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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN ENHANCING TOURISM ATTRACTIVENESS

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Abstract. This article examines the role and significance of cultural events and festivals in enhancing the attractiveness of tourism destinations. It provides a comparative analysis of locally rooted festivals and imported festival formats in terms of distinctiveness, scalability, and their impact on tourism demand. Particular attention is paid to the influence of seasonality, attendee composition, and event timing on festival effectiveness. The findings show that festivals can strengthen destination image, create additional activities for tourists, and contribute to the redistribution of tourism flows over time. However, the actual tourism value of a festival depends not only on total attendance but also on its seasonal and structural characteristics.

Keywords: festivals, event tourism, destination attractiveness, seasonality, tourism flows, tourism destination, authenticity.

TURIZM JOZIBADORLIGINI OSHIRISHDA MADANIY TADBIRLAR VA FESTIVALLARNING AHAMIYATI

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Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada madaniy tadbirlar va festivallarning turistik destinatsiyalar jozibadorligini oshirishdagi o'rni va ahamiyati tahlil qilingan. Tadqiqotda mahalliy madaniyat va an'analarga asoslangan festivallar hamda boshqa hududlardan o'zlashtirilgan festival formatlarining o'ziga xos xususiyatlari, miqyoslashtirish imkoniyatlari va turistik talabga ta'siri qiyosiy baholangan. Shuningdek, festival samaradorligiga mavsumiylik, tashrif buyuruvchilar tarkibi va tadbirning o'tkazilish vaqti kabi omillarning ta'siri yoritilgan. Tadqiqot natijalari festivallarning turistik imijni shakllantirish, turistlar uchun qo'shimcha faoliyat turlarini yaratish hamda turistik oqimlarni vaqt bo'yicha taqsimlashda muhim vosita bo'lishini ko'rsatadi. Festivalning haqiqiy turistik qiymati esa faqat ishtirokchilar soni bilan emas, balki uning mavsumiy va tarkibiy xususiyatlari bilan ham belgilanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: festival, tadbirlar turizmi, turistik jozibadorlik, mavsumiylik, turistlar oqimi, destinatsiya, autentiklik.

ЗНАЧЕНИЕ КУЛЬТУРНЫХ МЕРОПРИЯТИЙ И ФЕСТИВАЛЕЙ В ПОВЫШЕНИИ ТУРИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ПРИВЛЕКАТЕЛЬНОСТИ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются роль и значение культурных мероприятий и фестивалей в повышении привлекательности туристских дестинаций.





Проведён сравнительный анализ фестивалей, основанных на местной культуре и традициях, и заимствованных фестивальных форматов с точки зрения их уникальности, масштабируемости и влияния на туристический спрос. Особое внимание уделено таким факторам, как сезонность, состав посетителей и время проведения мероприятия. Результаты исследования показывают, что фестивали способствуют формированию туристического имиджа территории, созданию дополнительных видов активности для туристов и перераспределению туристических потоков во времени. При этом реальная туристическая ценность фестиваля определяется не только количеством участников, но и его сезонными и структурными характеристиками.

Ключевые слова: фестивали, событийный туризм, туристическая привлекательность, сезонность, туристический поток, туристская дестинация, аутентичность.

Introduction

Cultural events and festivals occupy a settled place in destination strategy. They are held to enliven a place, to express its culture, and to make it more attractive to visitors, and the last of these is usually stated without specifying the mechanism.

The specification matters because attractiveness has several components and festivals do not act on them equally. A festival is a strong instrument for one purpose, a weak one for another, and on at least one component it works against the destination.

A second question concerns the kind of festival. Events that express an existing local practice and events that import a successful format elsewhere are treated in policy as variants of the same thing. They differ in the property that matters most for a destination, namely whether a competitor can copy them.

Accordingly, the article has four objectives: to distinguish between rooted festivals and imported event formats; to identify which components of destination attractiveness festivals can realistically influence; to explain how seasonality and attendee composition determine tourism value; and to formulate design and evaluation implications for cultural events used as tourism instruments.

Literature Review

The literature on destination attractiveness and event tourism provides the theoretical basis for assessing the real contribution of festivals to tourism development. Formica and Uysal [1] conceptualise destination attractiveness through the relationship between what a destination supplies and what a market demands. Within this perspective, a festival should not be treated as an all-purpose instrument: its contribution depends on the particular component of attractiveness that it changes.

