



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Factors affecting the attractiveness and tourists' word-of-mouth intention to the Southern Folk Cake Festival

Nguyen Quoc Nghi ^{1,*}, Bui Thi Yen Ni ², Bui Van Trinh ³ and Tran Thi Be Mi ¹

¹ School of Economics, Can Tho University, Vietnam.

² Can Tho Lottery Company, Vietnam.

³ Department of Finance – Accounting, University of Cuu Long, Vietnam.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2021, 12(03), 277–284

Publication history: Received on 07 November 2021; revised on 13 December 2021; accepted on 15 December 2021

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2021.12.3.0687>

Abstract

The study aims to determine factors impacting the attractiveness and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions with the Southern Folk Cake Festival. Research data were collected from a survey of 202 visitors who have visited the Southern Folk Cake Festival. Applying the structural equation modeling (SEM), the study shows six impacting factors to the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival. They include typical cuisine, festival content, promotion, festival information, festival environment, and facilities. Among them, festival content has the most impact on the attractiveness of the festival itself. Besides, the attractiveness of the festival positively affects tourists' WOM intentions.

Keywords: Attractiveness; Word-of-mouth intention; Tourist; Southern folk cake festival

1. Introduction

Festivals and food events are keys elements in tourism development. Therefore, festival tourism pushes the industry development, leading to the increase in income of the tourist community (Nagy and Nagy, 2013; Congcong, 2014). There exists a positive correlation between food festivals and local tourism development (Bottyán, 2015). The development of tourism plays an essential role in the economy. Festivals attract tourists, decrease the seasonality in tourism, and positively impact both public and private economic sectors (Getz, 2016). Previously, Felsenstein and Fleischer (2003) pointed out that organizing festivals is considered a strategy to promote the image of local tourism. Festivals may encourage tourists to spend more, thereby increasing local income and promoting local economic development. Besides, celebrating festivals associated with tourism positively affects the preservation of the local tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Cudny, 2013).

As a center city of the Mekong Delta region, Can Tho has made great efforts to develop tourism by developing typical tourism products. Although the festival tourism in Can Tho City is still limited, the city is home to a variety of cuisines from all provinces and cities of the Mekong Delta, creating favorable conditions to attract international tourists. In particular, the Southern Folk Cake Festival is a key festival that impresses domestic and foreign tourists. According to the Department of Culture - Sports and Tourism of Can Tho City, in 2019, this city welcomed 8.8 million visitors, an increase of 4.6% over the same period in 2018. Total revenue from tourism reached over 4,435 billion VND, up 17.2% over the same period last year. The Southern Folk Cake Day was held for the first time in 2012 that later became an annual culinary event of the city. In 2015, the event was raised to the scale of a festival. This contributes to introducing and promoting typical folk cakes of the Southern region to domestic and overseas visitors. Therefore, this study is conducted to determine factors influencing the attractiveness and WOM intentions about the Southern Folk Cake Festival. The research results are the scientific basis to complete the festival program and attract more tourists to the festival.

* Corresponding author: Nguyen Quoc Nghi
School of Economics, Can Tho University, Vietnam.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research hypotheses

Based on the above literature review, researchers have pointed out factors that influence the attractiveness of a festival and positive word-of-mouth intentions of visitors. Thus, several research theories are set out below.

Local cuisine characteristics and culinary values are essential factors creating the attractiveness of a tourist destination (Quan and Wang, 2004; Tellstrom et al., 2006; Biazen, 2012; Marković et al., 2015; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016). Hence, the study suggests hypothesis H1: Typical cuisine positively affects the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival.

The variety of activities and the novelty of the festival content positively affect the attractiveness of the festival (Lee et al., 2011; Nagy and Nagy, 2013; Stankova and Vassenska, 2015; Marković et al., 2015; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016; Coskun, 2018). Therefore, the study proposes hypothesis H2: The festival content beneficially impacts the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival.

Promotion activities including attractive advertisements and impressive slogans create the attractiveness of the festival (Lee et al., 2011; Popescu and Corbos, 2012; Nagy and Nagy, 2013; Egresi and Kara, 2014; Lee et al., 2014; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016; Coskun, 2018). As a result, the study sets up hypothesis H3: Promotion puts a positive impact on the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival.

A source of adequate, reliable, and up-to-date information makes the festival more worthy to participate (Lee et al., 2011; Biazen, 2012; Maneenetr and Tran, 2014; Marković et al., 2015; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016; Coskun, 2018). Hence, the proposed hypothesis H4 is as follows: Festival information affects its attractiveness positively.

