

The relationship between festival key success factors and experience perception: The case of Orange Blossom Festival*

Ali Dalgıç¹ and Kemal Birdir²

¹Corresponding author, Isparta University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Tourism Isparta/Türkiye, E-mail: alidalgic@isparta.edu.tr, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5575-4825>

²Mersin University, Faculty of Tourism Mersin/Türkiye, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1353-3618>

Article Info	Abstract
Research Article Received: 15 February 2025 Revised: 8 March 2025 Accepted: 9 March 2025 Keywords: Key success factors, Experience perception, Orange blossom festival, Festivals	<i>This study aims to identify the key success factors perceived as successful or unsuccessful by the Orange Blossom Festival participants in Adana. Another goal is to explore the relationship between these factors and participants' experience perceptions. Non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling, was used. Data were collected via face-to-face surveys between April 3 and 9, 2017, with 923 completed forms. Analysis revealed higher averages for statements related to "food", "security", and "staff and volunteers" while "convenience" scored lower. Key success factors were found to have a significant positive relationship with experience perceptions. Based on these findings, it is recommended that festival organizers carefully manage these factors from the planning phase through the event's conclusion.</i>

1. Introduction

Events are an essential attraction factor that can directly and indirectly influence a destination's promotion, tourism development, and visitor attraction. Among the most frequently organized events worldwide are festivals, which fall under cultural celebrations. Festivals are events held within a specific theme and time frame, where participants engage to share common emotions and achieve particular objectives. It is possible to state that such events have various physical, social, cultural, commercial, political, and tourism-related impacts. Additionally, from the perspective of event participants, these events can foster socialization, facilitate learning about new cultural values, provide opportunities to meet new people, offer unique experiences, and allow for exploring new places. For both the host destination and the participants, achieving positive outcomes depends on the successful execution of the event. This can be accomplished by providing necessary inputs and an effective management process from the pre- and post-event stages. Focusing on key success factors and integrating them effectively is crucial in this process.

Key success factors can be defined as the essential elements required for the successful execution of an event. These factors influence the event's overall success and, consequently, impact participant satisfaction. In the context of festivals, key success factors may include elements such as "food and beverages" (Getz, 1997; Taylor & Shanka, 2008; Lee et al., 2008; Özdemir & Çulha, 2009; Anil, 2012; Kong, 2015), "facilities/infrastructure" (Getz, 1997; Lee et al., 2008; Özdemir & Çulha, 2009), "festival area" (Lade & Jackson, 2004; Taylor & Shanka, 2008; Anil, 2012), "festival program" (Lade & Jackson, 2004; Lee et al., 2008; Özdemir & Çulha, 2009; Lee & Chang, 2017), "convenience" (Lee et al., 2008; Özdemir & Çulha, 2009; Anil, 2012), "staff/volunteers" (Lee et al., 2008; Özdemir & Çulha, 2009), "activities" (Lade & Jackson, 2004; Cole & Illum, 2006; Kong, 2015), "security" (Getz,

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1997; Kong, 2015), “souvenirs” (Lee et al., 2008; Özdemir & Çulha, 2009) and “information/communication” (Lee et al., 2008; Özdemir & Çulha, 2009). Each of these factors, considered as inputs in the festival context, plays a crucial role in ensuring the continuity, promotion, and marketing of the organized event.

Key success factors can directly influence the experiences of festival participants. Individuals attend such events to escape from daily life and engage in unique experiences. Through effective planning and organization, key success factors can enhance both the cognitive and emotional experience perceptions of participants (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Ayob, Wahid & Omar, 2013; Jung et al., 2015; Lee & Chang, 2017). In this research, the primary objective is to identify the key success factors that stand out and exhibit relatively low averages. Another goal is to examine the relationship between key success factors and visitor experience perceptions. The study first presents relevant concepts and the relationships between variables under the conceptual framework section. Subsequently, details regarding the research purpose, sample, data collection process, participant information, and measurement scales are provided under the methodology section. The analysis of data are presented in the findings section. Finally, the study concludes with theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature review

