

Investigating exhibitors' selling and non-selling motivations towards traditional festivals

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to study the motivation of exhibitors for choosing small-scale traditional events by exploring selling and non-selling motivation factors from the exhibitors' perspective in the context of traditional festivals where products are sold on site. While different researchers have examined the motivation of investing marketing efforts in exhibiting, this study investigates both selling and non-selling functions involved in exhibiting in the specific area of traditional festivals. The intensity of the link between exhibitors' motivators and traditional festivals represents an understudied segment in this field. The research methodology includes an exploratory, questionnaire-based study on a sample of 137 exhibitors during the first day of the exhibition at two different, small-scale traditional festivals, questioning the differences between the non-selling and selling motivations. Results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the non-motivational and motivational factors affecting exhibitors of small-scale exhibitions. This paper contributes to the festival literature with the exhibitors' perspective, bringing forward a framework of understanding for traditional festivals from the selling and non-selling motivators.

Keywords: exhibitors, traditional festivals, motivation

The exhibition industry is growing rapidly and according to The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) approximately 31.000 exhibitions are held annually around the globe, with 4.4 million exhibiting companies welcoming about 260 million visitors (UFI, 2014). Furthermore, exhibition expenditures are the second largest item in the business marketing budget after advertising (Jacobson, 1990) and the growth trend is expected to continue as the demand for the exhibition industry increases at the regional, national and international levels (Lee, 2012; Mosely & Mowatt, 2011). The cause for this can be seen in modern market conditions which require stronger interaction with customers in order to achieve competitive advantage. Companies are seeking new ways of improving their business performance through building relationships with consumers and the local community while promoting their products at the same time (Wang, 2016). Exhibitions and festivals are perceived as a convenient marketing tool because of their multidimensional role which can be seen through their positive contribution to the participating companies, destinations and local communities (Xie & Sinwald, 2016). These economic, social and cultural opportunities are particularly relevant for small-scale events and traditional festivals which make up a growing part of the exhibition industry. Apart from providing various economic benefits for participating companies which can be manifested through sales increase, promotion of new products or partnership creation (Blythe, 1999; Menon & Manoj, 2014, Hung et al., 2015; Measson & Campbell-Hunt, 2015), traditional festivals also provide image enhancement (Kozak, 2005), knowledge exchange (Batheld & Gibson, 2015), community cohesiveness (Xie & Sinwald, 2016) and relationship building through face-to-face contacts (Han & Verma, 2014; Kang & Schrier, 2011). Consequently, exhibitions and festivals have become an essential marketing tool for many companies (Kirchgeorg, Jung & Klante, 2010).

Therefore, this research examine the different kind of motivations for exhibitors in participating to exhibitions. Thus, this paper develops a questionnaire and after the validating process analyse if there is a statistically significant difference between the non-selling and selling motivation factors for small-scale events and traditional festivals, especially assessing the non-selling motivation factors.

Research was conducted during two small-scale festivals. Both events enable exhibitors to sell their products directly to customers and to participate in various events organized by the promoters. Exhibitors' motivations were examined via a questionnaire two consecutive times during the duration of the festivals.

The paper is divided into five parts. After the introduction, there is a literature review presenting the importance of exhibitions, traditional festivals and the selling and non-selling motivations of exhibitors. The next part describes the research methodology and is followed by the results of the research and conclusions.

The exhibition industry is growing rapidly and in the future "it will be an irreversible trend because the future demands for the exhibition industry have been surging regionally, nationally and internationally" (Lee, 2012:5; Mosely & Mowatt, 2011). Consequently, the exhibition industry has become an important sales and communications tool (Kirchgeorg, Jung & Klante, 2010) and it constitutes "an important component of the promotion mix for most industrial products" (Lee, Seo & Yeung, 2012: 3). Exhibitions represent an effective marketing tool providing an opportunity for promotion of new products or services, sales, learning and knowledge exchange across geographical boundaries (Batheld and Gibson, 2015) while enabling face-to-face contact at the same time (Kozak, 2005). Therefore, it is important to underline the multidimensional roles of exhibitions, trade shows and festivals, which are manifested through relationship creation, the internationalization of small firms, and the consideration of exhibitions as a communication and promotional tool and an important information source (Menon & Manoj, 2014).

