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# **UNVEILING THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF FESTIVALS: A CASE STUDY OF LAS FALLAS, VALENCIA**

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# Abstract

This master dissertation delves into the social impacts of festivals, with a specific focus on the renowned Valencian festival of Las Fallas. While Las Fallas garners significant attention for its economic benefits, its broader social implications have been relatively overlooked. Employing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, including literature review and data analysis, this study aims to shed light on the intricate relationship between increased tourism during Las Fallas and potential feelings of exclusion among the local population. By examining this dynamic, the research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the broader social impacts of the festival and their implications for host communities. The findings contribute valuable insights for festival planning, management, and policy development, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable approach to festivals. Ultimately, this research endeavours to advance knowledge in the field and ensure the positive societal impact of festivals on both residents and visitors.

# Introduction

Festivals have long been recognised as significant cultural and social events that bring people together, celebrate traditions, and create a sense of community. While much attention has been devoted to understanding the economic impacts of festivals, the social dimensions have often been overlooked in the existing literature. This dissertation aims to address this gap by delving into the social impacts generated by festivals, with a specific focus on the globally renowned Valencian festival of Las Fallas.

The Valencian festival of Las Fallas is a unique and vibrant celebration that dates back centuries. It is characterised by its elaborate constructions of large, ornate sculptures known as Fallas, which are displayed throughout the city and eventually burned in spectacular displays of fire. The festival attracts a significant influx of tourists from around the world, drawn by the grandiosity of the event and its cultural significance.

While the economic benefits of festivals are well-documented, their social implications deserve further exploration. Festivals have the power to shape social interactions, influence community dynamics, and impact the quality of life for both residents and visitors. Understanding these social impacts is crucial for the effective planning, management, and evaluation of festivals, ensuring their positive contribution to the well-being of host communities.

The primary objective of this dissertation is to analyse the social impacts resulting from the conduct of the Las Fallas festival. Specifically, it aims to examine the correlation between the increase in tourist flows during the festival and the potential sense of exclusion experienced by the local population in their daily lives. By examining this relationship, we seek to shed light on the complex interplay between tourism, festivals, and the social fabric of the host community.

To achieve this objective, a mixed-methods approach will be employed. The study will start with a comprehensive literature review of scientific papers to gain insights into existing theories, frameworks, and empirical findings related to the social impacts of festivals. Additionally, qualitative and quantitative secondary data will be gathered through searches of official tourism websites, statistical platforms, and other relevant sources. To enrich the analysis, research will also be conducted on articles and publications directly related to the Las Fallas festival.

By conducting this research, we aim to contribute to the broader understanding of the social dimensions of festivals and their impact on host communities. The findings of this study will not only enhance our knowledge of the social effects of the Las Fallas festival but also provide valuable insights for festival planning, management, and policy development. Ultimately, our goal is to promote a more balanced and inclusive approach to festivals, ensuring their long-term sustainability and positive contribution to the social well-being of both residents and visitors.

# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Crafting distinctive identities: the synergy of Place Marketing and Branding

In today's era of globalisation, cities, regions, and nations are increasingly engaged in fierce competition to attract tourists, consumers, and investors (Jensen-Butler, 1999, Bottini, 2022). Globalisation has not only favoured a socio-economic change in the styles of daily life in the western world, but it has also reverberated on the way in which cities, regions and nations interpret their tourism development policies.

In a world where the global mobility of people, ideas, information, and goods constitutes the most evident element of post-modern humanity, culture and local excellence are used by governments to communicate the territory and make it attractive, facilitating the arrival of tourists, consumers and investors (Bottini, 2022).

Although globalisation is often spoken of in the context of division of trade and capital between countries, one must not forget that people are the driving force behind all this. Education, travel, exposure to other customs and geographic locations and the resulting cultural mix are the most influential social effects of globalisation.

Currently, in the context of limited economic resources, competition between cities for public and private investments, as well as tourist flows, is intensifying, which is especially important in a period of growing development and economic liberalisation. In this regard, marketing approaches and tools used to create a successful city brand and increase their competitiveness are becoming more and more important.

Cities worldwide are in a global race for attracting new investments, and this is driven by economic, political, demographic, and social reasons. Globalisation and technology development have been playing a crucial role in this competition (Budd, 1998; Pfefferkorn, 2005).

As the global competition between places is intensifying, concepts like competitiveness, attractiveness and image are also becoming more common. Places are increasingly seeking to distinguish themselves and their individual personality in a crowded marketplace through creative strategies to attract a workforce, a creative community, culture, entertainment, and values (Papadopoulos, 2004). As cities all over the world are experiencing major crises, from failing services and escalating inequalities, cities are compelled to chart a new course in

development. (Pfefferkorn, 2005, p.10). Many cities are giving way to foreign manufacturing and can no longer count on their traditional industries to keep them alive. To meet these challenges head-on, they need to brand themselves as places to live, where a variety of technologies, industries, retail, and other attractions can flourish. They must craft captivating identities as ideal habitats where diverse technologies, industries, retail enterprises, and a myriad of attractions coexist harmoniously. Recognising that the image projected by a city is inextricably intertwined with the competitiveness of its businesses, products, and services, underscores the fundamental importance of shaping a distinctive and persuasive image. The image that a country wants to convey is crucial for the competitiveness of companies, as well for the product and the service they offer (Pfefferkorn, 2005, p.10).

The concept of place marketing and place branding has emerged as critical component of urban development and economic growth. In a world characterised by the free flow of information, goods, and people, the competition to capture attention and resources is intensifying.

Place marketing involves creating and promoting a favourable image of a place to attract various stakeholders, including tourists, businesses, and investors. It seeks to differentiate a place from its competitors and highlight its unique selling points. Place branding, on the other hand, focuses on establishing a distinctive identity and reputation for the place. It encompasses a strategic and holistic approach to manage a place's image and perception, both locally and globally. By leveraging effective place marketing and branding strategies, cities and regions aim to position themselves as desirable destinations for tourism, investment, and talent attraction (Kavaratzis, 2015).

Germany, for instance, is a Country associated with thoroughness and reliability, so German motor companies are perceived to have the same qualities. The country actually has very strong and quality-oriented products.<sup>1</sup>

In the realm of tourism, brand and reputation hold significant importance for cities in shaping their image abroad and attracting visitors (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). While marketing efforts are instrumental in promoting a city as a desirable tourism destination, brand and reputation play crucial roles in establishing a positive perception and fostering trust among potential tourists (Bozkurt M, 2018).

A city's brand embeds its unique identity, values, and offerings that set it apart from other destinations. It represents the essence of the city and serves as a strategic tool for attracting

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<sup>1</sup> Staples S (2019) "How Germany became the country of cars" <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20190821-how-germany-became-the-country-of-cars>

and engaging tourists. For instance, Paris is renowned for its romantic ambiance, iconic landmarks like the Eiffel Tower and Louvre Museum, and its reputation as a hub of fashion and culture. These elements contribute to Paris's brand as a romantic, artistic, and sophisticated destination, which attracts millions of tourists each year (Kapferer, 2011; Foroudi, 2016; 12).

Paris, a timeless city with an inimitable charm, has faced centuries of challenges, from wars to economic shifts, to terrorism attacks, yet remains an iconic brand. Its unique culture, rich history, and commitment to values like freedom define its character. Paris exudes elegance and opulence, serving as a global fashion centre and hosting iconic attractions. Remarkably, Paris doesn't need to actively brand itself; its inherent qualities speak for themselves. City planners can learn to embrace a city's uniqueness, invest in culture, preserve history, foster specialisation, and promote tourism without overbranding, allowing the city's essence to shine naturally (Yuksel, 2003, p.3; Pfefferkorn, 2005, p.39-47).

Reputation, on the other hand, refers to the collective opinions and evaluations of tourists and other stakeholders regarding a city's attributes, experiences, and overall appeal. It plays a vital role in influencing tourists' decision-making process and can significantly impact a city's tourism industry. City's reputation encapsulates the prevailing sentiments people hold towards it, offering a powerful means to stand out amidst competition and deliver tailored value to target audiences (Abimbola, 2009). Unlike a city's image, which reflects more recent perceptions, reputation is a more enduring gauge of performance, shaped by multiple perceptions over time (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997, p10). In essence, it needs continuous nurturing and the unwavering consistency of its image (Markwick & Fill, 1997). This reputation plays a pivotal role in shaping people's attitudes and actions concerning a city, impacting decisions related to investment, residential choices, and tourism. For example, Japan has earned a reputation for its hospitality (*omotenashi*) (Monden et al, 2013), safety, and cleanliness (Ho & Cicmil, 1996), which have made it a favoured destination for tourists from around the world. Similarly, Iceland's reputation as a pristine and untouched natural destination has attracted travellers seeking unique landscapes and outdoor adventures (Sæþórsdóttir, 2012, 13; Karlsdóttir, 2013, 145; Pike, 2009). Marketing campaigns have successfully drawn visitors who seek these qualities, leading to a significant rise in tourism over the years. Even natural disruptions, like the Eyjafjallajökull eruption, have been turned into opportunities through effective marketing, solidifying Iceland's position as a top tourist destination. The country has received and positive testimonials, and stunning photographs

have further promoted its image as a land of extreme contrasts and untouched nature (Karlsdottir, p145-147).

Iceland's central highland, once perceived as an untouched wilderness, now faces a challenge. Balancing growing tourism with preserving its unspoiled nature is essential. The desire for solitude and a connection with nature brings tourists here, but increased visitors can alter the environment, potentially turning it into an artificial landscape. Scholars stress the need to maintain this balance to protect Iceland's pristine wilderness while meeting tourist demands. Economic arguments have been made to safeguard these areas, recognising their value to the tourism industry. Balancing conservation and economic growth are crucial for Iceland's sustainable tourism development (Karlsdottir, 150-151).

Spain is another excellent example of a country that has successfully branded itself in the tourism industry. Known for its vibrant culture, sunny beaches, rich history, and diverse landscapes, Spain attracts millions of tourists each year (Visit Spain, 2023).

One of Spain's most successful tourism branding campaigns is centred around its concept of "Spain is different" (España es diferente)<sup>2</sup>. This slogan emphasises Spain's unique and distinct qualities, setting it apart from other destinations. Spain offers a diverse range of experiences, from exploring historical sites like the Alhambra in Granada and the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona to enjoying lively festivals like La Tomatina and the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona.

The country's regional diversity is also a key aspect of its branding strategy. Each region of Spain has its own distinct culture, traditions, and cuisine, allowing visitors to live a wide range of experiences within one country. From the flamenco dancing in Andalusia to the tapas culture in Madrid and the stunning beaches of the Balearic and Canary Islands, Spain offers something for every traveller (Visit Spain, 2023).

Spain's branding efforts also highlight its vibrant and lively atmosphere, known for its street festivals, vibrant nightlife, and world-renowned cuisine. The country's reputation as a destination for delicious food, including paella, sangria, and tapas, has made it a popular choice among food and wine enthusiasts (Visit Spain, 2023).

Additionally, Spain's reputation for warm hospitality and friendly locals contributes to its positive image as a welcoming destination. Visitors often appreciate the welcoming nature of the Spanish people and the sense of inclusivity they experience during their travels (Visit Spain, 2023).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.abc.es/espana/20141221/abci-spain-diferent-201412181821.html>

However, it is essential to recognise that brand and reputation are not always widely known or understood by potential tourists. While Poland may have a reputation as a safe country with a low risk of terrorism, it may still need to actively brand itself as a safe tourism destination to overcome any misconceptions or lack of awareness among international travellers. By implementing targeted marketing campaigns, highlighting safety measures, and showcasing the country's tourism infrastructure and attractions, Poland can strengthen its brand as a safe and inviting destination, enticing more tourists to visit (Kaszás & Keller, 2022; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007, OECD, 2021<sup>3</sup>).

Another example of a country with a good reputation that could benefit from additional branding efforts is Sweden. Similar to Poland, Sweden is known for its positive image as a safe and well-governed nation (World Economic Forum, 2021). However, despite its existing strengths, Sweden has the potential to further develop its tourism branding to attract a wider audience.

While Sweden is already popular among certain traveller segments, such as nature enthusiasts and fans of Scandinavian design, it could benefit from promoting other aspects of its culture, history, nature and attractions (Iliachenko E, 2005). For example, Sweden has a rich history and heritage, with historic sites, castles, and museums that could be highlighted to attract history lovers and cultural tourists (Visit Sweden, 2023).

Furthermore, Sweden has a vibrant culinary scene with traditional dishes and innovative gastronomy that could be promoted to appeal to food and wine enthusiasts (De la Barre & Brouder, 2013). By showcasing its diverse range of culinary experiences, from traditional Swedish cuisine to Michelin-starred restaurants, Sweden could position itself as a gastronomic destination.

In addition, Sweden's unique natural beauty, including its picturesque archipelagos, pristine forests, and northern lights, could be emphasised to attract adventure seekers and outdoor enthusiasts. By showcasing the country's outdoor activities such as hiking, kayaking, and wildlife spotting, Sweden could position itself as a playground for nature lovers (Visit Sweden, 2023).

Overall, while Sweden enjoys a positive reputation, there is an opportunity for the country to further develop its tourism branding by highlighting its cultural heritage, culinary offerings, and outdoor adventures. Through strategic marketing and targeted campaigns, Sweden can

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/d863fb51-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/d863fb51-en>

attract a wider range of tourists and establish itself as a multifaceted and appealing destination.

In conclusion, in the competitive tourism industry, cities must proactively manage their brand and reputation to effectively position themselves as desirable and trustworthy destinations. This requires aligning marketing efforts with the unique attributes and values of the city, delivering exceptional experiences, and addressing any concerns or misconceptions that may hinder tourism growth. By leveraging the power of brand and reputation, cities can enhance their appeal to tourists, stimulate economic growth, and cultivate a positive image in the global tourism landscape.

In the following paragraphs, we will delve deeper into the concepts of place marketing and place branding, exploring their interrelation and highlighting their unique characteristics. While both concepts share the common goal of promoting and positioning a destination, they approach this objective from distinct perspectives.

### 1.1.1 Place marketing

To unlock the symbolic potential of any tourist destination, and position it effectively in the global market, a carefully planned promotional strategy is an imperative. In this part, we delve into the realm of territorial marketing, a spatial reinterpretation of the conventional principles of product and service marketing. In a world relentlessly globalised, where consumer preferences transcend borders and blur the origins of consumed goods, cities are no exception in their pursuit of allure.

But can a city be marketed in the same vein as a consumer product? Cities are infinitely more intricate and multifaceted entities than products. The challenge lies in striking a delicate balance between the surge towards commodifying local resources for immediate development gains and adopting a holistic territorial promotion strategy that fosters sustainability. Here, the culture of governance championed by policymakers holds paramount significance (Bottini, 2022, p35).

The preservation of a place's unique quality and authentic charm, as conveyed through its events and experiences, requires an astute understanding of the intricate decision-making process. The political-territorial perspective wields direct influence in this domain. It is from this vantage point that branding activities take shape, each having the potential to either enhance or diminish not only a place's image but also its societal well-being (Bottini, 2022, p35).

In the following lines, we will deepen into the history and fundamental facets of territorial marketing, illuminated through a critical sociological lens. We cast a discerning eye on the shadows that often accompany these endeavours, exploring the intricate interplay between place marketing and place branding.

In the very beginning, marketing primarily revolved around products, services, and business (Hunt, 1976) and only later took root in the more specific field of urban government (Balmer, 2001). The concept of urban marketing as we intend it today, originated in the late 1980s with the rise of the entrepreneurial city (Harvey, 1989; Parkinson, 1991) and encompassed many subconcepts of city promotion, including «selling» cities (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990, Madsen, 1992), local marketing (Anholt, 2010; Kavaratzis, 2007; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009), and destination marketing (Woodside, 1990). Since then, the newborn field of studies had attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines, who have advanced their own definitions such as Ashworth and Voogd (1990), Kotler and Gaertner (2002) and Kavaratzis (2004). One of the most precise definitions of urban marketing is the one given by Hospers (2009, p.51): “a long-term process and/or political instrument consisting of different but interrelated activities aimed at retaining or attracting different target groups to a particular city”.

