

An Examination of the Vaal River Carnival Attendees' Perceptions of Service Quality Towards Satisfaction and Future Behavioural Intentions

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Abstract

Carnival events have become pivotal in the growth of tourism initiatives to many destinations. Tourist experiences of event captivities touted the dawn of carnival events as valued visitor destinations. Accordingly, gaining insights on the event attendees' perceptions of service quality rendered at carnival events is crucial in growing visitor continued support and tourism at large. The impact of carnival events is gradually being examined in tourism marketing research since such occasions are sought to attract tourists through cultural and heritage services that enhance life experiences. This study investigates the Vaal River Carnival attendees' service quality perceptions towards their satisfaction and future behavioural intentions at an event hosted in Vanderbijlpark town, Gauteng province. A cross-sectional approach of gathering data using convenience non-probability sampling procedure was adopted. On-site questionnaire survey method was employed to collect data from 400 respondents. The study results highlight constructive and negative views of the respondent's experiences. The respondent's satisfaction with the event's level of service quality were high and positively impacted their future behavioural intentions. However, the event managers are advised to exigently deal with challenges of inadequate parking space and traffic jam linked to the event.

Keywords: Behavioural intention; carnival events; satisfaction; service quality; attendees

Introduction

Carnival events form part of a conductor discourse regarded as an essential tool in tourism, community economic development and destination marketing. Hosting carnival events has become an important feature in tourism destination marketing owed to the appreciation of benefits derived from such occasions (Hermann et al., 2013; Mair & Whitford, 2013), as they hold very useful attributes that can be useful in growing event visitor support and cut down on tourism seasonality (Esu et al., 2020). Despite the growth in carnival events in the global market environment (Guanah et al., 2020), a scarcity of empirical research on what classifies successful carnival events subsists. Carnival event attendees have often been viewed as consumers whose perceptions of value, experience, satisfaction and behaviour are submissively

established by the quality of the event (Getz, 1997). Mostly, researchers' efforts in examining such perceptions have focused mainly on their economic contributions. Booyens and Rogerson (2015), Esu et al. (2020) and Guanah et al. (2020), discovered that carnival events positively contribute to the economic welfare and enrichment of the tourism industry. Atchison (2015) states that the famous Brazilian, Rio de Janeiro carnival event of 2015 drew approximately 977,000 visitors and yielded about US\$4 31.9 million. This is one clear indication of what are the benefits of hosting carnival events and its contribution to the economic well-being of the host.

This suggests that the present understanding of carnival events and their subscriptions does not adequately explicate the strategic roles that they play as distinctive opportunities absent from daily life activities, wherein exceptional experiences can be reciprocated (Morgan, 2008). In today's dynamic and competitive global market, carnival events have assumed enhanced importance in their sustainability and the need for event organisers to pursue astute strategies to differentiate themselves from the rest while gaining competitive advantages (Muresherwa et al., 2017). Santoro and Massiani (2014) concur with this assertion and consent that owing to the robust competition that prevails in the tourism industry, a need to focus more on improved service quality levels is essential. This is important as this can assist carnival event managers to position themselves better and encourage increased consumer repeat visitation patterns.

According to Berry (1993), extraordinary service quality levels have become universal compliance among service providers to build a competitive advantage for their business survival. Contemporary consumers across the world have become more quality-conscious and their expectations for superior services have increased (Pai et al., 2021). The extent literature reveals that service quality forms the basis at which customer service encounters propel future behavioural intentions (Zeithmal et al., 1996). Accordingly, by providing excellent service quality, service providers present themselves with an opportunity to enhance customer satisfaction and increase their willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth and enjoy continued customer support (Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Jalivand et al., 2017). In service sectors such as the carnival environment, the event organisers are also obliged to deliver exceptional levels of service quality (Wang et al., 2020), because its valuation does not only rely on the service outcome element of service experienced but also on the process evaluation component (Mkhwanazi, 2019). Therefore, it is evident that both these elements have a robust effect on customer satisfaction and their future behavioural patterns, which could differ from one customer service encounter the next.

