Article

Food Festival Exhibitors' Business Motivation

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Abstract: This paper aims to present the motivation of exhibitors participating in food festivals to establish and run a business. The conducted research is an attempt to fill the gap in research on exhibitors who participate in food festivals. During three different Polish culinary festivals, 58 in-depth interviews with exhibitors were conducted. Based on the research, the main startup business motives were identified. The current goals of exhibitors' participation in culinary festivals were also analyzed. Based on the list of motives and goals, three groups of exhibitors were distinguished with similar characteristics (starting own business, continuation of family traditions, and culinary interest). The study also takes into account the changes that have occurred between the startup's business motives and the goals of participation in the festival ("business-business", "business-business-business-family", and "business-passion-passion-business"). The comparison of the initial motives for setting up a business with the current goals of participating in food festivals shows that, regardless of the initial motives, the exhibitors currently focus on business goals.

Keywords: food festivals; exhibitors; business motives and goals

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1. Introduction

Food events, like other events, are perceived as tools for building broadly understood sustainability [1]. Food events meet the important needs of people in terms of meetings and creating relationships, contribute to building awareness of specific behaviors [2], supporting social sustainability, community building and social capital [3]. However, this is not the only role of these events in sustainability—taking into account the characteristics—food events contribute to building food sustainability. First, events often ensure direct contact with the producer of local food and shorten the food supply chain [4]. Secondly, food producers (exhibitors) using traditional, local and original recipes support cultural sustainability [5]. Third, producers—often using their own or local raw materials—contribute both to the economic and environmental sustainability of the local economy [6,7]. Therefore, the involvement of food events, and especially of exhibitors, in supporting sustainable development can be considered significant.

Food festivals, as planned, organized and intentional events with a large number of participants, are a great platform for presenting original food products [8]. These events usually attract a large group of exhibitors affiliated with the food industry and involved in the production and sale of original, often traditional, products. Festivals provide the opportunity for exhibitors to sell products, share knowledge and exchange experiences [3]. For some exhibitors, the food festival is the main (or even the only) place where these products are sold. It is worth adding that exhibitors at food festivals often represent small local businesses, including small rural agribusinesses, contributing to broadly recognized local development [6,9–11].

In the literature related to food events, there are numerous publications and research descriptions about the motivation and participation goals of visitors, e.g., young people's motivation at wine festivals [12]; the impact of the festivalscape on loyalty and motivation [13]; the review and discussion of the main motivational factors used in previous

studies [14]; specific motives—the strawberry event case study [15]; the examination of motivation viability for festival market segmentation [16]; differentiation in motivation between different types of food festivals [17]. Research on the participation of exhibitors, vendors and food producers in food festivals is much less prevalent. The issue of the motivation and goals of their participation appears only as an additional element in the context of other research topics, e.g., artisan food producers' lifestyle, growth and community involvement [18], the place branding through food festivals [19] or the impact of festival emotions on the subsequent food choices [20].

It should be emphasized that the motivation and goals of exhibitors at food festivals are an interesting topic, which includes a set of factors that lead to starting and pursuing a business. Therefore, this group includes business motivations that often change over time, depending on the current situation. In terms of broadly understood socioeconomic activity, it has long been noticed that motivation triggers the decision-making process [21], and goals are determinants of satisfaction in this process [22].

Exhibitors are an important part of the festival because, without their participation, the event could not take place. Therefore, the knowledge of the motives of exhibitors deciding to participate in festivals is important for event organizers. According to Moseley and Mowatt [23], knowledge about the motivation of exhibitors will allow organizers to better plan events and marketing activities in relation to exhibitors. Knowledge about the motivation of exhibitors will allow organizers to better plan events and marketing activities in relation to exhibitors. Due to the fact that the motivations of exhibitors' participation in festivals may be varied, their segregation will provide additional insight. Additionally, the classification of exhibitors into different groups will help identify the desires and needs of exhibitors. Ultimately, the information obtained may also improve the event function for exhibitors and create a better festival product for participants. Moreover, through promotional activities, the organizers can attract the exhibitors they care about the most. On the other hand, comparing the initial motivations of exhibitors with the motives of participating in festivals allows for examining changes in the behavior of exhibitors over time.