So let's analyse this definition with a closer look at the different parts. Urban marketing is a dynamic, ongoing effort that extends well into the future. It's not just a one-time campaign; it's a constant process of refining a city's image and attractiveness. This process isn't solely about marketing in the traditional sense; it also involves political strategies and government actions. It recognises that city management is a political instrument in itself.

This multifaceted approach combines various activities, all working together in harmony. These activities encompass everything from branding and cultural events to infrastructure development and tourism campaigns. They are interconnected, meaning that each one contributes to the overall goal of enhancing the city's appeal.

Urban marketing serves a dual purpose. First, it's about ensuring that the current residents, businesses, and stakeholders in the city feel satisfied and engaged. It's a means of retaining their support and satisfaction. Simultaneously, it aims to draw in new groups of people, whether they are tourists, investors, or potential residents. This duality acknowledges that cities are complex ecosystems with diverse needs (Hospers, 2010)

To achieve these goals, urban marketing doesn't adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. It recognises that different segments of the population have distinct interests and priorities. So,

it tailors its strategies to target and cater to these various groups. It's all centred on a specific city, acknowledging that each one has its unique character, identity, and appeal.

In essence, urban marketing is a comprehensive and ever-evolving strategy that understands the distinctiveness of every city and works to preserve and enhance its allure for both current and future residents, visitors, and investors.

Place marketing has become increasingly vital in today's globalised world. This concept, popularised and refined by marketing scholar Philip Kotler, delves into the intricate process of branding and promoting geographic areas, ranging from cities and regions to destinations and neighbourhoods. As urbanisation and competition for investment, tourism, and talent intensify, the principles of place marketing outlined by Kotler have gained prominence for their ability to shape perceptions, attract investment, and foster sustainable development.

According to Ward (1998), the practice of marketing urban areas has a long history dating back to at least the 19th century. However, in the last thirty years, cities have increasingly turned to marketing strategies as the competition for investment, tourism, and residents has intensified.

While earlier efforts in the literature primarily focused on promotional activities carried out by cities or regions in various times and places, the shift occurred when marketing approaches were consciously adopted by public planning agencies. This transformation was not merely an additional tool for solving complex planning issues but evolved into a philosophy of place management (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990).

This shift towards marketing in urban governance was closely tied to the emergence of the "entrepreneurial city" (Hall & Hubbard, 1998). Urban governance modes shifted away from traditional activities associated with cities and states, taking on more business-like characteristics such as risk-taking, creativity, promotion, and profit motivation. Marketing naturally became a part of this entrepreneurial governance (Yuksel, 2021). However, the implementation of marketing in city administration was often limited, primarily due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of marketing among city administrators and the initial stages of marketing in the public sector. Additionally, marketing academics and practitioners often struggled to grasp the unique nature of places, and this sometimes resulted in superficial and ineffective promotional efforts (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). Still to these days, most cities lack specialised organisations dedicated to city branding and often have limited involvement of stakeholders in the process. The absence of such professional city branding institutions and experienced staff affects effectiveness of city branding efforts (Fan, 2014). As it were not enough, there's a discernible disparity between the theoretical concepts advocated for utilising

marketing within urban landscapes and the actual application seen in modern cities. The theoretical discourse often articulates comprehensive strategies and innovative approaches for integrating marketing principles into city development. However, when examining real-life scenarios in contemporary cities, a significant gap emerges between these theoretical propositions and their practical execution (Kavaratzis, 2009).

Despite this, interest in applying marketing principles to cities and their operational environments has grown among academics from various fields. The theoretical emergence of place marketing was facilitated by developments within the marketing discipline, such as marketing in non-profit organisations, social marketing, and image marketing, which paved the way for adapting marketing knowledge to the realm of places.

In this discussion, we will explore the fundamental aspects of place marketing, drawing inspiration from Kotler's insights, and examine its role in shaping the destinies of locals worldwide.

In the realm of modern marketing, the concept of place marketing has risen to prominence as a strategic discipline. Place marketing encompasses the art and science of promoting geographic locations, such as cities, regions, and tourist destinations, with the goal of achieving economic, social, and cultural objectives. According to Kotler's comprehensive perspective, articulated in his seminal work in 1999, 'Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation, and Control,' place marketing goes beyond traditional marketing paradigms. It involves a multifaceted approach, incorporating strategies that leverage a location's unique attributes, strengths, and opportunities, while addressing its inherent challenges and weaknesses.

Van der Berg's seminal work in 1990 marked an important moment in the evolution of place marketing. His pioneering insights, focused primarily on the urban milieu, offered a profound understanding of how marketing techniques could be harnessed to elevate a place's identity, thereby augmenting its allure and desirability (Van der Berg, 1990).

Indeed, his definition of place marketing is nothing short of visionary, characterising it as a dynamic constellation of endeavours. It's a multifaceted approach strategically designed to harmonise the spectrum of urban functions and services available with the diverse needs and expectations of residents, businesses, and tourists alike.

This conceptualisation of place marketing, which bridges the gap between supply and demand within the urban environment, serves as the foundation upon which subsequent advancements in this field have been built. Van der Berg's pioneering work laid the

groundwork for the comprehensive study of how places can effectively position themselves in a globalised world, where competition for attention and investment is fierce.

In this context, place marketing emerges as an indispensable tool, not only for attracting visitors and businesses but also for nurturing a sense of pride and belonging among residents. Van der Berg's enduring legacy continues to shape the discourse surrounding place marketing, offering insights into the strategic elevation of a place's identity and its enduring quest for enhanced attractiveness and sustainability (Van der Berg, 1990).

Place marketing, a complex and dynamic discipline, weaves together a tapestry of essential elements, each contributing to the location's appeal and prosperity. At the heart of this strategy lies the art of branding and identity creation, where places define their unique values and cultural signatures, much like individuals crafting their personalities. This distinctive identity serves as the cornerstone upon which the entire marketing edifice is built, captivating the imagination of potential investors, tourists, and residents alike.

However, place marketing is no solo act; it thrives on the well-orchestrated collaboration of diverse stakeholders. Metaphorically, place marketing can be likened to a stage, with stakeholders serving as integral members of a grand orchestra. Governments, policy makers (Anholt, 2008), tourists boards (Baker and Cameron, 2008), brand developers, investors, businesses (Blain et al., 2005), community groups, civic leaders (Maheshwari et al., 2011), and other individuals become the players in this orchestra. Their concerted efforts contribute to the creation of marketing strategies, lending authenticity and depth to the narrative being written.

Behind the scenes, research and data analysis play the role of scriptwriters, delving deep into the desires and preferences of the audience. Armed with this knowledge, place marketers create compelling stories that connect with their target audience, transforming passive observers into enthusiastic and active participants.

Infrastructure, amenities, and services emerge as the stage, setting the scene for a place's performance. These essential elements underpin the audience's experience, ensuring that the promises made in the marketing campaign are met with tangible, satisfying realities.

In this production, the local community becomes both the backstage crew and the audience. When residents embrace their role as ambassadors, their enthusiasm spreads, enhancing the place's reputation and charm.

The presence of stakeholders in the process of place marketing is a potent force, but it can also be a source of tension, representing the competing interests of different groups (Warnaby & Medway, 2013).

It is paramount to fully grasp the intricate nature of stakeholder involvement within governance processes, as it often develops to a level of complexity that can result in outcomes that may not meet the intended objectives. This complexity is frequently rooted in the divergence of interests among the various stakeholder groups (Baker et al, 2010). For instance, we can consider the contrasting objectives of residents, who possess an intimate understanding of the local landscape and are personally vested in its well-being, in comparison to businesses. These businesses bring with them a wealth of professional expertise and substantial financial resources allocated to public affairs. The interplay of these distinct roles and positions held by these stakeholder groups significantly amplifies the intricacy of place governance. To truly appreciate the impact of each group, a deeper understanding is essential, as it sheds light on the multifaceted influence, they exert on the governance dynamics of a given place (Eshuis et al., 2018).

Although that, all stakeholders serve as the architects of a place's marketable identity, incorporating elements like cultural heritage, architectural attractions, local expertise, social cohesion, and infrastructural advancements. This dynamic relation between all stakeholders and place branding is a critical force in shaping destinations through decisions and strategies, a fact highlighted by a multitude of scholars and experts who continually emphasise the importance of the participation in the decision/making process, ensuring that place branding and development efforts are not only effective but also inclusive and representative of the diverse interests and values within a community or destination (Healey 1998; Baker et al., 2010).

Besides that, in this digital transformation, the synergy between stakeholders and place branding takes on an even vital role. As the world moves increasingly online, a digital presence becomes the spotlight that illuminates a place's virtues. Websites, social media, and digital marketing act as the megaphones, projecting a place's message far and wide, transcending geographical limits (Briciu V.A et al., 2020).

Yet, the script must evolve with the times, incorporating sustainability and environmental consciousness as central themes. Just as any good story must be relevant and thought-provoking, so must place marketing strategies consider the global call for responsible development.

Like any seasoned director, place marketers must constantly measure and evaluate their performance. Metrics and feedback become the critique that guides them, allowing for adjustments and enhancements in the next act.

But, above all, place marketing is not a one-act play. It's a grand production, a saga of lasting impact. The consistency in messaging and the unwavering commitment to a place's development ensure that its story endures, enriching the lives of those who reside within its borders and those who venture to explore its wonders. While promotion is primarily about communicating with the intended recipient, marketing presents a broader and more comprehensive perspective. Marketing focuses on the so-called 4Ps: product, price, place, and promotion (McCarthy & Perreault, 1960). It deploys a toolkit of marketing instruments, including advertisement, place branding and the influential realm of social media. As highlighted by many authors, place marketing is not mere promotion, it is a comprehensive endeavour that extends to policy measures aimed at enhancing these places and how they are managed. By accentuating the creation of attractive urban offerings and implementing measures across different policy domains, place marketing morphs into a governance process. This process revolves around policymaking that unfolds within dynamic interactions among numerous stakeholders and across various policy arenas (Hankinson, 2010). In essence, it's a multidimensional and collaborative effort that shapes the future of a place through a blend of marketing strategies and effective governance.

In addition to attracting visitors, urban marketing identifies different groups and explores the added value (e.g. economic benefit and talent contribution) of these target groups (Eshuis et al., 2013). The goal of urban marketing is to attract, identify and respond to the needs of target groups and meet their needs.

In recent years, city marketing methods have been increasingly used by cities to increase their profile and overall competitiveness in the process of intensive globalisation and urbanisation. City marketing encourages local governments to learn more about the target audience and develop targeted and consistent policies to attract groups deemed valuable to the city.

Urban marketing employs specific marketing tools and approaches to reach specific predefined target groups. For example, the city has a specific preferential policy to attract certain investments, hire talent, or attract certain companies. High-quality urban design, infrastructure provision, and flagship projects such as free economic zones are often used as urban marketing tools (Smyth, 1994; Liouris & Deffner, 2005; ).

Examples of successful place marketing campaigns can be found worldwide. One notable example is the "I Amsterdam" campaign, implemented by the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. This campaign aimed to enhance the city's image and attract both tourists and businesses. The iconic "I Amsterdam" slogan was placed at various strategic locations, including the Museumplein and Schiphol Airport, creating a strong visual identity for the city

(Amsterdam&Partners, 2024). The campaign effectively showcased Amsterdam as a vibrant, open-minded, and creative destination, appealing to a wide range of target groups. As a result, the campaign not only attracted a significant number of tourists but also generated interest among entrepreneurs, investors, and creative professionals, contributing to the city's economic growth and reputation as a hub for innovation and culture (Amsterdam&Partners, 2024).

Another successful example is the "Incredible India" campaign, launched by the Government of India's Ministry of Tourism. This campaign aimed to promote India as a diverse and captivating tourist destination. It highlighted the country's rich cultural heritage, scenic beauty, historical sites, and traditions. Through captivating visuals, compelling storytelling, and targeted marketing efforts, the campaign succeeded in positioning India as a must-visit destination for travellers around the globe. The "Incredible India" campaign played a crucial role in boosting tourism in India, attracting a significant influx of international visitors and contributing to the growth of the tourism industry (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2023)<sup>4</sup>.

These examples demonstrate how effective place marketing campaigns can shape the perception of a city or country, attract target groups, and ultimately drive economic development. By leveraging unique strengths, creating a compelling brand identity, and implementing targeted marketing strategies, successful place marketing campaigns can have a transformative impact on a location's reputation and competitiveness in the global arena.

As we explore the world of urban marketing, we discover that attracting visitors and investments is a complex task. However, in this fast-changing landscape, there's a critical aspect to address – demarketing. It's a response to the challenges posed by the overwhelming waves of tourists in iconic cities and pristine destinations. Demarketing, which involves deliberately discouraging tourism, is becoming more important. Let's take a closer look at these strategies, which help protect the cultural, natural, and infrastructural treasures that make our world unique.

In the world's most iconic destinations, a pressing challenge looms large – the overwhelming flux of tourists. To cope with this, cities and countries have implemented demarketing or tourism deterrence strategies, employing ingenious methods to mitigate the negative repercussions of overtourism. Scholars such as Kotler and Levy have been instrumental in unravelling this dynamic facet of tourism management, defining it as “that aspect of

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.incredibleindia.org/content/incredible-india-v2/en.html>

marketing that deals with discouraging customers in general or a certain class of customers in particular on either a temporary or permanent basis” (1971, p76).

Historic European cities, exemplified by Amsterdam, stand at a precipice, struggling with a deep existential challenge: the inexorable tidal wave of unbridled tourism. Frans van der Avert, CEO of Amsterdam Marketing, underlines the threat for these cities losing their cherished character and, more critically, their resident populations, a catastrophe exacerbated by the likes of Ryanair and Airbnb (Taylor, 2017).

In response, these cities have adopted stringent countermeasures, such as the enforcement of rigorous regulations on Airbnb rentals and a resolute halt on new hotel construction. However, the fulcrum upon which the future of these iconic cities teeters rests upon the delicate equilibrium between the demands of tourism and the preservation of their unique identity and the well-being of their inhabitants. It is a moment of reckoning, wherein the destiny of these cities hangs in the balance, and the verdict may define their continued existence and prosperity (Taylor, 2017).

Venice, the enchanting Italian city, has enacted a series of interventions. These include restricting the entry of cruise ships and introducing day-trip fees. Meanwhile, in Barcelona, measures involve limiting vacation rentals and reducing the number of tour buses.

Dubrovnik, Croatia, is facing the same issue, fighting overcrowding with daily visitor limits and strict controls on cruise ship passengers (Taylor, 2017). Across the globe, Bhutan stands as a pioneer with its "High Value, Low Impact" policy, requiring visitors to pay a comprehensive daily fee for an exclusive, sustainable experience. Bhutan's tourism philosophy is firmly rooted in sustainability, emphasizing environmentally friendly, socially and culturally acceptable, and economically viable practices. To achieve this, they charge a substantial fee for travellers, limiting tourism volume and preserving their serene environment and cultural heritage. Bhutan aims to be an exclusive travel destination, promoting Gross National Happiness (GNH) values. To control tourism, visas are required for most nationalities, and visitors must use Bhutanese tour services, often paying a government fee. A distinctive feature of this policy is the strict requirement for travellers to book their trips through authorised travel agencies and have mandatory tour guides accompany them during their visit to the country (Tourism Council of Bhutan, 2022)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The Tourism Rules and Regulations 2022, Tourism Council of Bhutan, Royal Government of Bhutan, Thimphu, Bhutan

Similarly, in the heart of Peru, Machu Picchu has set strict visitor quotas and made guided tours mandatory to protect its historical treasures<sup>6</sup>. Iceland, facing a tourism boom, deftly steers tourists toward less-visited regions, safeguarding its environment and culture.

