

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH THE GREEK STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPACTS OF EVENTS: THE CASE OF PATRAS' CARNIVAL, GREECE

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ABSTRACT

Events can play a critical role in implementing sustainable developing models at destinations. Furthermore, the perceptions of stakeholders may contribute to the sustainability of a tourist destination in the long term. This paper presents an insight into the stakeholders' perceptions of the importance of festival events in promoting tourism sustainability, concentrating on Patras' Carnival. Festivals can be an instrument for tourism development, city image improvement and boosting regional economies. Based on a theoretical model that is grounded in the social exchange theory the research enriches the existing knowledge on promoting sustainable events and sustainable approaches to tourism development by taking into account the views of the leading players of tourism, local residents and business owners. A quantitative survey via a structured questionnaire was conducted in the city of Patras, Greece's third-largest city before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The questionnaire was distributed to the residents and business owners during the Patras' Carnival (Patrino Carnavali), the largest event of its kind in Greece. In total, 238 people participated in the study. It will be presented as a variety of positive and negative impacts of tourism toward economy, society, culture and environment and shed light on adequate managerial practices that boost further tourism flows in cities. The results may be useful not only to local government entities involved in the tourism strategic planning but also to stakeholders engaged in creating sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism industry.

Keywords: strategic management, sustainability, tourism industry, stakeholders' perspective.

1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, festival events enhance residents' "community satisfaction", through regional and neighbourhood development promoting the cultural heritage, of the people of the area, in various forms [1]. Festivals and carnivals are classified as a type of cultural tourism [2].

In this context satisfaction for locals' arise maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs of tourism. Taking into account the social exchange theory one can better understand positive and negative outcomes of tourism toward economy, society, quality-of-life and environment, so as to develop a long-benefit for the destination [3], [4].

The focus of the study is Patras' Carnival, which is a great cultural event, not only for Patras city, but also for the region of western Greece. The purpose of the study is to assess the perceptions of locals' about carnivals, towards sustainable tourism development. Thus, analysing resident's impact perceptions of tourism development that contribute to improving the image of the festival event as a tourist destination. Findings may help destinations on promoting sustainable events and planning for additional development.



2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural tourism and carnivals

According to Britannica the historical origin of carnival is not exactly known [5]. In Greece the carnival has its roots in ancient times and is inextricably linked to the worship of the god Dionysus. The English word “carnival” comes from the Latin “carnem levare” or “carnis levamen”, which means an abstention from meat. In Greek, the word “carnival” has the same meaning and is connected with the beginning of Lent. The largest carnival in Greece is Patras’ Carnival [6]. Masquerades and parades are common features of carnivals all over the world [7]. Carnival is a form of tourism product and should be examined in the context of special event tourism [8], [9]. Special event tourism has many impacts not only on the economy of a destination [10] but furthermore, for the communities in which they take place, they can play a vital role for the sustainable development of the destinations [11], [12]. The implications of special events according to Shone and Parry [13] are given in Fig. 1

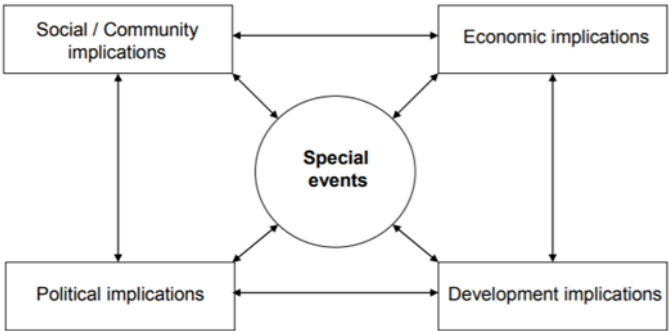


Figure 1: The implications of special events. (Source: Adapted from Macgregor et al. [14].)

Carnivals, as an urban festival, have many impacts on various sectors of a city (educational, artistic, social, political, economic) [15], [16]. Furthermore, there are positive and negative impacts which generally can be clustered into socio-cultural, political, economic, physical categories [7]. Also, carnivals can differentiate and promote a specific identity of a region and enhance town’s heritage.

2.2 Impacts of carnivals

As the topic of sustainability, nowadays, is an important issue, culture is a key point for urban development, making cities creative, attractive and sustainable [17]. Festival tourism as a form of cultural tourism plays significant role in achieving regional economic development and community, thereby enhancing place identity and local attractiveness [18]. However, it should not be ignored the fact that festivals, carnivals and events are significant emitters of greenhouse gases, due to transportation and energy use [19]. But, it has also to be mentioned that there are examples of environmental improvements, e.g. new infrastructure and restoring historic buildings [20]. On promoting sustainable events is crucial to understand stakeholders’ perspective on the impacts of the events. Furthermore,



for taking a range of measures to boost festival/carnival tourism is important to deepening the knowledge about these events and their impacts [21], [22]. Impacts are usually classified into three categories: environmental, economic and sociocultural.

