

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND SERVICE DELIVERY EXPECTATIONS OF VISITORS TO THE BLOEMFONTEIN VRYFEES

E. PROOS AND D. KOKT

Abstract

The contribution of tourism to the development of local regions is prolific, as it creates jobs and stimulates the economy (Lopez-Bonilla & Sanz-Altmira 2010; O'Sullivan & Jackson 2010; Saayman & Rossow 2011; Visser 2005). Events are an important motivation for tourists to travel. In this sense, there are three types of events: business events, sport events and festivals (Getz 2007). Festivals and festival tourism is a booming form of event tourism and the importance of festivals are recognized in both national and international spheres (Yang, Gu & Cen 2011). With this in mind, it is imperative that festival organisers have adequate information pertaining to the demographics and service delivery expectations of festival goers. The data for this investigation was collected during the 2013 Bloemfontein Vryfees and the findings report on the demographic composition of the festival goers and their service delivery expectations.

Keywords: Demographic profile, service delivery expectations, Festival, Vryfees, Bloemfontein.

1. INTRODUCTION

An arts festival can be many things and often the fun lies in discovering the unexpected. The world as we know it has changed from generation to the next. The need for self-actualization has become such a major role player that people are starting to look at things and most importantly at themselves in a very different way than in the past. The concentration has shifted in such a way that people want to be more socially acceptable in their surroundings and this had led to people searching for ways to ensure this and to fulfill this need. One of these ways includes the partaking in a significant number of festivals and events (Strydom 2008). The focus of this investigation is on the Volksblad and Kopsies Vryfees in Bloemfontein. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that if your festival or event is not popular and attractive to visitors that it will not grow from year to year. There is thus a need for research in the service delivery aspects of festivals.

2. FESTIVALS

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2003) defines a “festival” as: a day or period set aside for an often regularly reoccurring programme of cultural performances, exhibitions, competitions and celebrations (Strydom 2008). People need to experience fulfillment and one way of doing this can be to attend a festival. Festivals can contribute to joyful experiences, laughter and relaxation, which gives individuals a sense of belonging. Attending festivals can be a relaxing process whereby one person or with the company of good friends can go for a walk through all of the exhibitions and just take it all in whilst enjoying the sounds and tastes of a festival. These events can provide benefits for communities that range from tangible (increased revenue to local economy, mainly via local businesses, job creation, positive media coverage and images and sponsorship opportunities) and intangible products (enhanced community pride, cultural renewal, increased interest and investment in the host destinations, development of social capital and inter-cultural contact) (Kyungmi & Muzaffer 2003).

3. THE VRYFEES

The Vryfees is a non-profit seeking organisation. It was previously known as the Volksblad Kunstefees and underwent the name change in 2010 as a result of the organizers wanting to distinguish it from other festivals (Vryfees, Online, 2013). The first festival was held in 2000 in the city of Bloemfontein. It was organized by the Media24 group in an attempt to help grow the festival market in Bloemfontein and to help create a bigger income for the local community. “Culture should be promoted as a catalyst for creativity in our strategy for jobs and growth” (Briers 2008). Festivals greatly contribute to creativity, but also to the creation of wealth (Strydom 2008). The Vryfees attracts around 160000 festival goers annually and is one of the fastest growing festivals in the country. In 2013, all of the activities took place on the grounds of The University of The Free-State (UFS). All of the halls and parking spaces were within walking distance of each other, with the market in the middle of all of the attention. Festivalgoer's has looked forward to attending shows in the newly revamped Albert Wessels Auditorium, also at the convenient Kovsie church on campus. The festival program was made public on 25 April and tickets went on sale on the 3rd of May. For the sake of clarity, the layout of this article is as follows: the problem statement, methodology, results and discussion and conclusion and recommendations.

4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study aimed to determine the demographic profile of visitors to the Vryfees and to assess their service delivery expectations. The research was done by making use of questionnaires during the period of the festival and 100 questionnaires were completed.

5. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out at the Vryfees in Bloemfontein during the period of 9 July 2013 until 14 July 2013. The B Tech Tourism and Event Management students gathered the data during the festival. Six students each completed 100 questionnaires as part of a bigger project. This article reports only on the findings of 100 questionnaires. Convenience sampling applies to this investigation as the completion of the questionnaire was based on the willingness of visitors to complete it. The questionnaire consisted of six sections: Section A: Demographic profile of respondents, Section B: Accommodation, Section C: Transportation and parking, Section D: Food, shows and entertainment, Section E: Stalls and exhibitions and Section F: General issues.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports on the findings of the investigation.

Demographics

This section profiles the demographic composition of the respondents.

Province

Table 1 indicates the provinces in South Africa the respondents come from.

Table 1: Province Respondents were from the following provinces

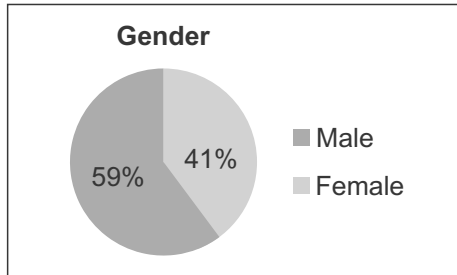
Eastern Cape	10%
Gauteng	3%
Free State	76%
Kwazulu-Natal	4%
Mpumalanga	1%
Limpopo	2%
Northern Cape	4%
Total:	100%

Table 1 show that most of the visitors to the Vryfees came from the Free State province (76%). The second most visitors came from the Eastern Cape province (10%), followed by Kwazulu-Natal (4%), Northern Cape (4%), Gauteng (3%), Limpopo (2%) and Mpumalanga with 1% of the visitors. In North West and the Western Cape there were zero visitors whom completed any of the questionnaires and it is clear that most visitors to the Vryfees are from bordering provinces because of it being relatively close to their homes.

Gender

59% of the respondents were male whilst 41% were female. This is detailed in Figure1.

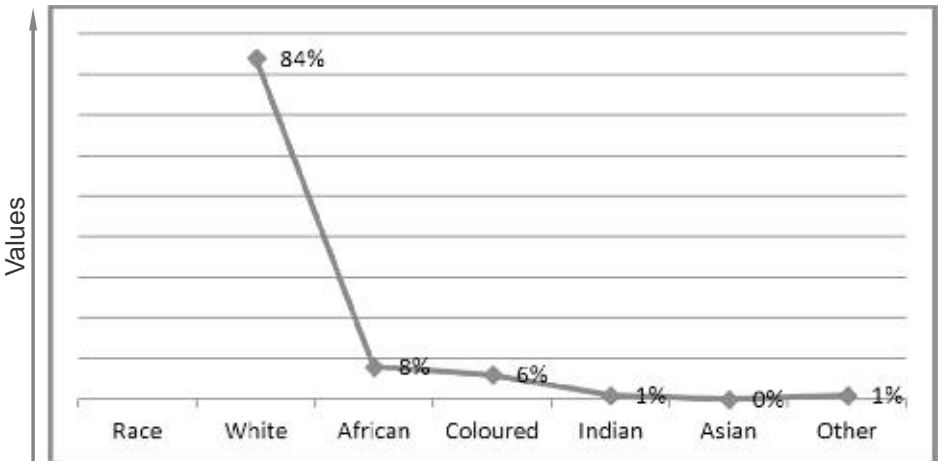
Figure 1: Gender composition of the respondents



Race

Figure 2 shows that 84% of respondents were White, 8% African, 6% Coloured, 1% Indian and 1% of another race.

