

## WHAT MOTIVATES US TO VISIT EVENTS? CASE OF THE ST JOHN'S EVE BONFIRE FESTIVAL IN THE CITY OF KARLOVAC

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The main purpose of the research was to examine the visitors' attitudes regarding the motives for visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire festival in the City of Karlovac, satisfaction with the festival, repeat visits and recommendations to others as well as regarding sharing the experience through social networks.

**Methodology** – An exploratory research of the visitors' motives to visit the St John's Eve Bonfire festival in the City of Karlovac was conducted on a convenience sample of 150 visitors on June 23, 2019. Data have been collected using two methods: interview and survey. The questionnaire consists of 23 statements of agreement or disagreement. Statements were measured by a five-level Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree) using Uysal, Grahan and Martin (1993) scale. The data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, inferential and multivariate statistics. **Findings** – The main motive of visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire festival is to enjoy socializing. There is a positive correlation between satisfaction with the festival and the intention to visit again, recommending it to others and sharing the experience through social networks. There is also a positive correlation between making a repeat visit and recommending it to others. There is a weak correlation with making a repeat visit and sharing the experience through social networks and a positive medium correlation between recommending the festival to others and sharing the experience through social networks.

**Contribution** – Identifying the motives for visit a particular event is important for identifying visitors' needs and preferences. The paper contributes to understanding what motivates visitors to visit different events. The results of this research are aimed at helping the organizers of various events improve the quality of service and content for different target group of visitors. Further research could investigate visitors' attitudes before the event, during the event and after the event. The researchers should also investigate the correlation of each of the motives for visiting an event with satisfaction and the difference in tourist experience as well as satisfaction between locals and visitors from other cities in Croatia and foreign visitors.

**Keywords** motives, satisfaction, loyalty, sharing the experiences through social networks, events, the St John's Eve Bonfire festival

### **INTRODUCTION**

The traditional festival of the St John's Eve Bonfire has been held since 1779. The location of the Bonfires has not change since. The first Bonfire was set on fire by the river Kupa in the region Gaza and the custom was soon started at the other side of the river Kupa in the region Banija. The eternal rivalry of Banija and Gaza, neighbors on the left and right side of river Kupa, has been brought to a new level and the competitive spirit flares up every year on the night before St John's Eve. The people of Gaza and

Banija have been competing ever since in the size, beauty and duration of the Bonfires burning. The last festival was held on June 23, 2019. The program took place on the four locations. There was a football match in the Gaza region. The traditional rope pull was held on the Banija bridge, with a stage performance with fire held in the evening. Fireworks and Bonfires were held on both of the banks of the river Kupa, with the famous rock band Zabranjeno pušenje.

The aim of the research was to examine the visitors' attitudes regarding the motives for visit the festival the St John's Eve Bonfire in the City of Karlovac, satisfaction with the festival, repeat visits and recommendations to friends, relatives and others, as well as regarding sharing the experience through social networks.

The following hypothesis were tested:

H1: Visitor's motivation to attend the St John's Eve Bonfire festival in the City of Karlovac is multi-dimensional construct.

H2: There is a positive correlation between satisfaction with the St John's Eve Bonfire festival and the intention to visit it again.

H3: There is a positive correlation between satisfaction with the St John's Eve Bonfire festival and recommending it to others.

H4: There is a positive correlation between satisfaction with the St John's Eve Bonfire festival and sharing the experience through social networks.

H5: There is a positive correlation between making a repeat visit and recommending it to others.

H6: There is a positive correlation between making a repeat visit and sharing the experience through social networks.

H7: There is a positive correlation between recommending the Festival to others and sharing the experience through social networks.

Data have been collected using two methods: interview and survey. Younger, middle-aged and elderly visitors were examined. The study was conducted on a sample of 150 visitors. The questionnaire consists of 23 statements of agreement or disagreement regarding motivational factors for coming to the St John's Eve Bonfire festival, repeat visits, recommendations and sharing the experience with others through social networks, as well as satisfaction with the festival and personal questions at the end of the questionnaire. The respondents' motives were measured by a five-level Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree). Descriptive, inferential and multivariate statistics were used in the data analysis using a software package SPSS v. 23.

