



# An evaluation of festival activities as motives for festival attendance: A case study of Strawberry festival at the Redberry farm in George, South Africa

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## Abstract

The author asserts that It is imperative that festival organisers understand tourist motivations for attending festivals in order to conduct effective festival planning and furthermore, in order to achieve a more productive festival marketing position and marketing strategy. The purpose of this study was to evaluate festival activities as motives to attend the Strawberry festival in George, South Africa and as a basis for informing marketing and management recommendations aimed at improving the festival experience of visitors. Much research has been conducted around festival-scape factors, however this study opted to focus on specific festival activities that were used in the promotional and advertising material for the festival, breaking the mould of analysing festival attendance motives as previously employed by many studies. The motivation of these attendees is broken down and viewed abstractly from different viewpoints of how the motivation to attend a festival, differs between attendees of varying age, first-time versus repeat visitors, spending patterns, and satisfaction with the range of services that are provided.

**Keywords:** Strawberry Festival, attendees' motivations, events.

## Introduction

Festivals and special events have grown in all destinations and are the fastest growing segment of the tourism field. Special interests in festivals and events such as cultural preservation, experiencing local foods and cultures, and community involvement in a destination have led to an increased emphasis on regional and local festivals. According to Park, Reisinger, & Kang (2008) festivals play a significant role for communities by attracting tourists, creating positive economic impact, creating opportunities for community involvement and togetherness, and enhancing the image of the destination.

A number of studies have been conducted on festivals and events with their many advantages for communities (Getz, 1993). However, due to the competitive nature of festivals, further research is essential to help both festival managers and marketers to ensure that they can have effective marketing strategies for their festivals.

The study done by Kim, Goh, and Juan (2010) found that it was widely accepted that understanding travel motivations is vital in predicting future travel patterns. This idea was further supported by Park, Reisinger, and Kang (2008) who stressed that understanding consumers' motivations is a key prerequisite to creating desirable experiences and satisfaction for customers. In the same notion and views of the authors above, Xie, Costa, & Morais (2008) were of the opinion that by understanding tourists' motivations, their needs can be fulfilled through marketing activities. Fodness (1994) also stated that effective marketing is impossible without identifying, understanding, and prioritising consumers' motivation. Increasing interest and more involvement in festivals has contributed to the growth of festivals. However, little attention has been paid to strawberry festivals in South Africa and especially to attendee's motivation and satisfaction levels during these festivals.



## **Significance of festivals**

According to Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell (2011: 14) festivals are known to be an important expression of human activity that contributes to our social cohesion and our cultural life. The same authors went on to indicate that these events have become a pervasive feature of our cultural landscape that constitutes a vital and growing component of the event industry. The views of Wamwara-Mbugua & Cornwell (2009) are that other commonly recognized positive outcomes for the community include: provision of economic support, authenticity, and community cohesion. In the opinions of Loots, Ellis & Slabbert (2011) festivals may also generate business activity and income for their host communities, as they can directly and indirectly increase tourism revenue. They further went on to indicate that these events can be a 'financial injection' to their host economies, and one that governments, businesses, and residents rely on and Saayman (2004) proposed that the contribution of these events to tourism in the area is especially seen in that they offer entertainment and serve as an attraction for their host community. This idea is further supported by Prentice and Anderson (2003), who indicated that festivals can be considered destinations in and of themselves.

## **Visitors to festival**

According to Felsenstein & Fleischer (2003) local festivals are increasingly being utilised to promote tourism and further boost the local economy. Based on studies done by Bagelym & Mokhtarian (2002) and Cole & Illum (2006), these authors recognise the different types of visitors who attend festivals, however, they emphasised the difference and importance of local residents and visitors who do not reside locally due to their distinctive behaviour. Felsenstein & Fleischer (2003) were of the opinion that attendees who are local residents are found to have different spending behaviour compared to non-locals. According to Lau & McKercher (2004), festival attendees can be grouped into two categories: first-time visitors and repeat visitors. First-time visitors are those attendees who have discovered the festival and are experiencing it for the first time, while repeat visitors have already acquired familiarity and satisfaction with the experience (Lau & McKercher, 2004). Both first-time and repeat attendees play a vital role in the success and sustainability of a festival. It has been found that these two groups differ significantly in regards to socio-demographics, behavioural characteristics, destination perception, perceived value, and travel motivations. While first-time attendees have been found to spend a significant amount of money during the festival, repeat visitors have been found to stay longer and spend more – a testament to their loyalty. Thus, this segment of repeat visitors represents an attractive and cost-effective market segment for festivals (Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis, 2010).

