes it interesting to study further cases that
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46 can enrich the literature on events for both scholars and policy makers. In particular,
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48 there are few studies that address the problem of the relationship between the
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50 expectations of participants in the event and the level of satisfaction perceived at the
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3 end of the same (Smith, and Costello, 2009; Yu, and Goulden, 2006; Pawitra, and Tan,
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5 2003).

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7 The objective of the present paper is to explore the gap between customers'
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9 expectations and their actual satisfaction and perceptions about the experience at the
10
11 event. To test this hypothesis, two cultural events are compared as case study, that is:
12
13 "Cavalcata Sarda" and "Sartiglia", held in the tourism low season in Sardinia (Italy).
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15 The former event goes back to its first performance held in 1711, during the Spanish
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17 domination, when the City Council of Sassari organized a "ride" in honour of King
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19 Philip V, when the nobility proudly presented their customs and traditions (Sardegna
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21 Cultura, 2016). The *Sartiglia* goes back to the Medieval times. The oldest preserved
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23 records accounted for an important event organized in honour of the emperor Charles V,
24
25 in 1546 (Fondazione Sartiglia, 2016). Nowadays, these two cultural events are still held
26
27 every year in the island of Sardinia in the off-tourism season (that is end of May and
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29 during the Carnival, respectively). The empirical investigation is based on equivalent
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31 information collected on a representative sample during the events in 2014, that allows
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33 a comparison of the findings for these cultural events.
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38 The paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a literature review. A
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40 description of the case study and of the relevant empirical data follows. A further
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42 section includes the methodological construct and the empirical findings. Concluding
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44 remarks are highlighted in the last section.
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48 A LITERATURE REVIEW

49 *Events, culture and tourism*

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52 The 20th century gave a boost to the events sector and tourism value that explains the
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54 variety of threads of research on the topic, while gaining academic recognition (Getz,
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2008, Getz & Page, 2016). One of the lines of research focuses on visitors' segmentation at events, assessing for instance visitor's consumption style (Prentice and Andersen, 2003), or to what extent groups of attendees are motivated by the cultural event or local tourist attractions (Getz & Cheyne, 2002; Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004). Lee et al (2004) identify clusters of visitors characterized by seeking culture and family, multi-purpose, escape at an event. Chang (2006) finds clusters of attendees grouped into equilibrium recovery, participation and learning, novelty-seeking, socialization, cultural exploration. Li, Huang, and Cai (2009) explore motivations of attendees at a rural festival, and label the five identified clusters as family travellers, event enthusiasts, loyal festival goers, escapers, social gathering lovers. Oom do Valle, Mendes, and Guerreiro (2010) study the attendees' profiles of a set of different types of events held in Faro, Portugal and detect three segments of tourists with different levels of satisfaction. Ramkissoon and Uysal (2011) suggest that a significant positive relationship exists between perceived authenticity and tourists' behavioural intentions to enjoy cultural attractions. Brida et al (2014) apply a Bugged-Clustering approach to the analysis of cultural events.

An assessment on service quality and customer experience

In service marketing literature, service quality is one of the most studied issue in a varied range of sectors, among them, the cultural sector. This may be explained by the fact that is considered as a critical dimension of competitiveness (Prayag, 2007) that has impact on business performance, customer satisfaction and loyalty (Shahin and Samea, 2010). Service quality represents how well different service aspects either meet or exceed expectations (Parasuraman et al, 1988; Fisk et al, 2004).

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3 This concept has derived in the model of Parasuraman et al. (1985), known as
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5 SERVQUAL tool that has become the dominant measurement scale in the area of
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7 service quality despite of some criticism by researchers (Prayag, 2007). In the context of
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9 events, it can be interpreted as a model that allows evaluating attendees' expectations
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11 and their perceptions of the service quality at any cultural event or cultural expression.
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14 According to this theoretical framework, service quality at an event can be
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16 disentangled into several dimensions (van Iwaarden, et al, 2003; Zeithaml and Bitner,
17
18 2009): tangibility (e.g. physical facilities, equipment); reliability (e.g. ability to perform
19
20 the promised service); responsiveness: (e.g. willingness to help customers and provide
21
22 prompt service); assurance: (e.g. knowledge and courtesy of employees, security);
23
24 access (e.g. road information; transport facilities); access communication of the services
25
26 provided (e.g. use of different languages; customers' information centre); empathy (e.g.
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28 customer caring).
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31 Measuring service quality requires to address both tangible and experiential
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33 elements (Getz et al, 2001). Despite frequent surveys during different cultural events, so
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35 far, very few studies have been published concerning service quality. In particular,
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37 limited attention has been given to the festival literature. Early studies have been led by
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39 Crompton. Ralston and Crompton (1988) examine service quality within the context of
40
41 the five dimensions contained in Parasuraman model. This is reliability, tangibility,
42
43 responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Considering the Dickens Festival as a case
44
45 study, Crompton and Love (1995) find that tangibility (i.e. parking, ambience,
46
47 interaction with sellers) was the most important dimension for visitors. However, some
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49 of the same items representing tangibility can be regarded as dissatisfiers (parking, rest-
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51 rooms), while fantasy, excitement, relax or social involvement can be regarded as
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53 satisfiers (Love and Crompton, 1996). Taking into account that service quality aim at
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3 meet expectations in both categories since even a small number of attributes can
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5 determine the perception of overall quality (Getz et al, 2001).
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7 In the context of film festivals literature, Park et al (2011) and Wong et al (2015) focus
8
9 on elements such as responsiveness by staff (e.g. staff professional conduct and
10
11 problem-solving skills) and effective signage. Finally, the relationship between service
12
13 quality and both satisfaction and loyalty is mixed in a rather limited number of festival
14
15 studies that analyse such relationships (Tanford and Jung, 2017).
16

