

Gap analysis of service quality at Innibos Arts Festival

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Abstract

Events, specifically festivals, have experienced significant growth in South Africa over the past ten years in size, numbers, diversity and popularity (Van Zyl, 2011). Arts festivals have become a feature in the South African cultural landscape and long term success and sustainability of these events rely on the emphasis of service quality, thereby highlighting sustainability of festivals and events. The questionnaire, based on the SERVQUAL model and an adaption of the Grönroos model was used to identify service perceptions and expectations of service quality at Innibos National Arts Festival in Mbombela, South Africa. The data were collected in two phases, the first prior to the festival to measure attendee's expectations, and the second after the festival to measure the attendee's experience of service quality at the festival. The statistical analysis was performed on a construct level as well as an individual variable level. This study aimed at quantifying the gap between attendee's expectations and perceptions of service quality and overall customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Service quality, SERVQUAL, festivals, perceptions, expectations.

INTRODUCTION

A succession of key social, cultural, technological and political events during the first fifty (50) years of the twentieth century have led to tourism growth, affecting an increasing range of environments. tourism becoming a mega worldwide industry (Page & Connell, 2006). Allen, Bowdin, O'Toole, Harris and McDonnell (2010) agree that events have become a feature of these environments and act as both catalysts for business activities and as income generators. Yoon, Lee and Lee (2010) opine that a review of relevant literature overwhelmingly supports the view that the

perceived level of customer service quality is a vital antecedent to eventual visitor satisfaction. According to Liang Liang, Illum and Cole (2008), in recent years, small towns have started regarding local festivals as a specialized form of tourism with dedicated economic development strategies. One such development is the introduction of Innibos National Arts Festival, held in the city of Mbombela, the capital of Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.

Innibos management (2009) explains that the festival, which is held annually in June, hosts an array of theatre, cabaret, classical

and rock productions at various venues in and around

Mbombela. This festival currently draws support from the same target audience as similar festivals in South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Events and festivals

According to Ozdemir and Culha (2009), the growth in size, popularity and diversity of festivals in recent years as special events has been enormous and festival tourism was labeled as “an emerging giant” over ten years ago. Both Van Zyl (2011) and Yolal, Woo, Cetinen and Uysal (2012) view festivals as unique tourist attractions which have experienced global growth and gained popularity in recent years. Liang *et al.* (2008) assert that festivals boost cultural tourism in host communities, providing each community with an opportunity to share and celebrate its culture and achievements with visitors while helping each community to develop its own identity. According to Liang *et al.* (2008), cultural tourism and festivals play a significant role in boosting host communities. Organisers of events use cultural themes in annual events to attract visitors and boost sustainable tourism. Sharing information on unique cultural heritage, local customs and ethnic backgrounds provides opportunities for local communities to publicise their culture (Yoon *et al.*, 2010). Van Zyl (2008) adds that planned events, encompassing festivals and arts festivals are common events in South Africa. In some cases these have become annual or bi-annual events, increasing in size each year and attracting large numbers of local and non-local visitors. Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris and McDonnell (2011) explain that arts festivals are universal and display considerable diversity. Getz, Andersson and Carlsen (2010) place festivals in the classical cultural-anthropological context as “a sacred or

profane time of celebration, marked by special observances”. In this context, Bowdin *et al.* (2011) classify a festival as a time of celebration, relaxation and recuperation. The artistic content of such events was variable and many had a religious or ritualistic slant, but music, dance and drama were often important features of the celebration. An essential feature of the festival was often celebration or reaffirmation of community or culture. Getz (2008) subscribes to Bowdin *et al.*’s (2011) classification of a festival and states that it is a social occasion of periodic recurrence, in a multiplicity of forms and a series of co-ordinated events. Participation can be open to all members of a community who are united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and a shared worldview.

Although arts festivals are universal, they display considerable diversity. By definition, arts festivals celebrate an art form, artist, or historical event in the art world and can result in an unusual repertoire of offerings (Tassiopoulos, 2010). Arts festivals are held in almost every part of the world and display wide diversity, an unusual selection of performances and exhibits, top performers and artists in the field celebrating a form of art, historical event or artist in the world of art are possible offerings (Getz, 1997). Getz (2010) asserts that a concerted effort towards treating festivals as commodities and focusing upon consumer behaviour and other marketing concepts, such as motivation for attending festivals and linking quality, satisfaction and behavioural intentions, is imperative. Deery and Jago (2010) agree that due to vying for support from the festival market, event organisers need to place considerable emphasis on service quality as a means of gaining competitive advantage. Tran and Ralston (2006) continues by stating that most festivals are exceptionally responsive to the specific needs of their participants. A festival will be unsuccessful, unless it meets the expectations and needs of the

attendees. This highlights and reinforces the role of service quality in the sustainability of festivals.

