

All That Jazz! Festival-Specific Predictors Of Service Quality, Satisfaction And Repurchase Intent

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Abstract

With growing consensus that performance-only constructs may serve as better predictors of service quality (SQ) than the original SERVQUAL scale, this research developed a FESTPERF instrument to investigate the questions of: whether the SQ factors at a jazz and blues festival were the same or similar to the generic SERVPERF factors; and, what festival-specific SQ factors, if any, were predictors of overall service quality, visitor satisfaction and repurchase intent. Results of this study at the *Brisbane Jazz and Blues Festival* showed that FESTPERF with a three factor solution differed from the generic SERVPERF instrument and did not replicate the SERVQUAL factors. Here, the factors of Professionalism of festival organisers/personnel, the Core Service and the festival's Environment were salient. Of these, the two factors of Professionalism and the Environment predicted visitor satisfaction that might, in turn, lead to repurchase. The festival's Core Service (primarily musical performance) did not predict intent to revisit, either directly or through the mediating satisfaction variable.

Introduction

This paper's focus on service quality (SQ) measurement within festivals and events derives, at least in part, from their multi-faceted and highly experiential nature, that is, 'the smorgasbord of service activities from which an entire event is evaluated' (Wicks and Fesenmaier, 1993, p.21). Surprisingly few studies have focused on SQ measurement (Baker and Crompton, 2000, Getz, O'Neill, and Carlsen, 2001, O'Neill, Getz, and Carlsen, 1999) in festival settings and only some of these works have investigated the application of the original SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988). In addition, there are no known studies that have explored perceived service quality among festival attendees using performance-based measures of service quality like the SERVPERF instrument (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) Hence, this research sought to develop and pre-test FESTPERF, a festival-specific SQ measurement tool, in order to compare its component factors with SERVPERF and subsequently, identify any significant linkages between FESTPERF factors, overall SQ, visitor satisfaction and repurchase intent.

In opting to use SERVPERF, the authors noted earlier work by Crompton and Love (1995) that hailed performance-only constructs as better predictors of festival service quality, a finding that has been supported in more recent festival research (Baker and Crompton, 2000, O'Neill, Getz, and Carlsen, 1999, Thrane, 2002). Nevertheless, the potential for at least some of the five SERVQUAL dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles to underpin SQ factors in a festival setting was acknowledged. For example, physical appearance (tangibles) and timeliness (reliability) have been identified as determinants of SQ in some festivals (O'Neill, Getz, and Carlsen, 1999). However, other items like access, cleanliness, creativity, sound quality and volume (Baker and Crompton, 2000, Grant and Palidowa, 2001, Thrane, 2002), that have not been embraced by SERVQUAL dimensions, have also been cited as SQ contributors. Given the idiosyncrasies of festivals themselves and the well-cited inability for SERVQUAL's five dimensions to be

replicated across different service contexts, a performance-based measure was chosen for this research. SERVPERF's ability to offer an absolute rating of attitudes towards SQ (O'Neill, Getz, and Carlsen, 1999) was also attractive in selecting it as the platform for developing the festival-specific SQ measurement tool.

As a preface to developing FESTPERF and observing how its components relate to overall SQ, satisfaction and repurchase intention, it was important to revisit the highly debated, service quality-satisfaction relationship. Contrasting arguments exist about the causal ordering of customer satisfaction (SQ leads to satisfaction or vice versa) and an alternative perspective asserts that neither of these constructs, however strongly related are antecedents to the other. In two prior studies at festivals (Baker and Crompton, 2000, Thrane, 2002), it was SQ that was found to directly influence satisfaction. However, the decision by the authors of this paper to treat both constructs as separate, but potentially related ones stems from the need to appropriately measure visitors' intent to repurchase the festival experience. Here, a strong positive association has been found to exist between satisfaction and repurchase intentions (eg. Taylor and Baker, 1994), but some authors (eg. Bigne, Sanchez, and Sanchez, 2001) argue that satisfaction alone is not enough to explain repurchase intentions. For example, some studies have shown that SQ itself affects customers' repurchase intentions (eg. Boulding *et al.*, 1993, 2000).

To better understand the relationship between SQ, satisfaction and repurchase intent, a mediated variable test using Baron and Kenny's formula (1986) has previously been advocated for use in festival research (Baker and Crompton, 2000, Thrane, 2002). In effect, SQ appears to affect repurchase intentions in one of two ways, either directly (eg. Boulding *et al.*, 1993) or indirectly as mediated by customer satisfaction (eg. Andersen and Sullivan, 1993). Only two festival-based studies have looked at the relationships between SQ, satisfaction and repurchase (Baker and Crompton, 2000, Thrane, 2002) and Baron and Kenny's formula (1986) produced different results in each case. However, these studies used overall SQ at the festival, rather than individual SQ factors to examine relationships between the constructs. Thus, it was the desire to understand the application of SERVPERF factors in a festival setting and the question of which SQ factors, if any, explain variance in overall festival quality, satisfaction and repurchase that underpinned this research.

