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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE EFFECTS OF SERVICE QUALITY ON SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY: CASE OF A LOCAL FESTIVAL

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to identify the dimension of service; and to examine the relationships among service quality, satisfaction and loyalty to visit the local festival. It is hypothesized that service quality is related to satisfaction and loyalty, and satisfaction is related to loyalty. A total of 149 visitors completed the survey during the local festival in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The findings showed that festival attendees assigned a great deal of importance on service quality to predict satisfaction and future intention. Also, the results indicated that satisfaction was the important predictor of future intention. Further, the findings of the study would be particularly beneficial because it pinpoints what areas to improve to better serve people and helps better understand the festival attendees.

## INTRODUCTION

Festivals have seen large scale growth in quantity and variation over the past several decades (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004; Getz, 2008). Festivals improve a destination's image, build a positive relationship between hosts and guests, and provide festival attendees with opportunities for appreciating different values and cultures (Douglas & Derrett, 2001; Huang, Li, & Cai, 2010). Festivals also contribute to revitalize tourism and provide economic benefits to local communities (Choo & Park, 2017; Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003). In particular, local festivals are considered as significant instruments in local economic development in destination marketing and the selling of attractions and venues (Getz, 2010). They increase sustainable tourism by helping festival attendees learn about cultural heritages, local customs, and ethnic diversity (Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010). As more and more local communities desire to host festivals to attract visitors, the festival organizers should understand that the success of festival marketing should be directed to creating a long-term relationship with festival visitors. The popularity and the benefits of festival stimulated rapid growth of the body in festival marketing literature. Especially, service quality, satisfaction and loyalty have been recognized as a significant measure of the success of festivals. Various researchers investigated the role of loyalty and its relationship with factors such as quality and satisfaction (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Yoon et al., 2010; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Lee, 2014). Previous festival study also suggested that providing high quality of service is central to satisfying festival visitors' experience, which consequently leads to a positive

confirmation to loyalty in the festival setting (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Although a plethora of research has focused on the relationship among service quality, satisfaction and loyalty, little empirical study has been conducted to investigate the impact of service quality dimensions on satisfaction and loyalty. In order to better understand which factors contribute to festival loyalty, the current study examined the effect of service quality dimensions and satisfaction on loyalty in a small local community festival.

## Literature Review

**Service Quality:** Service quality have earned a substantial amount of attention in academic and practical fields because it is related to the success of the agency and, in turn, lead to profitability (Crompton & Love, 1995). One of the most researched subjects regarding service quality is the issue of measurement. Two major models have contributed to the measurement of service quality. First, service quality is conceptualized according to the disconfirmation paradigm (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) that separately measures customers' expectations and their perceptions after they experience the product or services. Based on the expectation-disconfirmation model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) developed the SERVQUAL model which measures service quality as the gap between consumer perception and expectation. On the other hand, another measure of service quality is the performance-only model (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) that does not agree the necessity of the expectation component.

INSTEAD of measuring the disconfirmation process, what is measured is simply the outcome of the evaluation process. Service quality in a festival setting has been investigated by Crompton and Love (1995). They measured festival quality with 22 quality attributes such as quality of food and beverages, feeling of safety, cleanliness of the festival sites etc. Later, Baker and Crompton (2000) used these quality attributes and generated four dimensions of festival quality: generic features, specific features, information sources, and comfort amenities. Subsequently, FESTPERF had adopted general SERVPERF attributes and generated three dimensions of festival quality: professionalism, environment, and core service (Tkaczynski & Stokes, 2010). Further, service quality was explained with tangible environmental cues such as convenience, staff, information, program content, facility, souvenir, and food (Lee et al., 2008). These seven dimensions appeared to define the festivalscape, which is “the general atmosphere experience by festival patrons” (Lee et al., 2008, p. 57). Afterwards, numerous researchers adopted the festivalscape to measure quality of various festival settings (Lee, Lee, & Choi, 2011; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Vesce & Botti, 2019).