Satisfaction is a critical component in withstanding competition in the tourism industry and it can be identified as a verdict that a service or product feature provides a satisfying level of consumption (Meng et al., 2008). Additionally, Pal et al. (2022) postulate that to achieve satisfaction, an aspect of design and delivery must be present. Every year, consumers spend time and money attending carnivals, emphasising the significance of properly marketed, well-organised and managed proceedings to accomplish attendee satisfaction (Tkaczynski et al., 2022). Owing to the resilient association between the two aspects of customer experience, the broader the extent of service and the greater the quality of service a customer perceives, the higher the level of satisfaction. Additionally, this is a motivational factor that undertakes to deal with possible future competitive challenges. When carnival organisers offer poor service quality, both the event attendees and the organisers will be negatively affected, and the event visitors might display unfavourable future behavioural patterns. Consequently, this might have a harmful effect on the event organiser's reputation and impacts the sustainability of the occasion (Pappa et al., 2022).

Customer behavioural intention signifies a position on whether they will continue or not continue to patronise a service provider on a constant basis (Zeithmal et al., 1996), as both favourable and unfavourable behavioural intentions arise from superior or inferior service quality delivery acts. Kan and Fabrigar (2017) state that favourable behavioural intentions embrace the mentioning of positive recommendations by the customer about the service provider's offerings. Conversely, unfavourable behavioural intentions incorporate customers' spending patterns being a bit suspect, spending less money than usual, switching to other service providers, or sharing negative word-of-mouth communication with others (Zeithmal et al., 1996). By choosing to spend less or switching to another service provider following a negative service encounter, the customers eliminate the risk of future negative service experiences (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). In the context of the carnival event, behavioural intention is, therefore, explained as the event attendees' intentions to support the occasion even in the future and have the will to recommend the event to others (Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003; White & Yu, 2005). However, of note, is the growing evidence that the majority of the attendees have lodged complaints to the event managers about some facilities and infrastructure including inadequate parking spaces and traffic jams. Such behaviour highlights that the event attendees have different perceptions and expectations which can influence their future carnival event visitation behaviour patterns. It is, therefore, a crucial deduction then, that the VRC event attendees' perceptions of service quality provision towards their satisfaction and how that influences their future behavioural intention need to be investigated with the intent of reducing the existing knowledge gap within the South African carnival event environment.

Literature review

Carnivals are described as social memorials with a communal theme that has a public and emblematic sense (Getz & Page, 2016). These are intimately linked activities that the community appreciates as vital instruments towards its way of life and its social identity, continuity and survival. Certainly, a genuine link between carnivals and tourism subsists as an inundated indication of their relationship can be seen from a variety of events marketed as tourist attractions and appeal to a considerable number of tourists (Quinn, 2009). Over the years, carnival tourism has been widely studied from various outlooks counting visitor satisfaction and motivational factors, visitor travelling patterns, hosts' service quality and economic contributions (Welthagen & Lötter, 2020). Getz et al. (2012) state that well-marketed carnivals bring various positive effects to the host city in several ways that include contributions toward infrastructure developments, creation of employment opportunities and improving community pride. In addition, carnivals offer entertainment and expose both visitors and local people to new developments (Lee et al., 2017). Consequently, local businesses can benefit from the visitors spending their money on accommodation, food and drinks, which can lead to the attendees' satisfaction and improved event return behaviour rate that could boost entrepreneurial opportunities and local economic growth (Esu et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2022). Accordingly, it is important to investigate the carnival visitor's perceptions of the hosts' service quality which influences their satisfaction levels leading to positive future event revisit behavioural intentions. Thus, Lee et al. (2017) highlight that to better position carnival events to meet or exceed the visitor's needs and requirements to improve their future revisit behaviour, it is crucial for the event host to satisfactorily meet the visitors' expectations. Lee et al. (2010) put it that there is a definite link between customer satisfaction and loyalty, hence, it is imperative for the carnival event host to ensure that their degree of service quality is purged at customer gratifying levels. Customer satisfaction has engrossed extensive attention in the tourism marketing literature following its underlying influence on consumer behaviour

(Christou et al., 2018). Meng et al. (2008) define satisfaction as a judgment that a product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption. The authors further state that satisfaction can be regarded as a vital component of sustaining a competitive business, prompting repurchase intentions of a product or service. Numerous researchers concur that satisfaction is critical to thriving destination marketing which impacts continued consumption of what is on offer (Esu & Arrey 2020; Lee et al., 2017).

