



Profiling visitors at the strawberry festival at the Redberry farm in George, South Africa

Dr T. Ramukumba
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences
Tourism Department
E-mail address: takalani.ramukumba@nmmu.ac.za

Abstract

The identification and appropriate understanding of customers by tourism marketers and event organisers is significant for market segmentation. The profiling of tourists provides an opportunity for segmentation to be done on the basis of the characteristics of tourists making the trip. The main aim of the study is to identify the characteristics of the visitors of the annual strawberry festival held at the Redberry farm in George, South Africa, as a basis for informing marketing and management recommendations aimed at improving the festival experience of visitors. On-site data were collected using convenience sampling method from a sample of the visitors to the two days festival. The study also analysed if there was significant differences in spending patterns between first-time visitors and repeat visitors as well as differences in spending patterns based on the travelling party to aid in future understanding of the festival segments and their spending patterns. The results of the study show that the festival was mainly attended by first-time visitors, females and those aged between 18 – 25 years and attended only one day and they were overall satisfied with the services and facilities provided during the festival. The results further revealed that there was a small significant difference between spending patterns at the festival between first-time and repeat visitors as well as small significant difference in spending patterns based on the type of travelling party. The study also found that there were no significant differences between spending patterns based on how many days the attendees will attend the festival.

Keywords: Festivals, segmentation, first-time visitors, repeat visitors, South Africa

Introduction

There are numerous festivals that take place annually in South Africa and because of this; these festivals compete fiercely for visitors. Around the world, the festival industry has continued to grow since the 1900s and many visitors around the world have dedicated large amounts of time and money to attend these festivals. The views of Gelder and Robinson (2009) and those of Lee and Babin (2008) are that it is imperative that festival organisers have an in-depth understanding of the tourist market for their events if they want to secure long-term growth and sustainability. In this way festival organisers and marketers will be able to promote, organise and manage their festivals in a manner that offer visitors value for money and value in experience. The opinions of the above authors are supported by those of Shanka and Taylor (2004) who stated that given the competitive nature of festival sector of the events industry, it is imperative that visitors are satisfied with their experiences during these festivals. A lot of research has been done in relation to festival tourism in the academic literature, with the primary focus on examination of motivation for festival attendance (Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis, 2010; Lee & Hsu, 2013; Mosley, Lehto & Day, 2011) to mention but a few.

Other studies that have been conducted focused on the importance of repeat visitation behavior, first-time versus repeat visitors as well as the understanding of the entire market structure of festivals. These researches are imperative for festival organisation committees to ensure both immediate and long-term success (Chen & Chen, 2010; Kruger, Saayman, Ellis, 2010; Lee & Hsu, 2013; Son & Lee, 2009; Wamwara-Mbugua & Cornwell, 2009). Given the above and the continuous competitive nature of the festival sector of the event tourism



industry, it is imperative that continuous research is conducted to further understand the profiles of visitors to these festivals in this changing global world.

Literature Review

The importance of festivals

Based on the theory of a tourism system, it is generally accepted that tourism is a discretionary purchase based on the qualitative measure of the ordinal utility where tourists make the purchase based on raking of the bundles of the available commodities. Therefore, when an individual is deciding on whether to purchase a holiday package, he or she will consider the relative attractiveness of alternative packages available within the constraints of price and income. The implication of the above for suppliers of tourism products is that they have to enhance the ability of the product/destination to market itself and to differentiate itself from alternative products so that the basic motivational instincts in the individual to have the holiday are met. Pearce (2005) suggests the concept of 'tourist career' similar to a work career in which evaluation of past experiences, level of education, peer groups, physical and cultural environment, occupation and lifestyle together influence the decision for holidays. These push factors will encourage the tourist to leave home and travel to the destination. The implication that can be drawn for Pearce (2005) view is that the actual choice of the destination could be determined by the levels of disposable income and vacation allowance for wage earners, position in the lifecycle whether married or singles, if married ages of the children, and technological advancement especially transportation. The individual to ensure that the destination could satisfy their needs before purchase decision if done will gauge attributes at the destinations, including physical, cultural and political, (pull factors).

