Gujarat Tourism and Mega-Event: 
Capturing the Tourist’s perception, motivation & satisfaction in the event of 
RANN UTSAV 2013-14 at Kutch (Gujarat)

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Abstract:
Foreign tourist in a large number travel to India, to explore the Indian culture and heritage. Events are major attractions and one of the major reasons for travelers to travel across the globe. Monotonous offering for varied tourism destination can become innovative by conceptualizing, creating and hosting events like fairs, festival carnivals, sports events etc. Cultural colors, heritage, adventures, light and music shows, pilgrimage stories and varied markets in many different mixtures can create spectacular Event Tourism. Image of the destination and its varied attractions can be created with such events. This paper focuses that how Rann-Utsav (2013-14), attracted many foreign tourists in last few years and became a success for Gujarat Tourism and how foreign tourists have realized the brand Gujarat Tourism via Rann Utsav Event. It is said that: ‘the marketer is one who can sell ‘Ice to Eskimos’. So in this paper, we have studied how the district of Kutch, is effective in creating a buzz of its natural attraction of White Desert to the foreign tourists. We have divided the study in two parts:

Part 1: We have studied about the foreign tourist’s perception and motivation for visiting this mega-event of Rann-Utsav (2013-14). Moreover, we have studied about the major source of information for the foreign tourists for acquiring the information about Rann-Utsav. Also, we investigated the overall experience of the foreign tourists about the event

Part 2: We have highlighted some of the less impactful factors of the Rann-Utsav event, based on our observation. We had taken some snapshots of the event for the analysis of such factors and based on that we have commented and given our views and suggestions.

Key Words: Rann Utsav, Gujarat tourism, perception, motivation, mega-event

INTRODUCTION
“The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to World’s GDP in 2012 was USD 2,056.6 bn (2.9% of GDP). The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is expected to grow by 4.4% pa to USD 3,249.2 bn (3.1% of GDP) by 2023” (World Travel & Tourism Council. (n.d.). WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2013. Retrieved January 29, 2014, from http://www.wttc.org/). In other words, we can say tourism sector plays an important role in the economic development of the countries in the world.

According to Donald Getz (2007), tourism development depends on the study of behavior and motivation of tourist of all kind. And Event management depends on marketing, organizing and managing of an event. In other words, event tourism aims at increasing the tourism, based on proper management, marketing and organizing the events.

“Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner after gems and jewellery and readymade garments”(Kurukshetra, May 2012, Vol.-60, No.7, p.1). In other words, tourism is one of the major factors for the inflows of foreign currencies. Hence it becomes very important to study the behavior of foreign tourist arriving in our country, to serve them better and better. According to Paskaleva &
Shapira (2007), studying the expectations of the tourists’ can be useful for strengthening the destination’s features, and to develop better marketing strategies to give tough competition to other travel destinations.

It is very important to understand the tourist’s perceptions, their satisfaction level, their motivations to visit any place, in order to estimate the future tourism demand. This will helps us to strengthen the efforts for creating more tourists arrivals and can make the tourism more flourishing.

Moreover, it is very crucial to study the differences in tourist’s behavior belonging to different nationality. It becomes very important to explore the differences between domestic tourist and foreign tourist, in terms of their perception, motivation, satisfaction level and behavior.

This study was conducted in the district of Gujarat- Kutch, which is located in the western part of India. It is the largest district of India. Every year, the mega-event known as RANN-UTSAV, takes place. “More than 8000 tourists from villages, towns of India and also from all around the world made the Rann Utsav an event of colours, culture, people and holistic experience of a festival” (Gujarat Tourism, G. (n.d.). The Official Website of Gujarat Tourism, Govt. of Gujarat. Retrieved January 29, 2014, from http://www.gujarattourism.com/).

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Motivation & Perception

According to Hanqin & Lam (1999), for analyzing tourists’ motivations push and pull factors is a well-known approach. A study of Dann (1981) states that push factors are internal force or the need for travel such as desire to escape, the desire for freshness, or the desire for self-esteem. Pull factors are the factors which create attractiveness of travel destinations which motivates tourists to make a trip to places such as shopping centers, beaches, or friendly nature of the local people.