The successful execution of a festival requires the fulfillment of multiple essential factors. Certain fundamental elements must be ensured for the event’s overall success. The relevant literature defines these factors as “key success factors” (Getz, 1997; Cole & Illum, 2006; Taylor & Shanka, 2008; Marais & Saayman, 2011). Getz (1997) identified key success factors such as “a suitable area for the event”, “food and beverage services”, “facilities/infrastructure”, “accessibility”, “crowd management,” and “high-quality service”. Similarly, Lade and Jackson (2004) emphasized the importance of “high-quality facilities”, “festival area”, “festival program”, “planning and activity management,” and “marketing strategies”. Cole and Illum (2006) highlighted “entertainment”, “socialization”, “activities,” and “facilities” as crucial for festival success. Taylor and Shanka (2008) considered factors such as “crowd control”, “security services”, “attractions”, “atmosphere”, “festival area”, “festival timing”, “parking areas”, “food and beverage services,” and “accommodation services” as key success factors. Lee et al. (2008) identified “information services,” “staff”, “program”, “facilities”, “convenience”, “food,” and “souvenirs” as influential elements in festival success. Özdemir and Çulha (2009) also classified “information/communication,” “convenience”, “festival program”, “facilities”, “staff”, “food and beverage services”, and “souvenirs” under key success factors. Anil (2012) found that “festival area”, “food,” and “convenience” were the most critical factors for a festival’s success. Kong (2015) emphasized elements such as “food and beverage services and their prices”, “restrooms”, “parking areas”, “security”, “cleanliness,” and “activities”. Finally, Lee and Chang (2017) identified the most significant key success factors for festivals as the “festival program” and “facilities”.

Key success factors are among the most critical elements shaping festival participants' perceptions of the event. These factors can meet participants' expectations and enhance their satisfaction when effectively integrated. One of the most significant determinants of festival attendees' satisfaction levels is their overall experience (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Wu, Wong & Cheng, 2014). The essence of an experience is formed when extraordinary events occurring during exceptional times leave a lasting impression on individuals' minds (Geus, Richards & Toepoel, 2016). Experience can be described as the sum of cognitive and emotional states influenced by occurrences during an event (Biaett, 2013). Given that festivals are held periodically for a limited duration and offer participants diverse cognitive and emotional states, one of the primary objectives of attendees is the pursuit of unique experiences. Considering previous research findings, it can be concluded that key success factors significantly influence festival participants' experiences (Ayob et al., 2013; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Jung et al., 2015; Lee & Chang, 2017).

It is possible to explain the influence of key success factors on festival success and their relationship with participants' experience perceptions within the systems theory framework. Systems theory is based on input, process, and output principles. Inputs may include human resources, financial resources, equipment and materials, and facilities. The process encompasses components like planning, organization, and supervision. Additionally, systems theory suggests combining these factors with environmental influences can lead to various outcomes (Getz & Frisby, 1988, p. 24). From a systems theory perspective, the successful execution of a festival requires the integration of multiple key success factors, and achieving success depends on effective process management (Malen & Adams, 2008, p. 27). Each key success factor can be considered an input, and through efficient process management, these inputs can enhance the festival participants' experiences. Within this context, the following research question has been formulated:

RQ1: Are there positive and significant relationships between festival key success factors and festival participants' experiences?

3. Methodology

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This study aims to identify the key success factors perceived as successful and unsuccessful by the participants of the Orange Blossom Festival and to examine the relationship between these factors and participants' experience perceptions. The research was conducted in the context of participants attending the Orange Blossom Festival held in Adana. A sample was determined since it was not feasible to reach all participants due to time and financial constraints. The research sample consists of individuals aged 18 and above who attended the Orange Blossom Festival in Adana. The "convenience sampling method" was chosen for this study. The survey was conducted between April 3 and April 9, 2017, and 923 survey responses were collected. After processing the data obtained from the survey forms into the dataset, analyses for "missing data", "outliers", and "multivariate normal distribution" were performed. As a result of these analyses, it was determined that the study was conducted with a valid dataset consisting of 891 observations.

The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software package. The findings related to the demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. It was determined that 540 participants (60.6%) were female, 452 participants (50.8%) were between the ages of 18 and 29, 392 participants (44.0%) were high school graduates, and 497 participants (55.8%) were single.

Table 1. Participants' demographic characteristics

Gender (n=891)	Frequency	%	Education (n=891)	Frequency	%
Male	351	39.4	Primary School	156	17.5
Female	540	60.6	High School	392	44.0
<i>Age (n=890)</i>			College	115	12.9
18-29 years	452	50.8	University	189	21.2
30-39 years	232	26.1	Postgraduate	39	4.4
40-49 years	94	10.6	<i>Marital status (n=891)</i>		
50-59 years	84	9.4	Married	394	44.2
60 years and above	28	3.1	Single	497	55.8

The Festival Key Success Scale was developed based on the studies conducted by Anil (2012), Lee and Chang (2017), Yoon, Lee, and Lee (2010), Lee et al., (2008), Wu and Ai (2016), and Saayman, Kruger, and Erasmus (2012). The Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient of the Festival Key Success Factors Scale was 0.947. The Festival Experience Perception Scale was developed based on the studies conducted by Akyıldız (2010), Geus, Richards, and Toepoel (2016), and Lee and Chang (2017). The α coefficient of the Festival Experience Perception Scale was 0.940. The response categories for the items included in the scales were structured using a 5-point Likert scale ("1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree").