Event tourism is a well-established field. Getz [5] defines and systematises event tourism, while Getz and Page [6] review its development and note the need for greater precision in claims about event impacts. This is especially relevant when attendance is used as a proxy for tourism value, although the composition of visitors and the timing of the event may determine whether the destination receives any additional tourism benefit at all.

Research on festival sustainability and creative tourism highlights the difference between culturally rooted practices and transferable event formats. Quinn [2] discusses the risks that arise when local cultural practices are instrumentalised for tourism, while Richards [3] emphasises participation in creative practices as a source of tourism value. Together, these studies support the distinction between events whose uniqueness derives from a local tradition and formats that can be reproduced elsewhere.

Destination-image research provides a further dimension. Gartner [4] treats image as the product of a long-term formation process, while Baloglu and McCleary [8] show that destination image develops through multiple information sources and perceptions. Consequently, a single





festival may contribute to image formation, but its effect is likely to be gradual and difficult to isolate from the wider stock of information accumulated about the destination.

Crompton [7] distinguishes motives that push people to travel from attributes that pull them toward a particular destination. Festivals operate mainly on the latter side: they may supply a reason to choose a destination and, importantly, a reason to choose a specific date. Taken together, the literature suggests that the tourism role of festivals should be evaluated through clearly specified mechanisms rather than through the broad assumption that any successful cultural event automatically enhances tourism attractiveness.

Research methodology

The study is conceptual and analytical. No primary data were collected, no individual festival was empirically assessed, and no quantitative claim is made about a specific destination. The purpose is to clarify the mechanisms through which cultural events may affect tourism attractiveness and to derive a structured framework for design and evaluation.

The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, two festival logics - rooted festivals and imported formats - are compared according to replicability, scalability, distinctiveness and their principal design risks. Second, the effect of festivals is assessed across five components of destination attractiveness: product, seasonality, image, access and price. Third, season and attendee composition are cross-classified to identify the conditions under which a festival creates high, low, neutral or purely local value.

The source base is divided into three categories: A for peer-reviewed research, B for institutional publications and C for other materials. The conceptual decomposition of destination attractiveness follows the established supply-and-demand treatment of the construct [1]. The article also draws on the event-tourism literature [5,6], festival sustainability and creative-tourism research [2,3], and destination-image and travel-motivation studies [4,7,8].

Analysis and Discussion of Results

Rooted Festivals and Imported Event Formats

The first analytical distinction concerns the origin of the event. Rooted festivals express a cultural practice that exists independently of tourism, whereas imported formats bring a template that has already proved successful elsewhere. These two logics differ in precisely the properties that matter for destination competitiveness: distinctiveness and scalability.

ROOTED FESTIVAL expresses a practice that exists	IMPORTED FORMAT brings a format that works elsewhere
Can be copied by a rival: Not easily	Can be copied by a rival: Yes, within one season
Scales: Poorly, scale changes the practice	Scales: Well
Supplies distinctiveness: Yes	Supplies distinctiveness: No
Main risk: Instrumentalised until the practice changes	Main risk: Indistinguishable from the same event elsewhere

Figure 1. Rooted festivals and imported formats compared on four properties*

**Author's construction.*

The rooted festival expresses a practice that exists independently of the visitor: a craft season, a harvest, a musical tradition. Its distinctive property is that a rival destination cannot copy it, because the practice is not theirs. Its limitation is that it does not scale: increasing attendance changes the conditions of the practice, and beyond some point the thing being visited is no longer the thing that was there.





The imported format brings a template that works elsewhere: a film festival, a light show, a food event with an international line-up. It scales readily and it can be reproduced by a competitor within a single season, which means it confers no durable distinctiveness.

The tension between the two is not a matter of taste. Distinctiveness in the first column arises precisely from non-transferability, and scalability in the second arises precisely from transferability. Policy that seeks the scale of the second and the distinctiveness of the first is seeking two properties that come from opposite sources.

The literature on festival tourism has documented the associated risk in the first column, namely that a local practice instrumentalised for visitors gradually changes in response to them, so that what attracted the visitor is diminished by the visiting [2]. This is not an argument against tourism use; it is an argument for setting a capacity limit as part of the design rather than after congestion appears.

The creative tourism literature offers the constructive form of the same point: participation in the practice, rather than observation of a staged version of it, is what carries value and is also what constrains scale [3].

Table 1.