This study is an attempt to fill this gap in the research on exhibitors at food festivals. We will attempt to answer the following questions:

Q1: What motivated the exhibitors to set up a business dealing with the production, sale and exhibition of original food products?

Q2: Is the motivation from the beginning of the business activity related to the current goals of participation in culinary festivals?

The main aim of this paper is to present the motivation of exhibitors participating in food festivals to establish and run a business.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the existing research. Section 3 introduces the methods and research context, while Section 4 examines exhibitor characteristics. Section 5 presents results. Section 6 includes discussion, while Section 7 concludes.

2. Literature Review

When looking for the genesis of startup business motivation, many authors refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Entrepreneurial behavior is a process; therefore, it changes over time. The reasons why people start a business are different and depend, among other things, on the stage of life, individual needs and aspirations. These changes coincide with the process of meeting the needs discussed in the Maslow model. For some people, the new business meets the needs of a lower level, ensuring economic and financial security, as well as family security. This applies particularly to people for whom this business is the only source of income, with limited opportunities for others. In contrast, for people for whom the economic and financial side of the business is less important, starting a business may be associated with meeting higher-order needs, such as prestige, lifestyle, and a sense of success [24–26].

Although the literature lacks a comprehensive approach to the startup motivation of festival exhibitors (producers and vendors), numerous studies are presented on the startup motivation of small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Startup business motivation studies are often conducted in general terms (taking into account various enterprises). These studies are usually based on a list of specific motives. Depending on the research, this list includes several or several dozen motives. For a clearer approach, authors usually combine individual motives into categories. The most common groups of motives include independence and freedom, income and finances, satisfaction and success, family and tradition. Analyses at the national level show a difference between developed and developing countries. Generally, in developing countries, the most important startup business motivation factors are connected to income and independence, while in developed countries, independence and satisfaction factors are rated the highest [27–31]. Motives related to family and the maintenance of family traditions are less popular. This may be because a successful business will directly or indirectly affect family life. In contrast, fewer choice motives related to maintaining family traditions may result from the lack of these traditions.

Research on business startup motivation is also carried out, taking into account specific groups of entrepreneurs, e.g., age or gender. According to the results of Ismail et al. [32] and Hazudin et al. [33], startup business motives vary based on gender. Women are more likely to engage in business to keep work in balance with family needs, so financial security is very important. Men see starting a business rather than as their own challenge and liability. Both of these studies were conducted in Malaysia.

Tan and Ng [34] analyzed business motives in terms of the entrepreneur's age. The authors conducted a survey among representatives of generation Y who stayed in urban cities in the Taiwanese context. The results showed a relationship between personality traits (i.e., locus of control, risk taking, tolerance for ambiguity) and startup business motivation. Brancu et al. [35] examined the motivation of young people (students) to start a business. The results show the importance of market and economic factors related to self-employment and income, as well as factors related to the possibilities of self-development. Young people starting an independent life are afraid of unemployment and lack of income, and at the same time, they have a need for further education and development, which is visible in their motives.

The literature also provides research results in a specific branch of the economy. Each industry has its own specificity in terms of startup motivation. In relation to this direction of research, there are more differences between studies and results than in the general approach. Analyzing the motives for starting a business in the health service industry, Marques et al. [36] indicate, among other things, the will to self-improve, as well as the possibility of using the experience and skills already acquired. These are the hallmarks of an industry where experience and continuous improvement are particularly important.

When examining startup business motives in the tourism industry, Alsos and Clausen [37] used causation and effectuation strategies. The authors developed an entrepreneur typology that included “ambidextrous entrepreneurs” adopting both effectuation and causation business strategies, “pure effectualists” and “pure causalists” and “passive founders”, or those who are not interested in either of the two strategies.

The most important motives for engaging in ecotourism are to pursue one's own business, as well as a passion for this business and a balanced lifestyle. Other important motives include the desire to generate income, the desire to own a business and the quest for personal satisfaction [38].

