

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT IN FESTIVAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore the trends in the conceptual development of festival quality management. Investigation shows there is plethora of literature on festival quality which spans over three decades. However, researchers and practitioners have continued to grapple with trying to understand the why and what of festival quality study in tourism management. This knowledge gap exists probably because of the multi-disciplinary historical antecedent of festival quality research. This paper therefore provides extensive insight into the meaning, nature and scope of festival quality from individual and group research efforts. The paper also highlights the implications of identified dimensions and attendant relationships for festival product development, packaging and overall marketing performance of festivals.

Introduction

Special event tourism (SET) has become a significant factor in the tourism development initiative of most destinations. The economic and socio-cultural developments experienced by host communities of tourism attractions and resorts have led to the emergence of festivals as critical destinations products (Bowdin et al., 2008). This has propelled the event tourism businesses into becoming a big industry. Historically, it was Wood (1982) who

highlighted the birth of what is now known as the 'event industry'. Wood (1982) identified that "commercializing popular celebrations require wealth for people to participate and therefore meant selecting elements of the traditional festivals and adopting them for vicarious consumption". Subsequently, special event and festival tourism has become one of the fastest growing forms of tourism. This is because of its role in the socioeconomic development of successful destinations.

Janeczko, Mule and Ritchie (2002) identified some reasons why communities or regions organized special events. According to them special events are organized as a means of revitalizing the communities, as means of drawing people to the region that traditionally have a seasonal appeal, to serve as a promotional tool by bringing new visitations that that particular region or community will otherwise not experienced, it diversifies the local tourism market by increasing both real and potential revenue generation. Other benefits associated with organization and hosting of events are: enhancing or preserving local culture and history, providing local recreation and leisure opportunities and enhancing the local tourism industry (Martin et al., 2011).

The last three decades had witnessed increase in the number of empirical researches on events and festivals tourism. Most of the studies are focused at different perspectives of events and festivals: residents' perceptions and attitudes (Jurowski and Gursory, 2004; Viviers and Slabbert, 2012; Rollin and Delamere, 2007; Mensah, 2013; Swart and Bob, 2005); attendees' satisfaction with events (Esu and Arrey, 2009a, b); impact of events and festivals (Maughan and Bianchini, 2004; Esu et al., 2011); events and festivals branding and marketing (Esu and Arrey, 2009b); perceptions and attitudes of event organizers (Gursory et al., 2004), determinants of exhibition service quality (Jung, 2005); and service quality of exhibition organizers (Chen and Mo 2012). Despite the plethora of studies in the field, there is limited understanding of the points of convergence in knowledge of the various research outcomes and the implications of these outcomes on managerial decisions, especially as it relates to festival quality management. The objective of this paper therefore is to x-ray the position of some popular research groups on festival quality and attempt to highlight the point of convergence from extant literature. To achieve this objective, the author shall undertake extensive exploration and review of literature on conceptual developments in event and festival quality, attendees' satisfaction and behavioural intentions.

Event and Festival Quality

Harrington and Lenehen (2006: 18) in a panoramic view traced the evolution of research on the effect of quality management in organizations in the tourism industry to the early 1990s. Two research perspectives were identified: those that examined quality measurement approaches in hospitality operations (Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Callen, 1992, 1994 and 1996) and those that were concerned with service encounters-related issues in tourism context (Randell and Senior, 1992; Lockwood and Ghillyer, 1996). Harrington and Lenehen (2006: 18) further suggested that "quality prescription could be applied in any organizational setting provided those who are responsible for implementing it follow the appropriate procedures and techniques". This statement was made based on the understanding that quality is not 'a one size fit all factor'. The caveat is that the conditions in each company must be considered during implementation.