According to Yurtseven (2006) perception of tourists varies and so destination should provide services to tourists according to their perception. Destinations should also provide services according to type of tourists. Tourists can be categorized according to their motivation factor.

The five push factor groupings such as prestige, knowledge, enhancement of human relationship, novelty and relaxation and the six pull factor grouping such as expenditure, hi-tech image, service attitude and quality, sightseeing variety, accessibility and cultural links group, were found in the study by Hanqin & Lam (1999).
Whereas according to Rittichainuwat, Qu, and Brown (2001) six groupings of tourists who visited Thailand were cultural attractions, special interests, Buddhism, deals on tour promotion and currency exchange, good value of food/shopping/things to do and natural attractions were found. A study by Josiam and Frazier (2008) states that gaining knowledge about the historical characters and their family tree; tourists are motivated to visit friends and relatives or new places. These kinds of tourists always hunt for the famous historical characters and the cultural background of their ancestors.

Hence, in our study, we have investigated the main motivation for the foreign tourists to take a trip to Rann-Utsav.

Information Sources

According to Hawkins et al. (1995), five primary sources of information such as memory (eg. past experiences), independent sources (eg. travel agency or government), personal sources (eg. Family/friends), experiential sources (e.g., product trial) and experiential sources (e.g., product trial), were found.

A study by Jun et al. (2007) states that tourist with high travel budget generally refer online sources in their search for the places to visit. Moreover, according to Werthner & Ricci (2004), Internet uses by the tourists had shown great attractiveness among the Americans and Europeans. As per their study, they found that 30% of the adult population of US used Internet for gaining travel information. So, we can say that Internet is getting great momentum. But for some tourist, Internet sources are not found reliable and they search for other sources of information, where they get the honest and real information. According to Engel et.al (1995), word of mouth is strongly recommended by the tourists who are looking for reliable information.

Moreover, Louvieris and Oppewal (2004) states that travelers have different preferences for choosing the sources of information. In other words, we can say that different types of tourist have different choice for the information sources. Hence it becomes very important for us to study the main source of information for the foreign tourist which they have selected, in order to make a trip to the event of Rann-Utsav.

Events and tourism

Before describing event-tourism, we will first define the term “tourism”. Various sources define tourism in various manner, but we have selected the simple definition: “the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work or residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs”. (Cooper,Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert, & Wanhill 2008, 5.). Now let’s define the definition of Event-tourism: “Event Tourism is a systematic planning, development, and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, image-makers, catalysts for infrastructure and economic growth, and animators of built attraction” (Ghazali, in Collins and Minnis, 2007).”

Tourists always want to explore some special events or festival, in order to celebrate some special moments in their lives. To make their moments memorable, tourists travel across borders and miles and miles of distances. In such scenario, tourists are more incline towards events and shows happening around the world. In other words, we can say that events or mega-events can be a major source of tourism for their hosting countries.

Variant of definition occurs for mega event. Donald Gets (2007) in his book gives the definition of mega-events as those events that generate astonishing tourism level, huge coverage of media, status and reputation, and which creates good economic impact for the hosting country. Another form of definition is: “(Mega-events) Mega is a prefix that means one million. A mega-event is generally considered to be a large-scale event that has global publicity and or is associated with large-scale impacts, p351.” (http://wps.pearsoned.co.uk/wps/media/objects/1881/1926829/glossary/glossary.html)
In other words, we can say that mega-event acquires a huge media-coverage, where visitors are in huge amounts and which also benefits to the economy of the host country to a large extent. Mega-events mainly occur yearly and tourists around the world are attracted. Examples such as the International trade fairs and exhibition, the FIFA World cup, the Olympic Games etc.

Now a day, tourists look for attraction or events in their tour to any destination. According to Getz (1991), tourists need something in their leisure time. Events will enhance visitor’s experience and make them stay longer by encouraging them to spend extra time in tourism destinations. Also Getz (1991) states that the policy should be consider treating event as a closely connected field with tourism.

