Gender differences in motivations to attend festivals in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to conduct a within-gender analysis and between-gender differences in seeking (personal and interpersonal) and escaping (personal and interpersonal) motivations to attend a non-traditional festival in Saudi Arabia. Specific objectives were: to conduct a within-gender analysis in motivations to attend a non-traditional festival in Saudi Arabia; and to examine between-gender differences in motivations to attend a non-traditional festival in Saudi Arabia.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on the data collected from 458 attendees at a non-traditional festival in Saudi Arabia, the authors employed network analysis for within-gender analysis and MANOVA and ANOVA for between-gender comparison. The network analysis served two purposes, in that it examined each item's predictability for each gender, and analyzed the correlations among motivation items within each gender. In addition, the General Linear Model served to compare the male and female groups' motivations to attend the non-traditional festival. The authors first performed MANOVA for each dimension and then ANOVA for each dimension's individual items.

Findings – Within-gender analysis reveals that several sets of motivations were associated strongly for both genders. This suggests that Saudi Arabians seem to enjoy entertainment because it projects the festival mood; they want to escape both from home and work and attend the festival to relieve stress by changing their routine pace. However, gender differences were apparent in several other items, especially for the group of women. Between-group comparison analysis shows significant gender differences in several elements of motivation. Overall, personal seeking and escaping were greater for males than females. In contrast, interpersonal seeking was greater for females than males.

Research limitations/implications – Entertainment seems to be a key contributor to the festival mood because entertainment and the festival mood were related closely for both genders. In fact, personal and interpersonal escaping means were greater than personal interpersonal seeking means for both genders. Indeed, opportunities exist to develop non-traditional festivals in the country further. Gender differences were identified in several items of personal seeking and escaping, and interpersonal seeking. With respect to personal seeking, men tend to seek the entertainment, festival mood and the event's uniqueness more than do women, a finding that their higher means in personal escaping supported. It is clear that men view the festival as a way to enjoy themselves to escape from their jobs and daily stress to a greater degree than do their female counterparts. Women are more likely to seek interpersonal experiences in that they are more likely to enjoy the festival because it offers the opportunity to meet new people and spend quality time with family and friends. This study has several limitations, leading to suggestions for future research. Because seeking and

escaping motivations have been used relatively little in the festival setting, future researchers should develop a valid scale of personal and interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations specifically for festivals employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Second, while the data were collected at a single non-traditional festival, future research can use multiple sites to increase the ability to generalize the findings. Third, although this study was limited to Saudi Arabia, further research can apply seeking and escaping motivations, both at the personal and interpersonal levels, to other cultures to extend the applicability of the framework used in this study.

Practical implications – Non-traditional festival managers need to focus on an atmosphere that provides festivities, as many people in the Saudi Arabian culture appear to be escaping from their everyday lives to enjoy themselves and with family and friends. To appeal to male workers, festival organizers and managers need to advertise and market the events' mood and liveliness overall with photos of workers leaving the office free of stress and looking forward to attending an event. To appeal to women who desire unique experiences that a variety of forms of entertainment provide, event managers must ensure that the entertainment is innovative and creative, and differs from what other festivals provide to attract more female attendees. Also, festival planners must focus on events that incorporate the family unit and promote the opportunity to meet new people to appeal to women in Saudi Arabia.

Originality/value – This is the first study to examine gender differences in festival motivations in Saudi Arabia. The relaxation of the historically strict and conservative cultural values, coupled with the country's desire to develop its tourism and event sector, provides an ideal opportunity for future research. The authors hope that this research will stimulate further interest in the country with the goal to develop and market its tourism sector and products on the world's stage.

Keywords Saudi Arabia, Network analysis, Escaping motivation, Non-traditional festival, Seeking motivation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction
Traditionally, Saudi Arabia has been one of the world's most religiously conservative nations, with many social restrictions related to the entertainment industries (e.g. musical, comical or sporting). Therefore, engagement in leisure and entertainment activities was culturally undesirable because of the Islamic religion and way of life (Alkhudair, 2018; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010). Recently, however, Saudi Arabia has begun to change its ultra-conservative image and exploit its untapped potential as a nascent state-backed entertainment sector to diversify its economy (Alghenaim, 2013). This is in line with Saudi Government's Vision 2030 (2016) that promotes non-traditional festivals where people can enjoy modern entertainment elements such as contemporary music and shows, theaters, games, playgrounds and shopping (Mumuni and Mansour, 2014).