Esu and Arrey (2020) mention that the concept of customer satisfaction is rooted in the underlying theory of the expectation-disconfirmation model coined by Oliver (1980), and the performance-only model purported by Pizman and Millman (1993), as well as the expectation SERVQUAL gap mould proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985). Literature reveals that an essential characteristic of satisfaction is customer perceptions of the service performance throughout the consumption encounter. Even though negative perceptions of the performance would generally represent customer dissatisfaction regarding the performance, it is important to note that satisfying service encounters can also lead to unsatisfactory consumption experiences, when the performance does not meet customer expectations (Muresherwa et al., 2017). Lee et al. (2017) emphasise that confirmation occurs when the service performance meets or exceeds customer expectations. Confirmation yields superior satisfaction compared to negative disconfirmation which arises when the service performance does not meet customer expectations. Accordingly, when associating what customers expect from the service performance and what they have received is not satisfying or meeting their expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs while on the other hand, positive disconfirmation transpires when the service meets their expectancies. Therefore, disconfirmation represents the maximum levels of pleasure. Boon-Liat (2021) echo that in associating customer expectations with perceptions, customers tend to form a view about what to expect (negative or positive). Hence, the fundamental approach to examining customer satisfaction as affected by service quality, suggests that, prior to services being rendered, customers tend to have preconceived expectations that need to be properly satisfied by their service providers (Muresherwa et al., 2017). Weeks (2015) postulate that following a service encounter, customers assess their expectations in relation to the actual service performance. In this regard, customers evaluate if their perceptions are confirmed or not.

Against this backdrop, it is evident that expectation signifies projected behaviour and is indicative of anticipated service attributes. Accordingly, expectations serve as an assessment standard in expectation confirmation theory that customers use to assess service performance (Weeks, 2015). Contrariwise, not all customers derive satisfaction all the time from their service encounters. However, to preserve a competitive footing, the carnival event organisers ought to endeavour to reach more than just straightforward levels of satisfaction but an astute degree of customer delight (Bowdin et al., 2011). The literature review assumes that satisfaction is one of the key factors that certifies continued sustenance derived from excellently presented levels of service quality.

Vaal River Carnival (VRC) perspective

In South Africa, akin to the well-celebrated arts festivals and carnivals (such as Aardklop regularly held in Potchefstroom town of the Northwest province and the MaCufe cultural festival frequently held at Bloemfontein city of the Free State province), the VRC annual event takes place throughout the month of September in Vanderbijlpark town of Sedibeng District Municipality commonly known as the Vaal Triangle region of Gauteng province (Emfuleni Local Municipality, 2020/2021). Hermann et al. (2020) noted that these events provide an opportunity to local communities in reflecting their identity or value of their traditions. The first main attraction of the VRC was held in 2004, operating under the theme ‘Discover the

Rhythm of the Vaal’, showcasing events such as the Beer Festival, Fashion show, Golf Challenge, Jazz on the River, Vaal Spin Festival, Wheels at the Vaal and the Sunday Soul Music Sessions, which attracted many visitors across the country (Emfuleni Local Municipality, 2016). Since its inception, the VRC grew in stature and attracted many visitors from in and outside of Gauteng province, from all walks of life, race, colour, age and background, to celebrate and enjoy the beauty, history and richness of the Vaal Triangle region (Emfuleni Local Municipality, 2017/2018). During the 2015 VRC, 10 000 visitors were recorded, while during the 2016 event around 23 000 visitors were received and during the 2019 event, a record 125 000 attendees were received (Noszczky et al., 2021).