According to Getz (1991), events are the most thrilling and highest growing industry connected to leisure tourism and business tourism. A research study by Event Solution Fact Book reveals that the event industry is approximately $400 billion annual business. Average gross income was $2.38 million at event companies in 2000. Moreover, this study also found that the percent of companies is 40.5% overall, which is consisting of more that $1 million in gross revenues. Not only businesses and tourism are benefited through events, but we can say that host cities or countries also benefit themselves.

A mega-event demands good facilities such as accommodation and transportation, infrastructure, and other amenities. So, it becomes very important for the host city or country to look forward about all the factors concerning the tourist liking and disliking, in order to leverage their (host city or country) image and increase their tourism. Leverage means all about acquiring the best possible benefits from the featured event. Chalip (2004 p228) defines leveraging as: “the processes through which the benefits of investments are maximized.” In other words, we can say that events should leveraged in terms of visitors’ spending, overall profits after the event, positive image of the hosting city or country, maximum tourist footfalls and create a sense for tourist to visit again and again.

Moreover, another estimated benefit for hosting mega events is huge media exposure for the host city. Tourists, who enjoy their visit to the host city, persuade other to visit through word of mouth. On the contrary, if the events are not properly executed, then it can have negative impact on the tourism of the host city or country. Hence, proper planning and management of the event could result in the increase of positive word of mouth and increase in the tourism. “It is critical that the impacts of … events be managed effectively so that benefits accrue not only to select stakeholders, but to all of the host community” (Tiyce & Dimmock, 2000: 222).

Events can be described as a combination of event infrastructure, media, kind of tourists arriving in the event and the place where the event occurs. We can say that events should spread a positive message about the host city or country and should create a positive image in the mind of the tourists. The benefit of image transfer happens when tourist recognize any benefit in events, which is also beneficial for the host city or country. (Meyvis, Janiszewski 2004; Supphellen, Eismann and L.E. Hem, 2004).

The benefits of the event can be considered visible before the event takes place, during the event actually happening or after the completion of the event. The benefits can be felt by a variety of stakeholders which includes participants, local people of the host city or country, local businesses etc. “Mega-events have multiple effects on the society, the environment, and the economy of a region. This can range from increasing leisure facilities for locals to better infrastructure, but also to economic growth.” According to this book, to find the impact of mega-event, in terms of tourism is the best method.

Across the globe within different destination many events are organize in the different time-frame. Fashion Shows, Weddings, Expos exhibitions, conferences, seminars and workshops are other attraction across the world in which people travel for leisure or business tourism. One of the most awaited events for Gujarat is Rann-Utsav, which happens in the region of Kutch, every year. This mega-event captures huge media coverage and a big buzz. Through aggressive marketing campaign, this mega-event of Rann-Utsav tires to create large foreign tourists footfalls, every year.
Rann-Utsav- Event Destination
According to the official website of Rann Utsav, “this annually organized festival offers an opportunity for visitors to attend folk dance and music concepts, to watch artisans at work, to Shop directly from NGO’s craftspeople and village co-operatives, to see the great Historical monuments in the state, and to visit places off the usual tourist trail.

“During the festival, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat ltd. arranges tours with Transport, accommodations, food and guided sightseeing. The cool winter breeze and soothing rays of full-moon night will welcomes about 8,000 tourists in the Great Rann of Kutch. Many high profile dignitaries, including Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi enjoys cultural programmes, to be performed in the midst of the White Salt Desert spread over miles. For those interested in natural history, Kutch is the habitat of the endangered and interesting wildlife species like the Indian wild ass. Kutch is considered to be a haven for numerous handicrafts, which are carried on from generation to generation.”
(www.rannutsav.com).