Historically, the social culture of Saudi Arabia is male-centric, and the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia and its leaders heed the direction of the Islamic faith and ultimately the sacred text, the Quran. However, the social structure and culture are not entirely based on "Quranic ideals but to prevailing patriarchal cultural norms" (Esposito, n.d., p. 4). As such, gender differences within the culture have marginalized women in ways that exemplify them as inferior to their male counterparts in a wide variety of social contexts (Esposito, n.d.). Due to these culturally ingrained gender-related differences, Saudi Arabia's social space was compartmentalized to prevent gender mixing, such that women could not be in public unless in the company of a male guardian, and were expected to wear Hijab (Nabbout, 2019). Additionally, the culture banned women from driving automobiles and traveling outside of the country without permission from their male guardians. However, combined with Mohammed's (Saudi Crown Prince) decision and women's rights activists' movements, women's status has improved. For instance, women were allowed into sports stadiums for the first time in 2018 (CBS News, 2018), and the entertainment sector likely will increase Saudi women's desire to attend festivals.

People attend festivals with varied and heterogeneous motives (Cole and Chancellor, 2009; Crompton and McKay, 1997). Studies have indicated that some gender variation exists with respect to the importance attached to travel (Jönsson and Devonish, 2008), suggesting that this difference affects travel motives. While no study has examined the motives to

attend non-traditional festivals in the context of Saudi Arabia, a recent study has shown that two seeking motivations (i.e. food and entertainment) and two escaping motivations (i.e. diversion and escape) dominate on the part of Saudi Arabian tourists who attend local, non-traditional festivals (Alshammari and Kim, 2019). However, no study to date has examined the way gender differences affect motivations to attend such festivals.

Therefore, this study's goal was to examine gender differences in motivations to attend non-traditional festivals. This research builds on Iso-Ahola's motivation theory, which asserts that two motivations, seeking (personal and interpersonal) and escaping (personal and interpersonal) motivate tourism and recreation (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Snepenger *et al.*, 2006). This study posits that these motivations affect men and women's evaluations of the festival experience differently.

To this end, this study conducted a within-gender analysis and between-gender differences in motivations to attend a non-traditional festival in Saudi Arabia. Because it is the first study to examine gender differences in festival motivations, it seems critical to analyze the way festival motivation elements are perceived within and between genders. Thus, we established two objectives: to examine how personal and interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations to attend a non-traditional Saudi Arabian festival are correlated within each gender, and to examine gender differences in personal and interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations to attend a non-traditional Saudi Arabian festival.

Literature review
Non-traditional festivals in Saudi Arabia
According to Cudny (2016), Saudi Arabian events/festivals fall into two categories: traditional and non-traditional. In the traditional context, these festivals celebrate religious or cultural events that represent a subculture of traditions in society (Alshammari and Kim, 2019). For example, attendees of traditional Saudi Arabian festivals experience traditional foods and events designed to instill traditional culture and values (Alshammari and Kim, 2019; Houston, 2007). In addition, attendees of traditional events participate in a variety of culturally rich programs (e.g. traditional music, poetry reading), all while remembering the nostalgia of the old days (Alshammari and Kim, 2019; Klenosky, 2002). Thus, traditional Saudi Arabian events are the norm in the country and are held on an annual basis.

In contrast, non-traditional Saudi Arabian events are not associated with traditional cultural and religious norms (Alshammari and Kim, 2019). Contemporary live entertainment elements (e.g. camel racing, circuses, musical performances) provide important connective experiences with event attendees. Several notable non-traditional festivals are held in a variety of regions throughout Saudi Arabia (Alshammari and Kim, 2019; Bryanwoerner, 2019). For example, the Tolla Festival is the largest venue, in which attendees experience carnival entertainment with showrooms of perfume and a variety of other activities. Further, the Shafa Summer Festival provides Saudi attendees both a social and marketing venue that includes theaters, music and contemporary shows, while shopping festivals provide unique venues for various entertainment, such as interactive games, playgrounds and retailing.

With the Saudi Government's Vision 2030 (2016), the country seeks to establish both social and economic policies that will further the country's efforts to be less dependent on oil exports, and reduce some of the Kingdom's restrictions on social interactions simultaneously. In this effort, the country established the General Authority for Entertainment (GAE) with a mandate to organize and launch the entertainment industry (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). Supported by GAE, the first jazz festival ever and Saudi Comic-Con were hosted by Saudi Arabia in 2017 (Britton and Atassi, 2017). Moreover, the country lifted its 35-year ban on cinemas recently (Carey, 2018). In 2019, GAE announced that the country would host more non-traditional festivals where people can enjoy special events, including magic shows, auto races and theatrical performances.

The GAE anticipates that such non-traditional festivals would contribute $64bn to the annual GDP and create 224,000 new jobs by 2030. As such, the government is seeking to diversify its economy by providing more recreational and leisure activities (Mumuni and Mansour, 2014). Indeed, there are opportunities for both men and women to attend non-traditional festivals in Saudi Arabia.