17 For assessing the quality of the experience, another thread of research suggests the
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19 dimensions of environmental stimuli, satisfaction, emotional, hedonistic and social
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21 identification factors (Lee, Lee, Lee, and Babin, 2008; Grappi e Montanari, 2011).
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26 THE CASE STUDY

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28 For the empirical investigation, the “Cavalcata Sarda” and “Sartiglia” (Italy) are
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30 taken into account. The first event is held every year in the last but one Sunday of May
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32 in the Northern town of Sassari, and it is included amongst the great parades of
33
34 traditional costumes in Sardinia. Although its origin goes back to the XVIII century,
35
36 one of the memorable events of *Cavalcata* was held in 1889, the year in which the King
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38 Umberto and Queen Margherita visited Sardinia. During this event the Royal family
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40 was greeted by horsemen and amazons who wanted to pay their respects from all over
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42 Sardinia. The *Sartiglia* is held during the carnival time in the town of Oristano;
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44 according to the oral sources, its origin goes back to XIV century and the word comes
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46 from the latin *sorticola*, diminutive for good luck. The event evokes ancient agricultural
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48 rites, and the equestrian race and the horse rider costumes express several symbols that
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50 go to a festival of magic, prosperity and misery, pain and hope, through which people
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3 intended to ensure the fertility of the land and the abundance of the harvest (Regione
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5 Sardegna, 2016).
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9 *The survey*

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11 As an aim of the present research, the SERVQUAL model has been applied to analyse
12
13 and assess potential service quality gaps between attendees' expectations and actual
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15 experience, adapting the "importance-performance model" by Martilla & James (1977).
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17 In order to run a comparative analysis an identical survey was run during each event.
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19 The questionnaire was conducted by trained interviewers via face-to-face interviews
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21 during the event, at different hours of the day (between 10.00 am – 8 pm), in Italian,
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23 English and French in order to capture different segments of demand. The sample was
24
25 filtered by age (i.e. respondents at least 18 years old) and by place of residence (i.e. the
26
27 interview was conducted only to individuals who were not resident in the province
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29 where the event is held) with the aim to assess the economic impact exerted by visitors
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31 from the same region and/or tourists (i.e. those who spent at least one night at the
32
33 destination or nearby).
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37 The survey was structured on the basis of this thread of the literature and the
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39 questionnaire consists of five main sections: SECTION 1 - *GENERAL INFORMATION*
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41 about days of stay, place visited, knowledge about the event; SECTION 2 -
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43 *EXPECTATIONS ON THE EVENT*: based on a five point Likert scale, the degree of
44
45 importance of a set of items about the event; SECTION 3 - *EXPERIENCE*: based on a
46
47 five point Likert scale, an assessment on satisfaction and specific questions on
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49 expenditure during the event; SECTION 4: *PROFILE OF THE VISITOR*: gender,
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51 education, income range, place of residence, social and professional status; SECTION
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54 5: general comments and interviewers' details.
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3 Since there are no official data on attendance at the events, the data collection
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5 procedure has followed a non-probabilistic sampling procedure. Respondents were
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7 selected based on gender and age with the aim to collect more than 150 completed
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9 questionnaires. The questionnaire was then administered to visitors definable as tourists,
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11 people who spent at least one night in the host cities of the event or in the neighbouring
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13 areas. Excursionists were excluded, that is people resident in the same province of the
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15 event. Overall, a sample of 273 valid and completed questionnaires was gathered for the
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17 case of Cavalcata, while 262 questionnaires for the case of the Sartiglia, characterised
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19 by strata on age and gender as well as location within the event (the survey was in fact
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21 conducted in different areas of the city).
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26 *Sample characteristics*

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28 Most of the respondents at the event are from Italy (more than 80%). They are mostly
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30 female (more than 50%), but relatively younger in the case of the *Cavalcata*, and most
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32 of the respondents hold a high degree education (see **Table 1**).
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36 Some homogeneous findings have been obtained for the two events, regardless
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38 of their different levels of attractiveness. Many of the respondents believe that the event
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40 *represents the regional identity* (Cavalcata: 60.7%; Sartiglia: 69.7%) and this quota
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42 becomes even higher when evaluating the event as *a cultural tradition* (Cavalcata:
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44 61.5%; Sartiglia: 80.3%). On the opposite, respondents do not believe that the event is *a*
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46 *tourism attraction* (Cavalcata: 15.9%; Sartiglia: 11.3%). These findings highlight that
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48 these two events are regarded as authentic and a true expression of local history and
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50 traditions.
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53 The quota of those who are *overall satisfied with the event* is rather high
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55 (Cavalcata: 63.0%; Sartiglia: 75.0%). This outcome may explain why a fair quota of
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3 respondents declared to be *willing to return to the event in the future* (Cavalcata:
4 34.9%; Sartiglia: 31.8%) and, especially, to be *willing to recommend the event to*
5 *friends and family* (Cavalcata: 57.1%; Sartiglia: 69.5%). Besides, it is interesting to
6
7 note that those who are *willing to visit the city for holiday reasons, in a period other*
8 *than that in which the event took place*, are a rather great quota of the sample
9
10 (Cavalcata: 44.4%; Sartiglia: 53.6%). This outcome confirms the important role that the
11
12 events have as a "promotional channel" for these two destinations with a possible
13
14 important economics impact on the destination in the future.
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20 A satisfied customer is likely to repeat the experience and/or recommend the event
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22 to others. This is particularly true in a digitally and interconnected society where the e-
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24 word of mouth (e-wom) has become an important information channel. On the one
25
26 hand, e-wom helps consumers in their purchasing decisions, provides more information
27
28 about the actual quality of the event, influences overall costumers' trust (Xu and Li,
29
30 2016). On the other hand, e-wom helps to increase business and firms' productivity,
31
32 influences reputation, enhances quality of supplied services and the overall economic
33
34 returns to the investment (Ye et al., 2011; Lu et al., 2014). Notably, in this case, less
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36 than half of the respondents declared to be *willing to write comments or post photos*
37
38 *and / or videos in social networks* (Cavalcata: 33.7%; Sartiglia: 44.2%).
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44 TABLE 1 HERE
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48 *Expectations and perceived performance: statistical features* 49