According to Leisen (2001), it is important for tourism marketers to understand tourist behaviors, which may affect the choice of the destination offered, by the tourism marketers. However, tourism marketers find understanding tourist behavior difficult since tourism characteristics and needs are not homogenous. However, Mohsin (2005) suggested that through segmentation and market targeting, it would be possible to identify the potential tourist behaviors toward the marketplace. This notion was further supported by Jain (1985) who stated that in practice, the selection of target market is a complicated task, which needs a critical analysis on the potential segment based on their demographic, behavior and characteristic. Nonetheless, it is still useful and it helps to simplify the tourism marketers' understanding of the potential impacts by focusing the attention to one tourist segment only among specification of market segmentation.

Festival organisers and marketers require information on tourist profiles in order to help in designing and delivering tourism packages and supporting infrastructure. As the changes in the socio-economic factors that influence tourism demand indicate increasing future trends in tourism markets, appropriate planning have to be undertaken to meet consumer preferences. This may require the structuring of the industry accordingly and implementing effective anticipatory measures to ensure that visitors are satisfied by their experiences during these festivals. Research on market segmentation will provide information to enable product and promotional strategies to be adapted to different expectations and requirements. As the socio-demographic factors and the experience of the participants would influence future participation, a good understanding of the predictors of festival visitor experiences could serve as a guide for the planning of marketing campaigns for successful festival management. In the study done by Kim, Han and Chon (2006) it has been shown that the socio-demographic and festival experience-related variables of visitors have significant impacts on the volumes and patterns of their expenditure. The tourism industry and especially tourism events such as festivals would be highly affected by the number of tourist arrival or participation. To ensure repeat visitors and to attract new visitors, it is necessary that the services and facilities available are able to deliver satisfactory levels to the customers. A study done by Yaakob, Shuib, and Said (2008) revealed that market promotion



and word of mouth information are influential elements used by potential tourists in deciding to choose destinations, to extend length of stay and to spend on products and activities.

According to Allen, O'Toole, Harris and McDonnell (2011: 14) festivals are known to be an important expression of human activity that contributes to our social cohesion and our cultural life. The same authors went on to indicate that these events have become a pervasive feature of our cultural landscape that constitutes a vital and growing component of the event industry. The views of Wamwara-Mbugua and Cornwell (2009) are that other commonly recognised positive outcomes for the community include: provision of economic support, authenticity, and community cohesion. In the opinions of Loots, Ellis and Slabbert (2011) festivals may also generate business activity and income for their host communities, as they can directly and indirectly increase tourism revenue. They further went on to indicate that these events can be a 'financial injection' to their host economies, and one that governments, businesses, and residents rely on and Saayman (2004) proposed that the contribution of these events to tourism in the area is especially seen in that they offer entertainment and serve as an attraction for their host community. This idea is further supported by Prentice and Anderson (2003), who indicated that festivals can be considered destinations in and of themselves.

Festival attendees

According to Felsenstein and Fleischer (2003), local festivals are increasingly being utilised to promote tourism and further boost the local economy. Based on studies done by Bagelym and Mokhtarian (2002) and also Cole and Illum (2006), it is clear that these authors recognize the different types of visitors who attend festivals, however, they emphasize the difference and importance of local residents and visitors, who do not necessarily reside locally due to their distinctive behaviour. Felsenstein and Fleischer (2003) were of the opinion that attendees who are local residents are found to have different spending behavior compared to non-locals. According to Lau and McKercher (2004), festival attendees can be grouped into two categories: first-time visitors and repeat visitors. First-time visitors are those attendees who have discovered the festival and are experiencing it for the first time, while repeat visitors have already acquired familiarity and satisfaction with the experience (Lau & McKercher, 2004). Both first-time and repeat attendees play a vital role in the success and sustainability of a festival.

It has been found that these two groups differ significantly in regards to socio-demographics, behavioral characteristics, destination perception, perceived value, and travel motivations. While first-time attendees have been found to spend a significant amount of money during the festival, repeat visitors have been found to stay longer and spend more and this can be interpreted as a testament to their loyalty. Thus, this segment of repeat visitors represents an attractive and cost-effective market segment for festivals (Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis, 2010).

Problem investigated

The main aim of the study was to profile the visitors at the strawberry festival at the Redberry farm in George, Western Cape Province in South Africa.

Research objectives and methodology

The research objectives of the study were:

- To determine the visitor profiles to the festival,
- To determine visitor characteristics,
- To determine the satisfaction levels on services and facilities during the festival, and
- To determine the visitor over-all satisfaction with the festival atmosphere.



