



# Demographics and consumer behaviour of visitors to the Wegry/Drive Out Bull Run motorsport event

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## Abstract

It is generally accepted that the event tourism industry has a positive economic impact on countries and local communities alike, especially in developing countries such as South Africa, where events and event tourism are essential drivers for economic growth and development. Events have the potential to attract large numbers of attendees to host cities and local areas. Due to an increase in the popularity of participant-based extreme sports events, such as motorsports, it is essential for event organisers to understand the demographics and consumer behaviour of visitors to such events. The changing preferences of consumers pose challenges to marketers and event organisers. Marketers and event organisers need to understand the behaviour of consumers who attend their events, as this impact on the sustainability and profitability of events. The purpose of this study was to gain greater insight into the demographics and consumer behaviour of visitors to a motorsport event, the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run, hosted annually in the Northern Cape Province, South Africa. The research approach was quantitative in nature. The research design was survey research, and 267 questionnaires were administered to visitors of the 2017 WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run motorsport event. Findings highlight the need for increased and improved marketing and greater community participation. Applicable recommendations were proposed to assist the event organisers in adequately marketing and positioning the event in future.

**Keywords:** Consumer behavior, demographics, events, event tourism, motorsport.

## Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries (Statista, 2017; Khosla, 2010). The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2018) refers to tourism as a key sectorial driver for socio-economic progress. It is the world's third export category after chemicals and fuels, surpassing, automotive



products. In 2017, international tourism generated US\$1.6 trillion in export earnings (UNWTO, 2018).

In developing countries, such as South Africa, tourism contributes significantly to job creation by stimulating the economy. The contribution of tourism to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was R323 billion in the 2014 to 2015 review period (Department of Tourism, 2015). Stats SA (2018) reports that the tourism sector directly or indirectly employed 722 013 people (or 4.5% of total employment) in 2017.

The tourism industry is multifaceted and offers different services, including events, transportation, accommodation and tour guiding. Events are one of the main motivations for tourists to travel (Proos & Kock, 2014). Owing to a large number of events being offered in South Africa, event tourism has become a major source of income for local areas. Events are big business and figure prominently in shaping and reinforcing destination identities. Four types of events can be distinguished: business events, festivals, entertainment events and sports (Getz & Page, 2016; Kuenzel & Yassim, 2007).

Business events are characterised by their focus on business and trade whilst depending on special facilities such as convention centres and/or exhibition centres (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2012; Getz, 2012). According to Getz and Page (2016); Bowdin *et al.*, (2012) and Saayman, (2011), festivals are an important expression of human activity, which contributes to social and cultural life, whilst generating business activity and income for host communities. The testing of sports prowess through competition for example in classical Greece, gave rise to sports events (Bowdin *et al.*, 2012). Sports events are activities that involve skill and physical effort usually governed by a set of rules, such as a time limit for the game, a minimum age limit to participate and/or a specific number of people allowed in a team (Yoshida & James, 2010).

Research on events is prolific. International researchers such as De Aragao (2015) and Peeters, Matheson and Szymanski (2014) studied, for example, the economic impact of the FIFA World Cup in developing countries. Their results highlighted that sports events gave host countries international exposure, which in turn resulted in increased visitor arrivals and expenditure. Burnett (2017) researched on educational legacies of mega-sport events for Africa. Results indicated that there is a linkage between Olympic education, which is a value-based curriculum and physical education. Consequently, physical education at the school level has been firmly established due to Olympic Games legacy projects. Other researchers (Liu, Chuang, Chang & Chang, 2017) researched the benefits and impact influencing support of participants and residents for road race events. Results showed that



participants and residents positively experienced the benefits derived from attending events. This is supported by International research commissioned by the Germany Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (GMET, 2009) which confirms that people are travelling longer distances to attend events. Proos and Kock (2014) and GMET (2009) further highlights that demographic changes such as increased income levels influence the type and scope of tourists. Hence the need for motorsport event marketers to understand the demographic characteristics of visitors who attend the event.

The WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run is an annual motorsport event held in Van Wyksvlei. The town is located in the Upper Karoo in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Contrary to its name, which means “Van Wyk’s marsh”, the town is located in the dry and hot Northern Cape province of South Africa, (Experience Northern Cape, 2018; Adderley, 2017; Brand South Africa, 2017). The Northern Cape is the largest province in South Africa, has a population of about 1.214 million people, and represents 2.1% of the country’s total population. Besides being rich in minerals such as iron ore, alluvial diamonds, zinc, lead and manganese, the Northern Cape is home to six national parks which are Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Augrabies National Park, Mokala National Park, Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, Namaqua National Park and Tankwa Karoo National Park (Experience Northern Cape, 2018; Brand South Africa, 2017; South African National Parks, 2016). Tourism represents a huge source of untapped potential waiting to be exploited in the Northern Cape Province. Event tourism can thus contribute significantly to the economic growth and sustainability of the province.

Given the huge impact of events on local areas and the potential revenue they can generate, it is imperative that tourism authorities and event organisers focus on attracting the right target market for events and being able to meet the needs of the target market. An insight into the demographics and consumer behaviour of attendees of events is critical. With this in mind, the main objective of the study was to gain a better understanding of the demographics and consumer behaviour of attendees of the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run Motorsport Event.

## **Demographics**

Demographics are variables of population characteristics that can be expressed statistically and include age, sex, race, occupation, education levels and income (Van der Westhuyzen & Van der Merwe, 2014; Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2012; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). Insight into visitor demographics variables in tourism is vital to understand the implication of these variables for the marketing and positioning of tourism products.

Demographics have an influence in explaining event preferences and demand (Tassiopoulos, 2010).

Age is the number of years a person has lived. UNESCO (2017) ascertain that age is a transition from one stage of life to another such as from toddler to childhood. Personal preferences may change as consumers go through life, for example, children want toys as gifts, but when they grow older they tend to want clothes and technological devices (such as tablets and iPads). In marketing event tourism, the mixing of ages is an important factor to consider because values, lifestyles and attitudes differ among age groups within a population.

Sex and gender are terms that are used interchangeably to refer to whether a person is biologically male or female (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2012). Rather than adopting the conventional view that men have higher participation in adrenalin-filled tourism activities and events, Funk (2008); Gratton & Taylor (2005) highlight that gender-related differences are diminishing rapidly. Because of certain marketing strategies, women are being introduced to the basic rules of adventure tourism, travelling, camping and engaging in adventurous tourism activities and understanding the different levels of play and participation.

An individual's level of education is strongly associated with his or her occupation, whereas high-level occupations normally require advanced education and training (Ordóñez de Pablos & Aung, 2017). According to Parumasur and Roberts-Lombard, (2012), education acts as a surrogate factor for better-paying jobs, as it influences the level of income that a person earns. Markets consist of people with money to spend. Funk (2008) notes that marketers need to understand what consumers spend their money on and why.

Yeoman and Butterfield (2010) argue that demographic trends have an impact on everyone and everything, which include motorsport marketers and tourism for the purposes of this study. The demographic transition theory suggests that demographic trends and social changes have an important impact on the future development of the event tourism industry (Zaidi & Morgan, 2017). Demographic dimensions provide marketing managers with critical information about the size and characteristics of the target markets and assist in selecting groups of homogeneous consumers as target markets for marketing activities. Demographic variables are important because they indicate the population of the area, the size of the target market, the income group and the nature of the spending patterns of consumers who attend motorsport events.

Demography is important to event tourism marketing executives because people constitute markets. Demographic dimensions assist in selecting groups of homogeneous consumers as target markets for marketing activities. A clear understanding of tourism consumer demographics helps one to appreciate the implications of individual determinants of consumer behaviour (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993).