The results of this research seek to present the aspect of linking the motives behind the visits, levels of satisfaction with the festival, repeat visits and recommendations to others, and sharing the experience through social networks. The results of this research aim at helping the organizers of various events improve the quality of service and content for different target audience.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Festivals are cultural events (Frisby and Getz 1989) that are considered a form of cultural tourism (Formica and Uysal 1998; Mahika et al. 2015). Festivals provide communities with a way to celebrate their unique cultural traditions and attract tourist and local visitors (Tanford and Jung 2017, 209). They vary in reach from local to international with different themes like art, culture, food and beverage, music, religion and sports (Maeng et al. 2016; Tanford and Jung 2017). Festivals can be found in many forms and types, such as music, film, theatre, art, food, folklore, carnivals and medieval festivals (Mahika et al. 2015). The decision to visit festivals or events is an action taken to satisfy a particular need. Motivation is an indispensable factor of the customer behavior (Mahika et al. 2015, 1240). Motivational factors are inner factors that stir and directs consumer behavior (Iso-Aloha 1980). Some of the main motives mentioned by the specialists regarding the need to understand the visiting of festivals are (Crompton and McKay 1997, Mahika et al. 2015): understanding that the motivation of visitors represents the key concept in creating offer for the visitors and personalizing that offer according to their needs; building the loyalty of visitors for festivals that are organized every year; identifying the main motives to visit the festival is a key element in understanding the decisional process of visitors.

There are many different reasons why communities organize festivals: their cultural heritage, city or location promotion, attracting tourists, creating additional cultural and entertainment facilities for residents of a tourist destination and better quality of life of residents (Cudnym et al. 2012; Yolal et al. 2016). There are studies of festivals in Europe (Grappi and Montanari 2011; Brida et al. 2012, 2014, 2017; Ferrera and Sermento 2015), the Middle East (Akhoondnejad 2016), Asia (Sohn et al. 2016.), SAD-u (Yuan and Jang, 2008), Africa (Kruger et al. 2010) and Australia (Savinovic et al. 2012, Tanford and Jung, 2017). These studies investigate a variety of research topics, including motivation for attending (Brida et al. 2012, 2014, 2017; Meang et al. 2016, Rezaei et al 2018; Vitner Marković et al. 2019) visitor segmentation (Chang 2006; Brida 2012, 2014, Maráková et al. 2018), satisfaction (Kim 2010; Sohn et al. 2016) and loyalty (Yuan and Jang 2008, Kim 2010; Tanford and Jung 2017). Many studies have investigated the motives for visiting a certain festival (Uysal et al. 1993; Getz, 2008; Getz 2010; Matheson et al. 2014; Maeng et al. 2016; Tanford and Jung 2017; Vitner Marković et al. 2019). Wilson et al. (2016.), in their article of meta-analysis on research done about festivals during the years 1978-2014. They have found out that from 2010 onwards these studies have had a significant growth and motivation has been one of the most important subjects of the study in this field (Rezaei et al. 2018). A quantitative review of literature on motivating factors found that the most commonly researched were socialization, family togetherness, escape, novelty, excitement and cultural exploration (Mohr 1993; Uysal 1993; Maeng et al. 2016; Tanford and Yung 2017).