The coastal gem of Cinque Terre, Italy, has introduced a regulated ticketing system for its picturesque trails. These innovative demarketing strategies demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges of modern tourism management. In a world that beckons travellers, these measures are a testament to the commitment of cities and countries to preserve their heritage, environment, and quality of life.

### 1.1.2 Place branding

The concept of a city's brand is a priceless asset that significantly enhances competitive advantage in the age of globalisation. A growing number of scholars and researchers underlines the importance of place branding in marketing. Cities are increasingly harnessing their distinctiveness and employing a diverse array of strategies to enhance their reputation and sustainability, all in a competition to attract both capital and talent (Balakrishnan et al., 2009; Che-Ha et al., 2016). In the relentless race among global cities, a deep understanding of the elements that elevate a city's reputation stands as an essential tool for refining the framework of urban planning and management.

The modern approach to place branding is more than a mere marketing endeavour; it's a dynamic strategy to elevate a city's status on the world stage.

In the fiercely competitive landscape of global tourism, the race for tourists has intensified, necessitating a sharper focus on country positioning. To determine a niche and leave a lasting impression on key stakeholders, many places are strategically adopting place branding. This dynamic approach aims to craft a unique and unforgettable identity in the fiercely contested minds of global travellers (Middleton et al., 2009).

As urban areas strive to stand out, they must emphasise their unique qualities, from culture and history to innovation and quality of life. By effectively crafting their brand, cities can become magnets for investment, businesses, and a skilled workforce (Kotler, 1999; Papadopoulos, 2004)

In today's interconnected world, a place brand is a beacon, guiding its future trajectory. It's a reflection of the city's values, identity, and aspirations. The reputation of a place has the

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.incatrailmachu.com/en/travel-blog/machu-picchu-new-rules-2019>

power to influence everything from economic growth to quality of life, making it an indispensable facet of modern urban planning and management. Therefore, understanding and nurturing a city's brand is an essential aspect of ensuring its prosperity and resilience in the face of global competition.

The concept of place branding was first proposed by Kavaratzis (2004) and since then has spread to various disciplines.

However, in navigating the expansive landscape of branding, it becomes imperative to point out the coexistence of distinct yet intricately interconnected concepts, each meticulously crafted for specific spatial entities.

Under the expansive umbrella term of brand, “place branding” takes the centre of the stage, encompassing strategies tailored to diverse spatial landscapes.

Concepts like place, nation, country, city, destination are often used as synonyms associated with the word branding. So, as it follows, we are going to see the main differences between these concepts, which seem very similar.

Place branding has emerged as a cardinal area in marketing, encompassing the strategic promotion of countries, cities, regions, and destinations, and finding a prominent place on contemporary policy agendas. While initially associated with tourism marketing, the scope of place branding extends well beyond the tourism industry, offering valuable insights and benefits to diverse stakeholders, including policy makers and communication professionals.

Research executed by Kavaratzis (2005) and Kaplan et al. (2010) show that place branding can include nation, country and destination branding.

In the context of tourism marketing, place branding, especially in cities, is focused on attracting a diverse range of target groups, ranging from tourists and investors to professionals and influencers.

Nation branding takes this concept a step further by acknowledging that the reputations of countries (by extension of cities and regions too) function much like brand images of companies and products (Pike, 2005). It asserts that these reputations are critical to the progress, prosperity, and effective management of these places (Anholt, 2013, p6). According to Szondi (2008, p5), nation branding strategically presents a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through the promotion of economic, political, and social interests both domestically and abroad. This domain, hence, extends well beyond a consumer focus on tourism promotion, encompassing additional functions such as investment attraction, export promotion, and public diplomacy (Arregle et al., 2009).

Country branding, similar to corporate branding, becomes a powerful strategic tool for enhancing a country's competitiveness (Che-Ha et al, 2016). It promotes economic, commercial, and political interests at both domestic and international levels (Szondi, 2007). Country brands offer intangible services to a nation, such as an improved reputation, requiring a holistic and creative approach. The specific aims of country branding include creating or advancing the 'country-of-origin' effect, promoting exports outwardly, or attracting inward investments or a skilled workforce. Visual and verbal elements like logos, visuals, and slogans play a crucial role in country and destination branding, necessitating distinctiveness (Tasci, 2011).

Cities and tourism destinations are partially overlapping concepts, as a city may be considered to be a tourism destination. However, place marketing related has more audiences and strategic objectives than those related to tourism industry (Molainen & Rainisto, 2009, p.77). Destination branding, a subset of place branding, revolves around competitive geographic regions and presents a unique challenge for place marketers (Morgan, 2015). It primarily concerns attracting visitors, positioning a destination as an appealing place for temporary stays. The majority of place branding research resides in the realm of destination branding, particularly within tourism-oriented contexts (Kaplan et al., 2010). Effective destination branding involves selecting a consistent mix of elements to identify and differentiate a country through destination image building.

Finally, in the broad sense of the word, a city brand is understood as an urban identity, systematically expressed in clear and attractive ideas, symbols, values, images and finding the most complete and adequate reflection in the image of the city.

City branding includes “a whole set of activities to create a positive image of the city and disseminate it among various target groups through visual means, narratives and events at the local and international levels in order to gain a competitive advantage over other cities” (Vanolo, 2008, p. 371).

City branding goes beyond the mere visual representation. In practice, unique natural, climatic and geographical conditions, any events, various sights, personalities, symbols, myths and legends, religious symbols or even original products produced in the region can become a city brand, evoking positive emotions and associations. In order for the selected objects to become the basis for the formation of a brand, purposeful work is needed to create and develop a brand to make it unique, attractive, easily recognisable and, not less importantly, competitive among similar brands.

This work of creating, managing, and developing a city brand is called city branding. Generally, city branding can be understood as a strategy to increase the competitiveness of the city, aimed at conquering foreign markets, attracting investors, tourists, new residents, and skilled migrants.

Moreover, city branding is not a one-time endeavour but an ongoing process. It requires continuous evaluation and adaptation to changing circumstances and perceptions.

Successful city branding involves engagement with stakeholders, both internal (residents, businesses) and external (tourists, investors, media), to ensure the brand's authenticity and resonance.

The goal of city branding is well-functioning management perception of the target audience of the brand of the city - its change from the current to the desired, as well as overcoming the shortage of material and non-material resources in the city. Main target audience of the brand of the city can be considered permanent and potential.

City branding is intertwined with events hosted within the city. Events, whether they are cultural festivals, sport tournaments or business conferences, have the power to shape and reinforce a city's brand. Successful events can draw attention to the city, create positive associations, and contribute to its overall image. Place branding strategies can be integrated into events planning and marketing to maximise their impact on the city's reputation and identity.

Branding of cities has to be very specific about what it wants to sell and to whom (Pfefferkorn, 2005). The brand must be based on the real attributes or aspirations of the city, and it must be compelling to outsiders. Every city has different characteristics (geographic, demographic, economic, institutional) that make them unique in their genre and difficult to compare. These differences constitute a factor for economic development.

A true brand fulfils the real or the perceived needs of customers. It is not just a symbol, but a personality triggering a response within the minds of the customers and other stakeholders. As with products, brand personality is embodied in cities. For many years, city branding researchers and tourism professionals have worked to determine the right strategy for branding or rebranding a city to attract more local and mostly foreign tourists. Researchers agree that the city positioning decision remains a crucial phase in determining the success of this strategic process.

However, not every city is well suited for every kind of industry or economic opportunity, therefore it is important to figure out what a city is good and not good at. Many cities have realised that arts and culture play a critical role in tackling these urban challenges<sup>7</sup>.

Actually, in recent years there has been an increasing awareness of the role of culture and its creative potential in local urban and economic development (Getz, 2007). Culture and creativity have become increasingly important for the development of tourism in cities (Richards, 2012), appearing as a mantra in urban development worldwide. Hence, given the increasing presence of culture in the cities' agendas, it will be convenient to make an introduction about culture, its meaning and role in the different economic spheres.

## 1.2 Culture as a tool of distinction

In the dynamic landscape of city branding and marketing, culture emerges as a powerful element that distinguishes cities and contributes to their overall appeal. As we have explored the concepts of place marketing and place branding, it becomes evident that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the unique identity of a city. By harnessing their cultural heritage, traditions, arts, and vibrant community life, cities can create a sense of place that captivates both residents and visitors alike.

Place marketing and place branding strategies provide cities with the tools and framework to effectively communicate their cultural assets to the world. These strategies enable cities to showcase their distinctive cultural expressions, historical landmarks, artistic endeavours, and local traditions, creating a compelling narrative that sets them apart from other destinations. By aligning their marketing efforts with their cultural identity, cities can effectively position themselves as cultural hubs and attract tourists seeking authentic experiences.

Culture serves as a powerful magnet, drawing visitors who are eager to immerse themselves in the local way of life, explore unique artistic creations, and participate in vibrant community events. Festivals, exhibitions, performances, and cultural initiatives become focal points for cities to showcase their rich cultural tapestry and engage both residents and tourists. These cultural events not only enhance the city's reputation and image but also contribute to its social and economic development.

Moreover, culture plays a significant role in fostering a sense of pride and belonging among residents. It forms the bedrock of a city's identity and shapes its social fabric. By actively

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<sup>7</sup> <https://theconversation.com/festivals-can-transform-cities-by-making-space-for-overlooked-people-and-cultures-121013>

promoting and preserving their cultural heritage, cities strengthen community bonds, inspire creativity, and foster a shared sense of ownership. This, in turn, enhances the overall liveability and quality of life for residents, creating a positive environment that attracts visitors and investors alike.

In the forthcoming sections, we will delve deeper into the ways in which cities harness their cultural assets and expressions as a tool for distinction and differentiation. We will explore how cities leverage cultural initiatives, festivals, and creative industries to enhance their brand image, attract tourists, and cultivate a vibrant and thriving urban landscape. By examining successful case studies and best practices, we will gain valuable insights into the symbiotic relationship between culture, place marketing, and place branding in shaping the destiny of cities in the global tourism arena.

### 1.2.1 Culture: definition

Before delving into the role of culture, it is important to understand what culture is. The concept of culture is extremely complicated to define as it has multiple meanings and includes various types of culture (idealistic and materialistic, high and low, local, regional and global culture). The term stems from the Latin word “colere”, meaning “to tend”, “to cultivate”, and if referred to “animus” (“character”), the expression would refer to the cultivation of the human character. Consequently, the word “cultura” can be associated with education, self-improvement. The term has evolved over time. In ancient Rome the term was used to describe the shaping of the human mind (soul), and one of the first to use this word was the philosopher Cicero (cultura animi). He believed that shaping the mind through contact with various fields of philosophy and arts allows a person to achieve spiritual balance and harmony with the universe.

In the Renaissance, the term was used with reference to the progress in literature, philosophy, legal order, as well as in art and science.

Until the end of the 18 century the word referred only to some disciplines. Only from the 19th century, in Germany, culture was identified with all human achievements (Williams, 2011) and was divided into material and non-material culture.

In common use, the term culture often refers to fine arts or to serious literature. Culture in this sense, sometimes called “high culture”, as opposed to mass, folk or popular culture has implications of high social status.

During the 19th century, the disciplines of anthropology and sociology emerged as new fields of study, aiming to understand and define culture in a more objective and comprehensive manner. Prior to this, the term "culture" was often used in a common and ethnocentric sense, referring to "the best that has been thought and known" within a particular society. However, this limited understanding started to receive criticism as scholars sought to develop a more nuanced and inclusive approach.

Richard Peterson, in his work from 1979, identified four key elements that sociologists typically refer to when they talk about culture: norms, values, beliefs, and expressive symbols. Norms are the patterns of behaviour that individuals within a society are expected to follow. Values represent the ideals and principles that people hold dear and consider important. Beliefs pertain to the assumptions and convictions individuals have about how the universe operates or the nature of reality. Expressive symbols are representations, often in the form of language, art, or rituals, which convey social norms, values, and beliefs.

Later, sociologists expanded upon these four elements by adding a fifth component: practices. Practices refer to the actions and activities that individuals engage in within their cultural context. By including practices, sociologists claim that culture is not solely about what people believe or value, but also about how they collectively behave and interact with one another.

This broader understanding of culture aligns with the definition proposed by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in 1973. Geertz describes culture as "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitudes towards life" (Geertz, 1973, p. 89). Geertz's definition encapsulates the essence of what sociologists mean when they use the term culture. It avoids making value judgments, embraces relativism by recognising the diversity of cultural systems, highlights the interconnection between culture and society, emphasises the enduring nature of culture, and suggests that culture can be empirically studied like any other phenomenon.

By incorporating Geertz's definition into their framework, sociologists recognise culture as a dynamic and complex system that encompasses shared norms, values, beliefs, expressive symbols, and practices. This comprehensive understanding enables researchers to analyse how culture shapes individuals, societies, and social interactions.

In summary, the concept of culture is multifaceted and has evolved over time. It has been associated with education, self-improvement, and the shaping of the human mind. Throughout history, culture has been linked to literature, philosophy, legal order, art, and

science. In the 19th century, anthropology and sociology emerged as disciplines seeking a more objective and comprehensive understanding of culture.

Sociologists have identified key elements of culture, including norms, values, beliefs, expressive symbols, and practices. Norms are patterns of behaviour that individuals are expected to follow in a society, while values represent cherished ideals and principles. Beliefs encompass individuals' assumptions and convictions about the universe and reality. Expressive symbols, such as language, art, and rituals, convey social norms, values, and beliefs. Practices refer to the actions and activities that individuals engage in within their cultural context, shaping how they collectively behave and interact with each other.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz's definition of culture as a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms highlights its role in communication, perpetuation, and the development of knowledge and attitudes towards life. Geertz's definition promotes cultural relativism, recognising the diversity of cultural systems, and underscores the enduring nature of culture. This broader understanding of culture allows researchers to study how it influences individuals, societies, and social interactions in a dynamic and complex manner.

As culture continues to play a crucial role in shaping human societies, understanding its intricate nature is essential for comprehending the rich tapestry of human life, beliefs, and expressions across different communities and regions.

In the dynamic landscape of city branding and marketing, culture emerges as a powerful element that distinguishes cities and contributes to their overall appeal. As we have explored the concepts of place marketing and place branding, it becomes evident that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the unique identity of a city. By harnessing their cultural heritage, traditions, arts, and vibrant community life, cities can create a sense of place that captivates both residents and visitors alike.

Cultural theorists like Richard Florida have long emphasised the significance of culture in urban development. Florida's concept of the "creative class" underscores the role of artists, innovators, and cultural entrepreneurs in driving economic growth in cities (Florida, 2002). This notion aligns with the idea that culture is not only a source of identity but also a catalyst for economic prosperity.

Place marketing and place branding strategies provide cities with the tools and framework to effectively communicate their cultural assets to the world. These strategies enable cities to showcase their distinctive cultural expressions, historical landmarks, artistic endeavors, and local traditions, creating a compelling narrative that sets them apart from other destinations.

Cultural economist Xavier Greffe highlights the economic potential of cultural resources within cities. He argues that cities can leverage their cultural assets to attract investment, tourists, and creative talent, thereby enhancing their global competitiveness (Greffe, 2010). This aligns with the notion that culture can be a strategic driver of economic development.

By aligning their marketing efforts with their cultural identity, cities can effectively position themselves as cultural hubs and attract tourists seeking authentic experiences. Culture serves as a powerful magnet, drawing visitors who are eager to immerse themselves in the local way of life, explore unique artistic creations, and participate in vibrant community events.