50 A further issue relates to assess whether the two samples are statistically drawn
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52 from the same population and hence statistically homogeneous. **Table 1.A** (Appendix
53
54 A) provides the mean of all the items used to assess participants' expectations and their
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perceived performance at the event. As reported in Table 1.A, an independent sample test is also run to test a set of hypotheses, as follows:

1) ***Statistical difference between respondents' expectations at the two events:*** the Leven's test highlights that the null hypothesis of equal variances can not be rejected, although from the t-test the null hypothesis is marginally rejected at the 10% level of significance.

2) ***Statistical difference between respondents' perceived performance at the two events:*** the Leven's test suggests that the null hypothesis can not be rejected in the F-test (i.e. same variance) but it fails to be accepted in the t-test at the 5% level of significance.

Hence, there is some mixed evidence that the two samples (i.e. Cavalcata and Sartiglia) can be regarded as drawn from the same population.

The same test is run to explore whether expectations and perceived performance, at the two events, respectively, can be thought as statistically homogenous.

3) ***Statistical difference between respondents' expectations and perceived performance at the Cavalcata:*** the Leven's test suggests that the null hypothesis can not be rejected.

4) ***Statistical difference between respondents' expectations and perceived performance at the Sartiglia:*** also in this case, from the Leven's test it emerges that the null hypothesis can not be rejected.

Hence, there is ground to believe that the expectations have been satisfied both at the *Cavalcata* and the *Sartiglia*.

Furthermore, the potential gap between expectations and perceived performance can be explored through a graphical inspection. Figures 1-4 present a scatter plot where the bold line represents the mean of all the "expectation" and the "perceived

performance” items, respectively (see also Table A.1, for more details). Figure 1 reports the findings obtained for the services supplied at the *Cavalcata*. The first quadrant (I) accounts for items that can be viewed as characterised by a relatively “high strength”, since these denote both a high expectation and high perceived performance. This is particularly true for those items that present a score in the perceived performance higher than the score of the expectation, such as “4. Security”. This outcome seems to be congruent with the findings achieved by Biagi and Detotto (2014), that show that the Province of Sassari, with respect to other Italian provinces, is actually characterized by a relatively low level of pick-pocketing crimes that in their work appears to be the only type of crime that exhibits a statistically significant effect on tourism.

The fourth quadrant (IV) includes those items characterised by a strong weakness. In this case, “5. Public connections” is the only item that presents a relatively high score in terms of expectations but received a lower score in terms of perceived performance. This outcome is congruent with CRENoS (2016), where it is reported that Sardinia is characterized by a rather poor public infrastructure that limits public transport usage.

The third quadrant (III), where items characterised by a low expectation and perceived performance are included, contains services that the local agents may consider to implement and/or improve. A particular attention should be directed to the following items: “8. Other side events” and “7. Side events for children” that present a score for perceived performance lower than the expectation.

Figure 2 reports the results for the set of items related to social engagement and authenticity, for the *Cavalcata*. In the first quadrant (I) “high strength”, the highest score in terms of perceived performance is reached by the following items: “9. Curiosity about unseen events”, “12. Relax”, “14. Share the experience with friends and family” and “10. Live a strong and engaging emotion”, respectively. Interestingly, in the second

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3 quadrant (II), the item “18. Contribute to the local community” highlights that visitors
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5 seemed to have felt providing a contribution to the local community more than
6
7 expected.

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9 From the other two quadrants (namely, III “weakness”, and IV “strong weakness”),
10
11 it emerges that authenticity, especially expressed by “15. Experience genuine local
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13 products”, and the overall cultural and social engagement in the destination (see “13.
14
15 Meet new people” and “11. Visit cultural sites”) needs to be reconsidered by policy
16
17 agents. In this respect, Sassari Province is rich in archaeological sites and can offer a
18
19 wide range of activities that would help encouraging socialization amongst attendees.
20
21 This weakness links back to the findings attained by Meleddu et al. (2013) who
22
23 highlight a lack of an adequate network in the cultural supply in Sardinia.

24
25
26 Figures 3 and 4 report the results for the case of the *Sartiglia*. Figure 3 presents the
27
28 findings obtained for the services supplied at the event. The first quadrant (I - “high
29
30 strength”) includes items that present a score in the perceived performance higher than
31
32 the score of the expectation, such as “1. Program”, “2. Possibility to reserve seats”,
33
34 “3. Possibility to purchase tickets online”, “4. Security”, “4. Accessibility by private
35
36 transport”. Notably, none of these items scores a value of perceived performance higher
37
38 than the initial expectations, hence there is ground to believe that an extra effort needs
39
40 to be done in order to improve further these services. The third quadrant (III, “
41
42 weakness”) includes items related to “5. Public transport” and side events. Interestingly,
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44 “7. Side events for children” scores a better performance than expectation (i.e. 2.62
45
46 versus 2.49). Hence, these services require a further improvement.

