



A model of community-based festival image

Joy Zhuowei Huang^{a,*}, Mimi Li^b, Liping A. Cai^a

^a Purdue Tourism & Hospitality Research Center, 700 W. State Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907, United States

^b School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, China

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Community-based festival (CBF)
Image
First-time visitors
Repeat visitors

ABSTRACT

This study initiates an original inquiry into the image of community-based festivals (CBFs). A CBF image model was proposed and empirically tested based on existing destination image models. Four image constructs were identified as *Attributes*, *Family and Friendliness*, *Affective Association*, and *Overall Evaluation*. The interrelationships among these constructs were tested by structural equation modeling. The findings revealed that *Attributes* affects *Family and Friendliness* and *Affective Association*, which in turn, affects *Overall Evaluation*. This study also included visitor loyalty in the understanding of CBF image. It was found that repeat visitors had more favorable perceptions of the CBF than did first-time visitors. Significant perceptual differences were found in *Family and Friendliness*, *Affective Association*, and *Overall Evaluation* between the two groups of festival goers. In addition, it was revealed that loyalty exerted significantly negative interaction effects on the relationship between *Attributes* and *Family and Friendliness*, as well as the linkage between *Family and Friendliness* and *Overall Evaluation*. In addition, this study illustrated the importance of the support of local residents for CBFs. CBF planners and local tourism organizations would benefit from this study in terms of cultivating visitor loyalty to these festivals and building the destination's brand.

© 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Festivals and special events are increasingly sought after by visitors as unique offerings (Litvin and Fetter, 2006). They provide the opportunity for visitors to participate in a collective experience that is distinct from everyday life (Getz and Frisby, 1988). From the standpoint of host communities, festivals help enhance or preserve local culture and history (Xie, 2004), renew an urban area or region (Carlsen and Taylor, 2003; Richards and Wilson, 2004), generate economic benefits (Litvin and Fetter, 2006; Long and Perdue, 1990), stimulate the local tourism industry (Long and Perdue, 1990), and expand the tourism season (Getz, 1991). According to one report, about 6.5 million person-trips in Canada were generated through attendance at festivals or fairs, which contributed CDN\$1.8 billion to local communities (LeBlanc, 2004).

These advantages of festivals and special events are demonstrated more explicitly in rural settings, particularly in boosting local economies (Long and Perdue, 1990), continuing employment (Felsenstein and Fleischer, 2003), and proandoting rural destination (Boo and Busser, 2006). Communitand-based festivals (CBFs) in rural areas, labeled “home-grown” festivals by O’Sullivan and

Jackson (2002), are essentially small scale, bottom up, and run by one or more volunteers for the benefit of the locality. They take place in rural or semi-rural areas with the primary goal of providing cultural and entertainment benefits for locals and visitors (O’Sullivan and Jackson, 2002). Although small in scale and attendance, they have a diverse range of themes and purposes (Small et al., 2005). In addition, festival goers include nearby town or city residents, as well as locals (Bres and Davis, 2001).

Extant work on CBF focuses on two topics: economic benefits for local communities (e.g., Felsenstein and Fleischer, 2003; Long and Perdue, 1990; Mehmetoglu, 2002) and the effects of tourism promotion on host destinations (e.g., Boo and Busser, 2006; Felsenstein and Fleischer, 2003; Getz and Frisby, 1988; Mehmetoglu and Ellingsen, 2005). Although tourist expenditure at CBFs is the focus of many studies, increasing research attention is being directed toward the effects of festivals on destination image improvement (Boo and Busser, 2006). Festivals and special events have been proposed as an effective image-building strategy to make destinations creative and unique (Felsenstein and Fleischer, 2003; Li and Vogel song, 2006; Mehmetoglu and Ellingsen, 2005).

The existing literature, however, stops short of explicitly presenting visitor perceptions of community-based festivals and special events in rural areas. The purpose of this study is to fill this research gap with the objective of developing a model of CBF image. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions through the case of a CBF in the Midwestern United States.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 765 337 8732.

E-mail addresses: huang60@purdue.edu (J.Z. Huang), hmmlip@polyu.edu.hk (M. Li), liping@purdue.edu (L.A. Cai).

1. What are image constructs of the CBF?
2. What are the relationships among the image constructs of the CBF?
3. To what extent, does visitors' loyalty affect their perceptions of the CBF?

