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Program Quality, Service Quality, and Visitor Satisfaction within the Film Festival Context: Evaluating Major Film Festivals in Korea

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the overall competitiveness of the major six international film festivals in Korea using the constructs of program quality, service quality and visitor satisfaction. Specifically, this study aims to 1) identify the underlying dimensions of service quality in the film festival context, 2) examine the relationships among program quality, service quality, and visitor satisfaction, and 3) compare visitor satisfaction through service quality assessment between the local resident and non-resident visitors. The study identified five factors as most important dimensions of service quality within the film festival: information service, auxiliary amenities (i.e., other events or a variety of souvenirs), quality of facilities, program quality, and accessibility. The results of the study are consistent with the previous studies in that program quality is an important factor to the success of the film festivals overall. The results of the study suggest, however, that program quality is not a most decisive factor in satisfying all types of visitors. Visitors who came from the outside region considered the quality of facilities as the vital factor to their satisfaction. It indicates that the film festival tourism destinations that want to attract more out-of-region visitors should ensure and improve the visitor facilities before they plan a film festival in their destination. On the other hand, if the main purpose of the film festival is to serve local residents, festival organizers and destination marketers should focus more on the information service including promotion of the event to the locals as well as signage, brochures, and event staff training. Failure or success of the film festival tourism depends not only on the high quality of program or service but also on the delivery of the high quality service attributes pertaining to the specific visitor needs.

INTRODUCTION

Film festivals represent one of the most rapidly expanding areas of cultural events worldwide (Mueller 2006). International film festivals draw film professionals such as directors, actors/actresses, critics, producers, and buyers as well as multitudes of cultural tourists who travel to attend diverse national or international film festivals. These cultural travelers come to the venue of the festival and support the local economy through expenditures on lodging, meals, local products, and other cultural consumption in the region. With anticipated economic benefits generated by visitor spending at film festivals, public and private agencies are embracing film festival tourism as a new source of income for local business and taxation. For example, Santa Barbara County Conference and Visitors Bureau (CVB) revealed that the annual 10 day Santa Barbara Film Festival generated an additional \$7.3 million in revenue (Mueller 2006).

In addition to the economic benefits, film festivals are also perceived to benefit local residents in the communities by providing more cultural events. Accordingly, garnering support for film festivals is an appealing activity among policy makers as a way to develop a reputation for promoting arts and culture. With economic and political benefits derived from investing in film festivals and cultural events, financial support by public authorities continues to expand in many places worldwide. Korea is one of the countries joining the current boom of film festival tourism by recognizing the role of film festivals in supporting tourism and cultural venues for local communities. Since 1996, a variety of international film festivals have been created in many different cities. Now, there are close to 20 different film events including widely known international film festivals such as the Pusan International Film Festival.

Previous research from the cultural festival and event literature suggests that increase of visitor satisfaction by improving service quality is a key to success of the festivals as well as endurance of the festivals (Beaven & Laws 2007; Lee & Beeler 2007; Park, Daniels, Brayley, & Harmon 2008; Thrane 2002). Since Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988, 1988) introduced their conceptualization and measurement of service quality, the topic of service quality has been applied in many areas including hospitality (Oh 1999), festivals and tourism (Childress & Crompton 1997, Getz, O'Neill, & Carlsen 2001, Lee, Petrick, & Crompton 2007), cruise industry (Petrick 2002), and parks and recreation (Wright, Duray, & Goodale 1992). In particular, research indicates that service quality is a critical factor in determining the competitiveness of cultural events and festivals (Baker & Crompton 2000; Crompton & Love 1995; Thrane 2002).

In their pioneering research on service quality, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) suggested five dimensions of service quality of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions have guided the service quality research in the tourism and leisure fields in terms of the operationalization of quality (Crompton and MacKay 1989; Fick and Ritchie 1991; Crompton and Love 1995; Yuan and Jang 2008). However, many studies in the tourism and leisure fields found that the original measure developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) did not adequately cover services delivered in the tourism context. It is, in large, because service delivery in tourism lies in a continuum of the relative importance of personal interaction compared to facilities or other attributes whereas the original measure of service by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) is based on face-to-face transactions between service providers and customers (Crompton and Love 1995). As a result, the quality of festivals has been conceptualized and measured in various ways and tends to be situation-specific in a festival context. Crompton and Love (1995) reported that the tangible dimension was dominant at the Dickens festival.