Gender inequality in Saudi Arabia
The concept of gender is a socio-cultural construct, and how the Saudi Arabian culture defines the role of its women within its society is remarkably different from how it defines the role of men (Esposito, n.d.). In fact, Islam has been viewed as a major factor that determines gender inequality in Saudi Arabia. However, gender issues in Saudi Arabia are a holistic phenomenon combined with Islam as a religion, the cultural history of the society and social norms. Greatly influenced by the Arab civilization and Islamic heritage, the cultural setting of Saudi is deeply conservative, religious, traditional and family-oriented (Baki, 2004). Also, Saudi Arabia is a collectivistic culture where individuals view themselves as interdependent based on the nature of the relationship and its context (Hopper, 2015) and they also feel a significant degree of inequality because those who are of an inferior status should hold those above them with high esteem and regard (Hofstede Insights, 2019).

While the Saudi Arabian culture continues to relax from its fundamentalist view of women's limited roles in its society, monumental changes in social and cultural structures take a considerable amount of time for tolerance of things until they become accepted by the mainstream population. Given this consideration, socio-cultural aspects seem to play a significant role in an individual's motivation to engage in certain activities or behave in a certain way (Esposito, n.d.).

Due to deeply ingrained gender inequality in Saudi, Saudi Arabian women face a multitude of restrictions in their daily lives. For example, from a young age, opportunities to study diverse subjects are far fewer for women than men (Hamdan, 2005). Before 2005, Saudi universities had limited opportunities for young women to study law, journalism and engineering, so female students received a less comprehensive curriculum compared to their male counterparts (Forster, 2017). Furthermore, the expected traditional role of women in society as homemaker and the ban on driving have been the considerable obstacles for women's employment.

In addition to education, gender inequity in the entertainment sector is pervasive. First, more public entertainment facilities are offered to men than women. Men may partake in numerous pursuits outside the home such as attending camel and horse racing shows, watching soccer at a stadium, participating in water sports and hunting animals. However, Saudi women used to be prohibited from engaging in most activities outside the home, with main activities permitted to go to shopping malls, cafes or restaurants (Perper and Pasley, 2019; Powe, 2019). Even now, public swimming pools are unavailable to women, and they can only swim in facilities that are privately owned or in female-only gyms and spas (Powe, 2019).

Gradually, the Saudi culture is lifting its restrictions on women. For instance, women have recently been granted the right to drive and attend events and games alongside men (Alshammari and Kim, 2019). Since 2018, a wide variety of leisure and social activities have been adopted. The newfound abundance of opportunities to spend leisure time for both men and women has helped reform Saudi Arabia society, which helps the country's economy reduce its dependence on oil. As a popular non-traditional leisure activity in Saudi Arabia, festivals have allowed for increasing female presence.

Iso-Ahola's seeking-escaping motivations
According to Bromley (1990), motivation is a psychological concept that stirs individuals to achieve the objective desired while promoting their need to engage in a variety of behaviors

(Mook, 1996; Moutinho, 2000). Therefore, motivations are fundamental driving forces that help consumers make decisions and, ultimately, influence their experiential value (Deci and Porac, 1978).

Iso-Ahola's (1982) motivation theory provides the framework for this study. The theory suggests that both seeking and escaping motivations drive human behavior and that each also includes both personal and interpersonal motivations. Personal motives derive from internal desires, while interpersonal motives derive from the need to engage in experiences with others. The theory argues that an individual's motives are the antecedents to his or her behavioral responses (Snepenger *et al.*, 2006).

Personal and interpersonal seeking. Crompton and McKay (1997) described seeking motivations in the tourism context as "[…] the desire to obtain psychological (intrinsic) rewards through travel" (p. 4). For example, a unique event that provides food and entertainment may motivate a person to attend because of his/her seeking motivations (Alshammari and Kim, 2019). Seeking motivations also may include motives such as personal exploration, relaxation and status seeking (Crompton, 1979).

While personal seeking deals with one's personal desires, interpersonal seeking motivations are those contingent upon others being a part of the experience. For example, interpersonal seeking motivations may inspire one to engage in family togetherness or social interactions by congregating with like-minded people (Frankel *et al.*, 2019). In a study Frankel *et al.* (2019) conducted, individuals attended tattoo conventions for interpersonal seeking motivations, such as bringing friends/family together and meeting people who enjoy the same things they do, as well as personal seeking motivations, such as feeling good about themselves and experiencing new things.