Figure 2: Race composition of the respondents



Age

The age distribution of respondents is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Age distribution of respondents

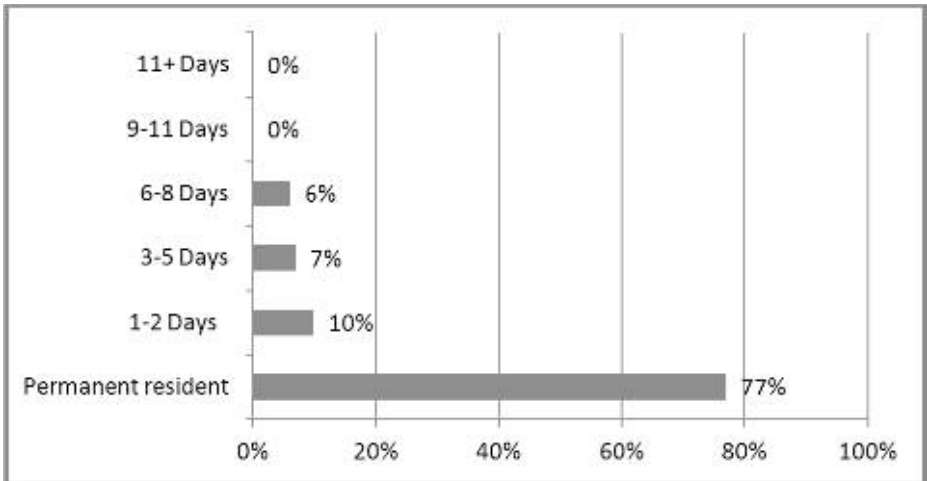
Under 30	69%
31-50	20%
51-70	8%
70+	3%
Total:	100%

The age stretched from young to old and was divided into the following classes: Under30, 31-50, 51-70 and then 70+. Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents were below the age of 30 (69%).

Length of stay

Figure 3 shows how long visitors stayed in Bloemfontein.

Figure 3: Respondent's length of stay during their visit to the Vryfees

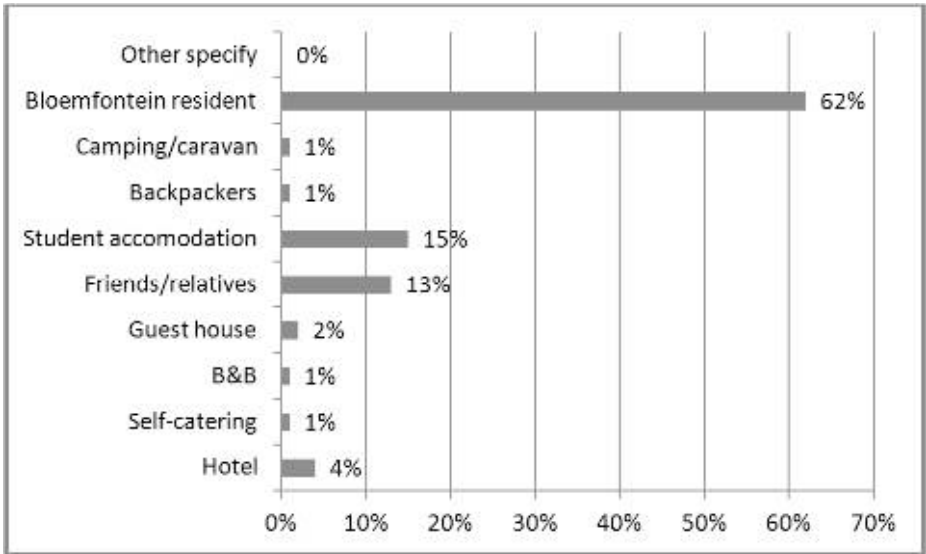


Graph 3 shows that most of the festivalgoers were from Bloemfontein (77%), whilst 10% stayed for 1-2 days. The other 13% of the respondents stayed for 3-5 days (7%) and 6-8 days (6%). None of the 100 respondents stayed for longer than 8 days and this can directly be because of the Vryfees only taking part for 6 days and the visitors not finding the need to stay on longer in Bloemfontein.

Types of accommodation

Figure 4 shows the types of accommodation respondents made use of.