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48
49 Figure 4 reports the results for the set of items related to social engagement and
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51 authenticity, for the *Sartiglia*. In the first quadrant (I) “high strength”, the highest score
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53 in terms of perceived performance is reached by the following items: “12. Contribute to
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3 the local community”, “9. Curiosity about unseen events”, “14. Share the experience
4 with friends and family”, “12. Relax”, “15. Experience genuine local products” and “10.
5 Live a strong and engaging emotion” “10. Buy local products”, respectively.
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7

8
9 From the other two quadrants (namely, III “weakness”), it emerges that the overall
10 cultural and social engagement in the destination (see “13. Meet new people” and “11.
11 Visit cultural sites”) needs to be reconsidered by policy agents. Notably, these findings
12 are homogenous with those obtained for the *Cavalcata*, that once more confirms the
13 lack of a proper network from a cultural supply perspective that requires a close
14 intervention by the local agents.
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24 PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS

25
26 In the present study, a principal components analysis (PCA) is pursued to explore
27 the gap between customers’ expectations and actual perceived performance. Through a
28 factor analysis run with categorical variables, that is a correspondence analysis, an
29 initial set of items is reduced to a more parsimonious group. All the relevant items are
30 defined by a 5-point Likert scale from one (complete disagreement) to five (complete
31 agreement), according to the level of agreement by residents on each item. The PCA
32 allows for eliminating redundant information from the original data and combining the
33 items into a set of latent variables (or factors), without having an a priori specific
34 hypothesis on the conceptual domain of the items. In this work, an orthogonal *Varimax*
35 rotation is employed which simplifies the number of items. Besides, a general to
36 specific procedure is applied to parsimoniously retain only meaningful information. As
37 the Kaiser criterion suggests, factors with eigenvalues greater than one are retained.
38
39 Cronbach's alpha is applied as a measure to test the reliability of the extracted factors.
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41 Values higher than 0.70 suggests for the reliability of the factors. The relative weight of
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each latent variables in the total variance is calculated, that takes into account how much each factor explains of the total variance. While cumulative value shows the amount of variance explained by $n+(n+1)$ factors (Escofier and Pages, 1988).

A factor analysis offers to the main stakeholders a better understanding on the set of items that have the highest impact. A PCA is run on the data collected during the events, using the same items as reported in **Table 1.A**, and disentangling expectations and perceived performance. Notably, a general-to-specific procedure is followed in order to account for only relevant information. **Table 2** presents the findings obtained in the case of the *Cavalcata*.

TABLE 2 HERE

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy test indicates an acceptable level, as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidel (1989). Besides, the Bartlett’s test of sphericity is also found to be statistically significant at the 1% (Table 2). Notably, only reliable factors are presented, that is with a Cronbach’s alpha higher than .60, since a factor with a value below this threshold is regarded as poor. Three main latent variables are considered for “expectation” and four main latent variables for “perceived performance”, respectively.

Booking: Although this factor captures a great quota of the total variance both in the “expectation” and the actual “perceived performance”, the mean is slightly higher in the former (2.42) than in the latter (2.40). In both of the cases, it includes “2. Possibility to reserve seats (stands)” and “3. Possibility to purchase tickets on line”.

Cultural experience and emotion: While in the first framework, *Factor_exp 2* (that includes “Curiosity about unseen events”, “Visit cultural sites”, “Live a strong and engaging emotion”) captures 17% of the total variance and presents a mean of 3.52, in the “perceived performance” framework, *Factor_perf 3* (that includes “My curiosity

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3 about the event is totally fulfilled” and “Have a strong and engaging emotion” accounts
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5 for 20% of the total variance and shows a rather high mean of 4.07.

6
7 **Complementary events:** In the “expectation” framework, *Factor_exp 3* presents a
8
9 mean of 2.88, whereas in the performance framework, *Factor_perf 4* shows a decreased
10
11 mean of 2.78. In both of the cases, the factors include “Other side events” and “Side
12
13 events for children”.

14
15 **Local products:** Notably, this latent variable appears only in the “perceived
16
17 performance” construct (named as *Factor_perf 2*), probably implying that visitors had
18
19 an unexpected experience about the local products (i.e. Tasted genuine local products
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21 and bought local products).

22
23
24 **Table 3** reports the findings obtained in the case of the *Sartiglia*.

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27 **TABLE 3 HERE**

28
29 Once again, The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure indicates an acceptable level and the
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31 Bartlett’s test of sphericity is also found to be statistically significant at the 1%. Three
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33 main latent variables are detected for the “expectation” construct and four latent
34
35 variables for the “perceived performance” construct; notably, the last two in each of the
36
37 construct were excluded since they present a rather poor value of the Cronbach’s alpha.

38
39 **Authenticity local products:** Although this factor (*Factor_exp_1*, that includes “buy
40
41 local products”, “experience genuine local products” and “shopping) captures a great
42
43 quota of the total variance (19.7%), the Cronbach’s alpha is relatively low (0.65). In the
44
45 “perceived performance” construct, *Factor_perf_3* includes “spent pleasant time with
46
47 friends and family”, instead of “shopping” as in the first construct, and the overall mean
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49 is rather high (4.33).

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52 **Booking:** *Factor_exp_2*, which includes “possibility to reserve seats (stands)” and
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54 “possibility to purchase tickets on line”, acquires more importance in the “perceived
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performance” construct, that is *Factor_perf_1* although is characterised by a lower overall mean (3.80 versus 3.78, respectively).

