



## Research Article

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# Cultural Events: Case Study of a Theatre Festival as an Element of Tourist Attraction

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## Abstract

*Events have increasingly become more relevant in scientific literature. Festivals are considered a part of event tourism, and they are emerging as a subfield largely because they occupy a special place in each culture. There are few profound studies regarding cultural festivals and, particularly, theatre. The main aim of this research is to contribute to the current scientific literature related to festivals as an instrument for cultural and tourist development. The findings of the study show the most relevant characteristics of the tourist who attends an event with more than forty editions such as the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro (Ciudad Real, Spain). Not only does it analyze its sociodemographic characteristics (gender, profession, level of studies and income level) but also interesting aspects such as the characteristics of the trip, which allow to determine the fundamentals of the event as a cultural space and an element of tourist attraction.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural festival, theatre, event, festival, event tourism*

## 1. Introduction

Through tourism, festivals have increasingly become an important tool for economic development, as well as for the change of image of cities and regions as modern cultural centers (Ma & Lew, 2012). Recently, attendance different types of events has become very important (Getz & Page, 2016a), among which are those associated to culture, more concretely concerts, theatrical works or, even, performances in public roads. In reality, these types of events significantly underpin diverse destinations (Stein & Evans, 2009). In opinion of Mason (2015), not only do they provide viable financial support for the participants, but they also offer rare cultural opportunities. According

to Cudny & Ogorek (2014), they satisfy the need for contact with culture and art, consequently provide to the generation of social capital, and even enriching the cultural life (Duran & Hamarat, 2014).

Festivals are of fundamental importance for the social and cultural development of local communities, and to create attractions for tourists (Duran & Hamarat, 2014). Leisure and culture represents an important item in the expenditure of households in developed countries. Together, they represent a net increase in aggregate demand, which in turn causes a drag on the rest of the economy. The quantitative figures indicate that, in 2015, the contribution of the cultural sector to the Spanish Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 2.4%, and in an increasingly globalized world, economic and cultural imperatives can be seen as two of the most powerful forces that shape human behavior (Throsby, 2001).

For some destinations, it is very important to host an event since it can help combat the seasonality of tourism. Ritchie & Beliveau (1974) published the first specific article on event tourism, which was based on how events could combat seasonality of tourism and, for this, they examined the Winter Carnival of Quebec. On the other hand, this type of celebrations are events that motivate tourism and an important figure for the development and consolidation of destinations (Horng, Su & Su, 2013).

An important aspect to determine both in the festivals and in the destinations is to understand and analyze the motivation of tourists (Woosnam *et al.*, 2009) to designate appropriate products for their demands. Well-known festivals like Edinburgh (in Scotland), Glyndebourne (England) and Salzburg (Austria) are much more than just cultural events (Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003). Accordingly, the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro aims to be an unmissable event for theatre lovers, since it is an unforgettable cultural experience, in which around 60,000 people gather each edition (the 39th Edition was held in July 2016) to attend the numerous shows, events and activities that are scheduled during the month of July.

## 2. Literature Review

Within the scope of the study of tourism, the term "event tourism" was first used at the end of the 1980s. This term has been reviewed historically by Getz (2008). Regarding the management of events, it is a rather recent academic topic and, therefore, it is reasonably simple to trace the appearance of the aspects and definitions of events (Berridge, 2007). Bowdin *et al.* (2006a) provide a practical summary on the definition of events. There is a great variety of sources that try to describe events (Shone & Parry, 2004; Van der Wagen, 2004; Allen *et al.*, 2005; Goldblatt, 2005; Bowdin *et al.* 2006b; Getz, 2007). Surprisingly, in spite of this diversity, there is a restricted consistency of accepted terms, aspects and definitions. One of the reasons for this is that events exist in all stages of society and in diverse types of organizations, and what one individual or group can see as original and exceptional (for example, a wedding), another group considers it normal and routinely (for example, a meeting). All this implies that the nature of the definition of events is so problematic that it may not be possible to do so. The relevance of the literature related to event tourism and its management is that all the information extracted from it is of great interest to the organizers and promoters of the events. It is a source of knowledge on the motivation of consumers and on the impacts produced by these events, thus establishing the basis for strategic planning.