The concept of service quality emanated from two schools of thought: (a) American School of Research drawn from 'parasuramannic perspective' (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988, 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996) and 'Garvinnic perspective' (Garvin 1987) and (b) the Nordic School of Research drawn from 'Cromptonnic perspective' (Mackay and Crompton, 1990; Childress and Crompton, 1997; Crompton and Love, 1995; Baker and Crompton, 2000 and

Lee et al. 2007). The parasuramannics initially believed that customers used ten criteria to evaluate service quality. Following a focus group discussion conducted by the group, the numbers of criteria were later reduced to a model of five called SERVQUAL: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, tangible. The Garvinnic perspective produced a model similar to SERVQUAL with eight dimensions: features, conformance, durability, reliability, performance, aesthetics, and perceived quality. Because of this similarity they are grouped under parasuramannics. Perceived quality from the parasuramannic perspective was underpinned on subjective disconfirmation theory which measures the gap between respondent's expectation scores and the perception scores (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In quality measurement, the criteria used by customers to evaluate service quality attributes are critical performance indicators of service delivery (Gronroos, 1990 and Zeithaml et al., 1991). Further to this, Zeithaml and Bitner (2000: 75) describe service quality as "a focus evaluation that reflects the customer perception of specific dimensions of service". SERVQUAL is an instrument used in measuring perceived service quality where in an individual responds to a set of attributes indicates his/her expectation before consumption on a scale and then subsequently responds to the same battery of items after consumption of the service or product on the same scale. SERVQUAL has been criticized on the grounds that it has poor psychometric properties and inferior predictive validity and in its place another model called PERQUAL was suggested (Babakus and Mangold, 1992; Brown et al., 1993; Carman, 1990; Teas, 1993a, b).

PERQUAL from cromptonnic perspective measures customer's perception of performance quality directly against customer's expectations and the evaluation scores recorded with a single score and not perception minus expectation. The Cromptonnics in order to overcome the drawbacks inherent in the parasuramannic perspective, conceptualized perceive quality from two angles, namely: technical and functional quality. Based on this understanding the group developed a model with six criteria, namely: professionalism and skills, attitudes and behaviour, accessibility and flexibility, reliability and trustworthiness, reputation and credibility and recovery. Crompton and Love, (1995) and Baker and Crompton (2000) proved that PERQUAL has a higher predictive validity than SERVQUAL.

Baker and Crompton (2000) refer to quality of a festival as performance quality of an event or attributes of service which are primarily controlled by a supplier. Simply put, perceived quality is the output of a tourism service provider. The Cromptonnics agreed that, evaluation of performance quality is based on a tourist's perception of the performance of the service provided. This inference was based on a study conducted at a two and half day annual festival event with several activities such as living history demonstration, historical reenactments, carnival rides, continuous live entertainment and over 150 food and art and craft vendors. The festival attracted 50,000 participants. In this study perceived festival quality was conceptualized into four dimensions, namely: generic features, specific entertainment features, information source and comfort amenities (Baker and Crompton, 2000).

Tkacznski and Strokes (2005) carried out a study to determine the specific service quality attributes and effect on satisfaction and repurchase intentions of attendees of Brisbane Jazz and Blues Festival. The objective of this study was to investigate whether the service quality factors at a jazz and Blues festival were the same or similar to the generic SERVPERF factors and what festival – specific service quality factors have effect on attendees' overall service quality and repurchase intentions. They conceptualized event quality as comprising of professionalism, service environment and core product. Professionalism had the following items: trust, promptness, support, transaction safety, understanding and accurate information. Core service included the following items: ability, music volume, sound quality, creativity and equipment. Festival environment included the following items: cleanliness,

crowding, toilets, seating, and view. Overall service quality at the festival was used in this study instead of individual service quality. Tkacznski and Strokes (2005) design and developed an instrument they called FESTPERF which was used in data collection. The instrument was similar to the one used by Baker and Crompton (2000). A total of 36 items were included in the instrument. Data for this study was collected from on-site attendees using self administered questionnaire.