On the other hand, research on jazz festivals (Saleh and Ryan 1993; Thrane 2002) suggested that the quality of the music program was the most important service factor. Yuan and Jang (2008) suggested that organizational features such as short lines, good selection of food, and reasonable admission price were the strongest attribute of the perceived service quality in the specific context of wine festival.

Despite the popularity of the concept of service quality in festival and event management, however, few studies have been carried out that focus on the effects of perceived service quality in a film festival context. In part, this is due to the fact that, traditionally, film festivals have not targeted the general public. Historically, the main audiences attending major film festivals were limited to film professionals such as directors, actors/actresses, film makers, and buyers. As the majority of attendees were stakeholders, there was little consideration for visitor service quality. Now, film festival managers eagerly seek general audiences and design themes to attract individuals with refined cinematic tastes who enthusiastically engage in these events (Mueller 2006). In addition to the lack of consideration for visitor service quality, more importantly, there was a lack of recognition regarding the relationship between film festivals and tourism, where film festivals used to be perceived as a cultural activity focused on programming rather than visitor service. Now, there is a growing awareness among destination marketers and film festival organizers that film festival travel is a form of cultural tourism that serves affluent and knowledgeable visitors who are likely to visit other cultural attractions in the region during their festival stay. Accordingly, destination marketers and festival organizers need to ensure that not only the program itself but also facilities and services in the film festival destination are capable of accommodating and satisfying visitor needs. The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the overall competitiveness of the major six international film festivals in Korea using the constructs of program quality, service quality and visitor satisfaction. Specifically, this study aims to 1) identify the underlying dimensions of service quality in the film festival context, 2) examine the relationships among program quality, service quality, and visitor satisfaction, and 3) compare visitor satisfaction through service quality assessment between the local resident and non-resident visitors.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as part of an evaluation of the six major international film festivals in Korea, which are, in part, funded by the government. Data were collected at those six major international film festivals. A visitor survey covering a broad range of topics was conducted on each festival site throughout the year beginning with the “Women’s Film Festival in Seoul” in April 2007. The last visitor survey was completed with the “Pusan International Film Festival” held from October 4 through 12, 2007. Eight interviewers were trained to intercept film festival attendees at various points within the festival area using a convenience sampling. Two-hundred self-administered questionnaires were distributed at each festival site that totaled 1,200 questionnaires for the whole project. The study included a total of 1,061 usable questionnaires after excluding insufficient responses.

Based on the prior research and interviews with the film critics and film festival programmers, 20 items were developed to measure the service quality of the film festivals. Respondents were instructed to rate the items using a five point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Data analysis involved three steps. First, demographic and socio-economic variables were analyzed for the total sample to understand the overall profile of the sample of film festival visitors in Korea. Second, to identify the underlying dimensions of service quality in the film festival context, principle component

factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed. Finally, multiple regression analyses were employed to examine the relationships among program quality, service quality, and visitor satisfaction as well as to see the differences between residents and non-residents with regard to their visitor satisfaction through service quality assessment.

FINDINGS

About 64 percent of the respondents were female and more than two-thirds (70%) were ranged in age between 20 and 29; a majority (96.2%) of the respondents were under 40 years of age. About 60 percent of the respondents were students and 73 percent of them were local residents. Over half (57.8%) were the first time visitors. The principal component factor analysis identified five factors as most important factors of service quality within the film festival: information service, auxiliary amenities (i.e., other events or a variety of souvenirs), quality of facilities, program quality, and accessibility. These factors accounted for 62 percent of the total variance. Criteria such as eigenvalues in excess of 1.0, scree test, and easiness of interpretation suggest that five dimensions appropriately represent service quality in a film festival context. The Bartlett test of sphericity indicated that the data were appropriate for factor analysis with $\chi^2 = 7,531.693$, $p < 0.000$. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the scale was 0.88, indicating a high reliability of items. Reliability of the items consisted of each factor identified by factor analysis was also tested. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.64 to 0.85, indicating a high reliability of items that consisted of each dimension.

Based on the five underlying dimensions of service quality within the film festival, multiple regression analysis was employed to understand the relationships between visitor satisfaction and five underlying dimensions of service quality. The regression model was significant at $p < .001$, and the five factors explained 40% of the overall visitor satisfaction. The beta coefficients revealed that all factors positively affected the visitor satisfaction. Among the five dimensions, program quality and information service turned out to be the most influential factors on the visitor satisfaction followed by quality of facilities, accessibility, and auxiliary amenities (i.e., other events, a variety of souvenirs, and quality of souvenirs)".

