

The Impact of Popular Culture Fandom on the Quality of Life of Visitors to Comic Con Africa 2019

Dewald Venter *

Department of Tourism and Integrated Communication, Faculty of Human Sciences Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa, Email, dewald@vut.ac.za

Tanya Erasmus

Department of Tourism and Integrated Communication, Faculty of Human Sciences Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa, Email, tanyae@vut.ac.za

**Corresponding Author*

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Abstract

This study aimed to establish the effects that travel motives and life domains have on visitors' quality-of-life. Based on the setting, a convenience sampling technique was used in which fieldworkers administered the questionnaire to visitors at Comic Con Africa 2019. Data from 433 (N) completed questionnaires were captured regarding their travel motives, life domains, life domains overall, and quality-of-life affect, and analysed. A structural equation modelling analysis indicated a positive linear relationship between the visitors' travel motives, life domains measured, life domains overall, and quality-of-life; all of which attained good composite reliabilities. The findings indicate that travel motives have an influence on visitors' life domains, positive and negative, relevant to their perceived importance. Overall, a visit to this pop culture event had a positive effect on visitors' quality-of-life. Based on the visitor demographics, social media marketing should be aimed at niche lifestyle aspects that are most enticing to visitor's pop culture life. The approach would most likely appeal to the markets' higher-order needs, which could increase visitor numbers and help improve their quality-of-life overall. This research opened the door to the new pop culture life domain, and contributes to the literature and methodology in tourism, life domains and quality-of-life.

Keywords: Travel motives; life domains; quality-of-life; structural equation model

Introduction

Research about popular culture is on the rise and various authors are especially focusing on the intersection between popular culture and tourism (Eklind & Gracia Tjong, 2016; Reichenberger, 2019). Popular culture tourism refers to destinations and attractions based on popular culture products such as films (Lundberg & Lexhagen, 2014; Beeton, 2016; Blanchet & Fabry, 2020), comic conventions (Uriarte, Antognozzi & Catoni, 2019), theme parks (Waysdorf & Reijnders, 2016), literature (Hoppen, Brown & Fyall, 2014), music (Lashua, Spracklen & Long, 2014) and celebrities (Yen & Teng, 2015). This paper will, however, focus on popular culture within the context of comic conventions, better known as 'Comic Con'. Some terms that are commonly associated with comic conventions are cosplay, fandom, science fiction, fantasy and various stigmatisations (Hill, 2017; Glenn, 2020). In recent years, research about travel motives within the field of tourism in relation to quality-of-life (QoL) or subjective well-being has gained momentum (Uysal, Sirgy, Woo & Kim, 2016; Venter & Kruger, 2019). Sirgy (2002:xiv) defines QoL as a broad umbrella term that encompasses intangibles such as happiness, well-being and a sense of satisfaction with life in general. Furthermore, Venter (2016:94) adds that QoL is a predominantly "subjective state with

objective elements whereby individuals perceive their lives based on their experiences in life domains (financial life, family life, travel life, social life, leisure and recreational life, health and safety life) which are important to them.” Research with regard to travel motives is addressed by some studies done at comic conventions abroad (Lotecki, 2012; Gagliardo, 2013; Lundberg & Lexhagen, 2014; Uriarte et al., 2019). However, there is little research with regard to travel motives and life domains’ effect on QoL when visiting comic conventions, especially with smaller and new comic conventions. Thacker (2018:164) asserts that “scholarship on comics focuses on American, European, and Japanese comics with less attention to comics from countries with smaller publishing outputs or less well-established fandoms”. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between travel motives, life domains and QoL of visitors attending Comic Con Africa 2019.

Comic Con

There is a growing number and scale of Comic Cons all around the world (Uriarte et al., 2019). In 2018, the first Comic Con Africa was held on the African continent and was regarded as a success, with 45 000 fans who attended. Since its success, Comic Con Africa 2019 was held at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand, Gauteng and drew nearly 71 000 attendees (Comic Con Africa, 2020). The Comic Con Africa 2019 also introduced the first Kids Con (Comic Con Africa, 2020). Comic conventions, in general, are a “gathering of the ‘tribes’ or fans that consists of different communities drawn together by their shared love of popular culture” (Jenkins, 2012:23). These events focus on different elements of pop culture such as cosplay, manga, anime, comic books, TV series and films, just to name a few (Favour, 2019). Some of these groups or fandoms are brought together, who otherwise would not normally occupy a shared space (Hill, 2017). Comic Cons are regarded as multi-genre entertainment festivals, trade shows, collectors’ mart, public forums, and arts festivals, all in one (Jenkins, 2012; Hanna, 2014; Comic Con Africa, 2020). Convention attendees often have the chance to meet their favourite actors, actresses, artists and other cultural icons (Hill, 2017), and also to take part in cosplay, E-sports tournaments and gaming (Comic Con Africa, 2020). The sociality at conventions provides a safe place for fans to engage in consumption without judgement from outsiders (Hill, 2017).

