

Festival services: A study of visitors' experiences at surajkund craft fair

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Abstract

More and more festivals are organized every year around the world, in big cities and villages alike, due to the numerous benefits they are perceived to bring at local and national levels. Past research show that fairs can bring positive benefits such as economic, social and community togetherness to their host community. In addition, fairs have the ability to create memorable experience for visitors, dampen negative images regarding host community, and create activities to motivate travelers. According to Getz (1991, 1997) festivals and public celebrations are seen as unique tourist attractions and destination image makers. Events and festivals also play a significant role in the lives of communities; enhance the local image of their host community (Getz, 1993). The experiences are base on the necessary services provided to the visitors. Therefore, the paper aims to examine visitor's experiences about various services of a famous fair i.e. Surajkund Craft Fair, Faridabad (Haryana). A structured Likert-type questionnaire was used to collect the opinions of respondents. The data was analysed using various appropriate statistical tool and the findings are presented in last part of the paper alongwith suggestions. This research clearly indicates that the Safety and Security services is major attribute of Services. Which highest 73.6 per cent visitors respond very good and lowest 1.3 per cent visitors respond very poor.

Keywords: Services, Craft Fair, Tourism, Visitors Experiences, Profile of Tourists.

Introduction

Fairs and festivals have become regular feature in recent years mainly because of main perceived benefits i.e. economical social to the host community. A part from this, these are formed to be complimenting the existing tourists activities, building positive image of the place and community and attracting new tourists. Highmore (2002) concluded that experience may have two stages; first 'moment by moment lived experience' and second, 'the evaluated experience'. Both of these are dependent on service quality, which is an important of business strategy. The service quality should be measurable and affective. Service is conjectural and the concept of service quality is even more abstract, making it very hard to quantify. Most recognized, in this context, is findings of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) they ascertained 5 dimensions of service quality i.e. Tangibles (appearance of physical facilities, personnel and materials), Reliability (dependable and accurate performance), Responsiveness (willingness to help customers and the promptness of service), Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees) and Empathy (caring and individualized attention to customers). One strategy that has been related to success is the delivery of high service quality, especially during times of intensive competition both domestically and internationally (Rao and Kelkar, 1997). This is true, particularly, for service industry like tourism where tourists enjoy the experience of product and don't own a product. In tourism industry, service quality can be used as a tool for competitive advantage in longterm. Tourism product have their own peculiar characteristics such as perishability, tangibility---etc.

these unique features are also biggest limitation for the products necessitating careful management of resources. As unsold services mean higher costs and lower profits. Fairs and festivals offer both products and services to visitors in the form of dance, music, art and craft exhibits, ethenical food items, paintings etc. these events are often cater to masses and are theme specific. Researcher have identified many socio-economical benefits of these for destinations. Event(s) tourism was not widely used, if at all, prior to 1987, events were not considered important for a destination. However, new Zealand tourist and publicity department (1987) recognized event tourism as a part of international tourism. Which is growing at a fast pace.

Literature review

SERVQUAL of Parasuraman Berry and Zeithaml and Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988) is most famous and widely used tool for evaluating, service quality in case of service industry and its different sectors.

Getz (1991, 1997) described festivals and public celebrations as unique tourist attraction and helpful in destination marketing. Furthermore, these can contribute a lot in the living of host society and by strengthening the image of locals.

Khutson, Stevens, Patton & Thomson (1992) used SERVQUAL and formulated LODGSERV to study service quality in lodging industry. The scale has five main dimensions i.e. reliability, assurance, responsiveness, tangibles, and empathy. Mei, Dean & White (1999) described another scale, HOLSERV was developed again based on SERVQUAL to investigate

service quality in hospitality industry. This scale has three dimensions relating to employees, tangibles, and reliability.

According to Lee, C-K., Lee, Y-K, Wicks, B. E. (2004) tourists visiting festivals have varied motivations, needs, and wants. Cultural festivals are more likely to attract more visitors than other festivals.

Since service quality is an elusive concept, there is still a debate on how best to conceptualize it and how service quality can be measured in different contexts. There is still a need to develop service quality measures that are country/industry-specific (Karatepe, Yavas, & Babakus, 2005; Crick and Spencer, 2011). This is because service quality build that are processed particularly for one culture/industry may not be applicable in a different setting (Mattila, 1999; Hsieh and Tsai, 2009; Salazar, Xosta, & Rita, 2010). George (2015) found that cultural festivals focusing on music, food and art represent significant community and economic opportunities for rural communities. The paper examined three South Australian festivals from multiple perspectives; first one is to recognize what relevant stakeholders consider festivals contribute to the society and how this may impact on the success of the festival itself. In this study he use Mitchell's model of creative destruction/creative enhancement as a theoretical framework and through qualitative analysis. Findings suggest that those communities who present a more complex understanding of the "rural idyll" through the integration of multiple local products will experience greater success, both for local and outsider audiences. Black (2016) demonstrated the networks of connections which festivals enable between the culture, heritage and people (individuals and groups) of a place. By focusing on four indicators his research showed the social impact of connections through the festival processes and content and argued that small-scale festivals in rural locations can contribute to social sustainability if they demonstrate a balance of both consistency and innovation and accessibility and openness within the locale.