**Satisfaction:** Similar to service quality, satisfaction has considered as a key concept in tourism and marketing discipline. It is defined as “the consumer’s fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or over-fulfillment” (Oliver, 1997, p. 13). It emphasized the customer’s emotional judgment as a conceptualization of satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is further explained with two perspectives: transaction-specific and cumulative (Anderson et al., 1994). Transaction-specific satisfaction means customers’ post evaluation to a specific product purchasing whereas cumulative consumer satisfaction is an overall experience of the total purchase. For example, festival satisfaction can be measured by each experience with programs, foods, staff, information, and souvenirs. (transaction-specific). On the other hand, festival satisfaction can be accessed by total enjoyment of the festival experience over time (cumulative). In general, cumulative satisfaction lies in the concept of overall satisfaction. Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky (1996) stated that overall satisfaction builds on the total subjective experience based upon the observations of both quality attribute and information. They conceptualized attribute satisfaction as “the consumer’s subjective satisfaction judgment resulting from observations of attribute performance” (p.17) and information satisfaction as “a subjective satisfaction judgment of the information used in choosing a product” (p.18). In this regard, most festival and tourism research indicated that overall visitor satisfaction is an adequate measure of the experience (Lee, Kyle, & Scott, 2012; Yoon, et al., 2010).

**Loyalty and its relation to Service quality and Satisfaction:** With the substantial increase in competition, maintaining and growing the number of visitors have become a crucial goal of festival organizations. The concept of loyalty embraces a wide range of meanings, producing various approaches. First, the behavioral definition of loyalty is customers’ repeat purchasing frequency or relative volume of same-brand purchasing over time (Tellis, 1988). Measurement of behavioral loyalty have included sequence of purchase patterns, proportion of product category purchases, probability of purchase patterns and other

factors. Second, the attitudinal definition of loyalty focuses on a customer’s preference and attitude toward the product (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978). It provided a better understanding of the underlying psychological phenomenon behind the behavior. Third, the conative definition of loyalty is a behavioral intention to repurchase the same brand product (Oliver, 1999). Behavioral intention have been often used as a measurement of loyalty because general repatronage intention are supposed to reflect the long-term concept of actual repeat behavior (Webster & Sundaram, 1998). In festival and tourism literatures, it is common to use behavioral intention and loyalty interchangeably (Choo, Ahn, & Petrick, 2016; Lee, et al., 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Yoon et al., 2010). Many researches have attempted to uncover the links among service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. As a behavioral consequence of future intention associated with service quality, Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) concluded that service quality influences behavioral intention which, in turn, affects actual behaviors. Further, Cronin and Taylor (1992) utilized a structural equation model to show that service quality and satisfaction influence future intention. In sum, the effects of service quality and satisfaction on loyalty, and the effect of service quality on satisfaction, have been empirically supported (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994).

In the festival literature, substantial amount of researches have been conducted to discuss the relationship among service quality, satisfaction and loyalty (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006; Lee & Beeler, 2007; Yoon, et al., 2010). Their findings were not different from the previous marketing literature. They all supported that service quality plays significant role in influencing satisfaction and loyalty. While most of studies focused on the paths among these factors, little attentions have made in looking at the effects of service quality dimensions on satisfaction and loyalty. The impact of different dimensions of service quality on satisfaction and loyalty can provide abundant merit to festival organizers which service dimensions should be emphasized to increase visitor satisfaction and repeat visits.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Data Collection:** International festival in Harrisonburg, Virginia had celebrated the cultural richness of the community over 20 years. The goal of the local festival is to revive local economy and promote city’s ethnic and linguistic diversity. It is a half-day festival that celebrates multicultural diversity of the community with various food and art-and-craft vendors, global village, and live entertainment. It is held in the neighborhood park and attracts approximately 10,000 visitors. Data was gathered on September, 2017 during the International Festival in Harrisonburg, Virginia. On-site interviews were conducted and the interview schedule was divided into five time slots to reduce sampling bias. A total of 149 festival visitors volunteered to complete it. Females comprised about 66 % of the sample while 34% were males. Approximately 51% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 30 years. About 62% of the respondents had earned a 4-year college degree or higher. About 60% of the respondents came to the festival as a group of two or three. Approximately half of the respondents indicated that they had attended the festival in the past. The sample was ethnically homogenous with 70% Caucasian respondents.

