

EVENT VENUE SATISFACTION AND ITS IMPACT ON SPONSORSHIP OUTCOMES

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The importance of sponsorship as a marketing communications tool is well recognized in the event literature. Despite the growth in event sponsorship investments and the increasing importance of the role of the venue in event planning, there is still a lack of research on the impact of event venue satisfaction on sponsorship outcomes. Thus, the objective of the present study is to analyze the effect of event venue satisfaction on sponsor image, and, in particular, to verify if attendee satisfaction with the venue has a positive effect on sponsor recall, attitude, and purchase intention. The article presents the results of a survey conducted during the International Rome Film Festival, which takes place annually at the Rome Auditorium. Results suggest that attendee satisfaction with venues affects attitudes toward the sponsors and sponsor-related purchase intention, while sponsor awareness is not affected. The main contribution of the article is the development of a comprehensive model of event sponsorship evaluation, in which traditional sponsorship outcomes are considered in light of attendee satisfaction and quality of services in the sponsor-related exclusive venue zones.

Key words: Event sponsorship; Event satisfaction; Event venue; Sponsorship outcomes; Attendee satisfaction

Introduction

The importance of sponsorship as a marketing communications tool is well recognized and documented in the literature and annual sponsorship spending worldwide has been growing rapidly. Since 2012 the total global sponsorship spending has increased from \$51.1 billion up to \$57.3 (IEG,

2016). Furthermore, according to IEG's 31st annual year-end industry review the forecast global sponsorship spending is projected to grow 4.7% in 2016.

Academic and practitioner research has recently focused on the importance of attitude research for understanding how sponsorships work (Jacobs, Pallov, & Surana, 2014; Wakefield, 2012). In particular, a number of studies have introduced different

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sponsorship evaluation indicators—related to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes—such as media exposure, awareness, recognition and recall rates, sponsor image, purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth communication (Carrillat, d’Astous, Bellavance, & Eid, 2015; Crompton, 2004).

Despite growth in sponsorship investments the previous findings on event sponsorship effects are often ambiguous and contradictory (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). Moreover, no empirical research has investigated how event sponsorship outcomes may be enhanced by venue satisfaction.

Various authors agree that the strategic role of the venue for the success of the event should be examined (Getz, 2007). Commonly, “venue” is defined as the place where something happens, especially an organized event, such as a concert, conference, or sports competition (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/venue>). However, the various types of events or venues and the different classifications available in literature (e.g., Lawson, 2000; Rogers, 2003; Whitfield, 2009) reveal that “events venues mean different things for different people” (Hassanien & Dale, 2011, p. 108). In this article we consider the venue as the location where the event is enjoined (Van der Wagen, 2010). Based on these premises, the objective of the present study is to analyze the effect of the event venue satisfaction on sponsorship outcome, and in particular to explore if attendee satisfaction with the venue has a positive effect on sponsor recall, attitude, and purchase intention.

To that end, this article begins with a broad survey of the existing academic and managerial literature. We then develop the hypothesis and explain the methodology for our empirical research. The main research results are subsequently explained. In the final section, conclusions are drawn, including several important implications for management, as well as the limitations of this study and future directions.

Events and Sponsorship: A Literature Overview

Sponsorship Antecedents and Outcomes

Sponsorship is an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, event, or even a person in return for access to the commercial potential associated with

one of these sponsored objects (Meenaghan, 1991). A revised, comprehensive definition describes sponsorship as “the provision of resources (e.g., money, people, equipment) by an organization directly to an event, cause, or activity in exchange for a direct association (link) to the event, cause or activity” (M. S. Lee, Sandler, & Shani, 1997, p. 162).

Over the years, studies have identified a variety of antecedents that can affect the outcomes of a sponsorship (see Table 1). These antecedents can be grouped into the following categories:

- *Team related*, such as a sport’s team performance (Ngan, Prendergast, & Tsang, 2011; Wakefield & Bennett, 2010);
- *Sponsor related*, such as existing knowledge of a sponsor’s product (R. Lacey, Close, & Finney, 2010);
- *Event related*, such as event involvement (Alexandris, Douka, Bakaloumi, & Tsasousi, 2008) or experience with the sponsor’s exhibit (Close & Lacey, 2014; Sneath, Finney, & Close, 2005);
- *Consistency related*, such as fit/congruence between event and sponsor (Grohs & Reisinger, 2005; Hutabarat & Gayatri, 2014);
- *Visitor related*, such as demographic characteristics of targeted customers (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006).

