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The Influence of Geographical Distance Groups (GDGs) on Visitor’s Information Sources and Motivations in Local Festival Settings

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THE INFLUENCE OF GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE GROUPS (GDGs) ON VISITOR'S INFORMATION SOURCES AND MOTIVATIONS IN LOCAL FESTIVAL SETTINGS

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Abstract
As an empirical study, a correspondence analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between geographical distance groups (GDGs) and (1) information sources, and (2) visitors’ motivation within the context of local festivals. A binary logistic analysis was then employed to identify the probability of higher satisfaction influenced by information sources, GDGs, and visitors’ motivations at local festivals. The results show that visitors’ information sources and motivations vary depending on GDGs. The study also reveals that information sources (i.e., TV and Word of Mouth) and GDGs are significant in predicting the likelihood of visitors’ higher satisfaction. The conclusions, implications and limitations were discussed in festival marketing.

Key Words: local festivals, geographical distance groups (GDGs), information sources, motivations, correspondence analysis, logistic regression analysis

Introduction
Among various sectors in tourism, events and festivals represent one of the largest elements of today’s tourism industry. Consequently, the recent promotional efforts of destination management organizations (DMOs) are more focused on local festivals with the realization that local festivals positively increase the image of destination and local economic growth (e.g., Delamere, 2001; Hingley, Boone, & Lindgreen, 2010; Felsentein & Fleischer, 2003). It has also been noted that festivals effectively convert potential visitors to actual visitors by providing local’s specialties such as culture, history, attractions, and products (McKercher et al., 2006). Considering the limitations of local festivals (e.g., limited geographical markets, limited budgets, limited media coverage), it is important for event practitioners to identify highly marketable geographic areas for better promotional strategies and budget allocations (Paul & Rimmawi, 1992). Previous studies have suggested that the optimal distance range of origins to the destination (e.g., Alexander, Lee, & Kim, 2011) and different types of motivations (e.g., Nicolau & Más, 2006) should be considered in marketing strategies from the geographical approach.

Despite the substantial amount of tourism studies that have focused on the effectiveness of travel information sources (e.g., Wendel & Dellaert, 2005), there is a relatively smaller amount research examining an integrated approach that encompasses information sources, motivations, and geographical distance. In terms of information sources, it has been suggested that destination choice would be determined by distance (e.g., Nicolau & Más, 2006), destination attraction (e.g., Perdue, 1986), personal characteristics such as motivations (activities) (e.g., Fesenmaier, 1988), and media channels (e.g., Kim, Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2006), all of which are positively associated with visitors’ satisfaction with a destination (Aktas, Aksu & Izel, 2007). In regard to motivations, a substantial study has attempted to investigate consumers’ consideration of media channels during different usage situations in economical convenience (Wendel & Dellaert, 2005). These findings suggest that individual visitors
tend to find travel related information mostly from their usable information sources. As a result, information sources, geographical distance, and individual motivations are significant factors in the destination choice, which determines a visitor’s satisfaction. With the recognition of these in destination choice, ultimately leading to visitors’ satisfaction, the aims of this study are: (1) to examine the relationship between geographical distance and information sources and visitor’s motivations within the context of local festivals; and (2) to identify the probability of high satisfaction influenced by information sources, GDG, and individual motivations within the context of the local festival.

Literature Review

The Impact of Local Festivals

Hosting a festival has revealed a number of benefits to the host community such as creating a positive economic impact, increasing community visibility, and enhancing community image. A substantial study has attempted to identify the effectiveness of local festivals in generating local economic growth (Hingley, Boone, & Lindgreen, 2010). Due to the positive economic impact of local festivals, festival organizers are primarily interested in implementing festivals that attract more visitors, focusing on a variety of themes such as music, food, wine, arts and crafts, and local traditions (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Mintel, 2010; Van Der Wagen & Carlos, 2005).