## **Motivation to attend festivals**

The success of a festival is heavily dependent on the execution of a strategic marketing plan; an understanding of the relationship between a destination event and its visitors and the identification of target markets are critical factors in the process (Thomson and Schoefield, 2009). Festival organizers are likely to assert that their primary goal is to provide high quality, satisfying experiences that visitors perceive to be good value in order to increase the probability of the visitors returning in the future and/or recommending the festival to others in their social circle (Lee, Petrick and Crompton, 2007). Since competition among festivals and destinations is increasing, the need for information on festivals, specifically analysis of motivations for attending festivals and events has become important. Moreover, Crompton and McKay (1997) argue that event managers should make every effort possible to fully understand the motives of festival attendance in order to provide better services for them; since motives are a powerful predictor of satisfaction and a significant aspect in the decision making process, the exploration of the visitors' motives can lead to advanced levels of attendance. For example, Crompton and McKay (1997) explored festival attendance motivation for the following reasons: firstly, it gives the opportunity to match the festival's content to the visitors' needs. Furthermore, it augments the visitors' satisfaction levels since their needs are met; and lastly it increases



the chances for the visitors to revisit the festival, a fact that plays a key role for the economic viability of the festival. Schoefield and Thomson (2007) also agree that it is critically important to discover festival visitor motivations and to measure consumers' satisfaction levels from the point of view of the consumer. They suggest that from a planning and management perspective it is vital to determine visitor satisfaction and behavioural intention with respect to repeat visits and to help identify the factors which affect visitor motivation and their experiential outcomes. Gelder and Robinson (2009) as well as Bowen and Daniels (2005) state that understanding why people go to festivals can help planners align their marketing efforts to emphasize the attributes that best reflect the mission and goals of each event. Nicholson and Pearce (2001) believe that these factors will become increasingly important as the growing number and diversity of events, especially festivals, lead to heightened competition, in particular when events are initiated or expanded to encourage tourism and thus boost local economies (Daniels, 2004). Getz (1993) also emphasized the importance of analysing visitors' motives for attending festivals and events. Identifying such motivations is a prerequisite for planning event programs effectively and marketing them to visitors (Crompton & McKay, 1997). Analysis of festival motivations also helps event managers to better position their festivals (Scott, 1996).

According to Crompton & McKay (1997), understanding festival motivation is imperative to design offerings for attendees, identify attendees' decision making process, and ultimately increase satisfaction levels. Individualistic motivations for festivals emerged because of the mixture of recreation for the local residents and tourism offerings for tourists. Previous research by the following authors (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Formica & Uysal, 1996; Mohr, Backman, Gahan, & Backman, 1993; Uysal, Gahan, & Martin, 1993) has found that need for excitement, event novelty, unique experience, socialization, entertainment, involvement are some reasons why people attend festivals. However, it should be noted that differences in motivations were revealed across factors such as age, income, local residency and repeat visitation.

Pioneered by Gitelson & Crompton (1984), first-time and repeat visitor studies concluded that each group had different motivations, leading to different behaviour. Most notable differences proposed by previous researchers included: socio-demographics, behaviour characteristics, destination perceptions, satisfaction and image, and travel motivation (Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis, 2010; Lau & McKercher, 2004; McKercher & Wong, 2004; Shanka & Taylor, 2004). Repeat visitors have also been found to display a stronger value-loyalty relationship than first-time festivalgoers (Lee, Lee, & Yoon, 2009). This study took a different view on festival attendance motivations as done by previous researchers, and focussed on festival activities as motives as an outline in the festival's marketing and promotional materials to attend the festival.

### **Festivals and destination management**

Festivals have been recognised as one of the most important areas of the tourism industry, and they have contributed to their host communities in a number of ways: creating economic impact, enhancing the overall image of the destination, and creating community involvement. Festivals have also provided the community with the recognition of the destination. According to Grunwell, Ha, and Martin (2008), festivals could bring a whole new group of tourists to a destination. When visitors have a positive experience in the host community, they will in all probability return to that destination in the future (Woosnam, McElroy, & Winkle, 2009).

