



Lessons in Managing Visitors Experience: The Case of Future Music Festival Asia (FMFA) 2014 in Malaysia

Tania Maria Tangit^{a,*}, Silverina Anabelle Kibat^a, Akmal Adanan^b

^aFaculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Locked Bag 71, 88997 Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

^bFaculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, KM26, Jalan Lendu, 78000 Alor Gajah, Melaka, Malaysia

Abstract

From religious celebrations to massive music festival, Malaysia is always known as a very festive country. Being one of the fastest growing sectors in tourism industry, music festival is celebrated lively everywhere in this region. However, not much research has been done to identify factors that visitors view as important for a good festival experience. This study analyzes visitor trends and motivational factors in attending the Future Music Festival Asia (FMFA 2014) as well as visitors' insights on facilities and services especially on safety concerns on the event that was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2014. A questionnaire survey was used as the primary method of data collection and was distributed throughout the two days during the festival. The findings highlighted the visitors' priority in selecting facilities and services and learn more about better arrangements on facilities and services that have the most impact toward future attendees. It would also enable festival organizers to better understand the impact of events landscape for Malaysia's tourism industry.

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1. Introduction

Music festivals are popular events with young adults. It is a growing type of festival in Malaysia and was held in most places with different theme and target audiences. Beautiful settings and intimate venues draw an increasing number of festivalgoers to destination all over the world. Music festivals are an important and developing arena for

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6088-513733 +60163167171.

E-mail address: silve598@sabah.uitm.edu.my

tourism sector and help to provide opportunities for targeted communication to the relatively homogenous festival audience comprised primarily of young people (Oakes, 2003). Young people basically have the apparent lack of attention to their potential and characteristics of the market as oppose to the much older people. However, study made by Horak and Weber (2000) showed that youth travel has existed for centuries and visiting a variety of cultural highlights, including festivals was the essential result of a well-rounded education, which presumed by many as a necessity before entering the adult world.

Festivals also are part of tourist motivation as revealed by Mahika (2011) on consumer's desires when opting for a travel destination. As motivations among the young people today are no more only for relaxing, rest and stay inactive, it is well explained in the study by Mahika (2011) that desire to meet people, having new experiences and discover new places are commonly found as this is believe can stimulate them psychologically. The concept of push and pull motivations factors can easily be identified in the case of attending a music festival like Future Music as it is one of the most talked about music festival today. In relation attending to music festival, it can relates to what Yoon and Uysal (2005) mentioned in their study that push motivations can be seen as the desire to escape, social interaction, prestige and looking for excitement, while pull motivations are inspired by a destination's attractiveness, the type and level of entertainment offered at the destination, the facilities and overall organization of the whole festival based on the review of other visitors that went to similar festival in the past. There has, however, been little research focused on the every possible aspect of music festivals in relation to the visitors' experience and organizers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Festival and Tourism

Festivals play an important part in the tourism industry for two major reasons. First, they create memories and stories, draw attention to mundane everyday experience, lift people's spirit, and celebrate human existence. Thus, festival is special type of social activities that give our lives deeper meanings and separate us from other kind of livings (Getz, 2002). People always will seek meaning in their lives; thus they are willing to travel to distant places to be part of a festival or event. Second, festivals are one factor to the economic income for the local community in a city, region, or country. Visitors to a festival definitely will stay in different type of accommodation depending on their budget, dine out in restaurants, participate in-group activities, and purchase souvenirs – another way of creating long lasting memories and meanings. The inflow of money will generate jobs and stimulate the local economy.

2.2 Future Music Festival

Future Music Festival began in 2006 as a one-day independent festival in Sydney, Australia. In 2007, it evolved into a massive festival held at various cities in Australia including Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. In 2012, the festival expanded out to Asia for the very first time with a show held in Sepang International Circuit at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. With similarities of what was held in Australia, the festival, Future Music Festival Asia (FMFA) brought together music fest lovers all around the globe to watch a combination of both local and international performers (Livescape Asia website, 2014)

This research seeks to explore visitors trends and motivation factors in attending music festivals with a view to contributing to the literature on perceptions toward the facilities provided and more specifically offering the festival organizers clearer picture of visitor's views on services especially on safety aspect. Since there is very little research on these areas of music events, limited empirical research on "entertainment service" by Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006) and very little discussion of marketing tools used to access information on music festival in literature (O'Reilly, 2005) this paper makes an important exploratory contribution to each of these areas, and, in general to the understanding of visitors engagement with visiting trends and service perception in mediated spaces.

