

BENEFITS RECEIVED AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS OF FESTIVAL VISITORS IN RELATION TO DISTANCE TRAVELLED AND THEIR ORIGINS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined behavioural intentions of visitors to a rural festival as well as the relationship between behavioural intentions of festival visitors and benefits they receive from attendance in relation to their origins and the distance they travel to the festival. The results were based on 413 questionnaires. A factor analysis generated three factors: the history appreciation benefit, the socialization benefit, and the enjoyment benefit. The respondents rated the enjoyment benefit the highest, followed by the socialization benefit, and history appreciation. Pearson's correlations showed that distance travelled had a significant negative correlation with visitors' intention to attend the festival again. Distance travelled did not have any significant correlations with visitors' word-of-mouth intentions, and the benefits they received. ANOVA tests were conducted to examine whether benefits received and behavioural intentions were demonstrated differently among visitors from different origins. ANOVA tests indicated that the socialization benefit for the local residents was significantly higher among residents than non-residents. The study provided a more thorough understanding of additional factors that may affect behavioural intentions of festival visitors, which may help festival organizers better understand visitors' behaviour and their behavioural intentions.

KEYWORDS

Behavioural intentions, festivals, visitor behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Goldblatt (2002, p.1) defined festivals as a "Kaleidoscope of planned culture, sport and political and business occasions: from mega-events like Olympics and world fairs to community festivals; from programs of events at parks and attractions to visits by dignitaries and intergovernmental assemblies; from small meetings and parties to huge conventions and competitions."

Festivals are unique tourist attractions (Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2004). While they have historic roots from long ago, they have enjoyed a tremendous growth in popularity in recent years, especially as a result of increasing cost of motor vehicle fuel keeping travellers closer to their home towns. While they are frequently conducted

in urban areas, festivals have become an important tourism resource for rural areas. Rural festivals provide important leisure-time outlets for people living in these communities.

Festivals boost the development of cultural tourism to host communities (Raj, 2003). Festival organizers use cultural and historical themes to develop annual events to attract visitors. Such festivals provide opportunities for the local community to share their culture and community development with visitors. Furthermore, they help the local community to develop its own identity.

The purpose of this study was to discover behavioural intentions of visitors to a rural festival in relation to their origins and the distance they travel to festivals. Specifically, there were two hypotheses for this study: (1) Distance travelled is significantly correlated with behavioural intentions; (2) There are no significant differences in the benefits received among visitors from different origins.

It is important for festival organizers to have a clear understanding that participants in their festival actually do perceive the benefits they intend to provide, a certain measure of future behavioural intention. Are the benefits perceived by the potential participant great enough to continue attracting visitors from a distance, to mobilize their intention to participate? Perhaps this would be one true measure of predicting a successful event. Many researchers have examined festivals from the perspective of benefits. This study looked at the relationship between benefits, distance travelled by participants, and their behavioural intentions.

This study was conducted at the 27th annual "Fair Grove Heritage Reunion", held in the community of Fair Grove (est. population 1,000) in Fall 2004, about 15 miles northeast of metropolitan Springfield, Missouri. The last weekend of each September, an estimated 45,000 people descend upon the community for two days. The event, which has a "turn-of-the-20th-century" theme, began in 1977 to preserve and celebrate the farming heritage of the community. The festival has a blend of music and entertainment, food, games, crafts and old-time demonstrations, including threshing, working draft horses and mules, blacksmithing, bobbin-lacing, horse-shoeing, leather carving and more. There are tours and demonstrations at the historic Wommack Mill, the festival centrepiece, which is one of the only two steam-powered grist mills still standing in the United States.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Behavioural Intentions