2. Literature review

Image is a mental structure that integrates the elements, impressions, and values people project onto a specific place. It is based on the material knowledge and emotional perceptions of perceivers of places (Espelt and Benito, 2005). Evidence suggested that tourist destination choice decisions were based on the degree to which they generate favorable images (Gartner, 1989; Um and Crompton, 1990). Destination image also illustrates the projection of a destination (Bonn et al., 2005; Mill and Morrison, 2002; Sirgy and Su, 2000). Understanding the existing images that visitors possess about destinations allows tourism organizations to project an effective image to target markets (Bonn et al., 2005; Pike and Ryan, 2004). Although image is difficult to define, the dimensions of destination image suggested by Gartner are commonly accepted in tourism literature. He posited that destination image was formed by three distinctly different but hierarchically interrelated elements: cognitive, affective, and conative (Gartner, 1993). This model has been adopted in subsequent studies on destination image. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) employed these components to measure images of four Mediterranean countries. Based on Gartner's model and Keller's concept of brand association (Keller, 2002), Cai (2002) proposed and tested a 3As (Attributes, Affective, and Attitudes) model of image, which emphasized the hierarchical nature of the image components. These three dimensions of destination image are also of value in destination positioning analysis. Pike and Ryan (2004) noted that affective messages may be used in promotional themes aimed at previous visitors. However, for an individual with no previous experience of a destination, cognitive elaboration is required.

Gartner's model has been employed, at least in part, in studies that link festivals and special events with image. Prentice and Andersen (2003) believed that a festival can reposition a destination's image, or even modify a region's image. Richards and Wilson (2004) employed a cognitive-affective approach to evaluate the impact of a cultural event on Rotterdam's image and found that a mega event could positively change the general image of the host city, at least immediately following the event. Boo and Busser (2006) examined a CBF and applied a semi-cognitive pure-affective model to investigate whether a festival could contribute to the improvement of the destination image. In contrast to the finding of Richards and Wilson on a mega event, Boo and Busser reported that the CBF did not improve the host destination's image. Li and Vogelsohn (2006) examined changes in festival image attributes using two methods and concluded that visitor perceptions of the host community were improved because of their festival experience. Jago et al. (2003) extended the line of destination image research to destination branding in their attempt to identify the contributions of events to destination branding.

Despite the progress in examining promotional effects of festivals on the image of the host community, extant literature has overlooked the transferring process of visitor perceptions from the festival to the destination (Jago et al., 2003). The concept of festival image remains ambiguous and unexplored.

In addition, while substantive attentions are attracted to promotional effects of festivals, research on how to encourage repeat festival visitation is limited. Repeat visitation tends to reduce marketing budgets (Shoemaker and Lewis, 1999), increase visitor expenditure (Alegre and Juaneda, 2006; Lehto et al., 2004), and elicit

positive word of mouth (Oppermann, 2000; Shoemaker and Lewis, 1999). Community-led festivals could benefit from more repeat visitors. These festivals are at a great disadvantage in promoting themselves to potential and existing markets, which is an obstacle to the expansion of their market into outlying areas. The primary target market of CBFs in rural areas is the localities surrounding the host destination. Therefore, a better understanding of perceptions and feelings of current visitors is greatly needed, which helps formulate strategies to encourage them to return.

The perceived destination image of visitors has been identified as a significant factor influencing repeat visitation. An emerging body of literature has addressed this issue (e.g., Bigne et al., 2001; Cai et al., 2003; Castro et al., 2007; Lucio et al., 2006). Several studies advanced this line of research to delineate effects of various image components on repeat visitation. Cai et al. (2003) compared perceptions among tourists of various degrees of loyalty, such as first-time visitors, occasional visitors, frequent visitors, and loyalists. No differences in attributes were found among the various groups of visitors, whereas significant differences in Affective and Attitude factors were revealed among them. Lucio et al. (2006) investigated causal relationships between image components and visitor loyalty. Their results showed that affective image exerted a significant positive influence on visitor attitudinal loyalty, whereas cognitive image did not.

Few tourism studies have attempted to develop a CBF image model, or relate it to repeat visitation. The current study is conducted to address this deficiency in the CBF research with four specific objectives: (1) to explore image constructs of the CBF on the basis of visitor perceptions; (2) to examine the relationships among festival image constructs and develop a model of CBF image; (3) to identify the similarities and discrepancies between the proposed CBF image model and a general destination image model; and (4) to investigate the effects of loyalty on visitors' perceptions of the CBF.