Service quality

According to Prakash and Mohanty (2012), the concept of service quality became an issue from the 1960s until the late 1970s. The period between 1980 and 1985 was an era of keen interest in service quality and 1985 to 1995, interest in empirical testing of conceptual frameworks and models such as those of Cronin and Taylor (1992), Berkley and Gupta (1994) and Parasuraman (1985) which grew at a pace, leading to the growth in research into service quality. A review of literature reveals that service quality models offer a framework of understanding as to what the concept of service quality is, as well as the measurement of service quality in each proposed conceptualisation (Martinez & Martinez, 2010). Landrum, Prybutok, Zhang and Peak (2009) and Lucas (2009) assert that in today's changing global environment, many organisations face increased competition which motivates them to seek competitive advantage, to display efficiency and to provide profitable opportunities to differentiate themselves in the market place. According to Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim (2010) service quality can be defined as the driving force to higher customer satisfaction and retention, thereby enhancing profitability and the ability to meet the competitive challenges within organisations. Sanchez-Garcia & Curras-Perez (2011) emphasise that when organisations offer poor service quality, both the customer and the organisation are affected. As the customer is not likely to return, this will have a detrimental effect on the organisation's reputation and affect the sustainability of the organisation negatively. A review of research by Alenezim, Kamil and Basri (2010) reveals that service quality is recognized as one of the major factors to

ensure an organisation's sustainability, and one of the driving forces behind an

organisation's achievement. The latter represents the outcome of a comparison between customers' expectations and customers' service received. Prakash and Mohanty (2012) maintain that service quality is the customer's impression of the service provider and the services offered. This can be seen as the result of a process which implies satisfaction with all the legitimate product and service requirements, needs and expectations of the consumer. A reasonable price and compliance with underlying determinants such as safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, transparency and authenticity make up the package.

In addition, customer satisfaction has attracted considerable attention in literature due to its potential impact on consumer behaviour, despite the conceptualization of the customer satisfaction construct and how satisfaction is measured effectively (Caro & Garcia, 2008 and Smith & Brown, 2008). Chen (2008) states that many researchers such as Oliver (1980); Bitner (1990); Fornell (1992) and Chen (2008) endorse the statement that customer satisfaction is the overall affective response to a perceived discrepancy between perceived performance and prior expectation after consumption. Many authors such as Gonzalez, Comesana and Brea (2007), Hutchinson, Lai and Wang (2009); Varela-Neira, Vazquez-Casielle and Iglesias-Arguelles (2008) and Kim and Lee (2010) argue that service quality and customer satisfaction have a high level of interrelation, though they differ in some respects. Hutchinson *et al.* (2009) agree that while customer satisfaction and service quality are related, both have distinct constructs. Lee (2005) and Saravanan and Rao (2007) add that service quality is likely to be the medium for providing satisfaction, but it does not directly measure satisfaction.

Saravanan and Rao (2007), Caro and Garcia (2008) and Smith and Brown (2008) state it should be acknowledged that

customer satisfaction may be increased by improving the quality of facilities and services, which in turn enhances the quality experience. Caro and Garcia (2008) report that there is general consensus among researchers that both service quality and customer satisfaction are in some measure influenced by the expectation of the customer. There is still considerable research to be done on how this process takes place. Expectation is viewed as a prediction made by a customer about what is likely to happen during an impending transaction or “exchange” or what the customer believes a service provider should offer (rather than what they in fact offer). Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1988) suggest that a service quality assessment is derived from the comparison of desired and perceived service, while the assessment of customer satisfaction derive from the comparison between predicted and perceived service. Both service quality and customer satisfaction are measured by using the gap approach in which the difference between perception and expectations is measured. The size of the gap between a customer’s service expectation and his/her perceptions indicates the level of dissatisfaction (Large & König, 2009). Gonzalez *et al.* (2007) opine that customer satisfaction results from global and individual transactions, while service quality is based on the superiority or inferiority of the service supplier and products or services. In a review of literature there appears to be consensus on the fact that service quality and customer satisfaction are separate constructs. To conclude, Stiglingh (2008) maintains it may be more correct to regard service quality as a casual antecedent to satisfaction.