NEED FOR THE STUDY
Every year, the mega-event of Rann-Utsav attracts large number of foreign tourists. These foreign tourists carry a positive or negative image of the event, based on their experience of their tour to the event of Rann-Utsav. These images not only affect the overall performance of the event, but it also affects the image and tourism of the hosting city or country. Hence it becomes very important to study their mindset and their overall experience during their tour to Rann-Utsav. This can be achieved by studying the demographic profile and the travel patterns, information sources and motivation and of course the overall satisfaction level of the foreign tourists.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY
This study can be beneficial to both mangers and the government bodies to understand the tourists in a better way and to design better marketing strategies to increase the tourist’s footfalls and to serve them better and better.

This study is conducted to understand the positive and negative factors of the mega-event called Rann-Utsav, in the district of Kutch of the Gujarat State. These will help the Gujarat tourism department to inculcate the likings and to remove the disliking of the tourists.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The aims of the study are divided into two parts:

PART 1:
1) Identify foreign tourists’ demographics and travel patterns;
2) Examine the major source of information and foreign tourists’ motivation
3) Examine foreign tourists’ overall satisfaction with the event

PART 2:
To highlight on some of the less impactful factors, based on our observation

METHODOLOGY

Research Instrument

Part 1:
Structured questionnaire were distributed among the foreinf tourists to collect the primary data. Medium of instruction was English. We have interacted with the translators, for those foreign tourists who were not able to understand English.

A pilot survey was done in a group of six foreign tourists (who were readily available during the event of Rann-Utsav) to find the content validity and reliability. After pilot study, necessary changes were made in the questionnaire and then it was distributed for the main survey.
Part 2:
Snapshot of different scenario were taken. Based on the observation from our point of view, we have highlighted the positive and negative factors.

SAMPLING & DATA ANALYSIS
A convenience sample method was used for data collection. 50 foreign tourists, who visited the mega-event of Rann-Utsav during Dec’2013-Jan’2014, were asked to fill the questionnaire. MS EXCEL was used to analyze the collected data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

PART 1:
Objective 1: To identify Indian tourists’ demographics and travel patterns

Question no. 2: Gender

Result: Here we can see that among the foreign tourist, 54% are female respondents and 46% are males.

Question no. 3: Age

Result: Here we say see that majority of the foreign tourists belongs to the age of 25-44 years
Question 4: Employment status:

Result: In case of employment status, 38% of the foreign tourists were self-employed, followed by 24% of employed group.

Question 5: Education

Result: Also in case of education, we can see that 40% of the foreign tourists were college students.
Question no. 6: Kindly mention your purpose of visit (Put a tick).

Result: We can find out that the main purpose for the majority of the foreign tourist is leisure tourism. 56% of the respondents mentioned their main reason to visit Rann-Utsav is leisure tourism.

Question no. 7: How many times did you visit Rann-Utsav?

Result: Here we can find out that 86% of the foreign tourists are first time visitors.

Objective 2: Examine the major source of information and foreign tourists’ motivation

Question no. 8: How did you come to know about this event of Rann-Utsav?
Result: Majority of the foreign tourists get influenced by word of mouth created by their friend and family, as an information source consisting of 57%. And second highest used source was found to be Internet source.

Question 9: Which factor motivated you the most, to visit the event of Rann-Utsav?

Result: Change and relaxation were ranked the top most motivation factor of the majority of the foreign tourist consisting of 50%.

Objective 3: Examine foreign tourists’ overall satisfaction with the event

Question no. 10: Rank the factors which you find the best in the event of Rann-Utsav

Result: Here we can find that foreign tourists were highly found impressed with the natural attraction of the White Desert.
Question no. 11: What is your overall experience for the visit of Rann-Utsav?

Result: 60% of the foreign tourists were found completely satisfied with their experience in their tour to Rann-Utsav.

Question no. 12: After your experience of tour to Rann-Utsav, would you recommend other to visit Rann-Utsav?

Result: More than 80% of the respondents agreed to refer a visit of Rann-Utsav to others.