According to Seaman (2004), the consequences that art and culture can generate on economic development in the short term have a relatively easy approach, since it is presumed that art and culture draw specific participants (tourists or consumers) who spend their earnings on cultural tasks, but also on other related goods and services (accommodation, catering, shopping, transportation, etc.). This way, as a whole, they represent a net increase in aggregate demand, which in turn causes a drag on the rest of the economy. Consequently, as asserted by Herrero (2002), activities related to leisure, recreation and culture are acquiring an increasingly appreciable dimension in modern economies.

Within tourism studies, research on festival tourism is a field of specialty that has experienced great growth and importance since the 1980s (Ma & Lew, 2012), and has thus been analyzed in different investigations (for example, Crompton & McKay, 1997; Formica & Murrmann, 1998; Getz

& Cheyne, 2002; Wamwara-Mbugua & Cornwell, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2012). Some analyze a specific type of festival, like related to art and culture (Lee *et al.*, 2004; Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Baker & Draper, 2013), theatre specifically (Woosnam, McElroy & Van Winkle, 2009; Duran & Hamarat, 2014), music festivals (Brown & Knox, 2016; Pérez-Gálvez *et al.*, 2017), film festivals (Cudny & Ogorek, 2014; Baéz-Montenegro & Devesa-Fernández, 2017), food (Woosnam *et al.*, 2016) or food and wine festivals (Savinovic *et al.*, 2012; Pérez-Gálvez *et al.*, 2015).

### 3. Research Methods

The methodology used in the present study has been based on the performance of a field study to recognise the sociodemographic profile, motivation, satisfaction and loyalty of tourists who attend any of the plays of the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro. In order to carry out this research, this field study has been carried out within the premises where the play is presented (Korstanje, 2016), carrying the out at the end of the play. The questionnaire was distributed to a representative sample of tourists -including those who spend the night, or tourists, as well as those who do not spend the night, or backpackers- at the festival, in which interesting aspects are raised and, in turn, allow determining the keys to this event as a cultural destination. These keys serve as a basis to establish recommendations that allow greater cultural and tourist use.

#### 3.1 Questionnaire and proceeding

The analysis is based on the application of a questionnaire to a representative sample of spectators who meet the condition of tourist or backpacker. The survey used in this research is based on different previous works (Woosnam *et al.*, 2009; Yolal *et al.*, 2012; Duran & Hamarat, 2014; Pérez-Gálvez *et al.*, 2015; Díaz *et al.*, 2016; Kruger & Saayman, 2016; Saayman & Saayman, 2016) and responds to diverse questions about theatre as a cultural product. The last version of the questionnaire sought the maximum clarity of the questions to achieve the objectives set in the research, as well as the maximum possible specificity in order to not extend the interview too long. It is structured in blocks: the first block gathers the questions related to the aspects of the trip, the time of permanence, the type of establishment that they use to spend the night or the means by which they had knowledge of the festival. The next block collects information about the spectator's attendance at previous editions, how they decide what show to attend, when they acquired the tickets and through what medium they bought them. Another block of questions collects different socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, such as age, gender, economic level or level of education, among others. The survey used questions with yes/no responses, questions with open and closed answers, and questions where a Likert scale of 5 points was used (1 = not very important, 5 = very important). The questions were formulated in a positive and negative sense to avoid acquiescence. The questionnaire has been distributed in two languages (English and Spanish) and it is totally anonymous. A pre-test of 30 surveys was carried out previously to detect possible deviations and errors.

#### 3.2 Data collection

The questionnaires were conducted by a team of interviewers trained for the occasion linked to the University of Córdoba. The surveys were provided in the two indicated languages chosen according to the mother tongue and place of origin of the visitors so as to not exclude any of them. The tabulation of the data was also done by the collaborating team. A total of 513 surveys were completed on different days between July 7 and July 31, 2016. In addition, they were held in the different venues where the theatrical performances took place —Corral de Comedias, San Juan Hospital, Municipal Theatre, etc.— with the purpose of collecting the widest possible range of people and situations. The selection of interviews was carried out by convenience sampling, commonly used in this kind of study where the sample is available to be surveyed in a specific time and space (Finn *et al.*, 2000). It was not stratified neither by gender, age, education, place of origin or by any other variable, so the procedure of selection was by choosing the tourists who were

willing to answer in a time interval of ten minutes. The rejection rate to the questionnaire was low and not significant depending on any variable.

