

AN EXAMINATION OF SATISFACTION VARIABLES AND INDICATORS AT A FIRST-TIME FESTIVAL

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to evaluate attendees' satisfaction in a first-time festival, and identify the relationship between visitor variables and their satisfaction level. Specific research questions / hypotheses focused on determining participants' satisfaction to the case Festival, understanding which indicators can best depict attendees' actual satisfaction level, and exploring how visitor variables may influence or relate to their satisfaction. The survey revealed a correlation between participants' overall destination image and their level of satisfaction to the festival experience, while all the other hypothesized relationship between visitor variables and their overall satisfaction level were proved to be invalid. Besides, the survey results suggest that indicators other than overall satisfaction and satisfaction attributes are needed in drawing a whole picture of attendees' attitude toward the festival.

Introduction

Hosting events is an effective approach to promote local tourism, as the man-made appeals generated will enhance the attractiveness of destinations (Ritchie, 1984; Xing & Li, 2000). In the past several decades, event tourism has become one of the fastest growing sections of the world leisure and recreation industry. Getz (1991) defined special event as "a onetime or infrequently occurring event outside the normal program or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body. To the customer, a special event is an opportunity for a leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of

choices or beyond everyday experience" (p. 44). Varying in their size and significance, events could be classified as special events, hallmark events, and mega-events (Getz, 1997).

While there is increasing attention paid to various impacts of events (Getz, 1999; Suh, 1996), researchers have focused primarily on the economic significance of mega-events (Gnoth & Anwar, 2000; Raltson & Hamilton, 1992; Ritchie, 1984). Few publications can be found using small-scale community events as research objects, although community-run small-scale events collectively "represent an attraction section of ever-growing significance" (Getz & Frisby, 1988). Even fewer focus on first-time festivals, which typically demonstrate some organizational and marketing uniqueness from the established ones. On the other hand, research results on small-scale festivals may provide more real operational significance to the majority of communities and managers who host events. Due to the relative rarity of mega-events, research focusing on small-scale festivals may provide more operational significance to the majority of communities and managers who host events.

Visitors' satisfaction is one of the key variables used in assessing festival quality. Most researchers have used fairly straightforward measures in evaluating participants' satisfaction, typically a 4 to 7 point Likert scale between the extremes of "very satisfied" and "very dissatisfied" (Westbrook, 1980). Some marketing scholars also proposed that customers' intention to repeat purchase and recommend the product to others could be very useful indicators of consumers' satisfaction level (Suh, 1996). The purpose of this paper is to evaluate attendees' satisfaction in a first-time festival, and explore how visitor variables may influence or relate to their satisfaction. The hypotheses for this study are:

H1: Resident participants' overall satisfaction level is significantly different from non-resident participants'.

H2: Attendees' festival-related expenditure is related to their overall satisfaction level.

H3: Festival visitors overall image of a destination is related to their overall satisfaction level.

H4: Festival visitors' amount of festival experiences is related to their overall satisfaction level.

Findings

Participant Profile

Various questions were asked to determine attendees' demographic and participation characteristics. According to the 224 identifiable and valid zip codes provided by on-site respondents, an overwhelming majority (94.64%) of respondents were from North Carolina. Among these North Carolinians, 77.36% were from the Jacksonville (including Camp Lejeune) area. In the follow-up questionnaire survey, 32% respondents claimed themselves or a family member live/work in downtown Jacksonville. This group of people is categorized as "residents" in this study, while the rest 68% are "non-residents".

As the case of many research studies utilizing mail-back surveys (Farrell & Associates, 1998; Gartner & Shen, 1992; Kerstetter & Mowrer, 1998), the typical respondent for this study was white, married, over 40, and most likely female (see Table 1). Characteristically, the respondents received (some) college education, and maintain an annual household income exceeding \$50,000.

In general, visitors to Jacksonville Riverwalk Festival came in a group of 3-4 people (mean group size is 3.27). Among them, 13% respondents attended the festival alone, while 5.3% had 7 or more in their group (see Table 2). Visitors' mean travel distance was 57.26 miles. However, about 4.4% of respondents that traveled 300 miles or more, with 1,300 miles being the maximum travel distance reported. These long distances inflated the mean travel distance. Therefore, the median, which is 10 miles could be a more reasonable representative of the average distance in this case, which is consistent with the results of visitors' origin.

A series of questions were asked on attendees' expenses on admission fees, food and beverage, shopping, lodging, transportation, entertainment and recreation, and other expenses related to their festival participation, for themselves and other group members. It is calculated that per person expenditure is \$28.33. Participants' overall image of Jacksonville is investigated by rating their overall impressions of Jacksonville as a visitor destination on a 1 to 10 scale (with "10" being the most attractive place, and "1" being the worst place they have ever traveled to).