Complementary services: In the “expectation” framework, *Factor_exp_3* presents a mean of 2.99, and is composed by “other side events”, “public transport” and “side events for children”, whereas in the performance framework, *Factor_perf_4* shows a decreased mean of 2.90 and includes only “other side events” and “side events for children” as items.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

An in-depth analysis of the perceived quality of the services provided at events can allow public and private organizers to identify critical issues, enabling them to improve event planning, efficiency, profitability, and overall performance (Seth, Deshmukh, and Vrat, 2005). This goal is achieved using the "Importance-Performance Analysis" model, developed in Martilla and James's consumer behaviour studies (1977), and also employed in further research (e.g. Riviezzo, de Nisco, Napolitano, 2009). This model adapted to the specific features of the destinations here analysed, allowed us to study the gap between visitors' expectations and their perceived performance in two events held every year in Sardinia during the low tourist season.

Thanks to the use of an equivalent survey, the comparison offered the opportunity to study the common characteristics that allowed a generalization of results and a broader discussion. The empirical results have highlighted to what extent the services, supplied during the events by policy makers and event organizers, were able to elicit visitors and tourists' expectations. The analysis has involved two macro-dimensions, that is main services related to the fruition of the event and overall perceptions about authenticity of the event and of social involvement.

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3 Both graphical and inferential analyzes have highlighted how the events were able to
4 generate levels of satisfaction higher than initial expectations, which provides policy
5 makers an important indication in continuing with the actions that have been taken so
6 far. At the same time, some areas of improvement also emerged with reference to the
7 possibility of generating greater value on some of the territorial resources that are still
8 not adequately exploited. In line with marketing studies, this outcome has assessed that
9 the "tourism product" can be regarded as a very different concept from that of "tourism
10 resource" and that only tailored agents' actions contribute to building the meanings
11 necessary to create economic value (Leiper, 1979; Smith 1994). This latter
12 consideration has mainly arisen especially with reference to archaeological sites and
13 museums as a network that requires a more proactive action and overall synergies.

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26 As for the results of the PCA, in terms of expectations, both events show the importance
27 of organizational aspects related to the ability to book the event and, in particular,
28 places for the enjoyment of the same in the most comfortable way possible, and buy
29 tickets online. On the other hand, although with some heterogeneity, respondents
30 expressed interest in aspects related to local culture, either with regard to the
31 opportunity to participate in events never seen before, or to visit sites with a story to
32 tell, as well as to be able to buy local products and / or to experience a strong and
33 engaging experience. The latter is with at least two of the seven dimensions that makes
34 memorable a travel experience, as indicated by Kim, Ritchie and McCormick (2012).

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46 From a perception point of view to experience, the PCA shows, for both events, the
47 importance of booking seats and buying tickets online. In the case of the Sardinian
48 Cavalcata the results were higher than expectations, while for Sartiglia the two results
49 are the same. In any case, this is a strong point of the event that is worth preserving and
50 communicating appropriately.
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3 Another factor highlighted by the analysis, albeit with modest values, concerns the
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5 perceived authenticity of local products (not just food and wine), both in terms of taste
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7 and purchase. If statistically so low value of this factor can be explained by the small
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9 size of the sample and the fact that it is based on measurements of a single year, from
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11 the point of view of the policies of the organizers of the event and of those who
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13 participate as entrepreneur, there are useful indications about the need to better
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15 communicate this part of the experience to the events.
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18 A third factor to think about is the emotions triggered by events: in both cases it can be
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20 seen that there was no expectation from the respondents, while in terms of performance
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22 this was evident, albeit with values considered acceptable (0.72 for the Cavalcade and
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24 0.73 for Sartiglia). The good thing, however, is just that: the ability of these two events
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26 to amaze and surprise the participants, an aspect that can be further enhanced with
27
28 communication aimed at attracting tourists travelling just looking for places considered
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30 mysterious, where Ties with the past and traditions are still very strong (Kim, Ritchie
31
32 and McCormick, 2012).
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35 The main limit of this research is that the data refer to only one year, while a wider time
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37 series could allow a more accurate evaluation of both the expectations and the
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39 performance results deriving from the management of the two events.
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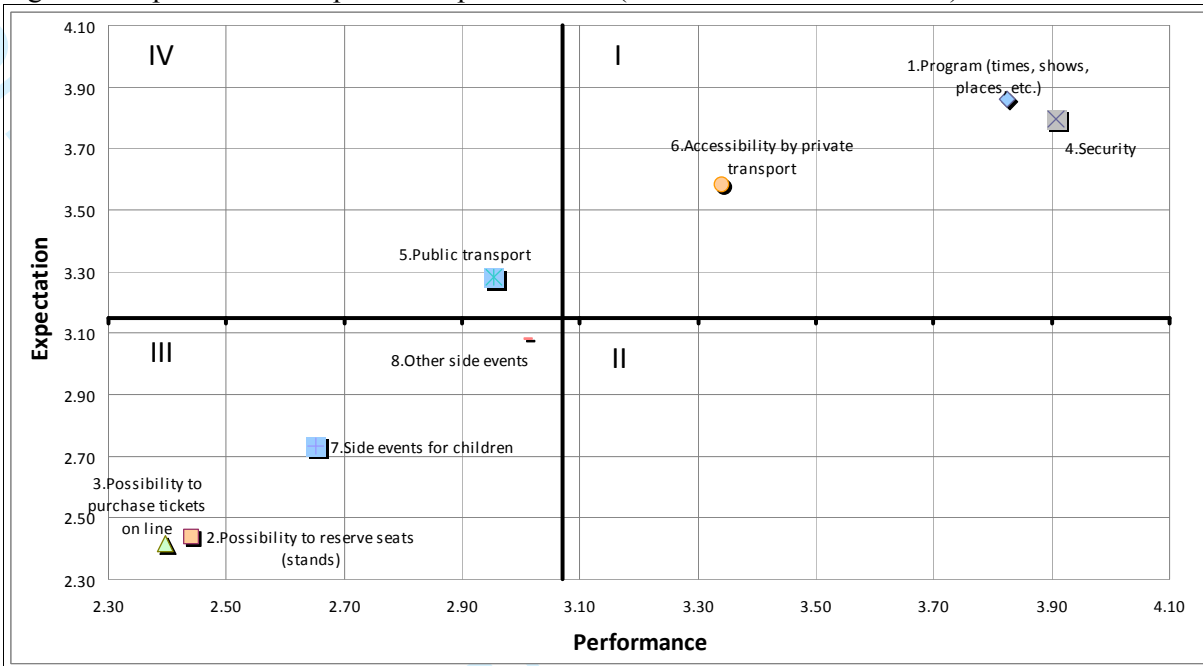
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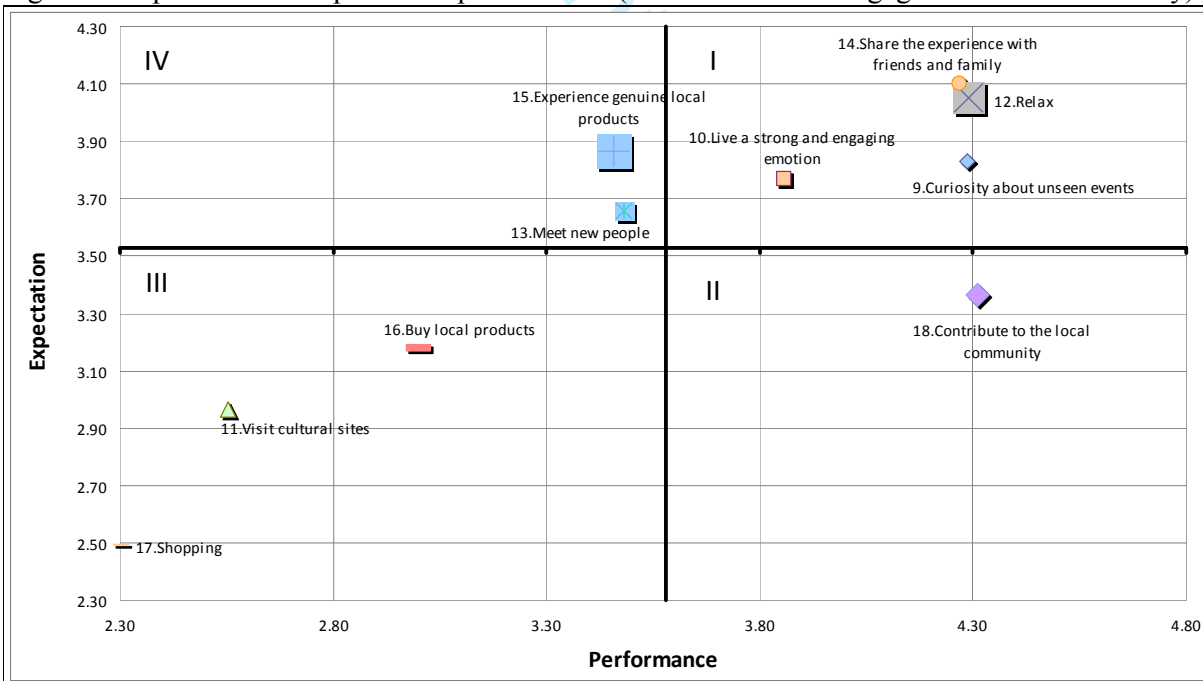
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Figure 1 Expectations and perceived performance (Cavalcata: overall services)