A clean environment with a high level of security and a bustling festive space positively impacts the festival's attractiveness (Cudny, 2013; Congcong, 2014; Lee et al., 2016; Mihajlović, 2017). From the above perspective, the study proposes hypothesis H5: Festival environment positively influences the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival.

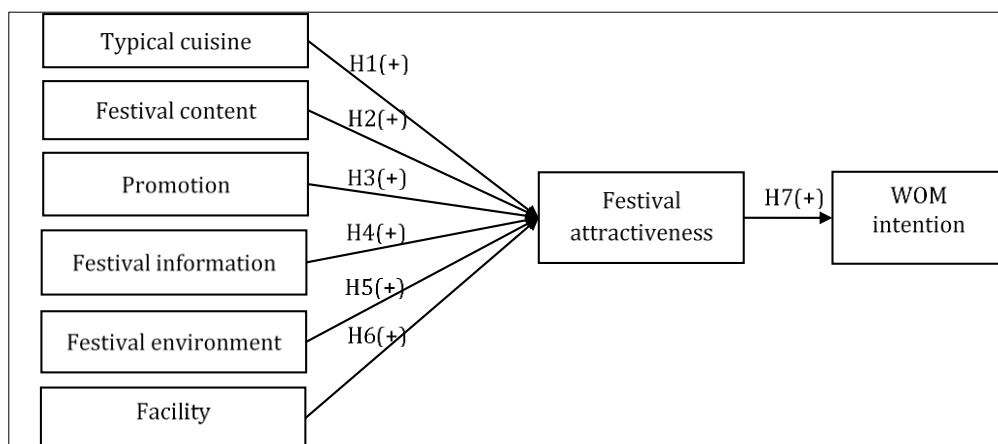


Figure 1 Proposed research model

Modern equipment and facilities, high-quality public convenience (parking slots and public restrooms) have a positive effect on the festival's attractiveness (Cudny, 2013; Sahoo, 2013; Maneenetr and Tran, 2014; Bottyán, 2015; Marković et al., 2015). Thus, hypothesis H6 is as follows: Infrastructure beneficially affects the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival.

The festival with interesting activities, attractive content, and unique folk cakes promotes positive WOM intentions (Lee et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2017; Naqvi et al., 2018). So, the study recommends hypothesis H7: The attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival increases tourists' WOM intentions.

Based on the aforementioned literature review and research hypotheses, the research model of factors affecting the attractiveness and WOM intentions about the Southern Folk Cake Festival is established.

Table 1 Interpretation of observed variables in the research model

Factor	Observed variable	Sign	Scale	Reference resources
Typical cuisine	Regional cuisine is unique and diverse.	TC1	Likert 1-5	Quan and Wang, 2004; Tellstrom et al., 2006; Biazen, 2012; Marković et al., 2015; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016
	The cuisine is high-quality.	TC2	Likert 1-5	
	The foods and drinks are tasty and delicious.	TC3	Likert 1-5	
	Food safety and hygiene are always guaranteed.	TC4	Likert 1-5	
Festival content	Activities are diverse.	FC1	Likert 1-5	Nagy and Nagy, 2013; Stankova and Vassenska, 2015; Marković et al., 2015; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016; Coskun, 2018
	The content is attractive.	FC2	Likert 1-5	
	The festival creates novel experiences.	FC3	Likert 1-5	
	The program is professionally prepared and organized.	FC4	Likert 1-5	
Promotion activity	Marketing activities are well prepared	PA1	Likert 1-5	Lee et al., 2011; Popescu and Corbos, 2012; Nagy and Nagy, 2013; Egresi and Kara, 2014; Lee et al., 2014; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016; Coskun, 2018
	Festive advertising images put a strong impression.	PA2	Likert 1-5	
	Plenty of media channels to promote the festival.	PA3	Likert 1-5	
	The marketing campaign is successful.	PA4	Likert 1-5	
Festival information	The information is provided fully and accurately.	FI1	Likert 1-5	Biazen, 2012; Maneenetr and Tran, 2014; Marković et al., 2015; Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016; Coskun, 2018
	Signs and maps are clear and easy-to-understand.	FI2	Likert 1-5	
	The information is continuously updated.	FI3	Likert 1-5	
	The source of information is reliable.	FI4	Likert 1-5	
Festival environment	The festival space is associated with Southern characteristics.	FE1	Likert 1-5	Cudny, 2013; Congcong, 2014; Marković et al., 2015; Mihajlović, 2017
	The food courts are eye-catching.	FE2	Likert 1-5	
	The festival surrounding is clean.	FE3	Likert 1-5	
	The ambiance is always bustling.	FE4	Likert 1-5	
	The security is guaranteed.	FE5	Likert 1-5	
Festival facility	Convenient parking slots.	FF1	Likert 1-5	Sahoo, 2013; Cudny, 2013; Maneenetr and Tran, 2014; Bottyán,
	Clean public restrooms.	FF2	Likert 1-5	
	Full infrastructure and facilities.	FF3	Likert 1-5	