Personal and interpersonal escaping. According to Crompton and McKay (1997), escaping motivation is the "[…] desire to leave the everyday life behind oneself" (p. 4). The idea of escaping is based largely on the desire to diverge from the daily monotony of life for emotional and physical revitalization (López-Mosquera and Sánchez, 2011; Snepenger *et al.*, 2006). Personal escaping motives could be intended to refresh one's mental health or well-being overall. On the other hand, interpersonal escaping motives drive individuals to avoid certain groups of individuals. For example, an individual may choose to avoid an environment where others exhibit judgmental behaviors or do not share the same perspectives and, thus, s/he will engage in interpersonal escaping motives. In Frankel *et al.*'s (2019) study, individuals attended tattoo conventions for personal escaping motivations, such as a change of pace from their daily routine, and overcoming negative feelings attributable to their everyday life, and for interpersonal escaping motivations, such as getting away from people who cause them stress and are judgmental.

Festival motivations

Motivations to attending festivals have been derived from earlier studies that examined tourism and recreation motivations. Crompton (1979) identified seven socio-psychological motives associated with tourism: escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relations and social interaction. Different from pull factors reflecting destination attributes, these motives are push factors reflecting socio-psychological needs. Crompton argued that when choosing a tourist spot, push factors are as important as pull factors. By conducting a meta-analysis of 36 studies that investigated individuals' motivations in participating in leisure activities, Manfredo *et al.* (1996) developed the Recreation Experience Preference scale consisting of 11 main domains: achievement, autonomy, risk taking, similar people, learning, enjoying nature, introspection, fitness, physical escape, teaching and risk reduction. Building upon the "experiential approach" introduced by Driver and Tocher (1970), Manfredo *et al.* (1996) claimed that recreations such as camping and fishing

should be viewed as self-rewarding experiences that occur during free time. Based on this approach, it is logical to assume that those who partake in leisure activities are motivated for a myriad of reasons, while specific domains might apply to one certain geographic location or activity. For example, one may participate in festivals to simply enjoy the entertainment or build new interpersonal relationships.

Motivations to attend festivals are well established in the literature. In the context of consumer behaviors, researchers have examined various consumer segments and considered the emblematic, emotional and artistic dimensions of the behavior (Getz, 2008; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987). As a caveat, researchers have claimed that event attendees experience enhanced self-esteem, but subconsciously or unintentionally (Chartrand *et al.*, 2008; Frankel *et al.*, 2019).

In Smith *et al.*'s (2010) study, attendees were motivated to attend a culinary event in Memphis, Tennessee, for a variety for reasons, including desires for food, event novelty and socializing. In addition, the authors reported that all of these motivations played roles in attendees' satisfaction with the experience overall. Similarly, Özdemir (2011) identified several motivations that influenced event attendees to choose the Efes Pilsen Blues festival held throughout Turkey, including exploration of culture, togetherness with family, socializing, novelty and the event's attractions. On the other hand, Chang *et al.* (2014) reported that escaping the stress pressures and stress of daily activities is a primary motive for attending festivals and events in the context of both domestic and international venues. Based on the survey inquiring with event attendees of a traditional festival in the Midwestern USA, their result showed that those residents who rated the experience as highly satisfying were likely to return, while tourists' satisfaction levels did not significantly influence their likelihood of returning.

As such, event attendees garner psychological (intrinsic) rewards when they visit the event places that differ from those in their everyday lives (Crompton and McKay, 1997). Specifically, they may desire authentic experiences for themselves that differ from their routines (Cohen, 2010; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987), which reflect personal seeking and escaping motivations. They also may wish to have social experiences, such as spending quality time with family and friends away from their everyday lives or meeting new people who can share the same experiences in the festival, which reflect interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations.

Gender differences in festival motivations
The literature reveals numerous gender differences throughout certain cultures and, certainly, throughout the world. Men are more independent, dominant, authoritarian and conservative, while women are more altruistic, empathetic, open to new experiences, collectivistic, and interested in emotional connection and interdependence (Mestre *et al.*, 2009; Ndubisi, 2006; Trived and Teichert, 2019). In the context of leisure and festivals, McGehee *et al.* (1996) found that women prefer relaxing vacations and seek to gain cultural experiences as a family, while men prefer vacations where they can be actively involved in sports and adventure. Wilson (2004) also found that women were more likely to emphasize the familial bonding aspect of the sport trip compared to men. These findings seem to reflect Gibson's (2004) argument that gender role socialization is so influential that it can encourage or discourage behaviors in the tourism setting.

Researchers have studied gender-specific motivations to visit events/festivals. Yolal *et al.* (2019) compared demographic differences in motivations to attend the Eskisehi International Film Festival in Eskisehir, Turkey. They found that younger females (e.g. less than 24 years of age) attended the event for its novelty and socialization than males who were 24–35 years of age, married, with university degrees or higher. On the other hand, Jani (2017) examined local attendees' perception of festival impacts in the context of

International Film Festivals in Zanzibar, a region of Tanzania. Their cluster analysis result shows that men and women did not significantly differ in their representation in three segments (i.e. Advocates, Ambivalents, Cautious-advocates). However, the descriptive statistics show that females were more likely to be advocates of festivals than males because they perceived socio-cultural and economic impacts more positively.

