

Attendee satisfaction in festival activity: Innibos National Arts Festival

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Abstract

Despite the growth in festival tourism in South Africa and the paucity and infrequent nature of festival research, very little research exists on addressing what classifies a festival as successful. Well organized, promoted and managed events have been linked to attendee satisfaction, resulting in a successful event. Similarly, there is a positive connection between customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention which underlines the importance for festivals to be successful and sustainable. This study employs an on-site survey of 500 visitors attending the Innibos National Arts Festival in Mbombela, South Africa. Eight constructs were investigated based on the SERVQUAL and Grönroos model to determine the overall satisfaction of the attendees. The statistical analysis was performed using the marginal distributions of variable and construct analysis based on the post data. This study aimed at determining the overall satisfaction levels of the between attendee's at the festival.

Keywords: Satisfaction, service quality, festivals, events, loyalty.



Source: <http://rushadventures.com/festivals-events/innibos-2014-festival/>

INTRODUCTION

In today's changing and competitive global environment, programming of special events has assumed increased importance in the sustainability of events at competing destinations; the need exists for each to seek strategies to distinguish itself in efficiency and in gaining competitive advantage (Yan, 2010). Deery and Jago (2010) substantiate this and agree that due to keen competition within the festival market, event organisers need to prioritise service quality as a means of gaining competitive advantage. Furthermore, Lee, Lee and Wicks (2003), indicate due to keen competition in tourism events and festivals, it is imperative to analyse visitors' motives for attending festivals and events. Moreover, this will help event managers to position their festivals better and encourage repeat visitation which is crucial to the sustainability and viability of festivals and events. Satisfaction is a crucial element in sustaining competition in the tourism industry and can be defined as "a judgment that a product, or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption" (Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2008). Furthermore, Castle (2008), states in order to achieve satisfaction an element of design and delivery must exist. Each year, consumers around the world invest in large quantities of time and money to attend festivals, highlighting the importance of well organized, promoted and managed events in order to achieve attendee satisfaction (Lee, Lee, Lee & Babin, 2008). Due to the strong link between the two facets of customer experience, the wider the reach of service and the higher the quality of service a customer perceives, the greater the customer's level of satisfaction is likely to be. Furthermore, this is the driving force which strives to meet the competitive challenges posed by the future. When organisations offer poor service quality, both the customer and the organisation are affected and the customer is not likely to

return. As a result, this often has a detrimental effect on the organisation's reputation and affects the sustainability of the organisation (Chen, 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Undoubtedly, a very strong association between festivals and tourism exists and there are copious amounts of evidence indicating the many festivals are marketed as tourist attractions, attracting large tourist numbers (Quinn, 2009). According to Getz (2010) and Gursoy, Kim and Uysal (2003), "festival tourism" has been explicitly researched from many perspectives including economic impacts, travel patterns, motivational factors, segmentation, service quality, visitor satisfaction and cultural aspects. Festivals contribute to the local rejuvenation and affluence of the destination, generating employment opportunities, development of sustainable infrastructure, enhancing community pride (Getz, Andersson & Carlsen, 2010; Esu & Arrey, 2009). Furthermore, the cultural event segment, under which festivals fall, is often discussed in the literature on cultural tourism (Getz, 2008). Getz (2010) defines festivals as cultural celebrations with a public theme that have a social and symbolic meaning. They are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognises as essential to its ideology and world view, to its social identity, historical continuity and often to physical survival. Hall and Sharples (2008) agree that cultural celebrations can have several connotations. Some of these include joyous occasions and events; special festivities with ceremonies of respect and festivity marked with special observances; solemnizations (marriage); and praise, gaiety and cheerfulness. Getz (2007) expands on cultural events and celebrations by stating that people attend these for fun, playfulness or revelry and the activities are associated with costumes, parades and festing. On a worldwide

scale, the number of festivals and events with a strong cultural impact is increasing rapidly. In addition to enhancing local pride in culture and history, these events also provide leisure and recreational opportunities as well as expose international visitors to the local people as well as to their customs (Lee, Lee & Wicks, 2003). Lee *et al.*, (2003) continues to emphasise the importance of analyzing visitors' motives for attending festivals and events to position festival events better to be able to meet their needs and help to ensure their satisfaction. Lee, Jeon and Kim (2010) reaffirm this by stating there is a positive connection between customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention and therefore important for festivals to be successful and sustainable.