Behavioural intentions is "defined as a perceived notion between oneself and some action" (Jaccard & King, 1977). Behavioural intentions always refer to future behaviour and often correlate with overt behaviour (Fishben & Ajzen, 1975). Conceptual models have been proposed to determine factors that affect behavioural intentions. According to Fishbein's model, attitude toward behaviour and perceived notion of what other people think of that behaviour determine one's behavioural intention (Fishbein, 1963; Fishben & Ajzen, 1975). Additionally, Ajzen & Madden (1986) proposed that other than the above two factors, there may be a third, "perceived behavioural control" that will affect one's behavioural intention. Perceived behavioural control could include certain internal factors such as knowledge and planning as well as external factors such as time and opportunity. Perceived behavioural control influences behaviour both directly and indirectly through an independent effect on behavioural intention (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). "The more it is perceived that the behaviour in question is not under control, the more it is expected that a direct link between perceived behavioural control and behaviour, not mediated by intention, will be present" (Kouthouris & Spontis, 2005).

Research on behavioural intentions has focused on its relationship with service quality and customer satisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Burns, Graefe, & Absher, 2003; Kouthouris & Konstantinos Alexandris, 2005; Cole & Illum, 2006). Previous research has demonstrated a connection between overall guest satisfaction and intention to return to the destination (Baker and Crompton, 2000). There are few

studies on how other factors, such as benefits, travel distance and place of origin influence behavioural intentions of visitors.

Travel Distance

There are two important theories that can help to predict how much distance tourists will travel to destinations. One theory is the distance decay theory. The idea of distance decay was first proposed by Losch (1954). According to the distance decay theory, whether a consumer chooses to purchase a product or not depends not only on the price of the product, but also the cost of travel to access the product (Losch, 1954). The distance decay theory predicts that demand will peak at some distance relatively close to a source market and then decline exponentially as distance increases (McKercher & Lew, 2003). Spatial barriers such as travel distance is recognized as one of the constraints for people participating in leisure activities (Hinch et al, 2005).

Another theory is the gravity model. According to the gravity model, the relative strength of bond between two places is determined not only by the distance between the two places, but also the population of both places (Haynes, Kingsley & Fotheringham, 1984). The gravity model takes into account the population size of two places and the distance between them when predicting how much distance people are willing to travel from one place to another. Such distance may include actual distance as well as driving or flight time. The gravity model has been applied extensively to examine changes in trade flows, tourist flow models, urban planning, GIS, marketing, etc. (Bergstrand, 1985; Bukenya & Labys, 2005; Randall et al, 2006).

Some evidence suggests travel distances may vary according to the type of activity in which people participate (Lentnek, Van Doran & Trail, 1969; Lentnek, Harwitz & Narula, 1981). Demographic factors such as gender, income and other social economic factors also affect the travel distance to a destination (Bagely & Mokhtarian, 2002; Gollege & Stimson, 1997).

Understanding how the proximity of tourist destinations affects behavioural intentions of tourists is important because it helps to identify barriers that prevent tourists from traveling to destinations. For example, extensive travel distances to no-cost and natural attractions is likely to reduce frequent use because of the expense and inconvenience. The relationship is complex though (Garling & Golledge, 1993). Other than travel distance, behavioural intentions are affected by many other demographic factors. For example, behavioural intentions are affected by both the location and the activity undertaken at that location. If the activities are attractive or important to travellers, they may overcome the distance barrier to return to tourist destinations. "The desire to undertake an activity combined with demographic attributes of the traveler might be sufficient to overcome distance such that an individual is prepared to travel to destinations outside their local neighborhood" (McCormack et al, 2006).

Benefits of Festivals

Research on the benefits of festivals is abundant (Besculides, Lee & McCormic 2002; Crompton & McKay, 1994; Esman, 1984; Gartner & Holecek, 1983; Kim et al, 1998; King, Pizam & Milman, 1993; Milman & Pizam, 1988; Thrane, 2002; Uysal & Gitelson, 1994; Walo, Bull & Green, 1996). Among them, there was a considerable focus on economic benefits of festivals for the destination (Crompton & McKay, 1994; Esman, 1984; Gartner & Holecek, 1983; Kim et al, 1998; Thrane, 2002; Uysal & Gitelson, 1994; Walo, Bull & Green, 1996). It should be noted that for some festivals in rural communities, this impact might be limited and relatively small (Chhabra, Sills & Cabbage, 2003). Chhabra, Sills & Cabbage (2003) suggested that the magnitude of the economic impact of festivals in rural communities depends on the characteristics of the festival such as the length of the festival as well as factors in the local economy such as other visitor attractions in the community.

