

The Impact of Cultural Events on Tourism: A case Study of the Carnival of Korca

ALMA ZHILLA

PhD in Economics, Faculty of Economics
University of Korca, Albania

Abstract:

The importance of culture and heritage is becoming more and more obvious, both in regionalists and regional development. Cultural factor are important because they directly affect economic performance and development, and therefore the competitiveness of the region. This paper aims to investigate the impact of festivals concerning cultural tourism regarding the host community. The literature research in this paper focuses on an area of study related to cultural tourism and the role of festivals in the creation of opportunities for community orientated events and festivals.

Furthermore, it offers a clear content of cultural events in Korca city, and defines the newest forms and trends in cultural tourism and regional experience economy. Cultural events can often boost getting acquainted , the preservation and transmission of cultural and historical traditions. This will often help with conservation and protection of local heritage, and a revival of indigenous cultures and arts .

Key words: Cultural Heritage, regional development, cultural events, traditions.

THE IMPACT STUDIES METHODOLOGY

The economic impact studies are used to estimate the economic importance of big cultural or sport events and important infrastructure project. Effects of hosting big events are mainly

evaluated in two fields. First is to focus on the short-term impacts which have wide diversity in the range of economic and intangible positive and negative effects on city and local community.

Second is to concentrate on the long-term impacts which concern to legacy of facilities construction and infrastructure improvements. (Barghchi et al., 2009)

The aim of impact analyses is to quantify additional incomes of big events on local economy using traditional impact measuring methods .We provided our research according to often cited impact studies methodology as we can mention questionnaires, surveys with local visitors.

According to Crompton (2010) the economic impact of visitor spending is estimated by the formula: number of visitors * average spending per visitor * multiplier. In our calculation we didn't used the multiplier because of lack of data on local level. The result of these analyses is estimation of number and structure of visitors of event and also of theirs average and total expenditures. This estimation allows quantifying gross direct, indirect and induced impacts of the event. The level of economic impact could easily have been overestimated if a carefully structured working methodology had not been used. There is a general consensus that whilst measures related to economic impact assessment are conceptually simple, the actual collection of such information is extremely difficult and time consuming. (Bond, 2008)

1. INTRODUCTION

Today events are considered to contribute significantly to the cultural and economic development wealth of Albania . Events have major impacts on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities. The event organisers are now using the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events to attract visitors and create cultural image in the host cities by

holding events in the community settings. The desire for events is not specifically designed to address the needs for any one particular group. The hosting of events is often developed because of the tourism and economic opportunities additional to social and cultural benefits. Many researchers have contested that local communities play vital roles in developing tourism through events.

Events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to visitors from other generating zones plus the potential for grants, or sponsorships, (Getz, 1997) either by direct or indirect intent. The government now support and promote events as part of their strategies for economic development, nation building and cultural tourism. The events in turn are seen as an important tool for attracting visitors and building the image within different communities. According to Stiernstrand (1996), the economic impact of tourism arises principally from the consumption of tourism products in a geographical area. According to McDonnell, Allen and O' Toole (1999), tourism related services, which include travel, accommodation, restaurants, shopping are the major beneficiaries of the event.

As far as events and tourism is concerned, the roles and responsibilities of governments as well private sector and society in general have significantly changed over the last decade. The situations have been changed where the state had the key responsibility for tourism development and promotion to a world where the public sector is obliged to reinvent itself by relinquishing its traditional responsibilities and activities in favour of provincial, state and local authorities. This indicates the growing influence on the behaviour of governments and business in general of development of event and tourism industries. This suggests that festivals impact on the host population and stakeholders in a number of ways. These factors are primarily concerned with a plethora of impacts, social,

cultural, physical, environmental, political and economic all of which can be both positive and negative.

This paper initially reviews literature related to cultural tourism and the role of festivals in the creation of opportunities for community orientated events and festivals which contrast with tourist orientated events which have tenuous links with local communities. Moreover, the paper will argue that community based events and festivals provide an opportunity for the celebration of local identity and community empowerment and create tourism for the local area.

The case studies within this paper explore the development of cultural tourism and multi-cultural events with the Korca , and the positive contribution that these events play in solidifying community relations with development of the cultural tourism.

2. CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural tourism is defined by international Cultural Tourism Charter professionals as

Domestic and international tourism continues to be among the foremost vehicles for cultural exchange, providing a personal experience, not only of that which has survived from the past, but of the contemporary life and society of others..
<http://www.icomos.org/tourism/charter.html>

The culture is an identity and the importance that individual people place on local and national social organisations, such as local governments, education institutions, religious communities, work and leisure. Cultural tourism describes tourist who take part in the cultural activities while away from their home cities. Cultural tourism is that form of tourism whose purpose is to discover heritage sites and cultural monuments on their travels.