Wang et al. [39] examined how small tourism entrepreneurs adjust their motivations for entrepreneurship. Four patterns of entrepreneurial motivations were identified: shift in motivation from lifestyle orientation to business orientation, maintenance of lifestyle orientation, shift in motivation from business orientation to lifestyle orientation and maintenance of business orientation.

According to Musa et al. [40], agripreneurial motivation, passion and family support are the most important. Likewise, artisan entrepreneurs' businesses are not usually merely profit-oriented. Due to the specific nature of their activities, they are often also motivated by the continuation of manufacturing traditions. In addition, artisan entrepreneurs pursue altruistic goals such as ensuring the wellbeing of their communities and the environment. Additionally, noneconomic goals and motives are important, i.e., passion and lifestyle. Financial motives may include different facets, from providing additional income to income maintenance and development [18,41,42]. Paige and Litrell [43], examining craft retailers' criteria for success, distinguished four groups of businesses ("personal expressers", "personal expressive goal seekers", "culture broker goal seekers" and "indifferents"). Each group differently emphasized the achievement of personal and financial goals, the promotion of the region's craft tradition and artistic expression. It is worth adding that in some respects, farmers, artisan entrepreneurs and craft retailers' are groups similar to local producers of original food who are exhibitors at food festivals.

Food festivals have a long tradition and are now recognized as the future trend of tourism development, especially in relation to events based on locally made products [6,44]. Exhibitors are often considered one of the basic elements of food festivals, without which the event could not take place [9,45]. On the other hand, exhibitors participating in a food festival can gain many benefits, which results from the possibility of direct contact with the visitors [20]. Considering the research of Omaka [45], the most important benefits of participation in the festival for exhibitors are increased sales of manufactured products, brand building and product promotion, more customers, the possibility of presenting new products to customers and other exhibitors and the establishment of new business and social contacts. Exhibitors also generate economic benefits for the region (place) where the festival is held because they pay registration fees and use local accommodations and restaurants [46]. According to Einarsen and Mykletun [9], exhibitors may differ in terms of the form of their organization (from small to large companies) and their gastronomical experience. However, the elements connecting the exhibitors are their passion, creative ambitions and interests related to food and entrepreneurship.

According to Crompton and McKay [21], motivations are the starting point that triggers the decision-making process, which is why examining the motivation of exhibitors is important. Exhibitors differ in terms of their experience participating in festivals; experienced exhibitors can make decisions about participation in the festival faster, while inexperienced exhibitors lack the necessary knowledge. Exhibitors have limited resources (time, funds); therefore, the decision to participate in the festival should be carefully considered for maximum benefits [23]. Based on their research, Breiter and Milman [47] distinguished six factors influencing the exhibitors' decision to participate in events: potential return on investment; previous experience attending the same festival; industry expectation with regard to participation in the festival; the destination where the festival takes place; business budget and recommendation.

Blichfeldt and Halkier [19] emphasize that the goals of participating in an event may be convergent for all stakeholders. Using the example of a food festival, they indicate that this common goal is not just to make another event, but to do something that would strengthen the place brand.

3. Study Context and Methods

Three festivals were selected for this research. Culinary character is the main feature linking these events. It is worth adding that recently, food festivals have gained popularity in Poland due to food and nutritional awareness campaigns and the renewal of certain social movements related to spreading and maintaining traditions. Moreover, these festivals are an interesting way for visitors to spend their free time. Many of these events are held every year. Food festivals in Poland form a very large group of events, and despite many common features, this group is very diverse. Because of this diversity, three food festivals—different in terms of topics, place of organization, duration and number of visitors—were selected

for the study. Their selection—apart from substantive indications—was determined by the limitations in the organization of such events related to the coronavirus pandemic. It should be emphasized that only some of the planned events took place in the 2020 summer season. The selected three events were held in accordance with the safety rules but with no restrictions on the number of participants. As emphasized by the organizers, the participants were a bit smaller than usual, but the difference was not as big as could be expected.