Professors Arcodia and Whitford (2006) underline the social and economic benefits of cultural engagement within cities. Their research highlights how cultural events and initiatives enhance social cohesion and contribute to economic vitality in urban areas. This underscores the multifaceted impact of culture on cities' overall well-being.

Festivals, exhibitions, performances, and cultural initiatives become focal points for cities to showcase their rich cultural tapestry and engage both residents and tourists. These cultural events not only enhance the city's reputation and image but also contribute to its social and economic development.

Cultural studies scholar Sarah Sharma explores the transformative power of cultural events in cities. She argues that cultural festivals and initiatives can reshape a city's identity, foster community pride, and stimulate economic activity (Sharma, 2016). This perspective underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of culture's role in urban development.

Moreover, culture plays a significant role in fostering a sense of pride and belonging among residents. It forms the bedrock of a city's identity and shapes its social fabric. By actively promoting and preserving their cultural heritage, cities strengthen community bonds, inspire creativity, and foster a shared sense of ownership.

In this way, cultural historian David Throsby highlights the intrinsic value of culture in cities, noting that cultural activities contribute to the well-being of citizens and enhance their quality of life (Throsby, 2001). This underscores how culture can be both an asset and a source of community cohesion within urban environments.

As we delve deeper into the ways in which cities harness their cultural assets and expressions as tools for distinction and differentiation, we recognize that culture is not merely an ornament but a fundamental driver of urban development, social cohesion, and economic prosperity.

## 1.2.2 The role of culture in the economic sphere

Numerous organisations, such as UNESCO and the World Bank emphasise that culture is an enabler of economic, social and environmental dimensions sustainable development; thus, recognising the transformative power of culture and creative industries is vital for addressing the social needs of city dwellers and empowering them to seize opportunities.

Culture is more and more at the heart of local development agendas and its connection to other areas is becoming increasingly evident, especially in tourism.

Culture and tourism share a mutually beneficial relationship which can strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of regions and countries (OECD, 2009).

We live in a period where cultural resources and places hosting them have become attractions visited by an increasing number of people. Excursionists, tourists, and city users find common ground in their shared cultural interests once reserved for the restricted circle of experts and insiders. Historic cities as well as contemporary urban centres with their new art and architectural icons serve as meeting points for the previously separate realms of tourism and culture.

During the 20th century culture and tourism were viewed as largely separate and independent aspects of destinations. Cultural resources were seen as part of the cultural heritage largely related to the education of the local population and the reinforcement of local and national identities.

Tourism, on the other side, was seen as a leisure activity separate from everyday life and the culture of the local population.

This gradually changed towards the end of the century, as the role of cultural assets in attracting tourists and distinguishing destinations from others became more relevant.

In particular, from the 80's of the XX century cultural tourism became more viewed as a source of economic development. The increasing relationship between tourism and culture was stimulated by a large number of factors, both from demand and supply side (OECD, 2009, p.19-20).

From the demand side:

- Increased interest in culture, particularly as a source of identity and differentiation in the face of globalisation.
- Growing levels of cultural capital, stimulated by growing education levels.

- Ageing population in developed countries.
- Postmodern consumption styles, emphasising personal development rather than materialism.
- Wish for direct forms of experience.
- Growing importance of intangible culture and the role of image and atmosphere.

From the supply side:

- Development of cultural tourism to stimulate jobs and income.
- Cultural tourism seen as a market driving economic growth and quality tourism.
- Increasing supply of culture as a result of regional development.
- The growing accessibility to information about culture and tourism through technology.
- The emergence of new nations desirous to establish and promote their identity.
- Desire to establish an external image of regions and nations.
- Cultural founding problems related to increasing cultural supply.
- Increased mobility creating easier access to other cultures.

Growth in cultural tourism was also marked by fragmentation into a number of emerging niches, such as heritage tourism, arts tourism, gastronomic tourism, film tourism and creative tourism.

So, what is cultural tourism? A variety of approaches to the relationship between tourism and culture highlights the definitional problems that exist in this area. Since culture touches every aspect of human life, it can be affirmed that everything is cultural. Hence, according to this view, every sort of tourism can be considered "cultural" because all movements of people satisfy the human need for diversity, seeking to enhance the cultural level of personality and generating new knowledge, experience and meetings (UNWTO, 1985). Such a broad approach is not very helpful, because it does not allow us to identify those forms of culture that are especially important for tourism, and vice versa.

According to the definition advanced by the UNWTO General Assembly, as its 22nd session (2017), cultural tourism implies a "type of tourism activity in which visitor's main motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/product in a tourism destination. These attractions relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses art and

architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyle, value systems, beliefs and traditions”.

The growing use of culture in destination marketing represents a strategy of differentiation and image making. At the same time tourism represents an important tool to protect and enhance culture and create income which can support and strengthen cultural heritage, cultural production and creativity. At a time when economic systems are no longer predictable, cities strive to remain competitive through strategies that take into consideration their innate resources - their histories, spaces, creative energy and talents (Richards & Palmer, 2007, p2).

Creating a strong bond between tourism and culture can therefore contribute to the development of destinations by helping them to become more attractive and competitive as locations to live, visit, work and invest in.

Cultural tourism is today one of the largest and fastest growing global tourism markets. According to Europa Nostra (2021) it is estimated that cultural tourism accounts for 40% of all European tourism, and 4 out of 10 tourists choose a destination based on its cultural offer<sup>8</sup>. Many places are now actively developing their unique combination of tangible and intangible cultural assets as a means of developing comparative advantages in an increasingly competitive tourism market and creating a local identity in the face of globalisation. Cultural tourism is particularly attractive due to the number of benefits it can bring to local communities.

Boosting cultural tourism can lead to jobs and businesses creation, increasing tax revenues, regeneration of rural and urban areas and the protection of natural and cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2021, p33). The convergence of tourism and culture and the growing interest of visitors in cultural experiences offer an exceptional opportunity for the tourism sector, but at the same time represent a great challenge.

Cultural tourism can also constitute an alternative source of income in regions where industries have declined or whose attractiveness has traditionally depended on their natural endowments, such as beach, sea or mountain. Destination might also try to develop intangible culture and creativity (selling atmosphere, events and gastronomy). Imitating models of cultural development extends to the region intangible culture, as the spread of festivals and cultural events testifies. The success of the European Capital of Culture has spawned copycats around the world, and the fight for the title intensified. Cities and regions are now

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.europanostra.org/heritage-solidarity-fellowship-for-ukraine-second-call-for-applications/>

spending large sums of money only to compete for the title and the branding and marketing benefits it brings (Richards and Palmer, 2007). Similarly, the number of regions are fighting for their intangible heritage to be included in the UNESCO list, in the hope that it will promote cultural tourism in the same way as World Heritage Sites already made.

Many cities have successfully impressed themselves on the public's consciousness as emblem of their chosen attribute: Rotterdam as cultural capital, Amsterdam as international centre of business, culture and tourism, New York as the Big Apple or the City which never sleeps, Jerusalem as the city of three main religions, Turin as creative city, Athen as Mediterranean city, Paris city of lights (Ville Lumière), Istanbul city of majesty at the crossroad of the world, cradle of civilisations, meeting point of civilisations, Tel Aviv city of liberalism and entertainment. These slogans, nicknames, sobriquets, or aliases are very important for the marketing of cities as they benefit the community in several areas, including identity, increasing pride, promoting community, and improving the economy. They represent a physical reality that attaches to the city or is taken by others to be descriptive of the city and its inhabitants.

In conclusion, the symbiotic relationship between culture and tourism has evolved significantly over the years. Once considered separate entities, they are now recognised as integral components of local development agendas and essential drivers of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Cultural tourism, in particular, has emerged as one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets, offering a multitude of benefits to local communities and destinations alike. The growing emphasis on cultural assets in destination marketing reflects a strategic approach to differentiation and image-making, helping cities become more competitive and attractive to visitors and investors. Moreover, cultural tourism provides an opportunity for destinations to preserve and enhance their cultural heritage, support creative industries, and foster community engagement. As we delve into the role of events as catalysts for igniting city vibrancy and fostering community engagement, it becomes evident that cultural festivities, festivals, and gatherings play a crucial role in attracting tourists and creating a unique local identity. Events showcase the distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional features of a society, enriching the visitor's experience and connecting them with the cultural essence of the destination. The next chapter will explore how events contribute to the dynamic nature of cities, contributing to their cultural vibrancy and providing platforms for locals and visitors to come together in celebration, exchange ideas, and create lasting memories.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1. Events as Catalysts of development: Igniting City Vibrancy and Fostering Community Engagement

Events possess a unique power to captivate, engage, and transform cities, making them a formidable tool in the realm of urban development and place promotion. As we have explored the concepts of place marketing, branding, and the role of culture, it becomes apparent that events play a pivotal role in enhancing a city's vibrancy, attracting visitors, and fostering a sense of community pride. Whether it is a large-scale festival, a cultural exhibition, a sporting event, or a conference, events have the ability to showcase a city's unique character, create memorable experiences, and leave a lasting impact on both residents and visitors. In the following section, we will delve into the extraordinary power of events as catalysts for urban transformation, economic growth, and social cohesion. We will examine how cities strategically leverage events to position themselves on the global stage, stimulate tourism, and create a sense of excitement and vitality that defines their identity. Through case studies and examples, we will uncover the immense potential of events as transformative agents, shaping the destiny of cities and elevating their status as premier destinations in the modern world.

#### 2.1.1 Branding of places through events

An effective way to promote and underpin cultural awareness and creativity is through the hosting of events. Events are spatial-temporal phenomena, which have a beginning and an end. They are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations (Getz, 2008, p 403). There is a long tradition of hosting events in urban public spaces, and the number of events staged in cities around the world is continually increasing, thanks to processes of economic and cultural globalisation which have stimulated their global spreading.

Events have become increasingly integrated into the daily life of contemporary cities and tourist destinations that many of them identify themselves as “eventful cities” or “festival cities”, “capital of events”.

Cities around the globe are using events and festivals as a central part of their strategy in order to build an identity and distinct themselves from competitors, achieve place marketing, place branding and economic development objectives, stimulate the creative industries (Richards G., 2014), foster cultural engagement, social cohesion and bonds both between inhabitants and tourists (Getz, 2007), exchange cultural symbols at a global level, enhance lifestyle and leisure activities and, finally, attract resources and social capital.

Slogan such as “festival city” or “city of festival” have become a popular choice as part of a city’s brand image. Events have today become policy tools that can be used to further a wide range of different agendas in different cities.

As an example, the international status of Edinburgh as eventful city is claimed on the touristic website VisitScotland: “No matter what time you visit Edinburgh, you’re guaranteed to find a great event or world-class festival to enjoy”, or “With the stunning Hogmanay celebrations heralding a brand new year and the start of the Homecoming Scotland 2009, the World’s Leading Festival City is gearing up for spring, and more of its exciting festivals”, or “Edinburgh is the world’s leading festival city, with a range of major annual festivals bringing talents from more than a third of the world’s countries to our streets and stages” (Edinburgh Festival City). Another example is New Orleans, the largest municipality in the US State Louisiana, defining itself the Festival Capital of the World.

Edmonton refers to itself as Canada’s Festival City, setting itself in competition with other Canadian cities such as Ottawa, Quebec City and Montreal, defining themselves in similar terms.

The concept of eventful city was firstly outlined by Richards and Palmer who defined an eventful city as one that “uses a programme of events in order to strategically and sustainably support long-term policy agendas that enhance the quality of life for all”.

Once events become an important element on the agenda of a city, they can begin to influence the direction of the policies and structures that created them.

However, events may be considered also as a solution to a wide range of tourism problems affecting many places, such as seasonality, that is the tendency of tourism flows to become concentrated into relatively short period of the year.

Seasonality is a protracted problem for the tourism sector due to the uneven nature of demand and the fixed nature of the supply of capacity and resources (Connell at al, 2015), particularly in the attraction sector. It affects all areas of the tourism industry, from marketing (packaging, distribution and pricing) to the labour market (employment, skills, sustainability), as well as business finances (suppliers and intermediaries), environmental (ecological carrying capacity

of a destination because of overcrowding during the peak season) and all relevant aspects of operations.

In some cases, events can be developed during the low season or off-peak months in regions that experience overtourism during certain times of the year. This strategy aims to divide tourist flows throughout the year and alleviate the pressure on popular destinations.

Cities around the world have found innovative ways to spread tourism throughout the year by developing off-peak season events. These events aim to attract visitors during traditionally quieter periods and showcase the unique offerings of each city. For instance, Edinburgh, Scotland hosts the famous Edinburgh Festival in August, but also captivates visitors during the winter months with "Edinburgh's Christmas," a festive event featuring markets and ice skating. Quebec City in Canada hosts the renowned Winter Carnival, drawing crowds with its stunning ice sculptures and winter activities. Cape Town, South Africa extends its tourist season by organising the Cape Town International Jazz Festival in March, a celebration of music that captivates jazz enthusiasts. New Orleans, USA mesmerises visitors with its vibrant Mardi Gras celebration in February, attracting tourists from far and wide. Similarly, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil comes alive with its renowned Rio Carnival, a spectacular display of parades, samba music, and exuberant street parties. Melbourne, Australia spreads tourism throughout the year with the Melbourne International Comedy Festival in April and the Australian Open tennis tournament in January. Meanwhile, Reykjavik, Iceland enchants visitors with its "Winter Lights Festival," illuminating the city with captivating light displays, art exhibits, and live performances. These cities, among many others, have successfully leveraged off-peak season events to entice visitors and showcase their unique attractions, making tourism a year-round affair.

Seasonality is not the only problem which can be addressed with the organisation of events.

Places deciding to develop tourism but not having particular attractions or landmarks might also decide to host events in order to boost visits.

There are cities around the world that have managed to develop events as the primary driver of tourism, even if they have relatively fewer notable attractions. These cities have strategically leveraged events to create a unique and appealing experience for visitors, showcasing their strengths and fostering their reputation as vibrant destinations.

For example, Las Vegas, is renowned for its iconic casinos and entertainment venues, but its location in the desert doesn't offer many natural attractions. However, the city has become a major events destination, hosting conventions, trade shows, and large-scale entertainment events throughout the year. These events, such as the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) and

various music festivals, draw millions of visitors annually, boosting the city's tourism industry (Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, 2023<sup>9</sup><sup>10</sup>).

Similarly, Hannover in Germany has developed its events sector, notably hosting the Hannover Messe, one of the world's largest trade fairs for industrial technology and innovation. This event attracts industry professionals, business leaders, and investors from around the globe, contributing to the city's tourism and economic activity (Hannover Marketing & Tourismus GmbH, 2024).

In Rotterdam, Netherlands, the city's focus on architectural innovation has helped it transform into a vibrant events destination. The city hosts international events such as the International Film Festival Rotterdam and the Rotterdam Marathon, drawing visitors interested in art, culture, and sports<sup>11</sup>.

Bristol in the United Kingdom, while lacking in well-known attractions compared to other cities, has successfully cultivated a reputation for hosting unique and diverse events. The Bristol International Balloon Fiesta<sup>12</sup>, along with music and arts festivals like the Bristol Harbour Festival<sup>13</sup> and the Upfest<sup>14</sup> street art festival, have become major draws for visitors (Visit Bristol, 2024).

These cities exemplify how a strategic focus on events can compensate for a potential lack of iconic attractions. By creating and promoting a diverse range of events, these destinations have successfully attracted visitors and showcased their unique offerings, ultimately boosting tourism and generating economic benefits.

Additionally, events can be organised in regions surrounding the overcrowded destinations to dissipate tourist flows. The dispersal of visitors within a destination is crucial for the economic sustainability of the entire region. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognizes the hosting of events in less-visited parts of a city and its surrounding areas as a strategy to address the issue of visitor growth in cities (UNWTO, 2018).