To estimate and quantify environmental impacts of events various approaches can be used such as environmental impact assessment (EIA), and life cycle analysis (LCA), biophysical methods and carbon emissions. As so, ecological footprint and carbon footprint are tools that consider environmental impacts that occur beyond a festival site [23].

Benefits of festivals include the generation of income, creation of jobs and also the enhancing of communal cohesion. However may attract people who behaves badly or in a way that breaks the law, causes cultural adulteration, worsen the city's sanitation through pollution, vehicular and human congestion and influence an increase in the cost of living [24].

2.3 Social exchange theory and tourism

The theory of social exchange is one of the oldest theories of social behaviour which also incorporates the concept of interaction. In an exchange process actors are dependent on each other for outcomes they value. They act in a way that increases positive outcomes and decreases negative outcomes. In terms of tourism, there are studies which claim that the meeting between the host community and visitors can either be an opportunity for rewards and satisfying exchanges, or it can be a means of boosting the local community's impulse to exploit visitors [25], [26]. Furthermore, in the context of social exchange theory, economic, social, and environmental impacts affect the perceptions of locals for tourism. A theoretical model was proposed by Yoon et al. (Fig. 2) which examines the relationship among the aspects of perceived tourism impacts, total impacts, and support for tourism development [27].

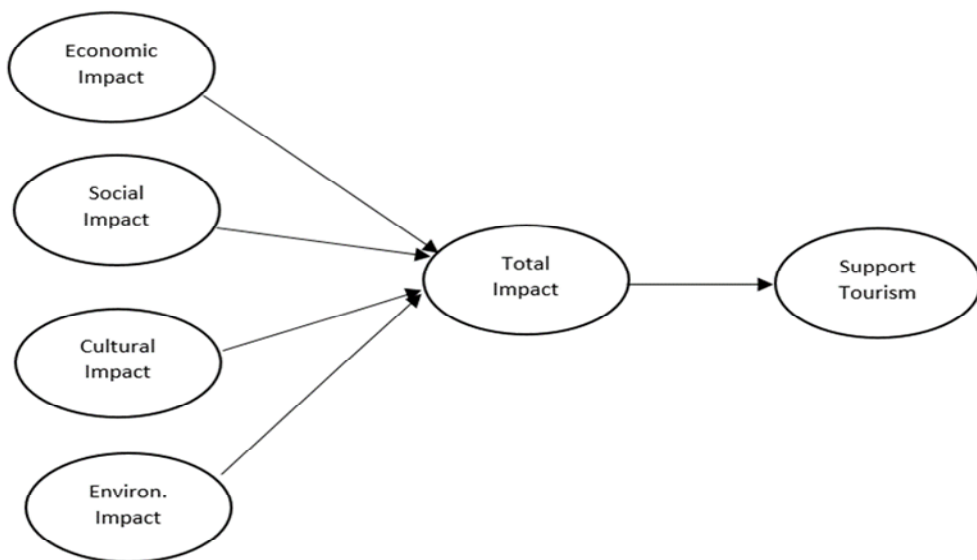


Figure 2: Theoretical model for perceptions of residents towards tourism development. (Source: Adapted from Yoon et al. [27].)

Facts that influence residents' attitudes towards tourism are [28]:

- Community attachment or length of residence;
- Knowledge about tourism, contact with tourists and concentration of visitors;
- Personal reliance on tourism;
- Proximity with the tourism centre;
- Level of participation in recreational activities;
- Demographic variables;
- Seasonality;
- Tourism taxes and perceived future of the community;
- The development stage of a destination.

3 METHOD AND MATERIAL: STUDY AREA

3.1 Study area: Patras' Carnival

Patras is the capital of the Prefecture of Achaia and is the third largest city in Greece. The population of Achaia is about 297,000 people and has an area of about 3.274 km². It has 7,345 hotel beds and 1,546 beds for rent. Analytically, it has 19 five stars hotel beds, 2,691 four stars hotel beds, 2,584 three stars hotel beds, 1,899 two stars hotel beds and 152 one star hotel beds. It has 449 tourist furnished houses (villas) and 404 camping places too. The total of overnight stays in hotel accommodation (foreigners) is 250,065 and the total overnight stays in hotel accommodation (locals) are 65,455. Finally, it has two seaports (the port of Patras and the port of Aegio) and one airport in Araxos [29].