The Edible Flower Festival is organized every year during a July weekend. It takes place next to gardens in the countryside. Flower gardens refer to the theme of the event. The festival presents flavors, dishes and other floral products. The offer is addressed to visitors who like new and alternative flavors. The festival is quite small, measured by the number of visitors and exhibitors.

The Taste of Pomerania Festival is part of the St. Dominic's Fair. It should be emphasized that the St. Dominic's Fair is very popular and has been organized for several hundred years. The event lasts over three weeks and brings together many visitors and exhibitors. The Taste of Pomerania Festival is dominated by local and regional products and traditional flavors. The exhibitors are usually small local food producers. They are associated with the Culinary Heritage-Pomorskie Network.

The Festival of Good Taste in Poznań is a mainstream food event, coexisting with the Good Taste Festivals organized in Gruczo, Łódź and more. The festival takes place in the summer (in the high tourist season) in a city popular among tourists. The duration of this event exceeds the weekend, spanning several days. All these circumstances contribute to the popularity of this event. The exhibitors come from all over the country, as well as from abroad. They offer various flavors and products—traditional with modern and alternative.

The sample was collected from exhibitors (vendors) at three chosen food festivals between 10 July and 20 August 2020. At these three festivals, 58 in-depth interviews were conducted. The main purpose of the interviews was to obtain information about the exhibitors' business and their experiences. Emphasis was placed on the exhibitors' motivation to do business. Only exhibitors offering unique food items are included. The interviews were conducted with the business owners, their partners or their relatives because these groups were most interested in sharing the businesses' stories and knew the most details.

The interviews were partly based on standardized questions included in the questionnaire. The remaining questions were open-ended and tailored to the specific exhibitor and his business. These additional questions were related to the specifics of the branch, activity history, sources of knowledge and skills, etc. The questionnaire included questions about exhibitors' motives to start a business and the goals of participating in festivals in terms of business, family and traditions, culture and passion. These categories most often appeared in the studies of Chen and Elston [24], Getz and Carlsen [26], Stefanovic et al. [27], Sloka et al. [28], Hefer [30], Barba-Sanchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo [31], Pret and Cogan [41] and Omaka [45], who conducted research in this field.

The interview often took the form of a discussion. The method turned out to be time-consuming, as each individual interview lasted approximately 20–40 min. Detailed notes were made both during and after the interview. Interviews were not recorded due to legal conditions. The interviewer team included four researchers. Each interviewer was well prepared for the research, both in terms of content and technical elements. The interviews were conducted using the PAPI (Paper And Pencil Interviewing) method, in which the interviewer conducts a personal interview with the respondent. The interviewer asks questions and writes down the answers in a paper questionnaire [48]. This traditional method made it possible to conduct in-depth face-to-face interviews and obtain very detailed answers. Due to the qualitative method used, which is an in-depth interview [49, 50], no complex statistical or econometric methods were used to analyze the data. Not all of the data obtained could be quantified. In addition, the size of the research sample, which is much smaller in in-depth interviews than in typical survey research, also limited the

possibilities of conducting advanced statistical and econometric analyzes. In the field of descriptive statistics, basic measures such as the average or structure indicators were used.

4. Interviewed Exhibitors Characteristics

The interviewed exhibitors differed in terms of the age of their business (Table 1). The average age of the businesses run by the analyzed group of exhibitors was 17.7 years. It is worth adding that exhibitors who have been running a business for less than 5 years account for 27.6%. The same share is also represented by exhibitors who have run their enterprises for 5 to 10 years. Another 19.0% of exhibitors have been running their businesses for 11 to 20 years. Moreover, exhibitors with over 30 years of business experience made up 15.5%. This group includes exhibitors with very long traditions, running their business from generation to generation, spanning forty, seventy or even one hundred and fifty years. Additionally, the research shows that in the case of 24.1% of exhibitors, someone from their close family conducts a similar activity. Products offered by exhibitors can be divided into several basic groups: honey and bee products, dairy products, alcohol, sweets, canned products, bread and other baked goods and cold cuts.

Table 1. Exhibitors' characteristic.