Geographical Distance, Information Sources and Motivations

In this study, distance is defined as the scope from the visitor’s origin to the destination (Nicolau & Más, 2006). In destination marketing, distance has been regarded as a significant factor determining destination choice (McKercher, Chan, & Lam, 2008). A substantial amount of tourism research has focused on the theory of distance decay while examining the optimal range of distance from origin in terms of the mobility of international travelers (McKercher, Chan, & Lam, 2008; Mckercher & Lew, 2003). Thus, distance may play an important role in the distribution of ideas, technology, population, time, and spatial interactions on various types of tourism behaviors.

It appears that information sources influence destination choice. According to Shank & Taylor (2004), the most common source of festival information would be a personal source such as word-of-mouth (WOM) across visitor groups. Their study also indicated that newspapers and radio were a significant information source in destination choice. A recent study found that the optimal range of distance would be from 150 to 200 miles in a geographical promotional approach when visitors travel from their origin to a festival destination (Alexander, Lee, & Kim, 2011). Considering the effect of information sources and distance on destination choices, this study posits that there will be certain relationships between the types of information sources (i.e., internet, newspapers, TV, radio, WOM and other) and the degree of geographical distance.

In terms of motivations linked to geographical distance, previous studies have focused on the variables of physical distance and the degree of destination attractiveness in predicting destination choice (e.g., Nicolau & Más, 2006; Perdue, 1986; Fesemmaier, 1988). Nicolau and Más (2006) found that tourist motivations, such as visiting family or friends, would moderate the effect of distance on the choice of destination. This result shows that travel motivation varies depending on distance between the traveler’s origin and the destination. In this regard, this study expects that there will be a relationship between the degree of geographical distance and the types of motivations within the context of local festivals.

Determinants of Visitors’ Satisfaction in Tourism

Customer satisfaction is a valuable concept in measuring and monitoring consumers’ genuine feelings of satisfaction, and it is one of the significant indicators that are directly related to customers’ intentions and behavior (Yoon, Lee & Lee 2010). As antecedents of visitors’ satisfaction in tourism research, individual motivations are a significant factor in predicting satisfaction: individual motivations include music (Thrane, 2002), food (Kim, Kim & Goh, 2010; Yoon, Lee & Lee, 2010), family/friends (Lee, Lee & Wicks, 2004; Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2008), and complementary leisure activities (Devesa, Laguna & Palacios 2010). Furthermore, according to Skuras, Petrou, and
Clark (2006), in rural tourism, the quality of the tourism experience is significantly and positively influenced by the source from which information about the trip is retrieved (i.e., Internet and newspapers). It was also observed that visitors who traveled long distances have a higher degree of satisfaction (Devesa, Laguna & Palacios 2010). Consequently, individual motivations, information sources, and distance are salient factors in predicting visitors’ satisfaction in the context of tourism.

Method

Setting and Sample

A survey was conducted in a local music festival in a Midwest area in the U.S. on Oct. 1st and 2nd, 2010. The festival is one of the largest festivals in the area, and about 75,000 tickets were sold for the various concerts and foods arranged during the 2-day period of the festival. The survey consists of a personal face-to-face interview and a self-administered questionnaire. Ten trained surveyors carried out the personal interviews according to an intercept approach, distributing the questionnaires at the end of the personal interviews.

The interviews took place at several locations throughout the festival areas. Adult visitors (i.e., over 18 years) were randomly selected as they enter or depart from the festival areas. The screening question, “Do you have a ticket to at least one event (i.e., concert, BBQ festival, or marathon competition) during the festival?” ensured that only real festival visitors were included in the sample. Visitors were distinguished by asking their zip code, county and state. Based on zip code, if an attendee had a zip code within the county where the festival was held, they were thanked for their time and survey didn’t proceed. A total of 788 festival attendees were intercepted, and it resulted in 288 valid visitors’ responses.