3. Methodology

The data used in the current study were drawn from a visitor profile study of a CBF that took place from June 30 to July 4, 2006, in a county in the Midwestern United States. Adult visitors from outside the host community were qualified as respondents. The data were collected through personal interviews at a variety of interview sites during the festival. A total of 258 usable questionnaires were collected. The survey instrument contained five parts. The first section pertained to the visitor's trip characteristics and behavioral patterns (i.e., travel companion(s), visit frequency, transportation, and distance between the origin and destination). The second section measured the visitor's evaluation of activities in which he or she participated at the festival. The third section focused on the participant's information search behavior and information needs. Section 4 dealt with the visitor's perceptions of the festival. The fifth section solicited demographic information about the respondents. Regarding to the instrument design, the respondents were asked to evaluate their perceptions pertaining to the festival delineated by the 17 statements on a scale ranging from 1 (the least descriptive) to 10 (the most descriptive). Among these 17 items, 14 were initially generated from a review of previous studies on destination image in general and festival image in particular (Anwar and Sohail, 2004; Boo and Busser, 2006; Crompton, 2003; Grosspietsch, 2006; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997; Petrick, 2004; Pike and Ryan, 2004; Poria et al., 2006; Richards and Wilson, 2004). Three statements were designed specifically for this CBF according to suggestions from the CBF organizers. They are: the festival provides a unique experience to celebrate Independence Day; the festival is ideal destination for a fun day trip; the festival is a local festival.

Statistical analysis was carried out as follows. Frequency analysis was employed to determine the profile of the festival attendees. Descriptive analysis was then conducted to summarize the visitor perceptions of each image statement. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was followed to identify the underlying image constructs. Items exhibiting low factor loadings (<0.40), high cross-loadings (>0.40), or low communalities (<0.50) were candidates for deletion (Hair et al., 1998). To verify the internal consistency reliability of the variables generated by EFA, Cronbach's alpha reliability test was employed. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to examine the relationships among the factors identified by EFA. Two analyses were used to investigate the effects of loyalty on visitors' CBF perceptions. First, ANOVA was conducted to compare the different perceptions of the festival of first-time and repeat visitors, with the image constructs as the dependent variables and the number of visits as the independent variable. Second, the interaction effects of loyalty on relationships among CBF image constructs were examined in structural equation modeling.

4. Results

4.1. General profile and trip characteristics of the respondents

The profile and trip characteristics of the sample are provided in Table 1. The majority of the respondents were repeat visitors and day trippers who came from nearby communities. More women than men participated in this survey. More than half of the respondents held an associate's degree or below. The trip characteristics of respondents showed that most of the respondents were day trippers and that around 80% lived within 50 miles of the host community (Table 1). These characteristics indicate the

Table 1
Profile and trip characteristics of respondents.

Variables	Frequency (n=258)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	114	44.2
Female	144	55.8
Education		
Left high school before diploma	4	1.6
High school diploma	102	39.5
Associate's degree	48	18.6
Bachelor's degree	57	22.1
Master's degree	14	5.4
Doctorate	5	1.9
Household income		
Unwilling to tell	60	23.3
Under \$20,000	23	8.9
\$20,000–39,999	21	8.1
\$40,000–59,999	39	15.1
\$60,000–79,999	40	15.5
\$80,000–99,999	32	12.4
Over \$100,000	32	12.4
Travel distance (miles)		
1–9	69	26.7
10–19	70	27.1
20–29	33	12.8
30–39	24	9.3
40–49	10	3.9
Over 50	40	15.5
Travel times		
First time	84	32.6
Repeat	170	65.8
Length of stay		
Day trip	209	81.0
Overnight	48	19.6

difference between CBFs and mega events. The latter attract more overnight visitors from other states or other countries (Getz, 1991). Over 65% of the respondents were repeat visitors. Clearly, the repeat market from nearby communities is the primary market of this CBF.

4.2. Community-based festival image constructs

Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the 17 image items to identify the image constructs of the CBF. Table 2 shows the results of EFA and the Cronbach's alpha reliability test for each identified construct. The four underlying image constructs generated by EFA explained 67.583% of the total variance. These constructs were labeled *Attributes*, *Family and Friendliness*, *Affective Association*, and *Overall Evaluation*. The alphas ranged from 0.789 to 0.930, which were higher than the conservative criterion of 0.70 (Pedhazur and Schmelkin, 1991).