Pakdil and Aydin (2007), Saravanan and Rao (2007) and Johns, Leeross and Tyas

(2000) agree that the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithmal in 1985 is an authoritative and extensively used scale for assessing service

quality and evaluating customers’ expectations and perceptions. Van Ree (2009) asserts that for measuring customer satisfaction, the disconfirmation paradigm is an appropriate method. Further research indicates that this model has been criticised for focusing on functional disparities of service quality and overlooking technical disparities. For this reason an additional model was included for the purpose of this study to reach the objectives of the study. The model used was developed by Grönroos in 1984. The Grönroos model focuses on both technical and functional quality. Technical quality refers to the quality that consumers actually receive therefore it focuses on the satisfaction levels of service quality (Bose & Gupta, 2013; Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988; Byarugaba & Osarenkhoe, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the above literature, the core research purpose was applied research based on a descriptive research approach. A quantitative methodology approach was selected, as this study’s methodology is grounded in the positivist social sciences paradigm. In this research random sampling was used, giving each member of the population an equal and known chance of being selected. The total population size of the festival was 96 000 over the duration of the festival. Data collection was done in two phases, (phase 1, respondents rated the service quality expectations of the festival and phase 2, respondents rated the service quality experience of the festival). The first section of the questionnaire required the respondents to indicate demographic information and the reasons for attending the festival. The second section of the

questionnaire was based on the Likert-scale principle. The Likert-scale was based on a five-point scale ranging from “very dissatisfied”, which scored 1, to “very satisfied”, which scored 5. The respondents were required to rate the service quality of the festival. The questions were divided into eight main constructs and categorized as follows; entertainment at the main stage

and theatre, site elements, price, food and beverages, craft exhibitors and vendors, parking, children’s entertainment and staff performance. Five hundred questionnaires were collected in phase 1 of the data collection process. The final realised sample comprised of 190 usable questionnaires, representing a 38% response rate.

A construct-level gap analysis and a variable gap analysis were used to analyse the data. For the construct level gap analysis the pre-data was validated using confirmation analysis. A reliability analysis using Cronbach’s α was used to test the reliability of the data before calculating the construct score and performing a paired sample t-test. For the variable level gap analysis, the variables were ranked within each category and the data were used to calculate the probability of positive and negative movement.

Construct-level gap analysis

To perform a gap analysis on the construct level, a confirmatory factor analysis with a reliability analysis was performed using the pre-data. Confirmatory factor analysis is used to test whether measures of a construct are consistent with the nature of the construct and whether the data fits the hypothesized measurement model. This analysis was performed on each of the 8 constructs in Section B of the questionnaire that formed part of the composite SERVQUAL and adapted Grönroos model. According to Field (2009:66), factor analysis

is a technique used to identify whether the correlations between a set of observed variables stem from their relationship to one or more latent variables in the data, each of which takes the form of a linear model. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is a measurement of sampling adequacy was used. Cronbach’s α , a reliability test used to determine whether the factors are consistent and reliable.

After this analysis construct scores were calculated for data collected before and after the festival. These scores were subjected to a paired *t*-test to identify differences (gaps) between the paired pre- and post-data, using a 0.05% significance level.

To quantify the practical significance of statistically significant gaps, the Cohen effect size was calculated. This is defined as $d = |\bar{D}|/s_d$ where $|\bar{D}|$ is then the absolute value of the average of the differences between after – before scores, and s_d is the standard deviation of the differences.

The value of d can be interpreted on the following scale:

$d < 0.2$: small effect; $d \approx 0.5$: medium effect; $d > 0.8$: large effect.

Variable-level gap analysis

After having determined the significant gaps on the construct level, the variables which constitute the main contribution to the gap were identified. Note that the contribution may be negative, namely; the respondents’ may have experienced a lower value than the perceived value, or a positive direction, namely respondents’ may have experienced a higher value than perceived value or no change in response, namely; respondents’ may have reported no change in their opinion between expectations and

experiences of the festival. To quantify the above said objective, a frequency analysis was used instead of calculating averages.

FINDINGS

Given the validity and reliability of the constructs, the construct level gap analysis conducted was based on the construct scores. Table 1 concludes that site

elements (.23), food and beverage vendors (.21), craft exhibits/vendors (.21), children’s

entertainment (.21) and staff (.52) showed statistically significant differences when comparing the after-score measurement with the before-score measurement.

However, only staff showed an effect size of medium importance whereas all the other construct differences were of small to medium importance.

TABLE 1: Construct level gap analysis - Paired t-test and effect size gap analysis

	Paired Differences		t	p-value	Effect size
	Mean	Std deviation			
Entertainment	.03	.27	1.78	.08	.13
Site Elements	.07	.31	3.17	.00	.23
Price	.01	.58	.22	.82	.02
Food & Beverage	.08	.37	2.83	.01	.21
Craft vendors	.16	.44	4.90	.00	.36
Parking	.02	.62	.52	.60	.04
Staff performance	.22	.43	7.16	.00	.52

Table 2 concludes that there was an overall positive movement (gap) when comparing the experiences versus the perceptions in all the constructs. Constructs in which the movements were the largest were craft/exhibit vendor and the staff constructs. Note that negative movements were

observed in the entertainment, site elements, price and parking constructs. However, these negative movements were small, except for the construct of price (food and beverage). The variables with larger gaps are highlighted in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Variable gap analysis