In a similar context, sponsorship outcomes are primarily investigating purchase intention (Alexandris, Tsaousi, & James, 2007; Choi, Tsuji, Hutchinson, & Bouchet, 2011), sponsor awareness (both recognition and recall) (Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka, 2004), brand attitude (Koo, Quarterman, & Flynn, 2006), and brand image (Woisetschläger & Michaelis, 2012).

The above literature review highlighted that, although there are specific event-related studies, they focus more on involvement with the activities of the event than on the impact of the venue. Despite the growing importance of the role of the venue (Getz, 2013), specific literature on how venue satisfaction affects event sponsorship outcomes is still lacking.

In the following section, the concept of venue and its related attributes is discussed in an attempt to present what is already known in the literature about its effect of sponsorship outcomes.

Table 1
Literature on Sponsorship Antecedents and Sponsorship Outcomes

Authors	Antecedents	Sponsorship Outcomes
Hickman (2015)	Fan identification, purchase intentions, and sponsorship awareness	Share of wallet attained by sponsors.
Close and Lacey (2014)	Attendees' product knowledge, attendees' plans to experience the sponsor's exhibit	Opinions of the sponsor (4 items and 1–5 scale) purchase intentions (1 item and 1–5 scale)
Close, Lacey, and Cornwell (2015)	Event Quality, attitude, and visual processing	Attitude toward the sponsor's products (2 items 1–5 scale) and purchase intent (4 items and 1–5 scale)
Hutabarat and Gayatri (2014)	Sponsor-event congruence	Brand image, attitude toward the brand, purchase intention
Woisetschläger et al. (2012)	Effects of learning and remembering of a sponsorship stimulus on brand image over time	Brand image
Ngan et al. (2011)	Team performance and the presence of a star in the team	Purchase intention (3 items and 1–7 scale)
Choi et al. (2011)	Satisfaction with event sponsors, goodwill, and fan identification	Purchase intention (1 item and 1–7 scale)
Potwarka et al. (2009)	Involvement with an event and frequency of exposure to sponsors' signage	Brand name recognition
Wakefield and Bennett (2010)	The competitive performance of the property, the affective intensity felt toward the property, the relatedness of its sponsor, and the prominence of its sponsor	Sponsor identification (yes/no)
R. Lacey et al. (2010)	Attendees' existing knowledge of an event sponsor's products, attendees' product knowledge, and assessments of sponsor's demonstration of social responsibility	Purchase intention (3 items and 1–5 scale)
Bennett et al. (2009)	Involvement, demographic characteristics, and action sport consumption	Brand use (yes/no)
Tsiotsou and Alexandris (2009)	Fans' team attachment	Sponsor image (3 items and 1–7 scale); Purchase intentions (3 items and 1–7 scale); Word of mouth (1 item and 1–7 scale)
Alexandris et al. (2008)	Spectators' attitude toward the event, spectators' involvement with the activity of the event, and spectators' beliefs about sponsorship	Sponsor identification (yes/no)
Dees et al. (2008)	Attitude, goodwill, and fan involvement	Purchase intention (1 item and 1–5 scale)
Clark, Cornwell, and Pruitt (2008)	Sponsorship announcements	Stock prices of sponsoring firms
Sirgy, Lee, Johar, and Tidwell (2008)	Self-congruity with a sponsorship event	Brand loyalty (1 item and 1–4 scale)
Woisetschläger, Hartleb, and Blut (2008)	Sponsorship evaluative congruence	Brand image (3 items and 1–7 scale)
Filo, Funk, and Neale (2007)	Sport participation motivation and event attachment	Purchase intention (2 items and 1–7 scale)
Alexandris et al. (2007)	Attitude toward the event, sport activity involvement (centrality and attraction), and beliefs about sponsorship	Sponsors image (4 items and 1–5 scale); word of mouth (1 item and 1–5 scale); purchase intention (3 items and 1–5 scale)
L. Lacey, Sneath, Finney, and Close (2007)	Repeat event attendees	Community involvement, brand image, and product (3 items and 1–7 scale)
Martensen et al. (2007)	Brand involvement, event involvement, fit between brand and event, brand emotions, event emotions, event attitude	Brand attitude (9 items and 1–5 scale); purchase intention (4 items and 1–5 scale)
Dees, Bennett, and Tsuji (2006)	Attitude toward commercialization and attitude toward event	Purchase intentions
Miloch and Lambrecht (2006)	Age, gender, level of interest in the event, and subject type (participant, spectator, or volunteer)	Sponsor recall, recognition (yes/no); Purchase intention (1 item and 1–5 scale);
Close et al. (2006)	Knowledge of sponsor, sport activity levels, sports enthusiasm, and community involvement	Attitude (2 items and 1–5 scale); purchase Intentions (1 item and 1–5 scale)