Attributes refers to the items related to the specific features of the festival, such as the dining facilities, activities, and entertainment opportunities; *Family and Friendliness* concerns the hospitality of the local residents; and *Affective Association* concerns the festival goers' emotional attachment to the festival. Sample statements for this dimension included "The festival is my favorite festival" and "The festival is my type of festival". Finally, *Overall Evaluation* included items related to visitors' overall impression of the festival.

The CBF image constructs mirror those of the 3As model of destination image by Cai (2002). In his destination image model, attributes are defined as the perceived tangible and intangible features characterizing the destination; affective elements are the personal values and meanings attached to and benefits desired from the attributes; and attitudes are related to the overall evaluation and the basis for actions and behavior (Cai, 2002). The CBF image constructs of *Attributes* and *Overall Evaluation* correspond to Cai's attribute and attitude components. The constructs of *Family and Friendliness* and *Affective Association* agree with Cai's definition of the affective component. One difference is that the affective construct in the current study specifically emphasized the importance of family togetherness and friendly people at the CBF.

4.3. Community-based festival image model

This study is unique in bringing up the concept of CBF image, and in proposing and testing a CBF image model. Both Gartner (1993) and Cai (2002) found a hierarchical relationship among three image components in their destination image models, which support the current study to propose the model of CBF image with the following two sets of hypotheses.

The first set of hypotheses concerns the relationships between *Attributes* and the affective constructs of *Family and Friendliness* and *Affective Association*.

H1a. The image construct of *Attributes* positively influences *Family and Friendliness*.

H1b. The image construct of *Attributes* positively influences *Affective Association*.

The second set of hypotheses concerns the relationships between the affective constructs and *Overall Evaluation*.

H2a. The image construct of *Family and Friendliness* positively influences *Overall Evaluation*.

H2b. The image construct of *Affective Association* positively influences *Overall Evaluation*.

Table 2
Results of exploratory factor analysis of visitor perceptions.

Image constructs and items	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Reliability coefficient
<i>F1: Attributes</i>		4.139	24.350	0.930
The festival provides a unique experience to celebrate Independence Day	0.78			
There are many things to see and do at the festival	0.76			
There are exciting entertainment opportunities at the festival	0.75			
The festival provides a unique atmosphere	0.68			
The festival is ideal destination for a fun day trip	0.59			
The festival provides a quality dining experience to festival goers	0.52			
<i>F2: Family and friendliness</i>		2.019	11.876	0.812
The festival is an ideal festival for family togetherness	0.81			
People at the festival are warm and friendly	0.50			
<i>F3: Affective association</i>		3.046	17.915	0.886
The festival is my favorite festival	0.63			
I would recommend the festival to my friends and/or relatives	0.62			
The festival is my type of festival	0.60			
The festival is affordable	0.52			
The festival is a regional festival	0.47			
The festival is an ideal festival for a couples getaway	0.48			
<i>F4: Overall evaluation</i>		2.285	13.442	0.789
The festival is a local festival	0.86			
The festival is for people of all ages	0.71			
I feel safe at the festival	0.44			
Total variance explained	67.583			

A structural equation modeling approach was used to test the hypotheses pertaining to the relationships among the festival image constructs. The results indicated a good fit for the data: $\chi^2 = 98.526$, $\chi^2/df = 1.23$, $p\text{-value} = 0.078$, GFI (*goodness-of-fit index*) = 0.948, AGFI (*adjusted goodness-of-fit index*) = 0.901 and RMSEA (*root mean square error of approximation*) = 0.033, which supported all the hypotheses. The *Attributes* construct exerted a positive influence on the affective factors of *Family and Friendliness* and *Affective Association*, which in turn, affects *Overall Evaluation*. The test results of the hypothesized relationships are reported in Table 3. The CBF image model (shown in Fig. 1) is consistent with that of Gartner (1993) and Cai (2002) in terms of the constructs and their interrelationships.

4.4. Effects of loyalty on visitors' CBF perceptions

Given the overwhelming market share of repeat visitors to this CBF, it is meaningful to understand how to retain the repeat market. The effects of loyalty on visitors' CBF perceptions were examined. Different perceptions of the festival from first-time and repeat visitors were first investigated. It was indicated that repeat visitors reported higher perceptual scores on all items than new tourists (Table 4). Repeat visitors were more satisfied with the festival than first-time visitors, both physically and emotionally.