Previous studies have identified five main visitor motives for attending festivals: socialization, escape, entertainment, geographical location of events and loyalty (Backman et al. 1995; Gelder and Robinson 2009; Lee et al. 2004; Nicholson and Pearce, 2001; Oakes 2010; Scott 1995; Swanson et al. 2003; Vitner Marković et al. 2019). Motivation can be defined as the driving force behind all behavior, so visitor's motivation may also affect visitor's attitude in general and some salient aspects of

behavior such as involvement, perception and satisfaction (Foodness 1994; Gnoth, 1997; Prebensen et al. 2013). According to “push and pull” conceptual framework, tourist behavior is motivated by external factors, e.g. characteristic of a destination and internal psychological factors, e.g. desire for socialization or relaxation, which impels tourist to engage in a leisure activity (Marâková et al. 2018). Marâková et al. (2018) in their study investigated main factors that motivate visitors to attend cultural events in Slovakia. The following six domains of visitors’ motivation are: new and different experience, friends and family togetherness, reconnection with culture and tradition, socialization, recovering equilibrium and change from everyday life (Marâková et al. 2018). Mohr et al. (1993) study about a local traditional event in South Carolina identified five-motivation factor: socialization, family togetherness, excitement, escape and event novelty.

Understanding and recognizing motivation factors of festival visitors enables marketers to study the visitors’ decision-making process (Maeng et al. 2016.), target visitors more accurately, allocate resources more efficiently and make more effective promotional decisions (Park et al. 2008). As a result, a unique experience can be provided for each of them (Savinovic et al. 2012) which increases satisfaction levels of their visitors (Rezaei et al. 2018). According to Crompton and McKay (1997) motivation has a close link with satisfaction. The festivals that are organized in local communities have their continuance and sustainability depend on the high level of repeat visits of local visitors. Return of the visitors is related to their satisfaction from the previous visit experience (Rezaei et al. 2018). As a result, it is required that visitors are seeking to be satisfied (Chang 2006; Schofield and Thompson 2007; Li et al. 2009; McDowall 2010; Rezaei et al. 2018). According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction is considered as consumer judgment about goods and services (Kim et al. 2010). It is an outcome of subjective evaluation about whether the selected alternative meets or exceeds expectations (Kim et al. 2010, 218). Satisfaction is defined as overall satisfaction with the festival. It is referred to literature with the terms festival (Yoon et al. 2010) or visitor (Yan et al. 2012). The motivation-satisfaction relationship has been a popular research interest of many authors since satisfaction has proven to have a positive influence on visitors’ post-purchase behavior such as recommendations and intention to revisit (Albayrak and Caber 2018).

Loyalty is defined as repeating purchase behavior and is characterized in terms of repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth-communication and recommendations (Lee et al. 2006). Oliver and Burke (1999) showed that creating loyalty depends on achieving customer satisfaction, which is affected by expectations. They suggested that there is a significant positive correlation between consumer satisfaction and their future intentions (Oliver and Burke 1999, Kim et. al. 2010). Loyalty is most often defined by behavioral intentions (Mason and Paggiaro 2012), which include intentions to revisit the festival (Choo et al. 2016) and to recommend it to others (Prebensen et al. 2010; Croes and Lee 2015, Tanford and Jung 2017). In Matheson et al. (2014) study at the Beltane Fire Festival most visitors were first time visitors, which is critical in ensuring festival sustainability.

## 2. RESEARCH RESULTS

An exploratory research of visitors' motives for visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire festival in the City of Karlovac was conducted on the convenience sample on June 23, 2019, on a sample of 150 respondents. The questionnaire consists of 17 statements of agreement or disagreement regarding motives for visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire festival and 6 statements regarding the satisfaction with the festival, the intention of repeat visit, recommendations to the others and sharing the experience with others through the social networks. Respondents' motives were measured by a five - level Likert scale to examine attitudes ranging from 1 to 5 (1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree). The last part of the questionnaire includes the visitor's personal information such as the city or the country where the visitor comes from, gender, age, how many times did the visitor visit the festival and how did the visitor find out about it. The observed dimensions contained in the research instrument are described by descriptive, inferential and multivariate statistics.

