

# **AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF QUALITY, VALUE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON CONSUMER BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS IN FOOD EVENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Food and wine tourism has become increasingly competitive in Italy; however, little is known about the current state or potential for wine tourism development in this country, despite the fact that millions of tourists, including many potential food and wine tourists, visit the Italian peninsula each year. In this exploratory study, the perspectives of tourists on wine tourism are examined. The study constructs a temporal model of food and wine tourist behaviour and related concepts with regard to past behaviour, satisfaction, perceived value and behavioural intentions. Specifically it proposes a theoretical model to investigate the relations between the dimensions of experiential quality, perceived value (functional value and monetary price), satisfaction and behavioural intention. Using a path analysis approach and data collected from the attendees at a regional food festivals. A confirmatory structural equation modelling procedure was performed by utilizing LISREL software. The result shows that the model is a statistically significant predictor for consumers' future behavioural intentions to attend the food festival again. In addition, experiential quality and perceived value were found to have direct and indirect impacts on visitors' future behavioural intentions. The practical implications for festival organizers are discussed. It is believed that the results of the present study will be useful to organisers of food and wine festivals and/or food and wine tourism developers.

## **KEYWORDS**

Perceived value, Event marketing, Service quality, Visitor satisfaction, Food festival

## **INTRODUCTION**

Food and wine tourism is currently being presented as a form of alternative tourism which has an ever increasing importance in the ambit of the Italian economic landscape. From a conceptual point of view, tourism can be defined as being the totality of individuals' behaviour in performing a continuum of activities motivated by needs, connected with territorial mobility towards less familiar destinations, within the short term (Casarin, 1996). The expression, food and wine tourism, evokes a series of images and associations that are sometimes connected with the agricultural world (agricultural tourism), others to landscapes and agricultural and food places (farm holidays - rural tourism), others to the environment and natural areas (ecotourism), as well as archaeological, architectural and historical ones (cultural tourism). It should be observed that all these different types proposed highlight two, fundamental aspects. On one hand, the so-called place-specific tourism, generated by the totality of a place's resources, together with the identity and the traditional nature of the place itself; on the other, the so-called special-interest tourism, which concerns, more specifically, the offer, exhibitions and food and wine events (Shaw & Williams 2002).

Special interest tourism can be defined as being that particular type of journey undertaken by people who share a common interest that can be satisfied in a specific area or at a specific destination (Weiler & Hall, 1992). It is the fulcrum around which the entire travel experience rotates (Read, 1980). In this the travel motivation is traced back to food and wine (Dodd & Bigotte, 1997). Food and wine tourism requires, especially in rural areas, where there is a strong agricultural vocation, events aimed at attracting visitors and increasing trust in the territory and local producers (Hoffman et al., 2001). For an in-depth account relative to the various types of events refer to Ferrari (2002) and Cherubini & Iasevoli (2005).

The progressive consolidation of the role of the events, which are considered as being the true attractions, catalysts and promoters of a territory's image (Getz, 2000), has stimulated a widespread research activity pivoted on event evaluation. The studies on event evaluation are traditionally grouped into two main, investigation trends (Thrane, 2002): the economic impact and the motivational research. This scheme, however, does not highlight a new research ambit relative to the analysis of the role performed by the quality, value and satisfaction of the consumers in establishing the future behavioural intentions of the participants at the various events (Baker & Crompton 2000; Caruana et al. 2000; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Cole & Scott, 2004; Lee et al., 2007; Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000; Petrick et al., 2001; Tian-Cole et al. 2002; Petrick, 2004).

This paper can be located inside this field of investigation and has the objective of offering an integrated approach aimed at understanding, from a unitary prospective, the relations existing simultaneously among quality, satisfaction, value and behavioural intentions. The relevance investigating the relations among these dimensions has also been underlined by Ostrom and Iacobucci (1995) who confirm "... it would be interesting to examine these consumer judgments simultaneously in one study to compare their relative effects on subsequent consequential variables". The comprehension of the specific mechanisms underlying the choice of a tourist destination represent an essential introduction to the area of marketing decisions. Furthermore, the analysis is also relevant with reference to the socio-economic impact of this particular type of events on the local territory.

The applicative context is represented by a sample of 368 participants at the food and wine events dedicated to asparagus that took place in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region in Italy. With respect to data analysis, a LISREL software has been used (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Within the marketing ambit, the analysis of the relationship existing between quality and satisfaction has given rise to in-depth research that has been object to scrutiny by the theory (Orsingher & Marzocchi, 2003).