Figure 4: Type of accommodation respondents used during their stay at the Vryfees



Most of the respondents are Bloemfontein residents (62%). 15% of the visitors made use of student accommodation, 13% of the respondents made use of overnight facilities at friends or family and this is a very popular trend amongst festival goer's because of it being the cheapest way of accommodation anywhere in the world. The other 10% made use of accommodation facilities, which are provided in and around Bloemfontein.

Most respondents were always happy with the service they received at the accommodation establishment they stayed at during the Vryfees. There were 9% respondents whom stayed at accommodation establishments and thus there is only 9% out of the 100 respondents whom filled in this part of the questionnaires. There were two instances where respondents were not sure and it was in the section about the assistance they received and when asking the staff at the establishment about attractions in Bloemfontein. This needs to be addressed and looked at by accommodation establishments.

Section C relates the responses to transport and parking.

Transportation

Table 3 shows the modes of transport used by respondents.

Table 3: Different modes of transport that the visitors to the Vryfees made use of

Tour Bus	2%
Taxi	4%
Rental Car	2%
Own Car	92%
Other, specify	0%
Total:	100%

Table 3 shows that most of the visitors to the Vryfees made use of their own car as a form of transport (92%), whilst the rest (8%) made use of other forms of transport. The respondents were also asked about their experiences related to transportation and parking. Attitudes of staff providing transportation are friendly and efficient the findings were always 8%, sometimes 6%, and not sure 2%. The able and willingness of staff providing transportation were next and results were as follow: always 7%, sometimes 7%, and not sure 2%. Next, was the question of whether the quality of transportation was good and resulted as always 9%, sometimes 6%, and not sure 2%.

Table 4: The overall impressions of Parking at the Vryfees

Always	21%
Sometimes	41%
Not sure	26%
Never	7%
Total:	95%

As can be clearly conducted from the responses of the visitors, the need for parking is very large and people are not satisfied with that aspect of the Vryfees.

Food, shows and entertainment

Section D relates the responses to food, shows and entertainment.

Table 5: Food, shows and entertainment (n = 100)

	Always	Sometimes	Not sure	Never	Total
Food Stalls	82%	18%	0%	0%	100%
Value food	61%	35%	4%	0%	100%
Priced	50%	38%	12%	0%	100%
Well organized	53%	40%	7%	0%	100%
Venues suitable	64%	33%	3%	0%	100%
Priced	27%	33%	26%	14%	100%
Overall	44%	51%	5%	0%	100%

Table 5 shows that visitors to the Vryfees were mostly happy with the positioning of the stalls with 82% answering always and only 18% sometimes which can be seen as very satisfactory for the organizers. 61% answered that they were happy with the food being value for money and 35% said sometimes with only 4% of respondents saying not sure. Thus, this aspect of the Vryfees considering the results of the food department is well organized and people generally enjoy it with 50% being happy with the price of food and 38% saying sometimes whilst only 12% said not sure about the pricing of food at the Vryfees. The shows were well organized and it can be seen in the results of the questionnaires with 53% saying always and only 7% saying not sure.

As a result of the Vryfees shows being held on the grounds of the UFS, the venues are suitable and 64% of respondents answered always and only 3% not sure about the venues being suitable. People were very dissatisfied with the pricing of shows. When concluding the section on food, shows and entertainment the consensus under visitors were 44% of respondents indicated that the overall experience were always good, 51% sometimes and 5% were not sure about their experience.

Stalls and exhibitions

The visitors were very satisfied with the positioning of the stalls and exhibitions (76% always) and (24% sometimes). In the question whether the stalls and exhibitions were worth visiting, the results were 3% being not sure, 34% sometimes and 63% saying always. The goods at the stalls were popular under visitors with only 6% not being sure, 54% responded always and 40% sometimes. Visitors indicated that 74% of staff was always friendly and 26% sometimes. A crucial part of building long-term relationships is the friendliness and efficiency of staff rendering the services and staff is vital in ensuring a competitive advantage (Chand & Katou 2007), so this aspect is very important in growing a festival like the Vryfees.

Table 6 indicates the overall impression of stalls and exhibitions.