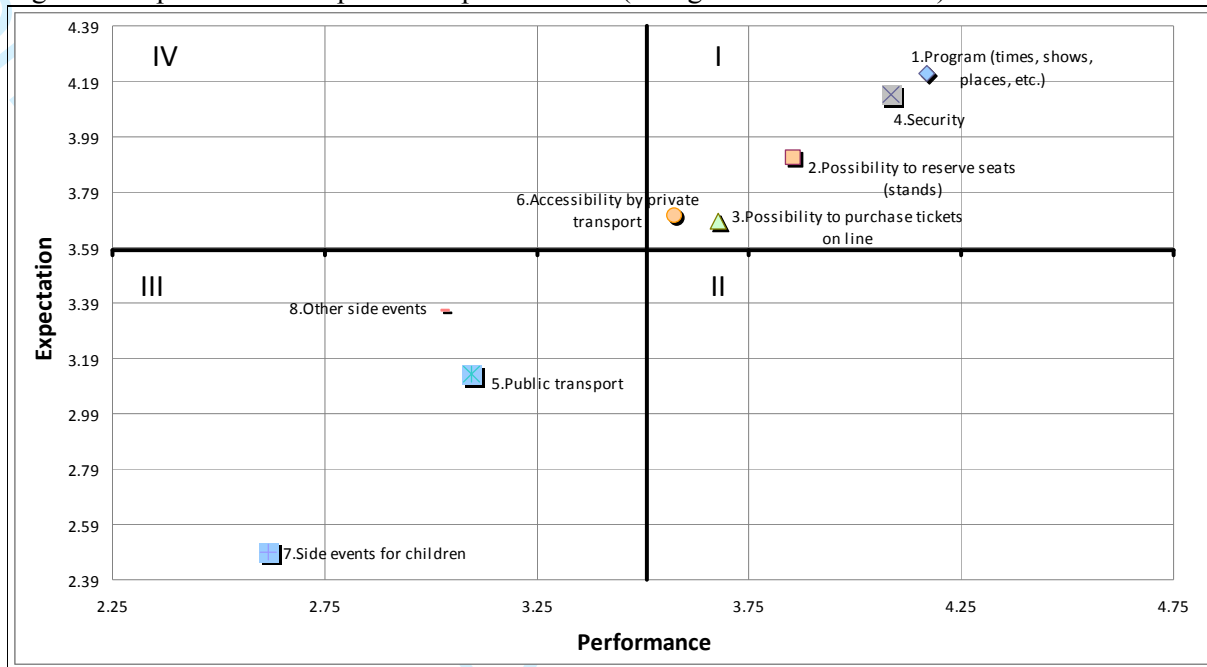
Notes: I quadrant: high strength; II quadrant: strength; III quadrant: weakness; IV quadrant: strong weakness