(continued)

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Antecedents	Sponsorship Outcomes
Koo et al. (2006)	Perceived brand/sport event image fit	Image (4 items and 1–7 scale); attitude (3 items and 1–7 scale); Recognition (yes/no); Purchase intention (2 items and 1–7 scale)
Grohs and Reisinger (2005)	Event-sponsor fit, event involvement, sponsorship exposure	Image transfer (12 items and 1–7 scale)
Sneath et al. (2005)	Experience with the sponsor's products during the event and influences on spectators' perceptions	Attitude (2 items and 1–5 scale); Likelihood of purchase (1 items and 1–5 scale)
Grohs et al. (2004)	Brand prominence, event-sponsor fit, event involvement, and exposure	Sponsor awareness (unaided and aided recall); sponsor image (12 items and 1–7 scale)
Gwinner and Swanson (2003)	Team identification	Sponsor recognition (yes/no); attitude (3 items and 1–7 scale); Patronage (3 items and 1–7 scale); Satisfaction (3 items and 1–7 scale)

The Concept of Event Venue

Event venues range in size and type; from stadia to music arenas, from outdoor playing fields, to school and community halls. They may be owned by public authorities, private entrepreneurs, charity/nonprofit associations, or consortia of shareholders. Some are purpose built to host events and others are dual use (such as educational venue facilities), while a few are only sporadically used to host events (e.g., public spaces). Another form of plurality in event venues is associated to the duration of their life; from those that are ephemeral to those that are permanent. Some event venues are temporarily erected, such as the Universal Exposition (Expo), and then transported to other spaces, or dismantled and discarded after use, or leased to another event. Furthermore, events venues can refer to different contexts, such as hospitality, tourism, leisure, and sport.

One of the most comprehensive taxonomies on events venues has been developed by Hassanien and Dale (2011), with the aim of identifying the different criteria that can be used to explore the concept and the scope of events venue. According to the authors, the criteria that can be used to classify the events venues sector are:

- *Strategic*, for example, on the bases of the core business of the event venue, the type of ownership, or management;
- *Market*, in terms of type of buyer (e.g., individual, corporate) or market place (e.g., regional, national);

- *Physical features*, such as size, space, etc.;
- *Service*, in terms of types of services and facilities offered;
- *Activities*, in terms of the types of activities (e.g., conference, exhibition, etc.).

Within the research field on event venue, three main relevant issues have been emerged: 1) the dimensions of the event quality (antecedents of the quality); 2) the relationship between the quality of the event (where the venue is one of the variables considered), the event satisfaction, and the loyalty; and 3) the event experience. These issues are explored below.

With reference to the dimensions of the event quality, the perception of satisfaction regarding an event venue is driven by different factors; given the particularities of many events, such as sport events and cultural festivals, event venue satisfaction is considered as a customer response to a) intangible, “soft” service quality dimensions, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, as well as b) tangible “servicescape” dimensions (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). Minor, Wagner, Brewerton, and Hausman (2004) suggest consumers judge performances as the sum of several components, including both elements of the performance and the venue.

Baker and Crompton (2000) claim that the perceived quality of festival performance is a significant assessment factor because it is under the control of festival organizers, while the level of satisfaction

that depends on the visitors' behavior is not always within the control of management. Rosenbaum and Wong (2010) note that when applied to a festival venue, these dimensions should include assessments of a venue's ambient conditions (e.g., cleanliness), space and function (e.g., sufficient rest areas), signs, symbols, artifacts (e.g., brochures), cost, and venue convenience.

Shonk and Chelladurai (2008) suggest that venue quality is comprised of environment, interactions, and value while T. J. Lee (2009) investigates the prior attributes required of a venue by conference organizers and by hotel managers.

