

Festival attributes and perceptions: A meta-analysis of relationships with satisfaction and loyalty



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Meta-analysis is used to evaluate factors that influence festival satisfaction and loyalty.
- The most important attributes are festival activities and environment.
- Perceptions of cost/value have stronger relationships than perceptions of service quality.
- Festival satisfaction is strongly related to festival loyalty.

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ABSTRACT

Festivals provide economic, social and cultural benefits to the communities in which they occur, and contribute to event tourism and destination marketing. This research reports a meta-analysis of the festival literature to evaluate the factors that contribute to festival satisfaction and loyalty. Attributes were classified into six categories: activities, authenticity/unique-ness, concessions, environment, escape and socialization. The analysis revealed that festival activities (program, entertainment, thematic activities) and environment (atmosphere, convenience, facilities) are the most important determinants of satisfaction and loyalty. Two perceptions were evaluated: cost/value and service quality. The analysis revealed that cost/value is important for both satisfaction and loyalty, whereas service quality is relatively unimportant. Satisfaction with the festival is strongly related to loyalty. The findings suggest that festival planners should focus on providing an enjoyable program in a comfortable environment at a reasonable price. This strategy will cultivate repeat attendance and stimulate future visits to the festival destination.

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1. Introduction

Festivals provide communities with a way to celebrate their unique cultural traditions and attract tourist and local visitors. Festivals fall under the umbrella of event tourism, whereby people travel to destinations to attend specific events (Getz, 2008). Festivals span a variety of themes including art, culture, food and beverage, music, religion and sports (Maeng, Jang, & Li, 2016). They vary in reach from local to international. Festivals provide economic, social, and cultural benefits to the communities in which they occur (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Grappi and Montanari,

2011). They are important for destination marketing and to promote tourism (Chang, 2006).

The research literature on festivals encompasses several areas. Many published articles are case studies in which attendees at a particular festival are surveyed. This literature is unique in its multicultural scope. For example, there are studies of festivals in Europe (Grappi & Montanari, 2011), the Middle East (Akhoondnejad, 2016), Asia (Sohn, Lee, & Yoon, 2016), the United States (Yuan & Jang, 2008), Africa (Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis, 2010), and Australia (Savinovic, Kim, & Long, 2012). These studies investigate a variety of research topics, including motivations for attending (Maeng et al., 2016), customer segmentation (Chang, 2006), importance-performance analysis (Baker & Draper, 2013), theoretical models of attendee behavior (Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010), attendee characteristics (McDowall, 2010), satisfaction (Sohn et al., 2016), and loyalty (Yuan & Jang, 2008). Many studies investigate

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peoples' motivations to attend festivals, but not how these motivations affect outcomes. A quantitative review of literature on motivating factors found that the most commonly researched were socialization, family togetherness, escape, novelty, excitement and cultural exploration (Maeng et al., 2016). Three primary themes were identified in a review of 423 festival studies conducted through early 2009: antecedents (e.g., motivations), outcomes (e.g., economic impacts), and planning and managing festivals (Getz, 2010).

The missing link is an integrated evaluation of how the festival experience affects attendee satisfaction and subsequent behavior. As many festivals occur regularly, planners seek to create a satisfying experience for attendees so that they will want to return in the future (Tanford, Montgomery, & Hertzman, 2012). Repeat visitation has broader implications for destination marketing and tourism, as visitors may choose to return to a destination they previously visited because of the festival (Getz, 2008). Individual published studies typically measure particular antecedents and outcomes to achieve specific research purposes. Some studies measure motivations only, others measure factors that influence satisfaction or loyalty, and some may include both. Models of festival loyalty investigate the process whereby festival attributes influence loyalty intentions through the festival experience (Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012). All of these studies provide building blocks for an integrated framework of festival loyalty.

