

# 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 knowledge relevant in festival quality management. There is plethora of literature on festival quality that 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 special event tourism management. This taxonomical problem exist probably because of the historical antecedent of service quality research. This paper therefore provides more sight into the meaning, nature and scope of festival quality from research groups and the strategic importance to festival marketing performance.

**Keywords:** Event, Festival, Service quality, Attendee satisfaction, Attendee behavioural intention, performance quality

## Introduction

Special event have become a significant factor in the tourism development initiative of most destinations. The developments in the subsector has propelled it into becoming a big industry (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell (2008). 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, event and festival tourism has been acclaimed as one of the fastest growing form 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 organize special events: special events are organize as a means of revitalizing the communities, a means to draw people to the region that traditionally have a seasonal appeal, to serve as a promotional tool by bringing new visitations that will otherwise not experience that particular region and to diversifies the local market by increasing both real and potential revenue generation. Other benefits associated with organization of events are: enhancing or preserving local culture and history, providing local

recreation and leisure opportunities and enhancing the local tourism industry (Martin, Bridges & Grunwell, 2011).

The last three decades had witnessed increase in the number of empirical researches on events and festivals. The studies are focused at different perspectives of events and festivals: residents' perception and attitude (Jurowski & Gursory 2004, Viviers & Slabbert 2012, Rollin & Delamere 2007, Mensah 2013, Swart & Bob 2005); attendees' satisfaction with events (Esu & Arrey 2009); impact of events and festivals (Maughan & Bianchini 2004, Esu, Arrey, Basil & Eyo 2011); events and festivals branding and marketing (Esu & Arrey 2009b); perceptions and attitudes of event organizers (Gursory, Kim & Uysal 2004), determinants of exhibition service quality (Jung, 2005); and service quality of exhibition organizers (Chen & 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 these outcomes have on managerial decision, especially as it relates to festival quality management. The objective of this paper therefore is to x-ray the positions of some popular research groups on festival quality and attempt to highlight the point of convergence or otherwise from extant literature. The paper shall discuss development in event and festival quality, attendees' satisfaction and behavioural intentions and implication on marketing performance.

### **Event and Festival Quality**

Harrington & Lenehen (2006:18) in a panoramic view traced from extant literature the emergence of research on the effect of quality management in organization to the early 1990s. Two research perspectives were identified: those that examined quality measurement approaches in hospitality operations (Saleh & Ryan, 1991; Callen, 1992, 1994 and 1996) and those that are concerned with service encounters-related issues in tourism context (Randell & Senior, 1992; Lockwood & Ghillyer, 1996 & Guerrier, 1996). Harrington & 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 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, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985 & 1988; Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1993; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuramann , 1996)) and 'Garvinnic perspective' (Garvin 1987, ) and (b) the Nordic School of Research drawn from 'Cromptonnic perspective' (Mackay & Crompton, 1990; Childress and Crompton, 1997; Crompton & Love, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000 and Lee, Petrick & Crompton (2007). The parasuramannic perspective initially believed that customers used ten criteria to evaluate service quality. Following a focus group discussion conducted by the group, the number of criteria was later reduced to a model of five called SERVQUAL: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangible. The Garvinnic perspective produced a model similar to SERVQUAL with eight dimensions: features, conformance, durability, reliability, performance, aesthetics, and perceived quality. Perceived quality from the parasuramannic perspective is underpinned on subjective disconfirmation theory which measures the gap between respondent's expectation scores and the perception scores (Parasuraman et al, 1988). SERVQUAL is an instrument used in measuring perceived quality where in an individual responds to a set of attributes indicating 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 PERFQUAL was suggested (Babakus & Mangold, 1992; Brown, Churchill & Peter, 1993; Carman, 1990; Teas, 1993).

Perceived quality from the Crompton perspective measures customer's perception of performance quality directly against his/her expectations and the evaluation scores recorded with a single score and not perception minus expectation using PERFQUAL. The Cromptonics in order to overcome the drawbacks inherent in the Parasuraman perspective, conceptualized service quality from two angles, namely: the technical and functional. 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 & Love, (1995) and Baker & Crompton (2000) proved that PERFQUAL has a higher predictive validity than SERVQUAL. Zeithaml, Berry & Bitner (2000: 75) describe service quality as "a focus evaluation that reflects the customer perception of specific dimensions of service". In service quality measurement, the criteria used by customers to evaluate quality attributes (Gronroos, 1990 and Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1991) are critical.