One of the most distinguished characteristics of festivals is their ability to create high returns on small investments (Getz, 1993). One way that festivals create less financial responsibilities for themselves is by holding events in temporary or already existing physical locations (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004). Most festivals do not own permanent physical structures that are a constant financial burden. Additionally, many festivals are managed and operated by a small staff or volunteers (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004), which is beneficial for both the residents and the festival. Residents benefit by being able to stay active in their community, and the festival benefits from a labour force that does not require much monetary compensation. These



characteristics make festivals more tolerant of economic downturns. This resistance to poor economic environments makes festivals more attractive to communities or organizations looking to start a new project.

Festivals provide an opportunity for residents and businesses of the local community to get involved and become active participants in their community. The ability of festivals to involve members of the host community gives festivals an important role in the preservation of a community's culture. During festivals, an atmosphere is created with valuable and cultural ideas, practices, and traditions that can be shared with others. New members of a community can learn about a community's culture from festivals conducted by the hosting community. Festival events create a sense of community and cohesiveness among community members (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004). Festivals can celebrate the music, art, food, strawberry, or countless other aspects of a community's culture and heritage. Thus, festivals are ideal projects for developing unique aspects of the community's culture. A sense of pride is developed as a community celebrates together. This pride and excitement from the host community can be important factors in attracting non-resident tourists to a festival as well as in providing a great opportunity for residents to be involved in community events. According to Lee, Lee, and Wicks (2004), festivals enhance tourists' experiences by using the local community's culture to create a unique experience.

## **Methodology**

In order to complete the study, a self-completing questionnaire was administered on-site to visitors attending Strawberry festival in 2016 over the duration of the festival. Attendees to the festival completed the questionnaire on the exit gates to ensure that only those who have had the experience can complete based on their overall experience of the festival on the day.

## **Study site**

This study was conducted at the Strawberry festival at the Redberry farm in George. Although the strawberry emporium is the major purpose of a festival, the festival also includes live entertainment, cycling competition, food and wine tasting and sales, stalls selling various merchandise, social events, and children's activities.

## **Instrument and motivation measurements**

The instrument for this study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of festival activities as motives for festival attendance at the Strawberry festival at the Redberry farm in George. The research used ten (10) main activities of the festival as published on the festival website and other promotional materials used to promote the festival. Using undergraduate students, a pilot test was conducted to establish reliability. Experts in tourism research and in festivals also reviewed a draft of the instrument to determine validity. Comments and inputs were used for development of the final instrument.

The final instrument was a three-page questionnaire consisting of three sections: socio-demographics, promotional mediums, travel and ticket arrangements and main festival activities that induce motivation to attend the festival. Attendees were asked choose the main activity that convinced them to attend the festival and they were allowed to choose more than one.

## **Data collection and analysis**

Data were collected at the Strawberry festival at the Redberry farm in George on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2016. Four undergraduate students from the Nelson Mandela University tourism department at the George campus administered and collected the surveys under the supervision of an academic researcher. Attendees were randomly approached,



asked if they were willing to participate in the study and the purpose of the study was explained. It was only those visitors who accepted to participate in the study that were given the questionnaire to complete. Attendees completed the survey in front of the research assistants, and the surveys were checked briefly and collected immediately after completion. A total of 137 attendees agreed to complete the questionnaire. The statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 15.0 for Windows) was used for data analysis. After encoding data in SPSS, the data were screened for usability and descriptive statistics were used to represent the sample.

## Research findings and discussion

This section provides a discussion on the findings of the research. Whilst the purpose of this study was to evaluate festival activities as motives to attend the Strawberry festival held at the Redberry farm in George, South Africa, it was deemed necessary as part of the findings to include the profile of the festival attendees as well as their views on satisfaction levels based on facilities and services rendered during the festival.

### Visitor profiles

**Table 1: Gender of visitors**

Gender	Percentage
Male	46,0%
Female	54,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

**Table 2: Age of visitors**

Age	Percentage
18-25	32,8%
26-35	26,8%
36-45	20,0%
46-55	12,8%
56 And Above	7,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

**Table 3: Visitor spending at the festival**

Amount of money spent at festival	Percentage
R100 or less	11,0%
R101 - R500	61,4%
R501 - R1 000	22,5%
R1001 - R2 000	4,7%
R2 001 and more	0,4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The results of the study, as shown in Tables 1 – 3 (visitor profile) above, show that the proportion of female visitors is marginally higher at 54% than the male visitors at 46%. The age distribution shows a relatively young group of visitors with 32.8% being 18 -25 years old, slightly followed by those between the ages 26 -35 at 26.8 %. Those aged between 36 -45 years were at 20% and the least age representation was for those who were 56 years and above with 7.7%.