More precisely, a prevalent convergence emerged around the prospective suggested by Parasuraman et al. (1985) in their pioneering work on the quality of services. The authors, distinguished between satisfaction and quality, identifying the latter as being an overall evaluation or the attitude connected to the acknowledged superiority or excellence found in using the service. On the other hand, satisfaction has, instead, been defined as being the emotive/cognitive result of a specific transaction. This approach has left open the debate relative to the connection existing between the two components (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), so much so as to sustain, two types of approach that are antithetic between themselves. The first corroborates the assumption that it is satisfaction that influences or conditions the quality of a service (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992), whilst the second, maintains that it is quality that influences satisfaction (Teas, 1993; Parasuraman et al., 1994).

Within the ambit of the studies relative to tourism and recreational activities, the quality of the service is the result of two components: the "quality of the performance" or "quality of the opportunity" and the "experiential quality" (Crompton, 1977; Brown, 1988; Crompton & Love, 1995). It should be underlined that the distinction between the performance quality and experiential quality is the result of Compton's conceptualisation, even if the author has adopted different terminology. Crompton (1977) identified the performance quality with output and experiential quality with outcome. The performance quality and service quality terms were introduced for the first time in 1988 by Brown in his study on open-air, recreational activities and was subsequently implemented by Crompton & Love (1995). The quality of the opportunity is represented by a totality of service attributes that can be controlled and changed by the individual offering the service. The experiential quality, instead, reflects the psychological benefits perceived by the visitors (MacKay & Crompton, 1988); it "involves not only the attributes provided by a supplier, but also the attributes brought to the opportunity by the visitor" (Crompton & Love, 1995).

The service quality and satisfaction present two possible investigation prospectives: "transaction/attributes" and "global" (Teas, 1993; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). The transaction/attributes dimension permits the analysis of a special relationship between visitor and service, for example, the one relative to participation at a specific event; the global one refers to an overall experience that the tourist has of the service further to repeated visits. More precisely, within the ambit of the transaction/attribute dimension, it is useful to make the following distinction: at a single transaction level, satisfaction is given by the experience quality; at an attribute level, the service quality is given by the quality of performance that represents the individual attributes of the service offered. On the basis of the aforementioned taxonomy, all the research conducted relative to the service quality appeared to agree in underlining how the accumulation of evaluations at a transaction level conducts to a global evaluation. This approach appears to be in line with the approach that confirms that it is quality that influences satisfaction. It appears to be clear that the analysis of the nature of the relationship created between the two dimensions has offered a cue for a number of other investigation prospectives.

A lot of studies have shown that satisfaction represents the effect of the service quality on the tourist's behavioural intentions within various contexts (Dabholkar et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2000; Brady & Robertson, 2001). However, the results obtained from the different research conducted did not always agree. More precisely, Cole & Scott (2004), by means of the use of a four stages model, confirmed that the experiential quality thoroughly summarises the influence of the quality of the performance on the total satisfaction and on behavioural intention. From this perspective, this contribution has emphasised the role of the experiential quality inasmuch as it is the dimension that best represents the benefits expected in general by the tourists (Oliver, 1993) and more specifically, by the participants at food and wine events.

Furthermore, pursuing an approach that has long since become consolidated (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000), in order to fully grasp the behavioural intention, it has also been necessary to consider the dimension relative to service value. Numerous research studies have investigated this aspect in an articulate way but, to

date, there has been no univocal definition of the perceived value (McDougall & Lévesque, 2000; Zeithaml, 1988). More precisely, although different conceptualisations exist in literature (client utility; benefits in relation to sacrifice; psychological price; monetary value and quality), a prevailing approach is recognisable which is the one based on the well-known Anglo-Saxon concept of value for money, or rather, on the trade-off between monetary price and quality (Dodds et al., 1991). This value model, in which the central position of the user is clear, is based on the relationship between the benefits and sacrifices and has also considerable relevance in underlining behavioural intention (Chang & Wildt, 1994). It should, however, be observed that it is a conceptualisation of a multi-dimensional type (Kotler, 2000), which therefore requires, therefore, a number of items in order to measure the perceived value. Some of the main approaches proposed in order to represent this phenomenon have been summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Principal dimensions investigated concerning the perceived value