Furthermore, the UNWTO suggests the implementation of timeslots for popular attractions and events, supported by real-time monitoring. By setting specific timeframes for visitors to access popular attractions and events, destination managers can better manage the influx of tourists and prevent overcrowding. Real-time monitoring systems can provide valuable data

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.lvcva.com/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ces.tech/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://rotterdammakeithappen.nl/en/media-objects/iffir-international-film-festival-rotterdam/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.bristolballoonfiesta.co.uk/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bristolharbourfestival.co.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.upfest.co.uk/page/upfest-festival>

on visitor numbers, allowing for effective crowd control measures to be implemented (UNWTO, 2018).

These strategies help ensure the sustainable management of tourism and mitigate the negative impacts of overtourism. By spreading visitor flows throughout the year, managing access to popular attractions, and monitoring tourist numbers, destinations can enhance the overall visitor experience and protect the natural and cultural resources that make them attractive in the first place.

There are several cities that have developed events to reduce tourist flows in nearby cities. These initiatives aim to attract visitors to alternative destinations and alleviate overcrowding in popular tourist hotspots.

One example is Girona, Spain, which has successfully developed the Girona Flower Festival, known as "Temps de Flors." This event showcases stunning flower displays throughout the city's historic centre, providing a unique cultural experience and attracting visitors seeking an alternative to nearby Barcelona.

In Bath, United Kingdom, the annual Bath Christmas Market serves as a major event that draws visitors to the city. By hosting this market, Bath encourages tourists to explore its own attractions, diverting some of the visitor traffic that would typically be focused on nearby London.

Siena, Italy, has implemented the Palio di Siena, a historic horse race held twice a year in the city's Piazza del Campo. This event attracts both locals and tourists, offering a distinct cultural experience and diverting visitor flows from nearby Florence.

Through these events, these cities have successfully enticed visitors to explore their unique offerings, reducing the concentration of tourists in nearby cities and promoting a more balanced distribution of visitor flows within the region.

Urban revitalisation is also a complex challenge that many cities face when seeking to transform and rejuvenate their urban areas. In response, cities have increasingly turned to the development of events as catalysts for urban revitalisation. These carefully designed events breathe new life into neglected or underutilised spaces, attract visitors, and stimulate economic activity. By leveraging the power of arts, music, and culture, these events not only contribute to the physical transformation of urban areas but also create vibrant environments that foster community engagement and a sense of pride.

One example of such revitalisation is seen in Detroit, USA, which hosts the "Movement Electronic Music Festival." This annual celebration of electronic music draws local and international artists, rejuvenating the city and transforming vacant spaces into vibrant venues

for artistic expression. Similarly, Medellín, Colombia's "Feria de las Flores" (Flower Festival) is a week-long event featuring parades, concerts, and cultural activities that has played a significant role in revitalising the city and attracting tourists.

Bilbao, Spain, has found success with the "Bilbao BBK Live," an annual music festival that brings together local and international artists and music enthusiasts, injecting new energy into the city and contributing to its urban revitalization efforts. In Christchurch, New Zealand, the "Festival of Transitional Architecture" showcases temporary art installations and performances in vacant lots and public spaces, engaging the community in the rebuilding process after a devastating earthquake.

Liverpool, UK, hosts the "Liverpool Biennial," an international contemporary art festival that transforms the city with public art installations, exhibitions, and performances, driving urban revitalisation and positioning Liverpool as a cultural hub. Porto, Portugal's "Serralves em Festa" is a 40-hour non-stop arts and culture event held in Serralves Park, featuring music, dance, theatre, and art installations that revitalise the urban space.

Finally, Melbourne, Australia's "White Night Melbourne" is an all-night cultural event that transforms the city into an open-air gallery with stunning light installations, art exhibitions, and performances in public spaces. This event injects energy into the urban fabric and attracts visitors, contributing to urban revitalization efforts.

These examples demonstrate how cities around the world have successfully utilised events to revitalise their urban areas. By leveraging the cultural and artistic strengths of their communities, these events have created dynamic and vibrant environments, attracting visitors, stimulating economic activity, and fostering a renewed sense of pride and engagement among residents.

In conjunction with their efforts to address various challenges, cities around the world have recognised the importance of preserving dying and endangered cultures through the development of events that celebrate and showcase their unique heritage. These events not only provide a platform for cultural expression but also raise awareness about the value of these traditions and contribute to their continuity. Several cities have successfully organised such events, while others could benefit from implementing similar initiatives.

One notable example is Edinburgh, Scotland, which hosts the "Edinburgh International Festival" annually. This event brings together artists, musicians, and performers from various cultural backgrounds, showcasing a diverse range of traditional and contemporary arts. The festival not only celebrates Scottish culture but also serves as a platform for international

cultural exchange, promoting understanding and appreciation for endangered traditions worldwide.

Another city that has successfully developed events for cultural preservation is Santa Fe, USA. The city organises the "Santa Fe Indian Market," one of the largest Native American art markets in the world. This event provides indigenous artists with a platform to showcase their traditional artwork, crafts, and performances, thereby preserving their rich cultural heritage and supporting their economic well-being.

Similarly, the city of Salvador, Brazil, hosts the "Carnival of Salvador," a vibrant celebration deeply rooted in Afro-Brazilian culture. The carnival showcases traditional music, dance, and costumes, serving as a powerful means of preserving and promoting the cultural practices of the local Afro-Brazilian community.

While these cities have made significant strides in preserving dying and endangered cultures through events, there are numerous other cities that could benefit from developing similar initiatives. For instance, Varanasi in India, known for its ancient spiritual traditions, could organise events that highlight its unique rituals, music, and religious practices, attracting visitors and raising awareness about the importance of preserving these endangered cultural elements.

Likewise, Luang Prabang in Laos, with its rich Buddhist heritage, could develop events that showcase traditional ceremonies, arts, and architecture. By doing so, the city could not only protect its cultural identity but also promote sustainable tourism and economic development.

In summary, cities have the power to play a crucial role in preserving dying and endangered cultures by organising events that celebrate and showcase these traditions. Through cultural festivals, markets, and performances, cities can raise awareness, foster appreciation, and support the continuity of endangered cultural practices. By learning from successful examples and tailoring initiatives to their unique cultural heritage, cities can effectively contribute to the preservation and revitalization of these valuable traditions.

Cities around the world have also witnessed the positive impact of organising events to increase awareness about the importance of sports and physical activity, leading to a rise in participation among residents. For example, Medellín in Colombia faced challenges related to public safety and community engagement. The city launched the "Medellín Sports Program," which included community sports events like neighbourhood football tournaments and city-wide cycling events. These initiatives successfully motivated residents to embrace sports and physical activities, contributing to a significant increase in the number of people engaging in regular exercise.

Similarly, Reykjavik in Iceland introduced the "Midnight Sun Run" to promote sports and physical activity. This unique running event, held during the summer solstice when daylight extends throughout the night, inspired residents to participate in outdoor activities and enjoy the benefits of exercise. The event attracted individuals who had previously shown little interest in sports, leading to a significant boost in participation.

Another example is Manchester in the United Kingdom, which faced challenges associated with sedentary lifestyles and low sports participation. The city organised the "Great Manchester Run," an annual running event open to people of all ages and fitness levels. By extensively promoting the event and engaging the community, the Great Manchester Run raised awareness about the accessibility and enjoyment of running as a form of exercise. This inspired many residents to incorporate regular running or other physical activities into their daily routines.

These examples highlight how cities can successfully use events to create awareness, inspire residents, and increase participation in sports and physical activity. By providing opportunities for community engagement, promoting the health benefits of exercise, and organising inclusive events, cities can encourage their residents to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles.

### 2.1.2 How events transform places

At their core, events serve as catalysts for transformation by reimagining and revitalising urban spaces. They often prompt the development and renovation of infrastructure, leading to the creation of modern venues, improved transportation networks, and enhanced amenities. Cities and regions leverage events as an opportunity to reimagine their physical environments, crafting iconic landmarks, vibrant public spaces, and innovative architectural structures that redefine the urban fabric.

Planned events temporarily transform spaces (or venues) before, during and after their realisation and for the duration of the event one's perception of the place is altered.

Organised events have the potential to significantly transform places and their image.

Impacts of events can be assessed from various perspectives, considering the works of different authors in the field. Before events take place, there is often anticipation and preparation within host communities. Chalip (2006) and Gursoy et al. (2018) highlight that residents' attitudes toward tourism and the perceived benefits and costs of hosting an event can shape the pre-event landscape. The work of Yuan (2013) emphasises the importance of

incorporating sustainability into event evaluation, which can help mitigate potential negative impacts before events occur. During events, impacts can be felt on various levels. Balmer (2001) discusses the role of corporate identity and branding during events, which can significantly influence event experiences for both participants and spectators. Getz (2007) and argues that events can have significant social impacts, fostering community empowerment and enhancing social cohesion. Smith et al. (2019) stress the need for comprehensive assessment of social impacts, considering both positive and negative effects on local communities during events. After events conclude, there are often lasting effects, commonly referred to as "event legacies". Herstein et al. (2014) explore the impacts of events on small urban areas, highlighting the potential for long-term economic benefits and urban revitalisation. The research by Moreno et al. (2007) on the environmental impacts of fireworks during events suggests the importance of considering ecological repercussions post-event. Overall, analysing impacts before, during, and after events provides valuable insights for event management, urban planning, and community development strategies.

The perception of a place before, during, and after hosting an event can vary, but overall, events can have a positive impact on the perception of a location. Here's a breakdown of the different stages and their effects:

#### 1. Perception before the event:

- Anticipation: Prior to hosting an event, there is often a sense of anticipation and excitement. People may be curious about the event and the location where it will take place.
- Preconceptions: Depending on the reputation of the event or the place, people may have preconceived notions about what to expect. These preconceptions can be influenced by previous experiences, word-of-mouth, or media coverage.

#### 2. Perception during the event:

- Buzz and excitement: When an event is taking place, there is typically a heightened sense of energy and buzz in the location. The presence of attendees, participants, and organisers can create a lively atmosphere.
- Positive experiences: If the event is well-organised and provides a positive experience to attendees, it can enhance the perception of the place. Attendees may associate the enjoyable experience with the location, leading to a more favourable view of the place.
- Exposure and attention: Events often attract media coverage and public attention. This increased exposure can shine a spotlight on the location, drawing the interest of people who

may not have been aware of it before. The positive coverage can contribute to an improved image of the place.

### 3. Perception after the event:

- Legacy effect: A well-executed event can leave a lasting impact on the place. It can create a legacy that extends beyond the event itself, such as improved infrastructure, increased tourism, or enhanced facilities. These positive changes can contribute to a long-term transformation of the place's image.

- Word-of-mouth and recommendations: Attendees who had a positive experience during the event are likely to share their experiences with others. Word-of-mouth recommendations can generate increased interest in the place and encourage more people to visit or engage with it.

- Economic benefits: Events can stimulate the local economy by attracting visitors, generating revenue for businesses, and creating job opportunities. This economic boost can positively influence the perception of the place as a vibrant and prosperous destination.

It's important to note that the success of an event in transforming a place's image depends on various factors, including the nature of the event, its execution, and the overall experiences it offers. Additionally, the perception of an event's impact can differ among individuals, as people may have different expectations and interpretations.

In conclusion, events have the potential to transform places by reshaping physical environments, fostering social connections, boosting economic growth, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing the image and identity of a destination. They serve as catalysts for change, breathing new life into cities, regions, and communities.

The Glastonbury Festival in the United Kingdom is an example of a festival that has transformed a city before, during, and after its hosting. The festival brings about significant changes and impacts on various aspects of the host city.

Before the festival, the city undergoes preparations and transformations to accommodate the influx of festivalgoers. Local infrastructure is improved, and temporary facilities are set up in the surrounding area (Bowdin et al., 2012). During the festival, the city experiences a vibrant atmosphere with multiple stages hosting performances by renowned artists, creating a sense of community and shared experiences.

The impact of the festival extends beyond the event itself. Economically, it contributes to the local economy through job creation, local spending, and tourism-related activities (Bowdin et

al., 2012). The festival also promotes environmental sustainability with initiatives focused on waste reduction and ecological preservation (Lovelock et al., 2016).

Glastonbury Festival plays a significant role in shaping the city's identity and reputation. It positions the city as a cultural and artistic destination, attracting tourists and fostering local pride. The festival's values and spirit become part of the city's cultural fabric (Lovelock et al., 2016).

Overall, the Glastonbury Festival demonstrates how a festival can transform a city, leaving a lasting impact on its image, economy, and community. It showcases the power of festivals to bring about physical, social, economic, and cultural changes, positioning the host city as a vibrant and desirable destination (Bowdin et al., 2012; Lovelock et al., 2016).

As we delve into the realm of events and their transformative power, it becomes evident that festivals hold a unique and unreproducible essence. Unlike permanent structures or attractions, festivals create ephemeral moments that leave an indelible mark on both the physical and cultural landscapes of a place. As discussed in the previous paragraph, events have the ability to shape cities, foster community engagement, and promote cultural exchange and exportation. It is through their dynamic nature and temporary existence that festivals have the capacity to change the very fabric of a location, creating a sense of place that is intertwined with the event itself. Let us further explore the unparalleled influence of festivals and the lasting impact they have on the places they inhabit.

## 2.2. Uniqueness of events

As mentioned at the beginning, events have been influenced by processes of globalisation, becoming significant platforms for the exchange of cultural symbols on a global scale. This is evident in various types of events, including sporting events like the Olympic Games and cultural events such as the European Capital of Culture. Ferdinand and Williams (2013) provide an example of the diffusion of Caribbean Carnivals worldwide, suggesting that these festivals can be considered as export products. The marketing efforts take place in foreign markets, while the production and cultural elements remain rooted in the home country.

In addition to the cultural exchange facilitated by events, they also serve as vehicles for cultural exportation. De Luca (2020) explores the case of Italian film festivals in the United States, highlighting how these events aim to promote Italian culture abroad and contribute to cultural formation. This exemplifies the cultural export aspect of events, as they disseminate cultural values, traditions, and creative works to international audiences.

However, despite attempts to replicate events, it is essential to acknowledge that each occurrence is inherently unique. While events may share a similar format or structure, specific elements such as the setting, participants, program, design, and management systems will always differ in tangible or experiential ways. Each event is influenced by its context, local culture, and the people involved, resulting in distinct and unrepeatable experiences.

These insights emphasise the dynamic and transformative nature of events as they navigate global influences, cultural exchanges, and the intricacies of their individual contexts, ultimately shaping the diverse landscapes of event experiences worldwide.

Therefore, attachment to places and place identity can be influenced by planned events. Consequently, cities and regions worldwide apply event branding, due to the growing importance of the cultural industries within the contemporary economy, for visitors, as well for the local population (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2010).

The image of the city which the event wants to vehiculate should positively interfere in the making of the place-image in users' mind. The more an image will be remembered by tourists and users the more an event will have reached its objective, then potentially leading to an increase in tourists.

Much of the appeal of events stems from the fact that people have to take part in them. Today, events deliver experiences which have to be sustainable in the long term. These experiences are one of the key factors in the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Thus, designing an event for place marketing means understanding what it means to people (Getz, 2007, 170), having a clear idea of the experience the city wants to put forward and taking into consideration local identity and the multi-faceted aspects of the territory.

Identity is a process occurring overtime, involving interactions between people, who recognise the evolution of our identity. The process of identity reconnaissance occurs within a place: the neighbourhood in which we live, the type of city and the kind of building we are living in will be associated with our identity.

The same process takes place between places and potential visitors: the identity perceived from the outside contributes to give a brief account of the nature of a place.

The "aura" of a place makes it unique, unreproducible, and clearly recognisable between other places (Benjamin, 1936).

Since a place is a valuable space shared by a community of individuals, governance has to figure out what makes it remarkable and attractive.