The high rate of VRC event attendance contributed immensely to the Vaal community as one of the most popular and rapidly growing events in the country (Emfuleni Local Municipality, 2020/2021). The continued success of the VRC can be attributed to the introduction of new and stylish exhibitions, some of which other carnivals do not feature. These exhibitions include the wedding expo, traditional meals, dance performances, poetry, acts and river cruises, as some of the key festivities that carnival visitors enjoy (Tuzunkan, 2018). Furthermore, the recent introduction of stimulating proceedings, which comprise an arts and culture carnival parade, the arts and craft exhibition, a beach party, as well as music genre fairs such as African Jazz, Amapiano, Hip-Hop and Kwaito melodies, also led to an increased number of VRC visitors (Emfuleni Local Municipality, 2020/2021). Leone and Montanari (2021) mention that new or never seen attractions and activities in carnivals usually enhance the image and reputation of an event and the host city. Accordingly, it would be prudent for the VRC event organisers to continuously examine their event visitors’ satisfaction levels relative to the quality of service offered during the event. Shamsu et al. (2022) add that such a measure could assist the organisers to plan better for upcoming events and predict visitor satisfaction levels, which could contribute to increased future patronage behaviour.

Effects of carnival events

Certainly, a firm connection between carnivals and tourism exists and there is sufficient evidence suggesting that carnivals are promoted as tourist attractions, drawing large numbers of tourists (Emfuleni Local Municipality, 2017/2018). According to Getz (2008), carnival tourism has been studied from various perspectives involving economic influences, travel arrangements, motivational factors, service quality, satisfaction and cultural attributes. Thus, carnivals are regarded as vital contributors to the social, economic and cultural welfare of communities (Nadotti & Vannoni, 2019). In countless instances, carnivals are viewed as infrequent types of occasions that do not only display diversity but purposely honour and appreciate societal disparities that impact social cohesion (Quaye et al., 2015). Some of these events are competitive in nature and usually short-term special events that offer patrons unique opportunities to be exposed to the old and new or never seen nor heard before performances and pastimes (Getz, 1997). Hughes (2000) states that the intimacy of individuals is the spirit of a carnival, that is, a comparatively large number of performers as well as the attendees meeting together in one place over a determined period of time. Therefore, it is very important for the event organisers to make sure that the event attendees’ requirements are met, in ensuring the continued success of an occasion such as the VRC (Doe et al., 2021). These attendees’ requirements include sufficient and competent service staff members, facilities, the capacity of the event venue, safety and security, as well as pertinent marketing at various levels (Leone & Montanari 2021). In addition, it is important for the event organisers to monitor the visitors’ echelons of pleasure, including its effect on their future patronage behaviour (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009).

Theories underpinning the study

Numerous theories are obtainable to choose from when examining the socio-economic effects of carnival events (Mair & Whitford, 2013). The theoretical context informing this investigation draws from the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), the social identity theory (SIT) and self-determination theory (SDT). All these theories have been broadly used in social psychology and relationship studies predicting human behavioural intentions.

Theory of reasoned action (TRA)

The TRA suggests that behavioural intentions are determinants of behaviour, revealed through attitude and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ham et al., 2015). Further, the TRA is used to predict and clear up differences in behaviour, comparative to regulated sets of constructs. For instance, attitudes toward a behaviour, subjective norms, perceived behavioural controls and behavioural intentions. To forecast customer patronage behaviour, it is vital to measure an individual's confidence in carrying out a particular behaviour or action in correspondence to social views (Lee et al., 2017). This study contends that customers with high patronage objectives are likely to positively react to the event organiser's offerings, which could lead to continued support (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Theory of planned behaviour (TPB)

The primary construct of TPB is the behavioural intention that stimulates individual behaviour or conduct (Ajzen, 1991). TPB, as a cognitive model of human behaviour, emphasises envisaging and understanding of people's reasonable behaviour (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Asare (2015) mentions that TPB presupposes that attitude regarding a behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control impacts an individual's behavioural intention. This theory undertakes that individuals are likely to perform a specific type of behaviour if they believe that such behaviour could lead to valuable and envisaged outcomes such as satisfaction (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

Social identity theory (SIT)

Karakaya et al. (2016) state that SIT, recommended by Tajfel and Turner (1979), seems to be the foundation of unravelling human behaviour and why people behave in a particular way. Hatch and Schultz (2004) state that SIT founded an emblematic interaction framework, accentuating a link between self and role coupled with society. Also, it emphasises that individuals can be provoked to behave in a manner that sustains and increases their self-esteem. Having high self-esteem is naturally a discernment of oneself as desirable, proficient, affable and a morally well-grounded individual (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Karakaya et al. (2016) add that such attributes render one to be fascinated by the social world and makes one more attractive to others.

