



PROFILING PARTICIPANTS OF THE RAINFOREST WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL

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Abstract

For tourism marketers and event organizers, the identification and understanding of the customers are important for market segmentation. Profiling the tourists allows segmentation to be done on the basis of the person who makes the trip. The main objective of the study is to identify the characteristics of the participants of the annual music festival in Santubong, Sarawak. The satisfaction of the participants on the services provided and the facilities available is evaluated using the perception analysis on the services and facilities. On-site data are collected from a sample of the visitors to the three days festival; the data include all associated expenditures spent in the area during the festival. The results of the study show that 34%, 18% and 48 % of the visitors participate in 1, 2 and 3 days in the festival, respectively. The average total expenditure per participant per day is about RM477 giving an estimated gross total expenditure during the 2009 festival of about RM9.62mil. Of the international visitors, 57% are from Europe, 33% from Australia and New Zealand, 4% from America, 5.9% from other Asian countries. The majority of the participants prefer to stay in hotels in the city than in hotels near the site of the festival because they could find more tourism products and services in the city. Most participants are satisfied with the services and facilities available at the festival site; however, the main concerns of some of the participants are the cleanliness of the toilets, the availability of transportation, and the parking facilities. The organizers and marketing agencies involved could use information from profiling studies to plan strategies to increase participation of music enthusiasts as well as non enthusiasts in the future.

Keywords

Festivals; Segmentation; Perception; Profiles; Services; Facilities; Forest environment.

INTRODUCTION

The Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF) is an event that unites musicians and artists from all over the world in the jungle of Borneo for an unforgettable event. It is one of the most prestigious cultural events in Malaysia, especially for Sarawak. The festival comprises a unique

cultural and musical workshop during daytime and concert performances at night. The main organizer for this event is the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB), which has also been playing a major role in presenting Sarawak as one of the world's main tourist attractions. Sarawak is known to have varieties of the most beautiful and unique traditional music originating from a diversity of indigenous communities.

Since the beginning of this special event in 1997, participation in the event has been increasing every year among traditional musicians from all over the world as well as traditional music lovers. RWMF has played a major role in boosting the tourist participation in this event every year (Munan, 2009). According to STB's Marketing Director Benedict Jimbau, there were about 20170 visitors in 2009 and this number has decreased this year due to breakout of H1N1 epidemics in 2008 (Yap, 2010). Throughout its history, this remarkable festival has grown rapidly in size and become the largest and most dynamic festival of its kind in Malaysia.

This musical extravaganza is held in the South East Asia's finest "Living Museum" the Sarawak Cultural Village (SCV), which is, located about 35 km from the city center within the City of Kuching. This venue is an obvious part of the theme of the rain forest musical event (Allen et al, 2005). Holding this spectacular event at the Sarawak Cultural Village, Santubong is most significant because the village, for one, is located in a virgin rainforest that is simply the best place to appreciate nature's beauty in Sarawak. The village is a showcase of Sarawak's diverse but unique ethnic groups, which includes the Iban, Malays, Orang Ulu, Bidayuh and Melanau cultural heritage (SCV, 2010).

The main objective of the study is to determine the characteristics of the festival participants and their satisfaction levels on the facilities and services and the overall festival. In order to meet the forth mentioned objectives, the paper is structured in several parts. Section 2 presents a review of related literature on the issues of visitors profiling and related analyses. Section 3 discusses the methodology and scope of work, while the results, conclusions and future research directions are noted in Section 4.

RELATED LITERATURE

In a tourism system, it is generally accepted that tourism is a discretionary purchase based on the qualitative measure of the ordinal utility; here customers make the purchase based on raking of the bundles of the available commodities. Therefore, when an individual is deciding on whether to purchase a holiday package, he will consider the relative attractiveness of alternative packages available within the constraints of price and income. Suppliers of tourism products will therefore have to enhance the ability of the product/destination to market itself and to differentiate itself from alternative products so that the basic motivational instincts in the individual to have the holiday are met.