ANOVA was conducted to compare the two groups for the four festival image constructs (Table 4). There were statistically

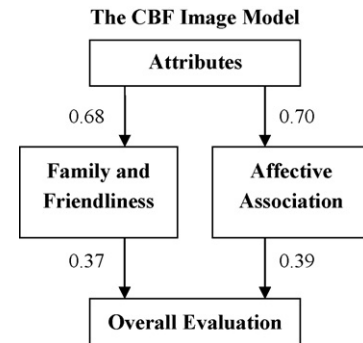


Fig. 1. The CBF image model.

significant differences between first-time and repeat visitors with respect to the constructs of *Affective Association* ($F = 4.461$, $p\text{-value} = 0.036$) and *Overall Evaluation* ($F = 8.102$, $p\text{-value} = 0.005$) at the 0.05 level, and a marginal difference in the *Family and Friendliness* construct ($F = 3.850$, $p\text{-value} = 0.051$) at the 0.1 level. However, no significant difference was found for the *Attributes* construct ($F = 0.268$, $p\text{-value} = 0.605$). This result indicates that repeat visitors responded with greater emotion to the festival than did new customers. Repeat visitors enjoyed the atmosphere of the festival and nice people of the host community. Although the scores of *Attributes* items of repeat visitors were higher than those

Table 3
Results of hypotheses testing and goodness-of-fit indices for the CBF image model.

Paths	Standardized estimates	<i>t</i> statistics	Hypothesis
Attributes → family and friendliness	0.68	10.561***	Accepted
Attributes → affective association	0.70	7.803***	Accepted
Family and friendliness → overall evaluation	0.37	2.991***	Accepted
Affective association → overall evaluation	0.39	3.003***	Accepted

Index	χ^2	χ^2/df	<i>p</i> -value	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Cut-off value	N/A	1.0–5.0	>0.05	>0.90	>0.90	<0.1
Observed statistics	98.526	1.23	0.078	0.948	0.901	0.033

*** Indicates significance at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

Table 4
Perceptual differences between first-time and repeat visitors.

Image constructs and items	Means of image items		Image constructs differences between first-time ($n = 84$) and repeat visitors ($m = 170$)	
	First-time	Repeat	F	Sig.
<i>F1: Attributes</i>			0.268	0.605
The festival provides a unique experience to celebrate Independence Day	7.19	7.82		
There are many things to see and do at the festival	6.79	7.09		
There are exciting entertainment opportunities at the festival	6.59	7.10		
The festival provides a unique atmosphere	7.11	7.82		
The festival is ideal destination for a fun day trip	7.56	8.01		
The festival provides a quality dining experience to festival goers	6.35	7.12		
<i>F2: Family and friendliness</i>			3.850	0.051
The festival is an ideal festival for family togetherness	7.99	8.41		
People at the festival are warm and friendly	7.71	8.63		
<i>F3: Affective association</i>			4.461	0.036
The festival is my favorite festival	5.14	6.46		
I would recommend the festival to my friends and/or relatives	7.26	7.87		
The festival is my type of festival	6.53	7.46		
The festival is affordable	7.61	7.75		
The festival is a regional festival	6.19	7.42		
The festival is an ideal festival for a couples getaway	7.04	7.24		
<i>F4: Overall evaluation</i>			8.102	0.005
The festival is a local festival	8.19	9.12		
The festival is for people of all ages	8.39	9.00		
I feel safe at the festival	8.32	8.69		

Table 5
Results of interaction effect testing.

Index	χ^2	χ^2/df	p-value	CFI	RMSEA	Interaction effect
Cut-off value	N/A	1.0–5.0	<0.05	>0.90	<0.1	
Test I ^a	197	1.71	0.000	0.975	0.059	–0.896*
Test II ^b	248.4	2.1	0.000	0.960	0.074	–1.390*

^a Test I was conducted to examine the interaction effect of loyalty on the relationship between *Attributes* and *Family and Friendliness*.

^b Test II was conducted to examine the interaction effect of loyalty on the relationship between *Family and Friendliness* and *Overall Evaluation*.

* Indicates significance at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

of first-time visitors, the discrepancy between these two groups was not significant for this image construct. This implies that new visitors and repeat visitors felt more or less the same about the tangible attributes of the festival, such as dining facilities, activities, entertainment, and so forth. Repeat visitors did not overvalue the tangible characteristics of the festival because of their emotional attachment. It therefore suggests that people did not return only for their positive perceptions of the festival's attributes. The other three constructs played a greater role in cultivating visitor loyalty to the festival.