Self-determination theory (SDT)

The SDT is a theory dealing with human enthusiasm and personality by applying an organismic metatheory, featuring an individual's reputation growing internal resources for personality development and behavioural self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The SDT elucidates the social environmental inferences and provides an understanding of what drives human behaviour (Malchrowicz-Mósko & Chlebosz, 2019). Aicher and Brenner (2015) state that SDT is comprised of three primary requisites that drive individuals' motivation: (a) autonomy; (b) people have a feeling of efficacy or self-confidence regarding an activity; and (c) relatedness, the need to encounter social interactions or the desire to be closely linked to others.

Methodology

This study is based on a descriptive research approach, applying a quantitative survey method, grounded in the positivist social sciences paradigm. A two-pronged approach was followed to obtain an impartial perspective, namely a theoretical foundation was established through a literature review and an empirical investigation using a quantitative research method was conducted with the aim of examining the hypothesised relationships between variables under investigation. A non-probability purposive sampling method was adopted in order to randomly select qualifying respondents. Cross-sectional data were collected with the aid of a structured self-administered questionnaire

Instrumentation

Section A of the study questionnaire consisted of biographical questions, including the visitors' characteristics such as gender, age category, type of visit and ethnicity. Section B focused on service quality dimensions. The scale for the service quality dimensions was adapted from Ko and Pastore (2005), which indicated an acceptable Cronbach alpha value of above 0.70. Section C measured customer satisfaction items adopted from Baltazar (2011), which reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87. Finally, section D covered future behavioural intention items. The scale was adapted from Yoshida and James (2011), which recorded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.78. A Likert-scale principle based on a seven-point measure ranging from "strongly disagreed", which scored one, to "strongly agreed", which scored seven, was applied.

Data collection procedure

To ensure randomisation, data were collected at different times and days during the entire duration of the annual festival in September 2021. The researcher was actively involved in the fieldwork especially in explaining the purpose of the study to the respondents as well as ensuring participants' right to confidentiality and anonymity. Voluntary participation was encouraged and informed consent was observed through an accompanying letter to the questionnaire citing the purpose of the study as well. Four fieldworkers were positioned at different events entry and exit points and they changed their positions after an hour. Of the 400 distributed questionnaires, only 335 were considered usable in the final analysis (response rate of 84%).

Data analysis

The data were statistically analysed using the statistical software SPSS, version 27.0. Descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and linear regression were employed to process data. An analysis of the demographic profile of respondents shows that the majority of respondents (55%; n=186) were males and the rest (45%; n=149) were females. In terms of the age groups, the largest group (26%; n=88) consisted of respondents whose ages ranged from 50 years and over, followed by (25%; n=84) respondents whose ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, followed by (24%; n=80) respondents whose age group ranged from 36 to 41 years of age, followed by (14%; n=47) respondents whose age group ranged from 26 to 35 years of age and the least age category of respondents (11%; n=36) consisted of those ranging from 42 to 49 years. Of the 335 respondents, the majority (48%; n=160) were accompanied by friends, while (32%) n=108 were accompanied by families and the remaining (20%) n=67 were alone. More than half (51%; n=171) of the participants reside in the Vaal region, while the remaining participants (49%; n=164) were from other parts of the Gauteng province.