4. Findings

The Festival Key Success Factors Scale assessed participants' perceptions of festival attributes. The findings of the descriptive analysis are presented in detail in Table 2. Considering the mean scores of the statements, it can be noted that the following statements had relatively higher means compared to others: "Local foods were available among the foods sold at the festival area", "The food sold at the festival area was of good quality", "The emergency response team at the festival area was adequate", "Festival staff and volunteers were willing to help", "The number of security personnel at the festival area was sufficient", "The security measures taken at the festival area were adequate" and "The variety of food sold at the festival area was sufficient". On the other hand, the following statements had lower mean scores: "Parking spaces were sufficient", "Restrooms were clean", "Rest areas were sufficient," and "The food sold at the festival area was reasonably priced".

Table 2. Descriptive analysis findings of the festival key success factors scale

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
Local foods were available among the foods sold at the festival area.	4.27	0.6644
The food sold at the festival area was of good quality.	4.25	0.6405
The emergency response team at the festival area was adequate.	4.24	0.7787
Festival staff and volunteers were willing to help.	4.21	0.6020
The number of security personnel at the festival area was sufficient.	4.19	0.8206
The security measures taken at the festival area were adequate.	4.18	0.8171
The variety of food sold at the festival area was sufficient.	4.17	0.7052
The festival area was well organized.	4.16	0.8607
Festival staff and volunteers responded quickly to our inquiries.	4.16	0.6120
Festival staff and volunteers had sufficient knowledge about the festival.	4.15	0.6107
The festival schedule was appropriate.	4.14	0.9042
The festival atmosphere was good.	4.14	0.8385
Transportation to the festival area was easy.	4.14	0.8793
The festival area was clean.	4.13	0.8757
The festival area was spacious enough.	4.12	0.8497
Festival staff and volunteers were courteous.	4.12	0.6944
The facilities around the festival area (cafes, restaurants, markets, etc.) were sufficient.	4.12	0.8599
Transportation options to the festival were sufficient.	4.10	0.9571
The festival program was well managed.	4.10	0.8591
The festival program was satisfying.	4.08	0.8294
The festival program was well planned.	4.07	0.8543
The festival program was rich in content.	4.07	0.8624
The quality of souvenirs sold at the festival was high.	4.07	0.7899
There was a variety of souvenirs available at the festival.	4.06	0.8369
The festival program was entertaining.	4.04	0.9097
Through festival events, I gained knowledge about local culture.	4.04	0.8323
The prices of souvenirs sold at the festival were reasonable.	4.00	0.8650
Festival brochures provided sufficient information.	4.00	0.7774
Pre-festival announcements (date, time, events, etc.) were adequate.	3.97	0.8390
The price of souvenirs sold at the festival was affordable.	3.96	0.9061
Festival information boards provided sufficient details.	3.94	0.8124
Directional signs at the festival area provided sufficient guidance.	3.94	0.7898
Sufficient information was provided via social media regarding the festival.	3.88	0.8492
The prices of food sold at the festival area were reasonable.	3.81	0.9961
Rest areas were sufficient.	3.79	1.0510
Restrooms were clean.	3.72	1.0324
Parking spaces were sufficient.	3.72	1.1178
Overall	4.06	0.4828

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the Festival Key Success Factors Scale. Before performing the factor analysis, certain assumptions were considered. These assumptions included: (1) factor loadings of items being 0.40 or above (Şencan, 2005, p. 779), (2) items loading on two dimensions having a cross-loading difference of at least 0.100, (3) communality values being 0.50 or higher, and (4) the use of the Varimax rotation technique (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). As a result of the factor analysis, six items were removed from the analysis due to cross-loading (i.e., loading on two dimensions with a difference smaller than 0.100). The remaining 30 items were grouped under seven dimensions: program dimension (five items), festival area and accessibility dimension (five items), information dimension (five items), staff and volunteers dimension (four items), souvenirs and convenience dimension (six items), security dimension (three items), and food dimension (two items). The total explained variance was approximately 70%. Additionally, the KMO value was around 0.90, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant.

An exploratory factor analysis was also conducted for the Festival Experience Perception Scale, considering the same assumptions. The KMO value was approximately 0.92, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant. The 11 items in the scale were grouped under two dimensions: emotional experience (seven items) and cognitive experience (four items), with a total explained variance of approximately 73%.

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix showing the relationships between the variables. Upon examining the table, it can be stated that all variables identified as key success factors of the festival have a positive and significant relationship with both emotional and cognitive experience perception variables.

