

Visitors' Satisfaction at Dubai Festival City: A Case Study

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to measure visitors' satisfaction at Dubai Festival City. A survey was administered to 457 visitors and only 213 were completed but 211 were usable. Data analysis was done by calculating averages and standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha-values and practical significance by means of satisfaction sizes. Correlation analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to identify if differences exist based upon age, gender, or parental status on the ratings of each of the dimensions. Finally, regression analysis was utilized to determine which of the factors are the strongest predictors of a visitor's intent to return to Dubai Festival City. The findings of the study stipulate that the middle aged adults preferring The Festival City over other age groups was not accepted based on the results of the ANOVA, however it was found that women may prefer The Festival City over men. The study recommended that The Festival City must use visitors' satisfaction as a tool for predicting the long-term success of the Festival and areas such as facilities, food, and atmosphere and price- value are essential to this concept.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Festival City, Shopping Stores, Restaurants and Cafes, Bowling Centers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Festival City in Dubai is an extremely popular place that attracts millions of visitors each year. However there are very few who generate quantitative data about visitors rather than only opinions about the place. Due to its popularity and prominence in Dubai, it is important to determine which demographic segment prefers to visit The Festival City. This paper will determine which age group, if any, prefers The Festival City over others. To generate an affirmative conclusion, an extensive literature review was conducted and a survey was distributed. The results of the survey show that there is not a positive correlation between age and preference of The Festival City however there is a correlation between gender and preference. This study is one of the first quantitative studies to be available in respect to The Festival City, which significantly assists future researchers in determining demographic information and satisfaction concerning The Festival City.

2. THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY AND ITS ELEMENTS

The Festival City in Dubai consists of four different themes: Shopping Stores, Restaurants and Cafes, Cinemas and Bowling Centers. Shopping Stores are both: local and international brand name stores. There are 370 stores of which 25 international brand name stores. There are 85 international restaurants and cafes with different tastes and flavors to include Chinese, Middle Eastern, Italian, Indian, African, Western and others. There are 12 Cinemas and huge bowling centers.

The Festival City runs over ten million square feet and visited by more than 3 million people every year. Parents everywhere were trying to make their kids happy and ecstatic about what they were experiencing, but the parents themselves seem to be not having as much fun as their kids. Because of this I started to wonder if there is a "best age" to visit The Festival City. Does one particular age group actually prefer to visit The Festival City more so than other age

groups? To determine if the hypothesis is correct, current literature and research will be reviewed on the topic as well as conducting a survey of past visitors.

To my surprise nobody had written on the subject of The Festival City before but it was written on it as a popular activity and attraction that is taken place in Dubai. Examples of themed restaurants in the Festival City are the Hard Rock Café, Chinese House, Lebanese Meals and Indian Foods and they are drawn from widely known culture resources.

The main characteristics that make up Dubai Festival City including technological wonders, spectacular buildings, educational presentations, sideshows to amuse, a party atmosphere, and food and drinks.

Sheik Mohammad Ben Rashed (Ruler of Dubai), the person behind the Festival City in particular and other major attractions in Dubai, himself wanted “a festival city... which would be as entertaining for adults as for their children”.

Retaining the visitors is a key strength of The Festival City. The Festival City is intentionally “organizing and controlling” visitors while making it seem as if they are making their own decisions without much influence. This argument is made by describing how the City is laid out to guide you in a certain direction, enter lines a certain way, and pass by shops to buy memorabilia at the entrances and exits of every theme. Therefore the purpose of the study is to find out visitors’ satisfaction at Dubai Festival City and to achieve that purpose the study would answer the following

Questions:

1-Are middle aged adults prefer The Festival City in Dubai over other age groups?

2-Are there any differences in visitors’ satisfaction related to the gender of visitors?

3-Which factor (Facilities, Food, Atmosphere, Price-value) is the strongest predictor of willingness to return to The Festival City in Dubai and which one is the weakest?

Hypotheses:

Ha1: Middle aged adults prefer The Festival City in Dubai over other age groups.

Ha2: There is statistical significance at ($\alpha=0.05$) differences in visitors’ satisfaction related to the gender of visitors.