Objectives of Study

In this research we have one objective

1. To study visitors' experiences about services of Surajkund craft fair.
2. To explore the impact of gender on use of *mobile app of the fair*.
3. To study the association of gender and *complaint and grievance handling*.
4. To examine the relationship of gender and *ticketing facilities of the fair*.
5. To investigate the association between gender and information services.
6. To inspect the relationship of gender of respondents and *public convenience facilities*.

Research methodology

The present study "Festival Services: A Study of Visitors' Experiences at Surajkund Craft Fair" is an exploratory in nature. The information was being collected through structured questionnaire from the Surajkund craft fair visitors. Sample size of visitors was 397 all the respondents responded seriously. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 was religiously used for the statistical analyses. Coding of variables in quantitative research is very critical for better interpretation of results. Age, education, occupation, place of origin, how do you reach fair, how many times to have visited the fair, from where did you get the information and what motivated you to come to Surajkund Craft fair were all coded and were entered in to the computer. The questions and responses were coded and entered in the computer using Microsoft Excel software. Required analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences 19 Version. 5 point Likert scale was used to know the responses of the respondents with the help of a structured questionnaire. The responses were measured in terms of very good, good, average, poor, and very poor.

Data Analysis

The results were draw on the responses collected from 397 visitors through self-administered questionnaires. The instrument had two sections; first part, had questions related to demographic profile of visitors; and second section, was used to collect information about experience of visitors regarding various services of Surajkund craft fair. Demographic profile of visitors was presented using frequency distribution tables; and percentage analysis was used to evaluate responses related to different services of the fair.

Profile of Visitors

397 visitors visiting Surajkund craft fair were contacted and their experiences were obtained with the help of structured questionnaire. The profile of visitors are presented in Table 1.

Sample characteristics were shown in Table no. 1 the sample size selected was 397. Male respondents were overrepresented by 67.8 per cent while female respondents were 32.2 per cent. Majority of the respondents were in the young age group of Less than 25 years (65.5 per cent), followed by 23.2 per cent of the sample were in age group of 26-35 years. Majority of the visitors i.e. 51.6 per cent were students and there were only 18.4 per cent professional. Almost half of the respondents has bachelor's degree (41.1 per cent), followed by master's degree (11.6 per cent). More than half of the respondents were local i.e. 58.9 per cent and 32.0 per cent from nearby districts whereas about 5.5 per cent of respondents were from other state.

Table 1: Visitor Profile of the festival

Sr. No.		Demographic Variables	Frequency (N=397)	Percent (%)
1	Gender	Male	269	67.8
		Female	128	32.2
2	Age	Less than 25 years	260	65.5
		26-35 years	92	23.2
		36-45 years	18	4.5
		46- 55 years	18	4.5
		Above 55 years	9	2.3
3	Education	+2 / 12 th	188	47.4
		Graduate	163	41.1
		Post graduate	46	11.6
4	Occupation	Student	205	51.6
		Professional	73	18.4
		Business man	34	8.6
		Others	85	21.4
5	Place of origin	Local	234	58.9
		Nearby districts	127	32.0
		Far of districts	14	3.5
		Other state	22	5.5
		Other country	234	0.1

The responses of respondents regarding nine dimensions of the festival services were gathered on a Likert type 6 point scale ranging from "Can't Say" to "Very Good", where "Can't Say" stands for "0" any "Very Good" represent "5". The finding are presented in Table No. 2.

It was revealed, in the first attribute, Cleanliness and Sanitation Services, that highest per cent i.e. 76.3 of visitors feels that the fair has quite high standards cleanliness and sanitation, however, only 0.5 per cent of visitors found it very poor.

The second attribute is related to Parking Services available in the fair area for visitors, in which highest 67.8 per cent visitors responded very good and a marginal number i.e. 0.8 per cent visitors found this service *Very Poor*.

The service of providing food and beverage items to visitors, Food & beverage outlets, was the third attribute. Majority of the visitors i.e. 63.7 per cent were

very happy with the quality and number of food and beverage outlets operating in the fair area and responded *Very Good*, however, a meagre number of visitors (1.3 per cent) found these services *Very Poor*.