Factor	Observed variable	Sign	Scale	Reference resources
	Modern equipment for the festival operation.	FF4	Likert 1-5	2015; Marković et al., 2015
Attractiveness	The folk cakes are diverse and tasty.	ATT1	Likert 1-5	Lee et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2014; Chang et al., 2017; Naqvi et al., 2018
	The activities are interesting.	ATT2	Likert 1-5	
	The festival content is impressive and novel.	ATT3	Likert 1-5	
	The festival creates a trend that attracts visitors.	ATT4	Likert 1-5	
WOM intention	I will share the information with the community.	WOM1	Likert 1-5	Lee et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2014; Chang et al., 2017; Naqvi et al., 2018
	I will recommend the festival to my relatives and friends.	WOM2	Likert 1-5	
	I will share the positiveness of the festival.	WOM3	Likert 1-5	
	I will invite my relatives and friends to the festival.	WOM4	Likert 1-5	

2.2. Analytical method

To test hypotheses of the research model, analyses used are as follows: reliability test with Cronbach's alpha coefficient, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to evaluate convergent and discriminant validity of variables, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the suitability of data to the market, and structural equation modeling (SEM) to demonstrate factors affecting the attractiveness and visitors' WOM intentions to the Southern Folk Cake Festival.

2.3. Data collection method

To meet the reliability requirement of the SEM model, the sample size should be between 100 and 200 (Hoyle, 1995). The SEM requires large sample sizes because it is based on the theory of large-sample distribution (Raykov and Widaman, 1995). However, there is no clear definition of how the sample size is considered large. Besides, Hoelter (1983) said that the minimum sample size should be 200. The study collected 202 observations by direct interviews and applied a convenient sampling. The survey subjects are tourists who have ever visited the Southern Folk Cake Festival. Thus, the sample size meets the reliability requirement for model testing.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Reliability test of scales

To indicate factors affecting the attractiveness and tourists' WOM intentions for the Southern Folk Cake Festival, the study used SPSS 22 and AMOS 22 software to support the analysis.

3.1.1. Step 1: Test the reliability of scales

The study tests the reliability level by Cronbach's alpha values. The test result in table 2 shows 34 observed variables belonging to 8 factors with Cronbach's alpha coefficients from 0.719 to 0.873 (Nunnally, 1978; Peterson, 1994; Slater, 1995). Also, all variables have item-total correlation values greater than 0.3. Therefore, the variables are used for the EFA step.

Table 2 Cronbach's alpha test result

Scale	Number of observed variables	Cronbach's alpha	Min corrected item-total correlation
Typical cuisine	4	0.719	0.614
Festival content	4	0.843	0.778
Promotion	4	0.838	0.765
Festival information	4	0.799	0.720
Festival environment	5	0.873	0.829
Facility	5	0.772	0.705
Attractiveness	4	0.753	0.668
WOM intention	4	0.868	0.782

3.1.2. Step 2: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is used to test the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales. The test results are guaranteed as the following numbers. (1) Factor loading values are all higher than 0.5; (2) the suitability test of the model ($0.5 < KMO = 0.24 < 1$); (3) Bartlett's test for correlation of variables (Sig. = $0.000 < 0.05$). Cumulative variance test = $53.12\% > 50\%$ which shows that variables included in the model have suitable explanations (Hair et al., 1998). Therefore, 8 factors are formed from 34 observed variables and there is no variable disturbance among factors so the factors' names remain the same.