Table 6: Overall impressions of the stalls and exhibitions

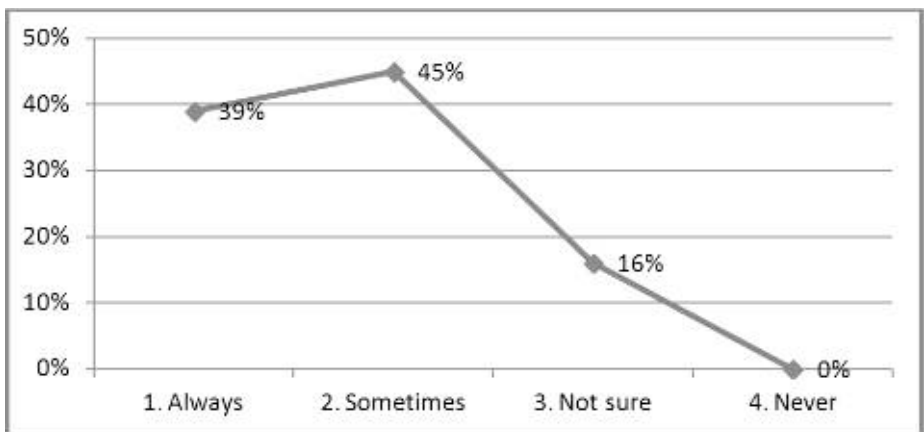
Always	59%
Sometimes	39%
Not sure	2%
Never	0%
Total:	100%

Table 6 shows that 59% of respondents indicated that stalls and exhibitions were good.

General issues

The final section of the Service Delivery Questionnaire of the Vryfees was Section F: General issues. The first question of this section handled about the ablution facilities, it can be clearly seen from the results: (always 11%, sometimes 24%, not sure 34%, never 31%), that the visitors were very dissatisfied with the ablution facilities. The grounds were very neat and tidy with nobody that answered never and only 8% answering not sure, whilst 39% responded sometimes and 53% always happy with the grounds being neat and tidy. Visitors were also very dissatisfied with places to sit and relax. The results were 22% never, 34% not sure, 27% sometimes and only 17% visitors responding always. The question related to noise pollution was as follows: 2% never, 6% not sure, 39% sometimes and 53% always. To conclude the questionnaire the last question was whether the visitors overall impression of the grounds and facilities were good. Graph 5 shows the responses.

Graph 5: Overall impression of the grounds and facilities



7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to profile the visitors to the 2013 Vryfees in Bloemfontein and to measure their service delivery expectation. Surprisingly, all of the 100 questionnaires were fully completed and the people were friendly and helpful to fill them in and to help us with our data gathering process.

The results of this study indicates all of the sections the organisers of the Vryfees need to focus more on while they are busy with their planning of the 2014 Vryfees. The visitors were happy with Section B, D and E (accommodation, shows and entertainment, stalls and exhibitions). The sections where they had problems with were Section C and F (transportation and parking, general issues). Thus, the organizers need to look at these sections and improve on them.

The most interesting finding was that visitors from all over South Africa visited the Vryfees and it is interesting to see that people in other provinces knows about the Vryfees in Bloemfontein. It was also interesting to note how friendly all of the festival goer's were and how they enjoyed their time in Bloemfontein. This research article has given an account of and the reasons for the results it received on all of the facts that were needed to be looked at by management to help improve the Vryfees. The study has gone some way towards enhancing the organisers understanding of how to attract more visitors to the Vryfees. The study was successful as it was able to identify weaknesses in the Vryfees like for example: The variety of different races that visit the Vryfees, parking, the ablution facilities, places to sit and the pricing of shows and exhibitions.

One of the issues that emerge from these above-mentioned findings is the fact that the organizers of the Vryfees need to be looking at ways to attract a wider range of races. Another aspect that needs their attention is the section on parking which as can be seen in above mentioned results that they are surely lacking enough parking space for visitors and this section needs extra planning and attention. The ablution facilities needs to be improved because it was a big point of concern under visitors and they said the facilities were dirty and simply too little to handle the large numbers of visitors to the Vryfees.