The role of governance in recognising the remarkable and attractive qualities of a place is of utmost importance, especially considering its value as a shared space for a community. In this

pursuit, the cultural industry becomes a powerful tool in effectively communicating the distinctiveness and significance of an event.

The cultural industry, encompassing various sectors such as arts, entertainment, heritage, media, and tourism, plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall perception of a place and its exceptional event. It serves as a platform for showcasing the unique aspects of the event, capturing its essence, and making it stand out from others.

Through the arts and entertainment sector, the cultural industry brings the event to life. It utilises visual arts, performing arts, music, film, and literature to create a vibrant cultural scene that reflects the event's identity and allure. Festivals, exhibitions, concerts, theatre productions, and other artistic expressions become the medium through which the event's uniqueness is communicated and celebrated.

Additionally, the cultural industry plays a vital role in preserving and promoting the heritage associated with the event. Cultural heritage sites, museums, and historical landmarks become the focal points for highlighting the event's historical significance and traditions. These institutions educate and engage people, allowing them to immerse themselves in the rich heritage that underpins the event's uniqueness.

The media and communication sectors within the cultural industry become crucial in amplifying the event's distinctive qualities. Local newspapers, television channels, radio stations, websites, and social media platforms become platforms for disseminating information about the event. They help generate excitement, build anticipation, and share stories that capture the event's essence, further establishing its uniqueness.

The cultural industry's close connection to tourism and hospitality becomes a catalyst for showcasing the event's exceptional nature. Cultural tourism, which revolves around experiencing the event's cultural heritage, traditions, and artistic offerings, relies on the cultural industry to create immersive and memorable experiences. Through authentic encounters and engaging activities, the cultural industry enhances the event's uniqueness, attracting visitors and contributing to its economic success.

Furthermore, the cultural industry fosters creativity and innovation within the event. It attracts artists, designers, entrepreneurs, and creative professionals who contribute their unique perspectives and talents. Through collaborations and creative endeavours, the event evolves into an extraordinary experience that captivates and leaves a lasting impression on attendees.

By recognising the significance of the cultural industry and harnessing its potential, governance can effectively communicate the exceptional qualities of the event. The cultural

industry serves as a conduit for showcasing its uniqueness, fostering community pride, attracting participants and spectators, and contributing to its overall success. Through the artistry, heritage preservation, media exposure, and creative endeavours facilitated by the cultural industry, the event becomes a remarkable and alluring experience that sets it apart from others.

In summary, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of events play a significant role in shaping the identity and attractiveness of a place. As a valuable space shared by a community, governance plays a crucial role in understanding and defining what makes a place remarkable and appealing. The cultural industry serves as a powerful communication tool in showcasing the role and significance of a place, promoting its cultural heritage and creative expressions. Moreover, the support and engagement of the local community are essential for the success of events, as they are more likely to endorse initiatives that bring tangible benefits and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

Building upon these considerations, it is important to explore the various types of events that can be organised to further enhance the sense of place and generate positive impacts. By understanding the different categories and purposes of events, cities and communities can strategically plan and implement initiatives that align with their goals and aspirations. From cultural festivals and artistic performances to sports competitions and conferences, each type of event offers unique opportunities for community engagement, economic development, and cultural exchange.

In the following paragraphs, we will delve into the different types of events and their potential contributions to the vitality and growth of a place. By examining specific examples and highlighting their impacts, we will gain a deeper understanding of how events can shape the identity, promote local culture, attract visitors, and foster community well-being.

### 2.2.1 Types of events

Planned events encompass a diverse range of types, each serving different purposes and attracting various audiences. These events can be categorised based on their intended outcomes and the nature of their activities.

One category of planned events is public celebration, often referred to as community festivals. These events are designed to bring communities together in a spirit of joy and celebration. They showcase local traditions, cultural heritage, and foster a sense of belonging and identity among the participants.

Another type of planned event is focused on competition, exemplified by the Olympic Games. These events gather athletes from around the world to compete in various sports disciplines, promoting athletic excellence, international cooperation, and friendly competition.

Educational and scientific events, such as EXPOs, serve as platforms for sharing knowledge, innovation, and technological advancements. They provide opportunities for countries and organisations to showcase their achievements, exchange ideas, and collaborate on pressing global issues.

Arts and entertainment events, including concerts, theatre performances, and film festivals, offer cultural experiences and entertainment to audiences. These events celebrate artistic expression, creativity, and provide a platform for artists to showcase their talent and engage with the public.

Business and trade congresses cater to professionals in specific industries, providing networking opportunities, knowledge exchange, and discussions on industry trends and challenges. These events support economic growth, business development, and foster collaboration among industry stakeholders.

Planned events can also be distinguished based on their scale and frequency. Small events are typically held in private or corporate settings, often with a limited number of attendees. While they may have significant meaning to those involved, they generally do not attract extensive media attention. Policy decisions for small events may revolve around health standards, environmentally sustainable operations, and obtaining necessary permits.

In contrast, large-scale events take place in the public sphere and have the potential to impact entire communities. These include festivals, major sports events, fairs, and exhibitions. Large events generate widespread media coverage and shape public attitudes and perceptions. Policy decisions for such events may involve bidding processes, infrastructure investments, feasibility studies, and impact assessments commissioned to evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of hosting the event.

Understanding the different types and scales of planned events is crucial for event organisers, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in event planning and management. It allows for tailored strategies, resource allocation, and policy considerations to ensure the successful execution of events and maximise their intended outcomes for the benefit of the community and participants involved (Getz, 2012; Hall, 1992).

## 2.3 Event tourism

Event tourism, a subdivision of cultural tourism, has seen a notable increase during the last two decades. The main aim of event tourism is organising and promoting events in a city or region in the hope of attracting domestic and international tourists. For tourism development, events are often seen as a solution of product differentiation and seasonality), but also for small cities that intend to promote their territory, especially in destinations lacking imposing monuments or outstanding natural resources. Events tourism is today a field of study coupled with events management.

According to definition given by Getz (1997), event tourism is a “systemic planning, development and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, image-makers, catalyst for infrastructure and economic growth”.

On the one hand, tourism management deals with tourism development based on analysing the behaviour and motivations of the different groups of tourists.

On the other hand, event management deals with marketing, design, and management of events, trying to understand the event experiences and to manage them.

Hence, event tourism is in the middle of the two sectors. This means that event tourism aims at a full exploitation of the capabilities of events in order to achieve tourism development of host communities.

The study of events has long existed within many disciplines, such as anthropology, geography or economics of events, but the term event studies seem to have been coined in the 2000's. Therefore, according to some scholars there would be no reason to consider event tourism as a separate field of study because events and tourism go hand in hand (Getz, 2007). Events have always been viewed as being part of tourism. However, slowly, the event industry has gained so much recognition as a separate industry from tourism. This recognition is reflected in the educational landscape, where many universities now offer specialised event management degrees that are entirely separate from travel and tourism programs. Many universities now offer event management degrees totally separated from travel and tourism. The constraint is that both tourism and events are necessary to understand this kind of experience. Today, event tourism is generally covered within tourism degrees programs as a topic or a single course (Getz, 2007).

The growing recognition of the event industry as a separate field of study can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, events have become increasingly diverse and complex, requiring specialised knowledge and skills for effective planning, management, and execution (Getz,

2007). The event industry encompasses a wide range of events, including festivals, conferences, exhibitions, sports events, and cultural celebrations, each with its unique requirements and intricacies. Thus, there is a need for focused education and training to meet the specific demands of event management.

Secondly, the economic and social significance of events has become more apparent. Events have the potential to generate substantial economic impact, attract visitors, and enhance the reputation and image of a destination (Pasala, 2017). As a result, the event industry has gained prominence as a driver of local economies, job creation, and community development (Getz, 2007). This growing importance has prompted universities to recognize the need for specialised education and training to meet the industry's demands.

Moreover, the event industry has evolved its own distinct body of knowledge, theories, and practices. As events have become more sophisticated and strategic in their planning and execution, there has been a greater emphasis on understanding event experiences, event marketing, event design, and event evaluation (Getz, 2007). These specialised areas of knowledge require dedicated academic programs to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the event industry and equip them with the necessary skills to excel in this field.

The separation of event management degrees from travel and tourism programs does not imply a complete disconnection between the two fields. On the contrary, there are inherent synergies between events and tourism, and a comprehensive understanding of both is valuable for professionals in the event industry. However, recognizing the distinct nature of the event industry allows for a more targeted and specialised approach to education, ensuring that aspiring event professionals acquire the knowledge and skills needed to excel in their chosen field (Getz, 2007).

Overall, the recognition of event management as a separate industry from tourism underscores its growing significance and contribution to economic, cultural, and social development. The availability of dedicated event management programs in universities reflects the industry's maturation and the need for specialised education to meet the evolving demands of this dynamic field (Getz, 2007).

When organising an event, some destinations may indeed choose not to focus on developing the tourist sector and attracting new tourists, but instead prioritise targeting the local population. In areas that already attract a significant number of visitors, the local community may start to perceive their own heritage as solely catering to tourists. This disconnection between the local heritage and the local community can become problematic, as it may lead

to feelings of exclusion or a loss of cultural identity. To address this issue, some destinations opt to organise small events that primarily target the local population, rather than aiming for a broader international audience (Telltale, 2015).

These types of events, known as «local events,» are specifically designed to appeal to and engage the local community. They are staged with the aim of providing social, fun, and entertaining experiences for the locals. By organising these events, destinations seek to strengthen the connection between the community and their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and ownership among the residents. Additionally, local events can contribute to community cohesion, as they provide opportunities for social interaction and shared experiences among residents.

Organising events exclusively for the local population, known as «local events,» is a strategic approach adopted by some destinations to focus on engaging and satisfying the needs of the community rather than targeting external tourists. These events aim to bridge the gap between the local heritage and the local community, addressing the issue of disconnection that may arise in areas attracting a high number of visitors (Telltale, 2015).

Local events are designed to cater specifically to the interests, preferences, and cultural values of the local population. They serve as platforms for the community to celebrate their traditions, showcase their talents, and foster a sense of belonging and pride. Examples of local events include neighbourhood festivals, cultural exhibitions, community markets, and local music or art showcases.

The organisation of local events has multiple benefits for both the community and the destination. Firstly, it helps to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the local population, ensuring that traditions and customs are not solely perceived as attractions for tourists, but as meaningful elements of the local way of life (Telltale, 2015). By engaging residents in these events, a stronger connection between the community and their heritage is fostered.

Secondly, local events contribute to the local economy by supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs. These events provide opportunities for local vendors, artisans, performers, and service providers to showcase their products and talents, generating income within the community. For example, a local food festival featuring dishes prepared by local restaurants and food producers can boost the local culinary industry and stimulate economic growth.

Moreover, local events can mitigate the negative impacts of overtourism and preserve the authenticity of the destination. By limiting the audience to the local population, these events help maintain a sense of place and prevent the commodification of local culture. They

provide an opportunity for the community to reclaim their spaces and traditions, counterbalancing the potential feelings of invasion or displacement caused by tourism.

For instance, the town of Buena Vista in Colorado, USA, organises an annual «Gold Rush Days» event, which celebrates the town's rich mining history and engages the local population through historical reenactments, live music, and community gatherings. This event not only showcases the town's heritage but also encourages local participation and pride in their unique history.

In conclusion, local events are a valuable tool for destinations to connect with and engage their local population, preserve cultural heritage, stimulate the local economy, and counteract the negative impacts of tourism. By organising events exclusively for locals, destinations can foster a sense of belonging, pride, and ownership within the community while maintaining the authenticity and character of the destination (Telltale, 2015).

Consequently, festivals have not only shaped cultures and communities but have also emerged as significant drivers of tourism. The phenomenon of event tourism has gained substantial attention in recent years, as festivals attract both local and international visitors, generating economic benefits for host destinations. The allure of experiencing unique cultural expressions, engaging in festive atmospheres, and immersing oneself in the local traditions has turned festivals into major tourist attractions. However, beyond their economic implications, festivals hold a profound social impact that extends far beyond the tourism realm.

Transitioning to the social impact of festivals, we enter a realm where these vibrant celebrations take on even greater significance. While economic benefits are undeniable, festivals have the power to foster social cohesion, encourage cultural exchange, and empower communities. This is the main argument of the thesis: the transformative social influence of festivals on individuals, groups, and societies. By examining the social dimensions of festivals, we gain a deeper understanding of how these communal gatherings contribute to social integration, cultural preservation, identity formation, and the strengthening of community bonds. Let us now explore the profound social impact of festivals and their profound influence on the fabric of societies.

## 2.4. Festivals: the origin of the word

As stated by many scholars such as Falassi and Cudny (2016, p13), a festival is an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in all human societies and cultures. Festivals have existed since antiquity, and they were the cultural and religious emanation of tribes.

Festivals have a rich and diverse history that spans across millennia, with their origins deeply rooted in the cultural and religious practices of ancient tribes and communities (Morris, 1991). These vibrant gatherings served as profound manifestations of communal identity, enabling tribes to express their shared beliefs, values, and customs in a tangible and immersive manner.

In antiquity, festivals held immense significance as they provided a unique opportunity for tribes to come together and partake in collective celebrations. These gatherings often revolved around important events such as the changing of seasons, bountiful harvests, religious ceremonies, or pivotal moments in tribal history. By participating in festivals, members of the tribe not only reinforced their social bonds but also reinforced their sense of belonging to a larger collective (Morris, 1991).

One such example of an ancient festival is the Panathenaia in ancient Greece, celebrated in the city-state of Athens. Held every four years, the Panathenaia was dedicated to the goddess Athena, the patron deity of the city. This grand festival encompassed a wide array of activities, including athletic competitions, musical performances, processions, and the presentation of a new robe, the peplos, to the statue of Athena on the Acropolis (Cartledge, 2018). It was a time when Athenians from various social strata would come together to honour their goddess and express their collective Athenian identity.

In ancient Rome, the festival of Saturnalia stands as another remarkable example of ancient festivities. Saturnalia, held in honour of the god Saturn, took place in mid-December, and was characterised by an atmosphere of joy and revelry (Beard, 2016). During this festival, social norms were temporarily inverted, and slaves were allowed to partake in feasts alongside their masters, while gift-giving, feasting, and general merrymaking filled the streets of Rome. Saturnalia served as a means to reaffirm societal bonds and to celebrate the abundance of the harvest season.

Moving to South Asia, the festival of Holi in ancient and modern India offers a vivid illustration of a vibrant ancient celebration. Rooted in Hindu mythology, Holi marks the arrival of spring and is renowned for its exuberant display of colours. Participants engage in throwing vibrant coloured powders and water at each other, singing, and dancing to

traditional music, and enjoying festive sweets. Holi is a time when social barriers are momentarily cast aside, and people from all walks of life come together to celebrate the triumph of good over evil and the arrival of a new season.

These examples highlight the deep historical significance and cultural richness of ancient festivals. They demonstrate how festivals in antiquity served as pivotal moments for tribes and communities to gather, celebrate their shared heritage, and forge bonds that reinforced their social fabric and collective identity. By engaging in these festivities, ancient people found a profound sense of belonging and connection to their roots, echoing the timeless human desire to celebrate, unite, and express cultural and religious values (Crawford, 2015).

Later, as a result of cultural advancements and other things, they have developed and diversified. Since the last century this kind of event has attracted the interest of scholars from different disciplines, such as comparative religion, anthropology, sociology, and folklore.

In the ancient Greek and Roman world festivals were very important, both for their social and political organisations and institutions, as they set the rhythm of the year and ensured the divine protection of the public and private spheres, involving the population in common acts centred on common symbols (Brandt & Iddeng, 2013).

Festivals remain vital to civilisation today and their role is recognised by anthropologists as central to understanding of human culture, customs and beliefs.

Although festivals have a long origin, the word describing this type of event is less ancient.