One of the research that highlights the impact of the venue on satisfaction was developed by Siu, Wan, and Dong (2012). The authors demonstrate that servicescape elements (of the venue) positively influence customers' perceived quality of the service, their affect, customer satisfaction, and desire to stay. They propose that the servicescape of event is composed of: ambient conditions, spatial layout, functionality, signs and symbols, and cleanliness.

With regards to the relationship between event quality, customer satisfaction, and fidelity, in a variety of sectors the enhancement of service quality has been identified as a key strategy for increasing levels of customer satisfaction (Neal, Quester, & Hawkins, 2002). An enhanced venue service/experience necessitates that organizers face greater complexity in the management of event service quality and, consequently, they require more elaborate frameworks to affect and assess customer satisfaction.

Numerous studies have analyzed the relationship that exists between event quality factors and customer satisfaction, where venue is one of the variables considered; Ko (2005) developed a scale of service quality in spectator sport, a 40-item scale, by adapting ServPerf with a multidimensional and hierarchical model (Ko & Pastore, 2005). The latter research approach was developed to test the psychometric properties of a five-dimensional framework, including quality of sport game, augmented services, interaction, outcome, and venue.

Crotts, Pan, and Raschid (2008) argue that key drivers of satisfaction can differ between delighted and dissatisfied customers of a wine festival; moreover, these drivers are attributes that have a direct relationship with customers' repeat visit intent.

A step higher from satisfaction, guest delight is defined as a positive emotional response to surprising service encounters (Berman, 2005). Importantly, according to Torres and Kline (2006), guest delight appeared more positively correlated with customer loyalty, positive word of mouth, and repeat purchase or visitation, than guest satisfaction.

Finally, event experience design is considered as inextricably linked to venue specifications and customer experience places are the new offering frontier (Gilmore & Pine, 2002; Lugosi, 2014). Companies marketing programs increasingly create experience places in real or virtual locations where customers can try products as well as immerse themselves in the experience, thus fulfilling unmet or latent demand. Efforts to measure cognitive satisfaction in any event venue have also offered insights into the relationship between customer satisfaction, sponsor identity, future attendance levels, and effects on profits (Martin, 2007). Altschwager, Goodman, Conduit, and Habel (2015) state that the relevance or importance of an event to a consumer can be determined by how well that event fulfills their particular experiential needs. According to the authors, marketing events must be delineated into categories that reflect their ability to fulfill sensory and cognitive stimulation needs.

The above literature review highlighted that, although there are specific studies on the quality of the event (and its impact on satisfaction and loyalty), the venue is generally considered as one of the factors investigated. Although, studies that focus on the capacity of the venue to impact on quality and satisfaction are rare (Siu et al., 2012). Even in the case of literature on event sponsorship, studies focus more on the impact of event involvement on the sponsorship outcomes (Alexandris et al., 2008; Potwarka, McCarville, Tew, & Kaczynski, 2009), while the role of the venue has always been analyzed marginally.

Starting from these premises, this study was designed to investigate the role of the venue in generating a positive effect on sponsorship image (recall, attitude, and purchase intention).

The literature review also suggests that key drivers of satisfaction can differ between delighted and dissatisfied customers (Crotts et al., 2008) and guest delight appeared more positively correlated with customer loyalty, positive word of mouth, and

repeat purchase or visitation, than guest satisfaction (Torres & Kline, 2006).

Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework

To test the effect of event venue satisfaction on sponsor image we considered three different types of attendee: delighted attendee (whose overall satisfaction was more than 4 on a 5-point Likert scale); unsatisfied attendee (overall satisfaction was less than 2); and unexposed (those who have not yet attended the venue) (see Fig. 1).

Sponsor Recall

Many studies examining sponsorship effectiveness focus on general public awareness of sponsors. The concept of sponsor awareness is a corollary of brand awareness, that is, “the ability for a buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category” (Aaker, 1991, p. 61); brand awareness itself is made up of two main components, namely, brand recognition and brand recall (Keller, 1993).

In the context of sponsorships, consumer awareness of the sponsor—in terms of sponsor recognition and recall—is a significant sponsorship outcome (Stipp & Schiavone, 1996). A number of

authors (Alexandris et al., 2008; Grohs et al., 2004) have focused on the importance of event interest and event involvement, concluding that event involvement is one of the dominant factors predicting sponsor awareness. Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Delighted attendees have a more positive awareness of the sponsor than unsatisfied attendees (H.1.1) and then unexposed attendees (H.1.2); also, unexposed attendees have a more positive awareness of the sponsor than unsatisfied attendees (H.1.3).