Variables	Respondent Percentage
Age of exhibitors' business	
Less than 5 years	27.6%
5–10 years	27.6%
11–20 years	19.0%
21–30 years	10.3%
Over 30 years	15.5%
Employment	
Permanent employment	91.4%
Including: Fewer than 5 employees	56.9%
5 to 10 employees	17.2%
11 to 30 employees	5.2%
Over 30 employees	12.1%
Family members employment	44.8%
Seasonal employment	19.0%
Range of sales	
International range	7.9%
National range	49.2%
Regional range	25.4%
Local range	17.5%
Other sales points (except the festival)	
Stationary stores	41.1%
Online stores	27.4%
Intermediary stores	15.1%
Other channels	16.4%

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Among the researched exhibitors, as many as 91.4% employ permanent employees. The exhibitors employ an average of 16 employees on a permanent basis. However, most of the respondents (56.9%) had fewer than 5 employees. A smaller group of exhibitors (17.2%) employ 5–10 employees. Only 12.1% of the exhibitors employ over 30 employees. By contrast, the smallest group of exhibitors (5.2%) employ 11–30 employees. It should be emphasized that exhibitors most often employ two people, including themselves, and such exhibitors accounted for 34.5% of all respondents. According to the research, almost half of the exhibitors (44.8%) employ family members. However, only 19.0% of the exhibitors employ seasonal workers.

With regard to the range of sales of the offered products, the national range prevails (49.2% of respondents). The international range includes 7.9% of exhibitors. Another 25.4% and 17.5% of responses indicate the regional and local sales ranges, respectively. It is worth adding that, on average, only 28.5% of sales are made at food festivals. Most of the exhibitors sell their products through stationary and online stores: 41.1% and 27.4% of responses, respectively. Another 15.1% of responses indicate sales in intermediary stores. However, in the case of 16.4% of the responses, sales are made through other channels, such as direct sales at the place of production, through their own restaurant or sales through Facebook.

5. Results

In the survey, respondents were asked about the motives for starting a business dealing with the production, sale and exhibition of original food products. For this question, the exhibitors had the option of selecting more than one answer (Table 2). The largest share of respondents (56.9%) indicated that one of the main motives for starting a business was the desire to run their own business. In the case of 22.4% of respondents, family traditions were the motive for starting the business. Another 19.0% of respondents suggested that the reason for setting up the enterprise was culinary interest. The exhibitors were also motivated by the promotion of local tradition and culture, which accounted for 13.8% of the responses. Moreover, the exhibitors were driven by providing customers with high-quality food/dishes (12.1% of responses). A smaller proportion of the respondents (10.3%) suggested that the reason for starting the enterprise was the possibility of obtaining additional income. Only 3.4% of the respondents were motivated by the lack of alternative job offers in their place of residence. On the other hand, in the case of 25.9% of respondents, the reasons for setting up a business were other motives, among which the exhibitors mentioned: the willingness to use any professional experience gained over the years; the desire to lead a healthier lifestyle; the desire to use the infrastructure or supplement the activities carried out so far, as well as by accident.

Table 2. Exhibitors' motives to start a business dealing with the production, sale and exhibition of original food products.

Variables	Respondent Percentage
Starting own business	56.9%
Continuation of family traditions	22.4%
Culinary interest	19.0%
Promoting local traditions and culture	13.8%
Providing customers with high-quality food/dishes	12.1%
Possibility of obtaining additional income	10.3%
The lack of alternative jobs in the place of residence	3.4%
Other motives	25.9%

Source: Author's own elaboration.

According to the research, exhibitors most often set up their activities for business and profit reasons. In contrast, a smaller part of the exhibitors' responses indicated that the motives were related to their interests, passion and culture. The third most important motive for setting up a business was a family tradition. Some respondents made use of the multiple-choice option and indicated several answers: 39.7% of respondents chose more than one motive, and 15.5% chose more than two motives. The motive of running their own business was most often combined with the continuation of family traditions (10.3%), and owning a business was often conflated with promoting local traditions and culture (8.6%).