Xie and Sinwald (2016) identified three main categories of impact of exhibitions and festivals: (1) economic benefits as a result of new expenditures caused by attracting visitors to the host region (Dwyer & Forsyth 2009; Mosely & Mowatt, 2011; Han & Verma, 2014); (2) social impacts, which can be subordinate to economic impacts but emphasize entertainment opportunities, the chance to socialize with others, community cohesion and relationships with people (Woosnam, 2013; Xie & Sinwald, 2016), and (3) community cohesiveness in cooperation with others and the sharing of a common interest for community members (Small, 2007; Reid, 2007 ; Oxoby, 2009). Although they are still not fully recognized, these specific benefits brought by special events such as exhibitions or festivals are especially important for development of smaller urban or rural areas and encouraging local producers. The contribution is visible through the reduction of uncertainty among potential clients as well as building of trusting relationships, which is particularly significant for small entrepreneurs. Through participation in festivals as exhibitors, small business owners gain different benefits in terms of facilitating starting business, developing products and expanding their consumer base (Mosely & Mowatt, 2011). Moreover, festivals function as business incubators; they help and support the establishment and development of small- and medium-sized businesses by encouraging innovations and minimizing risk (Bollingtoft & Ulhoi, 2005). A significant opportunity for this is provided through participation in local traditional festivals that have become a great interest of researchers since there is limited number of studies investigating local festivals from entrepreneurial point of view (Caber, Güven & Öztürk, 2016). However, these festivals represent important cultural, social and economic opportunities for all participants and for the rural community itself (George, 2015)

Traditional festivals

Traditional festivals represent a way of celebrating the culture of a certain place and thus they allow visitors to experience a part of a destination that differs from their own culture (Silkes et al., 2013). These festivals reflect the past and cultural heritage and imply local products and services associated with the community in which they take place (Black, 2016; Gration et al., 2008; Chhabra et al., 2003). The importance of place and social atmosphere that cannot be disregarded as a part of traditional festivals is highlighted by many authors (Sims, 2009; Black, 2016; Rose, 2002; Mackellar, 2006; Gration et al., 2008) because all local products outside their area will be perceived just as regular products (Guerrerro et al., 2009). The desire for tradition and authenticity in festivals can be seen as a consequence of the increasing inauthenticity of today's society and alienation from nature (Taylor, 2001; Sims,

2009) or as a result of the excessive standardization of tourism products (Grbac & Milohanović, 2008; Lertuputtarak, 2012). Artworks and products offered at traditional festivals made by individual craftspeople and artists have a story and meaning (Sims, 2009) and they encourage the participation of visitors (Black, 2016), especially with reference to hand-made indigenous products and traditional food. Accordingly, current scholarly researches predominantly focus on attendees' point of view and relevance of traditional festivals by emphasizing their contribution to the community (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2017). Due to fostering tradition and authentic experience, local food and hand-made products at festivals play crucial role in boosting economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability (Sims, 2009; Clark & Chabrel, 2007; Woodland & Ascott, 2007).

Numerous authors purport that small-scale cultural festivals largely contribute to the social sustainability of communities (Black, 2016; Gursoy et al., 2004; Rose, 2002; Quin & Wilks, 2013; George, 2015; Brown et al., 2005; Xie & Sinnwald 2016; Anderson & Getz, 2008). This can be confirmed by the fact that festivals make connections between people, culture and place and reinforce the creation of bridges and bonds, resulting in stronger social cohesion, exchange of knowledge and transmission of skills (Black, 2016; Xie & Sinnwald, 2016). Traditional festivals also keep local culture alive by preserving cultural practises (Black, 2016), rising awareness of tradition (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012), providing a sense of community and promoting local culture (George, 2015) by enhancing its image (Sims, 2009; Xie & Sinnwald, 2016). Cultural practises at festivals are commodified to some extent and thereby they can represent an opportunity for self-sufficiency by making revenues and strengthening local economy (George, 2015; Lin, Pearson & Cai, 2009; Xie & Sinnwald, 2016) which is considered as a part of economic sustainability. However, in order to realize these potential benefits of traditional festivals, it is necessary to gain an understanding of all stakeholders including exhibitors with their motives and expected outcomes (Han & Verma, 2014). As observed, extensive theoretical and empirical studies have determined the benefits of traditional festivals, while the research on motivation, especially from the exhibitors' perspective, is present in considerably smaller scope.