Attitudes Toward Sponsors

Attitude toward the sponsor could be defined as the consumer’s overall favorable or unfavorable evaluation of an organization sponsoring an event (Keller, 1993). Attitudes towards sponsors are critical determinants of consumer buyer behavior and Meenaghan and O’Sullivan (2001) identify attitude toward the sponsor as one of the critical variables affecting consumer purchase intentions within a sponsorship effectiveness context. In addition, several studies reveal that positive attitudes toward a sponsor are positively linked with intentions to attend an event and the motivation to consider purchasing a sponsor’s product (Close, Finney, Lacey,

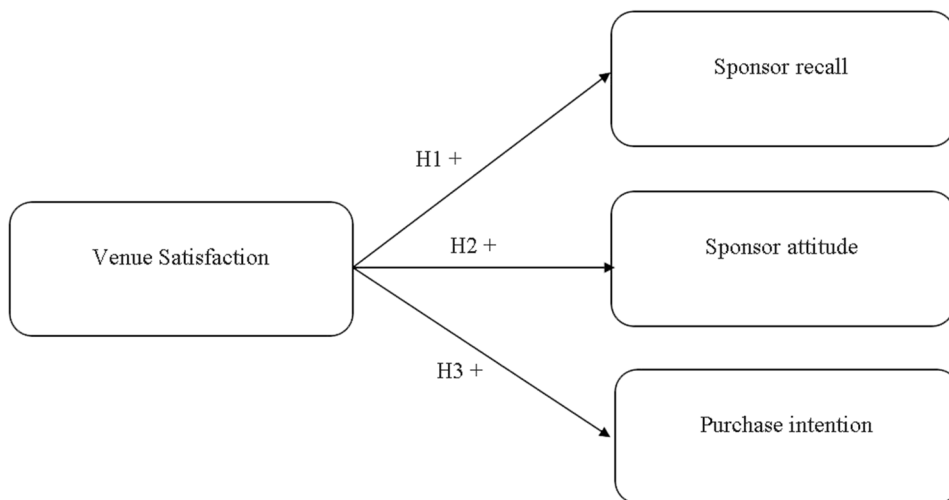


Figure 1. Theoretical model and research hypothesis.

& Sneath, 2006; Sneath et al., 2005). Previous research has also shown that attitudes toward a sponsor influences consumer purchase intentions (M. S. Lee et al., 1997; Madrigal, 2001; Meenaghan & O'Sullivan, 2001).

Therefore, on the basis of the above literature, the assumption is made that levels of satisfaction toward the event venue may influence the attendees' purchase intention of sponsors' products. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated as:

H2: Delighted attendees have a more positive attitude toward the sponsor than unsatisfied attendees (H.2.1) and unexposed attendees (H.2.2); also, unexposed attendees have a more positive attitude toward the sponsor than unsatisfied attendees (H.2.3).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is regarded as the likelihood that a consumer will buy a product, and is defined as "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand" (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 56). Even though purchase intentions are not equivalent to actual purchase behaviors, an individual's intentions may affect his or her future behaviors (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). According to some scholars (e.g., Alexandris et al., 2007), purchase intention is probably the most tested sponsorship effect. For the purposes of this article, the following hypothesis was formulated as follows:

H3: Delighted attendees have a stronger intention to buy the sponsor's product than unsatisfied attendees (H.3.1) and then unexposed attendees (H.3.2); also, unexposed attendees have a stronger intention to buy the sponsor's product than unsatisfied attendees (H.3.3).

Methodology

The International Rome Film Festival is a film festival that takes place annually during the months of October/November and is usually held at Rome's *Auditorium Parco della Musica*, designed by world-famous architect Renzo Piano. In the VI festival edition, the number of participants increased from previous years, with over 123,000 tickets sold and

over 630,000 people participating in film viewings or festival-related venue activities.

The auditorium includes a series of spaces for commercial, recreational, exhibition, and study activities. According to the taxonomy criteria developed by Hassanien and Dale (2011), the venue has the following main characteristics: events organization is the primary core business activity, the ownership is public, and the industry context is leisure/entertainment. Other characteristics include that the auditorium is a large modern infrastructure, it is located in the town center, and it is purpose built with indoor and outdoor areas. During the event period, stands and flagships corners were staged by the four sponsors. Furthermore, the sponsor's branding was printed at the bottom of each event banner, on the festival program, and on both brochures and tickets.