Bruwer (2013) conducted a study on service quality perception, satisfaction and buying behavioural using 381 attendees of a major wine festival in the Hawke's Bay Region in New Zealand. He identified three festivalscape dimensions namely: generic festival features, specific event and comfort amenities and entertainment features. Anils (nd.) carried out a study to investigate the antecedents of the festival visitors' satisfaction and loyalty. Six dimensions were analysed, namely: staff, festival area, food, souvenir, information adequacy and convenience. Out of the six dimensions, three dimensions (food, festival area and convenience) related to the festivalscape were identified.

Philip and Hazlett (1997) suggested a new conceptual model of service quality (P-C-P) which was contrasted with SERVQUAL. According to them, this was necessary because of the discontentment with SERVQUAL. The three dimensions are: pivotal attributes (P), core attributes (C) and peripheral attributes (P). The pivotal attributes contain items such as the information that the customer wishes to acquire. Core attributes contain four items which are similar to the dimensions in SERVQUAL (reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy). Peripheral attributes contain extraneous factors that impact on service encounters such as access (operating hours, convenient location) and tangibles (visually appealing facilities and well dressed staff).

Lee, Petrick and Crompton (2007) in their study carried out at Cajan Catfish Festival in Conroe, Texas, sought to understand the strength of the interrelationships among the constructs of perceived service quality, perceived service value and satisfaction and how each enhances positive behavioural intentions. They adopted service quality attributes that were operationalized in previous studies by Childress and Crompton (1997), Baker and Crompton (2000). These dimensions were: generic features, specific entertainment features, information source, comfort amenities.

Yoshida and James (2010) proposed a model that investigated the relationship between festival quality and game service satisfaction and behavioural intentions. The data used in this study was collected from spectators in a professional base ball game in Japan and United States. Festival quality was operationalized as service quality and core product quality. Service quality was construed as stadium employees and service environment, while core product quality was construed as team characteristics and player performance. Using factor analysis the model produced 6 domains of independent variables: stadium employees, facility access, facility space, opponent characteristics, player performance and game atmosphere. Games atmosphere consist of noise, scent, crowd, lighting, music, while core product consist of team history, star, rivalry and country's prestige.

Mensah (2013) in his study conducted on residents' satisfaction and behavioural intention of Asoglu Yam Festival in Ghana conceptualized festival quality into two dimensions: service quality and experience quality. Chen and Mo (2011) in their study on service quality of exhibition organizer identified six dimensions which include booth management, content, registration, access, booth layout and function, exhibition and booth attractiveness. Thamnopoulos, Tzetzis and Laios (nd.) conducted a research to determine the degree to which service quality perception and customers' satisfaction predict repurchase intentions and word of mouth communication. Drawing

from Alexandris (2008) they developed a service quality model called SPORTSERV. SPORTSERV is made of five dimensions or constructs: responsiveness, access, security, reliability and tangibles.

Yuan and Jang (2008) also investigated the relationship between perceived festival quality, satisfaction with wine festival and subsequent awareness of local winers and wineries and effect on future intentions to buy local wine products and to repeat visits. Six hypotheses were formulated to establish the relationships involving these constructs: perception of service quality of wine and satisfaction, perception of service quality of wine and awareness, satisfaction with wine festival and awareness of local wines, perception of wine festival quality and behavioural intentions, satisfaction with wine festival and behavioural intentions and awareness of local wines and behavioural intentions. The research setting was a one day event called Vintage Indiana and Food Grape Festival. They measured perceived service quality using the perception-only model. Perceived service quality was measure with 12 evaluative items drawn from previous studies such as Crompton and Love (1995); Thrane (2002); Baker and Crompton (2000).