Customer satisfaction has attracted considerable attention in literature due to its potential impact on consumer behavior (Caro & Garcia, 2008). According to Meng, Tepanon and Uysal (2008), satisfaction can be defined as 'a judgment that a product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption'. Furthermore, Meng *et al.*, (2008) reaffirms that satisfaction is considered an important element to sustain competitive business, influencing repurchase intentions whereas dissatisfaction often results in discontinuation of purchase of the service or product. Many authors such as Esu and Arrey (2009); Lee, Yang and Lo (2008); Lee, Jeon and Kim (2010) agree that satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing which influences the consumption of products and services. According to Esu and Arrey (2009), the phenomenology of customer satisfaction is based on common theories underlying the concept of customer satisfaction. These include the expectation – disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980), Performance only model (Pizman and Millman, 1993), Expectation SERVQUAL gap model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) and the Pivotal core peripheral model (Philip

and Hazlett, 1996). A review of research highlights that a critical characteristic of satisfaction is consumer's perceptions of the product's performance during consumption. Unfavourable consumption experiences and performance usually indicate that consumers are dissatisfied with the product. However, it is important to note that even a product that provides relatively good performance can lead to an unsatisfactory consumption experience when this performance does not meet the expectations of the consumer (Kim, 2011). In this context Kim and Lee (2010), in relation to satisfaction, states that when comparing what is expected to what is received, there are three possible outcomes. If the product delivers less than expected, negative disconfirmation occurs. Positive disconfirmation, on the other hand, occurs when the product provides more than expected. Finally Kim (2011) and Tian-Cole, Crompton and Willson (2002) assert that confirmation takes place when the performance of the product meets expectations.

Confirmation produces greater satisfaction than negative disconfirmation which occurs when the product or service does not meet the expectations of the customer. Positive disconfirmation indicates the highest levels of satisfaction. According to Serenko and Stach (2009), when comparing expectations to perceptions, customers will form an opinion about their experience (positive or negative). According to Kim (2011), the underlying approach to studying customer satisfaction, as applied in service quality, posits that, before using a service, a client has an expectation. Yi and La (2008) and Caro and Garcia (2007) describe in their review of research that after a service encounter, the customer compares expectations with the actual performance. His/her perception is either confirmed (if expectation and performance match), negatively disconfirmed (if the perception is lower than expectation), or positively disconfirmed (if perception is higher than

expectation). Expectation reflects anticipated behaviour and is predictive, indicating expected product attributes. Expectations serve as the comparison standard in expectation confirmation theory which customers use to evaluate performance (Yi & La, 2008). Conversely, not every customer can be satisfied all the time. However, to maintain a competitive position, event organisers need to aim to achieve more than merely basic levels of satisfaction (Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris and McDonnell, 2011). A review of research by Alenezim, Kamil and Basri (2010) concludes that satisfaction is one of the major factors ensuring sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the stated research objectives, this study is based on a descriptive research approach selecting a quantitative methodology approach grounded by the positivist social sciences paradigm. In this research convenience sampling was used. The target population included all attendees of the Innibos National Arts Festival with a sample size of 500. 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. (This was later re-coded due to the low frequencies in the data). 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. Confirmatory factor analysis was 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 (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985) and adapted Grönroos model (Grönroos, 1978). The questionnaire comprised of a total of 60 questions based on the 8 constructs. Cronbach’s alpha reliability test was used to determine whether the factors were consistent and reliable.

The final realised sample comprised of 190 usable questionnaires, representing a 38% response rate. Lastly, the overall satisfaction was determined by using the marginal distributions of the post-festival data for each of the variables based on the revised scale.

TABLE 1: Summary of validity and reliability.