Pearce (2005) suggests the concept of 'tourist career' similar to a work career in which evaluation of past experiences, level of education, peer groups, physical and cultural environment, occupation and lifestyle together influence the decision for holidays. These push factors will encourage the tourist to leave home and travel to the destination. However, the



actual choice of the destination could be determined by the levels of disposable income and vacation allowance for wage earners, position in the lifecycle whether married or singles, if married ages of the children, and technological advancement especially transportation. The individual to ensure that the destination could satisfy their needs before purchase decision if done will gauge attributes at the destinations, including physical, cultural and political, (pull factors).

It is essential for tourism marketers to understand tourist behaviors, which may affect the choice of the destination offered, by the tourism marketers (Leisen, 2001). However, the tourism marketers find understanding tourist behavior is an intricate matter because of the heterogenous characteristics of tourists. Through segmentation and market targeting, it would be possible to identify the potential tourist behaviors toward the marketplace (Mohsin, 2005). In practice, the selection of target market is a complicated task, which needs a critical analysis on the potential segment based on their demographic, behavior and characteristic (Jain, 1985). Nonetheless, it is still useful and it helps to simplify the tourism marketers' understanding of the potential impacts by focusing the attention to one tourist segment only among specification of market segmentation.

The pull factors as motivators in the selection of the destination are categorized into six labels (Pearce and Wilson, 1995). The first three labels are termed the 'physical' which include the activities available at the location (both public and commercial); the settings, which are linked to biophysical aspects as in the national parks, heritage sites, or wilderness areas; and the facilities that provide physical comfort for visitors. The second category includes three human and social based characteristics. These include the services delivered to the visitors resulting in "friendliness" of the location; the hosts, the local people at the destinations who are not involved in the industry; and the management at the destination which provides the marketing and organizations of the destination.

Tourism managers and administrators require information on tourist profiles in order to help in designing and delivering tourism packages and supporting infrastructure. As the changes in the socio-economic factors that influence tourism demand indicate increasing future trends in tourism markets, appropriate planning have to be undertaken to meet consumer preferences. This may require the structuring of the industry accordingly and implementing effective anticipatory measures to avoid or minimize potentially adverse environmental impacts. Researches on market segmentation will provide information to enable product and promotional strategies to be adapted to different expectations and requirements.

As the socio demographic factors and the experience of the participants would influence future participation, a good understanding of the predictors of festival visitor expenditures could serve as a guide for the planning of marketing campaigns for successful festival management. It has been shown that the socio demographic and festival experience-related variables of visitors

have significant impacts on the volumes and patterns of their expenditure (Kim et al, 2006). The researchers have found that visitors who 'stay over-night' relative to those who 'do not stay over night' spend significantly higher levels for all the six categories of expenditure included in their study.

The tourism industry and especially tourism events such as the music festival would be highly affected by the number of tourist arrival or participation. To ensure repeat visitors and to attract new visitors it is necessary the services and facilities available and delivered be of satisfactory levels. Studies have shown that market promotion and word of mouth information are influential elements used by potential tourists in deciding to choose destinations, to extend length of stay and to spend on products and activities. Studies that focus on the expectation-experience gap have suggested that complaints made by the tourists to the national parks must be taken seriously because they are indicators of dissatisfaction of the tourists on service and facility deliveries (Yaakob, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Data for the study is obtained through on site survey of the participants; structured questionnaire is distributed to the participants who have been selected at convenience in the festival ground. The survey is carried out on each day of the festival to ensure that sufficient number of participants have used the services and facilities to enable them to indicate their evaluation of the services and facilities at the site. Although the questionnaire has been designed for self-administered format, research assistants are available to help explain and clarify any misunderstanding.

The perception of the participants on the services and facilities is collected using the modified four-point Likert scales. The evaluation of the service and facility elements is used as an indicator of the level of satisfaction of the participants on the services and facilities. The analysis of the profiles of the participant is done using descriptive analyses. A total of 325 of participants have been included in the survey; only 300 questionnaires are accepted as complete; 25 questionnaires are discarded due to ambiguous or incomplete answers.

RESULTS

Visitors Profiles

Of the total sample selected for the study the proportion of domestic participants to the international participants is 48:52. This annual rainforest world music festival has been calendared as a major event among the foreign traditional music enthusiasts who have originated from the Americas, Australia and New Zealand, Africa and Europe. The Asians participants are mainly the Japanese and Koreans.