There were also not enough places to sit and relax and festival goer's had indicated that they would have preferred not to sit on the grass to take a rest. Most visitors to the Vryfees were under the age of 30 (69%) meaning that they are most likely students and could not afford most of the shows and exhibitions on their monthly income. The final issue that needs to be addressed is concerned with attracting more visitors from other provinces and not just neighboring provinces.

These findings suggest several courses of action and thus hence the following recommendations:

- The lowering of shows and exhibitions prices to attract visitors that are more youthful and to make sure that they have the money to buy a ticket to go and watch the shows.
- The organisers should endeavor to attract more individuals from diverse cultures by hosting more shows and exhibitions that are culturally of a more diverse nature than what they are currently busy doing.
- Organisers should improve the availability of parking.
- To help with ablution facilities the organisers can plan to have more porter potties in and around the grounds with signage guiding people towards them, there should also be a cleaning team that works different shifts to ensure that they stay clean under all circumstances and times to ensure no further complaints.
- The visitors complained about the availability of places to sit and relax at, for example they did not want to sit on the grass to rest. It is thus important that the organisers make sure that next year they have tables and chairs spaced throughout the grounds to ensure the visitors are happy and have nice and relaxing places to sit and enjoy the Vryfees.
- They can further more make a “relaxation park” for example where there are enough ablution facilities and places to sit and relax and in doing so ensure that, two problems are dealt with in one solution.
- To address the problem of attracting visitors from other provinces there should be looked at packages to offer visitors which will make their experience of the Vryfees much more enjoyable and attractive (accommodation, shows ext. included in a cheaper package).
- Furthermore, an emphasis can be put on marketing the Vryfees more in the rest of South Africa making use of social pages like Face book etc.

More research on this topic needs to be undertaken and in future, there should be more service delivery questionnaires handed out at the Vryfees in order to keep growing each year. Suggestions from visitors should also be accommodated in future research on this topic. Further experimental investigations are needed to estimate how to help improve the Vryfees experience to all its visitors.

8. REFERENCES

Briers, D. (2008). Interview with the ex-Chief Organizer of the Volksblad Arts Festival on 7 July 2008, Kroonstad.

Chand, M. and Katou, A. A., (2007). The impact of HRM practices on organizational performance in the Indian hotel industry. *Employee Relations*, 29(6), 576-594.

Getz, D. (2007). Event tourism: Definition, evolution and research. *Tourism Management*, 29, 403-428.

Kyungmi, K. and Muzaffer, U., (2003). Socio-Economic Impacts of Festivals among Organizers. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 10(3/4), Jan.

Morley, J. (2013). Discussing findings. Available from: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk>. Date of access 21 August 2013.

Lopez-Bonilla, J.M., Lopez-Bonilla, L.M. and Sanz-Altmira, B., (2010). *European Planning Studies*, 18(3), 435-447.

O'Sullivan, D. and Jackson, M.J., (2010). Festival tourism: A contributor to sustainable local economic development. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(4), 325-341.

Saayman, M. and Rossouw, R. (2011). The significance of festivals to regional economies: Measuring the economic value of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in South Africa. *Tourism Economics*, 17(3), 603-624.

Strydom, A. J. (2008). The impact of the Volksblad Arts Festival on fuel stations in Bloemfontein. *Research Methodology: additional notes, examples of research articles, protocols and trade press articles*.

Visser, G. (2005). Let's be festive: Exploratory notes on festival tourism in South Africa. *Urban Forum*, 16(2/3), 155-175.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. (2003). 4th edition. Houghton: Mifflin Company.

Vryfees, Agtergrond oor die Vryfees. Available from: <http://www.vryfees.co.za/content.aspx?cid8>. Date of access 9 April 2013.

Yang, J., Gu, Y, and Cen, J. (2011). Festival tourists emotion, perceived value and behavioural intentions: A test of the moderating effect of festivalscape. *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*, 12, 25-44.