Construct	Variable	Negative change	No change	Positive change	Difference (Positive - Negative)
Entertainment	Signage	5.85	79.79	14.36	8.51
	Value for money	8.51	75	16.49	7.98
	Toilets (availability)	13.76	73.02	13.23	-0.53
	Accessibility for special needs	12.57	77.25	10.18	-2.39
Site elements	Promptness of artists	2.15	81.72	16.13	13.98

	Programme material	3.7	80.95	15.34	11.64
	Quality of sound	10.58	81.48	7.94	-2.64
Price	Parking	7.41	69.31	23.28	15.87
	Theatre (paid tickets)	19.28	68.07	12.65	-6.63
	Food and beverage	28.57	60.32	11.11	-17.46
Food	Service delivery	2.14	82.35	15.51	13.37
	Cleanliness/hygiene	4.84	80.11	15.05	10.21
Vendor	Value for money	3.17	73.54	23.28	20.11
	Accessibility	3.7	77.78	18.52	14.82
	General service delivery	2.65	81.48	15.87	13.22
	Variety of arts and crafts	6.88	76.72	16.4	9.52
Parking	Safety and security	5.35	75.4	19.25	13.9
	Signage	15.51	68.45	16.04	0.53
	Availability	15.51	69.52	14.97	-0.54
	Accessibility	12.83	75.4	11.76	-1.07
	Assistance of parking attendants	16.67	70.97	12.37	-4.3
Staff	Responsiveness	1.6	73.26	25.13	23.53
	Availability	1.07	74.87	24.06	22.99
	Promptness	1.08	80.65	18.28	17.2
	Friendliness	1.6	80.75	17.65	16.05
	Reliability and accessibility of info	3.23	78.49	18.28	15.05
	Efficiency of bookings	3.33	78.33	18.33	15

DISCUSSION

It is crucial for festival marketers and organisers to appreciate visitors' perceptions and evaluation of festivals (Ozdemir and Culha, 2009). According to Van Zyl (2011), festivals have experienced significant growth over the past ten years in numbers, size, diversity and popularity. However, Van Zyl (2011) warns that the long-term success of the festivals and the events industry is reliant on strong marketing and strategic positioning; therefore it is imperative for festivals to focus on customers' needs and deliver value to ensure success and sustainability. Liang, Illum and Cole (2008:12), maintain

that continued viability and sustainability of an event and festival depend on a high level of repeat visitation which is inextricably linked to the quality of its offerings and customer service. The adapted SERVQUAL and Grönroos model served as an appropriate measurement tool to develop the appropriate constructs for the festival and the five dimensions of SERVQUAL provided a framework through its expectations/perceptions format to cover each of the five dimensions on which the questionnaire was based. These included reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness. The Grönroos model assisted with the technical quality dimensions of service quality measurement.

In conclusion, it is important for a festival to gain competitive advantage and ensure sustainability by focusing on service quality. In order to achieve this, it is vital to understand the expectations and satisfaction levels of the attendees at the festival and to identify the products and services which do or do not meet the expectations of the attendees at the festival.

LIMITATIONS

The main obstacle encountered during the study was the lack of response by original respondents' after the festival. Although respondents' showed an interest in

participation prior to the festival (over 400 questionnaires were completed), it was found that over 200 respondents' had provided incorrect contact details and could not be contacted after the festival. This was disappointing since respondents' were only selected if consent was given to be contacted after the festival for feedback. Incomplete questionnaires are invalid therefore these could not be used for the study.

CONCLUSION

The growth in the number of festivals in South Africa provides a platform for researchers in events management to emphasize service quality as a means of gaining competitive advantage (Van Zyl, 2011). It is for this very reason that the event industry needs to maintain service quality to meet customer expectations and increase the satisfaction levels of their customers. The main objective of this study was to evaluate the expectations of the attendees prior to the festival and evaluate the experience of the attendees after the festival and to make a comparison and determine the gaps. The SERVQUAL model and an adaptation of the Grönroos model assisted with identifying the

expectations and perceptions (experiences) of service quality at the Innibos National Arts Festival, 2010.

When the findings of this study are examined in general, the results indicate that the attendees are currently satisfied with the service quality offered by the management of Innibos National Arts Festival, 2010. However certain areas need to be improved to maintain competitive advantage. These include price and parking. Overall staff were scored extremely high on satisfaction. However, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged regarding this study, notably that the response rate of the questionnaires was not as expected, due

to many respondents not participating after the festival as agreed. Nonetheless, this study could be beneficial to the Management of Innibos and other arts festivals in improving the service quality in order to meet customers' expectations.

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