Comic Cons’ success depends on their fans and this is highlighted by Jenkins (2012), who stated that these conventions are shaped by the idea of the fan not as a collector, but as an influencer. The collective term, fandom, is often used to refer to fans. According to Williams (2006), there are degrees of fandom in terms of both intensity and identity. Lotecki (2012) stated that it is subjected to a constant state of evolution and development. Fans are generally referred to as enthusiastic devotees, followers, or admirers of a sport, pastime or celebrity (Williams, 2006). Fandom refers to the opportunities to form social connections or bonds that bring fans together as friends and as part of a subcultural community with shared interests (Jenkins, 2012; Reichenberger, 2019, Glenn, 2020). Some of the fans take part in cosplay or ‘kosupure’, which is a term that represents the combining of the words for ‘costume’ and ‘play’ or ‘role-play’ (Lotecki, 2012; Rahman, Wing-Sun & Cheung, 2012). Cosplay offers participants pleasurable experiences, meaningful memories, self-gratification, and personal fulfilment (Rahman et al., 2012; Hill, 2017). Through this participatory activity, cosplayers can momentarily escape from reality (Rahman et al., 2012) and enter into their imaginative world (Lundberg & Lexhagen, 2014; Glenn, 2020). Cosplay can be categorised into various genres, such as “fantasy, cuteness, romance, horror, sci-fi, gothic, and mythology, with each genre consisting of a wide array of characters” (Rahman et al., 2012:319).

On the other hand, fandom subcultures are frequently subjected to various stigmatisations or stereotypes (Gagliardo, 2013). Jenkins (1992) referred to mainstream

magazine articles with offensive word used to label fans as “kooks”, “misfits”, “crazies” and “childish”. Geek and nerd have become synonymous with pop culture fandom, as are the fabricated images attached to those words (e.g. horned-rim glasses, pocket protectors) (Glenn, 2020:34). Fans are often portrayed in the media as social misfits and loners (Jenkins, 1992); however, various research studies have constantly shown that fans are not the stereotypical geeks and social misfits that they are believed to be (Gagliardo, 2013; Lundberg & Lexhagen, 2014). Although many fans do not prefer to be labelled “otaku,” “nerd,” “geek,” or “fangirl/fanboy” (Hill, 2017), the meanings and identity attached to these terms show that these subcultures are aware of their otherness. Some fans embrace it and others oppose it due to possible social implications. Comic Con Africa refers on their website to “geeks of all ages” (Comic Con Africa, 2020). Overall, Busse (2013:74) explained that the industry desires fans because of viewer loyalty, free advertisement, and increased purchases of connected products.

Travel motives

Travel motivations are constantly changing and reforming (Tütüncü-Hrisztov, Müller & Molnár, 2020). Travel motives are driven by needs and wants fulfilment (Pawaskar, Mekoth & Thomson, 2020) that guides the consumer decision-making process. Travel motives are studied in a wide variety of tourism fields, which include sports tourism (Tütüncü-Hrisztov et al., 2020), popular culture tourism (Reichenberger, 2019), geotourism or volcano tourism (Aquino, Schänzel & Hyde, 2019) and nature or ecotourism (Garms, Fredman & Mose, 2017). Research about travel motives has been conducted for the last few decades and a number of motivation theories and models exist (Pawaskar et al., 2020). However, the most common theory used by researchers was coined by Dann (1977) as the push-pull approach. Tourists decide to travel because they are pushed by internal factors and/or pulled by a set of destination attributes that enhance their desires to visit a certain place (Dan, 1977; Garms et al., 2017; Michael, Wien & Reisinger, 2017; Aquino et al., 2019; Pawaskar et al., 2020). Yoon and Uysal (2005) state that push motivations are related to emotional and internal desires such as self-actualisation, relaxation, leisure or social interaction. Within the popular culture context, Smith (2010) and Thacker (2018) stated that attendees are keen to form connections with like-minded fans. This was confirmed by Lotecki (2012) and Rahman et al. (2012) with the addition of having fun, seeking escape and being social. Pull factors, however, refer to destination attributes such as location, climate, hospitality and related services that play a significant role in destination choice and travel satisfaction (Pawaskar et al., 2020). Pull factors within a popular culture context might refer to the location and brand of the convention, the celebrity guests or panellists, the comic artists and the food stalls, to name a few (Rahman et al., 2012).