| Authors                                    | Dimensions |    |    |    |    |   |
|--|------------|----|----|----|----|---|
|  | FV         | SV | EV | MP | BS | R |
| Bolton & Drew (1991)                       |            |    |    | ✓  | ✓  |   |
| Kantamneni & Coulson (1996)                | ✓          | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓ |
| Cronin, Brady & Hult (2000)                |            |    | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |   |
| Lapierre (2000)                            |            |    |    | ✓  | ✓  | ✓ |
| Hall, Shaw, Lascheit & Robertson (2000)    |            | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |    | ✓ |
| Williams & Soutar (2000)                   | ✓          | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |    |   |
| Sweeney & Soutar (2001)                    | ✓          | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  |    |   |
| Petrick (2002)                             |            |    | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓ |
| Simchi-Levi, Kaminsky & Simchi-Levi (2003) | ✓          |    |    | ✓  | ✓  | ✓ |
| Lee, Petrick & Crompton (2007b)            |            |    | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓ |
| Lee, Youn & Lee (2007a)                    | ✓          |    | ✓  |    |    |   |

FV=Functional Value; SV=Social Value; EV=Emotional value; MP=Monetary Price; BS=Behavioural Sacrifice; R=Reputation.

The first three items have been defined in this way (Sheth et al., 1991):

Functional Value (FV) is represented by the utility derived from the perceived quality and the performances expected from the product;

Social Value (SV) can be traced back to the utility of the product in relation to its association with one or more social groups;

Emotional Value (EV) is given by the capacity of the product to provoke sentiments or emotional reactions.

The next two items refer to the "sacrifice" dimension (Cronin et al., 2000), both of a monetary type and not:

Monetary Price (MP) is the perceived monetary price and the monetary price paid;

Behavioural Sacrifice (BS) is the sacrifice sustained by the consumer in terms of time, effort, fatigue, etc....

Lastly, the term:

Reputation (R) implies the estimation, opinion and consideration of the event within the reference social and territorial context.

In this work, two of the aforementioned and most used dimensions have been used to measure the perceived value. The first one is the "monetary price" which, as is well-known, represents the factor that best quantifies the sacrifice, in other words the price paid for the service; the second one refers to the "functional value" or the event's perceived benefit in relation to its capacity to enhance the product offered and the territory.

In order to fully understand the objectives of the study, it would also appear to be necessary to make reference to the relations created between the dimensions investigated (quality, value and satisfaction) as

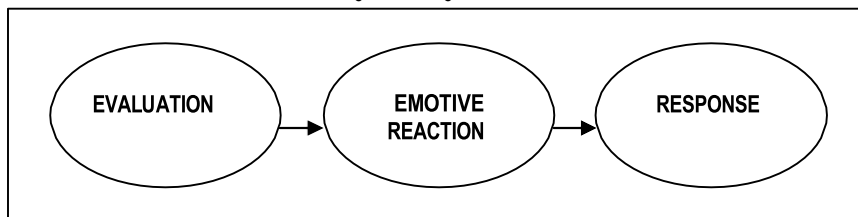
well as their effects on behavioural intention. A summary of the various approaches present in literature has been set forth in table 2.

Table 2- Relationships among quality, value and satisfaction existing in literature

| Authors   | Type of relationships defined             | Object of the investigation   |
|---|---|---|
| Bolton & Drew (1991)                              | SA→Q→V→BI                                 | Telephonic services   |
| Dodds, Monroe & Grewal (1991)                     | Q→V→BI                                    | Calculators and audio headphones  |
| Chang & Wildt (1994)                              | MP→Q→V→BI; MP→V→BI                        | Rental of unfurnished apartments, PC services acquired  |
| Cronin, Brady, Brand, Hightower & Shemwell (1997) | Q→V→BI<br>(MP+BS)→V; V→BI                 | Sports spectators, individuals practising a sport, entertainment, health care assistance, long-distance services            |
| Petrick, Backman & Bixler (1999)                  | SA→V→BI; SA→BI                            | Holidays in golf resorts  |
| Sweeney, Soutar & Johnson (1997)                  | Q→V→BI; MP→V→BI                           | Household electrical appliances   |
| Cronin, Brady & Hult (2000)                       | V→SA→BI; V→BI<br>Q→V→BI; Q→BI<br>SA→BI    | Individuals practising a sport, sports spectators, entertainment, health care assistance, long-distance services, fast-food |
| Kashyap & Bojanic (2000)                          | MP→V→BI; Q→V→BI                           | Holidays in 5 star hotels   |
| Oh (2000)   | MP→V→BI; Q→V→BI                           | Holidays in hotels  |
| Petrick, Morais & Norman (2001)                   | SA→MP; SA→BI; PV→BI                       | Theatre performances package  |
| Cole & Scott (2004)                               | PQ→EQ→SA→BI                               | Visits to the "Rainforest" (c/o Cleveland Zoo, Ohio, USA)   |
| Cole & Illum (2006)                               | PQ→EQ→BI                                  | Participation at the event, "Fair Grove Heritage Reunion" (c/o Wommack Mill, Missouri, USA)                                 |
| Lee, Youn & Lee (2007a)                           | FV→SA→BI; V→SA→BI, V→BI;<br>EV→SA         | Visits to the Korean Demilitarised Zone   |
| Lee, Petrick & Crompton (2007b)                   | Q→SA→BI; Q→BI,<br>V→Q→SA→BI; V→SA→BI V→BI | Participation at the event, "Cajun Catfish Festival" (c/o Conroe in Texas, USA)   |

