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# A review of festival visitors' motivation<sup>3</sup>

Abstract: To develop an effective festival marketing strategy it is imperative for festival organizers to understand the underlying motivational domains that lead visitors' decision to attend a festival. In order to obtain deeper insight into visitors' motivation, this study provides a review of existing research on festival visitors' motivation. Findings of this qualitative research indicate apparent similarity of motivational domains across different cultural settings and types of events. However, previous studies indicate differences in terms of the relevance of the dimensions of motivation, dependent upon sociodemographic characteristics of visitors, type of event and previous visitations, indicating the importance of more thorough understanding of the driving forces underlying visitors' behaviour in the context of a particular event.

Keywords: festival visitors, motivational domains

# 1. Introduction

Over previous three decades a number and diversity of festivals and special events have enormously increased. Festivals and special events are considered as a wave of alternative tourism which brings about a number of tangible and intangible benefits and contribute to the sustainable development of a hosting community (Chang, 2006; Yolal et al., 2012). They have increased worldwide due to numerous economic, socio-cultural and political implications for hosting communities. Festivals and special events are increasingly being used as instruments to promote tourism potential and boost regional economy (Chang, 2006). They increase shopping and employment opportunites and as such are regarded as revenue-generating occasions for host communities (Yolal et al., 2012). They are particularly recognized as a viable basis for long-term economic vitality of small communities (Kim et al., 2002). Festivals and special events are likely to build social cohesion and trust within host communites, contribute to the renewal of community pride and help building a positive image in the minds of visitors (Kim et al., 2002; Lee, Beeler, 2009). Festivals and events help preserve the local culture, foster cultural and social life in host communities, provide additional recreational opportunities for residents and stimulate urban regeneration and the development of host communities (Devesa et al., 2015; Duran, Hamarat, 2014; Yolal et al., 2009). However, literature has also indicated that festivals and events might contribute to negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts, putting pressure on local services and facilities, causing crowd and traffic congestion, crime and even commodification of culture (Yolal et al., 2012). Due to a number of expected benefits, festival-related issues have been increasingly drawing the attention of academia and practitioners.

Motivation to attend festivals is one of the most extensively researched area within the festival and events literature (Getz, 2010). According to Crompton and McKay (1997), more thorough understanding of festival visitors' motivation is a key to profound understanding of visitors' decision-making process. Identification of festival visitors' motivation is a necessary precondition for effective development of festival programme and activities and effective development of marketing and management strategies. Moreover, the fulfillment of festival visitors' motivation leads to their satisfaction, which is a prerequisite for visitors' future attendance of the festival. Therefore, it is imperative for festival organizers to understand visitors' underlying motivations, especially as, due to rising competitive pressures, successful hosting of festivals and their survival and financial viability are dependent upon attracting visitors beyond the immediate local area (Kim et al., 2002). Knowing visitors' motivation allows festival organizers to intervene more successfully at various points of visitors' decision-making process, adjust festival offering to visitors' preferences and consequently attract more visitors, get them to stay longer and deliver higher levels of satisfaction to attendees

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(Dewar et al. 2001). More thorough understanding of festival visitors' motives vields decisions regarding promotional campaigns and organizational and marketing expenditures which are more consistent and effective. According to Yolal et al. (2012) effective festival marketing is impossible without a thorough understanding of what motivates visitors to attend a particular festival. Better understanding of attendees' motivation has the potential to explain perceived impacts of a festival, such as social costs, community benefits, new opportunities and individual benefits, on a hosting community (Woosnam et al., 2016). Building upon the knowledge of visitors' motivation and the impact of the domains of motivation on socio-cultural implications of a festival may provide for a proactive festival organizers a solid knowledge base for the formulation of policies which would ensure that the benfits and opportunities are realized by the residents of a host community. According to Baker and Draper (2013), besides understanding visitors' motivation and the importance of various motivational attributes, it is also important to obtain deeper knowledge of festival attendees' post-visitation perceptions related to the fulfillment of motivational attributes, as by assessing the gaps between the importance of motivational attributes and visitors' perceptions of the fulfillment of these attributes festival organizers can better plan their festivals in the future and cater to the exact needs of festival attendees. Therefore, this paper set out to explain why people attend festivals and what drives them to make their choices and decisions in festival-attendance.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Motives are the driving forces of human behavior. They can be explained as internal psychological factors, i.e. unsatisfied needs which generate a state of tension or disequilibrium which arouses, directs and integrates a person's behavior (Yolal et al., 2012). Central to many studies concerning festival visitors' motivation to attend an event is the notion of push–pull factors (Crompton, McKay, 1997) and Iso-Ahola's (1982) escape-seeking dichotomy. In accordance with push-pull framework, festival attendance may be motivated by individual's intrinsic psychological benefits and their intention to escape some life aspects, as well as they can be pulled to attend an event by some external force, i.e. something attractive related to the festival or its venue. According to Iso-Ahola's (1982) escape-seeking dichotomy festival visitation is motivated by the interplay of these two forces. Whereas seeking motivations imply a search for something new, or a personal or interpersonal reward, escape motivations imply an individual's desire to leave behind its personal or interpersonal environment (Baker, Draper, 2013).