Method

An on-site self-administered survey was designed for implementation over the two days of the festival. Similar to other studies (eg. Frochot and Hughes, 2000), SERVQUAL was the starting point for developing the questionnaire's item pool. Following the path of other festival researchers (eg. Baker and Crompton, 2000, Crompton and Love, 1995), only 22 performance items were included initially. However, given that prior research had shown that crowding, seating, music quality and amenities were relevant, 36 items were ultimately listed to identify the SQ factors. Each item was measured on a seven point Likert scale anchored by 1 – Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree. The later sections of the questionnaire sought to find out which factors, if any, significantly explained the variance of overall service quality, satisfaction and repurchase intentions. The overall SQ construct was measured by asking, 'Overall, how would you rate the *quality* of services experienced at this festival?' using a 7-point scale anchored by 1- 'Poor' to 7-'Excellent'. Customer satisfaction was treated as a global evaluation and was measured by asking, 'Overall, how *satisfied* were you with the services experienced at this festival?' anchored again by a seven point scale. Repurchase intentions were measured by asking, 'How likely are you to purchase a ticket to the festival in

the future?' anchored by 1-'Very Unlikely' to 7-'Very Likely'. The instrument also sought to identify whether satisfaction explained the variance in repurchase intentions independently. Face validity was assessed a priori with a review of question wording, content, structure and order by a panel of services researchers. A pretest of the questionnaire at another smaller, music festival assessed the scale validity findings about festival service quality variables, their similarities and differences to past service quality research and their link to satisfaction and post-purchase repurchase intentions represent major contributions to the academic literature (Aaker, Kumar, and Day, 2001). Here, the FESTPERF scale produced a coefficient alpha of 0.8495 and no items were removed.

The study then used a principal axis factoring procedure with oblique rotation to determine meaningful constructs or factors that best represented attendees' perceptions of SQ. A correlation matrix was used to detect multi-collinearity, while KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity assessed the sampling adequacy and appropriateness of variables for factor analysis. Correlations were firstly examined between the SQ factors themselves and then, between these factors and overall SQ, satisfaction and repurchase intentions. To uphold Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediating formula, FESTPERF factors were regressed against attendees' satisfaction. Next, the same factors were regressed against attendees' repurchase intentions. The significance levels and t values for repurchase intentions were then assessed to determine whether satisfaction mediated the relationship between the SQ factors and repurchase intentions. Similar to other SERVPERF studies (eg. Cai and Jun, 2003), the SQ factors were also regressed against the overall SQ variable. While satisfaction was used as a dependent variable in the multiple regression, it was treated as an independent variable in a subsequent hierarchical regression to explore its relationship to repurchase intentions. FESTPERF factors were then entered into the regression equation together with satisfaction to examine the amount of change in the two models. The decision to enter satisfaction into the model first was based on the fact that satisfaction alone had been found to predict repurchase intentions in other services studies (Jones and Suh, 2000).

Findings

A final sample size of 308 festival attendees was obtained along with a sampling adequacy of .949. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 5560.55$, df, 351, $p < 0.001$) and the variables were deemed to be suitable for factor analysis. A Cronbach alpha tested the internal consistency of FESTPERF and an initial correlation matrix showed the range between the inter-item correlations to be significant. In the final pattern matrix (see Figure 1) that converged after six iterations, three factors constituted service quality at this festival. These were Professionalism (contributing the most variance), Core Service and the Environment. Note that Professionalism can be seen to be a combination of four SERVQUAL factors (Assurance, Empathy, Reliability and Responsiveness). This reflects the results of other SQ studies (eg. Dean and White, 1999, McDougall and Levesque, 1994) that suggest that human related SERVQUAL factors do not appear as distinct SQ dimensions in all industries. Parasuraman et al.'s (1988) view that reliability is the most important SQ determinant was not supported here. The second factor, Core Service, basically encompassed why a person attends this type of festival, that is, to see and hear music. Interestingly, four items in this factor are specific to a musical performance, with only equipment (e.g. stage and lighting) appearing in past SQ studies within the tangibles dimension.