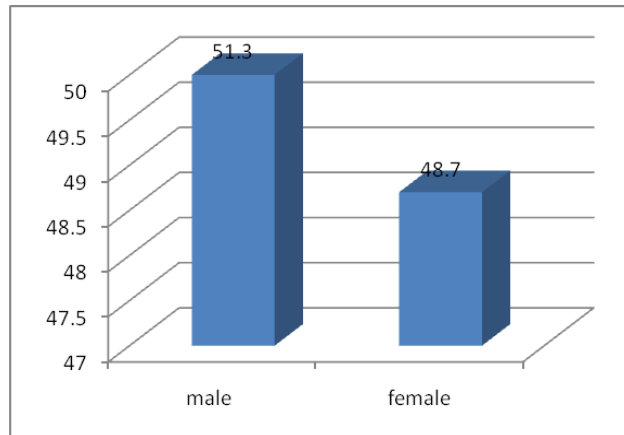


FIG. 1 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

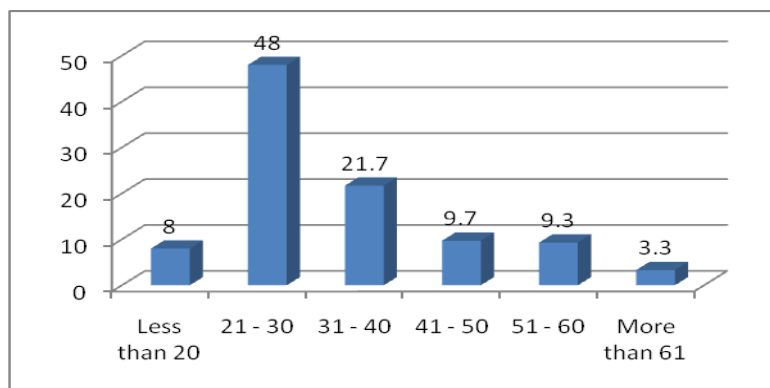


FIG. 1 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

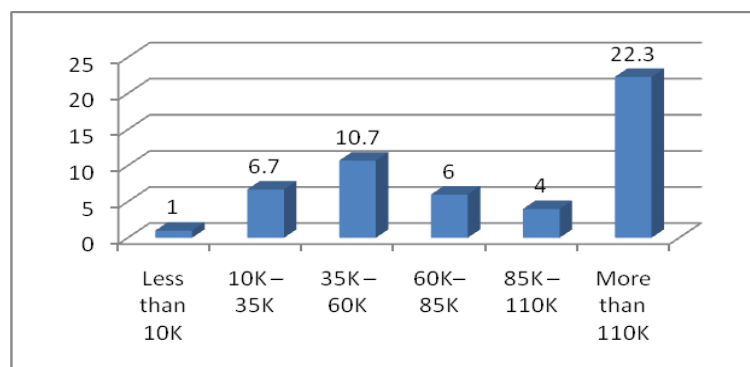


FIG. 3 GROSS ANNUAL INCOME OF VISITORS ('000 RM)

The proportion of male participants is marginally higher than the female participants, The age distribution shows a relatively young group of participants with 48% being 21–30 years old, and 21.7% were aged between 31–40 years old. About 12.6% are aged 51; those younger than 20 years (8.0%) are made mainly of university and college students.

Income being a rather sensitive issue to many individuals, especially among domestic visitors, only 50.7% of the sample have responded to the income question. Most respondents (22.3%) have indicated having a personal annual income of more than RM 110,000.00 (the higher

income distribution may be highly correlated to the higher exchange rates of foreign currencies to Malaysian Ringgit).

Visit Characteristics

Participation in festivals such as the musical events would be more exciting in groups of friend or family members; this is obvious when only 16% of the respondents indicate coming alone to the festival, coming with friends is the most common visit characteristic of the respondents. In the RWMF in Santubong, there are programs and activities that have been organized so that participation among groups of family and friends can be carried out. For instance, groups are encouraged to take part in traditional music workshop that include jamming together with the festival participants.