B=Behavioural intention; BS=Behavioural Sacrifice; MP=Monetary Price; Q=Quality; EQ=Experiential Quality; PQ=Performance Quality; SA=Satisfaction; V=Perceived Value; EV=Emotional Value; FV=Functional Value.

Figure 1: Bagozzi Model



This approach, which has been sustained in literature, has led to the processing of conceptual models in which the indirect effects of quality and value are present. Starting from this theoretic reference framework, in this paper we introduced a model where particular importance has been given to the experiential quality and the dimension of the service value relative to the monetary price and the functional value. More precisely, in agreement with Bagozzi (1992), the following relationships were formulated:

- Direct relations between monetary price (MP) and satisfaction (SA) and between monetary price (MP) and behavioural intention (BI) of the following type: MP→SA e MP→BI;

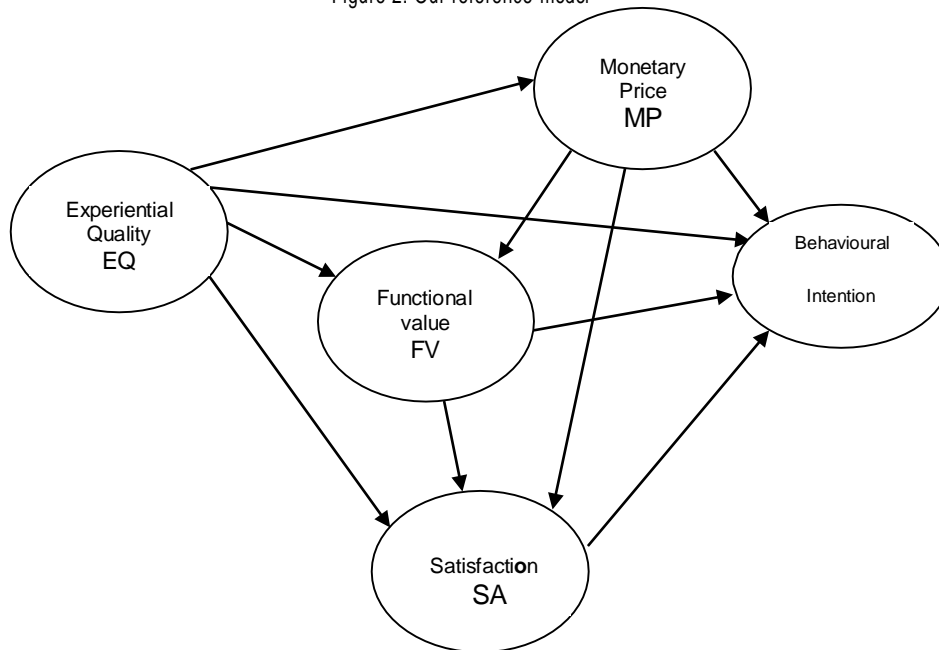
- Direct relations between the functional value (FV) and satisfaction (SA) and between the functional value (FV) and behavioural intention (BI) of the following type:  $FV \rightarrow SA$ ;  $FV \rightarrow BI$ ;
- Indirect relations between the monetary price (MP) and satisfaction (SA) of the following type:  $MP \rightarrow FV \rightarrow SA$ .

Furthermore, following the approach suggested by Cole & Scott (2004) and re-elaborated by Cole & Illum (2006), other relationships have been underlined:

- Direct between experiential quality (EQ) and satisfaction (SA) of the type  $EQ \rightarrow SA$  and between the experiential quality (EQ) and behavioural intention (BI) of the type  $EQ \rightarrow BI$ ;
- Indirect between experiential quality (EQ) and behavioural intention (BI) of the type  $EQ \rightarrow FV \rightarrow BI$  and the type  $EQ \rightarrow SA \rightarrow BI$ .