Traditional Saudi Arabian gender roles heavily shape the country's expectations toward leisure time. Unsurprisingly, women spend less time and are less active in their recreational physical activities compared to men (Al-Hazzaa *et al.*, 2011; Al-Hazzaa *et al.*, 2014), and physical activity classes are even banned at women's schools. Interestingly, in a recent study investigating the vacation and travel preferences and attitudes in Saudi Arabia, Mumuni and Mansour (2014) reported that men were more likely to be conservative and avoid entertainment-oriented activities (e.g. music concerts, nightclubs and movies), while women were more likely to enjoy variety when seeking entertainment.

Despite their importance to understanding social progression in contemporary Saudi Arabian culture, gender differences in Saudi Arabian festivals have not been studied. As the Saudi culture gradually is beginning to embrace non-traditional events, examining the gender differences in motivations to attend non-traditional festivals is opportune. We believe that seeking and escaping motivations to attend festivals and their personal and interpersonal subdimensions will inform on the planning and promoting strategies of non-traditional festivals in Saudi Arabia.

Methods
Sample and data collection
The sample was drawn from visitors who attended the non-traditional Abha summer festival. Unlike traditional festivals that focus on religious and cultural beliefs and practices, this festival offers entertaining activities, including live performances, games, and arts and crafts displays. The festival runs for two weeks and attracts approximately 3,000 visitors daily (Alhatla, 2016). Because these activities are entertainment-oriented, this festival attracts both youth generation and families to spend the summer in Saudi Arabi, instead of going abroad (Ramkumar, 2010). The data were collected during the late evening for three days at the end of July 2016. To collect the data, two researchers approached visitors and asked them to participate in a survey on festival motivations and experiences. When they agreed, the researchers processed the data collected only for those who stayed at the festival at least five hours to ensure that they had sufficient experiences to respond to the survey questions. Staying at least five hours was checked by asking "What time did you arrive at the festival?" From a total of 500 surveys obtained, 458 surveys were used in the data analysis after eliminating incomplete and unusable responses.

The sample included more females (60.7 percent) and the majority of participants were married (65.1 percent). The largest number of respondents were in the 26–35 age bracket (51.1 percent), followed by 18–25 (30.03 percent) and 36–45 (18.4 percent). The education level was high: Bachelor's degree (60.5 percent), High School or less (21.6 percent) and Graduate degree (15.7 percent). Approximately half worked full-time (52.0 percent), while the remainder did not work (30.3 percent) or worked part-time (17.7 percent).

Instrument
We used both the literature and experts' opinions to develop the motivation items used in the survey. The literature reveals that the predominant motivations to attend festivals are related to seeking entertainment and novelty, meeting new people, and diversion and escape from one's routine (e.g. Crompton and McKay, 1997; Dabholkar, 1994; Lee *et al.*, 2004; Uysal *et al.*, 1993). We categorized these motivations as personal and interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations, following Snepenger *et al.*'s (2006) framework. We then developed