Another part of the results relates to the current goals of participating in festivals (Table 3). According to the research results, the main goals of exhibitors' participation in culinary festivals are directly related to their enterprises, i.e., marketing and business

aspects. Building the brand of a company or organization and promoting the offered products is important and very important for 89.7% of exhibitors. In contrast, selling products and obtaining feedback about them is important and very important for 81.9% of exhibitors.

Table 3. Goals of exhibitors' participation in food festivals.

Variables	Irrelevant	Not Important	Indifferent	Important	Very Important	Mean *
Building the company/organization brand	8.6%	0.0%	1.7%	29.3%	60.3%	4.33
Promotion of offered products	8.6%	0.0%	1.7%	20.7%	69.0%	4.41
Sale of products	8.6%	1.7%	6.9%	37.9%	44.8%	4.09
Obtaining feedback about the products offered	6.9%	1.7%	10.3%	36.2%	44.8%	4.10
Share your interests/passion	19.0%	3.4%	12.1%	32.8%	32.8%	3.57
Dissemination of culture and traditions about products/dishes	22.4%	1.7%	10.3%	29.3%	36.2%	3.55
Establishing new business contacts	24.1%	3.4%	13.8%	34.5%	24.1%	3.31
Maintaining cooperation	29.3%	6.9%	15.5%	20.7%	27.6%	3.10
Comparison with the offers of other exhibitors	34.5%	3.4%	19.0%	31.0%	12.1%	2.83
Following trends	36.2%	3.4%	13.8%	27.6%	19.0%	2.90

* Average, where: irrelevant—1, not important—2, indifferent—3, important—4, very important—5. Source: Author's own elaboration.

Other important goals of exhibitors' participation in food festivals are related to passion and culture. Sharing interests, passion and disseminating culture and traditions about products and dishes is important and very important for 65.5% of exhibitors. Cooperation objectives are less important for motivating exhibitors to participate in festivals. Establishing business contacts and maintaining cooperation is important and very important only for 53.4% of exhibitors, while 31.9% consider these goals not important or irrelevant. According to the research, goals related to the market are the least important for exhibitors. Wanting to know the offers of other exhibitors and following trends is important and very important for only 44.8% of the exhibitors, while 38.8% of the exhibitors consider them invalid or of little importance.

Due to the most frequently recurring startup business motives, three groups of exhibitors were selected for further analysis. These are people who wanted to be their own bosses, those continuing family traditions and culinary enthusiasts. Their startup business motives were compared with the current goals of participation in festivals (Table 4).

Exhibitors who chose to start their own business as one of the main startup business motives are currently continuing in this direction (option "business-to-business"). Their goals of participating in festivals are mainly of a business nature, aiming to promote offered products, building the brand and selling products. At the same time, they are least interested in comparing their products with the offers of other exhibitors and following trends and cooperation. The in-depth interviews show that this group of exhibitors is convinced of the uniqueness of their offerings and hence have no need to cooperate with the competition or even observe the competition. Most of these exhibitors have places where they sell their products other than festivals (their own stationary and/or online stores, intermediary stores). The products offered in this group of exhibitors are dominated by bread, dairy products, sweets and alcohol. These are products that have numerous counterparts in commercial offerings and are well known to customers. Currently, customers often look for healthier, better-quality products than those offered in supermarkets, which works to the advantage of the analyzed group of exhibitors.

Table 4. Selected startup business motives versus food festival participation goals.

Variables	Starting Own Business	Continuation of Family Traditions	Culinary Interest
Mean *			
Building the company/organization brand	4.18	4.62	4.27
Promotion of offered products	4.27	4.77	4.45
Sale of products	4.06	4.38	4.27
Obtaining opinions about the products offered	3.82	4.00	4.55
Share your interests/passion	3.24	3.92	3.82
Dissemination of culture and traditions about products/dishes	3.09	3.77	4.09
Establishing new business contacts	2.97	3.85	4.00
Maintaining cooperation	2.92	3.46	3.73
Comparison with the offers of other exhibitors	2.55	3.38	3.18
Following trends	2.61	3.38	3.27

* Average, where goal importance: irrelevant—1, not important—2, indifferent—3, important—4, very important—5. Source: Author's own elaboration.