Figure 2 Expectations and perceived performance (Cavalcata: social engagement and authenticity)



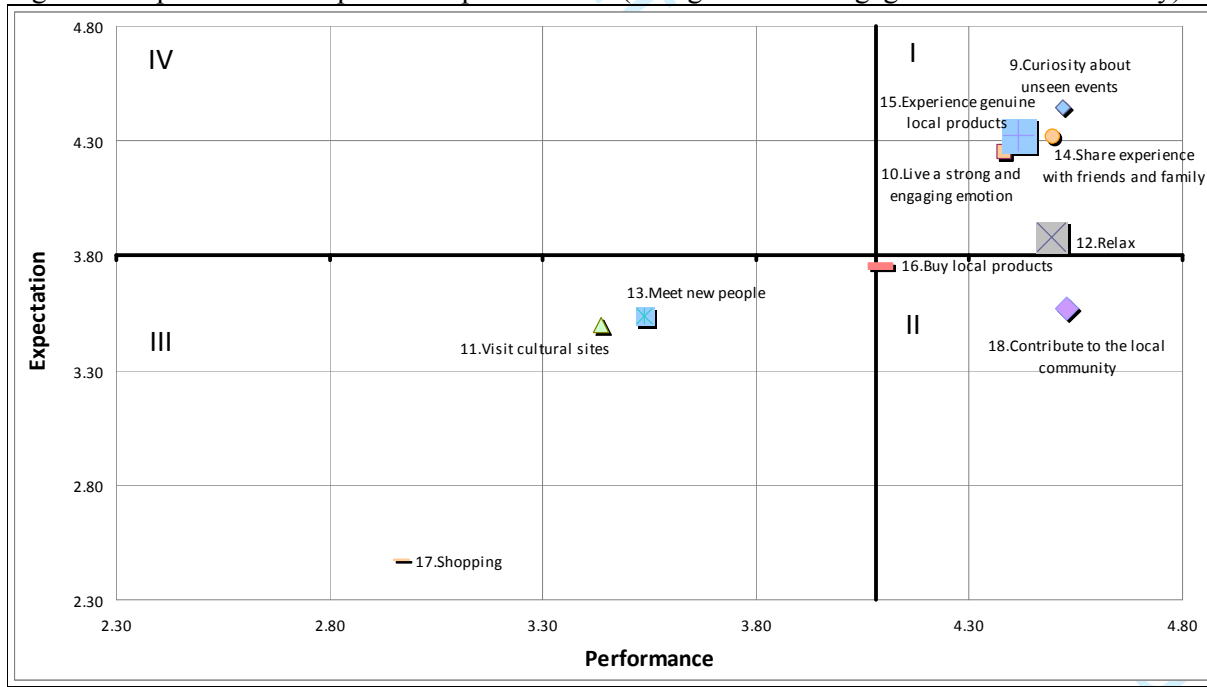
Notes: I quadrant: high strength; II quadrant: strength; III quadrant: weakness; IV quadrant: strong weakness

Figure 3 Expectations and perceived performance (Sartiglia: overall services)



Notes: I quadrant: high strength; II quadrant: strength; III quadrant: weakness; IV quadrant: strong weakness

Figure 4 Expectations and perceived performance (Sartiglia: social engagement and authenticity)



Notes: I quadrant: high strength; II quadrant: strength; III quadrant: weakness; IV quadrant: strong weakness

Characteristics	Cavalcata	Sartiglia
1 Italians	81.7%	83.3%
2 Foreigners	18.3%	16.7%
3		
4 Male	50.5%	63.0%
5		
6 Female	49.5%	37.0%
7		
8 Income range	15,001-28,000	28,001-55,000
9		
10 Age	31-50	46-50
11		
12 Education	High school	High school
13		
14 Perceptions/intention (fully agreement – score 5)		
15		
16 The event represents the regional identity	60.7%	69.7%
17		
18 The event represents a cultural tradition	61.5%	80.3%
19		
20 The event represents a tourism attraction	15.9%	11.3%
21		
22 Satisfied with the participation to the event	63.0%	75.0%
23		
24 Willing to return to the event in the future	34.9%	31.8%
25		
26 Recommend the event to friends and family	57.1%	69.5%
27		
28 Willing to visit the city for holidays in a period other than that in which the event took place	44.4%	53.6%
29		
30 Recommend the place to friends and family	45.7%	52.6%
31		
32 Willing to write comments or post photos and / or videos in social networks about the event	33.7%	44.2%
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Table 2. Latent variables (PCA – Cavalcata)