**Survey Instrument:** A two-page questionnaire was developed to examine service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty among the festival visitors. Items measuring service quality were adapted and modified from previous studies (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Crompton & Love, 1995). A total of 14 questions were used to evaluate service quality. Visitors' satisfaction was measured by three questions asking their overall satisfaction about the festival (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Howat, Murray, & Crilley, 1999). Finally, loyalty was measured with 3 questions regarding word of mouth and their willingness to come back (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998; Singh & Sirdeshmukh, 2000). All of the items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 equals "Strongly Disagree", 3 equals "Neither Agree nor Disagree", and 5 equals "Strongly Agree."

**Factor Analysis and Reliability:** First, an exploratory factor analysis extracted underlying factors of service quality. Four questions were dropped from the original 14 questions because of low loadings. Three factors of service quality emerged from the exploratory factor analysis. They were comfort amenities, information, and general features of service quality. Second, a reliability test was used to assess the internal homogeneity among variables. The results of the reliability analyses showed that all of the scales obtained acceptable Cronbach's alpha values. General features showed a reliability score of .86. Information and comfort amenities recorded a reliability value of .83 and .79 respectively. Further, satisfaction and loyalty showed a reliability score of .75 and .91 respectively.

## RESULTS

The results of the descriptive statistics showed that the respondents evaluated the quality of general features most positively. Mean values were ranged from 4.6 to 4.7. On the other hand, the mean values for comfort amenities were lower than other quality dimensions. Especially, the respondents' evaluation about parking availability was the lowest (mean = 3.9). The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that general features of service quality was the strongest predictor of satisfaction ( $b = .32, p < .01$ ). However, information and comfort amenities of service quality did not have significant effects on satisfaction.

Approximately, 32% of the variance in satisfaction was explained by three dimensions of service quality. The results also showed that general features of service quality was the most important indicator of loyalty ( $b = .37, p < .01$ ). In addition, comfort amenities of service quality was a significant factor to predict loyalty ( $b = .31, p < .05$ ). On the other hand, information dimension of service quality was not significantly related to loyalty. The findings reported that three dimensions of service quality explained 29% of the variance of loyalty. Finally, the results showed that the effect of satisfaction on loyalty was significant ( $b = .69, p < .001$ ) (Table 4). Overall, 47% of the variance in loyalty was explained by satisfaction.

**Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Sample**

		N	%
Gender	Male	95	33.6
	Female	48	66.4
Age	18 to 30	75	51.0
	31 to 40	24	16.3
	41 to 50	18	12.2
	51 to 60	22	15.0
	61 and above	8	5.4
Education	Less than high school	6	4.1
	High school graduate	50	34.0
	College graduate	54	36.7
	Master's, Doctorate, or Professional degree	37	25.2
Number of group	Came alone	20	13.5
	Two	58	39.2
	Three	30	20.3
	Four	18	12.2
	Five	11	7.4
	Six and above	11	7.4
Previous experience	Yes	72	48.6
	No	76	51.4
Race/Ethnicity	White or Caucasian	102	69.9
	Spanish, Hispanic or Latino	17	11.6
	Black or African American	11	7.5
	Asian or Pacific Islander	9	6.2
	Others	7	4.8

**Table 2 . Factor Loading, Reliabilities, Means, and Standard Deviation of Service Quality**

Definition Statement*	Loadings			Means	SD
	1	2	3		
General features					
Quality of food	.84			4.6	.63
Friendliness of the vendors	.81			4.8	.43
Visual appearance of the festival site	.79			4.6	.58
Feeling of safety at the festival	.76			4.8	.41
Cleanliness of the festival site	.72			4.7	.58
Information					
Information booths		.84		4.4	.88
Printed programs for schedule		.82		4.4	.88
Comfort amenities					
Number of places to sit and rest			.77	4.2	.84
Cleanliness of portable toilets			.74	4.2	.78
Availability of parking			.70	3.9	1.22
Eigen Value	8.06	2.05	1.43		
Variance Explained	47.41	12.07	8.45		
Reliability Coefficient	.86	.83	.79		