Visitors' structure shows that more respondents were female 52% and 48% were male. The age structure shows that the largest visitors' population is young people between 18 and 25 years old with 36% and 29.33% between 26 and 35 years old. The age group from 46 to 55 was represented with 10.66% and from 56 to 65 with 3.33%. The smallest number of respondents was from 65 and more with 2.66%. The largest number of respondents come from Karlovac 61.33%, then there were 8% of respondents from Zagreb, 6% from Duga Resa, 12% of respondents were from other cities (Rijeka, Ogulin, Slunj, Velika Gorica and Samobor) and 12.67% of respondents didn't answer the question. The visitors, 25.33% of them found out about the festival through social networks, 2.66% of them through leaflets, 6% through jumbo posters and 70.66% through the other sources but the most common was word-of-mouth.

The respondents were given 17 different variables about motives for visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire according to Uysal scale et.al. (1993) and 6 variables about the satisfaction and the loyalty.

Visitor's loyalty was measured by using scales: intention to recommend (adopted items taken from Kim et al. 2016), intention to revisit the destination (adopted items taken from Kim et al. 2015), and satisfaction and sharing the experience (two items taken from Buonincontri et al., 2017). The visitors were supposed to circle the mark from 1 to 5 for each statement, 1 - strongly disagree and 5 - strongly agree.

The first hypothesis H1 was focused on multi-dimensional construct the motives for visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire festival. In order to reduce the number of manifest variables to a smaller number of factors, explorative factor analysis was performed. Four factors were extracted that explain 56.13% of the variance (Table 1). The first dimension, which was labeled as "Socialization" explained 29.436% of total variance. The second dimension, which was labeled "Escape from everyday life" explained 11.733% of total variance. The third dimension labeled as "Event Novelty" which explained 8.093% of total variance and the fourth dimension, labeled as "Family togetherness" which explained 6.87% of total variance. The research results in Table 1 indicate that all dimensions are adequate (Taber, 2018), having Cronbach alpha coefficients between

0.64 and 0.76. The statement M012 “Because I enjoy the concert” was excluded from Factor 1 “Socialization” because its factor loadings was 0.278 and Cronbach alpha with that statement was 0.690. General conclusion from this explorative factor analysis is that resulting factor structure resembles previous empirical findings.

Table 1: **Results of the explorative factor analysis (N = 150)**

<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor loadings</i>	<i>Total variance explained (%)</i>	<i>Alpha coefficient</i>
<b>FACTOR 1- Socialization</b>			<b>29.436</b>	<b>0.766</b>
M06	To be with people who enjoy the same things I do.	.501		
M07	Because I enjoy festival crowd.	.604		
M08	Because it is stimulating and exciting.	.579		
M09	To observe the other people attending the festival.	.439		
M010	Because the St John's Eve Bonfire is unique.	.520		
M011	Because I like the variety of things to see and do.	.504		
M013	Because I have been here before and had a good time.	.502		
M014	So I could be with my friends.	.335		
<b>FACTOR 2 – Escape from everyday life</b>			<b>11.733</b>	<b>0.708</b>
M01	To get away from the usual demands of life.	.841		
M02	To have a change from my daily routine.	.696		
M015	To be with people who are enjoying themselves for a change.	.361		
<b>FACTOR 3 – Event Novelty</b>			<b>8.095</b>	<b>0.637</b>
M03	Because I enjoy special events.	.412		
M04	Because I was curious.	.603		
M05	To experience new and different things.	.601		
<b>FACTOR 4 – Family togetherness</b>			<b>6.870</b>	<b>0.727</b>
M016	Because I thought the entire family would enjoy it.	.800		
M017	So the family could do something together.	.640		

Source: Research results

This confirms the H1 hypothesis, the “Motivation for visiting” construct consist of four factors: “Socialization”, “Escape from everyday life”, “Event Novelty” and “Family togetherness”. “The most common motivational factor for visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire in the City of Karlovac is to enjoy socializing with friends”. It has the highest mode 5 and smallest coefficient of variation 16.904.