Ha3: One of the factors (Facilities, Food, Atmosphere, Price-value) is the strongest predictor of willingness to return to The Festival City in Dubai and others come after.

3. METHODS

To come to a conclusion as to whether one age group prefers The Festival City over another, a survey was administered to 457 people. Out of the 457 people 213 surveys were completed, however only 211 were usable because one person did not sign the informed consent page, and one person was under eighteen. The survey tool used is called Survey Builder and it is free for users. People under the age of eighteen were restricted not to participate in the survey by sending anyone who answered “under the age of eighteen” to a dismissal page. Unfortunately there is no way to prevent participants from lying about their age on this survey because it is not required to be taken in public with someone administering the process. This survey was completely anonymous and free to anyone who chose to participate, barring the requirement that they must check off the informed consent page and be of appropriate age. The beginning of the survey consists of basic demographic questions. Besides age, it also included gender, state of residence, and information about any children or grandchildren the participant may have. Following the demographic questions, there were twenty five questions about the satisfaction of The Festival City that were rated on a seven point scale, with “Strongly Agree” being the highest rating and “Strongly Disagree” being the lowest rating. These scaled questions included questions about landscaping, cleanliness, food, employees, variety of attractions and merchandise, the price/value of the city, and how fun The Festival City is. Finally, there was a question about willingness to return and their satisfaction compared to different themes. The survey was posted onto Facebook, Twitter, and distributed by email to visitors. My hypothesis is that once all the data is analyzed, there will be a larger number of people aged 35-50 that rate The Festival City higher than any other age group.

Once the survey data was collected, a number of statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. First, principle component analysis was conducted to identify the dimensions that determine a customer’s satisfaction level with The Festival City experience. This tool was utilized to understand how respondents conceptualize an experience since

individuals reduce a wide-range of stimuli into a manageable number of dimensions. Correlation analysis was then used to explore the relationships between the dimensions analyzed. Correlation analysis identifies the strength of the relationship between variables. A correlation of greater than 0.70 indicates a strong relationship exists between the variables. The sign of the correlation, positive or negative, indicates the direction of the relationship (e.g. direct or inverse). Next, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to identify if differences exist based upon age, gender, or parental status on the ratings of each of the dimensions. Finally, regression analysis was utilized to determine which of the factors are the strongest predictors of a visitor's intent to return to a The Festival City. Regression analysis examines the relationships between independent variables, in this case the dimensions identified by the principle component analysis, and a dependent variable, which in this case is the respondents' likelihood to return to The Festival City.

4. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS/IMPLICATIONS/ORIGINALITY

Limitations:

This study was conducted in a unique wealthy city setting (Dubai), and may not be generalized in other cities. It has also not considered the impact of the relationship management underpinnings on customer satisfaction. However, by employing these themes (facilities, atmosphere, food and price-value), the researcher would be able to unveil the factors that exist between local visitors and the international ones, and also produce more generic results.

Practical implications:

Findings suggest that Dubai Festival City can create more visitors' satisfaction by exhibiting cultural differences, showing genuine commitment to service, communicating information to customers efficiently and accurately, delivering services competently, handling potential and manifest conflicts skillfully, and improving overall customer relationship quality.

Originality/value:

Interest in the subject of visitors' satisfaction has been growing among marketing researchers and practitioners. This study adds value by unveiling the key antecedents of relationship quality and visitor satisfaction that can be used in visitor relationship management.

5. FINDINGS

As mentioned before, the data collected came from the 211 respondents who successfully completed the survey. Of the respondents 58% were female and 42% were male. There were 33% of respondents who answered "yes" to having children and 6% who answered "yes" to having grandchildren. Of the 211 surveys completed, 81% of the respondents have visited The Festival City before. To analyze the survey, the questions and their answers were put into the SPSS program. The first step to analyzing the survey was to identify how visitors may conceptualize The Festival City experience. A principle component analysis was conducted using varimax rotation. This broke down the twenty one survey items related to visitors' perceptions of The Festival City into four different factors. Table 1 below outlines the factor-loadings.