Patras has a developed tourist infrastructure, but it is not overdeveloped. The tourism of Patras is based mainly on Greek visitors. The airport of Patras has very low passenger traffic and the tourist traffic of Patras is based on the Greek tourist market. A significant percentage of the tourist traffic of Patras comes from the carnival festival that it has been organizing successfully for many years.

Patras' Carnival is an event that has a 98.4% recognition nationwide, counts about 100,000 visitors, of which 50.0% comes from Athens, 40.0% are young people and students. During the carnival of 2009, visitors spent about 17 million Euros, while crew members approximately 2.5 million Euros and the Municipality of Patras spent about 1.2 million Euros. In addition 250 jobs was created [30].

The carnival of Patras is a great cultural event with about 120,000 participants and takes place every year [31]. The beginning of the Patras carnival dates back to 1829, at that time the merchant named Moreti was organizing carnival dances at his house in Patras. The union of the Ionian Islands with Greece in 1864 and the port of Patras resulted in the settlement of many westerners in Patras. Many of them were from Italy which had a long tradition in organizing carnival events and so they transferred the cultural tradition of the carnivals to Patras [32].

The carnival of Patras is considered one of the largest in Europe and stands out for the variety of events that a family can participate in [33]. In other words, it includes parades of children and adults, the hunt for lost treasure, many parties in the streets of the city, parade of dance schools and visitors have the opportunity to participate in the events [31]. Visitors can participate in the carnival by joining in the carnival parade, taking part in parties and joining in various events that take place in the city of Patras. The participation of the guests is booked with the payment of a fee. In addition, the Patras' Carnival includes events such as the children's carnival, street theatres, concerts, theatres and other events [32]. All the

above highlight the uniqueness of the city of Patras as a carnival tourist destination and the opportunities and possibilities it has.

3.2 Data and instrument

The target population of the study refers to Patrician residents and business owners of different tourism activities. A face-to-face survey was conducted during the carnival festival period, namely from January to February 2018. A total of 279 responses were gathered, out of which 238 were usable. The basic research instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was developed following the multiphase mixed approach of Churchill [34], [35] and DeVellis and Thorpe [36]. This method involves a systematic process of formulating a valid and reliable research instrument. In essence, four successive stages are applied in the questionnaire development: (i) extensive literature review, (ii) items generation and scales construction, (iii) preliminary pilot testing and (iv) distribution to an actual sample.

The questionnaire items were originally borrowed from the English literature and were translated by the authors to Greek based on Brislin's guidelines [37], [38]. First, a bilingual language expert reviewed and revised the translation to guarantee that the translated version reproduced the clarity, comprehensibility and suitability of the original items. Furthermore, the appropriateness of the measures for each conceptual variable was confirmed by content experts (tourism professors). The final version of the questionnaire eliminated any possible mistakes, ambiguities based on the recommendations of the experts [39]. The questionnaire administration took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire consists of 44 items organized in three blocks: classificatory data about participants (7); perception of tourism impacts (36); and the overall attitude towards tourism development (1). Attribute items were extracted from extant studies of residents' attitude towards tourism impacts. Perception and attitude have been measured using five-point Likert scale, as recommended by Maddox [40] and Williams and Roggenbuck [41], anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

4 RESULTS

The survey data have been analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 applying both descriptive and inferential statistic techniques. First, descriptive statistics were performed to analyse respondents' socio-demographic profile. Second, the 36 attitude items were factor-analysed to identify the perceived impacts of tourism by Patrician residents and business owners. In Table 1 we can observe demographic characteristics of the participants in the survey such as gender, age, education, marital status and occupation.

The underlying factors of perceived tourism impacts of residents in Patras were examined by the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were included in the analysis to determine the fitness of the data [42]. The KMO stands on 0.882 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (p value $< .000$), indicating that the correlations between items are sufficiently large [43]. A principal component analysis with varimax rotation method was applied to confirm the scale construct validity. The EFA revealed two factors with the total variance explained of 67.023%, suggesting a satisfactory factor solution.

Table 2 presents the derived two factors with their loadings and also the means and standard deviations of the 36 items used. Each factor was characterized according to the core items constituting it [43]. The first factor named "positive impacts" is related to



Table 1: Respondent's profile.

Variable	Category	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	114	47.90
	Female	124	52.10
Age	Up to 24	44	18.50
	25–34	85	35.70
	35–44	64	26.90
	45–54	30	12.60
	Above 54	15	6.30
Education	High School	94	39.50
	University	85	41.20
	Postgraduate	64	9.70
	PhD	30	2.10
	Other	15	7.50
Marital status	Unmarried	137	57.60
	Married	35	14.70
	Married with children	56	23.40
	Divorced	10	4.20
Occupation	Tourism oriented	121	50.80
	No tourism oriented	117	49.20
Tourism-oriented sector	Accommodation Services	20	16.50
	Transport services	8	6.60
	Cultural Activities	6	5.00
	Athletic Activities	9	7.40
	Travel planning services	3	2.50
	Food Services	40	33.10
	Conferences and exhibitions	1	0.80
	Retail supply of goods	28	23.10
	Other	6	5.00

positive aspects including employment opportunities, economic growth of the region, environmental protection and maintenance of cultural heritage. The second factor is “negative impacts”, which focuses on negative aspects of festival event including drug trafficking, crime problems, labour exploitation, parking problems, increase in property rents and price of goods and services.