Table 2: **Motivations Scale – mean, mode, standard deviation and coefficient of variation (N=150)**

Item	Mean	Mode	SD	V
<b>FACTOR 1 – Socialization</b>				
M06 To be with people who enjoy the same things I do.	3.69	4	1.153	31.246
M07 Because I enjoy festival crowd.	2.59	1	1.471	56.795
M08 Because it is stimulating and exciting.	3.36	3	1.175	34.970
M09 To observe the other people attending the festival.	2.50	1	1.375	55.000
M010 Because the St John's Eve Bonfire is unique.	3.84	5	1.176	30.625
M011 Because I like the variety of things to see and do.	3.42	3	1.110	32.456
M012 Because I enjoy the concert.	3.42	3	1.088	31.812
M013 Because I have been here before and had a good time.	3.77	5	1.212	32.148
<b>M014 So I could be with my friends.</b>	<b>4.49</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.759</b>	<b>16.904</b>
<b>FACTOR 2 – Escape</b>				
M01 To get away from the usual demands of life.	3.39	3	1.312	38.702
M02 To have a change from my daily routine.	3.40	4	1.259	37.029
M015 To be with people who are enjoying themselves for a change.	3.47	3	1.282	36.945
<b>FACTOR 3 – Event Novelty</b>				
M03 Because I enjoy special events.	3.69	4	1.111	30.108
M04 Because I was curious.	3.60	4	1.153	32.027
M05 To experience new and different things.	3.40	3	1.240	36.470
<b>FACTOR 4 – Family Togetherness</b>				
M016 Because I thought the entire family would enjoy it.	3.91	5	1.046	26.751
M017 So the family could do something together.	3.72	4	1.134	30.483

SD – standard deviation

V – Coefficient of variation

Source: Research results

The research results in Table 3 indicate that construct is reliable (Taber, 2018), having Cronbach alpha coefficient 0.782, total variance explained 51.444% of statements, only two factor loadings were lower than 0.5 (M022 and M023). When the statement M023 “I have shared my similar experience with others through Social Networks.” is excluded from Factor 1, because its factor loadings is 0.457, the Cronbach alpha without that statement is higher 0.798 and total variance explained is 56.587%. When the statement M22 “I will recommend the St John's Eve Bonfire to others” is also excluded, the Cronbach alpha is lower 0.760 then the one with the statement M022. The general conclusion from this explorative factor analysis is that the statement M023 must be excluded.

**Table 3: Results of the reliability test for satisfaction and loyalty (N=150)**

<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor loadings</i>	<i>Total variance explained (%)</i>	<i>Alpha coefficient</i>
<b>FACTOR 1- Satisfaction and Loyalty</b>			<b>51.444</b>	<b>0.782</b>
M018	Because I heard about the St John's Eve Bonfire and thought, it would be fun.	.742		
M019	Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.	.824		
M020	I will participate in similar types of experiences in the future.	.676		
M021	I will revisit the St John's Eve Bonfire in the future.	.669		
M022	I will recommend the St John's Eve Bonfire to others.	.472		
M023	I have shared my similar experience with others through Social Networks.	.457		

Source: Research results

The experience of visiting the St John's Eve Bonfire festival for 71% of respondents was a very good satisfaction; the mean is 3.95 and mode 5 and coefficient of variation 25.919. The St John's Eve Bonfire will be revisited by 85% of the respondents; the mean is 4.39 and mode 5 and coefficient of variation 18.633. The St John's Eve Bonfire will be recommended to others 82% visitors; mean is 4.35, mode 5 and coefficient of variation 20.804. Their experience through social networks will share 46% of respondents but 36% of them will not share their experience; the remainder of the respondents were neutral; the mean is 3.25, mode 5 and coefficient of variation 46.780.