Two festival logics		
Property	Rooted festival	Imported format
Copied by a rival	Not easily	Yes, within a season
Scales	Poorly, scale changes the practice	Well
Supplies distinctiveness	Yes	No
Main risk	The practice changes in response to visitors	Indistinguishable from the same event elsewhere

Effects on the Components of Destination Attractiveness

The second stage assesses the effect of a festival on individual components of destination attractiveness. The results show that festivals are not equally effective across all components and that their strongest contribution may differ from the justification most commonly used in policy discourse.

PRODUCT	SEASONALITY	IMAGE	ACCESS	PRICE
Strong	Strong	Weak and slow	None	Adverse
A festival is a thing to do on stated dates	It can move demand into a trough	One occasion is a small shock to a large stock	Flights and visas are unaffected	Prices rise during the festival

effect of a festival on each component of destination attractiveness

Figure 2. Effect of a festival on each component of destination attractiveness*

**Author's construction.*

Product: strong. A festival is a bookable thing to do on stated dates. For a destination whose constraint is that there is nothing specific to plan a trip around, this is the direct remedy.

Seasonality: strong. A festival can move demand into a period when capacity would otherwise be idle. This is the contribution most often available and least often claimed.

Image: weak and slow. A single occasion is a small addition to a stock that has accumulated over years from many sources [4], and the channels through which it could act are limited and largely outside the organiser's control. The effect is not zero, but it is the weakest of the available channels and the hardest to detect.

Access: none. Flights, routes and visa rules are unaffected by a festival.

Price: adverse. Prices for accommodation typically rise during a festival, which reduces attractiveness for visitors who are not attending it.

The pattern deserves emphasis because it inverts the usual justification. The claim





ordinarily made for a festival is the image claim, which is the weakest one; the two strong claims, product and seasonality, are rarely the ones advanced, although both are observable within a single year and neither requires a survey.

The distinction also affects who should judge success. The image claim can only be assessed years later and by someone else; the product and seasonality claims can be assessed by the destination itself, from occupancy and booking records it already holds.

A further point concerns what a festival does for the traveller's decision. Motives that move a person to travel are distinct from the attributes that draw them to one destination rather than another [7], and a festival acts on the second. It supplies a reason to choose a place and a reason to choose a date, which is why its effect appears in the timing of demand before it appears anywhere else. Where the image channel is nonetheless the one of interest, the mechanism runs through sources the destination does not control [8], and the appropriate measurement is of those sources rather than of attendance.

Table 2.

Effect on components of attractiveness

Component	Effect	Reason
Product	Strong	A thing to do on stated dates
Seasonality	Strong	Moves demand into a trough
Image	Weak and slow	One occasion against an accumulated stock
Access	None	Flights and visas unaffected
Price	Adverse	Accommodation prices rise during the event

Seasonality and Attendee Composition

The third stage considers two variables that determine the tourism value of a festival: the season in which it is held and the composition of its audience. Attendance alone is insufficient because the same headcount may represent additional tourism demand, displaced demand or purely local participation.

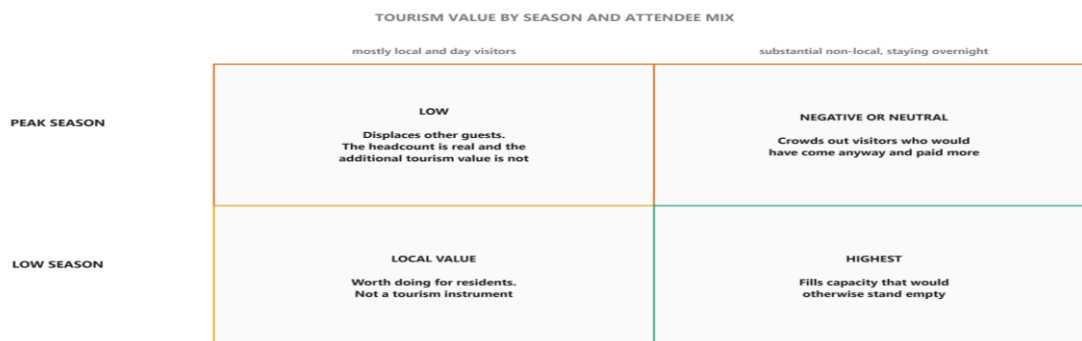


Figure 3. Tourism value of a festival by season and attendee composition*

**Author's construction.*

Peak season, mostly local attendance. Low value. The headcount is real and the additional tourism value is not, because the capacity used would have been occupied.