Life domains

Life domains can be defined as areas in one’s life that range from very important to least important, which affect one’s QoL. Examples of life domains include social life, family life, leisure life, self-life (self-esteem life) and pop culture life. The latter is a newly identified and measured life domain based on the event theme of this study derived from available literature on pop culture. Within each life domain are everyday experiences that can either be beneficial (positive) or detrimental (negative). These experiences result in positive feelings that include enthusiasm and happiness or negative feelings such as disappointment or fear (Uysal, Sirgy, Woo & Kim, 2016). According to Sirgy (2012), the positive affect experienced in a life domain carries more weight than a negative experience overall. Additionally, he argues that certain life domains such as social and leisure life are more prone to producing positive experiences than negative ones. These aforementioned experiences in life domains do not take place in isolation and can affect other life domains either positively or negatively. Venter, Kruger and Uysal

(2021) state that the impact of such positive or negative affect on other life domains is dependent on the weight of the effect and the actual and perceived importance of the life domain to the individual. Sirgy (2012) explains this phenomenon as the bottom-up spill-over theory in which a positive or negative experience in one life domain affects a person's other life domain(s) either positively or negatively. The bottom-up spill-over theory establishes that overall satisfaction with QoL is fundamentally influenced by the satisfaction experienced in different life domains by a person (Eslami, Khalifah, Mardani, Streimikiene & Han, 2019). This theory is often used to explain the relationship between travel motives, life domains, life domains overall and QoL (Dolnicar, Lazarevski & Yanamandram, 2012; Kim, Kim & Woo, 2021; Woo, Kim & Uysal, 2015; Yu, Sirgy, Bosnjak & Lee, 2021).

Quality of life

According to Maditinos, Papadopoulos and Prats (2014), the roots of QoL originated from the Aristotelian ethics model (384-322 BC) of eudemonism. Niemiec (2014) explains eudemonia as a subjective experience associated with the pursuit of human excellence. This subjective state is encapsulated by QoL, which consists of a person's attitude, motivation, community engagement, religion, cultural beliefs, level of perceived control and life goals (Meditinos et al., 2014; Sirgy, 2012; Sheldon, 2016). Additionally, according to Zhang (2017) and Zhang and Zhang (2018), QoL consists of multiple life domains tied to an individual's understanding of what is important to them. This importance can be influenced by external factors such as societal values, culture, religious beliefs, values and ethics (Venter & Kruger, 2019). Taking part in leisure experiences such as attending events (Saayman, Li, Uysal & Song, 2018; Venter & Kruger, 2017), has shown a direct positive impact on a person's QoL.

Methodology

The study was granted ethics clearance by the Vaal University's Faculty Research and Ethics Committee (FREC/HS/05/02/2021/6.1.1). The research design was exploratory and descriptive and includes a quantitative approach. The sample population consisted of visitors to Comic Con Africa 2019 following a convenience sampling technique. This sampling technique was used due to the large crowds at the event, which made a structured probability sampling method difficult. After explaining to visitors the purpose, aims and objectives of the research as well as their rights, fieldworkers collected 415 hard copy questionnaires from willing respondents at the event, of which 379 could be used. Simultaneously, a short link to a digital version of the online questionnaire was hosted on several pop culture Facebook pages, which could be accessed anonymously by respondents. The online questionnaire, created with Google Forms (Google.com 2019), contained the same introduction as the hard copy via the word of welcome. By proceeding to complete the digital version, respondents consented to be part of the study anonymously. A total of 54 online questionnaires were completed, which, together with the 379 usable hard copy questionnaires, gave a total of 433 that could be used for the statistical analysis.