Selling and non-selling motivations of exhibitors

Exhibitors are motivated by the possibility of exhibiting in different festivals and their motivation derives from the various commercial and non-commercial benefits that can be obtained. Motivation attributes from the exhibitors' perspective represent an understudied area because "they are multidimensional, and thus it is impossible to explain participation with any single component of exhibition benefits" (Lee & Kang, 2014:189). However, some authors distinguish between selling benefits, referring to access to main decision makers, contact with potential clients and opportunity to service customers, and non-selling benefits, which include gathering information about competition, chance to upgrade employees' self-esteem and opportunity to test new products (Menon & Manoj, 2014; Wang, 2016; Leo, Seo & Yeung, 2012; Lee & Kang, 2014). Kozak (2005) analyses exhibitors' motivations by categorizing them into four main groups: selling-related, strategic benefit-related, promotion-related and research-related. Wang (2016) has a slightly different approach and classifies factors that motivate exhibitors depending on whether they are related to sales, networking, competition, social relationship or incentive. According to Mosely and Mowatt (2011) it is only possible to speculate about exhibitors' motivations for participation because there is no empirical data. Although there are some earlier studies which provide evidence on festival participation from the exhibitors' perspective, there is still insufficient understanding of what motivates and demotivates them to participate (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2017), especially when it comes about traditional and small-scale festivals. Thereby the research gap with regard to understanding exhibitors' motivation towards traditional festivals is the focus of this research, especially testing the differences between non-selling and selling factors. According to some scholars, primary motivations of exhibitors are related to sale and purchase: to meet new customers, launch new products or take sales orders (Blythe, 1999; Menon & Manoj, 2014, Hung et al., 2015; Measson & Campbell-Hunt, 2015). On the other hand, other ones (Lee, Seo and Yeung, 2012) purport that selling is no longer the main objective of participation and emphasize the importance of networking through information exchange. Furthermore, Kang and Schrier (2011) have pointed out the predominance of social value because social exchange and connections made at festivals affect the building of successful business relationships (Sarmiento, Simões, & Farhangmehr, 2015; Wang, 2016; Hultsman; Yuksel & Voola, 2010). Since exhibitions are an important tool of marketing communication (Brščić, Trošt & Kezić, 2011; Lee, Yeung & Dewald,

2010), face-to-face contact which they enable is considered as one of the most important motivators (Han & Verma, 2014; Kang & Schrier, 2011), especially because it is increasingly rare (Smith et al., 2003). However, there are plenty of other motivators that should not be disregarded. Exhibitors' participation is also often stimulated by scanning market opportunities (Menon & Manoj, 2014), exploring the competition (Wang, 2016), learning from customers or being part of a community (Mosely & Mowatt, 2011). Participation in festivals is advisable for SMEs, which generally lack resources, because this is a convenient way of finding partners (Wang, 2016), expanding business, getting new ideas and overcoming obstacles by building relationships and keeping up with trends (Mosely & Mowatt, 2011). The literature review shows that exhibitors' and entrepreneurial aspects are included in studies of traditional festivals but to a rather limited extent. So there is still insufficient understanding whether the major motives for exhibiting are related to selling or non-selling benefits and which motivational factors are predominant. Therefore, exhibitors' motivations and decision-making factors need to be researched in order to be coordinated properly to ensure a festival will be successful and result in mutual satisfaction (Han & Verma, 2014).

According to the most popular typology of exhibitors' motives classification, most authors distinguish two main groups, selling and non-selling motives (Wang, Lee & Huh, 2017), even if their interrelationship is still unknown. Therefore, the main hypothesis of this research is as follow: H1: There is statistical significant difference between the exhibitors' non-selling and selling motivational factors.