Research also showed that festivals also have many social impacts on a community (King, Pizam & Milman, 1993; Milman & Pizam, 1988). Folklore festivals, for example, are commonly seen in rural communities. They help to conserve cultures and revitalize traditions (Besculides, Lee & McCormic 2002; Esman 1984). Festivals also play a significant role in the lives of people in a community because they provide important activity outlets for both locals and visitors as leisure pursuits (Getz, 1993). Festivals help build social cohesion by reinforcing ties within a community (Durkheim, 1965; Rao, 2001; Turner, 1982).

Other than entertainment, Rao (2001) suggests that festivals provide a specific time and place for families to demonstrate their commitment to their community. By participating in festivals, families can interact with other families in a mutually enjoyable environment, allowing them to develop strong relationships with one another (Rao, 2001).

Festivals as tourist attractions provide personal benefits such as new or increasing recreational opportunities for families, individuals and communities (Allen et al, 1993; Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2004). Festivals provide excitement, fun, and great cultural entertainment for people in the community. Festivals provide an opportunity to involve people in community activities who haven't previously been active. "Festivals are often intimately related to maintenance and celebration of community values and, ultimately, to their survival" (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002, p. 327). In fact, in the case of small festivals, a local identity is often the most important outcome (De Bres & Davis, 2001).

The benefits that visitors enjoy at destinations will affect behavioural intentions. Research has shown that effective communication of the promised benefits and the ability of the destination to deliver the benefits by the experiences provided will increase the chances that visitors will return to a destination (Petrick, 2004.).

METHODOLOGY

To develop the survey instrument and identify potential benefits a festival offers, a focus group was conducted with 34 people in a neighbouring rural community festival who organize festivals similar to that staged in Fair Grove (See appendix for survey instrument). Over the two days of the Fair Grove festival, questionnaires were distributed to festival participants at a major picnic area/outdoor food court in the park where the event was held. This location was a major crossroads for those attending. Festival attendees were approached by survey interviewers and invited to voluntarily complete the questionnaire on site. They were also offered a chance to win a cash-prize drawing of \$100 as an incentive to complete the survey for the historical society sponsoring the festival. A total of 413 questionnaires were completed by attendees.

Festival attendees' future behavioural intentions were measured by three items (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). Respondents were asked to report their likelihood of saying positive things about the festival, encourage others to come to the festival, and whether they planned to return to the festival in future years on a 7-point scale, with 1 = not at all likely to 7 = extremely likely (See appendix).

Zip codes of visitors' current hometowns were solicited to determine the origins of the festival attendees. Since Fair Grove is a rural community that is outside of a metropolitan city - Springfield, visitors' origins were categorized into three groups: local residents (Fair Grove), Springfield (the third largest cities nearby) residents, and visitors from other origins. The respondents were also asked to report the mileage they travelled in order to participate in this festival.

RESULTS

Respondent Profiles

Table 1 depicts the responses describing guest profiles in terms of distance travelled, group size, number of visits over the years, and the number of total hours these guests visited the event this year. Results showed

that most visitors were not local residents, but residents of nearby communities. Among the 413 surveys returned, only 71 (17.1%) indicated that they were locals. Most visitors came to the festival in groups, most likely with family and/or friends. They were repeat visitors (81.1%) this year and spent at least a half-day at the festival on average. A little over half of the respondents (51.1%) reported that they were attending the festival all day, while 41.5% of them attended the festival only in the afternoon. The average travel distance was 52 miles.