### 3.3 Sampling and Sampling error

The specific frame of the study is the tourist who goes to a cultural destination such as the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro, regardless of whether they stay overnight or not, or that they visit other places in the province of Ciudad Real. This tourism is difficult to analyze due to the lack of data. The only information available is provided by the festival's managing body: the Almagro International Festival of Classical Theatre Foundation. According to the data provided, the public attending the previous edition, 2015, amounted to 52,000 people. Of this figure, it is estimated that some 49,500 people—around 95% of the visits— correspond to people from outside the town of Almagro. Therefore, the figure of 49,500 people was used as the reference population, with the sample error for a confidence level of 95% of  $\pm 4.30\%$ .

The study has been conducted through a total of 513 surveys to the public attending the 39th edition of the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro that met the condition of tourist or hicker throughout the 25 days of July that the festival lasted. Table 1 shows the technical data of the study.

**Table 1:** Technical sheet of the study

Number of tourists arrived at The International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro ( 2015)	49,500 people
Sample	513 questionnaires
Method	Convenience sampling
Period	July 2016
Sampling error	$\pm 4,30\%$
Confidence level	95.0% $p=q= 0.5$
Sample control	Implementation and monitoring of field work by the authors of the research

**Source:** Own elaboration

### 3.4 Data analysis

The tabulation and statistical analysis of the data has been carried out using the SPSS v. 23 computer program. Statistical and association measures that supply information indispensable to research the possible patterns of association between variables from a two-dimensional contingency table have been applied.

## 4. Analysis Result

Table 2 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourist surveyed globally and by identified segments. Of the 513 people interviewed, 47.7% were men and the remaining 52.2% were women, with no significant differences depending on the groups or segments considered. The tourist surveyed is, in general terms, young. More than 3 out of 5 people in the sample are under 50 years of age, with a positive association between age and motivation to attend the festival (contingency coefficient = 0.347,  $p = 0.000$ ). The public of more than 40 years of age usually travels with their partner and the younger ones usually do it with friends or colleagues. Among people who travel alone, their presence is greater in the group of people who are over 60 years old.

The level of academic training of the respondents is very high. It should be noted that there is a high percentage of university graduates—83.1% of respondents declare having a university degree or postgraduate—, with no differences between spectators (statistical H of Kruskal Wallis = 0.917,  $p = 0.632$ ). Regarding the professional group of surveyed tourists, liberal professionals,

salaried workers and businessmen stand out. These categories are associated with the high educational level of the participants.

As in other studies (Pérez-Gálvez *et al.*, 2017), the question about the monthly family income level has been the one that has caused the greatest reluctance. A total of 96 people out of 513 respondents did not answer, despite the amplitude of the intervals proposed in the questionnaire. The tourists that come to the festival are characterized by having a medium-high purchasing power. Of the visitors who answered, 16.8% claim to have an income of less than € 1,000 per month, compared to 41.3% who claim to earn more than € 2,000.

Regarding the place of origin of the tourists attending the festival, the vast majority are national (97.2%) while 2.8% are foreigners. Among them, 31.1% reside in Castilla-La Mancha, region of location of the town of Almagro, and 54.1% in the bordering regions, highlighting those coming from Madrid (30.9%), Andalucía (12.8%) and Comunidad Valenciana (6.9%). With reference to foreign tourists, the presence of North Americans and Swiss stands out. The findings show the low international repercussion and the marked proximity character of the festival as a cultural destination. This has implications from the business management. In order to achieve greater visibility and with it a greater international impact, it would be convenient to promote the festival abroad. As a cultural product, it is recommended to bring the festival closer to other foreign cities as other festivals do —as is the case of the International Classical Theatre Festival of Mérida in Medellín (Colombia).