The next attribute, Safety and Security Services, was intended to know the opinions of respondents about the safety and security arrangements in the fair area. Most of the respondents i.e. around 95 per cent were of the view that there are adequate safety and security measures to ensure a feeling of safety and security among the visitors. But still, 1.3 per cent of visitors were not happy with these provisions.

Fifth attribute was aimed to identify the effectiveness of mobile app of the fair. It was revealed from the responses that around 69.5 per cent, i.e. highest number of visitors, found the app very effective and informative; whereas it appeared that fairly large number of visitors i.e. 25.2 per cent were not using the app.

Table 2: Responses to different Dimensions of Festival Services

Various Dimensions of Festival Services		Can't say	very poor	poor	average	good	very good
Cleanliness and Sanitation Services	Frequency	4	2	4	20	64	303
	Percent	1	0.5	1	5	16.1	76.3
Parking Services	Frequency	17	3	4	15	89	269
	Percent	4.3	0.8	1	3.8	22.4	67.8
Food and Beverage outlets	Frequency	7	5	7	25	100	253
	Percent	1.8	1.3	1.8	6.3	25.2	63.7
Safety and Security services	Frequency	4	5	0	13	83	292
	Percent	1	1.3	0	3.3	20.9	73.6
Mobile App. of the fair	Frequency	100	3	4	14	93	183
	Percent	25.2	0.8	1	3.5	23.4	46.1
Complaint/Grievance	Frequency	80	6	3	20	84	204

Handling	Percent	20.2	1.5	0.8	5	21.2	51.4
Ticketing of Fair and Other recreational Facilities	Frequency	5	3	10	41	105	233
	Percent	1.3	0.8	2.5	10.3	26.4	58.7
Information Services	Frequency	39	2	7	11	74	264
	Percent	9.8	0.5	1.8	2.8	18.6	66.5
Public Conveniences	Frequency	19	4	4	16	66	288
	Percent	4.8	1	1	4	16.6	72.5

Next attribute was related to the Complaint/Grievance Handling. Almost half of the respondents i.e. 51.4 per cent revealed that the fair has a *Very Good* mechanism of dealing with complaint handling. One-fourth of the visitors responded in favour of *Good* option in the questionnaire and only 9 respondents were not happy with this service of the particular fair. Ticketing of Fair and other Recreational Facilities is the seventh criterion to judge the festival services of the fair. Nearly 60 per cent i.e. 58.7 per cent of visitors favoured the *Very Good* option whereas nearly 1 per cent (0.8 per cent) visitors opted for *Very Poor* response.

The attribute related to Information Services was the next criterion to evaluate the fair. 66.5 per cent and 18.6 per cent of visitors exhibited their strong agreement that the fair has *Very Good* and *Good* information services. However, around 10 per cent of visitors were of neutral opinion.

The last attribute was Public Conveniences which aimed at measuring the opinions of respondents about the state of public conveniences at the fair. In this, highest per cent of visitors 72.5 responded *Very Good* and lowest 1.0 per cent visitors responded *Poor*.

In the next step, Chi-Square test was applied to check the association of gender with various measures of festival services. The findings are presented in Table no.3. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant association between Gender and four of the festival service measures i.e. *Cleanliness and Sanitation*

Services, Parking Services, Food & beverage outlets, Safety and Security Services; as the Pearson Chi-Square values are 4.730, 6.895, 5.050, and 4.273, respectively; and calculated significances are 0.450, 0.229, 0.410, and 0.370 at 5 per cent level, respectively. Therefore, it can be induced that both males and females are satisfied with the hygiene and sanitation services; availability of parking services; variety and quality in food and beverage outlets; and safety and security arrangements at the festival ground.

Whereas, remaining dimensions of the festival services showed statistically significant association with the gender of respondents. The value of Chi-Square i.e. 11.182 is statistically significant, 0.048, at 5 per cent level for use of mobile app of the fair for males and females respondents. It is also supported by the significant value of Phi and Cramer's V.

Gender was found to be marginally significantly affecting the respondents' opinions about complaint/grievance handling services at the festival; as the value of Chi-Square (11.054) is equal, 0.050, to the level of significance at 5 percent; and Phi and Cramer's V are significant.

There was a statistically significant relationship between gender and ticketing of the fair and other facilities available at the festival; as the Chi-Square value is 16.967 which is significant (0.005) at 5 percent level of significance. It can be judged that the males and females don't have same opinions about ticketing of various facilities at the festival.