items for each dimension. The personal seeking motivations included entertainment ("to enjoy the entertainment" and "to enjoy the festival mood") and novelty ("to see and do a variety of things, and to have unique experience"). The interpersonal seeking motivations were associated with interacting with other people, and consisted of "to explore the opportunity to meet new people," "to have quality time with my family/friends," and "to explore new experiences with my family/friends." Academic experts (both Saudi Arabian and US) confirmed the scale items' face validity in the tourism discipline, and all items were measured using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data analyses
The network analysis in this study served to achieve Objective 1, "to examine how personal and interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations to attend a non-traditional Saudi Arabian festival are correlated within each gender." Network analysis is a relatively new technique that allows researchers to conceive psychological constructs that are constituted by the mutual interaction of their items (Briganti *et al.*, 2018). The data were analyzed with JASP (v. 0.9.2). The network analysis graphic shows nodes and edges. In this study, nodes (variables) represent "festival motivations." Edges (correlations) are connections between two nodes, meaning that there is an association after all other nodes in the network are controlled. Each edge has a sign: blue edges represent positive regularized partial correlations, whereas red edges represent negative regularized partial correlations. An edge's thickness denotes its weight (i.e. the association's strength). Figure 1 illustrates the estimated network in the 13 motivation items at two networks (male and female). The results show that most of the edges are blue, positive correlations. Achieving the first
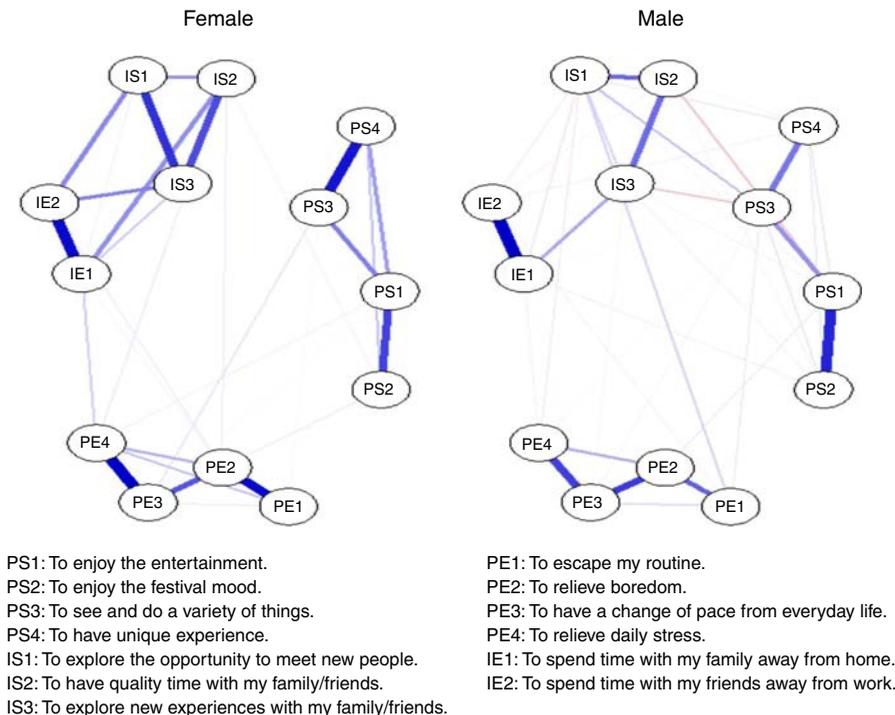

PS1: To enjoy the entertainment.
PS2: To enjoy the festival mood.
PS3: To see and do a variety of things.
PS4: To have unique experience.
IS1: To explore the opportunity to meet new people.
IS2: To have quality time with my family/friends.
IS3: To explore new experiences with my family/friends.

PE1: To escape my routine.
PE2: To relieve boredom.
PE3: To have a change of pace from everyday life.
PE4: To relieve daily stress.
IE1: To spend time with my family away from home.
IE2: To spend time with my friends away from work.

Figure 1.
Network analysis

objective via network analysis was accompanied by examining each item's predictability for each gender, and analyzing the correlations among motivation items within each gender.

According to Epskamp *et al.* (2018), psychometric network analysis is based on the graph theory and usually does not encounter such issues as unequal variances and loss of power resulting from unequal sample size; rather, centrality stability is more important. In our study, centrality stability was verified by the finding that the correlation between original centrality strength and centrality strength from the subset of the sample (90 percent) was above 0.7 ($p < 0.05$) for both male and female groups.

To accomplish Objective 2 (to examine gender differences in personal and interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations to attend a non-traditional Saudi Arabian festival), we conducted a General Linear Model (GLM) via SPSS to compare the male and female groups' motivations to attend the non-traditional festival. We first performed MANOVA for each dimension and then ANOVA for each dimension's individual items.

Results

Network analysis: within-gender analysis

First, each node (variable)'s predictability is described according to the variance explained (R^2). Although some nodes had low variances (PS2 = 0.285 for females PS4 = 0.381 for males), the majority of the nodes had variances above 0.50, suggesting the motivation items have relatively good predictability. Overall, the variances personal seeking, personal escaping and interpersonal escaping explained generally were higher for men, while the variance interpersonal seeking motivations explained were higher for women. Detailed information on predictability expressed as R^2 is provided in Table I.

Second, edges of the motivation items were analyzed to determine the way they were related to each other within each gender (Figure 1). Several sets of motivations were associated strongly for both genders: PS1 and PS2, IE1 and IE2, and PE3 and PE4. This indicates that Saudi Arabians seem to enjoy entertainment because it projects the festival mood; they want to escape both from home and work and want to attend the festival to relieve stress by changing their routine pace. However, gender differences were apparent in several other items. To check whether the two networks (male and female) provide different results for both genders, we employed network invariance and global strength invariance tests (Santos *et al.*, 2018). The network invariance test showed the two networks differed significantly ($p < 0.050$), and the global strength invariance test showed that the level of