The resulting model has been schematized in Figure 2, which highlights the relations between the dimensions investigated concerning the perceived value (functional value and monetary price) and the other variables.

Figure 2: Our reference model



## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The investigation was conducted by means of face to face interviews with a sample of 368 participants at the five main food and wine events concerning the promotion of asparagus organised by the Friuli Venezia Giulia region in Italy: Mostra concorso dell'asparago bianco; Festa degli asparagi; Asparagorgo; Fieste dai sparcs; Bianco & Bianchi. White asparagus has been included in the list of Traditional Agricultural and Food Products in Friuli Venezia Giulia region and the promotional exhibitions of this agricultural product are among the oldest in the region.

In order to bring the analysis to an end, a LISREL model was adopted (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) based on the approach suggested by some authors (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cronin et al., 2000; Cole & Scott, 2004; Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al. 2007b), with the appropriate adjustment to our case study. The individuals interviewed who replied to the main questions in the investigation were 312 of which 55% were men and 45% women. The most significant age bracket present was made up of individuals aged between thirty and forty years (53%), whilst the most widespread educational qualifications were represented by the High School Leaving Certificate (47.7%). The different types of employment occupation recorded have been set forth in table 3.

Table 3: Professional capacities of those interviewed

| <b>Profession</b>      | <b>%</b> |
|------------------------|----------|
| Labourer               | 13.0     |
| Clerk                  | 22.9     |
| Executive              | 3.5      |
| Trader                 | 6.4      |
| Entrepreneur           | 5.5      |
| Teacher                | 5.2      |
| Student                | 6.4      |
| Housewife              | 8.1      |
| Freelance professional | 10.1     |
| Pensioner              | 11.6     |
| Unemployed             | 1.4      |
| Other                  | 5.8      |

With reference to the distance covered to reach the exhibition, there were 65.4% within 20 kilometres, 20.2% between 20 and 50 kilometres and only 14.4% over 50 kilometres. More than 78% used the car as the preferred means of transport. The means of communication through which the participants came to find out about the event was most importantly by word of mouth (39%), followed by the press (19%) and advertising posters (17%). The other means of divulging the information, amongst which, radio-television, (7%), appeared to be much less incisive. The data on the intention expressed by some 19% of the visitors to visit areas and places adjacent to the event was of particular significance, for its consequences on the territory.

The data collected was analysed first of all in order to filter it from any distortions or errors, such as contradictory and/or missing answers. Furthermore, in order to achieve the model estimate, factors were extracted (latent variables) by means of the factorial analysis which concentrated the information originally contained in a high number of variables. Thus, the representations of the experiential quality (EQ), functional value (FV), monetary price (MP), satisfaction (SA) and behavioural intention (BA) were achieved by means of 13 latent variables, as highlighted in table 4.

Table 4: The items in the model used

| <b>EQ</b>       | <b>EXPERIENCE QUALITY</b>  |
|-----------------|--|
| V <sub>1</sub>  | Experience of food and wine events   |
| V <sub>6</sub>  | Experience of local, food and wine traditions  |
| V <sub>11</sub> | Experience of product tasting  |
| V <sub>12</sub> | Experience of product purchase   |
| V <sub>13</sub> | Sharing a professional interest with other individuals   |
| V <sub>15</sub> | Visit to friends and relations   |
| V <sub>16</sub> | Conviviality   |
| <b>FV</b>       | <b>FUNCTIONAL VALUE</b>  |
| V <sub>17</sub> | Capacity of the event to increase awareness connected to the local product                       |
| V <sub>18</sub> | Capacity of the event to increase the desire to acquire additional information about the product |
| V <sub>20</sub> | Capacity of the event to increase the contribution to the creation of a territorial image        |
| <b>MP</b>       | <b>MONETARY PRICE</b>  |
| V <sub>22</sub> | Monetary price level to eat and drink  |
| <b>SA</b>       | <b>SATISFACTION</b>  |
| V <sub>21</sub> | Level of global satisfaction   |
| <b>BI</b>       | <b>BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION</b>   |
| V <sub>19</sub> | Desire to participate at the event once again in the future                                      |

Then the parameters of the structural equations model were estimated by means of the LISREL 8.51 software (Jöreskog & Sörbom 1993). The departure point is the co-variance matrix among the variables observed. The arrival point is made up of the parameters of a structural equations model that describes the causal connection between the variables. Starting from the data but with the constraints of the model, we need to find out the parameters which, when they are placed in the model, produce a lesser deviation between the co-variance matrix of the model and the co-variance matrix of observed data. The main results have been set forth in tables 5.