Measures

The survey questionnaire largely consist of (1) information sources (Park, Reisinger & Kang, 2008; Shanka & Taylor, 2004), and (2) individual motivations in the decision making process (Devesa, Laguna & Palacios 2010; Kim, Kim & Goh, 2010; Meng, Tepanon & Uysal, 2008; Yoon, Lee & Lee, 2010), and complementary leisure activities (Devesa, Laguna & Palacios 2010). In regard to geographical distance (e.g., Alexander, Lee, & Kim, 2011), zip code was used to divide three distance levels, (1) immediate land neighbors within 50 miles, (2) visitors who were from over 50 miles within the state, and (3) visitors who were from out-of-state in terms of the definition of tourist (minimum 50 miles in one way) by National Tourism Resources Review Commission (1973). Information sources include the Internet, TV, radio, newspapers, word of mouth (WOM), and others (e.g., road signage). The question on music, food, activities, friends/relatives, and other were used to measure the individual’s motivations in this study. Furthermore, the visitor’s overall satisfaction was measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (Lee, Lee & Wicks 2004).

Results

The Results of Chi-Square Tests

Table 1 shows the results of information sources by groups in geographical distance. Significant chi-square values were reported for the groups in geographical distances, information sources, and motivations relationship. The reported values for Table 1 were information sources ($X^2 = 24.101$, $p<.01$), and music ($X^2 = 7.787$, $p<.10$), food ($X^2 = 4.742$, $p<.1$), friends/relatives ($X^2 = 8.979$, $p<.05$), and other ($X^2 = 4.743$, $p<.1$) in motivations, respectively.
Table 1
Information Sources by Groups in Geographical Distance (N=288)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>N(%)</th>
<th>χ²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>D2</td>
<td>D3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>25(21.2)</td>
<td>26(22.6)</td>
<td>16(30.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>10(8.5)</td>
<td>7(6.1)</td>
<td>2(3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>17(14.4)</td>
<td>6(5.2)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>19(16.1)</td>
<td>12(10.4)</td>
<td>2(3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>32(27.1)</td>
<td>46(40.0)</td>
<td>22(41.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Othera</td>
<td>15(12.7)</td>
<td>18(15.7)</td>
<td>11(20.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Yes</td>
<td>101(85.6)</td>
<td>86(74.8)</td>
<td>36(67.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music No</td>
<td>17(14.4)</td>
<td>29(25.2)</td>
<td>17(32.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Yes</td>
<td>78(66.1)</td>
<td>66(57.4)</td>
<td>26(49.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food No</td>
<td>40(33.9)</td>
<td>49(42.6)</td>
<td>27(50.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure activities Yes</td>
<td>1(0.8)</td>
<td>4(3.5)</td>
<td>27(50.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure activities No</td>
<td>117(99.2)</td>
<td>111(96.5)</td>
<td>1(1.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/relatives Yes</td>
<td>39(33.1)</td>
<td>52(45.2)</td>
<td>30(56.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/relatives No</td>
<td>79(66.9)</td>
<td>63(54.8)</td>
<td>23(43.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherb</td>
<td>13(11.2)</td>
<td>6(5.3)</td>
<td>8(15.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherb No</td>
<td>103(88.8)</td>
<td>107(94.7)</td>
<td>44(84.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: D1= Group within 50 miles, D2= Group over 50 miles within the host state, and D3= Group from other states
aOther: organization, magazine, road signage and so on, and bother: vendors, musicians, etc.
* p< .1, ** p< .05, *** p< .01.

Results of Correspondence Analysis

The first correspondence analysis examined the relationships between information sources and GDGs. The results show that the 2-dimensional Solution explained 97% of the variance in the data with the horizontal axis accounting for 84% and the vertical axis accounting for 13%. The results indicate that radio is a medium channel useful for D1 (i.e., within 50 miles). WOM, however, appears to be more closely linked to D2. In addition, it is notable that the results for the Internet and other information sources were closed to D3. The results suggest that marketers of the festival need to focus on different promotional sources depending on different residential areas.
In the second correspondence analysis, the cross tabs result (GDGs x motivations) was employed to examine the relationship between motivations and GDGs. The results indicate that the 2-dimensional solution explained 99% of the variance in the data with the horizontal axis accounting for 63% and the vertical axis accounting for 36%. The joint plot in Figure 2 shows the relationships between the row (motivations) and column (GDGs) based on the proximities of the row and column points. The joint plot reveals that D1 was more likely to depend on music and food motivations, while D2 was more likely to meet the friends or relatives in the festival area. D3 was more likely to do other activities. The results imply that marketers of the festival need to select an appropriate motivational information strategy depending on different distance groups.
The influence of Information Sources, GDGs and Motivation on Overall Satisfaction