Table 1: General Profile of Respondents

	Mean	SD
Miles visitors travelled	52.62	215.25
Number of visitors in group	4.24	2.87
Number of visits	7.42	5.91
Number of hours for visits	5.58	3.94

Benefits of Festivals

With the data collected at Fair Grove's festival, a factor analysis was conducted on 19 items to examine the dimension of the benefit scale. The principal component analysis with oblimin rotation generated three factors. The factor loading of the items are displayed in Table 2. The first factor contained nine items addressing the history appreciation benefit; the second factor included five items concerning the socialization benefit; and the third factor involved five items on the enjoyment benefit. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each sub-scale and the reliabilities for history appreciation, socialization and enjoyment were .91, .79 and .76, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Factor Analysis of Benefit Scale

	Cronbach's alpha
History appreciation	.91
Socialization	.79
Enjoyment	.76

The mean scores of the benefits enjoyed by participants are reported in Table 3. Respondents rated the enjoyment benefit the highest, followed by the socialization benefit and history appreciation benefit (1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree).

Table 3: Respondents Rating on Benefit

	Mean	SD
Enjoyment	6.03	.88
Socialization	5.89	.92
History appreciation	5.35	1.10

Visitors' Behavioural Intentions: Ranking Order of Behavioural Intentions

The mean scores of visitors' future behavioural intentions are shown in Table 4. Respondents were very likely to say positive things about the festival, encourage friends to come to the festival, and they were very likely to return to visit the festival again themselves (1 being not at all likely, 7 being extremely likely).

Table 4: Behavioural Intentions of Respondents

	Mean	SD
Say positive things	6.27	.90
Visit again	6.48	.85
Encourage friends and relatives	6.35	1.02
Will not come back	2.48	2.37

Relationship between Behavioural Intention and Distance Travelled

To examine whether distance was a factor influencing the benefits received and visitors' behavioural intention, Pearson's correlations were conducted between distance travelled and benefits received. Results of Pearson's correlations are shown in Table 5. Distance travelled had a significant negative correlation with visitors' intention to attend the festival again ($r = -.156$). The longer visitors had to travel, the less likely they would return in future years. Distance travelled did not have any significant correlation with visitors' word-of-mouth intentions. Pearson's correlations were also conducted between distance travelled and the benefits visitors enjoyed. No significant relations were found between these two factors.

Table 5: Correlations of Behavioural Intentions and Distance Travelled

Behavioural Intentions	Say positive things	Visit again	Encourage friends	Will not come back
Travel Miles	-.062	-.156(**)	-.067	.023
Sig. (2-tailed)	.230	.002	.196	.676
N	375	379	379	340

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

Benefits Received among Visitors from Different Origins

ANOVA tests were conducted to examine whether benefits received and behavioural intentions were different among visitors from different origins. In Table 6, results of the ANOVA tests indicated that among the five factors of Socialization benefit, four showed significant differences among local visitors, Springfield visitors and visitors from other origins.

The mean scores for the local residents among Socialization benefits were higher than those for visitors from Springfield and visitors from other origins (Table 7). No significant differences were found among visitor groups in the other two major categories of benefits, enjoyment benefit and history appreciation benefit. No significance was found among the different visitor groups in terms of their behavioural intentions.

Table 6: ANOVA Analysis on Benefits Received Among Visitors from Different Origins

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Be around people	Between Groups	5.298	1	5.298	4.928	.027*
	Within Groups	433.285	403	1.075		

	Total	8.583	404			
Talk to other people	Between Groups	7.556	1	7.556	6.086	.014*
	Within Groups	505.324	407	1.242		
	Total	512.880	408			
Meet new people	Between Groups	10.605	1	10.605	5.212	.023*
	Within Groups	826.039	406	2.035		
	Total	836.645	407			
Get together with friends	Between Groups	23.898	1	23.898	13.190	.000*
	Within Groups	735.622	406	1.812		
	Total	759.520	407			
Be with people who share similar interests and values	Between Groups	.365	1	.365	.257	.613
	Within Groups	575.492	405	1.421		
	Total	575.857	406			

*Significance level at .05

DISCUSSION

As indicated earlier, most visitors to this rural festival were not local (Fair Grove) residents, but visitors from outside of the small town. However, they were not long distance travellers either. Most likely they were visitors from nearby communities. This indicates that although small-scale rural heritage tourist activities such as the rural festival in this study may not necessarily attract a tremendous number of long distance travellers, they could still attract a large number of visitors from outside the community, especially those from nearby communities.