For testing this main hypothesis, auxiliary hypotheses will be developed after the identification of the factors describing the selling and non-selling motivations.

METHODOLOGY

In order to fulfil the research goals, primary research investigating exhibitors' motivations in small-scale exhibitions was conducted. Two events were taken into consideration: Histria (Food and Beverage Exhibition) and Handmade Fest (Traditional handmade products). Both events were held in Pula, Istria County, Croatia and both in the low season: Histria during February and Handmade Fest during December, in order to reduce seasonality's effects in this touristic destination. These events were chosen because exhibitors can participate in different events organized by the promoters but can also sell their products directly to consumers from their booths. The survey method was applied to collect data. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire used in the study was designed using previous literature (Kozak, 2005; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Lee et al., 2010; Lilleheim et al., 2005) and adapted to reflect the novelties of this area of research. All item measuring exhibitors' motivations were developed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranking from "1-not important at all" to "5-very important". The questionnaire was created in English and then translated into Croatian. Primary research involved two consecutive surveys of the events, conducted in 2014 and 2015. A purposive sample was used, targeting exhibitors who was willing to participate in the survey. The questionnaire was distributed to all exhibitors on the first day of the event and collected at its end.

Finally, 137 completed questionnaires were collected, making a response rate of 49.68 percent. Data were analysed in two stages: firstly, running a principal component analysis in order to identify the selling and non-selling motivational factors and secondly analysing them. The SPSS statistical software program was used for data analysis.

RESULTS

The first step of data analysis was run descriptive statistics for all the questions to check for errors in data entry. After that, a descriptive profile of the exhibitors is provided. An analysis of the study indicated that 36.5 percent of exhibitors were men and 63.5 percent were women. Within this sample, 58.39 percent had a high-school degree and 39.42 percent, a university degree. While 66.42 percent of the exhibitors were representatives of a firm's marketing department, 12.40 percent were owners or partners in a firm. The number of employees in most of the firms was small: 37.22 percent of the firms had 3 or fewer employees and 47.44 percent had 3 to 10 employees (5.84 percent had 11-50 employees; 8.03 percent, 51-100 employees; and 1.47 percent, more than 100 employees). The majority of

exhibitors (98.6 percent) were from Croatia, with 40 percent hailing from Istria County where the festivals took place. In addition, 36.5 percent of exhibitors were participating for the first time, while 41.61 percent had participated 2-4 times; 16.05 percent, 5-8 times; and 5.84 percent, more than 8 times.

The first step of data analysis employed a factor analysis in order to delineate the perceived dimensions of exhibitors' motivations and to validate the measurement scale, as summarized in Table 1. The KMO is 0.536 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicated that the chi-square value of each factor achieved the marked level (167.340; $p=0.000$), making the data suitable for this analysis. Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to identify the number of dimensions among motivation attributes. The orthogonal (Varimax) rotation with Kaiser normalization was used to determine if there were sizable correlations between the extracted factors. One item with a factor loading smaller of 0.50 was removed from the study.

A total of four dimensions were identified and the factors are labelled as follow: (1) collaboration and cooperation, (2) selling and physical condition, (3) new products and competition, (4) personal contact and image.

TABLE 1
EXHIBITORS' MOTIVATIONS

Items	Factor 1 loadings	Factor 2 loadings	Factor 3 loadings	Factor 4 loadings	Variance Explained
F1: Collaboration and cooperation (Cronbach's Alpha*=0.764, Eigenvalue= 2.518)					
MTV10	Offering cooperation with the hotel industry	0.861			21.290%
MTV11	Connecting with other exhibitors	0.736			
MTV9	Award and award ceremony	0.716			
MTV8	New business cooperation with SMEs	0.682			
F2: Selling and physical condition (Cronbach's Alpha*=0.629, Eigenvalue= 2.359)					
MTV7	Possibility of selling non-available products in this area		0.789		18.249%
MTV5	Ambient conditions of the exhibition		0.808		
MTV4	Promotion and sale of existing products		0.660		
F3: New products and competition (Cronbach's Alpha*=0.508, Eigenvalue= 1.649)					
MTV3	Presentation of new products			0.878	15.323%
MTV6	Getting to know the competition's prices and products			0.666	
F4: Personal contact and image (Cronbach's Alpha*=0.690, Eigenvalue= 1.443)					
MTV1	Personal contact with customers			0.843	13.545%
MTV2	Improving the organization's image			0.709	