**Table 2:** Sociodemographic profile of the tourists in the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex</b> (N = 513)		<b>Educational level</b> (N = 513)	
Man	47.8%	Primary education	01.6%
Woman	52.2%	Secondary education	15.3%
		University education	43.1%
		Master/PhD	40,0%
<b>Age</b> (N = 513)		<b>Occupational category</b> (N = 509)	
Less than 30 years of age	13.2%	Civil servant	31.8%
30-39 years old	23.0%	Employee	28.1%
40-49 years old	23.0%	Business owner	14.9%
50-59 years old	25.8%	Retired	09.0%
60 years old or more	15.0%	Student	05.9%
		Self-employed	05.7%
		Unemployed	03.8%
		Housewife	00.8%

**Source:** Own elaboration

The rate of repetition in attending the Festival is high (Table 3). Thus, 6 out of 10 respondents had attended the Festival in past editions. This allows us to conclude that the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro has a high degree of loyalty with a very significant figure: 15% of the respondents declare that they have attended the Festival in more than ten editions. The fact that the festival is a cultural destination of proximity for the Castilian-La Mancha explains that tourists from this region have a higher fidelity index (statistical H of Kruskal Wallis = 39.793,  $p = 0.000$ ). Obviously, foreign tourists have the lowest rate of repetition, although it is also significant that two out of ten had already attended in past editions.

Among the tourists interviewed, seven out of ten visitors spend the night outside their habitual residence due to the festival. The average stay is 1.5 nights. In relation to the type of establishment used to spend the night, 3 and 2 star hotels are the most frequent type of accommodation, followed

closely by 5 and 4 star hotels, and the house of friends and/or relatives (Table 3). The data reveal a greater purchasing power that translates into a higher frequency of use of hotel establishments with 2 and more stars (gamma coefficient = 0.231,  $p = 0.000$ ).

As for how they learned about the 39th edition of the International Theatre Classic Festival of Almagro, the results of table 3 show that the tourists mainly followed the recommendation of friends and/or family members, the festival website in Internet and the previous experience of previous editions—this question is of multiple choice, and the results are greater than 100—. The data show that the satisfaction of the public in past editions, and the fact that they recommend their visit, together with the new information and communication technologies, are determining factors in the dissemination of this cultural event.

**Table 3:** Characteristics of the trip

Variables	Categories	Total
<b>Visits</b> (N = 512)	It is my first time	41.1%
	Between 1 and 5 editions	30.7%
	Between 5 and 10 editions	13.7%
	Between 10 and 15 editions	04.9%
	Between 15 and 20 editions	04.5%
	More than 20 editions	05.1%
<b>Stay</b> (N = 513)	Did not stay overnight	29.3%
	One night	33.5%
	More than one nights	37.2%
<b>Overnights accommodation type</b> (N = 389)	4-5 star Hotels	25.6%
	2 -3 star Hotels	28.0%
	1 star Hotels	00.8%
	Hostel/Guesthouse	11.6%
	Tourist apartment	14.4%
	Family or friends 'house	19.6%
<b>Hear about the festival</b> (N = 513)	Recommendation of friends and family	41.5%
	Festival website	35.5%
	Own experience of previous editions	29.8%
	Ads in traditional media.	16.8%
	Information leaflets of the Festival	07.4%
	Recommendation of social networks	04.7%

**Source:** Own elaboration

In relation to the number of theatrical functions that they attend or plan to attend, a third of the respondents indicate that they will attend a single function and slightly more than half indicate between two and four functions (Table 4). Only 1.6% of the sample states that they attend or will attend more than ten theatrical performances.

Another data of interest requested from the visitor was the frequency with which they proceeded to reserve or purchase his location for the theatrical function (table 4). In this sense, 2 out of 10 respondents indicate that they acquired the ticket as soon as it was put on sale; that is, three months in advance, while 3 out of 10 indicate that they did it at the last minute. The average of induced expense—not including the price of the ticket— of attending a theatrical function reaches € 56, with differences among the surveyed tourists (statistic H of Kruskal Wallis = 36,301,  $p = 0.000$ ). There is an association among the family income level and the induced expense (gamma coefficient = 0.318,  $p = 0.000$ ): the tourist who declares higher levels of income spends more money and, on the contrary, for those who declare lower rents the expenses are minor.