Question no. 14: According to you, what is the lacking factor in this event of Rann –Utsav?
Result: Here we can see that majority of the respondents found that there should be some personal assistance or guide to help them get more information during their stay to Rann-Utsav.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION:

In this study, we have studied the demographic profile and the travel patterns of the foreign tourists. We had also investigated the major source of information and motivation for the foreign tourists to make a trip to Rann-Utsav. And last but not the least; we had captured the overall experience of the foreign tourists about their trip to Rann-Utsav.

We had found that majority of the respondents were males belonging to the age group of 25-44 years. From the results, we can see that the major purpose of the respondent visited Rann-Utsav to have leisure tourism. And majority of the respondents were 1st time visitors. This point can be taken into consideration by Gujarat Tourism, in order to encourage more and more frequent visits.

We found that word-of-mouth was the most influencing factor and the main source of information for the foreign tourists. But the other source of information such as Newspapers, Magazines, Advertisement and Travel agency, were found to create negligible impact for the tourist. This should be taken care by the Tourism board, in order to make other sources of information more impactful.

As far as motivation factors are concerned, ‘change & relaxation’ were found in majority. Here one of the motivation factors of ‘Knowledge gaining’ can be leveraged more by Gujarat Tourism. In other words, we can say that Gujarat Tourism Board can take this initiative to create a buzz of Kutch district as an historical place by highlight the event of Rann-Utsav. This can make the tourists to come to Kutch to increase their knowledge and explore some new learning.

It was found that the natural attraction of ‘White Desert’ was the most fascinating factor for the foreign tourists. Apart from this they were also very impressed in the areas of hospitality and security concerns. But many of the foreign tourists felt the need of some arrangement for acquiring the tourism information.

On a whole, majority of the respondents were really found satisfied about their experience in the event of Rann-Utsav and majority of them agreed to refer their visit to this event. But as far as some lacking factors are concerned, foreign tourist felt the need of some personal assistant or a person as a guide. So, if the management of the event Rann-Utsav, can make some arrangements for the foreign tourists to acquire their own personal assistance in the event to guide them throughout their stay, then this can help the foreign tourists to acquire more information and explore new places nearby. This arrangement can also create an extra remuneration for the event. In other word, management can charge some small amount for hiring the guide to the foreign tourists.

LIMITATIONS

Due to the limitation of time to collect the data, sample size was only 50 respondents. So, based on this sample size, we cannot generalize the results for the large sample size. This is the major limitation of our study.
PART 2:
To highlight some of the less impactful factors of the event, based on our observation
Snapshot of different scenario were taken. Based on the observation from our point of view, we have highlighted some of the less impactful factors.

Snapshot 1: Entrance of the event Rann-Utsav

Comments: The entrance of the event was found quite impressive. They have highlighted the tradition and culture of Gujarat, in the design of the entrance way. But we cannot properly and clearly notice the main Logo & Name of Rann-Utsav, from far. According to us, if this Logo can be enlarged more, then tourist can notice it from far distance and can create a good impact.

Snapshot 2: Near the entrance area

Comments: Here we can see that dust-tin was found near the entrance. This seem to not impressive for the tourists. So dust-tins should be placed on proper corners with proper indications.

Snapshot 3: Child Labor

Comments: This scenario was capture, which indicates the existence of child labor in the event. This should be discarded and children should not be encouraged to do work. This scenario creates a very bad image in the mind of the foreign tourists, about the management of the event and India as a whole.
FINAL COMMENTS:

One thing we have noticed in the route while going to Rann Utsav, that there were no proper landmarks. It becomes difficult for the tourists, who are visiting this event for the first time to find the way. Proper landmarks are visible from the city of Bhuj, which is nearly 60 kms away from the event place. So, according to us, the event management should keep some more landmarks from the far distance, to facilitate the first time visitors.

Moreover, we have also noticed that there was not enough marketing of this event in the nearby cities of Kutch. We were not able to see any particular hoarding of this event. So, according to us, the management of the event should do some marketing efforts for creating more awareness of this event in the local cities of Kutch.

From our personal experience, we can say that the overall experience was very good. Rann Utsav, creates an unique image for the tourists and also greatly complement the tradition of Gujarat state.

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