TABLE 1. ACCOMPANIMENT DURING VISIT

Type	Percent
Spouse	17.3
Family members	9.3
Friends	47.3
Family members and friends	10.0
Alone	16.0

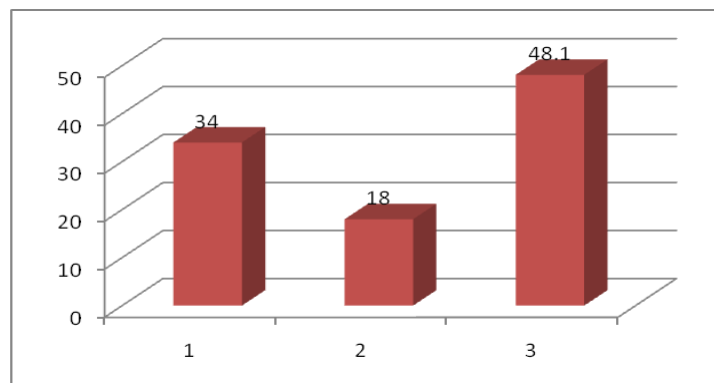


FIG. 4 NUMBER OF DAYS ATTENDING THE FESTIVAL

The musical festival is a three-day event, and the majority of the participants (48.1%) have indicated attending the whole three days. The day-time programs (workshops, seminars, cultural activities) in the festival have been scheduled to allow maximum participation among the visitors, while the traditional musical presentations fill up the night-time entertainment. The organizer of the festival provides sufficient transportation facilities to allow participants to stay in Kuching city since more accommodation facilities are available in the city; 75.7% of the participants have chosen to stay in Kuching city (Table 2).



TABLE 2. PLACE OF STAY DURING FESTIVAL

	Percent
Hotel in Kuching City	75.7
Hotel in Santubong	24.3

Attending any music festival is a rather costly affair since the participants will have to spend on several necessary items:

1. Accommodation and transportation if lodging facilities in the festival area are not available or inadequate in supply, participants will have to stay in the city;
2. Food and beverages;
3. Souvenir; and
4. Entrance fees which could be huge if the participants stay for the completely festival period or have not been able to purchase the entrance tickets with discounts (usually given to the early birds).

TABLE 3. EXPENDITURE OF PARTICIPANTS AT RWMF, SANTUBONG

Expenditure type	Less than RM100	RM 100-350	RM 350-600	RM 600-1000	More than RM 1000
Lodging			88%	5.3%	6.7%
Food & beverages	68.7%	23.7%	7.6%		
Transportation during festival	92.3%	7.7%			
Souvenirs	80%	20%			
Entrance fees	25.3%		69.3%	5.3%	

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (88.0%) have indicated spending less than RM600.00 on the accommodation. On food and beverages, 68.7% have spent on the average less than RM100 during the three day festival, while almost 24% of them have indicated spending up to RM350 on food and beverages during their stay. The expenditure on local transportation, whether taxis/car rental or bus, is relatively low; the majority (92.3%) have indicated spending less than RM100 for the three-day stay. Although 75% of the participants stay in hotels in Kuching, they have used the bus transportation facility prepared by the festival organizer, thus the transfer cost is low.

The entrance fees to the music festival have been set at different rates depending on several

criteria. A single entry fee is set at RM90 per adult with a 20% discount for children under 18 accompanying the parents. Students who could show their identification matrix cards are also given a 20% discount for a single entry. Early bird purchasers could purchase the tickets at RM250 per person for the three-day pass. As shown in Table 3, 69.3% of the respondents have indicated spending a total of between RM350-RM600 for the entrance fees during the festival. About 25.3% of the respondents have spent less than RM100 for entrance fees, these are most likely participants for one day event who have come mainly for the musical extravaganza on the last night of the festival.