CONSTRUCT	KMO	NO OF COMPONENTS	CUMULATIVE VARIANCE	Cronbach α	SERVQUAL/Grönroos DIMENSION
Entertainment – main stage & theatre shows	0.70	2	53.72	0.72	Communication Tangibles Accessibility

Site elements	0.893	1	63.18	0.89	Competence Communication Reliability
Price	0.783	1	62.55	0.84	Price
Food & beverage vendors	0.838	2	69.66	0.82	Tangibles Price Competence Accessibility
Craft exhibits/vendors	0.829	1	75.09	0.88	Competence Price Tangibles Accessibility
Parking	0.858	1	77.58	0.92	Security Competence Communication Accessibility
Children's entertainment	0.809	1	80.15	0.91	Empathy Reliability Security Accessibility
Staff	0.867	1	76.94	0.92	Empathy Courtesy Responsiveness Reliability Competence Tangibles

FINDINGS

The primary objective of this study is to determine the level of satisfaction of the attendees at the Innibos National Arts Festival. To analyse the reliability of scales, this study employed the analysis of Cronbach alpha coefficients using SPSS version 21. All scales evidenced sufficient reliability. To evaluate the validity of questions for each factor comprising the independent variables, factor analysis was

conducted using confirmatory factor analysis to analyse the relationship among variables suggested in the research model. Table 2 concludes that the lowest average of satisfaction being price (58.51%), Parking (62.32), entertainment (78.37%), children's entertainment (85.38%), food and beverage (87.85), site elements (88.45%), craft vendors (89.29%). Staff indicated the highest satisfaction level (95.58%).

TABLE 2: Overall averages of satisfaction levels

CONSTRUCT	AVERAGE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION (%)
Price	58.51
Parking	62.32
Entertainment	78.37
Children's Entertainment	85.38
Food And Beverage	87.85

Site Elements	88.45
Craft Vendors	89.29
Staff	95.58

The overall level of satisfaction in the after festival data revealed that the attendees were satisfied with the service quality delivered at the festival, with the possible exception of price and parking. Innibos management needs to pay more attention to these two constructs in order to meet the needs of the attendees and to improve the satisfaction levels.

DISCUSSION

Despite the growth of festivals and events very little research has been done to evaluate the aspects such as satisfaction, perceived value and the intentions to revisit an event or festival. Existing studies have focused predominantly on the economic impacts of festivals which have played a considerable part in demonstrating the economic benefits to the host communities, thereby paving the way for subsequent studies on other relevant issues pertaining to festivals. Considering the increasing competition within the festival industry, it is imperative for festivals to focus on service quality in order for festivals to remain sustainable.

A noticeable approach of treating festivals as commodities has emerged, focusing on consumer behavior and other marketing related concepts as well as the association between quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Getz, 2010). According to Ozdemir and Culha (2009) events, more specifically festivals can be considered as a contemporary business service involving promotion to attract visitors willing to spend money on such an event, while in turn, promoting the destination. Furthermore, it is crucial for festival marketers and organisers to appreciate visitors' perceptions and

evaluation of festivals. The constructs for the questionnaire were developed using an adaption of the SERVQUAL and Grönroos models. In conclusion, satisfaction is considered a crucial element to sustain competitive business in the tourism industry, hence the importance to understand the expectations and satisfaction levels of the attendees at a festival.

LIMITATIONS

The main obstacle encountered during the study was the lack of willingness to participate. 500 questionnaires were initially completed, however 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

For the past few years, there has been a tremendous effort to understand and thoroughly examine event quality and visitor satisfaction. Yan (2010) and Thrane (2002) conclude that in today's changing and competitive global environment, programming of special events has assumed greater importance in the sustainability of events, hence each has the need to seek strategies to distinguish itself in efficient service and competitive advantage. According to Tung (2004), due to increasing competition when marketing tourism events and festivals, it is imperative to analyse visitors' motives for attending festivals and

events. This will help events managers to position their festivals better thereby encouraging repeat visitation which is cardinal to the sustainability and viability of festivals and events. All this can be achieved only if the customers are satisfied with the service quality of their previous experience (Van Zyl, 2011).

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the overall satisfaction levels of the attendees at the Innibos National Arts Festival. When the findings of this study are examined in general, the results indicate that the attendees are generally satisfied with the service quality offered by the management of Innibos National Arts Festival with the exception of price and parking. 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 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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