Reliability and validity

The internal consistency of measurement items was assessed by computing Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and the item-to-total values. The study yielded Cronbach’s alpha values that ranged from 0.932 to 0.946, well above the recommended threshold of 0.70 suggested by Hair et al. (2006). The item-to-total values for all the measurement items were above the baseline value of 0.5, demonstrating the cohesiveness of measurement items (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The questionnaire was pilot tested, as suggested by Malhotra (2010), using 50 respondents to enhance content validity. Discriminant validity was also assessed by inspecting the inter-construct correlation matrix. As shown in Table 1, the inter-construct correlation values ranged from 0.679 to 0.776, below the rule of thumb of 0.8 (Fraering & Minor, 2006), indicating the attainment of discriminant validity. Predictive validity was assessed by inspecting the Beta coefficients and t-values. The study shows significant relationships between the constructs under investigation, indicating the prevalence of satisfactory levels of predictive validity. Table 1 summarises the reliability and validity measures employed in the study.

Table 1: Scale reliability and validity

Research construct		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach’s test	
		Mean	SD	Item-to-total	α value
Service quality (SQ)	SQ1	6.016	1.602	.830	.946
	SQ2			.644	
	SQ3			.756	
	SQ4			.654	
	SQ5			.715	
	SQ6			.703	
	SQ7			.671	
Customer satisfaction (CS)	CS1	5.906	1.432	.768	.932
	CS2			.849	
	CS3			.817	
	CS4			.852	
	CS5			.816	
Future behavioural intention (FBI)	FBI	6.11	1.635	.739	.934
	FBI			.610	
	FBI			.737	

Test for association (strength and direction)

The Spearman correlation coefficient was chosen as the ideal statistical co-efficient employed to examine the interrelationships between the study constructs because the data are not normally distributed, in other words, it tends to be non-parametric in nature (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2002). Table 2 reports on the correlations between the proposed study constructs.

Table 2: Correlation matrix

Construct	SQ	CS	FBI
Service quality (SQ)	1.000	.776**	.679**
Customer satisfaction (CS)	.776**	1.00	.754**
Future behavioural intention (FBI)	.679**	.754**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As indicated in on Table 2 above, the correlational matrix showed strong significant positive correlations amongst the study variables ranging between $r=0.679$ and $r=0.776$ with a probability level of 0.01 taken as a level of significance. The relationship between the study constructs was further assessed with a view to corroborating the assumptions of the linear regression models along with co-linearity diagnostics checks (Field, 2013). None of the correlations in Table 2 had a value of $r>0.9$; thus, the data were considered suitable for linear regression analysis using the Enter method.



Regression analysis

Before regression analysis was done, multi-collinearity tests were undertaken to determine if the data were suitable for regression analysis. The results in Table 3 indicate that all the independent variables had variance inflation factor (VIF) values of <10 and tolerance values (Tol) of >0.10. In addition, collinearity diagnostics were also considered as part of the multiple regression procedure as mentioned above. Based on these values, multicollinearity does not pose a threat in this study (Pallant, 2016). The standardised residual plot, Cook’s distance and scatter plot were used to assess the presence of outliers. The standardised residual plots were all below +3.3 and -3.3. The highest value of the Cook’s distance was 0.088 and all scores on the scatter plot were confined to the middle, tangential to the zero point. All these statistics indicate that outliers did not affect the model results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The results of the regression analysis are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of the regression analysis

Dependent variable: Customer satisfaction	Beta	T	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
Model 1: Independent variable				Tolerance	VIF
Service quality	.821	30.490	.000**	1.000	1.000
R=0.821 R ² =0.675 Adjusted R ² =0.668 F change=96.894** significant at p<0.01 Tol=Tolerance value VIF=Variance inflation factor					
Dependent variable: Future behavioural intentions	Beta	T	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
Model 2: Independent variable				Tolerance	VIF
Customer satisfaction	.754	20.947	.000**	1.000	1.000
R=0.754 R ² =0.567 Adjusted R ² =0.567. F change=438.77 ** significant at p<0.01 Tol=Tolerance value VIF=Variance inflation factor					

Discussion of results

The result of regression model 1 indicated an adjusted R² of 0.675. This suggests that approximately 68 percent of the variance in customer satisfaction is accounted for by service quality. Service quality revealed a co-efficient of $\beta=0.821$ with a p-value of <0.05 on customer satisfaction. This implies that service quality (independent variable) contributes towards explaining the variation in customer satisfaction (dependent variable). Moreover, the correlation analysis further revealed a strong relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction ($r=0.754$). In addition, the service quality dimensions scored a summated mean of 6.016 out of 7, implying that most respondents perceived service quality dimensions as effective in enhancing customer satisfaction. Previous research such as Ahmad and Papastathopoulos (2019) as well as Wu (2021), obtained a positive significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. The hypothesis (H₁), which states that there is a positive significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is, therefore, supported.