Measurement Scales

The operationalization of items to measure the aforementioned constructs was informed by previous studies on venue and sponsorship effectiveness.

The evaluation of the satisfaction toward the venue has been recorded as overall evaluation.

Attendees were asked to judge their overall satisfaction towards the venue, taking into account the following dimensions: ambient conditions, spatial layout, functionality, signs and symbols, and cleanliness (Siu et al., 2012).

To measure sponsor awareness, the unaided recall technique was used. In particular, to measure sponsor awareness we used the unaided recall technique. Participants were asked to answer to the following question: "Do you know who are the official sponsors of the Festival?" (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006).

To measure the attitude toward the sponsor, the scale employed by Dees, Bennett, and Villegas (2008) was used. High scores on the scale suggest that the respondent has a positive evaluation of a particular sponsor. The scale includes four items: "I have a positive opinion of the company who sponsored this event"; "The company who sponsored this event is a successful company"; "The company who sponsored this event markets high quality products"; "The company who sponsored this event is a professional company."

Finally, to measure indirect purchase intention, a slightly modified version of Alexandris et al. (2007) and Tsiotsou and Alexandris' (2009) scale was used. All these items were scaled on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree/unsatisfied*) to 5 (*strongly agree/satisfied*). These measures were tested for all the four sponsors.

As regards to the evaluation of customer satisfaction, two groups of customers were identified for the analysis: unsatisfied customers (those with 1 and 2 points in the Likert scale) and very satisfied customers (delighted customers). In the latter case, Berman's (2005) recommendation was used—at the far-right end of the customer satisfaction continuum is the zone of delight (p. 133)—and delighted respondents were considered as those with 4 and 5 points on the Likert scale.

Procedure and Samples

The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability in a group of eight individuals. A team of 10 researchers and one supervisor were involved in the data collection. During the 10-day event, 1,174 useful questionnaires were collected face-to-face by the interviewers. Each interview was about 15 min long. In order to meet the sampling criteria, the interviewed individuals had to be adults (at least 16 years old). To achieve the research objectives and test the different hypotheses, the face-to-face questionnaires were completed in two different locations: inside the venue (nearby the sponsors' hospitality areas) and outside the venue. A nonprobability sampling (convenience) technique was used to get data from the attendees; researchers located outside the venue only selected respondent that had not yet participated in the event, while inside the venue individuals that have enjoined the event were selected (convenience technique). Subjects received no incentive for completing the questionnaire.

At the end of the 3 days of data collection, 751 participants (64% of the sample) were interviewed inside the sponsors' village venue, while 423 (36% of the sample) were interviewed outside the entrance to the sponsors' village venue. Data were analyzed by using SPSS 19.0 software and two-sample *t* tests were performed to test the hypothesis on the four sponsors.

The tables presented in the results section refer to the output of one of the four sponsors, who we called, for privacy reasons, sponsor "Alpha." The same results were obtained for all four sponsors.

Results

The data analysis conducted as part of this research sought to test the research hypotheses listed, which are next discussed in turn. Table 2 shows the results, the number, and percentage of unaided citations of the sponsor name of sponsor awareness for sponsor *Alpha*. The analysis of the data shows that there are no differences between the three groups of attendees (delighted, unsatisfied, and unexposed). In all groups, the percentage of customers that spontaneously mentioned the name of sponsor *Alpha* is around the 37%. Likewise, the percentage of customers that mentioned other sponsors names ranged from 48.7% to 53.3%. Therefore, considering the results, further statistical analysis in support of the hypothesis has not been carried out. Thus, hypotheses 1.1., 1.2., and 1.3. are rejected.

Table 3 shows the results (means and standard deviations) of the three groups of attendees' attitudes toward sponsor *Alpha* and their purchase intention.