3.1.3. Step 3: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

After running the EFA, the above eight factors are included for confirmation factor analysis (CFA). The result shows as follows: Chi-square/df = $1.281 < 2$ with $P = 0.000 \leq 0.05$. The TLI and CFI index reaches 0.930 and 0.938, both are > 0.9 . RMSEA = $0.043 < 0.08$. These prove that the model is consistent with market data (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). The standardized regression weights of scales are higher than 0.5 and unstandardized regression weights are statistically significant, so scales achieve convergent validity. Besides, the correlation coefficients among factors are less than 1 with standard deviations less than 0.05. Therefore, the research model reaches the discriminant validity.

Based on the result in table 3, the Composite Reliability (ρ_c) is satisfactory. Meanwhile, the Average Variance Extracted (ρ_{vc}) is slightly low (less than 0.5), the ρ_{vc} can accept the value of 0.4 or higher under the condition that the ρ_{vc} is greater than 0.6 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Fraering and Minor, 2006). Thus, all factors are satisfactory in terms of value and reliability, so the model is suitable to be applied in the next SEM.

Table 3 Reliability test result

Factor	Number of observed variables	Composite Reliability (ρ_c)	Average Variance Extracted (ρ_{vc})
Typical cuisine	4	0.72	0.40
Festival content	4	0.85	0.58
Promotion	4	0.84	0.58
Festival information	4	0.80	0.50
Festival environment	5	0.87	0.57
Facility	5	0.77	0.41
Attractiveness	4	0.75	0.44
WOM intention	4	0.88	0.64

3.2. Verification of theoretical model and research hypotheses

After the CFA, structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to test research hypotheses.

Table 4 Relationship estimation in the SEM

Relationship	Estimated value	Standard Errors (S.E)	Critical Ratios (C.R)	Standardized estimated value	P-value	Hypothesis
ATT <--- TC	0.152	0.066	2.303	0.244	0.021	H1
ATT <--- FC	0.470	0.116	4.051	0.564	0.000	H2
ATT <--- PA	0.142	0.070	2.033	0.199	0.042	H3
ATT <--- FI	0.160	0.064	2.505	0.200	0.012	H4
ATT <--- FE	0.127	0.061	2.092	0.190	0.036	H5
ATT <--- FF	0.115	0.056	2.050	0.185	0.040	H6
WOM <--- ATT	0.557	0.133	4.174	0.469	0.000	H7

The estimated values indicate the impact level of each factor on the attractiveness and WOM intentions of visitors. The greater the absolute values, the higher the degree of impact. Table 4 claims that estimated values of factors are statistically significant at the level of 1% to 5%. This means that all mentioned factors positively impact the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival. Accordingly, the festival content has the strongest impact on the attractiveness of the festival. Besides, the festival's attractiveness positively affects the WOM intentions of visitors. This result proves that the Southern Folk Cake Festival has an attractive program, interesting activities, various and impressive types of folk cake, which leads to positive WOM intentions. Research results are similar to those of Lee et al. (2011), Lee et al. (2014), Chang et al. (2017), and Naqvi et al. (2018).

4. Conclusion

The Southern Folk Cake Festival has become a typical feature of Can Tho City and a culinary cultural highlight of the Mekong Delta. It brings both traditional and modern values. This is one of the festivals in the region attracting a large number of visitors. The festival offers an opportunity for the city managers to promote the land, people, and culture of the South. It introduces typical folk cakes, preserves culinary cultures, and develops the tourism industry of the city. The factors that positively affect the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival are typical cuisine, festival content, promotion activities, festival information, festival environment, and facilities. Also, the festival's attractiveness beneficially impacts the WOM intentions of visitors to the festival. Based on the research results, some governance implications are proposed to improve the attractiveness of the Southern Folk Cake Festival in Can Tho City. First of all, build a diverse festival program with new and attractive activities. Secondly, upgrade the infrastructure and equipment for the festival. Thirdly, promote and improve the quality of promotion activities. Fourthly, strictly manage the festival surrounding to create beautiful scenery. Fifthly, preserve and enhance the culinary cultures, ensure food safety and hygiene.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