Festival Attendees' Satisfaction

Zeithaml and Bitner (2000: 75) describe satisfaction as a more inclusive construct than service quality and define it as "the customers' evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met their needs or expectations". Satisfaction is a function of several factors and not just service quality. Other factors that contribute to customers' satisfaction include: product quality, price, situational factors and personal factors (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000: 74). Baker and Crompton (2000) conceptualize satisfaction as "an emotional state of the mind after exposure to the opportunity. Satisfaction was expressed as quality of experience. According to them, satisfaction may be influenced by the following factors: socio-psychological state of mind that a tourist brings to a site (mood, disposition, and needs), extraneous events (climate, social group interaction) that are beyond the control of the service providers as well as programme of event or site attributes that the suppliers can control. Overall satisfaction was defined as "an affective state that is the emotional reaction to a product or service which is consistent with the level of satisfaction". Baker and Crompton (2000) assert that overall satisfaction is made of two chief antecedent factors: attribute satisfaction and information satisfaction. Attribute satisfaction refers to "consumer subjective satisfaction judgment resulting from observation of attribute performance", while the information satisfaction refers to "consumer subjective satisfaction judgment of the information used in choosing a product". The attribute specific satisfaction is enhanced by other factors such as the consumer's psychological state and extraneous factors. This is further strengthened by Lee et al. (2007) who assert that satisfaction is not achieved exclusively through quality of service.

Jahanshahi, Gashti, Mindamadi, Nawaser and Khaksar (2011) observe that most authors are in commonality in the conceptualization of satisfaction and describe satisfaction as a cognitive or emotional response, which is experienced usually after exposure (expectation prior to a purchase decision, product, consumption experience, etc). The response may be time based (after consumption, after choice, based on accumulated experience, etc). Philip and Hazlett (1997) added that the literature in service quality and customer satisfaction is riddled with confusion and discontent as to the exact nature of service quality and how it could be conceptualize. Customer satisfaction was defined as the accumulation of transaction-specific assessment. There is a large debate on the nature of the relationship and direction. Some researchers see the flow as customer satisfaction to service quality,

while some see the relationship flowing from quality to customer satisfaction. Up till this time, researchers are still involved in the assessment and reassessment to justify claims (Teas, 1993a, b, 1994).

Festival Attendees' Behavioural Intentions

Drawing from the theory of reason (TORA) as postulated by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Baker and Crompton (2000), attendees' behaviour can be predicted from intentions that corresponds directly to behaviour and that corresponding intentions are very accurate predictors of social behaviours. Behavioural intentions were operationalized by two domains (loyalty and willingness to pay money) (Baker and Crompton, 2000).

Thamnopoulos et al. (nd.) conceptualize repurchase intention "as a consumer's tendency to buy products or services from the same company or the same organization that provides services". Heillier, Gensem, Carr and Rickard (2003) define behavioural intention as the process of purchasing a product or a service from the same company based on a previous experience which undoubtedly was satisfying. Cronin and Taylor (1992) measure future behaviour of tourists using two indicators: the intention of repurchasing and the intention to provide positive recommendations. They acknowledged the fact that several tourism researchers have adopted a similar approach and had conceptualized behaviour intentions in terms of revisit to a destination or event and the willingness to recommend the destination or event to friends and relatives.

Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuramann (1996) gave a modified operational definition of behavioural intentions to include loyalty and to pay more money, to say positive things to others, attend the festival again, recommend to others, and encourage friends and relatives to go the festival and make festival the first choice among festivals. Yuan and Jang (2008) conceptualized two indicators of behavioural intentions. One of the indicators was the possibility that the respondent will perform a repeat visitation because of the wine festival and the second was the tendency to buy local wine.

Festival Quality, Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions

The distinction between quality of performance and satisfaction was first made by Brown (1988). Crompton and Love (1995) and Baker and Crompton (2000) found that performance quality has significant direct effect on satisfaction. All four indicators predicted attendees' satisfaction. Yoshida and James (2010) found that games atmosphere strongly predicted games satisfaction. Similarly, stadium employees, stadium facility and access were the major predictors of service satisfaction. Tkacznski and Strokes (2005) confirmed the claim that festival quality (independent variable) predicts satisfaction. Specially, professionalism and environment were found to predict satisfaction. Core service did not predict satisfaction. O'Neil, Getz and Carsen (1999) identified physical appearance, tangible and timeliness, and reliability as determinant of satisfaction in some festivals.