Peak season, substantial non-local attendance. Neutral or negative. Festival visitors occupy capacity that other visitors would have filled, and where the festival crowd pays less or stays more briefly the destination is worse off.

Low season, mostly local attendance. Genuine local value and no tourism value. Such festivals are worth holding for residents, and the honest description is that they are cultural policy rather than tourism policy.

Low season, substantial non-local overnight attendance. The highest value, because the capacity filled would otherwise have stood empty.

The design rule follows immediately: the tourism case for a festival rests on the date rather than on the programme. A festival held during the peak has little tourism value however good it is, and one held in the trough has value even if modest, provided it draws visitors from





outside.

Two practical points support the rule. Both variables are recorded rather than estimated: the season is known in advance, and attendee origin and overnight stay can be captured at registration or through accommodation records. And both are decided before any programming choice, which means the tourism case can be settled at the outset rather than defended afterwards.

Table 3.

Season and attendee mix			
Season	Attendee mix	Tourism value	Correct description
Peak	Mostly local	Low	Cultural event, not a tourism instrument
Peak	Substantial non-local	Neutral or negative	Displaces higher yielding demand
Low	Mostly local	None for tourism	Cultural policy
Low	Substantial non-local overnight	Highest	Fills idle capacity

Design and Evaluation Implications

The preceding analysis implies that festival design should begin with the tourism objective and the demand context rather than with the programme itself. The sequence of decisions matters because several of the variables that determine tourism value are known before the event is designed.

Choose the date first. Place the festival in the demand trough. Where an existing festival sits in the peak for reasons of tradition, the honest conclusion is that its justification is cultural rather than touristic, and its evaluation should say so.

Decide the intended attendee mix. A festival for residents and one for visitors differ in language, ticketing, timing within the week and promotion channel. Attempting both usually produces an event that serves neither well.

Set the capacity limit as part of the design. For rooted festivals this protects the practice that constitutes the attraction. For imported formats it is a commercial question rather than a conservation one.

Record what will be needed for evaluation. Attendee origin and overnight status, collected during the event. Retrospective reconstruction is not possible, and it is the omission that most often leaves a festival unable to demonstrate anything.

State which claim is being made. Product, seasonality, image or local cultural value. These are different claims with different evidence, and combining them produces a report that cannot be assessed.

Table 4.

Design decisions and their order		
Decision	When taken	Why first
Date	Before programming	Determines whether tourism value is possible at all
Intended attendee mix	Before programming	Determines language, ticketing and channel
Capacity limit	At design	Protects the practice or sets the commercial ceiling
Data to be recorded	Before the event	Cannot be reconstructed afterwards
Claim to be made	Before evaluation	Different claims require different evidence

Conclusions and Recommendations

Festivals contribute to destination attractiveness through specific channels, not generally. They supply a bookable thing to do and they can move demand into a period when capacity is





idle. Both are strong effects and both are observable within a year from records the destination already holds.

The claim usually advanced for festivals is the image claim, and it is the weakest of the available channels: one occasion is a small addition to a stock accumulated over years, and the effect is correspondingly hard to detect.

The decisive variables are the date and the attendee mix, not the programme. A festival in the peak displaces guests who would have come anyway, so its tourism value is low or negative however good it is, while a festival in the trough that draws overnight visitors fills capacity that would otherwise stand empty.

Finally, the two festival logics deliver incompatible properties. A rooted festival cannot be copied and cannot be scaled; an imported format scales and can be copied within a season. Seeking both at once is the most common design error in this field, and the corresponding discipline is to choose which property is wanted and to accept the limitation that comes with it.

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are proposed for the design and evaluation of cultural events and festivals as tourism instruments:

1. Festival dates should be selected with seasonality in mind. Where the tourism objective is to generate additional demand, priority should be given to low-demand periods rather than peak periods in which displacement is likely.

2. The intended attendee mix should be defined before programming begins. Events designed primarily for residents and events intended to attract non-local overnight visitors require different language, ticketing, scheduling and promotion strategies.

3. Rooted festivals should include capacity limits that protect the cultural practice on which their distinctiveness depends. Scaling should not be pursued at the cost of changing the practice itself.

4. Attendee origin and overnight-stay status should be recorded during registration or through accommodation data so that tourism value can be evaluated directly rather than inferred retrospectively.

5. Evaluation should state clearly whether the intended outcome concerns product development, seasonality, destination image or local cultural value, because each claim requires different evidence and should not be combined into a single undifferentiated success indicator.

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