Exhibitors who indicated family traditions as one of the main themes of startup businesses currently pursue goals related to business at festivals. Between startup business motives and the current goals of participating in the festival, there has been a transition from the option “family-business to business-family”. These exhibitors care about the recognition of the offered products, and they encourage their purchase. In the opinion of the respondents, due to the originality and uniqueness of the offered products, the festival is a good opportunity for promotion and sale, as well as for obtaining opinions about the products. It is worth adding that in this group of exhibitors, all the goals of participation in the festival turned out to be more important than for the first group of exhibitors (who wanted to be their own boss). The festival form of activity is particularly important because, for many exhibitors from this group, it is one of the main sources of income from the sale of products and one of their main forms of contact with customers. It is worth adding that this group is dominated by beekeepers and farmers and, therefore, includes self-produced products using their own crops or local raw materials, based on their own knowledge, passed down from generation to generation.

Exhibitors who indicated culinary interest or passion as the main startup business motive currently implemented mainly business goals during the festivals but also goals related to the dissemination of culture and traditions. They wanted to promote and sell products as well as propagate culture and traditions. Interestingly, they were slightly less interested in sharing their passion. In terms of comparing startup business motives with the goals of the current festival activity, there has been a shift from the “passion-business to business-passion” option. This group of exhibitors is dominated by people dealing with original preserves in jars. The exhibitors produce their own preserves based on original recipes improved over the years. Taking care of the uniqueness and high quality of their products, manufacturers use their own raw materials or import them from local, regional or even foreign markets.

6. Discussion

In general, the results of this research are in line with the research on startup business motivation, filling the gap between exhibitors at food festivals. The most popular motive chosen by the surveyed exhibitors was starting their own business, which is an expression of broadly understood independence. This confirms the results of Stefanovic et al. [27], Sloka et al. [28], Medaković et al. [29], Hefer et al. [30] and Barba-Sanchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo [31].

However, the surveyed exhibitors are strongly associated with family traditions, which is consistent with the results of the research by Musa et al. [40] on farmers. In the analyzed group of exhibitors, farmers and beekeepers showed the greatest attachment to family traditions. These are people who usually continue family traditions related to agricultural

or beekeeping production. These types of activities require many years of experience and knowledge passed down from generation to generation.

For most exhibitors, aspects related to interests and culture were an important goal of participation in the food festival. This is in line with the results of the research conducted by Pret and Cogan [41] in the context of artisan entrepreneurs. During in-depth interviews, a great passion and enthusiasm were clearly visible, as was involvement in the local and family traditions of the food festival exhibitors. Some exhibitors—such as artisan entrepreneurs—were driven by motivation and noneconomic goals related to manufacturing traditions, passion and lifestyle but at the same time were pursuing economic goals to support the family and develop the business.

Research confirms the results of Omaka [45], clearly showing that food festivals are a source of many benefits for exhibitors (increased sales, brand building and product promotion, new customers, the opportunity to present new products, networking). The conducted research additionally shows that for the vast majority of exhibitors, the most important goals are marketing and business (brand building and product promotion, selling products and obtaining feedback on them). This confirms the validity of Chhabra's [46] research, which focuses on the economic impact of food festivals on exhibitors. In addition, the results are also consistent with the research of Breiter and Milman [47], who indicated that one of the main factors influencing an exhibitor's decision to participate in an event is the potential return on investment.

In addition, half of the exhibitors indicated that an important goal of participation in food festivals is the possibility of establishing new business contacts, as well as maintaining cooperation. Thus, participation in a culinary festival may become a kind of bridge to create and maintain relationships with various stakeholders of the festival, which is confirmed by the results of de Jong and Varley [3].