Data analysis

The rotation of factor loadings shown in Tables 1 to 7 was subjected to a direct Oblimin with the Kaiser normalisation method. Additionally, a principal component extraction procedure was implemented. The statistical software used to analyse the data was STATA for Windows, version 13.1 software (StataCorp, 2013), which provided the factor structures and the exploratory factor analysis' (EFA) statistical results, which required no cross-loadings. An EFA was done to find any interrelationship in the form of latent variables between the variables measured using the Likert scale, thereby validating the suitability of the data for an EFA. A

five-point measuring Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) was used in accordance with DeVellis (2012). DeVellis (2012) notes that the minimum recommended Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient of a Likert scale should be ≥ 0.7 . The most common measurement method used to determine the reliability of a scale's internal consistency is an α . George and Mallery (2003:231) categorise the suitability of the α as < 0.5 = unacceptable; > 0.5 = poor; > 0.6 = questionable; > 0.7 = acceptable; > 0.8 = good and > 0.9 = excellent. According to the α of the labelled factors of this study, the reliability of the five-point Likert scales is more than satisfactory.

Using STATA, two statistical measures from the EFA have been calculated, namely the Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO). The former, according to Pallant (2010), is regarded as significant at $p = < 0.001$, while the latter should be between 0 and 1. Having conducted both tests for this research, the BTS and KMO were found to be statistically significant. According to Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999), the values generated were good > 0.7 = good; > 0.8 = great and > 0.9 = superb. The statements in Tables 1 to 7, e.g. travel motives, social life, leisure life, self-life, pop culture life, life domains overall and quality of life included a principal component analysis, showing the suitability of the dataset to conduct the EFA. DeVellis (2012) is of the opinion that when conducting a correlation matrix, the resulting factor loadings of ≥ 0.3 are deemed appropriate and therefore were kept as a contributing factor. According to Clark and Watson (1995), the mean inter-item correlation values for a generated factor should fall within the range of 0.15 and 0.55. However, Pallant (2010) notes that when fewer than ten items are used in a measuring scale, the acceptable mean inter-item correlation values can range between 0.48 and 0.76. To explain the strength of the relationship between a latent and manifest variable, the standardised regression coefficients (β) are used (Rootenberg, 2012:36). Pallant (2010:161) explains that the strength of such a relationship is classified as making a substantial contribution to the prediction of the sig. value at ≤ 0.05 . Inversely, a value of > 0.05 signifies that the variable makes no unique contribution to the prediction. The analysis included an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Cronbach alphas (α) correlations and a structural equation model (SEM).

Results

Respondents

The study population comprised 51% males and 49% females, of whom the vast majority (50%) were between 18 and 25 years. More than half of the respondents (58%) indicated that English was their home language. Most respondents (52%) indicated a diploma/degree as their highest qualification. Some 62% of respondents indicated that they are employed full-time, while nearly two thirds (66%) are single. Most respondents (43%) travelled in a party size of one or two and 72% indicated that they reside in Gauteng. More than half (53%) indicated that it was their first visit to Comic Con. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) made the decision to attend when this event was announced. Slightly more than half of the respondents (55%) heard about the event through social media.

Exploratory factor analyses of travel motives, life domains and quality of life

Table 1 depicts the EFA of travel motives. The KMO test for this factor was statistically significant (0.90) and BTS ($p \leq 0.05$). The factor *Comic Con novelty* obtained a good α (0.89). The α of the labelled factors affirms the reliability of the five-point Likert scale used. The factor accounted for 34.73% of the total variance explained.



Table 1: Travel motives

Questionnaire statements	Comic Con novelty
To relax	0.33
Attendance gives me time to build stronger relationships with those I care for	0.36
For the benefit of travelling in a group	0.34
It is the exciting thing to do	0.61
To live out my pop culture fantasy	0.71
To learn more about pop culture	0.71
For a fun experience with friends and family	0.52
So that my group members can develop an appreciation for pop culture	0.61
I can meet new friends	0.54
To meet pop culture celebrities	0.60
I can pursue enjoyable activities	0.54
It inspires my imagination	0.56
I look forward to a great event atmosphere	0.69
I can explore the exhibits	0.60
It is value for money	0.51
I enjoy the cosplayers who bring pop culture to life	0.60
I am curious about pop culture	0.63
Pop culture memorabilia interest me	0.62
To inspire my creativity	0.65
It is the most interesting event close to me	0.47
Cronbach alpha	0.89
Mean inter-item correlation	0.90
Mean & std. deviation	3.95 ± 0.96

With reference to Table 2, social life, *positive affect social life* achieved the highest mean. The total variance explained for these two factors was 56.56%. The labelled factors achieved a good α , which indicates the internal consistency of the Likert scale used. The KMO for the two factors was 0.75, and the associated BTS was statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$).