Most visitors came to the festival in groups, most likely with family and/or friends. This demonstrates the probability that rural community festivals are attended by a group displaying participation routine. Most were repeat visitors from previous years and they spent a fair amount of time at the festival, indicating that this festival has maintained high quality that continues to attract return visitors over time. Among the benefits expressed by this festival's visitors, although both local and non-local visitors reported socialization, enjoyment, and history appreciation benefits, the results showed a slight difference of opinions between local visitors and non-local visitors. For local visitors, socializing with family and friends was the most important reason they participated in the festival. On the other hand, for non-local visitors, enjoying the festival itself appeared to be the major purpose. In other words, for local visitors, the festival is more of a leisure venue to spend quality time with family and friends. What the festival is all about in the minds of the organizers may not necessarily be the most important reason for locals to attend. What matters most is that this festival provides them with an occasion for leisure activity with other locals. On the contrary, for non-locals, the reason they travelled a certain distance was for the festival itself. In this case, it is to attend a folklore festival which focuses on history appreciation. This festival may only attract people from greater distances who have

such an interest. People who are not interested in folklore and history may not be willing to travel to come to such a festival.

Table 7: Differences between Locals and Non-locals on Benefits Received

		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
		Lower Bond	Upper Bound
Be around people	Local	6.20	6.64
	Non-local	6.00	6.23
Talk to other people	Local	6.09	6.55
	Non-local	5.83	6.08
Meet new people	Local	5.44	6.08
	Non-local	5.18	5.49
Get together with friends	Local	6.26	6.73
	Non-local	5.70	6.01
Be with people who share similar interests and values	Local	5.60	6.28
	Non-local	5.74	6.99

Statistical results of the relationship between distance and behavioural intentions showed that behavioural intentions correlated with overt behaviour. Overt behavioural intention refers the actual return intention. This was demonstrated in the results showing that distance travelled had a significant negative correlation with visitors' intention to visit the festival again. Distance could be one of the "perceived behavioural control" factors that prevents people from coming back in future years. Furthermore, behavioural intentions did not correlate with non-overt behaviour, as shown in the results that distance travelled, did not have any significant correlation with visitors' word-of-mouth intentions. In other words, even though some visitors will not be visiting this festival again because of the travel distance required, they may still encourage their friends or other family members to attend this festival in the future if they had positive experiences at the festival. Distance travelled did not have significant correlation with benefits received.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research supported benefits of festivals stated in past literature. Festivals, such as folklore festivals commonly seen in rural communities, help to preserve and revitalize local cultures and traditions, provide important leisure activity outlets, build social cohesion and provide opportunities for families to strengthen relationships with one another.

The results of this study showed that the festival in this rural community mostly attracted visitors from outside the host community. Therefore, such festivals could be tourist attractions for a rural community as an economic resource for that community. Future research may focus on this issue. The results of this research also validated the theory that behavioural intentions usually correlate with overt behaviour.

In conclusion, this study examined behavioural intentions of visitors to a rural festival as well as the relationship between behavioural intentions of festival visitors and benefits they receive from attendance in

relation to their origins and the distance they travel to a festival. Different from previous studies focusing on service quality, satisfaction, or value and the relationship of these variables with behavioural intentions, this study provided a more thorough understanding of additional factors that may affect behavioural intentions of festival visitors. This knowledge may help festival organizers to better understand visitors' behaviour and their behavioural intentions.

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