Table 3: Association of Gender with Various Aspects of Studied Measures

		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Cleanliness and Sanitation Services				
	Pearson Chi-Square	4.730 ^a	5	0.450
	Likelihood Ratio	6.509	5	0.260
	Linear-by-Linear Association	0.104	1	0.748
	Phi	0.109	-	0.450
	Cramer's V	0.109	-	0.450
Parking Services				
	Pearson Chi-Square	6.895 ^a	5	0.229
	Likelihood Ratio	9.416	5	0.094
	Linear-by-Linear Association	2.656	1	0.103
	Phi	0.132	-	0.229
	Cramer's V	0.132	-	0.229

Food and Beverage outlets				
	Pearson Chi-Square	5.050 ^a	5	0.410
	Likelihood Ratio	6.877	5	0.230
	Linear-by-Linear Association	3.743	1	0.053
	Phi	0.113	-	0.410
	Cramer's V	0.113	-	0.410
Safety and Security services				
	Pearson Chi-Square	4.273 ^a	4	0.370
	Likelihood Ratio	4.046	4	0.400
	Linear-by-Linear Association	1.415	1	0.234
	Phi	0.104	-	0.370
	Cramer's V	0.104	-	0.370
Mobile App. of the fair				
	Pearson Chi-Square	11.182 ^a	5	0.048*
	Likelihood Ratio	13.336	5	0.020
	Linear-by-Linear Association	7.037	1	0.008
	Phi	0.168	-	0.048
	Cramer's V	0.168	-	0.048
Complaint/Grievance Handling				
	Pearson Chi-Square	11.054 ^a	5	0.050*
	Likelihood Ratio	11.562	5	0.041
	Linear-by-Linear Association	0.834	1	0.361
	Phi	0.167	-	0.050
	Cramer's V	0.167	-	0.050
Ticketing of Fair and Other recreational Facilities				
	Pearson Chi-Square	16.967 ^a	5	0.005*
	Likelihood Ratio	19.807	5	0.001
	Linear-by-Linear Association	5.923	1	0.015
	Phi	0.207	-	0.005
	Cramer's V	0.207	-	0.005
Information Services				
	Pearson Chi-Square	15.059 ^a	5	0.010*
	Likelihood Ratio	16.332	5	0.006
	Linear-by-Linear Association	2.636	1	0.104
	Phi	0.195	-	0.010
	Cramer's V	0.195	-	0.010
Public Conveniences				
	Pearson Chi-Square	18.220 ^a	5	0.003*
	Likelihood Ratio	19.108	5	0.002
	Linear-by-Linear Association	0.672	1	0.412
	Phi	0.214	-	0.003
	Cramer's V	0.214	-	0.003
No. of Valid Cases = 397				
* Significant at 5%				

Information services at the studied festival were found to be dependent on the gender of the respondents. As the value of Chi-Square, 15.059, is statistically significant (0.010) at 5 per cent level of significance; which is well supported by value of Phi and Cramer's V.

The opinions of male and female respondents varied significantly for public conveniences in the Surajkund Festival area. This is shown by the value of Chi-Square, 18.220 which is statistically significant (0.003) at 5 per cent level of significance. These findings were corroborated by the Phi and Cramer's V.

Conclusion

Events and Festivals have been recognized by various studies as an important motivator of tourism. By their nature, events and festivals are of short duration usually in a particular month or season and are based around a theme, large number of people around the world every year dedicate huge amounts of time and money to attend festivals. It is noted that these events and festivals are becoming big business in local communities and involve tremendous amounts of marketing and organization. Many retail businesses depend on them for their success, because when tourists attend events, they shop, eat and drink, which indirectly boost these retail businesses. There are various tools that measure and improve quality service as well as mechanisms for quality recognition in the tourism and hospitality industry. But as such, there is no state specific scale to measure service quality in the tourism sector in India or abroad. Events and festivals are mostly used to attract visitors or tourist to a destination to offer experiences that are unique to those that occur in everyday activities. SERVQUAL being introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1988) has been adopted widely across the world. Initially it was a 22 item scale which later was reduced to a 5-items scale with reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness (Parasuraman et al., 1991). In this study we know about the visitors' experiences about the services of Surajkund craft fair. This research clearly indicates that the Safety and Security Services is major attribute of Services. Which highest 73.6 per cent visitors respond very good and lowest 1.3 per cent visitors respond *very poor*. Second attribute is Cleanliness and Sanitation Services in which highest 76.3 per cent visitors respond very good and lowest 0.7 per cent visitors respond *very poor*. There were statistically significant differences in the opinion of male and female respondents on aspects such as *use of mobile app, complaint/grievance handling services, ticketing of the fair and other facilities, information services, and public conveniences*. Whereas, other aspects of festival services are independent of gender in the study. The findings of the study are very helpful for policy planners and practitioners for working toward better visitors' satisfaction in festivals. However, every research has its own boundaries in terms of universe, sample size, area etc. So do this research has its own limitations, but still, it will serve as foundation for further research in the still unexplored area of visitors' satisfaction in festivals.

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