Table 5: Model's parameters

| Type of relationship | Estimated parameter | Standard Error | t value |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------|
| MP→FV                | 0.002               | 0.003          | 0.72    |
| MP→SA                | 0.02                | 0.01           | 2.29*   |
| MP→BI                | 0.02                | 0.00           | 5.39**  |
| FV→SA                | 1.33                | 0.25           | 5.28**  |
| FV→BI                | 0.32                | 0.09           | 3.51**  |
| SA→BI                | 0.05                | 0.02           | 2.51*   |

\* significant value:  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* very significant value:  $p < 0.01$

Overall, the model was acceptable, inasmuch as the Chi-square value is equivalent to 32.7 with 40 degrees of freedom and the p value is 0.7871. Or rather, the variance and co-variance matrix, estimated by means of the model proposed, does not shift significantly from the equivalent matrix calculated on the data observed.

### **SOME SYNTHESIS CONSIDERATIONS**

Food and wine tourism is a particular kind of niche tourism that is currently enjoying a growing interest, as confirmed by the numerous research contributions that have recently appeared on the subject (Hall & Mitchell 2005; Hall et al. 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002). In this ambit, agricultural and food products and culinary specialities become vehicles to develop a place's tourist offer in the measure in which they can be configured as being the elements identifying a population or a territory. It is a new way of approaching the culture of a place, which presents its own characteristics that are essentially connected to the recreational, convivial and social dimension. The dishes created with a region's traditional products can be defined as being "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usage, situations and behaviour" (Barthes, 1979). From this perspective, food and wine events become moments of conviviality and socialisations during which the links with tradition and the local territory are emphasised.

Eating and drinking at a food and wine event are perceived as being the consumption of something that goes well beyond a simple foodstuff and can be considered as being the consumption "of a local heritage, comparable to what is experienced when visiting historical sites and museums" (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). This appears to be even clearer in the case of food and wine exhibitions that are connected to a particular product that is offered with the purpose of celebrating it, promoting its production and its territory. In these cases, the perceived value and experiential quality components adopt a particular importance. More precisely, the value associated with the culinary-gastronomic experience becomes the central factor for establishing, directly or indirectly, the visitor's satisfaction and his future behavioural intention.

Starting from these assumptions, this paper has aimed to better analyse which perceived value dimensions mainly influence the behavioural intentions of the participants at a food and wine event connected to the promotion of an agricultural food product with a long, local tradition, such as the Friulano asparagus. The reference model was set up starting from the outline that had initially been proposed by Cronin et al. (2000) and inserting direct and indirect effects conceptualised by other authors (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cole & Scott, 2004; Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al. 2007b). More precisely, with reference to "service quality", the ties have been schematised as follows:

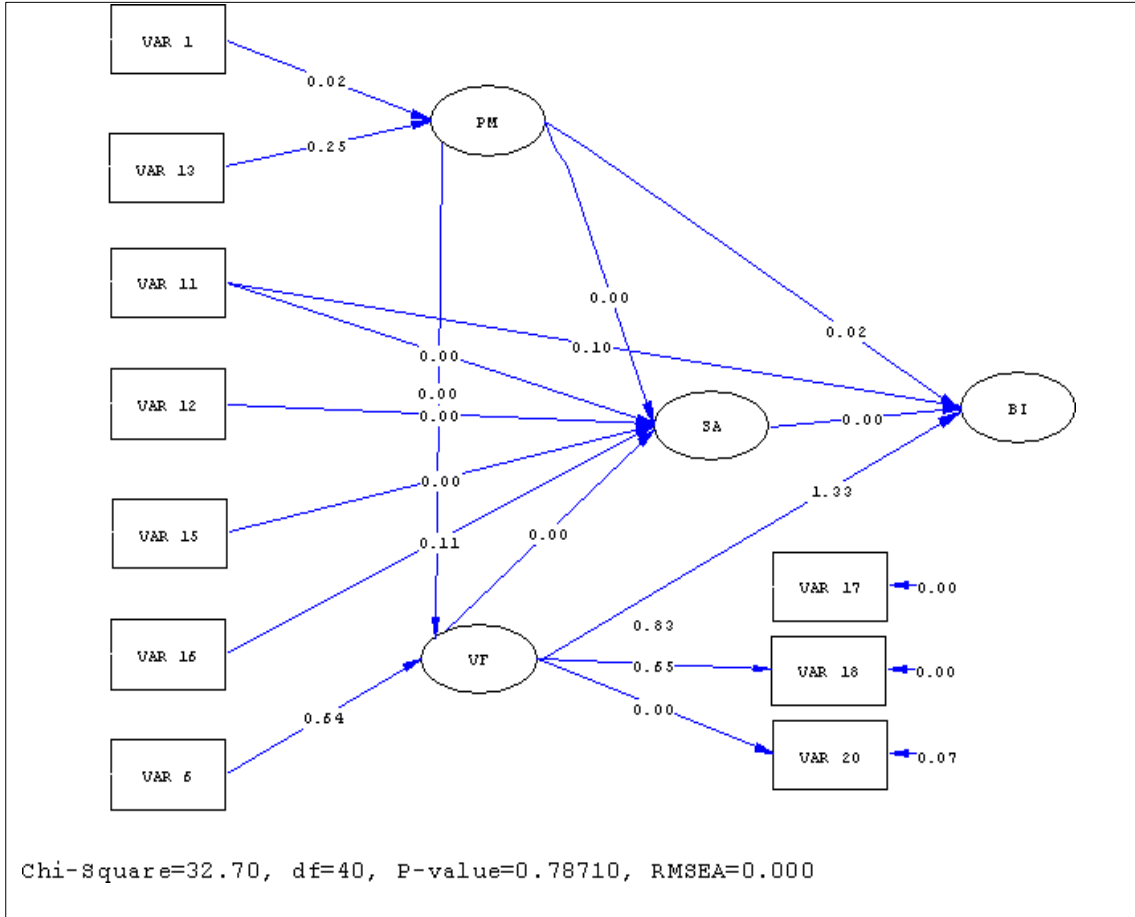
1. the direct effect of the experiential quality on the behavioural intention and satisfaction:  
 $EQ \rightarrow BI$ ;  $EQ \rightarrow SA$
2. the indirect effect of the experiential quality on the behavioural intention by means of the value:  $EQ \rightarrow FV \rightarrow BI$ ;  $EQ \rightarrow MP \rightarrow BI$
3. the direct effect of satisfaction on behavioural intention:  
 $SA \rightarrow BI$

With reference to the "service value" the decision to underline two dimensions: functional value (FV) and monetary price (MP), emerged from the empirical evidence and has been sustained by the theory (Kantamneni & Coulson 1996; Williams & Soutar 2000; Sweeney & Soutar 2001; Simchi-Levi et al. 2003; Lee et al. 2007b). The relations defined are:

1. the direct effect of the monetary price (MP) on the future behavioural intentions (BI):  $MP \rightarrow BI$ ;
2. the direct and indirect effect of the monetary price on satisfaction (SA):  $MP \rightarrow SA$ ;  
 $MP \rightarrow FV \rightarrow SA$
3. the direct effect of the functional value on satisfaction and behavioural intention:  $FV \rightarrow SA$ ;  
 $FV \rightarrow BI$

The results of the model, represented in Figure 3, present important implication both from the theoretic as well as operative point of view.

Figure 3: Model elaborated with Lisrel 8.51 software\*



From a theoretic point of view, the relationships identified confirm what has already been highlighted in other studies (Lee et al., 2007a; Cole & Illum, 2006), or rather, that the emotional components of the service quality (EQ) and the perceived value (FV) represent the most important factors for determining behavioural intention (BI). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that the proposal of representing the perceived value on a one-dimensional scale (Oh, 2000; Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000) did not appear to be suitable, so we had to resort to a multi-dimensional approach, as suggested by other authors (Kotler, 2000; Petrick, 2002; Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b). With reference to the experiential quality (EQ), ties of a direct and indirect type were highlighted with the behavioural intention (BI). This appears to be in line with other authors, who have concluded that the emotional response of visitors to some aspects of the service quality have an influence on future behavioural intentions (Tian-Cole et al., 2002).

Theoretically this study pinpoints that the two components of perceived value (monetary price MP and functional value FV) have become a precondition for business to survive and to be profitable also in the food sector. In a competitive environment the food firms as well as the food festival operators have to understand customer needs and provide better perceived value in order to maintain competitive advantage. Particularly food festival can become a critical link between the customers and the food industry. If the sales representative can create value to the festival attendances and the customers appreciate it that this will be