The result of regression model 2 indicated an adjusted R² = 0.567, implying that approximately 57 percent of the variance in behavioural intention is accounted for by customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction revealed a co-efficient of $\beta=0.754$ with a p-value of <0.05 on behavioural intention. This suggests that customer satisfaction (independent variable) contributes towards explaining the variation in behavioural intention (dependent variable). The correlation analysis, in addition, reported a strong relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intention ($r=0.754$). In addition, customer satisfaction scored a summated mean of 5.906 out of 7, implying that most respondents perceived customer satisfaction as effective in enhancing revisiting intentions. The results of this study support the findings from previous studies on this relationship whereby Liang et al. (2018), as well as Ardani et al. (2019)

established that behavioural intention is positively affected by customer satisfaction. The hypothesis (H₂) that states that there is a positive significant relationship between customer satisfaction and future behavioural intention is, therefore, supported. In summary, the findings of the study, reveal that as the positive perceptions of consumers regarding quality of services received increases, their satisfaction and purchase intentions also increase (Khumalo-Ncube & Motala, 2021).

Implications

Notwithstanding the limitations inherent in the study, the findings of this study highlighted numerous important and vital insights that other researchers in South Africa may utilise for future research purposes. For practitioners and academics, the study presents a list of factors they may wish to consider in attempting to generate a greater degree of service quality among carnival settings. Firstly, evaluation and assessment of customer perception relating to dimensions of service quality is critical as it allows events management to modify strategies in order to increase visitors and tourists' attraction to various destinations. To this end, socio-demographic characteristics should also be considered and factored into the marketing and product strategy of carnival events, especially to implement image marketing (promoting the sense of place) and destination marketing (selling the service) strategies. Secondly, events managers who may also need to serve as tourism marketers, should capitalise on the constant increase in social media users and communication. It is recommended that organisations should make use of social media to constantly engage with its clients in order to satisfy attendees' expectations, thus media marketing should be incorporated into a corporate marketing strategy. Finally, it is recommended that an understanding of how visitors perceive carnival events would be helpful for municipality planners and marketers to better structure their tourism and arts and culture resources and activities

Conclusions

It is pertinent to note that the study was predominantly based on the objectives of the research, the literature review, research methodology employed and applied coupled with findings and recommendation. This study substantiated and validated previous studies conducted and further indicated that service quality dimensions have direct and indirect effects on visitors' satisfaction and behavioural intention. The results of this study are believed to be contributing significantly to consumer behaviour and tourism literature, more so on the influence of service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intention. For practitioners and academics, the study presents factors they may wish to consider in attempting to generate a greater degree of service quality, satisfaction and revisit intentions among carnival visitors. However, the study adopted a non-probability convenience sampling procedure thus limiting generalisability and representativeness of the findings of the study to other similar events. To this end, using probability sampling methods to enhance the external validity of the findings is recommended. Additionally, from a research methodology perspective, the incorporation of qualitative approaches and methods could be considered to supplement the questionnaire survey (quantitative method or approach used in the study) in enhancing objective responses. This study is an imperative contribution towards addressing the call for more research on events management in order to remain competitive on the tourism and leisure landscape. More precisely, the results of this study will be useful to events organisers and researchers universally who may be grappling with identifying appropriate strategies to assess sentiments and satisfaction levels among attendees. Finally, the informational contribution of this study is not only restricted to scholars and academicians but also to industry players. It seems worthwhile

that organisations should make use of social media to constantly engage with their clients and incorporate media marketing into the corporate marketing strategy.

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