**Table 4:** Characteristics of the trip (bis)

Variables	Categories	Total
<b>Concerts attend</b> (N = 510)	Only one	35,5%
	Entre dos y cuatro	51,7%
	Between 2 and 4	08,8%
	Between 4 and 6	01,0%
	Between 6 and 8	01,4%
	Between 8 and 10	01,6%
<b>Buy ticket</b> (N = 511)	More than 10	25,0%
	As it was put on sale by the Festival	22,7%
	In May	23,7%
	In June	28,6%
<b>Daily expenditure</b> (N = 498)	At the last minute	02,4%
	Under 10€	11,6%
	From 10€ to 20€	13,7%
	From 21€ to 30€	07,6%
	From 31€ to 40€	04,6%
	From 41€ to 50€	06,6%
	From 51€ to 60€	04,0%
	From 61€ to 70€	04,4%
	From 71€ to 80€	45,1%
<b>Theatre festivals assistance 2016</b> (N = 507)	Over 80 €	39,0%
	No other	16,8%
	One	22,9%
	Two	09,9%
	Three	06,9%
	Four	04,5%
	Five or more	

**Source:** Own elaboration

Considering the estimate of tourists who attended the festival in the 2016 edition —95% of the 62,000 spectators according to data provided by the Fundación Teatro Internacional de Almagro, entity in charge of managing the festival—, the declared average expenditure variable and the income obtained by the box office (544,932.8 €), an approximation has been made of the economic impact of the festival as a cultural tourism event. This impact is estimated at 3.8 million euros —about 182,000 € per day. These revenues revert both in the economy of the locality of Almagro and in the nearby municipalities, increasing the demand for branches of activity such as catering, commerce, transport or leisure, among others. From the above, it can be concluded that the three weeks of the festival have a significant economic impact.

The rate of attendance at other theatre festivals is high (Table 4), 6 out of 10 interviewees declare that they have attended or are planning to attend some other theatre festival throughout 2016 —Mérida, Olmedo, Santander, Grec or the Veranos de la Villa (Madrid), among others—.

Among the spectators, a minority group with the highest demand is detected —they declare to attend five or more festivals including Almagro. This minority group, which represents 11% of the sample, characterized by being older visitors, declares a higher level of income and a lower level of general satisfaction with respect to the average. In the same way, it makes the lowest assessment of the different attributes related to the theatrical function they attend. These results show that the higher the consumption of a cultural product, the greater the demand of the consumer.

## 5. Conclusion

The cultural potential of the International Classical Theatre Festival of Almagro requires the realization of research, with the aim of obtaining ideas and keys when making plans for improvement and tourism promotion. The discriminate strategies in the offer go through a complete description of the tourist that attends the diverse theatrical representations, which implies not only

an analysis of the sociodemographic variables but also of the opinion on different aspects of the visit or of the consumption habits.

The typical socio-demographic profile of the tourist that attends the Festival is a relatively young spectator (under 50 years old) with a high academic level. The majority of the audience is Spanish, highlighting tourists from Castilla-La Mancha, Andalusia, Madrid and Valencia. This conclusion shows the importance of carrying out a greater projection of the Festival in other Spanish autonomous communities and abroad.

The Festival has a high degree of loyalty among the public since 6 out of 10 spectators have attended previous editions, with the highest repetition rate corresponding to the Castilian-La Mancha audience, the same region where Almagro is located. The degree of overnight stay is in line with the fact that 31% of visitors reside near the town of Almagro, and 70% of the sample stayed at least one night to attend the festival. The most common means of accommodation is 3 and 2 star hotels, followed closely by 5 and 4 star hotels.

The average planned spending, not including the price of the ticket to the theatre, reaches 56 euros, with the expenditure declared by the public from other regions somewhat higher. In the 2016 edition, the generated demand is estimated at around 3.8 million euros. These figures allow to conclude that the three weeks of the festival has a significant economic impact that reverses both the economy of the town of Almagro and neighboring municipalities, increasing the demand of different branches of economic activity such as restoration, trade, transport or leisure.

The management implications derived from this study are mainly three: The first, greater promotion and dissemination, in order to raise its cultural appeal, both in the rest of Spain and abroad. The second, the search of new theatrical experiences on the part of the spectators implies that, without renouncing its essence, the Festival must begin to include in its programming authors and alternative and complementary works to the classic. And the third, the use of the festival's good image to reinforce the city of Almagro as a cultural tourist destination. Also, the functional implications of this study are in the supply of information to the organizers of the Festival, with the aim of advancing to improve the management of this cultural event.

The main limitation of this research is the scarcity of data corresponding to the thirty-eight editions already held. Previous to the investigation, the profile of the spectator or the percentage of tourists of the total number of attendees, including their origin, was unknown.

For future lines of research, it is proposed to carry out similar studies in other festivals, in order to identify common links and discriminating characteristics. Without a doubt, this will provide to the progress of the academic discipline in relation to cultural management in Spain.

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