Table 3. Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1-Program	1								
2-Festival Area & Accessibility	.648**	1							
3-Information	.410**	.448**	1						
4-Staff & Volunteers	.306**	.348**	.316**	1					
5-Souvenirs & Convenience	.543**	.541**	.415**	.275**	1				
6-Security	.470**	.541**	.380**	.309**	.407**	1			
7-Food	.411**	.436**	.392**	.494**	.335**	.390**	1		
8-Emotional Experience Perception	.604**	.609**	.497**	.339**	.499**	.496**	.411**	1	
9-Cognitive Experience Perception	.511**	.515**	.431**	.265**	.424**	.394**	.320**	.700**	1

P<0.01

5. Discussions and conclusions

This study aimed to examine participants' perceptions regarding key success factors at the Orange Blossom Festival in Adana and to analyze the relationships between these key success factors and participants' experience perceptions. When evaluating the findings related to key success factors as input elements, it was observed that statements related to “food”, “security”, and “staff & volunteers” had higher mean scores. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate a significant and positive relationship between key festival success factors and participants' experience perceptions (both cognitive and emotional). It has been observed that the dimensions of “program”, “festival area and accessibility”, “information”, “staff and volunteers”, “souvenirs and convenience”, “security”, and “food” are all significantly and positively related to both “emotional experience perception” and “cognitive experience perception”.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Firstly, in the evaluation of findings concerning key success factors as input elements, it was found that statements regarding “food”, “security”, and “staff & volunteers” exhibited higher mean scores. In this context, the availability of local food and the quality of food were perceived positively by participants in this festival. Additionally, the adequacy of emergency medical teams, security personnel, and safety measures were other aspects that participants perceived favorably. Lastly, another highly rated aspect was the willingness of staff and volunteers to assist attendees. On the other hand, despite being part of the festival experience, factors related to “convenience”—such as rest areas' availability, restrooms' condition, and parking facilities—had lower mean scores than the overall average. When comparing these results with findings from previous studies in the literature, the “food” dimension identified by Getz (1997), Taylor & Shanka (2008), Lee et al. (2008), Özdemir & Çulha (2009), Anil (2012), and Kong (2015) was also found in this study. Furthermore, the significance of the “security” factor in this study aligns with the findings of Taylor & Shanka (2008) and Kong (2015). The importance of “staff” mentioned by Lee et al. (2008) and Özdemir & Çulha (2009) is also supported by the results of this study. However, the key success factor referred to as “convenience” in studies by Lee et al. (2008), Anil (2012), and Kong (2015) appears to be relatively lacking in this study. This shortcoming could affect the festival's success, image, participant satisfaction, and experience perception. From a systems theory perspective, each key success factor can be seen as a cog in a machine. If one or more of these cogs are faulty, the system may experience disruptions or failures.

Secondly, it has been determined that the dimensions of “program”, “festival area and accessibility”, “information”, “staff and volunteers”, “souvenirs and convenience”, “security”, and “food” all have significant and positive relationships with both “emotional experience perception” and “cognitive experience perception”. When comparing these findings with previous studies in the literature (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Ayob, Wahid & Omar, 2013; Jung et al., 2015; Lee & Chang, 2017), similar conclusions can be drawn. In this context, key success factors can enhance festival participants' ability to acquire new knowledge while also providing them with an enjoyable escape from daily life. From a systems theory perspective, the proper management of inputs—namely, key success

factors and environmental factors—through an effective process will increase cognitive and emotional experience perceptions among participants.

5.2. Practical implications

Festival organizers should carefully manage the “convenience” dimension to enhance the attendee experience. Ensuring adequate and well-maintained restrooms, parking spaces, and comfortable rest areas can increase visitor satisfaction. Addressing these factors effectively may also positively impact the festival’s reputation and long-term success. Moreover, it is recommended that festival organizers carefully integrate and manage key success factors from the planning stage to the event’s conclusion. Since festival attendees seek a unique experience, organizers should ensure these expectations are met through a well-structured and seamless festival experience.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

As with any study, specific limitations exist within the context of this research. The findings apply to the Orange Blossom Festival and similar festivals with comparable themes and scales. Additionally, the study employed a convenience sampling method, where survey forms were distributed to all willing participants. A quota sampling method could yield results that capture more participant characteristics. Furthermore, future research could utilize qualitative methods, such as interviews, to gain deeper insights into the significance, shortcomings, and recommendations regarding key success factors. This approach would provide more detailed information for both theoretical contributions and practical applications. Future studies could also investigate additional factors influencing key festival success factors. Lastly, an important research avenue would be to explore the mediating variables that may impact the relationship between key festival success factors and participants' experience perceptions.

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Author contribution statements

The authors equally conducted the research design and implementation, analysis, and article writing without using AI applications.

Disclosure statement

The authors reported no potential competing interest.

Ethical committee approval

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