Table 1: Principle Component Analysis

	Facilities	Atmosphere	Food	Price/Value
Lndscpwd	.729	.420	-.237	.016
cleanwd1	.747	.353	.087	.279
empathwd1	.745	.225	.154	.052
cleanwd2	.662	.241	.331	.276
userfwd1	.680	.382	-.018	.011
maintwd1	.754	.361	-.268	.214
Empathwd2	.713	.176	.052	.048

varietywd1	.644	.055	-.214	-.258
funwd1	.761	.072	-.348	-.223
foodwd1	.727	-.241	.420	-.262
foodwd2	.756	-.173	.19	-.321
edwd1	.755	-.136	.05	-.068
pricevalwd1	.545	-.485	.335	.162
merchwd1	.692	-.025	-.130	-.036
efficwd1	.421	-.359	-.042	.645
funwd2	.742	-.042	-.371	-.117
pricevalwd2	.608	-.565	-.174	.136
cleanwd3	.730	.012	.30	.011
foodwd3	.721	-.295	.40	-.163
pricevalwd3	-.065	.600	.408	-.100
pricecvalwd4	.673	-.275	-.295	-.076

Note. a. 4 components extracted

The strongest variables in each component are what determine the factors involved in visitors' perceptions. From this table it is concluded that component one relates to facilities in the City. This involves cleanliness, maintenance, employees, and signs and directions within the City. The second component relates to the atmosphere of the City, which includes how fun activities are, the variety of attractions and merchandise, and the price paid for admission. The third component relates to the food of The Festival City. The only variable that had a strong number in this component that did not quite fit was the educational aspects of the City. This variable also had a somewhat strong value for the second component, atmosphere. Because educational aspects are more closely related to atmosphere than food, this variable was moved into component two. The final component relates to the price/value visitors' perceive from the City. This component includes the wait times for rides, the price/value of admission, and the expensiveness of the City. Correlations between the four factors and willingness to return can be shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

1. Facilities	1.00					
2. Food	.628	1.00				
3. Atmosphere	.713	.704	1.00			
4. Price Value	.292	.497	.523	1.00		
5. Return	.327	.281	.501	.240	1.00	
6. OP Compare	.359	.264	.378	.173	.249	1.00

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The next step in analyzing the survey is to determine if the four factors labeled "facilities", "atmosphere", "food", and "price value" correlate enough with ages of the respondents to say definitively whether one age group prefers The Festival City more than another. The completion of an Analysis of Variance indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between respondents age for any of the dimensions or for the intent to return; however, there is a difference based upon gender. Table 3 shows the ANOVA results from comparing age of respondents to the four factors and the differences based upon gender are found in Table 4.

Table 3: Age

Relationship		Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Statistic	Significance
Facilities	Between Groups	297.213	10	29.721	1.293	0.239
	Within Groups	3563.558	155	22.991		
	Total	3860.771	165			
Food	Between Groups	275.408	10	27.541	1.007	0.44
	Within Groups	4238.526	155	27.345		
	Total	4513.934	165			
Atmosphere	Between Groups	323.175	10	32.317	1.43	0.172
	Within Groups	3502.801	155	22.599		
	Total	3825.976	165			
Price Value	Between Groups	103.046	10	10.305	1.013	0.435
	Within Groups	1576.351	155	10.17		
	Total	1679.398	165			
Return	Between Groups	62.808	10	6.281	1.525	0.135
	Within Groups	638.542	155	4.12		
	Total	701.349	165			
OP Compare	Between Groups	557.42	10	55.742	0.512	0.88
	Within Groups	16863.333	155	108.796		
	Total	17420.753	165			

Relationship Sum of Squares Degrees of freedom Mean square F-statistical Significance

Table 4: Gender

Relationship		Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Statistic	Significance
Facilities	Between Groups	105.726	1	105.726	4.618	0.033
	Within Groups	3755.045	164	22.897		
	Total	3860.771	165			
Food	Between Groups	0.359	1	0.359	0.013	0.909
	Within Groups	4513.575	164	27.522		
	Total	4513.934	165			
Atmosphere	Between Groups	53.934	1	53.934	2.345	0.128
	Within Groups	3772.042	164	23		
	Total	3825.976	165			
Price Value	Between Groups	9.052	1	9.052	0.889	0.347
	Within Groups	1670.345	164	10.185		
	Total	1679.398	165			
Return	Between Groups	36.539	1	36.539	9.014	0.003
	Within Groups	664.81	164	4.054		
	Total	701.349	165			
OP Compare	Between Groups	2.551	1	2.551	0.024	0.877
	Within Groups	17418.202	164	106.209		
	Total	17420.753	165			