The interaction effects of loyalty on relationships among CBF image constructs were tested in structural equation modeling, respectively. The construct of loyalty here is behavioral loyalty measured by first and repeat visitation, as visiting time is not a continuous variable. The testing results (Table 5) showed that loyalty exerted significantly negative interaction effects on the linkage between *Attributes* and *Family and Friendliness*, as well as the relationship between *Family and Friendliness* and *Overall Evaluation*, but no effects on relationships between *Attributes* and *Affective Association*, as well as *Affective Association* and *Overall Evaluation*. This result indicates that compared to first-time visitors, the relationship between *Attributes* and *Family and Friendliness* becomes weak for repeat visitors, so does the linkage between *Family and Friendliness* and *Overall Evaluation*. This implies that how repeat visitors perceive the family oriented and friendly atmosphere at the CBF did not depend so much on their perceptions of CBF attributes as first-time visitors did. The same can be said for the effects of *Family and Friendliness* on *Overall Evaluation*.

The finding pinpoints the particular role of *Family and Friendliness* construct in CBF image model, especially for the group of repeat visitors. They appeared to have an independent and specific perception of family get-togetherness and friendly local residents at the CBF, which demonstrates fewer connections with *Attributes* and *Overall Evaluation* of the CBF image. A close look at the data provides more insights in this regard. Over 80% of repeat visitors traveled with their spouses, own kids, parents, grand children, or other relatives. Most of them believed the festival was good for family get-together and they came with this purpose. Repeat visitors had a well-established emotional perception of the festival in this aspect which is difficult to be affected by attributes. The outcome of ANOVA reveals the marginal difference of *Family and Friendliness* between first-time and repeat visitors. This result therefore explains why this established image of repeat visitors weighs less in the overall evaluation of CBF.

5. Conclusions and discussions

This research offered insights into an issue not extensively addressed by far. The study proposed and empirically tested a model of CBF image, and examined the effects of loyalty on visitors' CBF perceptions. Four image constructs were identified and labeled *Attributes*, *Family and Friendliness*, *Affective Association*, and *Overall Evaluation*. In addition, hierarchical interrelationships among these constructs were examined. The study also revealed that repeat visitors had more positive perceptions than first-time visitors. The perceptual differences of *Family and Friendliness*,

Affective Association, and *Overall Evaluation* between first-time and repeat visitors were significant. In addition, this study found that the relationships between *Attributes* and *Family and Friendliness*, as well as *Family and Friendliness* and *Overall Evaluation* became weak when it comes to repeat visitors.

The contribution of this study to the extant literature is two-fold. First, although tourism destination image has been extensively investigated, the current study advanced this line of research by exploring the image of CBFs. A CBF image model is proposed and empirically tested, which is consistent with general destination image models in previous studies (Cai, 2002; Gartner, 1993). The study findings indicate the importance of local resident involvement to the CBF image of visitors.

Second, the results with reference to CBFs and loyalty provide evidence to support prior research. Petrick (2004) found that when making repurchase decisions, repeat visitors were more likely to base their perceptions of quality on how the experience made them feel, whereas first-time visitors were more likely to base their perceptions on price, which implies that the former make decisions based on affective perceptions while the latter are more likely to do so based on attribute-based perceptions. Some researchers suggested that affective messages could be more useful in positioning a destination, especially when they are aimed at previous visitors (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Pike and Ryan, 2004). Um et al. (2006) argued that the revisit intention of first-time visitors may be influenced mainly by destination performance as a whole, whereas intention of repeat visitors may be influenced largely by promotional efforts to elicit positive memories and disseminated information on new attractions. This supports Cai's assertion that affective and attitude image components are closer and more critical than attribute-based ones to the decision-making stage of destination selection (Cai et al., 2003).

In addition to making conceptual contributions, the findings of this study should be helpful to practitioners for the marketing and management of CBFs in several aspects. First, the results point to the significance of the involvement of local residents in CBFs. They indicate that visitors to these festivals regard family togetherness and friendliness of local communities as important, especially repeat visitors. Festival organizers and planners should encourage local people to support CBFs and project the image of a friendly community to the family market.

Second, CBFs need to pay greater attention to the repeat market, as the study findings suggest that repeat visitors from nearby rural communities are the primary market of these festivals. It was also revealed that repeat visitors enjoyed the atmosphere of the festival and nice people of the host community, whereas first-time visitors appreciated the tangible more than the emotional elements. Recognizing the importance of repeat patronage at CBFs, local organizations should improve their promoting strategies and focus on the affective elements of the festivals. Promotion of specific attributes is essential to increase the awareness of the festivals and attract new customers, whereas establishing emotional bonds with visitors is more effective in cultivating loyalty and thus, repeat visitors.