*based on standardized item

As presented in Table 1, these four motivation factors combined accounted for 66.411 percent of variance. Apart from the first factor, which explains 21.29 percent of total variance, the remaining three factors explain from 13.545 percent to 18.249 percent of variance. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient presents acceptable values, where the factor Personal contact and image presents the lowest one (0.508) with the Eigenvalue of 1.649.

The following step of data analysis involved conducting mean comparison analysis to determine the relative importance of the factors affecting the motivation of exhibitors (Table 2).

TABLE 2
FACTORS' MEAN COMPARISON ANALYSIS

Rank	Factor	Composite mean
1	Personal contact and image	4.470
2	New products and competition	4.345
3	Collaboration and cooperation	3.292
4	Selling and physical condition	3.166

Despite explaining a lower percentage of the variance, the factor "Personal contact and image" is the most important motivation factor for exhibitors (4.47), while the factor "New products and competition" was the second motivator. Specifically, the items "Improving the organization's image" (mean: 4.59, SD: 0.840) in the factor "Personal contact and image" and the item "Presentation of new products" (mean: 4.65, SD: 0.879) in the category "New products and competition" have been selected as the two most important motivation attributes. Lastly, the three least important motivations were "Award and award ceremony" (mean: 2.92, SD: 1.618) and "New business cooperation with SMEs" (mean: 2.16, SD: 1.359), both in the factor "Collaboration and cooperation", and "Possibility of selling non-available products in this area" (mean: 2.24, SD: 1.521) under the category "Selling and physical condition", which had the lowest motivation scores in all four factors.

The second step of the analysis was hypothesis testing. In order to do that, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to identify the normality of distribution. All the factors have a normal distribution at the significance level of 0,05. According to the normality of data, the Paired-Sample T-test was run to check the statistically significant difference between the non-selling and selling motivational factors. The hypothesis "There is statistical significant difference between the exhibitors' non-selling and selling motivational factors" is accepted at the significance level of 0,1% (t-value=8,085).

This paper aimed to investigate the motivators which influence exhibitors to participate in exhibitions. Exploratory factor analysis was used in the formulation and presentation of research results, where the validation of the used scale presents acceptable values and can be used for further surveys. However, the factor New product and competition should be additionally developed and analysed. The research results provide an answer to the research goals, with the non-selling factor "Collaboration and cooperation" explaining most of the variance. This indicates that many exhibitors seek customers not only to reinforce their product positioning but also to ensure their professional development, by forging closer relationships and making their companies more visible. "Personal contact and image" is the composite factor means with the highest score, pointing to the important purpose of improved presentation at exhibitions. These non-selling motivators cast a new light in the literature considering that selling factors were previously shown to have the dominant impact.

According to the tested hypothesis, there is a significant difference between the non-selling and selling factors which drive exhibitors to participate in the small-scale exhibition. These research results shed new light on the importance of why entrepreneurs and business decide to take part in exhibitions. Stating that the differences between the selling and non-selling factors exist, the influence of each one of them on exhibitors' loyalty and intention to return should be explored.

However, these results have implications for managerial practice, too. Namely, an understanding of the exhibitors' key motivations for participating in traditional festivals provides organizers with an objective basis for improvements and for meeting the real needs and expectations of exhibitors, thus helping them to achieve their goals.

The survey's limitations could be a good starting point for future research projects. The sample should also be expanded to include other categories, primarily participants and their motivations for attending traditional festivals, as this would allow comparison between the motivations of exhibitors and those of participants. A comparative research across different kinds of exhibitions and industries would be interesting for the academia and practitioners alike. Also, it would be useful to repeat this survey in order to obtain clearer guidelines for further studies and better insights for the exhibition market as well as include exhibitions in other regions.

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