### **Consumer behavior**

The term “consumer” refers to an individual who buys goods and services for personal use (Coetsee & Nienaber, 2012). “Consumer behaviour” refers to the choices that consumers make; thus, the study of consumer behaviour focuses on how consumers make decisions with regard to spending their available resources (such as time, money and effort) on consumer-related products (Gbadamosi, 2018). Thus, consumer behaviour encompasses characteristics that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services they expect to satisfy their needs. In addition to the physical activity of buying, the purchasing behavior of consumers involves a mental decision.

Furthermore, understanding that consumer decision making does not take place in a vacuum, aids to provide an appreciation of the determinants of consumer behaviour. Determinants are factors that decisively affect or influence the nature or outcome of a process or activity. A number of people/group determinants- such as family, friends, reference groups and society play different roles in the decision-making process. However, because every person belongs to a specific group, it is important for marketers to understand the individual, group and economic determinants of consumer behavior. These determinants determine whether consumers will purchase a product or service because they want to meet their own needs, it is the most popular trend on the market, or they have the money available to buy the product or service that aligns with their needs and wants.

Zitkus and Puskoriute (2013) argue that consumers do not necessarily look to buy the cheapest products but consider different factors such as motivation, mood, environment emotions and other factors. The Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (EBM) Model of Consumer Behaviour describes the different stages consumers go through in decision-making. These include motivation and need recognition, search for information on the event, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing and going to the event and the outcome of attendance (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995). The outcome of attending the event will influence future attendance of the event. The EBM model recognises that consumers are different. An example is a tourist participating in the event who is motivated to attend events because of the novelty of the event or the attractive nature of

the event (Kruger, Viljoen & Saayman, 2015). Marketers and motorsport event organisers need to understand why visitors attend their events in order to have repeat visits which are important in terms of sustainability and growth.

Understanding visitor demographics and consumer behaviour will not only provide organisers with a competitive advantage that will ensure sustainability but will assist them in marketing and positioning events. The basic philosophy of marketing rests on the premise that when a business delivers beyond satisfactory expectations, the business can retain customers and improve brand loyalty (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2012). Thus, understanding consumer demographics and consumer behaviour act as a cornerstone for marketers to understand consumer behaviour of visitors to motorsport events.

The primary aim of this section was to provide a better understanding of demographics and consumer behaviour of visitors to an event. It reviewed literature on demographic variables and the importance of demographics. It also provided insight into the concept of consumer behaviour, as well as the determinants of consumer buying behaviour.

### **Motorsport events – The Wegry/Drive Out Bull Run**

Motorsport events are a group of competitive events involving motorised vehicles, which are either racing (e.g. Formula 1) or non-racing (e.g. 4x4 obstacle course) competitions. Motorsport events are spectacular, exciting and provide enjoyment for participants and spectators alike. Races consist of series, championships or events. Drivers can compete in these events as either professionals or amateurs (Henry, Angus, Jenkins & Aylett, 2007).

Motorsport events are an important contributor to local economies. In 2005, motorsport events in South Africa contributed 0.42% towards the country's GDP (Henry et al., 2007). In 2017, MSA accorded the South African Endurance Series national championship status, after which it attracted competitors from the region and beyond (SA Endurance Series, 2017). Ntloko (2016) concurs that sports events add business opportunities and investments that are likely to further boost the economy of the host country and region.

Although motorsport events contribute to an increased level of noise and air pollution from the race cars, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. Positive impacts emanate from travelers' spending which can include travel, accommodation, food and entertainment expenses. Furthermore, people attending motorsport events often extend their time in the area for sightseeing. The Northern Cape Economic Development, Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (NCED, 2011) states that tourism is one sector that can challenge





mining and agriculture as the most important industry in the Northern Cape Province.