Table 2: Social life

Questionnaire statements	Positive affect social life	Negative affect social life
I feel good meeting new people	0.82	
I feel good making new friends	0.84	
I feel good spending quality time with people who share a mutual interests	0.79	
I feel good spending quality time with friends	0.69	
I feel satisfied socially	0.63	
I feel unhappy not spending time with people who share my interests		0.81
I feel bad not having enough time with friends		0.84
I feel negative lacking enough personal time		0.80
I might be stigmatised as a geek by society		0.60
Cronbach alpha	0.81	0.76
Mean inter-item correlation	0.46	0.46
Mean & std. deviation	4.08 ± .04	3.20 ± .06

With reference to Table 3, a direct Oblimin with Kaizer normalisation rotation technique and a principal component extraction procedure were applied, which produced two factors that were labelled *positive affect leisure life* and *negative affect leisure life*. *Positive affect leisure life* attained the highest mean. The BTS was $p \leq 0.05$ and the KMO attained a value of 0.75, which shows statistical significance. The two factors provide an excellent α . The total variance explained for these two factors was 54.19%.



Table 3: Leisure-life

Questionnaire statements	Positive affect leisure life	Negative affect leisure life
I have enough time to do what I like	0.70	
I feel relaxed mentally	0.88	
I feel physically relaxed	0.87	
I can relieve stress	0.79	
I feel that I have wasted my time		0.86
I do not feel entertained		0.87
My expectations were not met		0.87
Cronbach alpha	0.83	0.83
Mean inter-item correlation	0.55	0.63
Mean & std. deviation	2.74 ± .05	2.06 ± .05

Table 4 yielded two factors that were labelled *positive affect self-life* and *negative affect self-life*. *Positive affect self-life* achieved an excellent α , while *negative affect self-life* achieved an excellent α , especially considering that a five-point Likert scale was used. BTS for these two factors was $p \leq 0.05$, and the KMO achieved a value of 0.75. From the results produced, *positive self-life* had the highest mean and these two factors accounted for 79.84% of the total variance explained.

Table 4: Self-life

Questionnaire statements	Positive affect self-life	Negative affect self-life
I feel good doing things I like	0.74	
I feel happy learning more about myself	0.75	
I feel satisfied enjoying myself	0.77	
I feel unfulfilled		0.52
I feel alone and therefore unhappy		0.56
I feel negative due to social stigmas		0.56
Cronbach alpha	0.89	0.83
Mean inter-item correlation	0.42	0.43
Mean & std. deviation	4.25 ± .04	2.02 ± .05

Table 5 yielded two factors that were labelled *positive affect pop culture life* and *negative affect pop culture life*. Both the *positive affect pop culture life* and *negative affect pop culture life* achieved an excellent α , especially considering that a five-point Likert scale was used. BTS for these two factors was $p \leq 0.05$, and the KMO achieved a value of 0.60. From the results produced, *positive pop culture life* had the highest mean and these two factors accounted for 74.06% of the total variance explained.

Table 5: Pop culture life

Questionnaire statements	Positive affect pop culture life	Negative affect pop culture life
I might meet a pop culture celebrity, which makes me excited	0.73	
I feel good about the number of pop culture exhibits	0.90	
I feel happy participating in the pop culture activities	0.89	
I feel stigmatised based on my pop culture taste		0.86
The pop culture community is overbearing		0.88
Cronbach alpha	0.89	0.89
Mean inter-item correlation	0.79	0.74
Mean & std. deviation	4.24 ± .04	2.05 ± .05

The principal component extraction procedure and the direct Oblimin with Kaiser normalisation rotation technique produced one factor that has been labelled *life domains overall* in Table 6. The factor achieved an acceptable α and accounted for 62.29% of the total

variance explained. The BTS for the factor was $p \leq 0.05$, and the KMO achieved a value of 0.77.