The diverse settings and populations used in previous research limit the ability to generalize the findings beyond a specific festival. Therefore, the practical implications for festival organizers and marketers are not easily accessible from the literature. Moreover, one cannot expect organizers to sift through dozens of studies to gain useful insights for their festivals. The current research uses meta-analysis to quantify the effects of festival attributes and perceptions on attendee satisfaction and loyalty. The analysis produces a single effect size for each relationship, allowing researchers and practitioners to determine which factors are most important in driving repeat visitation. The research addresses the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between festival attributes and festival satisfaction? Which attributes are the most important satisfaction determinants?
2. What is the relationship between attendee perceptions of the festival and satisfaction?
3. What is the relationship between festival attributes and loyalty? Which attributes are the most important loyalty determinants?
4. What is the relationship between attendee perceptions of the festival and loyalty?
5. What is the relationship between attendee satisfaction and attendee loyalty?

2. Conceptual framework

Fig. 1 provides a conceptual framework for the research. After reviewing the literature and scrutinizing the measures used in each study, we identified six attribute dimensions of the festival experience that have received the most attention in the literature. *Activities* are comprised of the festival programming, entertainment, music and thematic content. *Authenticity/uniqueness* reflects the way in which the festival depicts the local culture. *Concessions* are the food, beverage and souvenir outlets that are offered. *Environment* represents the atmosphere and facilities at the venue. *Escape/enjoyment* encompasses the emotions, fun and excitement of attending the festival. *Socialization* represents the time spent in the

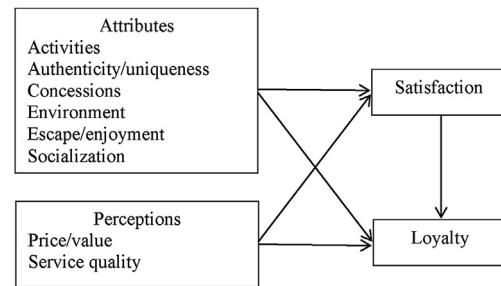


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

company of family and friends. Perceptions are evaluations of the overall festival experience that are not tied to a particular festival characteristic. *Cost/value* represents the extent to which the festival is perceived to be good value for the money. *Service quality* reflects perceptions of staff responsiveness and efficiency of service operations. Attributes and perceptions are linked to satisfaction and loyalty. *Satisfaction* is the attendee's overall satisfaction with the festival. *Loyalty* encompasses intentions to return to the festival in the future and recommend it to others.

It is important to note the meta-analysis evaluates the magnitude of relationships but not their direction. However, based on the individual studies analyzed, experiences and perceptions precede satisfaction and loyalty, and satisfaction leads to loyalty in studies that include both variables. The next section describes the literature that defines each variable, and relationships that have been observed within individual studies.

3. Literature review

Table 1 lists the study variables, common labels used in the literature, and a representative source that applied each label. In meta-analysis, it is essential to ascertain the operational definitions of variables to classify them under the correct attribute (Tanford, 2016). Researchers use a variety of labels to identify constructs that are conceptually similar. In most cases, the measurement scales were provided, and when they were not the description of the variable in the text was used to classify it. The literature review describes illustrative sources for each variable, but does not cite every article. We describe the overall pattern of relationships for each variable with satisfaction and loyalty, but not the detailed statistics. These are analyzed with meta-analysis following the literature review. A complete list of articles used in the analysis and the relationships they reported is provided as an Appendix.

3.1. Attributes

3.1.1. Activities

Festival activities constitute the central focus of the festival; that is, activities are what visitors do at the festival. *Festival program* was defined as evaluations of the program overall on various attributes (funny, varied, wonderful, well managed, well organized) at two festivals in Korea (Lee et al., 2011; Yoon et al., 2010). Similarly, *programme content* at a philosophy festival in Italy was measured by evaluative ratings of the program overall (Grappi & Montanari, 2011). A large student-run festival at an Iowa university included educational demonstrations and entertainment, resulting in two constructs labeled *education experience* and *entertainment experience* (Manthiou, Lee, Tang, & Chiang, 2014). A cultural festival in Australia focused on ethnic food and wine experiences; therefore, the activities variable was defined as *food, wine, and entertainment* (Savinovic et al., 2012). In an investigation of a jazz festival in

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