Among the earliest research on festival visitors' motivation Mohr et al. (1993) examined visitors' motivation in the context of a hot air balloon festival held annually in South Carolina. Their findings showed that socialization, family togetherness, excitement, escape and event novelty were the most common domains of visitors' motivation. The authors further explored the differences among first-time and repeat visitors in terms of the importance of motivational domains, demographic characteristics and levels of satisfaction, arriving at the conclusion that first-time and repeat visitors differed in terms of excitement and event novelty, whereas no statistically significant differences were revealed among these two groups of visitors according to age, gender, marital status, income and education. According to this study significantly more satisfied were repeat visitors of the hot air balloon festival in comparison with the first-time visitors. Similarly, McDowall (2010) in the context of a religious festival held in southern Thailand identified four dimensions of visitors' motivation, such as friend/family togetherness, excitement, event novelty and escape. The study further revealed differences between residents and non-residents in regard to the importance of motivational domains, major sources of information they used to find out about the festival and their performance ratings of the festivals and levels of satisfaction. Arguably one of the most frequently cited instrument used to measure festival visitors' motivation is Crompton and McKay's (1997) 28-item scale, which by means of exploratory factor analysis yielded the following seven domains of festival visitors' motivation: cultural exploration, novelty/regression, recover equilibrium, known-group socialization, external interaction/socialization, and gregariousness. The authors have also provided evidence of the difference in importance of motivational domains among first-time and repeat visitors, which provides useful information to festival organizers in terms of adjusting festival programme and its activities to better fulfill the expectation of first-comers and at the same time retain repeat-visitors. This instrument has provided a guideline for a number of following explorations into the domains of festival visitors' motivation. Dewar et al.'s (2001) study in the context of the Harbin Ice Lantern and Snow Festival in China resulted in five dimensions of motivation, such as event novelty, escape, socialisation, family togetherness, excitement/thrills. Comparing the findings of this study to a similar research performed in North America and Jordan, the 158 ECIN 2017 authors further arrived to the conclusion that the instrument developed in one culture is applicable across different cultural settings and festivals, even though the events differ in terms of sophistication and marketing theme and that these dissimilarities, rather than the cultural context, may cause differences in relative importance of motivational domains and their content. Similarly, the diversity of visitors' motives across different festivals have been supported by Nicholson and Pearce (2001). The authors examined visitors' motives in the context of two food and wine-related festivals, the Marlborough Wine, Food and Music Festival and

the Hokitika Wildfoods Festival, an air show, Warbirds over Wanaka, and a country music festival in New Zealand. Their study revealed some similarity in motivational domains among comparable events. The application of principal component analysis in the context of the Marlborough Wine, Food and Music Festival resulted in the following four domains of motivation: event socialization, event novelty/uniqueness, escape and family. Factor analysis of motivational items in the context of the Hokitika Wildfoods Festival resulted in five dimensions of motivation which were respectively labeled as follows: event socialization, event novelty/uniqueness, entertainment/excitement/people, escape and family. Five domains of motivation resulted from the principal component analysis in the context of the air show, such as novelty/uniqueness, socialization, specifics, escape and family. The main reasons for attending the New Zealand Gold Guitar Awards, according to Nicholson and Pearce's (2001) study, were specifics/entertainment, escape, variety, novelty/uniqueness, family and socialization. Kim et al. (2006) in the context of the International Festival of Environmental Film and Video in Brazil identified five dimensions of visitors' motivation. They were labeled as family togetherness, socialization, site attraction, festival attraction and escape from routine. The study further indicated that although gender, level of education and household income of visitors did not have significant impact on motivation, younger visitors appraised escape from routine more than the older group of visitors, whereas the middle age visitors valued festival attraction significantly higher than the younger group. Lee and Beeler's (2009) study in the context of the 19th Annual Winter Festival in Florida indicated five domains of visitors' motivation, such as novelty, reminiscence, family togetherness, escape from boredom and fun with friends. Their study further provided evidence of a significant impact of reminiscence on visitors' satisfaction. In a recent study of visitors' motivation in the context of the International Troia Festival in Turkey, Duran and Hamarat (2014) identified six domains of motivation, such as cultural exploration, family togetherness, escape and excitement, novelty, event attractions and socialization. Their findings indicated significant differences in the domains of motivation on the basis of visitors' socio-demographic characteristics. Whereas family togetherness and cultural exploration were more important for female visitors, male visitors were more motivated by event attraction and escape and excitement. Devesa et al. (2015) explored visitors' motivation for attending an international film festival in Chile. Their findings showed that visitors were most commonly motivated by the search for novelty and new experiences, desire for leisure and entertainment and a chance to see something different from films available in the mainstream commercial cinemas. In the context of Eskisehir international arts festival Yolal et al.'s (2012) study revealed five domains of visitors' motivation, such as socialization, excitement, event novelty, escape and family togetherness. Their study further indicated significant differences in visitors' motivation with respect to different types of festival activities. Factor analysis of 28 motivational items in the context of aboriginal festivals yielded five dimensions of motivation, such as equilibrium recovery, festival participation and learning, novelty-seeking, socialization and cultural exploration (Chang, 2006). This study also revealed statistically significant differences in the importance of motivational domains among different segments of visitors. Investigating the underlying dimensions of visitors' motivation in the context of Fiesta Italiana, a cultural festival organized in Texas to educate attendees and maintain the Italian culture for Houstonians, Baker and Draper (2013) proposed a 20-item measurement instrument, which on the basis of principal component analysis yielded three dimensions of visitors' motivation, such as experiencing Italian culture, experiencing Italian products including food and wine and escape from daily life and experiencing something new. Whereas previous research mainly focused on the examination of motivation from the perspective of visitors, scarce empirical attempts have been undertaken to examine how festival and event organizers perceive visitors' motivation. Kim et al.'s (2002) study on a sample of festival organizers, by means of principal axis factoring, resulted in five dimensions of motivation which jointly accounted for 71% of the total variance in motivation. These five dimensions were labeled as social/leisure, event novelty, family togetherness, escape and curiosity.