Table 1. Regression Analysis for Visitor Satisfaction and Dimensions of Service Quality

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	3.603	.022			.000*
Information Service	.329	.022	.349	14.729	.000*
Auxiliary Amenities	.204	.022	.216	9.125	.000*
Quality of Facilities	.242	.022	.257	10.846	.000*
Program Quality	.330	.022	.350	14.780	.000*
Accessibility	.214	.022	.227	9.590	.000*
R ² =0.405 df=5 F=143.115 p<.000					

To compare the visitor satisfaction through service quality assessment between the local residents and non-resident visitors, two regression models for resident versus non-resident were performed. Notably, there were significant differences between resident and non-resident visitors with regards to the service quality dimensions that influenced the visitor satisfaction. The visitor satisfaction among the resident group was strongly influenced by the

information service dimension while the most influential factor on the visitor satisfaction among the non-resident group was the quality of facilities.

Table 2. Regression Models for Visitor Satisfaction by Residents and Non-Residents

Variables	Residence	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	R	3.640	.025			.000*
	NR	3.566	.055			.000*
Information Service	R	.383	.025	.421	15.55	.000*
	NR	.186	.048	.188	3.84	.000*
Auxiliary Amenities	R	.204	.024	.226	8.35	.000*
	NR	.206	.049	.202	4.15	.000*
Quality of Facilities	R	.184	.024	.204	7.55	.000*
	NR	.379	.056	.330	6.76	.000*
Program Quality	R	.331	.025	.361	13.35	.000*
	NR	.338	.047	.348	7.13	.000*
Accessibility	R	.204	.025	.220	8.11	.000*
	NR	.225	.049	.225	4.63	.000*
R ² =0.442 df=5		F=121.35	p<.000 (Resident model)			
R ² =0.351 df=5		F=30.202	p<.000 (Non-resident model)			

APPLICATION OF RESULTS

With a growing popularity of film festival tourism, many destination marketers are investing significant tax dollars without evaluating the overall competitiveness of the festivals. Five underlying dimensions of service quality identified in this study can be a useful guideline for destination marketers considering support for the film festival tourism in their areas. The results of the study are consistent with the previous studies in that program quality is an important factor to the success of the film festivals overall. The results of the study suggest, however, that program quality is not a most decisive factor in satisfying all types of visitors. Visitors who came from the outside region considered the quality of facilities as the vital factor to their satisfaction. It indicates that the film festival tourism destinations that want to attract more out-of-region visitors should ensure and improve the visitor facilities before they plan a film festival in their destination. On the other hand, if the main purpose of the film festival is to serve local residents, festival organizers and destination marketers should focus more on the information service including promotion of the event to the locals as well as signage, brochures, and event staff training.

CONCLUSION

Events and festivals become more and more popular and crucial to many destinations as ways to diversify their marketing strategies in order to enhance visitor experiences as well as to attract more visitors. Nonetheless, there seems to be naïve belief that introduction of new event or festival would bring in more visitors and would lead to the festival success. But, success of the film festivals should not be taken for granted without considering how service quality is assessed by visitors and affects their overall satisfaction with these events. In his

study of 'why festivals fail', Getz (2002) pointed out that inattention to program or service quality is one of important factors that attribute to the failure of the event or festival. Substantively, high program quality and service quality is necessary for achieving film festival visitor satisfaction and for the festival success overall. Ultimately, satisfied visitors, whether with programming or destination, are good for future business both for the festival and the destination. However, it is notable that there are multi-dimensions of service quality of the film festivals and different dimensions are compliant with different visitor needs.

While program and service quality is certainly a necessary condition for a satisfying experience for film festival visitors, high service quality per se is not a sufficient condition for a festival success. It is more important to deliver high quality service venues that satisfy the needs of the target audience. Adequate and advance planning and marketing can assure to define the main objectives of a film festival (i.e., whether it is for local residents or for more out-of-region visitors) and, accordingly, to provide better strategies to reach out to the target audience as well as to satisfy their specific needs (Getz 2002). Especially, destinations that want to host a film festival in their region should consider what they want to achieve through the festival prior to creating or supporting it. Failure or success of the film festival tourism depends not only on the high quality of program or service but also on the delivery of the high quality service attributes pertaining to the specific visitor needs.

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