Table 6: Life domains overall

Questionnaire statements	Life domains overall
Overall, this event enriched my social life	0.75
Overall, this event enriched my leisure life	0.77
Overall, this event enriched myself self-esteem	0.83
Overall, this event enriched my pop culture life	0.79
Cronbach alpha	0.80
Mean inter-item correlation	0.50
Mean & std. deviation	3.80 ± .19

The BTS was $p \leq 0.05$, which shows the statistical significance, and the KMO attained a value of 0.76, which falls within an acceptable range. One factor was extracted and labelled *quality of life* in Table 7, which accounts for 63.59% of the total percentage of variance explained. The statements measured a high α coefficient level of reliability.

Table 7: Quality of life

Questionnaire statements	Quality of life
In most ways, my life is close to my ideal	0.81
The conditions of my life are excellent	0.85
I am satisfied with my life	0.86
So far, I have achieved the important things in my life	0.78
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	0.66
Cronbach alpha	0.85
Mean inter-item correlation	0.54
Mean & std. deviation	3.57 ± .05

SEM

The results of the model fit in Figure 1 indicate that the data fit the SEM within acceptable parameters.

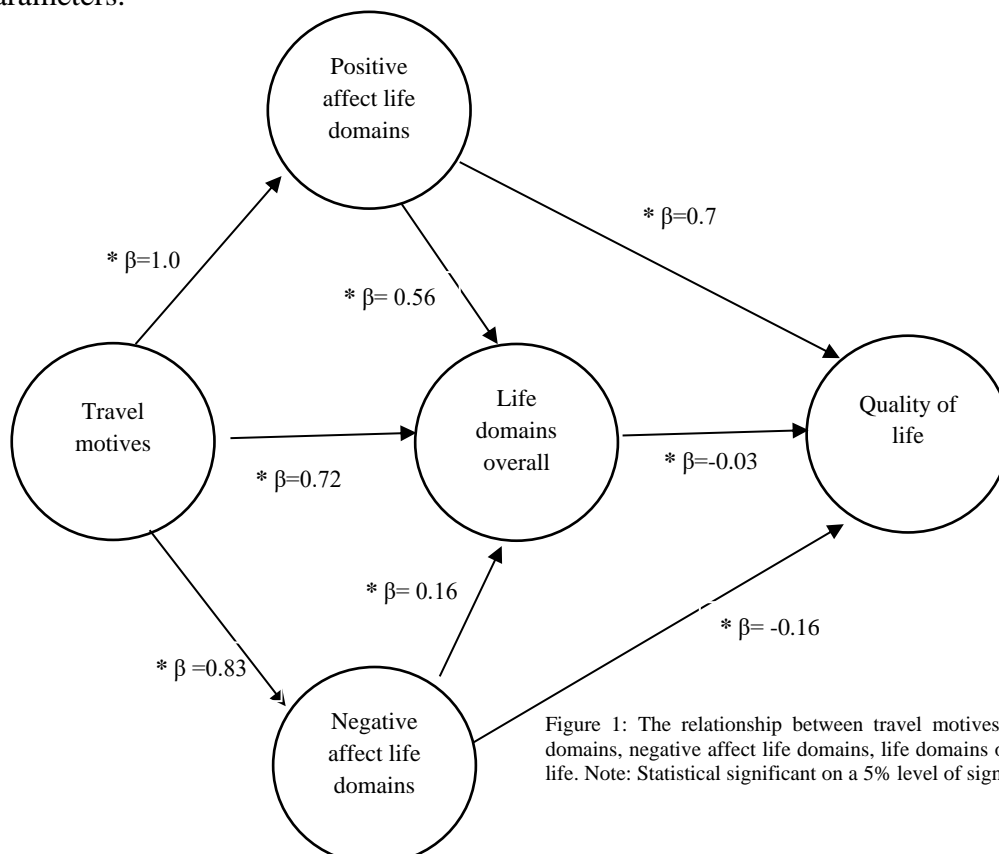


Figure 1: The relationship between travel motives, positive affect life domains, negative affect life domains, life domains overall and quality of life. Note: Statistical significant on a 5% level of significance ($p < 0.05$).

The chi-square, divided by its degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), yielded a result of 2.1, which is indicative of a good fit, as this statistic is very sensitive given its power in model fit identification. The model produced a borderline acceptable CFI = 0.58 and RAMSEA of 0.086, with a 90% confidence interval. Therefore, a borderline acceptable model fit was achieved for the five-factor model and the model was retained as the final research model. The standardised regression coefficients (β), travel motives, had a direct perfect statistical positive effect on positive affect life domains ($\beta=1.0$) and a significant effect on life domains overall ($\beta=0.72$) and negative affect life domains ($\beta=0.83$). Positive affect life domains had a significant positive statistical effect on life domains overall ($\beta=0.56$) and quality of life overall ($\beta=0.70$). Negative affect life domains had a statistically insignificant effect on life domains overall ($\beta=0.16$) and negative effect on quality of life ($\beta=-0.16$). Life domains overall had a negligible direct negative statistical effect on QoL ($\beta=-0.39$).