The majority of visitors (61.4%) have indicated spending between R101 – R500 during the festival. The second highest spent was recorded for those who spent between R501 and R1 000 with 22.5%, whilst the least spent was recorded for those who spent R2 001 and above represented by 0.4%.

### Visitor characteristics

**Table 4: Travelling form of the visitors**

Travelling party		
Partner/Spouse	32	13,6%
Family members	114	48,3%
Friends	72	30,5%
Just me	10	4,2%
Prefer not to say	8	3,4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Participation in festivals would be more exciting in groups family members and friends; this supported by results showing 48.3% of those who came with family members and 30.5 % who attended the festival with friends respectively. The results of the study also show that this festival is least interesting to those who travel alone at 4.2% and those who prefer not to say about their travel status at 3.4%. Interestingly, 13.6% attend the festival with their spouses which may infer that this festival is good as an outing destination for spouses.

**Table 5: Times of attending the festival**

Times attending this festival	Number	Percentage
First time	121	51,1%
Second time	80	33,8%
Third time	21	8,9%
More than three times	15	6,3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Most festivals draw from a relatively local area whereby their continued viability and sustainability depends on a high level of repeat visitation (Crompton and McKay 1997). Interestingly, as shown in table 5 above, just above half of the visitors (51.1%) were attending the festival for the first time, slightly followed at 33.8% who were attending the festival for the second time. It seems the festival is struggling to convince visitors to return for three times and more as shown by 8.9% of those who were attending the festival for the third time and 6.3% of visitors who were attending the festival for more than three times.

**Table 6: Number of days attending the festival**

Days of festival attend	Number	Percentage
One	218	92,4%
Two	18	7,6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The strawberry festival is a two-day event, and the majority of the visitors (92.4%) indicated attending the festival for only one day with only 7.6% attending the full two days of the festival as shown in Table 6 above. This finding may infer that visitors do not find the festival to have enough activities to do over a period of two days.



## Festival atmosphere

**Table 7: Rating of the festival services and facilities by visitors**

	Mean	SD	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Festival's overall atmosphere	1,8	79,0%	41,9%	42,4%	14,4%	0,0%	1,3%	100%
Quality of food	1,8	71,9%	38,6%	47,0%	13,1%	1,3%	0,0%	100%
Availability of parking	1,9	80,1%	34,9%	46,4%	16,2%	1,7%	0,9%	100%
Quality of entertainment	1,9	78,9%	32,6%	48,7%	16,1%	1,7%	0,8%	100%
Cleanliness of bathrooms	2,0	92,7%	34,5%	39,1%	19,6%	6,0%	0,9%	100%
Waiting times to be served	2,0	91,3%	30,9%	42,8%	21,2%	3,0%	2,1%	100%

The delivery of service and the provision of facilities influence the satisfaction of visitors to the destination and therefore an analysis of the perception of the visitors to the event will enable the organisers and marketers to gauge the satisfaction levels of the visitors since perception will indicate the actual experience of the visitors on the services and facilities provided. In this study, visitors were asked to rate their satisfaction and experiences during the festival on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). These results are presented (Table 7 above) descending from the most positive to the least positive as rated by the visitors. The results of the study infer that the visitors were mostly satisfied by the service quality and standards of the facilities during the festival. This is supported by a standard deviation for all the items evaluated which was recorded at above 70% for all the items.

The highest ranked festival service and facility were waiting times to be served and cleanliness of the bathrooms with a mean scores of 2.0 each and these were slightly followed by availability of parking and quality of entertainment with mean scores of 1.9 each. The least important festival services and facilities were overall festival atmosphere and quality of food with mean scores of 1.8 each. The results also show that if the responses of those who strongly agreed and those who agreed are combined together, the results show an overwhelming majority of participants in favour of the service standards and quality of facilities provided during the festival. The highest combined percentage of those who strongly agreed and agreed is for the quality of food at a combined 85% and this was slightly followed by the overall atmosphere of the festival recorded at 84.3%. Overall, all the combined scores of those who strongly agreed and those agreed which is recorded above 70% indicates the great satisfaction levels by the visitors.