Bojanic and Warnick (2012) ascertained that the benefits of motorsport events should spread from core to peripheral areas. As The WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run, as an annual motorsport event organised by the WegRy/Drive Out magazine in South Africa, can thus contribute to growing tourism in the Northern Cape. The WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run was selected because it can add to the growth of Van Wyksvlei and the surrounding area as a mecca for off-road adventure motorsports enthusiasts. In addition, the ancient town has heritage aspects such as the Van Wyksvlei Dam, the first State funded dam which was built in 1882 and the historical actions of the Second Boer War (Northern Cape info, 2019) which enhances its value as a desired tourist destination.

To participate in the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run, participants need to have a vehicle which is thirty years or older with a value of R25 000 or less, per entrant. This motorsport event not only attracts community members from the province but also visitors from other provinces, which in turn means that they spend time and money in the province whilst attending the event. Although it might be too expensive for international entrants to act as participants, WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run motorsport event has potential to attract international tourists as spectators.

The WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run motorsport event also acts as a social event. Community members are encouraged to volunteer as marshals for the event, thus providing community members with the opportunity to interact with other community members and the tourists. Furthermore, a soccer tournament is held on the weekend of the motorsport event for the local community. Locals are also provided with an opportunity to display their artistic talents and sell their goods at a market held at the event. Job opportunities are created in this way, especially for the youth and those seeking part-time employment opportunities. Motorsport consumers are the pivot upon which motorsport events leverage their reputation. Insight into the demographics and consumer behaviour of visitors to motorsport events would help marketers of the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run to predict the needs, wants and expectations of visitors. This, in turn, would enable the organisers of the event to effectively market, position and grow the event in the future.

## **Methodology**

The study adheres to the interpretive paradigm, as the role of the researcher was to understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of the different participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The interpretive



paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals. Researchers in this paradigm seek to understand rather than explain. A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study. Quantitative research examines the relationship between variables, which can be analysed using statistical procedures (Patten & Newhart, 2017). A survey research design was selected and a structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents.

### **Population and sampling**

The population of this study were participants and attendees of the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run motorsport event which amounted to 700 (Van Eeden, 2017). The study involved non-probability sampling, and specifically convenience sampling based on participants and attendees' willingness to complete the questionnaire. According to Israel (1992), for a population of 700, a sample of 255 is sufficient (at a confidence level of 95%). In this study, 267 questionnaires were completed and deemed sufficient for the purpose of the research.

### **Questionnaire construction**

A structured questionnaire comprising mostly closed-ended questions and one open-ended question was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire consisted of five sections, namely section A, B, C, D and E (which were *demographic profile of respondents, accommodation, food and beverage, organisation of the event* and *only for competitors* respectively). The questions were clear and simple. There was no subject-related terminology included in the questionnaire. No cover letter accompanied the questionnaire; instead, the field workers explained the aim and scope of the study to the respondents and reiterated that the information was for research purposes only.

The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. To ensure the applicability of the questionnaire to the study, a pilot study was conducted in Kimberley (Simon, 2011). Ten visitors to the Monstermob Raceway motorsport event in Kimberley were requested to complete the questionnaire. Positive feedback was provided on the format of the questions, and questions were deemed clear and concise.

### **Data collection procedure**

Salkind (2009) states that data collection involves everything from contacting possible sources, to arranging data collection trips, to the actual venue where data recording takes place. The researcher was assisted by three research assistants in gathering the data from respondents at the event. The research



assistants were former tourism and marketing students and were briefed beforehand on how to administer the questionnaire.

Permission to administer the questionnaire was obtained from the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run organisers, and visitors' consent was obtained before administering the questionnaire to them. No incentives were offered for participation. Only respondents over the age of 18 years were selected, as minors would need consent from their parents or legal guardians. With regard to groups travelling together (i.e., family or friends), the researcher selected only one respondent from such a group to avoid duplication (Swart, 2016). The data collection took place over the full three days of the event, that is, from 6 to 8 October 2017, which allowed enough time for data collection.