In addition, this study introduces the concept of branding to the current marketing program of CBFs in rural areas. Branding is a powerful tool to increase the attitude strength of visitors toward destinations and establish emotional connections between destinations and visitors, thereby creating unique competitiveness (Cai, 2002; Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Morgan et al., 2003). Effective branding programs foster greater confidence of consumers, which induces consumer loyalty (Kim and Kim, 2004). It will be meaningful for tourism organizations in rural areas to understand the CBF image model and recognize the significance of festivals to repeat visitation, especially when building the destination's brand.

This study is not without limitations. The image constructs identified were based on an empirical study of an Independence Day festival in a county in the Midwestern United States in summer. It is very likely that visitors will have different perceptions of festivals with other themes, taking place in other seasons, or in different locations. Further research with a larger sample size and using other analytical methods is needed to verify the results of this study. In addition, CBFs substantively benefit from the repeat market, but festival goer loyalty has not received adequate attention from practitioners or the academic community. This study investigated the relationship between repeat visitation and festival image. Future studies should extend this line of research to examine visitor loyalty in the context of CBFs more extensively.

References

- Alegre, J., Juaneda, C., 2006. Destination loyalty: consumers' economic behavior. *Annals of Tourism Research* 33 (3), 684–706.
- Anwar, S.A., Sohail, M.S., 2004. Festival tourism in the United Arab Emirates: first-time versus repeat visitor perceptions. *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 10 (2), 161–170.
- Baloglu, S., Brinberg, D., 1997. Affective images of tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel Research* 35 (Spring), 11–15.
- Baloglu, S., McCleary, K.W., 1999. U.S. international pleasure travelers' images of four Mediterranean destinations: a comparison of visitors and nonvisitors. *Journal of Travel Research* 38 (November), 144–152.
- Bigne, J.E., Sanchez, M.I., Sanchez, J., 2001. Tourism image, evaluation variables and after purchase behavior: inter-relationship. *Tourism Management* 22, 607–616.
- Bonn, M.A., Joseph, S.M., Dai, M., 2005. International versus domestic visitors: an examination of destination image perceptions. *Journal of Travel Research* 43 (February), 294–301.
- Boo, S., Busser, J.A., 2006. Impact analysis of a tourism festival on tourists' destination images. *Event Management* 9 (4), 223–237.
- Bres, K.D., Davis, J., 2001. Celebrating group and place identity: a case study of a new regional festival. *Tourism Geographies* 3 (3), 326–337.
- Cai, L.A., 2002. Cooperative branding for rural destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research* 29 (3), 720–742.
- Cai, L.A., Wu, B., Bai, B., 2003. Destination image and loyalty. *Tourism Review International* 7, 153–162.
- Caldwell, N., Freire, J.R., 2004. The differences between branding a country, a region, and a city: applying the brand box model. *Journal of Brand Management* 12 (1), 50–61.
- Carlsen, J., Taylor, A., 2003. Mega-events and urban renewal: the case of the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games. *Event Management* 8 (1), 15–22.
- Castro, C.B., Armario, E.M., Ruiz, D.M., 2007. The influence of market heterogeneity on the relationship between a destination's image and tourists' future behavior. *Tourism Management* 28, 175–187.
- Crompton, J.L., 2003. Adapting Herzberg: a conceptualization of the effects of hygiene and motivator attributes on perceptions of event quality. *Journal of Travel Research* 41 (February), 305–310.
- Espelt, N.G., Benito, J.A.D., 2005. The social construction of the image of Girona: a methodological approach. *Tourism Management* 26, 777–785.
- Felsenstod, D., Fleischer, A., 2003. Local festivals and tourism promotion: the role of public assistance and visitor expenditure. *Journal of Travel Research* 41 (May), 385–392.
- Gartner, W.C., 1989. Tourism image: attribute measurement of state tourism products using multidimensional scaling techniques. *Journal of Travel Research* 28 (2), 15–19.
- Gartner, W.C., 1993. Image formation process. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* 2 (2/3), 191–215.
- Getz, D., 1991. *Festivals, Special Events and Tourism*. Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.
- Getz, D., Frisby, W., 1988. Evaluating management effectiveness in community-run festivals. *Journal of Travel Research* 27 (1), 22–27.
- Grosspietsch, M., 2006. Perceived and projected images of Rwanda: visitor and international tour operator perspectives. *Tourism Management* 27 (2), 225–234.
- Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L., Black, W.C., 1998. *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 5th ed. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Jago, L., Chalip, L., Brown, G., Mules, T., Ali, S., 2003. Building events into destination branding: insights from experts. *Event Management* 8 (1), 3–14.
- Keller, K.L., 2002. *Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, 2nd ed. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Kim, H., Kim, W.G., 2004. The relationship between brand equity and firms' performance in luxury hotels and chain restaurants. *Tourism Management* 26, 549–560.
- LeBlanc, M., 2004. Tourist characteristic and their interest in attending festivals and events: an anglophone/francophone case study of New Brunswick, Canada. *Event Management* 8, 203–212.
- Lehto, X.Y., O'Leary, J.T., Morrison, A.M., 2004. The effect of prior experience on vacation behavior. *Annals of Tourism Research* 31 (4), 801–818.