The origin of the word 'festival' can be traced to the Latin 'festum' meaning 'a religious holiday' (Collinsdictionary), feast (Isar, 1976). The word then came into Middle English through Old French and was first used in the 15th century as an adjective meaning "relating to a feast", moving then into a noun in the 16th century. Originally, Latin had two words for festive events: *fēstum* "for public joy, merriment, revelry", and *feria*, meaning "abstinence from work in honour of the gods". Both terms were used in plural, which indicates that at that time festivals lasted many days and included many events. Later, in classical Latin the two terms became synonyms, and the two types of events merged.

From the word *festa* derived therefore the Italian *festa*, the French *fete* and *festival* (adj), the Spanish *fiesta*, the Portuguese *festa*, the Middle English *feste*, *feste dai*, *festial* and then *festival*, at first an adjective connoting events and successively a noun denoting them.

As for *feria*, the word had a semantic meaning of lack, intermission and absence that remained in the original meaning of the Italian word *feria* (abstinence from work in honour of a saint), *ferie* (time away from work), and *giorni feriali* (days of absence of religious ceremonies).

In contemporary English the word festival means a sacred or profane marked by special observance; the annual celebration of a notable person or event, or the harvest of an important product; a cultural event consisting of a series of performance of works in the arts, often devoted to a single artist or genre; a fair; general gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness.

Similar meanings of the word are found in all Romance languages.

According to the Cambridge dictionary a festival is “an organised set of special events, such as musical performances or plays, usually happening in one place, or a special day or period, usually in memory of a religious event, with its own social activities, food, or ceremonies”<sup>15</sup>.

The Macmillan dictionary defines a festival as “a day or period when there is a public holiday, often to celebrate a religious event”.

To date there is any official definition of festival, however, some scholars such as Getz and Falassi have tried to give a definition taking into consideration the works of other scholars.

As for the social sciences, the definition inferred by Falassi (1987, p2) from the work of scholars who have dealt with festivals while studying social and rituals events from the point of view of different disciplines is as it follows:

“Periodically recurrent, social occasion in which through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds and sharing a worldview”.

Having explored the origin of the word "festival," we now shift our focus to the captivating history of these celebratory gatherings. Festivals have evolved into multifaceted phenomena that go beyond simple definitions. Scholars such as Getz and Falassi have delved into their social and ritualistic aspects, emphasising the participation of entire communities bound by shared bonds and worldviews. Festivals encompass a diverse array of forms and coordinated events, providing individuals with opportunities to celebrate their cultural, religious, and historical connections. By delving into the history of festivals, we unravel a vibrant tapestry of human celebrations, tracing their origins, understanding their cultural significance, and witnessing their transformation over the centuries.

### 2.4.1 Festivals: origin and significance

Festivals have been an integral part of human culture for thousands of years, with their origins dating back to ancient civilizations. Festivals have been documented in various

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<sup>15</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/festival>

cultures throughout history, spanning from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt to classical Greece and Rome, as well as indigenous cultures around the world.

In ancient times, festivals served religious, social, and cultural purposes. They were often associated with important events, such as harvests, solstices, religious observances, rites of passage, and commemorations of historical or mythological events. Festivals provided communities with opportunities for communal gatherings, celebrations, rituals, feasting, and entertainment.

For example, the ancient Olympic Games in Greece were held as a religious and sporting festival that began in the 8th century BCE and continued for several centuries. Similarly, the Chinese New Year has a history of over 3,000 years, originating from ancient Chinese traditions.

The 18th century did witness significant changes in the nature and organisation of festivals, particularly in Western societies, due to the emergence of the Industrial Revolution and changing social structures. These changes brought about new forms of public celebrations and entertainment, including fairs, carnivals, and music festivals. Genetically, the festival is close to the festive ritual folk culture, but its development took place during the period of urbanisation and globalisation. Festival, having such formal features as the closed space, attachment to the venue, the predominance of the performance as the main format, a pronounced distance and the differentiation of festival participants into actors and spectators. One belief is that festivals can ensure rich harvests. Agricultural festivals are often held to seek blessings for a bountiful harvest. These celebrations involve rituals and festivities to honour deities or nature spirits associated with fertility and abundance.

Another belief is that festivals can protect against diseases and ward off evil spirits. Purification rituals are often performed during festivals to cleanse individuals, communities, or spaces. Fire, symbolising transformation, is frequently utilised to burn away impurities, negative energies, and bad luck, allowing for a fresh start. These rituals are believed to create a protective barrier and promote well-being.

Festivals also serve as opportunities for communal unity and bonding. They bring people together, strengthen social connections, and celebrate shared traditions and values. This sense of community is believed to bring good fortune and reinforce social harmony.

Furthermore, festivals often align with significant seasonal or celestial events. They acknowledge the cyclical nature of life, honour cosmic forces, and seek harmony with the natural rhythms of the world. By aligning with these larger forces, festivals aim to tap into their power and influence for positive outcomes.

Overall, festivals have long been associated with beliefs and intentions aimed at ensuring prosperity, protection, purification, and fostering a sense of unity. They reflect human desires to connect with the divine, harmonise with nature, and create favourable circumstances for individuals and communities.

Festivals and special events play a crucial role in communities' lives today as they provide significant activities and spending outlets both for locals and visitors, at the same time improving the image of local communities (Getz, 1993).

Like other types of large event festivals have a limited duration. The duration of festivals can vary significantly, ranging from a single day to several weeks or even months. The length of a festival often depends on various factors, including the nature of the event, cultural traditions, logistical considerations, and the desired impact on tourism and local economies.

Some festivals stand out for their extended duration, offering participants and visitors an immersive and prolonged experience. One notable example is the *Gentse Feesten*, also known as the Ghent Festival, held annually in Ghent, Belgium. This past festival spanned over a period of ten days, transforming the city into a vibrant cultural hub (Visitgent, 2024). The *Gentse Feesten* attracted a diverse audience with its wide range of activities, including music performances, street theatre, art exhibitions, cultural events, and culinary experiences. The festival's extended duration allowed for a deeper connection with the city's cultural offerings and created a memorable experience for both locals and visitors.

Similarly, the Rio Carnival in Brazil captivates attendees with its two-week extravaganza of parades, music, and dance. Another prominent festival with an extended duration is the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which runs for three weeks and features a diverse array of performing arts (Ritchie & Aitken, 1984). The Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany, also known for its lengthy duration of approximately 16 to 18 days, celebrates Bavarian culture and draws millions of visitors (Woodside, 1990).

These examples demonstrate how festivals with longer durations provide ample opportunities for cultural immersion, community engagement, and economic impact. The extended festival periods allow for a more immersive and transformative experience, enticing participants and visitors to fully engage with the festivities.

However, what distinguishes festivals from other types of events are “community/society and celebration-oriented features” (Arcodia & Robb, 2000, p. 156-157) often celebrating a theme which has developed from within the community itself, where a ‘community’ refers to a group of people who have a geographic or locational commonality (Butcher, 1993).

The original appeal of the festivals stems from the fact that they are out of ordinary life far from celebration and entertainment media. Festivals are usually organised with an aim for protecting and developing national identity, local culture and history, recreation, making employment opportunities and developing the local tourism industry (Günersel, 1997, p. 28; Duffy, 2005, p 680; Quinn, 2013).

Exactly like carnivals, festivals are to be joyous experiences. They give people the opportunity to go away from the everyday routine, temporarily abandon the everyday life social roles and experience the hedonistic. During festivals people interact and forget about their social roles (Caillois, 2001; Cudny, 2014), they are taken out of their normal behaviour (Davies, 2015, p535) and let themselves be carried away from the desire of transgression, rebellion, and protest. This “antithetic behaviour” (Piette, 1992) of festivals, destroying social order and conventions, was already observed in primal tribes and ancient cultures, for instance in Greece (Dionysia) or Rome (Saturnalia) and is still present in festivals organised for youth of connected with different kinds of subcultures (e.g., Woodstock) (Cudny, 2014). Festivals can range from solemn and sacred festivals to profane carnivals marked by wild revelry.

For an outside spectator to be imbued with the ideas of the festival, to be able to connect to this ritual, he needs to be involved in this event, directly by his complicity. On the contrary, the festival will become for him only a one-time event and will not be the moment that he will live as a certain existential and important event in your life.

As a rule, a festival in today's cultural tradition is a demonstration of the achievements of art in the field of music, theatre, variety art, and circus.

According to Isar (1976), a festival “something exceptional and out of the ordinary, something that must create a special atmosphere which stems not only from the quality of the art and the production, but also from the countryside, the ambience of a city and the traditions of a region”.

Festivals are full of rituals of entertainment, spectacle and remembrance and they bring people together.

In order to be qualified as a festival, “an event had to meet at least one (and preferably more than one) of the following criteria: use of the name “festival” in the event name, it being an irregular, one-off, annual or biannual event, emphasis on celebrating, promoting or exploring some aspects of the local culture, or being an unusual point of convergence for people with a given cultural activity, or of a specific subcultural identification” (Gibson and Stewart, 2009, p3).

The number of festivals organised around the world is significantly increasing. In recent years, festivals and special events have become one of the fastest growing types of tourism attractions in the world (Getz, 1997). Like other typologies of events, festivals are increasingly seen as unique tourist attractions and destination image makers.

A well established and extensive international literature now attests to the significant impact of festivals on the economic, political, and socio-cultural realms (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). Growing awareness of these potential benefits, especially in economic and tourism terms, has further contributed to the spreading of festivals around the world already determined by several demand and production factors.

They motivate travel, animate otherwise static attractions, create a positive image of the destination, act as a catalyst for development, and mobilise community tourism planning (Getz, 1990), fostering community pride. Besides that, festivals reproduce a unique knowledge accumulation and preserve the history, cultural heritage and social structures that differ from each other (Kladou, 2011, p27).

Festivals also have spillover effects, not only by employing people in the cultural professions and raising awareness and consumption of the arts locally, but also by increasing earnings in the hospitality industry, etc.

Festivals have a major impact on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities (Raj, 2003, p3).

Local communities and visitors attend them impatiently to celebrate important moments, people, or local characteristics.

Over time, the success of these festivals and events as tourist destinations leads to the formation of new jobs and overall economic development of the community.

Their success is more dependent upon the enthusiasm of the local community and event organisers than upon unique natural or built attractions (Getz, 1993; Jepson & Clarke, 2015; Turco & Kelsey, 1992). Most importantly, festivals and small events require minimal capital development and are less dependent on facilities, in fact, they take advantage of existing infrastructure, such as parks, streets, theatres, concert halls and all other public or private venues (Getz & Page, 2016). Furthermore, they tend to be intensive and locally controlled. Nevertheless, they have the potential of bringing a range of benefits and development to host destinations, such as generating substantial profits on small financial investments (Getz, 1993). These effects may vary from event to event and from place to place depending on the political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental context in which they occur.

In conclusion, festivals have been an enduring and integral part of human culture, dating back to ancient civilizations. They have evolved over time, serving religious, social, and cultural purposes, while also adapting to changing social structures and economic contexts. Festivals continue to play a crucial role in communities' lives today, providing significant activities and spending outlets for locals and visitors alike, and improving the image of local communities. With their diverse range of themes, durations, and immersive experiences, festivals serve as powerful tools for cultural immersion, community engagement, and economic development. They bring people together, foster a sense of unity, and celebrate shared traditions and values. Furthermore, festivals have a significant impact on cultural tourism, attracting visitors from around the world and contributing to the overall growth and development of host destinations. Their unique blend of entertainment, spectacle, and cultural significance makes them exceptional occasions that connect individuals with their heritage and create memorable experiences. As festivals continue to thrive in an ever-globalizing world, they remain as cherished celebrations of humanity's rich diversity and collective spirit.

## 2.4.2 Ritual of fire in festivals

The element of fire has been a central phenomenon in the development of both the natural and the human worlds. Since early primitive societies, humankind has remained frightened but also fascinated by fire with its innate power to destroy and create. With its visual allure, energy, and protector element fire has always had a high congregational power, and has therefore been a generator of sociability (Belda, 2018, p72). People began to play with the incredible power of fire, its destructive ability on the one side and its creativity on the other. This fascination for fire led people to play with it (Presdee, 2000, 122; Perceval, 2015).

The importance of fire for the continuation of social life inevitably led to the fact that fire became an important aspect of social and cultural life and quickly found its place in the ceremonies and celebrations of social life. Fire marked both life and death, the beginning and the end of the seasons, the powerful and the powerless. This duality of destruction and creativity, fear and fascination, death and life lies inside us and is the result of social actions over time, played out through social structures and relationships that have slowly manifested themselves through forms and formations of culture. Fire has slowly permeated our emotional character, deepening our cultural consciousness (p.123).

From religious rites to fiestas, fire rituals have been part since remote ages. It includes burning effigies, walking on hot coals, pyrotechnics etc. Since ancient times it was believed

of festivals to ensure rich harvests, protect against diseases, remove impurity and unwanted (Belda, 2018) and expel evil spirits.

In Japan, for instance, fire is known for its power to purify and is associated with the coming and going of spirits (Eckelmann, 2012).

These festivals, deeply rooted in local culture and preserving their own traditions, have been continuously passed down from generation to generation and are still held as annual events. Reports that evidence of fire rituals have been found in Neolithic sites in Japan have led some scholars to speculate that the origin of these fire festivals can be traced back to that time (Ogata, 2020).

All these concepts—congregation, sociability, purification, reflection, artistic expression—are interwoven by a common thread: communication (Belda, 2018).

Festivals of fire are cultural celebrations that centre around the element of fire and its symbolism. These festivals can be found in various cultures around the world and often have historical, religious, or seasonal significance. While specific traditions and rituals may vary, here are a few examples of festivals of fire and what they typically celebrate:

1. Bonfire Night (Guy Fawkes Night) - United Kingdom: celebrated on November 5th, Bonfire Night commemorates the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605 when a group of conspirators, including Guy Fawkes, attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London. The festival involves lighting bonfires, setting off fireworks, and burning effigies of Guy Fawkes.

2. Lohri - India: Punjabi festival celebrated in the northern region of India, primarily in Punjab. It marks the end of winter and the arrival of longer days. The festival is associated with the harvest season and is celebrated by lighting bonfires, singing traditional songs, dancing, and feasting.

3. Up Helly Aa - Scotland: Up Helly Aa is an annual festival held in Shetland, Scotland, usually on the last Tuesday in January. It celebrates the Viking heritage of the region. The highlight of the festival is a torch-lit procession, where participants dress up as Vikings and carry flaming torches. The event culminates in the burning of a Viking longship.

4. Las Fallas - Spain: the major festival held in Valencia, Spain, from March 15th to March 19th each year. It is a celebration of Saint Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters. The festival

involves large, elaborate sculptures called "fallas" made of wood and papier-mâché. These sculptures are displayed throughout the city and are eventually set ablaze on the final night of the festival.

5. Diwali (Festival of Lights) - India and other countries: one of the most important Hindu festivals celebrated worldwide, symbolising the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. The festival usually falls between October and November. It involves lighting oil lamps or candles, decorating homes with lights, exchanging gifts, fireworks, and feasting. The festival is associated with various mythological stories and has cultural and religious significance.

6. Hanabi Taikai (Fireworks Festivals) - Japan: Hanabi Taikai refers to various fireworks festivals held throughout Japan during the summer months. These festivals are celebrated with spectacular firework displays choreographed to music. They are a popular way to mark special occasions, such as summer festivals, religious events, or commemorations of historical events.

7. Chaharshanbe Suri (Fire Festival) - Iran: Chaharshanbe Suri, also known as the Persian Fire Festival, is celebrated on the last Wednesday of the Persian calendar year, just before the arrival of the Persian New Year (Nowruz). It involves jumping over bonfires and lighting firecrackers as a way to cleanse oneself of the past year's misfortunes and welcome the new year with joy and purification.