Baker and Crompton (2000) refer to quality of a festival as quality of performance of an event or attributes of service which are primarily controlled by a supplier; it is the output of a tourism service provider. They agree that, evaluation of the quality performance 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, which attracted 50,000 participants. In this study perceived festival quality was conceptualized into four dimensions, namely, generic feature, specific entertainment feature, information source and comfort amenities (Baker & Crompton, 2000).

Tkacznski and Strokes (2005) carried out a study to determine the specific service quality 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 & 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 a 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 is 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 such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Peripheral attributes deals with elements which are 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 & 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 behaviour intentions. They adopted service quality attributes that were operationalized in previous studies by Childress & Crompton (1997), Baker and Crompton (2000). These dimensions were: generic features, specific entertainment features, information source, comfort amenities.

Yoshida & 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. The model produce 6 domains of independent variable after factor analysis to represent festival quality: 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 & 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 & 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 & 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 this 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 & Love (1995); Thane ( 2002); Baker & Crompton (2000).

### **Festival Attendees' Satisfaction**

Zeithaml, Berry & 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 need 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, Berry & 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 influence by the following factors: socio-psychological state of mind that a tourist brings to a site (mood, disposition, and needs), extraneous events (e.g 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 “a 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, & 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, 1993, 1994.)

### **Festival Attendees' Behavioural Intentions**

Drawing from the theory of reason 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 provide services”. Heillier, Gensem, Carr & 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 & 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 & 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 & 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 & Love (1995) and Baker & Crompton (2000) found that performance quality has significant direct effect on satisfaction. All four indicators predicted attendees’ satisfaction. Yoshida & 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 as 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 (reliability) as determinant of service quality 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 & Jang (2008) and Thamnopoulos, Tzetzis & Laios (nd), Yuan & Jang 2008, Mason 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. It is the general agreement that festival quality has indirect effect on behavioural intentions.

Baker and Crompton (2000), Thrane (2002) and Baron and Kenny (1986) and Thamnopoulos, Tzetzis & Laios (nd) reported a significant direct relationship between satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Thamnopoulos, Tzetzis & Laios (nd) affirmed that that satisfaction

affects customers repurchase intentions (repeat visit and word of mouth communication). Baker & Crompton (2000) found that satisfaction had a positive direct effect on intentions. Yuan & Jang (2008) found that satisfaction and awareness have positive and direct relationships with behavioural intentions. Um, Chon & Ro (2006) found that repeat visits are determined by perceived attractiveness than by overall satisfaction.

Valle, Silva, Mendes & 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 management of any festival. The author found the following convergent points in festival quality management research:

- That perceived festival quality is better measured from the cromptonnic perspectives
- Results of all the studies examined for the purpose of this work indicate that there is a significant relationship between festival quality and attendees' satisfaction.
- The studies vary on the dimensions of festival quality that predicts attendees' satisfaction. Hence the need for festival managers to identified the specific dimensions that significantly affect satisfaction. This may also vary with the type of festival.
- All the studies examined in this work showed that there is no direct significant relationship between festival quality and behavioural intentions: rather an indirect and mediatory relationship exist.
- All the studies examined also indicated that there is a significantly relationship between satisfaction and behavioural intentions of festival attendees.

The overarching benefits of the various research perspectives are intended to give researchers, practitioners and academicians a big picture which is a sine quo non for effective event management and successful event outcome. Satisfaction study is carried out because of the motivation among tourist service providers that the amount of investment in evaluating and improving the quality of performance and striving to increase customer satisfaction will lead to increase visitor traffic and revenue for the company. This is supported by the existence of numerous literature that suggest that customer's satisfaction and service quality have a measurable impact on customers retention, market share and profitability (Rust, Zahorik & Keiningham, 1995; Bhote, 1996; Zeithaml, Berry and Bitner, 2000). Festival and event product comprise a bundle of or package of tangible and intangible dimensions or components that significantly satisfy the attendee and directly or indirectly influence future. The task before managers is to factor the significant quality dimensions in the festival product development and marketing strategy. Lastly, the managers should ensure that all implementation gaps are removed from the system in order to achieve optimal and expected attendees' behaviour.

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