5 FINAL REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study depicts local perception of impact attitudes towards Patras’ tourist destination. The number of cultural events, the preservation of cultural identity and heritage and also the local attractiveness result in boosting Patras’ image. Furthermore, the investment in tourism



infrastructure, the increasing of job offered stimulate the place branding, making Patras not only a destination to visit, but also to live and work.

Nevertheless, stakeholders such as the Municipality of Patras, the Region of Western Greece, the tourist and professional organizations should all work together as to eliminate the negative effects of tourism and increase locals' satisfaction. Also, they should take drastic measures to avoid damaging natural surroundings and landscape. Finally, the responsible public authorities must control the phenomenon of exorbitant prices and impose the appropriate punishment on the perpetrators.

Table 2: Results of the exploratory factor analysis.

Measure items <i>Tourism at Patras causes....</i>		Loadings	Mean	SD
Factor 1: Positive impacts (PO) (EigenValue: 15.141; Total variance: 29.369)		0.717	2.767	1.170
Economic	POEC1 .increase in employment opportunities	0.890	2.735	1.296
	POEC2 .improvement of the economic status	0.859	2.765	1.237
	POEC3 .improvement of local government resources	0.858	2.671	1.240
	POEC4 .attraction of investments	0.852	2.609	1.234
	POEC5 .improvement of the quality of life	0.727	2.559	1.195
	POEC6 .improvement of residents' purchasing power	0.605	2.630	1.161
Social	POS01 .improvement of the quality of public services	0.695	2.345	1.086
	POS02 .improvement of public infrastructures	0.682	2.786	1.144
	POS03 .improvement of the road and transport infrastructure	0.667	2.979	1.171
	POS04 .increase of choices within the local market	0.634	2.782	1.130
	POS05 .the influence inhabitants' professional orientation to tourism-related jobs	0.615	2.878	1.143
	POS06 .improvement of residents' professional skills	0.572	2.752	1.148
	POS07 .increase of occasions of amusement	0.526	3.000	0.994
Cultural	POCU1 .the construction of modern buildings	0.817	2.418	1.252
	POCU2 .conservation and restoration of historical monuments	0.808	2.941	1.189
	POCU3 .conservation and restoration of historical places and monuments	0.803	2.866	1.225
	POCU4 .maintenance of cultural heritage	0.765	2.975	1.176
	POCU5 .maintenance of the cultural identity	0.728	2.983	1.132
Environmental	POEN1 .improvement of the general image of environment	0.653	2.752	1.122
	POEN2 .protection of the environment	0.639	2.681	1.143

Table 2: Continued.

Measure items <i>Tourism at Patras causes....</i>		Loadings	Mean	SD
Factor 1: Negative impacts (NE) (EigenValue: 6.7093; Total variance: 13.013)		0.524	3.132	1.180
Economic	NEEC1.increase of property rents	0.454	3.277	1.211
	NEEC2.increase of the price of goods and services	0.452	3.109	1.153
	NEEC3.increase of the cost of real estate	0.388	3.298	1.204
	NEEC4.more spending to the region	0.271	3.160	1.169
Social	NESO1.negative effects in the ethos	0.674	3.311	1.234
	NESO2.negative influence in the lifestyle of locals	0.626	3.403	1.168
	NESO3.increase of drug trafficking	0.615	3.034	1.259
	NESO4.increase of road accidents	0.577	3.252	1.130
	NESO5.increase of criminality	0.568	3.164	1.174
	NESO6.increase of alcoholism	0.541	2.966	1.158
	NESO7.increase of labour exploitation of local population	0.497	3.071	1.218
	NESO8.increase of gambling	0.468	3.445	1.160
Environment	NEEN1.damage to the natural surroundings and the landscape	0.661	3.382	1.201
	NEEN2.increase of the pollution of the environment (rubbish, air pollution and noise)	0.624	3.147	1.269
	NEEN3.traffic congestion and parking problems	0.523	3.172	1.162
Culture	NECU1.negative effect in the cultural heritage	0.445	3.618	1.180

Notes: KMO = 0.882; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 0.000; Overall variance explained = 67,023%. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; * p< .05.

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