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# 3. Methodology

In line with the main objective of this study, to present the findings of previous research attempting to probe into the underlying factors which drive festival visitors' behaviour and indicate directions for future research, this qualitative study has been based on the review of extant literature on festival attendees' motivation. Major academic databases have been the subject of enquiry, such as ScienceDirect, Sage Journals, Wiley Online Library, Emerald, Ingenta Connect, whereas the key terms for publication search have been festival, motives and motivation, placed in the abstract or publication title. This study has focused on papers published between 1993 and present, due to the evidence of a rising number of research papers dealing with the issue of visitors' motivation from the year of 1993. The search yielded 78 sources, published mainly in the following academic journals: Tourism Management, Annals of Tourism Research, Event Management, International Journal of Event and Festival Management, Festival Management & Event Tourism, Journal of Vacation Marketing, Journal of Convention & Event Tourism, Journal of Travel Research, International Journal of Event Management Research, etc. The relevance of festival-related discourses is clearly indicated by a number of journals specialized in festival and event-related issues.

# 4. Results and discussion

The main objective of this study was to present some of the key findings of extensive research which pertains to the issues of why people attend festivals and how they make their choices. Probing deeper into the underlying dimensions of motivation for attending a festival has become crucial, taking into consideration rising competitive pressures among festivals and tourism destinations. Several main reasons lie behind the necessity of discerning the most common motivational domains of festival attendance. Understanding visitors' motives is a key prerequisite to tailoring festival programme and activities to cater to the needs of key segments of festival visitors. Moreover, the fulfillment of visitors' motives is strongly related to their satisfaction and post-visitation behaviour, which is of particular relevance for the sustainability of festivals in nowadays stiff competitive battle. Identifying motivational domains underlying festival attendance and their relative importance is likely to facilitate effectiveness of festival organizers' marketing activities.

Review of extant literature indicates that although festival visitors' motives are likely to be multiple, they can be condensed into several motivational domains. In spite of the fact that motivational attributes and resulting domains of motivation to a certain extent varied across different studies, findings of reviewed studies mainly resulted in similar dimensions of motivation. Previous studies most commonly yielded five dimensions of motivation, such as novelty-seeking, socialization, family togetherness, escape and excitement. Previous studies also indicate differences in terms of relative importance of resulting motivational domains, even among similar types of events (Nicholson, Pearce, 2001). The importance of motivational domains also differed on the basis of previous visitations (Mohr et al., 1993), gender, age (Baker, Draper, 2013; Yolal et al., 2009), nationality (Baker, Draper, 2013) and other socio-demographic characteristics and behavioural patterns.

However, as even similar events resulted in slightly different motivational domains, festival organizers are advised to examine the domains of visitors' motivation and their relative importance taking into consideration the exact context of research. Knowledge of the underlying domains of motivation may be particularly useful for segmenting festival visitors and designing effective marketing activities. In addition to examining the importance of the domains of motivation, festival organizers are advised to measure visitors' perceptions of the fulfillment of motivational domains. Importance-performance analysis of visitors' motivation would be a valuable managerial instrument for bridging eventual negative gaps and improving competitive standing at the market.

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