The data also offer evidence that delighted customers have the higher level of attitude (on all items) and purchase intention, followed by those who have not experienced the venue, and finally

Table 2
Number and Percentage of Unaided Citations of Sponsor *Alpha*

	Sponsor Citations [n(%)]	Other Sponsor Citations [n(%)]	No Answer [n(%)]	Total
Delighted	188 (37.2)	259 (51.3)	58 (11.5)	505
Unsatisfied	91 (37.0)	131 (53.3)	24 (9.8)	246
Unexposed	157 (37.1)	206 (48.7)	60 (14.2)	423

Table 3

Attitude Toward the Sponsor *Alpha* and Purchase Intention (Mean and Standard Deviation)

Attitude and Purchase Intention	Delighted Mean (SD)	Unsatisfied Mean (SD)	Unexposed Mean (SD)
I have a positive opinion of the SPONSOR	3.90 (0.998)	3.42 (1.125)	3.77 (1.060)
SPONSOR is a successful company	4.04 (0.944)	3.58 (1.058)	3.83 (1.010)
SPONSOR markets high quality products	3.95 (0.955)	3.51 (1.026)	3.80 (1.021)
SPONSOR is a professional company	4.06 (0.908)	3.62 (1.036)	3.78 (1.018)
I do not recommend SPONSOR'S products to a friend of mine	3.86 (1.079)	3.25 (1.310)	3.63 (1.152)

the dissatisfied attendees. In particular, unsatisfied customers recorded the lowest level, with a mean range from 3.25 to 3.62, while delighted customers performed the highest level, with a mean range from 3.86 to 4.06. Finally, unexposed visitors are placed in a middle ground between delighted and unsatisfied customers (range from 3.63 to 3.83).

This result shows clearly that there is a strong difference between satisfied and dissatisfied customers and, consequently, it highlights the impact of the venue on the sponsors' performance on all five items.

In order to test hypotheses 2.1., 2.2., and 2.3., *t* tests were performed on all the four sponsors to determine whether there were any significant differences in attitude for delighted, unexposed, and unsatisfied attendees.

As seen in Tables 3 and 4, the data indicate that respondents who have a high level of satisfaction (delighted) always had a better image of sponsor *Alpha* than unsatisfied attendees; in depth, the means were significantly higher for all the four sponsors' items with a value of $p < 0.001$, so that

H2.1 is confirmed. Regarding the difference of opinion between delighted attendees and those who have no experience of the sponsors' village venue, data show a difference among the means (at a different *p*-value level of significance). Therefore, hypothesis 2.2 can be confirmed. Finally, the data indicate that respondents without experience of the sponsors' village venue always had a better image of the sponsor than unsatisfied attendees (at a different *p*-value level of significance). Therefore, hypothesis 2.3 can also be confirmed.

To test hypotheses 3.1., 3.2., and 3.3., *t* tests were conducted to verify the differences of purchase intention among the three groups of attendees on all the four sponsors. Table 5 shows the results for sponsor *Alpha*.

The *t* test suggests that the mean values for intention to buy of the delighted attendees were significantly higher than those of unsatisfied customers, and of those who had not experienced the sponsors' village venue ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.01$, respectively). Therefore, hypotheses 3.1 and 3.2 are also confirmed. Finally, those without experience of a

Table 4

t Test Results for Attitude Toward the Sponsor *Alpha* Among Event Groups

<i>t</i> Test Results	Delighted/Unsatisfied			Delighted/Unexposed			Unexposed/Unsatisfied		
	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.
I have a positive opinion of the SPONSOR	10.191	5.303	0.000*	1.484	1.786	0.076****	4.029	-3.560	0.000*
SPONSOR is a successful company	13.241	5.464	0.000*	2.745	2.871	0.004**	4.404	-2.838	0.005**
SPONSOR markets high quality products	10.895	5.082	0.000*	3.529	2.049	0.042***	2.513	-3.097	0.002**
SPONSOR is a professional company	12.478	5.259	0.000*	6.082	3.811	0.000*	1.569	-1.796	0.073****

Notes. The overall strength of relationship is significant. * $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.05$; **** $p < 0.1$.

Table 5

t Test Results for Purchase Intentions of the Sponsor's *Alpha* Product Among Event Groups

<i>t</i> Test Results	Delighted/Unsatisfied			Delighted/Unexposed			Unexposed/Unsatisfied		
	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig.
I do recommend SPONSOR'S products to a friend of mine	17.552	5.875	0.000*	4.431	2.789	0.005	5.91	-3.351	0.001*

Note. The overall strength of relationship is significant. * $p < 0.001$.

venue have a significantly higher level of purchase intention than unsatisfied attendees ($p < 0.001$). H3.3 is also confirmed.