**Table 3. The effects of Service Quality on Satisfaction and Future Intention**

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	
	Satisfaction <i>b</i>	Future Intention <i>b</i>
Service Quality		
General features	.32**	.37**
Information	.21	-.03
Comfort amenities	.17	.31*
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.32	.29
F value	13.1***	11.82***

\**p*<.05 \*\**p*<.01 \*\*\**p*<.001**Table 4. The effect of Satisfaction on Future Intention**

Independent Variable	Future Intention <i>b</i>
Satisfaction	.69*
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.47
F value	121.71*

\**p*<.001

## Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to identify the dimensions of service quality; and to examine the relationships among service quality, satisfaction and loyalty to visit the festival. It was hypothesized that quality influence satisfaction and loyalty. Also, satisfaction was hypothesized to influence loyalty. There are several matters worth mentioning as far as the results are concerned. First, three dimensions of service quality were emerged based on the data collected in this study. Previous studies in the field of festival and tourism provided various dimensions of service quality such as the general service quality attributes (Baker & Crompton, 2000); combination of general SERVQUAL and festival specific attributes - FESTPERF (Tkaczynski & Stokes, 2010); environmental cues and features - festivalscape (Lee et al., 2008). The details of how festival quality has been operationalized are diverse among festival settings. Adopting the general service quality attributes to the local community festival, three dimensions of service quality appeared in this study. Especially, the respondents of this study evaluated general features of the festival most positively. Festival attendees expressed that they felt safe at the festival and the vendors were very friendly.

On the contrary, quality of comfort amenities such as parking, toilets, or number of rest areas were evaluated lower than other dimensions of quality. Second, the findings of this study confirmed the positive role of service quality on satisfaction. The results indicated that the level of satisfaction is based on the level of service quality provided. Among service quality dimensions, general features was the most significantly related to the prediction of satisfaction. The positive link between service quality and satisfaction might enlighten practitioners as to the successful way of developing strategies. In order to develop favorable emotional judgments among visitors, festival organizers should provide admirable levels of service quality. Especially, ensuring safety and cleanliness of festival sites, food quality, friendly attitude of vendors and staff should be delivered to the visitors adequately to heighten visitors' satisfaction. Third, the current study confirmed that the level of service quality influences the level of festival visitors' loyalty. Festival visitors who perceived high service quality were more likely to indicate that they would visit the festival again in the future and refer positive experience to others.

Among service quality dimensions, general features and comfort amenities were significant predictor of loyalty. That is, the festival attendees who perceived high service quality in food, safety, visual appearance of the site, cleanliness of the toilet and the site, and the number of rest areas were more likely to be loyal to the festival. Fourth, a significant relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is another important issue for practitioners. Even though festival managers assure the provision of excellent service quality, it would not necessarily guarantee that visitors would attend the festival again or deliver positive word-of-mouth testimony. If festival attendees are not satisfied with their experiences due to uncontrollable reasons such as bad weather, conflict with other people, or financial problems during the festival, it will significantly lower the level of overall satisfaction and lead to unfavorable loyalty.

Therefore, the best way to generate favorable loyalty would be to reinforce and develop positive satisfaction assessment (Brady & Robertson, 2001). Finally, this study offers suggestions for future research in terms of questions that remain to be addressed regarding research design and analysis of relationships. Even though the current findings are valuable, whether the results could be generalized to other festival context is uncertain. Studies regarding festival quality across different types of events have indicated that service quality studies could be event-specific because the nature of quality is highly related to a particular festival (Nicholson & Pearce, 2001). Different quality items and factors have been developed in various settings such as a corn festival (Uysal, Gahan, & Martin, 1993), a music festival (Bowen & Daniels, 2005), and a wine festival (Yuan & Jang, 2008). Given this fact, it is suggested that the future study should focus on the development of the service quality items specifically related to the nature of the local international festival. Additionally, it is advised to utilize a structural equation modeling to provide a comprehensive model. Since the purpose of the current study was to provide an evidence of the relationships between dependent and independent variables, the causal relationships among the factors were not examined. Future studies would benefit from using a structural equation modeling to estimate interrelated relationships.

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