3. Research Method

The FMFA 2014 survey was conducted from the 13-15 March 2014 at Bukit Jalil National Stadium, Kuala Lumpur. The survey was lead by a team of lecturers from the Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Enumerators were 25 student volunteers from the Faculty of Business Management and the Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management of UiTM Shah Alam and UiTM Puncak Alam, as well as students from other colleges.

Student volunteers underwent a briefing and training on the 12 March 2014 that comprises of understanding the sections within the survey and on approaching respondents. Volunteers were also briefed on the “Do’s and Don’ts” as enumerators for the survey.

In total there were 1810 participants of this study, where 1596 valid responses were accounted for. The criteria of a valid and complete questionnaire would include respondents’ age, gender and at least 50% of the questionnaire is completed. Main limitation of the study is in the process of getting responses from the visitors as festivals and events are highly dynamic with continuous flows of participants. The visitors to festivals especially music festivals are excited, rowdy, and sometimes intoxicated. As a result, the surveys are difficult to carry out therefore the result will not be comparable.

4. Key Findings

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	Categories	Total Count	Percentage %
Age	<i>Below 18</i>	4	0.3
	<i>18-20</i>	465	29.1
	<i>21-25</i>	730	45.7
	<i>26-30</i>	305	19.1
	<i>31-35</i>	58	3.6
	<i>36-40</i>	18	1.1
	<i>41-45</i>	12	0.8
	<i>Above 46</i>	4	0.3
Gender	<i>Male</i>	791	49.6
	<i>Female</i>	805	50.4
Marital Status	<i>Single</i>	1415	88.7
	<i>Married</i>	124	7.8
	<i>No Response</i>	57	3.6
Nationality	<i>Malaysian</i>	1095	68.6
	<i>Non-Malaysian</i>	478	29.9
	<i>No Response</i>	23	1.4

The respondents’ demographic profile as displayed in Table 1 showed a majority of the respondents who participated in the survey are single (88.7%), female (50.4%) and between 21-25 years old (45.9%). More than half of the respondents are students (52.3%) and at least 70% of the respondents are Malaysians. This showed that majority of the visitors that attended FMFA 2014 are among the young people and mostly are from Malaysia.

4.2 Ratings on Facilities and Services Provided during FMFA2014

Respondents’ rating on facilities and services during the festival are divided into 13 items (Table 2) that covered from cost of tickets, choice of performers, cleanliness, food & beverage selection and security check. There was at

least 60% participation from respondents on this question. Most respondents rated “Excellent” for the choice of performers (27.9%), sound & lighting (26.4%) and stage setup (26.1%). Respondents rated the cost of tickets (16.9%), merchandise on sale (14.5%), F&B selection (14.1%), food quality and hygiene (15%) and cleanliness of the area (13.3%) to be at a satisfactory level. Less than 5% of the overall respondents rated “Poor” with regards to the shuttle service (2.2%), security check (2.4%) and signage (2.1%) provided throughout the festival.

Table 2: Facilities and Services

Categories	Poor		Average		Satisfactory		Very Good		Excellent		No Response	
	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%	C	%
Shuttle Service	35	2.2	86	5.4	185	11.6	240	15.0	233	14.6	817	51.2
Cost of Tickets	39	2.4	126	7.9	270	16.9	261	16.4	250	15.7	650	40.8
Choice of Performers	10	0.6	62	3.9	137	8.6	296	18.5	446	27.9	645	40.5
Security Check	38	2.4	45	2.8	137	8.6	337	21.1	366	22.9	673	42.3
Sound & Lighting	5	0.3	43	2.7	127	8.0	325	20.4	421	26.4	675	42.3
Stage	3	0.2	47	2.9	138	8.6	311	19.5	416	26.1	683	42.7
Merchandise on Sale	16	1.0	56	3.5	231	14.5	313	19.6	276	17.3	704	44.2
F&B Selection	31	1.9	67	4.2	225	14.1	274	17.2	292	18.3	707	44.3
Food Quality & Hygiene	8	0.5	81	5.1	240	15.0	304	19.0	279	17.5	684	42.9
Publicity	15	0.9	35	2.2	167	10.5	322	20.2	361	22.6	696	43.6
Cleanliness	21	1.3	60	3.8	213	13.3	328	20.6	285	17.9	689	43.2
Layout	14	0.9	56	3.5	183	11.5	336	21.1	311	19.5	696	43.7
Signage	34	2.1	40	2.5	172	10.8	298	18.7	331	20.7	721	45.2
Overall Festival Organization & Design	24	1.5	28	1.8	125	7.8	352	22.1	357	22.4	710	44.5