Table 2. — Participant Characteristics

Participant Characteristics		Mean
1. Group Size	Percentage (%)	3.27 persons
1	13.0	
2	32.1	
3	18.8	
4	14.1	
5	11.6	
6	5.1	
7 or above	5.3	
2. Miles Traveled	Percentage (%)	57.26 miles
0-5	35.0	
6-10	29.0	
11-15	10.4	
16-20	4.9	
21-25	1.0	
26-50	8.9	
51-300	6.4	
>300	4.4	
3. Per Person Expenditure		\$28.33
4. Overall image rating		6.23/10
5. Previous Festival Participation Experiences (In the past 12 months)		2.94 times

The mail-back respondents gave a mean rating of 6.23, with a standard deviation of 1.91.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the amount of their festival experiences in the past 12 months (not counting the Riverwalk festival). In this paper, this amount is used to numerically represent one's level of festival experiences. Participants' average festival experiences amounts to nearly 3 times (see Table 2).

Satisfaction Indicators

In this project, 4 types of indicators are investigated in assessing participants' satisfaction. These include:

- Overall satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10
- 27 satisfaction attributes (16 universal attributes, 11 site-specific ones) on a scale of 1 to 5
- Intention to recommend the festival to others (Yes/No)
- Intention to attend the festival again (Yes/ No)

Table 3 presents respondents' rating on specific satisfaction items and overall satisfaction. "Safety and security", "cleanliness of facilities", "condition of facilities", and "behavior of other visitors" are among the most satisfied attributes of the festival. On the other hand, "sporting competition", "other local opportunities", and "water quality" received

Table 3. — Participants' Satisfaction

Satisfaction Attributes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
safety and security	130	4.72	.574
cleanliness of facilities	128	4.69	.572
condition of facilities	127	4.67	.550
behavior of other visitors	129	4.63	.613
availability of space	122	4.59	.689
the organization of the festival	123	4.51	.682
helpfulness of volunteers	126	4.50	.767
availability of festival information	129	4.40	.939
children activities	84	4.32	1.008
crowd traffic/visitor control	123	4.30	.886
price	120	4.14	1.031
stage performances	87	4.11	.945
accessibility for those disabilities	88	4.07	.956
night concert	39	4.03	1.158
quality of food vendors	116	4.03	.913
variety of food vendors	128	4.02	.951
opportunity to relax	127	4.02	.934
quality of the performing artists	108	4.02	.967
quality of shopping vendors	126	3.98	.950
exhibits	124	3.94	1.015
opportunity to experience new things	128	3.92	.952
variety of shopping vendors	129	3.88	1.104
uniqueness of the experience	126	3.72	1.009
shopping and dining opportunities	120	3.66	1.025
water quality of New River	89	3.63	1.122
other local opportunities	107	3.63	.841
sporting competition	66	3.58	1.190
overall satisfaction of the trip	115	7.37	1.723

lowest grades. Participants' overall satisfaction was 7.37 on a scale of 1 to 10.

Contrary to the fairly low overall satisfaction rating, participants have consistently high level of "intention to recommend the festival to others" (97.2%) and "intention to attend the festival again" (93.7%). This demonstrates a very favorable attitude toward the festival.

Hypotheses Testing

H1: Resident participants' overall satisfaction level is significantly different from non-resident participants'. A T-test, using overall satisfaction as a dependent variable, and respondents' residency status (i.e., they are residents or nonresidents) as the independent variables, resulted in an observed

Table 4. — Relationship Between Participants' Overall Satisfaction Level and Their Residency Status

Residency Status	N	Overall Satisfaction		t	Sig.
		Mean	St Dev		
Resident	37	7.55	1.50		
Non Resident	76	7.32	1.81	.694	0.5
Total	115	7.36	1.72		

Table 5. — Relationship Between Participants' Overall Satisfaction Level and Their Festival-related Expenditure

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall satisfaction of the trip	115	7.36	1.72
Per person expenditure	121	6.23	51.87
Pearson's r		-.104	
Significance		.286	

level of significance of 0.694 (df=111). Thus, the hypothesis is not supported (see Table 4). In other words, this survey didn't identify a significant difference between resident festival participants' overall satisfaction level and that of non-resident participants'.

H2: Attendees' festival-related expenditure is related to their overall satisfaction level.