**Table 4: Scale satisfaction and loyalty – mean, mode, standard deviation and coefficient of variation (N=150)**

Item number	Item	Mean	Mode	SD	V
M018	Because I heard about the St John's Eve Bonfire and thought, it would be fun.	3.75	4	1.080	28.800
M019	Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.	3.97	5	1.029	25.919
M020	I will participate in similar types of experiences in the future.	4.21	5	0.992	23.562
M021	I will revisit the St John's Eve Bonfire in the future.	4.39	5	0.818	18.633
M022	I will recommend the St John's Eve Bonfire to others.	4.35	5	0.905	20.804
M023	I have shared my similar experience with others through social networks.	3.23	5	1.511	46.780

SD – standard deviation

V – Coefficient of variation

Source: Research results

The magnitude and the way of connection for related variables are measured by Pearson's correlation coefficient (Horvat and Mijoč 2012, 476). The correlation coefficient takes over the value between -1 and +1, weak correlation ranges from 0 to +0,3, positive medium correlation ranges from +0,3 to +0,7, positive strong correlation ranges from +0,7 to +1 and complete positive correlation is +1 (Horvat and Mijoč 2012, 476).

**Table 5: Results of the correlation analysis (N = 150)**

	repeat visit	intention to recommend	sharing experience through social networks	satisfaction with the experience
repeat visit	1			
intention to recommend	0.522*	1		
sharing experience through social networks	0.291*	0.310*	1	
satisfaction with the experience	0.427*	0.478*	0.375*	1

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

Source: Research results

Correlation analysis showed that there was a statistically significant correlation between the observed variables. The magnitude of the correlation coefficient ranges from 0.291 to 0.522, ( $p < 0.001$ ). Visitor satisfaction with the experience is positive medium correlated with repeat visit ( $r = 0.427$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), intention to recommend ( $r = 0.478$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and sharing experience through social networks ( $r = 0.375$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Repeat visit is positive medium correlated with intention to recommend ( $r = 0.522$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the correlation with sharing the experience through social networks is somewhat lower ( $r = 0.291$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Intention to recommend is positive medium correlated with the sharing experience through social networks ( $r = 0.310$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It can be concluded that each hypothesis has been confirmed except the H6 hypothesis, because there is a weak correlation between repeat visit and sharing experience through social networks. Further research could investigate the reasons why visitors of the St John's Eve Bonfire festival do not share experience through social networks more.

### **2.1. Research limits and future recommendations**

Since the examined visitors who participated at the event came there to socialise and have fun, they were not that keen on taking their time to fill in the survey and answer the questions. Loud noise and crowd limited the possibility of asking questions the older population and due to bad electricity conditions, it was difficult for them to read the questions. Future recommendation is to do the survey before the festival, during the festival and after the festival. Considering that most of the visitors are locals, it is possible to do that kind of survey and the resulting hypothesis will vary depending on survey time. Also, the correlation between every motive for visiting with the visitors' satisfaction could be the subject-matter of the research. Further research could investigate do the visitors of different festivals and events share their experience through social networks and their correlations with different age segments. Also, further research could investigate the difference in tourist experience and satisfaction between locals and visitors from other cities in Croatia and foreign visitors.

## **CONCLUSION**

The festival such as the St John's Eve Bonfire has a great importance in the City of Karlovac and its Tourist Board through the traditional cultural tourism product. All the hypothesis have been confirmed from the research results except the hypothesis H6: There is a positive correlation between making a repeat visit and sharing the experience through social networks. In the City of Karlovac should be more festivals like this one to encourage socialization and spending free time with friends and family as well as other visitors in the City of Karlovac confirmed by hypothesis H1.

The visitors of the St John's Eve Bonfire visit the festival regularly every year (85%) which shows sustainability of the festival and recommendation to the others (82%) shows the increase of the visitors'. The Beltane Fire Festival in Edinburg visits 80.4% visitors for the first time and 43.2% of them knew little about festival, which is critical in ensuring sustainability of the Festival (Matheson et al. 2014). The hypothesis H6: There is a positive correlation between making a repeat visit and sharing the experience through social networks was not confirmed because there is a weak correlation between repeat

visit and sharing experience through social networks, which needs a further investigation.

The identification of motives for visiting a certain event is very important for establishing the visitors' needs and their preferences. This can become the main source of information for the tourism and marketing professionals and those who organize the events to make the valid decisions when choosing the right tourist packages offered to potential visitors.

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