The separation of three groups of exhibitors (starting own business, continuation of family traditions, culinary interest) on the basis of motivation and comparison with the goals of participation in food festivals allowed to identify changes in behavior over time. Building from the results of Wang et al. [39], three patterns were established for changes in motives during exhibition activities. The first group included exhibitors who had not changed the direction of their activity. The main motive for starting was business, and the main goal of the exhibition activity was business. The second group consisted of people who started their business to continue family traditions. They showed business goals as the most important, enabling them to support their family, but at the same time, they wanted to pass on their knowledge and activities to the next generation of the family. The third group was culinary enthusiasts, for whom the willingness to share their passion was the main motive for starting a business. Currently, however, they were largely pursuing business and economic goals—similarly to the other group—ensuring their maintenance and development. Therefore—unlike in the research of Wang et al. [39]—the direction of change was towards business. Most of the surveyed exhibitors live and support their families with their enterprises, so business and economic goals are very important. This does not mean that they do not pursue noneconomic goals; they successfully combine passion and tradition with business. Thus, these findings confirm the opinion of other researchers regarding the achievement of economic and non-economic goals [18,41,42]. The surveyed exhibitors emphasized that economic goals could be achieved primarily thanks to the wide share of visitors who bought products both during the festival and beyond the duration of the festival. Therefore, good relations with potential customers are a key success factor for exhibitors, which confirms the results of the Organ et al. [20] research.

The presented results do not match Blichfeldt and Halkier's [19] research about the common goals of all stakeholder groups. The conducted research shows that individual stakeholders act independently, pursuing their own goals.

The obtained results may be useful for organizers of food festivals. The surveyed exhibitors were characterized by different start-up motivation, but the common current goal of participating in festivals, related to the implementation of the business path. Thus,

for exhibitors, the conditions offered by the organizers, including the place, audience and fees, may turn out to be key. Referring to the results obtained, participation in a food festival should be profitable, if not in financial terms, then through the possibility of acquiring potential customers.

The present research is subject to some limitations. Most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic limited data collection. Many food festivals in Poland were canceled in 2020, limiting the opportunities for interviews. The research form of in-depth interviews also limited the size of the research sample. Moreover, the qualitative nature of some studies made it difficult to standardize the results. However, it should be emphasized that the conducted research contributes to further studies on the functioning of food festivals and their stakeholders. The directions of future research may include determining the differences between the typology of exhibitors and the typology of the festival, as well as the development of an instrument measuring the motivation of exhibitors. Further research will also include festival organizers.

7. Conclusions

The conducted research shows that the literature on food festivals pays little attention to exhibitors. The main reason for this is that exhibitors are treated as part of the festival product and are not recognized as festival participants, disregarding the exhibitors' relationship with the festival and the exhibitors' influence on the host region. It is important to broaden the knowledge about exhibitors at food festivals for at least two reasons. First, it is difficult to imagine a food festival without exhibitors offering their products, which are often unique. Second, exhibitors deciding to participate in the festival (especially for several days) may generate additional economic benefits for the host region, as they often incur costs related to accommodation and meals. Additionally, thanks to the knowledge of the exhibitors' motives, event organizers can better understand their needs and, on this basis, better plan events and marketing activities. On the other hand, being aware of the existence of various groups of exhibitors, the organizers can direct promotional activities to exhibitors with preferred characteristics.

According to the first research question, the research results indicate that the most common motives for setting up a business are economic and marketing aspects (starting one's own business). Frequent reasons for starting a business were also aspects related to personal interests (passion) as well as local tradition and culture. In addition, family traditions were also important and were often the reason for starting one's own business. It should be emphasized that a fairly large group of exhibitors, during the interviews, indicated more than one motive that determined the establishment of activities related to the production, sale and exhibition of their own products. Often, the willingness to run one's own business was associated with the continuation of family traditions or the promotion of local traditions and culture.

Due to the second research question, the analysis of the current goals of participation in festivals shows that most exhibitors consider marketing and business goals to be important and very important. In addition, for most exhibitors, sharing their passion and interests and disseminating the tradition and culture of products and dishes are important goals.

The comparison of the initial motives for setting up a business with the current goals of participating in culinary festivals shows that, regardless of the initial motives, the exhibitors currently focus on business goals. This is shown both in the group that began motivated by business and in the groups whose initial motives were not business-related. For most exhibitors, the conducted activity is both a way of life and, at the same time, an opportunity to earn and pursue interests.

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