reflected on their behavioural intentions and the chance are high they would be loyal customers. The results provided support of the findings of previous studies that perceived value is likely to be the best determinant of visitors' behavioural intentions (Lee et al., 2007b, Petrick, 2002, Chang & Wildt, 1994). Also similar to other studies (Cronin et al. 2000, Cole & Illum, 2006, Petrick, 2004) it was also found that experience service quality (EQ) not only had a direct significant effect on visitors' behavioural intention but also an important indirect effect mediated through functional value (FV) and monetary price (MP). The output of this path analysis also showed that both the two dimensions of value (functional value FV and monetary price MP) were positively related to satisfaction. This suggests that the most effective way to improve customer satisfaction in visiting a food festival is to focus either on the utility derived from expected performance (FV) of the festival or on the price have a strong effect on perception. From an operative point of view, these ties appear to be significant for the parties who are actively involved in this particular kind of exhibitions (a food and wine event celebrating a traditional agricultural food product) inasmuch as they highlight the effects on satisfaction (SA) of the two dimensions of the perceived value investigated (FV and MP).

In the first place, the existence of direct ties between FV and SA and between MP and SA make the models that connect satisfaction only to service quality inadequate to fully understand the users' behavioural intentions. In fact, it could be that although the participants appear to be overall satisfied with the type of service offered and the ways they were supplied, they are unable to perceive either the monetary or functional value. Therefore if the local producers and public authorities, who actively participated at the event, only aimed at improving the quality of service, this would be limiting, inasmuch as the effects on the users' satisfaction relative to the perceived value would be neglected. Furthermore, the existence of the indirect effect of the functional value on satisfaction highlights the participants' sense of belonging to a territorial community, inasmuch as the value of the event is perceived in terms of the qualification and promotion of the local products and territory.

Secondly, the relations that the individual, latent variables in the experiential quality (EQ) have with SA and BI can represent, for the event's organisers, a useful, cognitive instrument with planning value. The objective of implementing the service quality in itself is insufficient in order to have positive repercussions in terms of behavioural intentions. It is, in fact, necessary for the various protagonists involved in the exhibition to be aware of what emotional quality benefits are perceived by the participants. To achieve this, the direct and indirect effects of the individual latent, EQ variables have been highlighted in table 6.

Table 6: The effect of the individual, latent, EQ variables

| <b>EQ</b>       | <b>Experience quality latent variables</b>                | <b>Important Effects *</b>      |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------------|
| V <sub>1</sub>  | Experience of food and wine events                        | EQ → MP → BI                    |
| V <sub>6</sub>  | Experience of local, food and wine traditions             | EQ → FV → BI; EQ → FV → SA → BI |
| V <sub>11</sub> | Experience of product tasting                             | EQ → BI; EQ → SA → BI           |
| V <sub>12</sub> | Experience of product purchase                            | EQ → SA → BI                    |
| V <sub>13</sub> | Sharing of a professional interest with other individuals | EQ → MP → BI                    |
| V <sub>15</sub> | Visit to friends and relations                            | EQ → SA → BI                    |
| V <sub>16</sub> | Conviviality  | EQ → SA → BI                    |

\*Only the statistically significant ties have been highlighted.

It clearly appears that only the latent variable V<sub>11</sub> (product tasting experience) presents a direct tie with the behavioural intention, whilst the others have ties of an exclusively indirect type. Three variables present indirect relations with the value and they are in particular:

- V1 (experience of food and wine events) and V13 (sharing of a professional interest with other individuals) with the MP dimension relative to the monetary sacrifice;
- V6 (experience of local food and wine traditions) with the FV dimension relative to the functional value.

The other four variables V11 (product tasting experience); V12 (product purchase experience); V15 (a visit to friends and relations) and V16 (conviviality) present indirect effects with satisfaction. The study reminds festival organizers that improved festival quality does not ensure the customers' loyalty. Other factors may also contribute to visitors' satisfaction with the festival which directly influence their behavioural intention like functional value and monetary price. These factors are controllable with a strong linkage between festival organizers and the entrepreneurs of the food industry. Due to the limitations of this study, results should be interpreted with caution. First of all the study is focused on one particular food festival setting in one particular Italian Region. The model needs to be tested with other festivals that take place in other regions. In addition although relationships among constructs were identified the study do not verify that they were causal relationships as in the case with all structural models.

In spite of these limitations, this paper demonstrated the important role of visitor's experience the important role performed by EQ and by the two value dimensions analysed (FV and BI) in establishing future behavioural intentions. More precisely, it highlights that if visitors do not perceive the benefits derived from the tasting experience, they might decide not to take part at any future events. Furthermore, the perception of the monetary sacrifice sustained for eating and drinking and the event's functional value, connected with the local identity sought by the participants, are all factors that the organisers can control, thus also influencing the participants' future behavioural intentions.

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