The theme of culture has grown over the last two decades but no clear definition of culture has been accepted by the community as a whole. Culture in modern day terms is seen as a product by governments, large organisations and individual people to develop their own standing in the given market. Wyman states that culture plays an important part in the society:

"...In an economic climate where we hear so much about crisis in health and education, it is important to remember that culture, too, is an essential element of a healthy society. It's not an either-or situation. Health is necessary for life; culture makes life worth living..."

http://www.nasaa-arts.org/artworks/ct_contents.shtml
(Yorkshire Evening Post, 2002).

Tourism is an opportunity for cultural exchange and more, creating an interaction within people of different lifestyles, aspirations and needs. Putting economic benefits aside, experiencing outside contact within various communities draws attention to the host community. People will always want to interact with other cultures and communities in the hope of learning of their traditions or possibly be confronted by new challenges and perspectives on life. It has been said that travel is a means to "discover that things unknown or forgotten within ourselves". Tourism is obviously an experience driven industry the more you do it the more you want it. In addition local culture is a unique experience, along with the local personality, food and hospitality. The more one knows and learns about a destination, the more fulfilling the experience will be.

3. EVENT TOURISM

In literature about event tourism the concept is mainly used to describe destination strategy, how the development and marketing events is used to gain some specific tourism and economic benefits. For the event organizer tourists are potential customers so knowledge about their characteristics is

important. Figure 2 shows the main economic and tourism roles the events play. All the roles can be important for destination or a society, and event organizers should assess how an event can have a positive effect or utilized tourism markets.

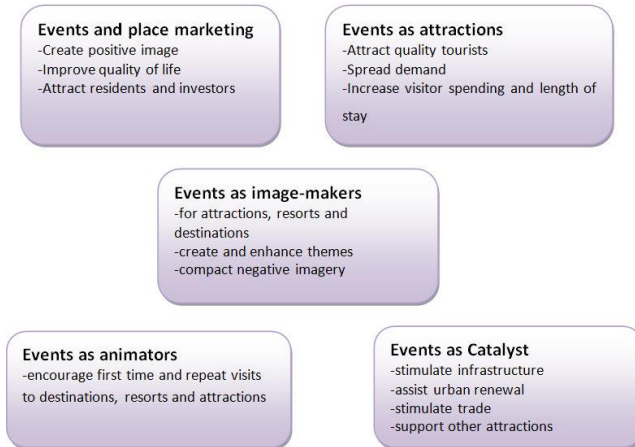


Figure 2. Economic and tourism roles of events (Getz, 2005)

3.1 Events and Festivals – the impacts

According to the report *Estimating the Economic Impacts of Festivals and Events: A Research Guide*, event and festival tourism is one of the fastest growing forms of tourism. And though we may first think of what potential extra visitor spend these events can bring to an area, the positive impacts are not purely economic – there are social and environmental impacts, too. There can also be negative impacts resulting from an event, and organisers should try to keep these to a minimum or, where possible, eliminate them altogether. These can include the event receiving a poor reputation due to inadequate facilities or inflated prices, and ecological damage as a result of increased footfall and pollution in a concentrated area.

The positive effects of an event or festival can be felt before, during and after an event or festival:

Social Improved reputation – a successful event or festival can highlight the best of what your area has to offer and send out a positive message to future visitors. PR/media coverage – bringing attention to your area through an event or festival raises awareness among potential visitors of what you have to offer, and can increase local pride and community spirit. Community involvement – bringing the community together to promote the area helps to create a more joined-up experience for visitors and helps you to work together to target more visitors for all.

Economic Extend the tourist season – the fixed length nature of events and festivals encourages visitors to stay for the duration of the event and for longer than they might have. Spread the spend – events and festivals can boost an area’s off-season, and help to spread spend by geography and season. ‘The ripple effect’ – it’s not only the businesses directly involved with an event or festival that will benefit from the spend. Visitors will also be looking for places to stay, places to eat and local attractions to visit while there. Legacy – a themed event or festival can also attract visitors that would otherwise not have come to an area, which means businesses can reach a whole new audience. In turn, businesses can promote to those visitors and raise the profile of their area.

Environmental Sustainability – if handled sensitively, an event or festival can support the local economy and allow preservation of its natural assets. For guidance, there is an ‘eventIMPACTS’ section with support tools available.