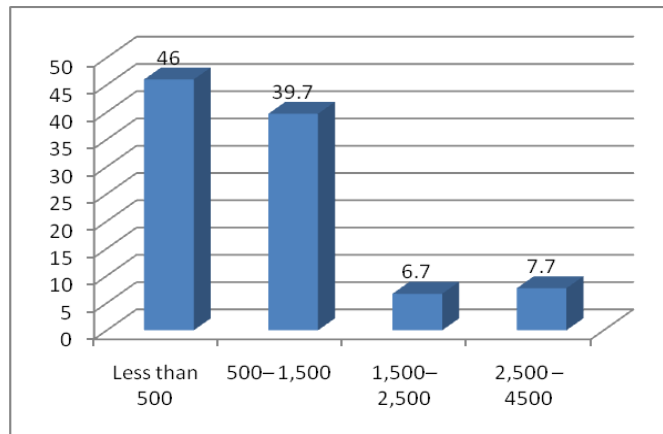


FIG. 5 TOTAL EXPENDITURE DURING FESTIVAL

Figure 5 shows the total expenditure of the participants during the festival three-day period. The majority of the participants have spent less than RM500 during the three-day period. Almost 40% have spent up to RM1500 during their attendance at the festival. Based on the total number of participants (of different categories) of 20170 (the Borneo Post), the gross expenditure during the festival in 2009 is estimated at RM9.62 mil.

Perception of Visitors on Services and Facilities

Deliveries of services and provision of facilities will influence the satisfaction of visitors to the destination; an analysis of the perception of the visitors to the site will enable the organizer to gauge the satisfaction level because perception will indicate the actual experience of the visitors on the services and facilities provided. In this study, participants have been asked to rank their satisfaction on a scale of 1 (very unsatisfactory) to 4 (very satisfactory). The results are represented in Table 4. The deliverables are categorized into 5 items labelled as: (1) accessibility; (2) services; (3) food and beverage services; (4) concert staging facilities; and (5) toilet facilities.

Staging the music festival in Sarawak Cultural Village (SCV), Santubong, is supported by a vast majority of the participants (91%). The respondents feel that the SCV as the main staging area of RWMF totally represents the unique culture of Sarawak because they can get to know Sarawak more through the village itself. However, only slightly more than half of the respondents are moderately satisfied with the parking and transportation facilities. Most of the visitors are not happy with the queuing time for the shuttle transportation provided by the organizer and for having to walk quite a distance from the drop off point to the village.



TABLE 4. SATISFACTION OF VISITORS ON FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Items/Scales	1		2		3		4		average
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Accessibility									
Location of the festival in Damai/Santubong	11	3.7	12	4.0	118	39	159	53	3.42
Transportation facilities	31	10.3	79	26.3	130	43.3	60	20.0	2.73
Parking facilities	22	7.3	71	23.7	156	52	51	17.0	2.78
Services									
Reception services at the festival	7	2.3	32	10.7	175	58.3	86	28.7	3.13
Information services at the festival	8	2.7	26	8.7	179	59.7	87	29	3.15
Communication facilities at the festival	10	3.4	39	12.3	175	58.3	76	26	3.06
Ticket booking/reservation facilities at the festival	13	4.4	34	11.3	162	54	91	30.3	3.10
Assistance given by park staffs	4	1.3	37	12.3	174	58	85	28.4	3.13
Food and beverage services									
Restaurant facilities at the festival	10	3.3	26	8.7	148	49.3	116	38.7	3.23
Food variety available at the restaurant	14	4.7	31	10.3	146	48.7	109	36.3	3.17
Beverage variety at the restaurant	11	3.7	38	12.7	165	55	86	28.6	3.08
Services given at the restaurant	12	4	31	10.3	179	59.7	78	26	3.08
Prices of food charged at the restaurants	16	5.3	61	20.3	165	55	58	19.4	2.84
General cleanliness at the restaurant facilities	4	1.3	31	10.3	184	61.4	81	27	3.14
Concert Staging facilities									
Concert staging facilities	8	2.7	31	10.3	169	56.3	92	30.7	3.15
Audio system for the concert performances	6	2	27	9	172	57.3	95	31.7	3.15
Accessibility to various attractions within the village	7	2.4	34	11.3	165	55	94	31.3	3.15
Toilet facilities									
Accessibility to rest room/toilet facilities	10	3.3	38	12.7	171	57	81	27	3.08
Number of public rest room / toilet facilities in the village	13	4.3	53	17.7	161	53.7	73	24.3	2.98
Cleanliness of the rest room / toilet facilities in the village	27	9	61	20.3	150	50	62	20.7	2.82
Overall satisfaction	9	3	37	12.3	191	64	63	21	3.03

Participants are satisfied with the reception and information services at the festival, more than half of the respondents have indicated as such. The online reservation facilities adopted by the communication and booking/reservation department of the organizer of the festival have made visitors felt easier to purchase tickets and make other reservation to the festival. The internet accessibility has minimized queuing up at the entrance and ticket sale windows. Besides that, the assistance given by the staff is of much help to the visitors during the event. The services delivered to the participants are undertaken by volunteers from local communities and students from local universities who want to be parts of a traditional music culture and want to gain experience in organizing a big event. Their hospitality and professionalism in providing the services have given a positive impression to the visitors.