Findings

The findings are based on the demographic profile, EFA and SEM, which contribute positively to the literature and methodology of comic convention events. Due to ethical considerations, the research excluded potential respondents younger than 18 years. Therefore, the findings are applicable to the specific age groups measured. According to Mpotaringa and Hattingh (2019:4) demography is important to event tourism marketing executives because people constitute markets with homogeneous consumers who can be targeted. Based on the demographic findings, a typical Comic Con visitor will either be male or female, between the ages of 18 and 25, mostly single, speak English, and completed a diploma. Additionally, a typical visitor mainly lives in Gauteng and visits alone or with one person. The Comic Con Africa 2019 was the second event held Gauteng and therefore most of the visitors indicated that they visited for the first time. Respondents mainly heard about the event via social media and this corresponds with the average age group. Research by Kozinets (2020) among adults in the United States of America showed that the age group of 18 to 29 is most likely to use social media. There are different social media platforms that are popular, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and Flickr. According to McKenna, Myers and Newman (2017:88), social media “enable people to create and share content with other people and/or participate in a community”. Social media is increasingly used as a communication and advertisement tool (Kozinets, 2020).

With regard to the EFA, all domains, besides *negative affect social life*, achieved a good α , which is indicative of the internal consistency of the Likert scale used. The large to medium positive linear r is indicative of the relationships between the various domains and serves as a good predictor of visitor satisfaction to a pop culture event. The research demonstrates that respondents experienced a large to medium positive effect in their travel motives, life domains, life domains overall and QoL when visiting a pop culture event. With reference to Figure 1, the bottom-up spill-over effect is evident. Respondents’ travel motives were met, which positively spilled over upward to the positive and negative affect life domains measured. The positive affect life domains, in turn, spilled over upwards positively into life domains overall and QoL. The negative affect life domains had an insignificant effect on life domains overall and QoL, which is good. Interestingly, life domains overall had an insignificant effect on QoL. Similar positive spill-over effects were observed in research on military heritage festivals (Venter & Kruger, 2019), military museums (Venter & Burger, 2018) and military expos (Venter et al., 2021). The findings show that visitors to a pop culture event whose expectations are met, experience an improvement in the positive life domains measured. Additionally, these positive affect life domains affect lead to a higher QoL.

Conclusion

The purpose of Comic Con Africa 2019 should be to maximise the QoL and satisfaction sought by visitors, whether conscious or subconscious. This research focused on a novel event that was introduced to Africa in 2018, held in two provinces, namely Gauteng and the Western Cape. The Comic Con Africa 2019 had several additions to its Gauteng event, such as the Kids Con, and moved to a venue that allowed for more visitors. Due to this larger venue and various smaller venues and events occurring simultaneously at the Comic Con, a convenience sampling method was most appropriate. These results can therefore not be generalised to the entire population. However, it gave great insight into the typical profile of visitors to this event and the effect it has on their QoL. The ‘pop culture life’ was a new dimension added to the QoL research, and could be used in future research. This research furthermore also identified the need for an improved market segmentation. As Kids Con was introduced, better marketing towards families could be done. If successfully hosted, Comic Con Africa’s management will be rewarded with positive word-of-mouth marketing, more repeat visits and an increase in profits. Comic Con Africa’s event management can implement the findings of this study to cater for those specific life domain needs identified, by designing activities with specific experiences in mind and service offerings that enhance the pop culture experience, life domains, life domains overall and QoL. An annual or bi-annual exploration of the QoL impacts that Comic Con has on different age groups could be of interest, as different age groups have different needs and wants. Mxunyelwa and Mangisa (2018:1) are of the opinion that events create socio-economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs in tourism, food and beverage, and technical services sectors which promotes entrepreneurship. An investigation of the effect of Comic Con on such entrepreneurs would be of great interest. The COVID-19 pandemic had an immensely negative effect on the events industry scheduled for 2020 and beyond.

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