Variable		Male	Female	All
			R^2	
PS1	To enjoy the entertainment	0.710	0.439	0.540
PS2	To enjoy the festival mood	0.631	0.285	0.385
PS3	To see and do a variety of things	0.541	0.497	0.425
PS4	To have unique experience	0.381	0.479	0.405
PE1	To escape my routine	0.736	0.645	0.693
PE2	To relieve boredom	0.919	0.755	0.815
PE3	To have a change of pace from everyday life	0.940	0.777	0.840
PE4	To relieve daily stress	0.857	0.745	0.786
IS1	To explore the opportunity to meet new people	0.444	0.702	0.556
IS2	To have quality time with my family/friends	0.472	0.649	0.592
IS3	To explore new experiences with my family/friends	0.503	0.765	0.621
IE1	To spend time with my family away from home	0.884	0.721	0.763
IE2	To spend time with my friends away from work	0.879	0.752	0.768
Mean R^2		*0.684*	*0.632*	*0.630*

Table I.
Predictability in network model

connectivity overall, operationalized as the weighted sum of all edges in the network, differed across the two networks as well ($p < 0.05$). The results demonstrated that PS3 and PS4 were connected strongly for women, indicating that seeing and doing a variety of things provides unique experiences. Further, IS1 and IS2 were connected well to IS3, in that women view meeting new people as a way to provide new experiences and quality time to their family members or friends.

GLM: between-gender differences

As illustrated in Table II, the MANOVA results showed significant gender differences in the three dimensions: personal seeking and escaping, and interpersonal seeking. However, there were no gender differences in interpersonal escaping.

The ANOVA results showed significant differences in specific items in three dimensions. For personal seeking, men had higher means than did women in motivations to "enjoy entertainment," "enjoy the festival mood" and "have a unique experience." On the other hand, women had a higher mean than did men in the motivation to "see and do a variety of things." Interestingly, men had higher means than women did in all personal escaping items: "escape my routine," "relieve boredom," "have a change of pace from everyday life" and "relieve daily stress." In contrast, women had higher means than did men in all interpersonal seeking items: "explore the opportunity to meet new people," "have quality time with family/friends" and "explore new experiences with family/friends."

Discussion and implications

The objectives of the current study were to study gender differences in their motivations for attending non-traditional festivals in Saudi Arabia. We utilized Iso-Ahola's motivation theory, to provide a framework or relevance that two primary motivations (interpersonal seeking,

	Male ($n = 180$)	Female ($n = 278$)	Total	F-statistic
Personal seeking				
To enjoy the entertainment	4.36	4.02	4.15	33.245***
To enjoy the festival mood	4.47	4.29	4.36	10.991***
To see and do a variety of things	3.70	3.90	3.82	6.943**
To have unique experience	4.29	3.91	4.06	36.241***
Wilkes' λ (value $= 0.765$)				34.799***
Personal escaping				
To escape my routine	4.62	4.38	4.46	23.145***
To relieve boredom	4.55	4.28	4.39	22.510***
To have a change of pace from everyday life	4.53	4.33	4.41	12.502***
To relieve daily stress	4.48	4.24	4.34	15.574***
Wilkes' λ (value $= 0.944$)				6.742***
Interpersonal seeking				
To explore the opportunity to meet new people	3.87	4.36	4.17	65.885***
To have quality time with my family/friends	3.92	4.61	4.33	8.635**
To explore new experiences with my family/friends	4.24	4.53	4.42	2.279
Wilkes' λ (value $= 0.870$)				22.481***
Interpersonal escaping				
To spend time with my family away from home	4.60	4.40	4.48	1.883
To spend time with my friends away from work	4.45	4.38	4.41	1.588
Wilkes' λ (value $= 0.994$)				0.017

Notes: [a]Means: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

Table II.
MANOVA and
ANOVA results:
means[a]

personal seeking) and escaping (personal escape, interpersonal escape) apply to festival goers in the context of Saudia Arabian non-traditional events. This study further illuminates that personal and interpersonal dimensions of these two primary motivations – seeking and escaping – affect men and women's evaluations of the festival experience differently. Thus, festival organizers and managers should communicate key benefits that appeal to males and females when marketing non-traditional festivals. The suggestions below are based on both within-gender analysis and between-gender comparison.

The results of the study indicated that generally, Saudia Arabians enjoy events' festive atmosphere (most means were higher than 4.0). Entertainment seemed to be a key contributor to the festival mood because entertainment and the festival mood were related closely for both genders. Unlike a traditional belief that women in Saudi Arabia are less active or spend less time on engaging recreational physical activities compared to men (Al-Hazzaa *et al.*, 2011; Al-Hazzaa *et al.*, 2014) due to legislation and expected gender norm formed by the society, our finding illustrates that women equally have a desire to attend and enjoy the festive atmosphere. This finding suggests that women are no longer prevented from enjoying leisure activities and entertainments. As the new generation has different perception toward non-traditional events, these entertaining activities can provide them with a fun way to spend time with friends and escape from daily life (Abid, 2019).