Discussion and Managerial Implication

This research provided empirical evidence concerning the effects of event venue satisfaction on sponsorship outcomes. The initial assumption was that attendee satisfaction throughout the event venue, staged by the sponsors and the event organizers, would influence the main outcomes on sponsor's equity: awareness, attitude, and purchase intention.

Statistically significant differences emerged between highly satisfied individuals exposed to the venue in comparison with a) those who did not experience the venue, and b) those who were unsatisfied. In particular, the effects of venue satisfaction were linked to the outcomes of attitude and purchase intention of sponsors' products. Different levels of sponsor awareness (recall) seemed not to be influenced by the venue experience.

Although there has been no previous empirical research specifically investigating the impact of venue satisfaction on sponsorship outcomes, the findings reported here confirm and support what authors proposed in similar studies on antecedents or factors affecting sponsorship effectiveness. In particular, many authors have tested and confirmed a relationship between *event-related* variables and sponsors' effectiveness. In these studies, authors have analyzed *event-related* antecedents such as: event activity involvement (Alexandris et al., 2007; Alexandris et al., 2008; Bennett, Ferreira, Lee, & Polite, 2009; Grohs & Reisinger, 2005; Martensen, Grønholdt, Bendtsen, & Jensen, 2007) and experience with the sponsor's exhibit (Close & Lacey, 2014; Sneath et al., 2005).

The construct of "activity involvement" was used in the studies by Alexandris et al. (2007, 2008) as an antecedent of sponsorship outcomes. Activity involvement has been defined as "an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest toward a recreation activity or associated product" (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997, p. 246). The studies highlighted that the mean scores in the attitudinal variables toward the sponsors were higher among the involved spectators (such as, for example, dancing festival spectators compared to visitors to a basketball game or snowboarding exhibition). Regarding the experience with the sponsors, Sneath et al. (2005) confirmed that experience with a sponsor's products during an event may enhance event outcomes.

The same results were confirmed by Close and Lacey (2014) in their analysis of sponsors' ability to use exhibits to create stronger sponsorship outcomes by enhancing attendees' brand opinion and purchase intentions. The authors explored how plans to visit (versus actual visits to) the title sponsor's marketing exhibits impacted on sponsorships' effectiveness at a week-long cycling event. The study's results suggest that the mere presence of event marketing activities (in addition to sponsorship communications) improves sponsorship outcomes.

These studies confirm that event-related factors can affect sponsors effectiveness.

Our study contributes to the literature delving into the role of the event venue (as an *event-related* variable) and its impact on sponsorship effectiveness.

The findings offer some interesting insights for practitioners involved in event planning and organization, such as event managers or venue managers, or those who invest in sponsorship (such as marketing or communication managers). We suggest managers give maximum attention to the role

of the venue in event experiences and to measure attendees' satisfaction with it. Furthermore, event managers can use customer satisfaction data to better negotiate sponsorship terms with potential sponsors.

From a broader perspective, and in line with the results of all previous studies with which the results of this research are integrated, the researchers recommend to sponsoring firms or event managers to:

- Assign an important role within the communication or sponsorship strategy to event-marketing activities organized in the venue during a sponsored event;
- Consider the synergies between the wide variety of event-marketing activities held before or during a sponsored event;
- Try to ensure that the impact of event-marketing activities is high and use this information when negotiating sponsorship value and effectiveness.

Limitations and Future Research Lines

Because this research study focused on a specific event, there are limitations related to the fact that: a) the analysis has been developed on the main sponsors of the event; b) the data is specific to the Rome International Film Festival; and c) no longitudinal or time series data was collected to reveal how consumer perceptions and intentions differed between years in which the festival was hosted.

Future research may strengthen the theoretical underpinning by examining the literature on the (over)commoditization of venues and event experiences and considering additional angles of investigation, including an investigation of the relationship between the demographic attributes of attendees (i.e., gender, age, class, and economic status). It may also explore which aspects of the venue have the greatest effect on sponsorship outcomes.

Researchers could also carry out longitudinal research in order to evaluate attendees' knowledge and opinions before and after an event, which would allow them to better evaluate the impact of events and the bias of attendees' prior knowledge of the sponsors brand or the sponsors promotion activities (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998).

Another opportunity for future research could be to identify which event-marketing activities inside

the venue are most interesting for attendees; in fact, managers need to estimate which operative activities, performed during an event and inside the venue (e.g., free entertainment, experienced product displays, education, promotional gifts, etc.), generate the strongest impression on attendees.

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