A test of Pearson Correlation r was applied between the mean of participants' overall satisfaction level and their per-person expenditure in the festival. The Pearson's r value of -0.104 implied that no significant correlation was found between these two variables. Thus, for this festival, attendees' festival-related expenditure is not statistically related with their overall satisfaction level.

H3: Festival visitors overall image of a destination is related to their overall satisfaction level.

A test of Pearson Correlation r was employed between the mean of respondents' overall image rating and their overall satisfaction rating. The test produced a Pearson Correlation r of 0.513, which is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed). Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. The relevant statistics are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. — Correlation Between Participants' Overall Satisfaction Level and Their Overall Destination Image

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall satisfaction of the trip	115	7.36	1.72
Overall impression of Jacksonville as a visitor destination	125	6.23	1.91
Pearson's r		.513*	
Significance		.000	

H4: Festival visitors' amount of festival experiences is related to their overall satisfaction level.

Again, a Pearson Correlation r test was calculated between the mean of respondents' amount of festival experiences and their overall satisfaction rating. The r value is -0.166, indicating the hypothesis is not supported. In other words, the amount of festival experiences of visitors to Jacksonville Riverwalk Festival is not significantly related to their overall satisfaction level. (Table 7).

Table 7. — Relationship Between Participants' Overall Satisfaction Level and Their Amount of Festival Experiences

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall satisfaction of the trip	115	7.36	1.72
How many times have you been to a festival in the past 12 months	123	2.94	3.119
Pearson's r		-.166	
Significance		.083	

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this study provide an interesting example of the complexity of event tourism study. The survey did reveal a correlation between participants' overall image of Jacksonville and their level of satisfaction. That is to say, the more satisfied visitors feel with their experiences, the more favorable an overall image they will hold, and vice versa. However, for the other hypotheses, what sounds logical was not supported by actual survey results. For instance, most marketing scholars will agree that a more satisfied customer tends to consume more. Nevertheless, this hypothesis is not accepted in this study. Neither did the survey identify any substantial difference in satisfaction level between residents and non-residents, or

among festival attendees with different level of participation experiences.

Failing to establish a positive relationship between participants' satisfaction level and their consumption pattern is probably due to the fairly limited spending opportunities provided by the festival. The festival is a small-scale, open-access community event, which didn't charge any admission fee for participation (except attending the night concert). As the vast majority of attendees are locals, average spending on lodging or transportation is very limited. These reasons contribute to a fairly homogenous consumption pattern, which means everybody spent most of their money on food and beverage. Even though attendees are very satisfied with their festival experiences, there are inadequate "consumption outlets" allowing them to spend money.

Residents and non-residents, or festival attendees with different level of participation experiences didn't show significantly different satisfaction levels. This may be attributed to people's similar expectation to a small-scale community event like the Riverwalk Festival. Future research investigation on the reasons will help the organizers segment and choose their targeted market, as an event can never succeed unless it meets the motivations, expectations and needs of the targeted groups (Camacho, 1979; Hall, 1992).

Four kinds of satisfaction indicators were employed in this survey. There is obvious inconsistency between respondents' rating in specific satisfaction attributes, their intention to recommend the festival to others, intention to return, and their overall satisfaction. For the satisfaction items, even the lowest grade was higher than 3.5, which is fairly positive on a scale of 1 to 5. Likewise, respondents also indicated an impressively strong intention to return and recommend the festival to others. In contrast, the 7.37/10 overall satisfaction rating is much lower than expected.

One fact that may help justify the above results is the undesirable weather condition. In an open-ended question in the mail-back questionnaire, 45.11% respondents complained about the hot weather. Many of them indicated that the festival will be much more enjoyable, and they will stay longer and give a much higher rating if the weather

is better. Directly associated with this complaint, 19.55% suggested to change the festival date to either spring or fall, although previous study has proved that summer was most popular for attending events (Wicks & Fesenmaier, 1995).

It may be concluded that some non-controllable factors may have more influence on satisfaction than event programming and planning.

We may also conclude from this survey that indicators other than overall satisfaction and satisfaction attributes are needed to draw a whole picture of attendees' attitude toward the festival. In Jacksonville Riverwalk Festival. The respondents are content with the specific service attributes of their festival experience, such as "safety and security", "cleanliness of facilities", "condition of facilities", and "behavior of other visitors". But their overall satisfaction was worsened by the weather condition, which damaged a more enjoyable experience. In other words, respondents separated their comments on festival per se and non-controllable factors such as weather. That helps explain why at the same time people gave fairly low rating on satisfaction items, they still indicated a strong intention to return and recommending to others.

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