## Data analysis

Data were captured in Excel and both descriptive and inferential statistics (chi-square) were performed on the data. Non-parametric statistical test was applied to the data. Non-parametric statistics are often appropriate when frequencies across a Likert scale are considered.

## Results and discussion

### Demographic profile

The demographic profile of the respondents comprised of the province of residence, country of residence, length of stay, group composition, gender, race, age, annual income, employment status and education level. Table 1 captures the demographic profile of the respondents. Table 1 indicates that most of the respondents, 97.7% (261) of respondents were from South Africa whilst the remaining 2.3% (6) of the respondents indicated that they were international residents. It is clear from Table 1 that the Western Cape had the majority (31.1%) of the respondents in comparison to other provinces. International respondents indicated Botswana (66.7%), Namibia (16.7%) and Britain (16.7%) as their country of origin.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents**

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q1 Province of residence	Eastern Cape	24	9%
	Free State	33	12.4%
	Gauteng	59	22.1%
	KwaZulu-Natal	2	0.7%
	Limpopo	10	3.7%
	Mpumalanga	5	1.9%
	North West	10	3.7%



	Northern Cape	35	13.1
	Western Cape	83	31.1%
Q2 Country of residence	Botswana	4	66.7%
	Namibia	1	16.7%
	Britain	1	16.7%
Q3 length of stay	Entire event	252	94.4%
	Day visitor	2	0.7%
	Local resident	13	4.9%
Q4 Group composition	Alone	5	2%
	Family	29	11%
	Friends	146	55%
	Family and friends	79	29%
	Other, specify	8	3%
Q5 Gender	Female	53	20%
	Male	214	80%
Q6 Race	African	9	3%
	Coloured	12	5%
	Indian	2	1%
	White	244	91%
Q7 Age	Under 21	5	1.9%
	21-40	132	49.4%
	41-60	108	40.4%
	Older than 60	22	8.2%
Q8 Annual income	Nil – R300,000	106	39.7%
	R301,000– R500,000	90	33.7%
	R501,000 – R 700,000	46	17.2%
	R701,000 or more	25	9.4%
Q9 Employment status	Self-employed	144	53.9%
	Formally employed	107	40.1%
	Student/retired	7	2.6%
	Other, specify	2	0.7%
Q10 Education level	Grade 12 or below	79	30%
	Graduate level	128	48%
	Post graduate level	60	23%

### Rating of accommodation, food and beverage and organization of the event

The organisers provided two options of tented accommodation on site, that is, cheap tents (basic) and luxury tents. A total of 46.4% of the respondents experienced reasonably priced accommodation and 72.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that the staff was friendly. About half (45.32%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the food stalls were well positioned whilst 40.82% strongly agreed that the food prices were reasonable. More than half (59.9%) of the respondents and 53.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that the event was well organised and the event location was convenient. This was in contrast with 27.7% of the respondents who disagreed that the ablution facilities were always clean. Furthermore, when responding on whether

signage to and at the event was clear more respondents (23.6%) strongly disagreed than agreed.

As indicated earlier, Pearson's chi-squared test was applied to the data of this study, using a significance level of 0.05 to determine the correlations between income and accommodation. Other correlations include income and food and beverage, income and type of media that influenced attendance of the event. Table 2 below shows the analytical statistics of the comparisons

**Table 2: Analytical statistics of the comparison of income versus accommodation, food and beverage and type of media that influenced attendance of the event**

	Chi-square	df	p	Interpretation
Income and type of accommodation	32.70845	15	0.00515	Significant correlation between income and accommodation type
Income and amount spent on accommodation	10.43047	6	0.10766	No correlation between income and amount spent on accommodation
Income versus amount spent on food and beverage.	39.52868	9	0.00001	Significant correlation between income and amount spent on food and beverage.
Income and the type of media that influenced attendance of the event.	10.96867	12	0.53161	No correlation between income and the type of media that influenced attendance of the event.

## Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of the demographics and consumer behaviour of visitors to motorsport events, to determine visitor satisfaction, and to make recommendations to the event organisers and Northern Cape government regarding the marketing and positioning of the WegRy/Drive Out Bull Run motorsport event.

Most of the attendees (49.4%) indicated that they were aged between 21-40 years. In addition, most respondents (39.7%) earned less than R300 000, indicating younger visitors attended who are still in the early stages of their career and not earning high salaries yet. Thus, they opted for cheaper accommodation provided by the organisers. The organisers provided two options of tented accommodation on site, that is, cheap tents (basic) and luxury tents. Nearly 70% of the respondents indicated that they spent less than R2 000 on accommodation. These conclusions are supported by the correlation analysis presented in Table 2. It indicates a significant correlation between income and accommodation type, and income and amount spent on food and beverage.



Mixed feelings were recorded related to the cleanliness of the facilities – 22% of the respondents had concerns on the cleanliness of the toilets and ablution facilities, which can have a negative impact on health, especially the men's facilities. The respondents reiterated on the need for more ablution facilities for males since more males (80% of the respondents) attended the event than females (20% of the respondents).

Although most respondents (41.9%) strongly agreed that the security was good, 0.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The positive response could have been due to the availability of security personnel and the electric fence. However the negative response could have been due to the electric fence which was not in working condition.

A total of 35.2% of respondents indicated that friends and family influenced them to attend the event, whilst only 1.9% were influenced by advertisements. This could be attributed to the fact that all consumers belong to a social group made up of family and friends, who in turn influence individual social needs. This conclusion further supports the views of Bhatia (2013) that family and friends affect consumer behaviour. 44.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that information about the event was easily accessible. Information was available from family and friends, social media, WegRy/Drive Out magazine and advertisements.

It is important for tourism stakeholders to understand the demographics and consumer behaviour of motorsport visitors as set out in this study. The findings from the study can be used as a tool to propel the image of the province not only locally, but also to a global audience and help to market and position the destination.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations that address visitor experience, marketing and positioning of the motorsport event are based on the findings of this study and follow below:

- a) There is a need for robust marketing by event organizers of the event so that it receives more recognition beyond the borders of the neighbouring provinces and in other countries. Sustainable tourism and the related job creation opportunities and community participation are part of the event and need to be highlighted in marketing material. Furthermore, there is a need for marketing aimed at females and other racial groups who might be interested in such events.



- b) A tourism repertoire and compendium should be made available to visitors and competitors when sending communication about the event. This could be sent out before visitors start their travels and could include an all-inclusive tourism package for visitors from outside Van Wyksvlei to promote tourism in the area and the province.
- c) A map of Van Wyksvlei and tourist attractions in the vicinity would make it easier for people to find their way to the event and tourist attractions.
- d) Assuming that space is available, locals can be motivated to open their houses for accommodation during the event, complementing the established accommodation establishments. This will ensure that the visitors have a variety of accommodation options to choose from.
- e) More showers and a urinary area for men should be provided. In addition, regular cleaning and check-ups at ablution facilities should become standard procedure so that the ablution facilities are kept clean at all times.
- f) There is a need for bigger variety of food as well as more food stalls at the venue.
- g) Van Wyksvlei is well known for its tasty Karoo mutton. An opportunity can be provided for spectators and participants alike to pre-order cuts of meat to take back home. This has the potential to open up a new distribution channel for the local community to provide ready-cut meat to consumers across the country.
- h) There is a need to create stronger links and networks between the event organisers, the public sector and other private stakeholders. This will lead to better cooperation between stakeholders which, in turn, can result in better services provided to tourists.

### **Suggestions for future research**

This study can provide the groundwork for further studies on detailed motivational factors related to motorsport events. This study on motorsports pertains strictly to automobiles. There is an even larger gap in the literature on consumer behaviour with regard to motorcycle, boat and air racing.

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