

Chapter 20

Customer Responses to Arts Festivals: The Effects of Relationship Marketing on Cultural Activities

Angela Chang
University of Macau, China

ABSTRACT

Arts festivals can be defined as staging various arts to the public to present art forms and provide creative possibilities. Such festivals serve as forms of communication and entertainment, and their ability to reach large audiences has drawn the attention of organisers, sponsors, and researchers. This chapter explores how customers accessed and responded to arts and cultural activities as well as how they were affected by social relationships. Data were collected from a sample of 1,387 respondents during an arts festival. The results show that most respondents of a traditional arts and culture activity comprised numerous families. The high level of satisfaction with the event enhanced the outcomes for future attendance. Thus, in the cultural entertainment industry, marketing efforts in establishing relationships should be proactively pursued because they facilitate enduring relationships and generate satisfaction with organisers. Recommendations and managerial implications are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary arts festivals foster public participation in arts and cultural events, facilitating innovation in cultural industries. Arts festivals can be defined as staging various arts to the public to present novel art forms and provide new creative possibilities. Such festivals serve as forms of education, communication, and entertainment and have the ability to reach large audiences. By lur-

ing domestic residents and international tourists, arts festivals help improve the image of a city and yield positive economic benefits. Thus, numerous regional as well as international organisations and governments support arts festivals.

Arts festivals generally contain more than one type of artistic performance, such as dramas, concerts, and dances, as opposed to festivals such as film festivals that focus on a single type of art. These combined arts festivals generally aim

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to attract broader audiences by offering various arts genres, as opposed to a niche or single-genre festival (Finkel, 2009). Combined arts festivals are considered as another category of events in which the performances serve a cultural and social role for large audiences. These arts festivals are highly accessible and socially inclusive because of the myriad choices that are difficult to distinguish from entertainment, cultural, or commercial products regarding system how they are distributed. The conditions for arts festivals are framed in time and space, live transmission, and exhibiting high drama and ritual importance.

Combined arts festivals provide opportunities for artists and organisers to reach a large public audience. The audiences of arts festivals are provided with the opportunity to contribute to the artistic process that is granted to spectators through active participation and immediate feedback. Such arts audience's sense of artistic quality is not only based on their review of performance content but also on their experience and emotion as an audience member. This is beginning to change the public understanding of the artistic process and the relationships among artists, arts event organisers, and audiences (Johanson & Freeman, 2012).

In 2011, a 10-day survey was conducted at an annual combined arts festival in Taichung, Taiwan, with the following aims: first, to understand what festival environments look like in contemporary Chinese society; second, to investigate whether participation heightened the relationship and experience of attending arts festivals and how spectators perceived this relationship and experience; and finally, to study the multi-dimensions of the relationship concept and discuss relationship marketing theory on application on specific shows or activities. In this study, it was observed that the relationships associated with organisers and sponsors in a literary community attracted the audience to the festival, besides considering the experience of participating as a customer.

BACKGROUND

Review of Arts Audience Study

Previous studies have surveyed audiences of performing arts from various perspectives. Studies have focused on the value of participants to the industry (Pinnock, 2006), customer attitudes towards brand-related information (Baranovitch, 2007; D'Astou, 2004; Stafford, Tripp, & Bienstock, 2004), and audience retention and motives (Rentschler et al., 2002). These recurring themes arise in performing arts studies of participation and most studies have compared demographic characteristics of customers and noncustomers. This section of the paper presents a review of previous audience studies that are related to arts performances, festival environments, and how customers perceive that their participation heightens the experience of attending and participating enthusiastically in arts activities.

Nielsen, McQueen, and Nielsen (1974) surveyed 800 attendees of performing arts events in Illinois, United States, by considering variables of socio-demographic characteristics and types of performing arts event. Their study indicated that the core audience of performing arts was composed primarily of students, professionals, teachers, and people earning relatively high incomes. The audiences for all types of event were similar in that they were highly educated professionals, educators, and researchers. The literate groups sought more sophisticated and complex forms of art and entertainment than less complex forms, such as commercial or media events. In addition, the study suggested that future analyses should be conducted to elucidate potential and core audiences, and concluded that arts programmes and audience development should be directly related.

Hume, Mort, and Winzar (2007) conducted in-depth interviews with 26 patrons after a general performing arts experience. They examined consumer opinions to identify the predictors of repurchase intention. The findings indicated that

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