4. KORCA AS AN ATTRACTIVE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CITY

Historic countries and localities in Albania are a unique cultural heritage in the Mediterranean area. Albanian heritage

remains a precious treasure, not only for Albanians, and the country history and its development but also for the whole balcony. In the “Cultural Heritage”—are included all the objects, with great historic value—that represent the history of the country where they come from.

“This continues to be one of this city’s most important and enjoyable family attractions.” (Yorkshire Evening Post, 2002).

The Korca city, known as the backbone of the Albanian culture and the host for very popular carnivals all over Albania, is located in the southern parts of Albania. It is the biggest city in the southern region. The distinguished culture leaves an unforgettable impression on the minds of the visitors which find its way back to the ancient times, since the place is continually inhabited leading to cultural advancements from one period to the next. It represents to be the most pristine, enjoyable and hospitable city of Albania.

Korca is the sixth largest city in Albania standing on a plateau bounded by Morova Mountains. The city is approximately 180 km, 200 km and 70 km from Tirana, Durrës and Ohrid respectively. So it is possible to reach Korca by catching a bus or hiring taxi from any of these major cities. The major natural tourist attractions in Korca like Voskopoja, Dardha and Vithquki are in the perimeter of 25 kilometers from the city. The city experiences mediterranean climate and has temperature higher than western part of Albania.

The Korca city is of great historic, economic and agricultural value to Albania. The city has beautiful and magnificent ‘Cathedral’, a famous landmark in the city. The cobble stoned alleys of Shen Gjergj and Republika boulevards are very famous. The cultural attractions in the city include the National Museum of Education, Museum of Medieval Art, Meadow of Tears, Oriental Art Museum and many others.

The city of Korca is famous mainly for its cultural heritage. Korca Serenades are the popular songs of this place

representing the cultural values. They are sung together with guitar. Carnival is a major event celebrated here before the Easter that drives tourists from all over the world. It is the most colorful, vibrant and vivacious event of its kind. It makes Korca one of the major sought after places in Albania.

The cultural heritage, beautiful historic monuments and the natural beauty are all the ingredients making Korca a major tourist destination in Albania.

Local authorities are equally responsible for the preservation and development of cultural heritage values; however, this responsibility is not accompanied by the appropriate funding mechanisms. In addition, there is need to empower an interactive approach towards cultural heritage. As a vital asset for the region, cultural heritage has a significant potential for sustainable economic development if audiences are built and accessibility to local cultural heritage assets improves. With these in minds the project shall monitor the 2018 budgeting of the cultural programme with the participation of the public of the Korça municipality.

All of these artworks will have some botanical elements in their subject or in secondary elements. A group of art historians will then undertake the arduous task of presenting these artworks, contextualizing the meaning of the floral elements therein.

“Our events in the run up to Carnival Day provide something for everyone as well as giving the whole city the chance to come together in one big party.”

(Yorkshire Evening Post, 2002).

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4.1 Korça as a cultural events city

Korça as well as some surrounding villages of the region, has traditionally preserved and improved the celebration of carnivals. In terms of a democratic society nowadays this beautiful tradition revives and again wins the popular values of a jovial celebration. Economy During the 20th century, Korçë gained a substantial industrial capacity in addition to its historic role as a commercial and agricultural centre. The plateau on which the city stands is highly fertile and is one of Albania's main wheat-growing areas. Local industries include the manufacture of knitwear, rugs, textiles, flour-milling, brewing, and sugar-refining. Deposits of lignite coal are mined in the mountains nearby such as Mborje-Drenovë. The city is home to the nationally famous Birra Korça. According to official reports the city enjoys one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. The majority of foreign investment comes from Greeks, as well as joint Albanian-Greek enterprises.

Korca Beer Fest is the biggest event in Albania. Within 5 days, over 100.000 people visit the festival. The large number of visitors is mostly due to basic festival principles: free entrance, an exceptional music program, and a wide range of foreign and domestic beer brands. Korca Beer fest was founded in year 2007. In six years of its existence over 500 000 visitors could have seen more than 100 free music performances and tasted a lot of beer brands. The festival has received the Albania Tourism Award in 2010 Owing to all the mentioned, Korca Beer Fes established itself as one of the most important segments of the tourist offer of Korca Region, as well as a brand that promotes our city and strengthens its image.