Figure 1 - Pattern Matrix (Final Phase)

	Factor		
	1	2	3
Factor 1- Professionalism			
Trust	.851		
Promptness	.818		
Support	.789		
Transaction Safety	.786		
Understanding	.756		
Accurate Information	.544		
Factor 2- Core Service			
Ability		.843	
Music Volume		.802	
Sound quality		.652	
Creativity		.651	
Equipment		.580	
Factor 3- Environment			
Cleanliness			.738
Crowding			.728
Toilets			.646
Seating			.640
Viewing			.632
Eigenvalue	8.386	1.356	1.143
% Of Variance Explained	50.086	6.064	4.677
Factor alpha	.9142	.8854	.8502

The third factor, Environment, and its items, have not been found in past SERVQUAL or SERVPERF studies. Although tangible aspects of the festival are represented, the items don't reflect any items in the SERVQUAL tangibles factor. Overall, the FESTPERF service quality factors are different from the generic SERVPERF factors although the three factors do share some of the dimensions of this instrument. In running satisfaction as the dependent variable, the three factors explained 43 % of the variance (F-value 76.50, $p \leq .001$, 3, 304 *df*). However, only two factors, Professionalism ($p < .05$) and Environment ($p = 0$), explained festival visitors' satisfaction that may lead to repurchase. The Core Service factor was insignificant here. With repurchase intentions as the dependent variable, only 22.9% of the variance in this variable was explained by the three factors, but this model was also significant (F-value 30.146, $p \leq .001$ with 3, 304 *df*). Although the significance of Professionalism was the same as when satisfaction was adopted as the dependent variable ($p = 0.00$), the standard coefficient fell marginally to .356, indicating that repurchase intentions for this SQ factor may be only partially mediated by satisfaction. No significant relationship existed between Environment and repurchase intentions ($p = .263 > .001$) showing that this relationship was mediated by satisfaction. Furthermore, no significant relationship existed between Core Service and repurchase intentions. This factor was insignificant in both Model 1 and Model 2 and hence, it did not explain either satisfaction or repurchase intentions. To determine whether satisfaction explained the variance in repurchase intentions independently, only satisfaction was entered into Model 1, and then for Model 2, satisfaction and the three other factors were entered into the regression equation. In Model 1, satisfaction contributed

40.2 % of the variance in repurchase intentions and served as a significant predictor ($p = 0.00$) with a significant beta coefficient of .636. This finding confirmed claims that satisfaction as a sole independent variable does predict repurchase intentions. In Model 2, satisfaction combined with the three service quality factors contributed to 41.7% of the variance in repurchase intentions. However, only satisfaction and Professionalism were significant in explaining variance in repurchase intentions ($p < .05$ in both instances). Both Core Service ($p = .586$) and Environment ($p = .227$) were insignificant predictors. Therefore, satisfaction on its own or with Professionalism was a predictor of repurchase intent. When combined with Core Service and Environment, its ability to explain variance in repurchase intent became insignificant.

A final multiple regression identified which FESTPERF factors explained variance in overall SQ. Importantly, the three festival SQ factors were analysed as independent variables and overall SQ was the dependent variable. Here, 43.3% of the variance in visitors' perceptions of overall quality was related to the three independent variables. This model was highly significant (F-value 77.438, $p < .001$, 3,304 *df*). The Professionalism and Environment variables both served as significant predictors of overall SQ at the festival. The Core Service factor was again an insignificant predictor ($p = .246$, > 0.05). Thus, Thrane's (2002) prior claim that music performance is the best predictor of overall SQ was not supported here. Festival performance was secondary to Professionalism in visitors' SQ evaluations. Hence, if musical performance was excellent, low quality supplementary services could jeopardise visitors' repurchase intent.

Conclusion

This study is the only known research to apply all SQ dimensions and other specific-industry items to a festival setting. The FESTPERF instrument, reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of other SQ research, identifies three SQ factors not previously found in festival research. While items within the Professionalism factor are essentially SERVQUAL items, here they merge into one factor of people-related service delivery to become a major determinant of SQ perceptions. While Core Service has been significant in past SQ studies, it was not the most important factor here. The Environment factor did not emerge from past SQ studies, but it was salient among these festival goers. That the festival-specific SQ factors, rather than overall SQ, predicted festival repurchase intentions, either directly or indirectly through satisfaction or not at all, is a major finding. Similarly, findings that the Professionalism and Environment factors predict festival satisfaction and that Professionalism predicts repurchase intent without satisfaction is notable. Importantly, while conclusive findings emerged here with satisfaction as the dependent variable, satisfaction as an independent variable was also found to predict repurchase intent.

In summary, this study's findings about festival-specific SQ factors, their similarities and differences to past SQ research and, their links to satisfaction and repurchase intent add to the current body of knowledge about festivals. Research at other festivals or events that seek to replicate the FESTPERF tool is now desirable to test its wider application. The FESTPERF scale could be tested in a variety of music festival settings such as rock, gospel and pop. Future research could also examine whether these SQ factors are visitor-specific and also if such factors can also be identified as predictors of perceived SQ among festival staff and organisers.

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