Therefore, event managers need to focus on an atmosphere that provides festivities, as both males and females in the Saudi Arabian culture appear to be escaping from their everyday lives to enjoy themselves and with family and friends. In fact, personal and interpersonal escaping means were greater than personal interpersonal seeking means for both genders. A non-traditional festival can be organized to add PlayStation tournaments and water splash activities (Alshammari and Kim, 2019). Although PlayStation tournaments usually are played in private places, such as a friend's house, this can be applied to a festival where family or friends can enjoy pastimes away from their usual environment and escape hot weather (Leon, 2014).

Gender differences were identified in several items of personal seeking and escaping, and interpersonal seeking, as illustrated in Table II. With respect to personal seeking, men tend to seek the entertainment, festival mood, and the event's uniqueness more than do women, contrary to the finding of Mumuni and Mansour (2014) who reported than mean tend to avoid entertainment activities than women do. This finding seems to corroborate with the finding that they have higher means in personal escaping than women. It is clear that men view the festival as a way to enjoy themselves to escape from their jobs and daily stress to a greater degree than do their female counterparts. Thus, to appeal to male workers, festival organizers and managers need to advertise and market the events' mood and liveliness overall with photos of workers leaving the office free of stress and looking forward to attending an event.

Because women desire unique experiences from a variety of forms of entertainment such as singing, dancing, comedy and shopping (Mumuni and Mansour, 2014), event managers must ensure that the entertainment is innovative and creative, and differs from what other festivals provide to attract more female attendees. Saudi women have many cultural and religious restrictions that prevent them from participating in activities in public spaces, such as swimming and ice-skating (Powe, 2019). Thus, they may wish to see and do a variety of things that do not contradict their society's beliefs. To appeal to women, festival organizers may offer a small, private space for women to ice-skate and play snow games because they want to enjoy themselves without wearing Hijab (Nabbout, 2019), and provide other entertainment spaces for them to see carnivals and parades and participate in fashion design competitions or craft shows.

The finding that women are more likely to seek interpersonal experiences supports previous studies (Mestre *et al.*, 2009; Trivedi and Teichert, 2019), in that they are more likely

to enjoy the festival because it offers the opportunity to meet new people and spend quality time with family and friends. In fact, women regard meeting new people as a way to increase quality time with family or friends, reflecting their collectivistic and social orientation. The interpersonal seeking motivation is essential for Saudi women because they usually meet friends and new people at home, where they have practiced hospitality throughout their lives. With this background, they seem to view a festival as a new environment in which to enjoy spending time with friends. Moreover, the findings in gender differences in Saudi Arabians' festival motivations suggest that these gender differences can be viewed in the socio-cultural context. The preferred form of leisure culture for Saudi women was to communicate/meet with family, friends and new people (i.e. interpersonal seeking), while personal seeking was an essential festival motive for Saudi men. This distinct difference may reflect the traditional and conservative culture of Saudi Arabia that views women as homemakers, family-oriented and caregivers, and such expected gender roles may have shaped women's leisure preferences. Thus, to appeal to women, festival planners must focus on events that incorporate the family unit and promote the opportunity to meet new people. For example, they can offer indoor and outdoor spaces to socialize with friends and new people, such as outdoor cinemas, opera houses, concerts, libraries with reading spaces and international band performances, such as Blackpink band (Nabbout, 2019).

Despite this study's significant contribution to the Saudi Arabian festival and gender literature, it has some limitations that should be addressed. First, although some researchers (e.g. Frankel *et al.*, 2019) have applied seeking and escaping motivations, the scale has been used relatively little in the festival setting. Therefore, future researchers should develop a valid scale of personal and interpersonal seeking and escaping motivations specifically for festivals employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Second, the data were collected at a single non-traditional festival. Future research can use multiple sites to increase the ability to generalize the findings. Third, the study was limited to Saudi Arabia. Further research can apply seeking and escaping motivations, both at the personal and interpersonal levels, to other cultures to extend the applicability of the framework used in this study. Different outcomes will solidify our finding that gender differences in festival motivations are ingrained in the socio-cultural background.

Conclusion
This study was the first to examine gender differences in festival motivations in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it offers promising avenues to other scholars who are interested in the leisure culture of Saudi Arabia, an area that is relatively understudied. Despite cultural norms related to gender roles, Saudi Arabia has now become one of the most economically powerful countries in the world. The relaxation of the historically strict and conservative cultural values, transforming itself from the traditional way of keeping a very conservative culture, coupled with the country's desire to develop its tourism and event sector, provides an ideal opportunity for future research. It is our belief that this research will stimulate further interest in the country with the goal to develop and market its tourism sector and products on the world's stage.

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