Participants of the festival are offered varieties of food and beverages at the restaurant facilities; the participants are generally satisfied with the offerings. They are quite happy with the services provided at the eating-places. Prices charged at the restaurants are considered fair, given that the participants do not have choices on the availability of other places to purchase food and beverages. Most important of all, the results show that cleanliness at the restaurant facilities in the village is regarded as satisfactory.

The concert staging facilities together with the sophisticated audio system for the concert performances are satisfying to the participants. The cultural and musical workshop conducted by the performers themselves during daytime in the village houses and the concert performances at night at the two main stages provided by the organizer during this festival have made the participants felt that this prestigious cultural event is totally worth it. The easy access to the various attractions within the village have made the three-day festival and music workshop satisfying to the majority of the participants. More importantly, the participants are gratified because they agree that the organizer of the festival has been able to invite many talented and well known performers in the traditional music scene from all over the world.

An essential facility that has not been given due attention in many publicly organized events is the rest room / toilet facility. At the cultural village, it is indicated that the toilet facilities provided have been satisfactory according to the respondents. The toilet facilities have been evaluated based on the accessibility of the visitors to the facilities as well as the cleanliness of the facilities in the village. The participants are also happy with the number of rest room facilities in the village available to be used, the number of toilets available has reduced the queuing time to relieve oneself.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of the study is to explore the profile of participants of the RWMF organized by the STB of Sarawak. This annual event has become a prime attraction of the state tourism industry since it has been able to bring together many well-known traditional music talents, individuals as well as groups, from all over the world. Information on the profiles of the participants will be useful for future organization as well as for marketing purposes. In addition, information on the satisfaction of the participants on the services delivered and



facilities offered will be useful in ascertaining that the money spent by the participants are worth it, thus will help in increasing repeat visitors and promotion by word of mouths.

In general, participants of the music festival belong to niche groups of traditional music lovers; they have come from different parts of the world, a slight majority come from Europe. Most of them are in the 21 to 40 year age group; come with friends and family members. Close to half of the total participants stay on for the whole three-day periods and spending between RM500 to RM1500 on accommodation, food and transportation.

Overall, the participants are satisfied with the facilities and services provided by the organizer at the festival. Some of them have suggested to the organizers to provide campground facility, recycling facility, environmental stalls that could reflect the rainforest nature of Sarawak. Many have also suggested starting using biodegradable packing rather than using styrofoam food containers. Even though some of the respondents have indicated not fully satisfied and feel that their expectation have not been fully achieved, many are impressed and feel that the organizer has done its best to fulfill the visitor's satisfaction. Therefore, the constructive comments given by the visitors could help the organizer in improving the service deliveries in order to maximize benefits and minimize problems during the RWMF event in the future.

Some of the participants have commented on the upgrading of the facilities done, as this is an annual international event, they feel that there is no excuse for last minute upgrading of the facilities, this has caused the grass lawn in front of the stage to be in an awful condition. Among those who put up at the hotels in the Santubong area, have commented on the prices charged, prices are of five star levels but the services provided are of three star quality. To attract repeat customers it is not only important that service deliveries are of high quality but more important the customers have memorable experiences when they use the services and facilities.

Although the organization of such music festival has cultural and heritage objectives, the cost involved in organizing the festival is massive. Therefore, it is necessary that the financial implications of the festival should become a major concern of the organizer, in this case the Sarawak Tourism Board, a public agency. As the effects of the festival will also be trickled down to the local communities and the region as a whole; policies and rules with respect to the impacts of the organization of such event must be properly formulated and implemented to minimize the unwanted effects. It is also necessary that the local communities must have a positive perception of the impacts of the event on their livelihood, thus a study on how they communities feel about the economic as well as socio-cultural impacts of the festival should also be undertaken.

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