The researchers appreciated all the corrections suggested and recommended by the experts.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Biazen T. Local food festivals: Towards successful branding and sustainable local food tourism in Östersund. Thesis- Masters. Mid-Sweden University. 2012.
- [2] Bottyán I. The impact of domestic gastronomic festivals on the local accommodations. *The Central European Journal of Regional Development and Tourism*. 2015; 7(2): 188-205.
- [3] Chang HM, Chou CL, Wu CL. Destination tourism information sources, trip quality, and behavioral intention for island tourists. *International Journal of Information Technology and Business Management*. 2017; 60(1): 32-43.
- [4] Congcong T. The study of festival tourism development of Shanghai. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. 2014; 5(4): 52- 58.
- [5] Coskun G. Investigating the relationship between values, satisfaction and intention to return: the case of Clemson International Food festival. *Ottoman: Journal of Tourism and Management Research*. 2018; 3(1): 187-199.
- [6] Cudny W. Festival tourism—the concept, key functions, and dysfunctions in the context of tourism geography studies. *Geographical Journal*. 2013; 65(2): 105-118.
- [7] Egresi I, Kara F. Economic and tourism impact of small events: the case of small-scale festivals in Istanbul, Turkey. *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, Geographia*. 2014; 59(1): 47-64.
- [8] Felsenstein D, Fleischer A. Local festivals and tourism promotion: The role of public assistance and visitor expenditure. *Journal of Travel Research*. 2003; 41(4): 385-392.
- [9] Fornell C, Larcker DF. Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1981; 18(1): 39-50.
- [10] Fraering M, Minor MS. Sense of community: An exploratory study of US consumers of financial services. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*. 2006; 24(5): 284-306.
- [11] Gerbing DW, Anderson JC. An Updated Paradigm for Scale Development Incorporating Unidimensionality and Its Assessment. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1988; 25(2): 186-192.
- [12] Getz D. The nature and scope of festival studies. *International journal of event management research*. 2010; 5(1): 1-47.
- [13] Hair JF, Black WC, Babin BJ, Anderson RE, Tatham RL. *Multivariate data analysis (5th ed)*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall. 1998.
- [14] Hoelter JW. The analysis of covariance structures: Goodness-of-fit indices. *Sociological Methods & Research*. 1983; 11(3): 325-344.
- [15] Hoyle RH. The structural equation modeling approach: Basic concepts and fundamental issues. In R. H. Hoyle (Ed.). *Structural equation modeling: Concepts, issues, and application (ed., pp. 1-15)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 1995.
- [16] Maneenetr T, Tran TH. Developing Cultural Tourism through Local Festivals a Case Study of the Naga Fireball Festival, Nong Khai Province, Thailand. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 2014; 5(23): 734-734.
- [17] Mihajlović I. The Importance of Local Events for Positioning of Tourist Destination. *European Journal of Social Science Education and Research*. 2017; 4(4): 228-239.
- [18] Nagy A, Nagy H. The importance of festival tourism in the economic development of Hungary. *Visegrad Journal on Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development*. 2013; 2(2): 57-59.
- [19] Naqvi MHA, Jiang Y, Naqvi MH, Miao M, Liang C, Mehmood S. The effect of cultural heritage tourism on tourist word of mouth: The case of Lok Versa Festival, Pakistan. *Sustainability*. 2018; 10(7): 2391.
- [20] Nunnally JC. *Psychometric Theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book. 1978.
- [21] Peterson RA. A meta-analysis of Cronbach's coefficient alpha. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 1994; 21(2): 381-391.
- [22] Popescu RI, Corbos RA. The role of festivals and cultural events in the strategic development of cities. Recommendations for urban areas in Romania. *Informatica Economica*. 2012; 16(4): 19-28.

- [23] Quan S, Wang N. Towards a structural model of the tourist experience: An illustration from food experiences in tourism. *Tourism Management*. 2004; 25(3): 297-305.
- [24] Raykov T, Widaman KF. Issues in applied structural equation modeling research. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*. 1995; 2(4): 289-318.
- [25] Sahoo S. Tourist's satisfaction towards cultural tourism festival: A case study on Konark Dance Festival, Odisha. *Acme Intellects International Journal of Research in Management*. 2013; 3(3): 1-11.
- [26] Slater SF. Issues in conducting marketing strategy research. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*. 1995; 3(4): 257-270.
- [27] Stankova M, Vassenska, I. Raising cultural awareness of local traditions through festival tourism. *Tourism & Management Studies*. 2015; 11(1): 120-127.
- [28] Tellström R, Gustafsson IB, Mossberg L. Consuming heritage: The use of local food culture in branding. *Place branding*. 2006; 2(2): 130-143.
- [29] Tsai LM, Sakulsinlapakorn K, Council T. Exploring tourists' push and pull travel motivations to participate in Songkran festival in Thailand as a tourist destination: a case of Taiwanese visitors. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*. 2016; 4(5): 183-197