Data for the study was obtained through on site survey of the visitors; structured questionnaires were distributed to the visitors who have been selected at convenience in the festival ground during the two day duration of the festival. The survey was carried out on each day of the festival to ensure that sufficient number of visitors have used the services and facilities to enable them to indicate their evaluation of the services and facilities at the site. Although the questionnaire was designed for self-administration, research assistants were available to help explain and clarify any misunderstanding. The perception of the visitors on the services and facilities was collected using the five-point Likert scales. The evaluation of the service and facility elements is used as an indicator of the level of satisfaction of the visitors on the services and facilities. The analysis of the profiles of the participant was done using descriptive analyses.

Results and findings

Visitor profiles

Table 1: Gender of visitors

Audience Profile		
Gender		
Male	109	46,0%
Female	128	54,0%
Total	237	100,0%

Table 2: Age of visitors

Age		
18-25	77	32,8%
26-35	63	26,8%
36-45	47	20,0%
46-55	30	12,8%
56 And Above	18	7,7%
Total	235	100,0%

Table 3: Visitor spending at the festival

Amount of money spent at festival	Number	Percentage
R100 or less	26	11,0%
R101 - R500	145	61,4%
R501 - R1 000	53	22,5%
R1001 - R2 000	11	4,7%
R2 001 and more	1	0,4%
Total	236	100,0%

The results of the study, as shown in Tables 1 – 3 (visitor profile) above, show that the proportion of female visitors is marginally higher at 54% than the male visitors at 46%. The age distribution shows a relatively young group of visitors with 32.8% being 18 -25 years old, slightly followed by those between the ages 26 -35 at 26.8 %. Those aged between 36 -45 years were at 20% and the least age representation was for those who were 56 years and above with 7.7%.

The majority of visitors (61.4%) have indicated spending between R101 – R500 during the festival. The second highest spent was recorded for those who spent between R501 and



R1 000 with 22.5%, whilst the least spent was recorded for those who spent R2 001 and above represented by 0.4%.

Visitor characteristics

Table 4: Travelling form of the visitors

Travelling party		
Partner/Spouse	32	13,6%
Family members	114	48,3%
Friends	72	30,5%
Just me	10	4,2%
Prefer not to say	8	3,4%
Total	236	100,0%

Participation in festivals would be more exciting in groups family members and friends; this supported by results showing 48.3% of those who came with family members and 30.5 % who attended the festival with friends respectively. The results of the study also show that this festival is least interesting to those who travel alone at 4.2% and those who prefer not to say about their travel status at 3.4%. Interestingly, 13.6% attend the festival with their spouses which may infer that this festival is good as an outing destination for spouses.

Table 5: Times of attending the festival

Times attending this festival	Number	Percentage
First time	121	51,1%
Second time	80	33,8%
Third time	21	8,9%
More than three times	15	6,3%
Total	237	100,0%

Table 6: Number of days attending the festival

Days of festival attend	Number	Percentage
One	218	92,4%
Two	18	7,6%
Total	236	100,0%

The strawberry festival is a two-day event, and the majority of the visitors (92.4%) indicated attending the festival for only one day with only 7.6% attending the full two days of the festival as shown in Table 6 above. This finding may infer that visitors do not find the festival to have enough activities to do over a period of two days. Interestingly, just above half of the visitors (51.1%) were attending the festival for the first time, slightly followed at 33.8% who were attending the festival for the second time. It seems the festival is struggling to convince visitors to return for three times and more as shown by 8.9% of those who were attending the festival for the third time and 6.3% of visitors who were attending the festival for more than three times as shown in Table 5 above.

Table 7: Contingency Table - Times attending this festival and how much spent at festival

Times attending this festival	How much spent at festival							
	R100 or less		R101 - R500		R501 or more		Total	
First time attendees	19	16%	78	64%	24	20%	121	100%



Repeat attendees	7	6%	67	58%	41	36%	115	100%
Total	26	11%	145	61%	65	28%	236	100%
Chi ² (d.f. = 2, n = 236) = 10.67; p = .005; V = 0.21 Small								

The results of the study as shown in table 7 above infer that a small significant difference in spending patterns between first-time and repeat visitors to the festival. The results show that first-time visitors spend slightly higher than repeat visitors in two of the three categories of spending amounts with repeat visitors spending more than first-time visitors in one category. These results are similar to the findings of Kruger, Saayman, & Ellis (2010) who found that first-time attendees have been found to spend a significant amount of money during the festival.