## Marketing strategies and media

Word of mouth	42,6%
Facebook	34,2%
Street posters	18,6%
Street banners	17,7%
Newspaper	13,1%
Algoa FM	9,7%
Flyers	7,6%
School communicator	6,8%
Official website	6,3%
Email	5,1%
Other	3,8%
Twitter	1,3%

The results of the study indicate that most of the festival attendees knew of the festival through word of mouth (42.6%) and that was slightly followed by Facebook page of the festival (34.2%).



The least marketing medium that attendees got festival information from was Twitter (1.3%). Street posters (18.6%) and street banners (17.7%) proved to be important marketing mediums for the festival as well. Strawberry festival is an annual event used to promote the Redberry farm and its activities, one that attracts a diverse range of people from varying socio-demographic backgrounds. Based on the visitor profile data, organisers may wish to revisit the marketing strategies and media currently being used to attract visitors to the event.

### Visitor motivation

**Table 8: Motives to attend the festival**

<b>Festival activities</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strawberry Emporium	79	33,3%
Food and wine testing	75	31,6%
Country market	70	29,5%
Children activities	68	28,7%
Free entertainment	55	23,2%
Craft beer tastings	49	20,7%
Headline performer Jesse Clegg	32	13,5%
CrossFit	29	12,2%
Trail run	24	10,1%
Mountain Biking (MTB)	14	5,9%

Table 8 above, show the results relating to what motivated the attendees to attend the festival. The results of the study indicate that the important motivation for visiting the festival was the strawberry emporium (33.3%), slightly followed by those who were motivated by food and wine testing (31.6%). The third-ranked motive for visiting the festival was country market (29.5%) The fourth-ranked motive for visiting the festival was children activities (28.7%). The least motivator for visiting the festival was mountain biking (5.9%) which was slightly followed by trail run (10.1%). With respect to visitor motivations for visiting Strawberry festival, the most important motives were strawberry emporium and food and wine testing whilst there is an argument that country market and children activities could be considered important motivations to visit the festival. This finding is consistent with Crompton and McKay's (1997) assertion that individuals are likely to attend a festival based on the motivations of novel value, education and socialisation. Moreover, the findings support those of Crompton and McKay (1997) and Scott (1996) who found varying levels of importance placed on certain motivations for visiting. Given that the most important motive for visiting Strawberry festival was strawberry emporium, special attention must be made and acted upon to ensure the festival meets the visitor's desire to gain knowledge and expand intellectual horizons. Failure to meet these needs (as well as their secondary needs i.e. food and wine tasting, country market and children activities) seems likely to reduce visitor satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat visitation which may in turn affect the likelihood of success of future Strawberry festivals.

Based on the visitor profiles, the findings suggest that this particular festival could do a better job of marketing itself. With the motives of strawberry emporium, country market, food and wine tasting as well as children activities being the main reasons for visitors to attend Strawberry festival, promotional materials might need to incorporate (or even develop products) that address how the festival satisfies these needs. In terms of product development, ideas such as offering discounted group ticket sales or offering combined festival-entry and festival activity tickets may appeal to the festival attendees. Increasing the number of information lectures/sipping sessions and providing information about strawberry education classes might appeal to those who visited Strawberry festival primarily for strawberry emporium motives.





## Conclusion

In conclusion, there is certainly scope for further research on motivations for attending a festival based on specific motives that are used to market and promote the festival, and such research would build on the current study's theoretical, methodological and practical contributions to festivals and events sectors of the tourism industry. The purpose of this study was to evaluate festival activities as motives to attend the Strawberry festival held at the Redberry farm in George, South Africa and as a basis for informing marketing and management recommendations aimed at improving the festival experience of visitors. The literature review could not confirm that similar research has been conducted at any festival as this was done focusing on motivations to attend festivals based on activities specific to the festival, which is an indication that this is an area where more research is required. Previous research done was found to be mainly on established models of festival attendance rather than specific festival activities. This study is significant since the festival sector is growing in South Africa and as such, this sector creates more opportunities for festival entrepreneurs both current and potential. The study results infer an indication that the visitors were satisfied overall with the facilities and services rendered during the festival which is good for the sustainability of the festival as such.

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