- Li, X., Vogelsong, H., 2006. Comparing methods of measuring image change: a case study of a small-scale community festival. *Tourism Analysis* 10, 349–360.
- Litvin, S.W., Fetter, E., 2006. Can a festival be too successful? a review of Spoleto, USA. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 18 (1), 41–49.
- Long, P.T., Perdue, R.R., 1990. The economic impact of rural festivals and special events: assessing the spatial distribution of expenditure. *Journal of Travel Research* 28 (4), 10–14.
- Lucio, H., Maria, M.S., Miguel, A.M., Javier, S., 2006. Tourism destination image, satisfaction and loyalty: a study in Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Mexico. *Tourism Geographies* 8 (4), 343–358.
- Mackay, K.J., Fesenmaier, D.R., 1997. Pictorial element of destination in image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research* 24 (3), 537–565.
- Mehmetoglu, M., 2002. Economic scale of community-run festivals: a case study. *Event Management* 7, 93–102.
- Mehmetoglu, M., Ellingsen, K.A., 2005. Do small-scale festivals adopt “market orientation” as a management philosophy? *Event Management* 9, 119–132.
- Mill, R.C., Morrison, A.M., 2002. *The Tourism System*, 4th ed. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, IO.
- Morgan, N.J., Pritchard, A., Piggott, R., 2003. Destination branding and the role of the stakeholders: the case of New Zealand. *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 9 (3), 285–298.
- O’Sullivan, D., Jackson, M.J., 2002. Festival tourism: a contributor to sustainable local economic development? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 10 (4), 325–342.
- Oppermann, M., 2000. Tourism destination loyalty. *Journal of Travel Research* 39 (August), 78–84.
- Pedhazur, E., Schmelkin, L., 1991. *Measurement, Design, and Analysis: An Integrated Approach*. Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, Hillsdale, NJ.
- Petrick, J.F., 2004. First timers’ and repeaters’ perceived value. *Journal of Travel Research* 43 (August), 29–38.
- Pike, S., Ryan, C., 2004. Destination positioning analysis through a comparison of cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions. *Journal of Travel Research* 42 (4), 333–342.
- Poria, Y., Reichel, A., Biran, A., 2006. Heritage site perceptions and motivations to visit. *Journal of Travel Research* 44 (3), 318–326.
- Prentice, R., Andersen, V., 2003. Festival as creative destination. *Annals of Tourism Research* 30 (1), 7–30.
- Richards, G., Wilson, J., 2004. The impact of cultural events on city image: Rotterdam, cultural capital of Europe 2001. *Urban Studies* 41 (10), 1931–1951.
- Shoemaker, S., Lewis, R.C., 1999. Customer loyalty: the future of hospitality marketing. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 18, 345–370.
- Sirgy, M.J., Su, C., 2000. Destination image, self-congruity, and travel behavior: toward an integrative model. *Journal of Travel Research* 38 (May), 340–352.
- Small, K., Edwards, D., Sheridan, L., 2005. A flexible framework for evaluating the socio-cultural impacts of a small festival. *International Journal of Event Management Research* 1 (1), 66–76.
- Um, S., Chon, K., Ro, Y., 2006. Antecedents of revisit intention. *Annals of Tourism Research* 33 (4), 1141–1158.
- Um, S., Crompton, J.L., 1990. Attitude determinants in tourism destination choice. *Annals of Tourism Research* 17, 432–448.
- Xie, P.F., 2004. Visitors’ perceptions of authenticity at a rural heritage festival: a case study. *Event Management* 8, 151–160.