Kim, Severt and Welden (2010) showed that quality of entertainment show, service area, and staff treatment, quality of service area, quality of entertainment show, and quality of staff treatment were the predictors of future intention. Bruwer (2013) found that festival entertainment features were stronger predictor of behavioural intentions than general festival features and specific event and comfort amenities. Anil (nd.) found that out of the three dimensions that significantly influence satisfaction, food dimension was the most important factor for satisfaction. Souvenir, staff and informational adequacy did not affect visitors' satisfaction.

Baker and Crompton (2000), Thrane (2002), Lee et al. (2007), Yuan and Jang (2008) and Thamnopoulos, Tzetzis and Laios (nd.), and Mensah (2013) investigated the relationship between festival quality and attendees'

behavioural intentions. They all reported a non significant direct relationship between perceived quality and behavioural intentions. Most research results shows that festival quality has indirect effect on behavioural intentions (Baron and Kenny, 1986) .

Baker and Crompton (2000), Thrane (2002) and Baron and Kenny (1986) and Thamnopoulos, Tzetzis and Laios (nd.) reported a significant direct relationship between satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Thamnopoulos, Tzetzis and Laios (nd.) affirmed that satisfaction affects customers repurchase intentions (repeat visit and word of mouth communication). Baker and Crompton (2000) found that satisfaction had a positive direct effect on behavioural intentions. Yuan and Jang (2008) found that satisfaction and awareness have positive and direct relationships with behavioural intentions. Um, Chon and Ro (2006) found that repeat visits are determined by perceived attractiveness than by overall satisfaction.

Valle, Silva, Mendes and Guerreiro (2006) established that there is a direct causal relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty intention, that satisfaction is one contributing factor to destination loyalty intentions. Similarly, Anil (nd.) found that satisfaction is the main determinant of visitors' loyalty.

Conclusion and Implications for Product Development Marketing

The various studies examined in this paper affirmed that festival quality research is critical to a successful festival management. The author found the following convergent of ideas and relationships in festival quality management research: (a) that perceived festival quality is better measured from the cromptonnic perspectives, (b) the results of empirical studies in extant literature reviewed for the purpose of this paper indicate that, there is significant relationship between festival quality and attendees' satisfaction, (c) the results of studies on festival quality indicate that festival quality has mediatory effect on tourist behavioural intentions, (d) the results of most festival quality studies vary on the dimensions of festival quality that predict attendees' satisfaction. There is a general consensus that festival quality dimensions that predict satisfaction include: service quality, experience quality, technical quality, customer value of festival and cost of festival, (e) the paper identified the existence of a significant relationship between satisfaction and behavioural intentions of festival attendees.

The overarching benefit of this study and other studies examined in this paper is subsumed in the big picture of the subject matter it has presented to research students, practitioners and academicians. Satisfaction study is carried out because of the motivation among tourist service providers that any amount of investment in evaluating and improving the quality of performance of special event and festivals has a corresponding return on investment. This is measured by the increase in customer satisfaction and the attendant increase in visitor traffic, customers retention, market share, profitability and revenue for the company (Rustet al., 1995; Bhote, 1996; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000).

In considering the overall festival management strategy, festival quality attributes should form the basis of every festival product development and packaging strategy. Festivals managers should packaged the festival product attributes as bundles of tangible and intangible need satisfying dimensions or components which if effectively leveraged has significant effect on attendee satisfaction, patronage and the bottom line of the organizers. The task before managers is to fathom the predictors of attendees' satisfaction and factor the significant festival quality dimensions in the festival product development and marketing strategy. Lastly, festival managers should ensure that all implementation gaps are removed from the system in order to achieve favourable behavioral intentions and attitudes from event and festival stakeholders.

The marketing implications of this study is obvious: the above associations between festival quality management and behavioural intentions suggest the need for festival managers to investigate further whether festival quality dimensions that significantly affect attendees' satisfaction vary with the type of festival, festival product, demographics of attendees, cultural system of event organizers and host communities.

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