The carnivals come as a result of exploring and using ritual, ethnographic, artistic and jovial values of this running authentic folk tradition. This event sings the opening of the tourist season in Korça organized by the City in cooperation with other cultural institutions. It is a very popular event that preserves the values of its authentic tradition. It represents an essential part of our culture and cultivates the values of a specific folklore, oral, burlesque, humorous, and musical. The festival promotes the interests of individuals and organized groups also to create new values. By recognizing the importance of our cultural heritage youth can also embrace this tradition and thus ensure a greater participation from year to year making the carnivals an annual event, loved and appreciated from all citizens. The City and the cultural and artistic institutions have all the necessary possibilities and experience to a successful organization of this festival. The festival is organized in Korça in the beginning of June. Several groups with a tradition in the celebration of carnivals participate in this festival. Korça, as hosting city is represented with several groups. In addition, other organized groups may also participate after having previously presented their artistic platform to the organizational Commission of this festival.



Korça takes pride in its Fest of Beer

The "Beer Festival" project, implemented for the tenth consecutive year, always aimed at stimulating, supporting and promoting local businesses, strongly influencing the

development of tourism in the city, turning it into an important tourist pole. This year's innovation was that the holiday was extended to Korça's Old Bazaar, offering traditional serenata and traditional dishes throughout the day, to go to the square near the Skanderbeg Stadium. During the five nights of the week 10-14 August 2016, a mass audience was noticed, not only from the city of Korca and its surroundings, but also from domestic and foreign tourists, specially coming to be part of this important event . An important venue for the Beer Festival during the last five nights took place and a festive show featuring Albanian bandwriters such as Alban Skënderaj, Flori Mumajesi, Juliana Pasha, Like every year, the holiday except witnessed 10 years of success story had a record participants and for five nights in a row the city became the most frequented tourist destination. For a decade in succession, this holiday, which is now identified with Korca and its beer, culminates in the tourist season, taking the seal of the largest summer organization in the country. Total amount of this project from the Municipality: 1 000 000 Lek. Project value realized: 954 000 Lek



During the four nights of Beer Fest people consumed about:

100.000 glasses of beer.

100.000 meat balls.

50.000 sausages.

The area of field where Beer Fest took place was 4300 m². 200 sets of picnic tables were used. 10.000 – 11.000 people participated to Beer Fest while only for the last day there were about 25.000 people.

Children's playground A separate area is reserved to children. Parents can choose divertimento with their children between 06.00 pm to 09.00 pm. Children can be followed and entertained by the animators engaged on this occasion after being registered by their parents in the contacts list. The animators are responsible for the safety of the children and the communication with the parents. The children's playground will include animations and games as follows: The balloon and the Sliding Tunnel will be the center of the playground Face painting – children can paint their faces resembling different animals and characters and then make up a show of their day. Procreative games – tables where children can paint or give life to their creative works. Sports games – different games that include physical activities will be part of the program ex.: pull of the rope, ball games, sliding games, skittles etc. 30 animators of Fusion will be engaged in the following activities in collaboration with Staff from the Municipality. There will also be provided an area where ambulant venders can sell their products – ice creams, sweets etc.
<http://www.ecotourismtrails.eu/touristic-guide/korca.html>

CONCLUSION

Festival culture has a long history in Korça and there are many unique tourism festivals in it. With the deepening of reform and opening up as well as the gradually improving of people's living standards, event tourism has become an effective way to celebrate a feast day in many local families and it also becomes a hot pursuit by many tourist cities. The festivals & special events is a fast-growing industry and plays an important role in

contributing to the commercial and tourism industries. Beer Festival is a special industry concentrated with both product-oriented and consumer-oriented. So, it has powerful affection on industries associated with the beer industry and other aspects of the host city. With the fast-growing of Beer Festival, the impact of it on the host city is more and more worth studying. This article focuses on the impact of Beer Festival on the host city. To analyze the impacts on the host city systematically, it chooses two famous Beer Festivals home and abroad . The major conclusions of this study are as follows & First of all, Beer Festival has the following positive significance on the host city &

- 1) it can drive the economic development of the host city;
- 2) it may enhance the image of the host city;
- 3) it can strengthen the overall competitive power of the host city.

At the same time, Beer Festival also has some negative impact &

- 1) Beer Festival may disturb the normal life of the residents and the public security, and worse still, it may damage the ecological environment of the host city to some extent;
- 2) there may exist crowing-out effect and valley effect for the host city.

After a trade-off, the positive impact of Beer Festival on the host city far outweighs the negative impact. Therefore, the host city should actively develop the beer tourism industry under the guidance of a rational policy. Unlike past studies which only focus on the old ideas of development countermeasures of event tourism, this paper is based on the comparison of two separate beer festivals of tourism products. The result may help the host city to have clear understanding of festivals' impacts, to enhance the advantage and to avoid the disadvantage. Furthermore, it will make the city much more beautiful and prosperous.

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