As you can see in Table 4 the significance of “return” is at .003, which shows that willingness to return and gender have a strong enough correlation to say that “one gender prefers The Festival City over the other”. In this case it is found that women prefer The Festival City over men. Another question that arose from analyzing the results was if respondents were more likely to prefer The Festival City and return to the City if they have children. An ANOVA was ran, as shown in Table 5, but again there were no statistically significant results.

Table 5: Children

Relationship		Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Statistic	Significance
Facilities Between		43.937	1	29.721	1.293	0.239
	Groups Within	2816.844	164	22.991		
	Groups					
	Total	3860.771	165			
Food Groups	Between	4.744	1	27.541	1.007	0.44
	Within Groups	4509.19	164	27.345		
	Total	4513.934	165			
Atmosphere	Between Groups	30.666	1	32.317	1.43	0.172
	Within Groups	3795.31	164	22.599		
	Total	3825.976	165			
Price Value	Between Groups	2.413	1	10.305	1.013	0.435
	Within Groups	1676.985	164	10.17		
	Total	1679.398	165			
Return	Between Groups	1.752	1	6.281	1.525	0.135
	Within Groups	699.597	164	4.12		
	Total	701.349	165			
OP Compare	Between Groups	19.557	1	55.742	0.512	0.88
	Within Groups	17401.196	164	108.796		
	Total	17420.753	165			

Relationship Sum of Squares Degrees of freedom Mean square F-statistical Significance

A regression analysis was performed to determine which factor is the strongest predictor of willingness to return to The Festival City. As seen in Table 6, atmosphere is a significant predictor in determining the respondents' willingness to return, and about 30% of the variance is explained by this factor.

Table 6: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.0564a	0.319	0.302	2.639

Notes: a. Predictors: (Constant), Price Value, Facilities, Food, Atmosphere

Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Statistic	Significance
Regression	523.948	4	130.987	18.813	.000a
Residual	1120.999	161	6.963		
Total	1644.947	165			

Notes: a. Predictors: (Constant), Price Value, Facilities, Food, Atmosphere

b. Dependent Variable: revisitwd

c. Weighted Least Squares Regression- Weighted by Return

Model	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Significance
(constant)	0.597	0.804		0.742	0.459
Facilities	-0.009	0.024	-0.034	-0.37	0.712
Food	-0.035	0.021	-0.153	-1.615	0.108
Atmosphere	0.193	0.029	0.701	6.714	0
Price Value	-0.021	0.028	-0.058	-0.746	0.457

Notes: a. Dependent Variable: revisitwd1

b. Weighted Least Squares Regression- Weighted by Return

6. DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed is very limited on the perceptions and experiences of different age groups. The majority of the articles read describe people's experiences, views, and opinions of different attractions in different countries without actually grasping the demographic information of the visitors. Implications due to the shortcomings of present literature, the data collected from the survey is so far the most informative resource when it comes to the preference of different age groups and The Festival City because the data is quantitative and can be separated by different factors. The hypothesis of middle aged adults preferring The Festival City over other age groups was not accepted based on the results of the ANOVA, however it was found that women may prefer The Festival City over men. The survey that was administered will significantly assist future researchers in determining demographic information and satisfaction when it comes to The Festival City because the survey does not only measure people's overall satisfaction but it narrows it down into categories and topics. The survey results showing that women prefer The Festival City over men can influence the marketing and advertising professionals in the tourism field for future projects. This paper is original in its topic, so it is hoped that there will be further research conducted to help define the results and add to the scholarship concerning The Festival City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For future research it is suggested that surveys also include the number of times a person has visited The Festival City, for this may help determine which age group visits the City more often than another. It would also be resourceful for data to actually be collected on site in Dubai, UAE from current visitors to The Festival City. Because the survey used only collected data from 213 people, it is also suggested that a much larger sample size be used to determine if the results are accurate.

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