Table 8: Contingency Table - Travelling party and how much spent at festival

Travelling party	How much spent at festival							
	R100 or less		R101 - R500		R501 or more		Total	
Partner/Spouse	1	3%	24	77%	6	19%	31	100%
Family members	12	11%	67	59%	35	31%	114	100%
Friends	8	11%	43	60%	21	29%	72	100%
Just me	4	40%	4	40%	2	20%	10	100%
Total	25	11%	138	61%	64	28%	227	100%
Chi ² (d.f. = 6, n = 227) = 12.95; p = .044; V = 0.17 Small								

The results of the study as shown in table 8 above infer that a small significant difference in spending patterns between the various travelling parties to the festival. The spending patterns between those travelling with their spouses, with family members, with friends and those travelling alone seem to be evenly spread across the different spending categories. This is confirmed by the P-value of .044 which shows a small significant difference in spending patterns across the different travelling parties.

Table 9: Contingency table: Days of festival attend and how much spent at festival

Days of festival attend	How much spent at festival							
	R100 or less		R101 - R500		R501 or more		Total	
One	25	12%	130	60%	62	29%	217	100%
Two	1	6%	14	78%	3	17%	18	100%
Total	26	11%	144	61%	65	28%	235	100%
Chi ² (d.f. = 2, n = 235) = 2.25; p = .324								

The results of the study as shown in table 9 above infer that there was no significant difference in spending patterns between those attending the festival for one day and those attending for two days.



Table 10: Overall rating of the festival atmosphere by the visitors

Central Tendency & Dispersion: Overall rating of event							
	Mean	S.D.	Minimum	Quartile 1	Median	Quartile 3	Maximum
Overall rating of the festival	1,89	0,63	1,00	1,50	2,00	2,17	4,33

The results of the study on the overall rating of the festival show a mean score equals 1.89 and this mean score can be described as positive because it is in the interval $1.80 < M \leq 2.60$. The summated score calculated as the mean for the overall rating of the festival in terms of reliability of summated score resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0, 86. This finding indicates that the visitors were highly satisfied with the festival because this value is greater than 0.80.

Practical managerial implications and recommendations

The results of the study indicate this two day festival is attractive to the young visitors (18 – 25) and those travelling with family members as shown in the findings section of this study. The managerial implication for the festival organisers and marketers is that they should strengthen their marketing efforts to these groups by introducing festival activities that appeal to these markets. However, another managerial implication is that the organisers and marketers should focus also on other age groups to ensure the long-term survival and sustainability of this festival. Spending at the festival is minimal and this need to increase for the economic sustainability of festival since the highest spend was recorded for those spending between R101 – R500. The results of the study also indicate that majority of visitors are only attending the festival for only one day. It is imperative therefore for the festival organisers and marketers to find ways of convincing visitors to attend the festival for its entire two day duration. This can be achieved by extending the festival activities to prolong the attendance of the desired visitors..

Conclusions

The identification and proper understanding of customers by tourism marketers and event organisers is important for market segmentation. The profiling of tourists provides an opportunity for segmentation to be done on the basis of the characteristics of tourists making the trip. The main aim of the study is to identify the characteristics of the visitors of the annual strawberry festival held at the Redberry farm in George in the Western Cape Province in South Africa, as a basis for informing marketing and management recommendations aimed at improving the festival experience of visitors. The satisfaction of the visitors on the services provided and the facilities available as well as the festival atmosphere was evaluated using the perception analysis on the services and facilities.

The results of the study show that the festival was dominated by first-time visitors (51%), dominated by females (54%) as well as those between the ages 18 – 25 (32.8%). The results further show that majority of visitors were only attending the festival for one day (92.4%) and many of the visitors were travelling with family members (48.3%) whilst 30.5% were travelling as friends. From a financial point of view, the majority of the visitors (61.4%) spent between R101 and R500 during the festival.

Most visitors were mainly contented with the services and facilities provided during the festival and they were generally satisfied overall with the festival atmosphere. The visitor profile data together with visitor satisfaction levels with the services provided during the festival as well as visitor satisfaction levels with the overall atmosphere of the festival results suggest that festival organisers and festival marketers should focus more on ensuring repeat visits since the festival was dominated by first-time visitors.



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