Note: C = Count, % = Percentage; Based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Poor and 5 = Excellent

4.3 Safety and Security Concerns among the Visitors

Table 3: Safety and Security

Categories	Count	Percentage %
Theft	719	45.1
Overcrowding	561	35.2
Fights	478	29.9
Getting Lost	451	28.3
Drugs	407	25.5
Accidents & Injuries	387	24.2
Severe Weather	344	21.6
Sexual Assaults	321	20.1
Riot	295	18.5
Alcohol	233	14.6
Food Hygiene	179	11.2
Health Concerns	169	10.6
Fire	155	9.7
Others	20	1.3

Note: n = 1956

Majority of the respondents answered theft (45.1%), overcrowding (35.2%), fights (29.9%) and getting lost (28.3%) to be their major safety and security concerns. A quarter of the respondents' were also worried of drug abuse (25.5%) during the festival. The least of their concern was a possibility of a fire (9.7%). This showed that majority of the visitors during FMFA2014 want to feel confident about their safety while enjoying themselves with the performances. As big and aggressive crowds are unavoidable in any festivals especially when it implies music performances, there are many aspects that the organizers need to take in ensuring crowd safety. They should have practical guidance that provides all involves in the organization of the event on how to manage crowd safety in systematic way. This will not primarily aimed mainly at the organizer, but to others involved in the event such as contractors, local authorities and related staff.

5. Issues during FMFA2014

By looking at the respondents' concerns especially towards the safety and security during the FMFA 2014, it was quite reasonable, as the third day of the FMFA 2014 has been cancelled after six people died from drug overdoses and 19 people were arrested for drug possession. According to the police report (The Star, 2014), the victims were believed to have taken the drug before going to the concert and aged between 21-27 years old. Although the organizers and police were recognized of their efforts to establish preventative health and safety measures at the events, large overcrowding crowds and security check at the entrance gate were highlighted by the respondents from the findings above might be among the reason things getting out of control during the peak of the events. The resulting havoc became serious crowd-safety issues as most concerned citizens started to question the need to have big entertainment events in the country.

There are tragic events that had happened everywhere in the world especially when crowds gather. The failure of managing a mass movement of the crowd and ignoring the potential of aggressive behaviors will always be the areas highlighted in the importance of being responsible towards a good crowd safety management.

Most of the top world performer also mentioned that crowd safety is the No. 1 issue for all festivals and concerts, which it is important to be there and be safe (Huan, 2013). Due to the overwhelming response on thousands of people attending sporting events, pop concerts and festival each week, the most authorities from all big cities has published a major revision of its guidance of crowd safety management. It was aimed at event organizers to highlight the importance and their responsibility in making sure they practice a very efficient crowd safety management as people who attended all these events want to feel confident about their safety.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

This study highlights only the total counts/responses on the questions posed in the survey. The survey achieved 72% respondents out of the targeted 2500 respondents across 3 days. The total number of valid surveys is recorded at 1596 (88% response rate). It can be concluded that the survey activity went well, despite having only 1.5 hours on Day 3 to conduct the survey due to the cancellation by authorities in response to the drug cases involving 19 people with 6 died from drug overdoses that attended the festival a night before.

It is well aware that hosting an international event is encouraged because of its potential economic impact as well as the locals can benefit through temporary jobs and spending by the festival goers. However, everyone that involve in the making of any festivals especially when it comes to music performances that guaranteed big and aggressive crowds, safety should always be the top priority. Therefore in the future, a much stricter festival organizer, more safety personnel and much better plan of crowd safety management would be needed in order to ensure a smooth and clean festivals. However, with the overwhelming reaction from the community in relation to the death cases, the local authorities has suggested to stop hosting the festival in the following year.

On the survey point of view, it is recommended to designate an area for the purpose of the survey activity (i.e. Tourism Malaysia/Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) can allocate a space for their survey activity during FMFA 2014). With an allocated space and freebies to give away (i.e. ice cream, festival-related goodies, vouchers, contests prizes, etc), festival-goers may not be hesitant to answer the survey at their convenience. A "Freebies" zone can be allocated in future events, where more surveys can be easily conducted at a controlled space and area. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the survey activity does not take place at various festival grounds. Survey questions should not be a duplicate of other ongoing surveys of the same festival, and also be pretested by organizers and a selected sample to ensure survey objectives are met.

As the events industry is going through a period of unprecedented change, both internal and external forces and trends should be closely examined, as they would affect the attendees' overall experience and satisfaction before,

during and after the festival. This would enable festival organizers to better understand the impact of events landscape for Malaysia's tourism industry.

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