In order to examine the influence of GDGs and individual motivation on overall satisfaction, a binary logic analysis was applied. For the analysis, the overall satisfaction score was re-coded as either 1 (higher than the mean value of satisfaction) or 0 (lower than the mean value). The results of binary logic estimations for local food festival visitors are shown in Table 2. Overall, the results indicate that prediction of the probability of overall satisfaction can be significantly improved by knowing the distance from respondents’ origin to a destination and motivations. The percent correct reaches about 64% and this improvement is statistically significant at .01 level (Chi-square= 28.354, and df = 12).

Table 2 reveals that the probability of high satisfaction varies depending on information sources and distance groups. The likelihood of high satisfaction in the festival area increases by almost 3 times (exp(2.517)) and 4 times (exp(3.791)) when festival visitors employ TV and WOM as information sources for festival participation, respectively. Furthermore, the probability of high satisfaction increases by about 3 times (exp(2.925)) when respondents are from over 50 miles within Missouri (D2).

### Table 2
Influential Factors on Visitor’s High Satisfaction in the Festivals (N=288)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Exp (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>.501</td>
<td>1.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>2.223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td>1.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>.923*</td>
<td>2.517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>1.333***</td>
<td>3.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>-.242</td>
<td>.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>1.073**</td>
<td>2.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>.498</td>
<td>1.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>-.330</td>
<td>.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>.424</td>
<td>1.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/relatives</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>1.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>1.149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model Chi-square (sig.): 28.354(.000), -2 Log likelihood: 355.191, % correct: 66%, and Nagelkerke $R^2$.13
Reference: a= other, b=D1, and c= discrete response
*p< 1, **p< .05, ***p<.01
Conclusion

Under the current economic situation in the U.S., many destination management organizations (DMOs) are focusing on examining new marketing strategies for local festivals to contribute to the local economy. The understanding of highly marketable geographic areas for local festivals is leading event practitioners to create promotional strategies and budget allocations. For this purpose, as an empirical study, a correspondence analysis was undertaken to identify the underlying sources of information and motivations utilized by festival visitors based on geographical distance of D1 (within 50 miles), D2 (over 50 miles within the host state), and D3 (from other states) group visitors. Moreover, a binary logistic analysis was employed to examine the satisfaction level of the festival visitors by applying the prominent factors of information sources, visitors' motivation, and geographical distance groups (GDGs).

The results show that GDGs are closely linked to certain information sources and to motivations. It also appears that certain information sources (TV and WOM) and GDG (D2) are significant in predicting the probability of higher satisfaction. Promote festivals to people from different residential areas require a different promotional mix. Specifically, radio and WOM communication are most appropriate for potential visitors from D1 and D2 respectively, while Internet is be more appropriate for potential visitors from D3. Based on the findings, this study provides festival marketers with some valuable marketing implications. First, festival marketers need to distinctively utilize promotional tools toward different distance groups. Second, they also need to develop more tailored marketing strategies considering both the different motivations and distance groups. Third, information sources, GDGs, and individual motivations should be considered in order to improve visitors’ satisfaction in the local festival context.

This study has few limitations. The sampling was restricted to a single destination, and one should be cautious in generalizing the conclusions and implications because the sample was drawn exclusively from visitors to a specific festival destination. In order to draw more generalized conclusions, a larger data set involving multiple local festivals would be necessary, but the heterogeneity issue would presumably still remain.
References