Page 29 of 32	Cavalcata (Expectations)	Variable contribution	% Explained variance	% Cumulative Variance	International Journal of Event and Festival Management Cronbach's alpha	Journal of Event and Festival Management Factor mean	Cavalcata (Perceived performance)	Variable contribution	% Explained Variance	% Cumulative Variance	Cronbach's alpha	Factor mean
1												
2												
3	Factor_exp 1: Booking		17.49	17.49	0.85 good	2.42	Factor_perf 1: Booking		22.375	22.375	0.90 excellent	2.40
4	Possibility to reserve seats (stands)	.909					Possibility to reserve seats (stands)	.934				
5	Possibility to purchase tickets on line	.907					Possibility to purchase tickets on line	.926				
6												
7												
8												
9												
10	Factor_exp 2: Cultural experience and emotion		17.05	34.54	0.61 questionable	3.52	Factor_perf 2 : Local products		20.366	42.741	0.75 acceptable	3.22
11	Curiosity about unseen events	.792					Tasted genuine local products	.904				
12	Visit cultural sites	.727					Bought local products (e.g. crafts, food)	.861				
13												
14	Live a strong and engaging emotion	.684					Factor_perf 3 : Emotion		20.171	62.912	0.72 acceptable	4.07
15												
16	Factor_exp 3 Complementary services		16.69	51.23	0.74 acceptable	2.88	My curiosity about the event is totally fulfilled	.883				
17	Other side events	.858					Have a strong and engaging emotion	.880				
18												
19	Side events for children	.850					Factor_perf 4 : Complementary services		19.885	82.797	0.76 acceptable	2.78
20							Quality of other side events	.889				
21							Quality of side events for children	.851				
22												
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Notes: Cavalcata (expectations): Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy 0.652; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity chi-square= 489.749 (0.000);

Cavalcata (perceived performance): Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy .601; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity chi-square= 401.192 (0.000);

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Table 3. Latent variables (PCA – Sartiglia)

	Sartiglia (Expetations)	Variable contribution	% Explained variance	% Cumulative variance	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor Mean	Sartiglia (Experience)	Variable contribution	% Explained variance	% Cumulative variance	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor mean
	Factor_exp 1: Authenticity local products		19.725	19.725	0.65 questionable	3.51	Factor_perf 1: Booking		12.804	12.804	0.84 good	3.78
	Buy local products (e.g. crafts, food)	.831					Possibility to reserve seats (stands)	.924				
	Experience genuine local products	.754					Possibility to purchase tickets on line	.918				
	Shopping	.657					Factor_perf 2 : Emotion		12.753	25.558	0.73 acceptable	4.45
	Factor_exp 2: Booking		17.471	37.196	0.82 good	3.80	Curiosity about unseen events	.883				
	Possibility to reserve seats (stands)	.919					Live a strong and engaging	.842				
	Possibility to purchase tickets on line	.902					Factor_perf 3 : Authenticity products		12.590	38.147	0.68 questionable	4.33
	Factor_exp 3 :		17.006	54.202	0.63 questionable	2.99	Tasted genuine local products	.735				
	Side events for children	.809					Bought local products (e.g. crafts, food)	.690				
	Public transport	.743					Spent pleasant time with friends & family	.680				
	Other side events	.671					Factor_perf 4 : Complementary services		11.562	49.710	0.71 acceptable	2.90
	Factor_exp 4: Emotion		14.184	68.386	0.51 poor	4.35	Quality of other side events	.833				
	Curiosity about unseen	.835					Quality of side events for	.785				

events		International Journal of Event and Festival Management								
1	Live a strong and engaging	.761				Factor_perf 5 : Event authenticity	11.099	60.808	0.45 poor	4.61
2						This event is a local tradition	.787			
3										
4										
5										
6							.656			
7						Through this event I learned local customs				
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14						The event is unique	.643			
15										
16										

17 Notes: Sartiglia (expectations): Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy 0.605; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity chi-square= 540.079 (0.000);
 18 Sartiglia (perceived performance): Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy .607; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity chi-square= 598.828 (0.000);

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Table 1.A Descriptive Statistics of all the items (means) and Leven's test

Items	Cavalcata		Sartiglia	
	Expectation	Performance	Expectation	Performance
1. Program (times, shows, places, etc.)	3.8582	3.8252	4.2167	4.1700
2. Possibility to reserve seats (stands)	2.4387	2.4416	3.9132	3.8548
3. Possibility to purchase tickets on line	2.4173	2.3969	3.6834	3.6777
4. Security	3.7955	3.9076	4.1423	4.0840
5. Public transport	3.2799	2.9528	3.1313	3.0957
6. Accessibility by private transport	3.5795	3.3404	3.7047	3.5732
7. Side events for children	2.7308	2.6510	2.4885	2.6161
8. Other side events	3.0789	3.0047	3.3591	3.0256
9. Curiosity about unseen events	3.8315	4.2857	4.4457	4.5200
10. Live a strong and engaging emotion	3.7684	3.8566	4.2491	4.3837
11. Visit cultural sites	2.9653	2.5550	3.4962	3.4370
12. Relax	4.0517	4.2900	3.8779	4.4939
13. Meet new people	3.6556	3.4811	3.5382	3.5385
14. Share the experience with friends and family	4.0993	4.2697	4.3156	4.4959
15. Experience genuine local products	3.8662	3.4570	4.3244	4.4153
16. Buy local products	3.1778	2.9725	3.7519	4.0643
17. Shopping	2.4926	2.3024	2.4695	2.9676
18. Contribute to the local community	3.3630	4.31	3.5670	4.53
1) Levene's test (Ho: Equal variances) -on expectations-, Cavalcata versus Sartiglia			F-test 0.155 (0.531)	
t-test (Ho: Equal means)			t-test -1.817 (0.078)*	
2) Levene's test (Ho: Equal variances) -performance-, Cavalcata versus Sartiglia			F-test 0.740(0.396)	
t-test (Ho: Equal means)			t-test -2.155 (0.038)**	
3) Levene's test (Ho: Equal variances) -expectations versus performance (Cavalcata)			F-test 1.814 (0.187)	
t-test (Ho: Equal means)			t-test 0.039 (0.969)	
4) Levene's test (Ho: Equal variances) -expectations versus performance (Sartiglia)			F-test 0.647(0.427)	
t-test (Ho: Equal means)			t-test 0.633 (0.531)	

Notes: * statistical significance at the 10%.