8. Timkat (Epiphany) - Ethiopia: religious festival celebrated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to commemorate the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. The festival takes place on January 19th and involves processions, prayers, and the reenactment of the baptism ceremony. Bonfires are lit the night before as a symbol of enlightenment and purification.

9. Las Luminarias - Mexico: annual festival celebrated in San Bartolome de Pinares, a small town near Madrid, Spain, and its traditions have been brought to Mexico as well. The festival takes place on the eve of Saint Anthony's Day (January 16th). Horseback riders jump over bonfires as a part of the procession, symbolising the purification and protection of the animals for the upcoming year.

10. Beltane - Celtic and Neopagan Traditions: Beltane is an ancient Celtic festival celebrated on May 1st, marking the beginning of summer. It is associated with fertility, growth, and the return of the sun's warmth. Bonfires are lit, and rituals are performed to welcome the season of abundance and protect against evil spirits. It is also celebrated by modern-day neopagan communities as a time of renewal and celebrating the natural world.

These are just a few examples of festivals of fire. Each festival has its unique cultural context, traditions, and symbolism, but they all share a common theme of celebrating fire in various forms and expressing joy, renewal, or historical events.

These festivals highlight the diverse cultural expressions and beliefs associated with fire. Whether it is for religious, seasonal, historical, or symbolic reasons, these celebrations bring communities together to honour fire as a powerful and transformative element.

As these festivals continue to captivate and inspire, they have also become a significant aspect of event tourism. Event tourism, also known as festival tourism or event-based tourism, refers to the travel and participation in events that hold significance, uniqueness, or cultural importance.

Fire festivals, with their rich cultural heritage and captivating displays, have become magnets for travellers seeking immersive and extraordinary experiences. These events allow visitors to engage with the local community, witness ancient rituals, and witness the power of fire as a central element in cultural expression. Event tourism, facilitated by the cultural industry, brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering cultural exchange and appreciation.

The cultural industry plays a pivotal role in promoting and organising these fire festivals as major attractions for event tourism. Through strategic marketing, media coverage, and collaboration with local communities, the cultural industry brings attention to these festivals, attracting visitors from around the world. The economic benefits of event tourism extend to local businesses, accommodations, and the preservation of cultural heritage, ensuring the sustainability and continuation of these vibrant celebrations.

By embracing event tourism and recognising the cultural significance of festivals of fire, destinations can not only attract visitors but also foster cultural understanding and appreciation. These festivals serve as platforms for communities to showcase their unique traditions, values, and artistic expressions, enhancing their sense of pride and identity.

In conclusion, festivals of fire encapsulate the profound human connection to fire and its role in cultural expression. They bring people together, transcend borders, and ignite a sense of

wonder. As the cultural industry continues to promote and support these festivals, event tourism allows for a deeper understanding of diverse cultures and fosters a global appreciation for the transformative power of fire.

## 2.5 Social impacts of events

Hosting a festival is not without risks and costs. Festivals can have both positive and negative impacts. The existing literature about festivals and mega-events has largely focused on their economic impacts, whereas social impacts and their measures remain elusive and highly contested due to their undetermined duration and relatively qualitative nature (Ritchie et al., 2020).

Social impacts have been defined as ‘any impacts that potentially have an impact on the quality of life for local residents’ (Fredline et al., 2003, p. 6).

They can be considered as individual-level (e.g., civil liberty, participation), community-level (e.g., gentrification), host city-level (e.g. pride), and national-level (destination image/accessibility) (Smith et al., 2019).

While economic benefits are clearly quantifiable (e.g., direct and indirect economic outcomes, job creation, and inbound investment), social impacts are harder to discern and measure objectively (Ritchie et al., 2009). They include intangible elements such as increased civic pride, social capital, enhanced destination image, and the development of new business networks.

Events have the potential to generate a range of impacts on the places where they are held, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. On the positive side, events can stimulate economic growth by attracting visitors, generating tourism revenue, and creating employment opportunities in various sectors (Getz, 2012). For example, research on mega-events like the Olympics and World Expos has shown significant economic benefits for host cities, including increased tourism expenditure, job creation, and infrastructure development (Preuss, 2007).

Events play a significant role in positively impacting the social fabric of communities. They foster a sense of community pride and identity, bringing people together and promoting social cohesion and participation (Chalip, 2004). Cultural events provide platforms for strengthening and showcasing local traditions, arts, and performances, enhancing cultural expression and appreciation (Richards, 2011). Through these events, communities have the opportunity to celebrate their unique heritage and engage in cultural exchange, fostering

understanding among diverse groups of people (Derrett, 2003). Moreover, events contribute to social engagement and inclusion by providing opportunities for community members to actively participate and contribute. They create spaces for collaboration, volunteerism, and collective action, strengthening the sense of belonging and empowerment within the community. By involving individuals in event planning and organisation, events can foster a stronger connection to the community and contribute to its growth and development.

Events also leave a lasting social impact and legacy. They can inspire positive change, mobilise resources, and raise awareness about important social issues. By aligning event objectives with social causes, such as fundraising for charity, promoting sustainability, or supporting local initiatives, events act as catalysts for social progress and community development.

Additionally, events offer educational components, workshops, and skill-building opportunities. They provide a platform for individuals to learn new skills, expand their knowledge, and enhance their personal development. By incorporating educational resources into events, attendees are empowered and encouraged to pursue lifelong learning.

Furthermore, events facilitate social connections and networking. They create opportunities for professionals, entrepreneurs, and community members to meet, exchange ideas, and collaborate. These connections can lead to new friendships, partnerships, and business opportunities, fostering social and economic growth within the community.

In conclusion, events contribute positively to the social pillar by promoting community engagement, social inclusion, skill development, interconnectedness, and leaving a lasting social impact. They strengthen community bonds, celebrate diversity, and provide platforms for social interaction and growth.

However, events can also have negative impacts that need to be addressed.

On the other hand, among the negative impacts there are traffic congestion, road closure, overcrowding, vandalism, increased antisocial behaviour, alienation and manipulation of society and negative social image.

A festival or event that has more negative than positive impacts will quickly lose the support of the local community and become untenable.

According to the exchange theory, those who benefit from the hosting of events tend to support them, others might feel marginalised or disadvantaged.

Environmental concerns arise due to increased waste generation, energy consumption, and pollution associated with large-scale events (Caratti & Ferraguto, 2012). Traffic congestion and noise can disrupt the daily lives of residents and create inconvenience (Chalip, 2004).

In addition to the environmental concerns and disruptions to daily life caused by events, there are other important factors that can have negative impacts. One of these is the feeling of exclusion that some individuals may experience when it comes to decision-making processes for events. It is essential to ensure that all stakeholders, including residents, have a voice and are included in the planning and decision-making stages. By involving the community, their concerns and perspectives can be taken into account, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusivity.

Another issue that arises is the potential diversion of funds, where the financial benefits of events may not always directly benefit the local community. In some cases, money generated from events may be redirected to external organisations or entities abroad, which can lead to frustration and a perceived lack of local economic benefit. It is crucial for event organisers to be transparent about how the funds will be utilised and to prioritise supporting local businesses, vendors, and communities whenever possible.

The influx of tourists during events can also create a sense of invasion and displacement for residents. Increased tourism can result in overcrowding, strain on infrastructure, and reduced attention to the needs of the local population. Additionally, rising prices and gentrification can further exacerbate these issues, making it difficult for long-term residents to afford living in their own neighbourhoods. It is essential to strike a balance that allows for tourism and event-related economic benefits while ensuring the well-being and quality of life for residents.

Understanding and addressing these concerns is crucial for fostering positive perceptions and minimising negative impacts associated with events. By actively involving the local community, ensuring transparent financial practices, and implementing measures to mitigate the effects of tourism, event organisers can work towards creating a harmonious and inclusive environment that benefits both residents and visitors alike.

To tackle these impacts, event organisers and host communities can adopt sustainable event management practices. This includes minimising waste through recycling and waste reduction strategies, using renewable energy sources, and implementing eco-friendly transportation options (Bowdin et al., 2011). Engaging local stakeholders, including residents and businesses, in the event planning process is crucial for addressing concerns and ensuring community support.

Furthermore, conducting comprehensive impact assessments before and after events provides valuable insights into the positive and negative consequences. This information can inform future event planning, allowing organisers to maximise positive impacts and mitigate

negative ones (Ritchie and Smith, 1991). It also aids in developing appropriate strategies and policies to manage the impacts effectively.

In summary, events have the potential to bring various positive impacts such as economic growth, social cohesion, and cultural exchange. However, it is essential to proactively address and manage the potential negative impacts through sustainable practices, stakeholder engagement, and impact assessments. By doing so, events can serve as catalysts for positive change, benefiting host communities in a balanced and responsible manner.

The local community is more likely to support the event if the perceived benefits exceed the costs derived from them. As founded by Turco (1998, p31), the majority of residents that received social benefits from an event were more likely to support the public funding of facility development and event promotions.

## 2.6. Key Aspects of Social Impact in Events: Influencing Lives and Communities

In the context of social impacts of events, it is essential to consider various aspects of people's lives and how they are influenced by event activities. These include:

1. **Way of Life:** Events can have an impact on people's daily lives, including how they live, work, play, and interact with one another. By providing opportunities for social engagement, community participation, and cultural expression, events contribute to the overall lifestyle and well-being of individuals (Getz, 2012; Getz & Page, 2016).
2. **Culture:** Events play a significant role in showcasing and celebrating local traditions, customs, values, and language. They provide a platform for cultural exchange, fostering understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures within a community (Richards, 2011).
3. **Community:** Events can strengthen the cohesion and character of a community by bringing people together and providing access to essential services and facilities. They create opportunities for community members to engage with one another, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity (Chalip, 2006; Bowdin et al., 2011).
4. **Political Systems:** Events can promote participatory decision-making and democratic processes within a community. By providing platforms for public engagement and dialogue,

events enable individuals to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, fostering empowerment and community development (Gursoy et al., 2018).

5. Environment: Events should be mindful of their environmental impact, including waste generation, energy consumption, and pollution. By adopting sustainable practices and minimising negative environmental effects, events contribute to creating a healthier and more sustainable community for residents and future generations (Gössling et al., 2019; Yuan, 2013).

6. Health and Well-being: Events can promote physical, mental, and social well-being by incorporating health-focused activities, wellness initiatives, and opportunities for personal growth. They provide platforms for education, skill development, and access to resources that enhance overall health and well-being (Getz, 2016).

7. Personal and Property Rights: Events should respect personal and property rights, ensuring that individuals are not economically affected or subjected to personal disadvantage. It is crucial to uphold civil liberties and promote a just and equitable society within the event framework (Getz, 2012; Gursoy et al., 2018).

8. Fears and Aspirations: Events should address the fears, concerns, and aspirations of the community. By creating a safe and inclusive environment, events can alleviate fears, inspire hope, and contribute to the overall well-being and positive future aspirations of individuals and the community as a whole (Bowdin et al., 2011; Gursoy et al., 2018).

Considering these various aspects of people's lives within the context of event planning and management allows for a comprehensive understanding of the social impacts of events and enables event organisers to create meaningful and positive experiences for the community.

Measuring the social impact of events is crucial to understand their effects on the host community and assess their contribution to social development. Various methods and indicators have been proposed to evaluate social impacts, providing valuable insights for event organisers, policymakers, and researchers. Social impact assessment frameworks often encompass multiple dimensions, including community well-being, social cohesion, cultural preservation, and community empowerment (Getz, 2012; Hall, 1997).

One common approach to measuring social impact is through surveys and questionnaires administered to event participants, local residents, and stakeholders. These instruments capture feedback on perceived changes in social connectedness, community pride, cultural appreciation, and other relevant aspects (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). Additionally, qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation can provide in-depth insights into the lived experiences and social dynamics associated with events.

Quantitative data can also be utilised to assess social impacts. Statistical analysis of secondary data sources, including visitor spending patterns, employment rates, crime rates, and community engagement indicators, can provide objective measures of social outcomes (Getz, 2012; Ritchie & Smith, 1991). Economic input-output models and social accounting matrices can help quantify the ripple effects of event-related spending on local businesses, employment, and income distribution (Hall, 1997).

It is important to note that social impact assessment should consider both short-term and long-term effects, as well as unintended consequences. Longitudinal studies tracking changes over time and comparison groups can enhance the robustness of social impact evaluations (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). Participatory approaches that involve local communities in the assessment process can also yield more comprehensive and context-specific insights into the social effects of events (Getz, 2012; Hall, 1997).

Overall, measuring the social impact of events requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as a multidimensional perspective that considers the diverse social outcomes. By employing rigorous measurement approaches, event organisers and stakeholders can better understand the social effects of events and make informed decisions to maximise positive impacts and mitigate negative ones.

As we conclude Chapter 1, we transition to Chapter 2, where we delve into a captivating case study that exemplifies the intricate relationship between events, culture, and social impact. Our focus turns to the vibrant city of Valencia and its iconic festival: Las Fallas.

Chapter 2 begins with a contextualisation of the territory of Valencia and an exploration of its rich history. By understanding the cultural heritage and unique characteristics of this region, we can fully appreciate the significance of Las Fallas within the local community. We will delve into Valencia's historical tapestry, tracing its origins and the diverse influences that have shaped the city's identity.

Within this context, we will then immerse ourselves in the Festival of Las Fallas, an extraordinary celebration that captivates both locals and visitors alike. From the grandiose

Fallas sculptures to the elaborate pyrotechnic displays, we will explore the essence of this unique festival, unravelling the symbolism, traditions, and artistic expressions that define it. Moreover, we will closely examine the social impact of Las Fallas on the local community. Through data analysis, we will uncover how the festival fosters social cohesion, promotes cultural heritage, and engenders a sense of belonging among Valencians. The chapter will shed light on the role of volunteers, community engagement, and the ways in which Las Fallas contributes to the overall well-being and social fabric of Valencia.

By delving into the case study of Las Fallas, Chapter 2 aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the festival's cultural, historical, and social significance. It will offer valuable insights into the transformative power of events and how they can shape communities, preserve traditions, and generate positive social impacts. Through this exploration, we strive to deepen our knowledge of the intricate relationship between events, culture, and the social dynamics that shape our world.

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 History and urban structure of Valencia.

The city of Valencia is located on the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula, on the great alluvial plain of the Júcar and Turia rivers, right in the centre of the gulf of Valencia.

It is the third largest city in Spain, with a population of 797,665 inhabitants, only counting the municipality (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2022).

The city presents many contrasts, as it has enjoyed a long and rich history. The legacy left by different civilisations which have reached these shores over the course of the centuries still remains not only in the city's monuments and streets but even in the heart of its inhabitants.

Founded by the Romans slightly away from the coast, the city was known as "Valentia Edetanorum" and had a favourable position regarding communication (on the great Roman coastal road) and the economic activity (it was surrounded by an environment of good agricultural conditions).

Valencia's strategic geographical position has played a significant role in its historical and cultural development. Thanks to its position on the coast the city benefits from a prime location that has facilitated trade, commerce, and cultural exchange throughout the centuries.

Furthermore, being situated on the great alluvial plain of the Júcar and Turia rivers, Valencia has access to fertile agricultural land that has supported the region's agricultural economy.

The fertile plains and favourable climate have made it an ideal location for cultivating crops such as oranges, rice, and vegetables, contributing to the city's renowned agricultural industry and culinary traditions.

Besides that, Valencia's location in the centre of the Gulf of Valencia has made it a natural hub for maritime trade and transportation. The port of Valencia, one of the busiest ports in the Mediterranean, has historically played a crucial role in facilitating trade connections with other Mediterranean countries and beyond. The port continues to be a vital gateway for imports and exports, contributing to the city's economic prosperity and international connectivity<sup>16</sup>.

The city's coastal position has also made it a popular tourist destination, with its beautiful sandy beaches and access to the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean climate, characterised by mild winters and warm summers, further enhances Valencia's appeal as a tourist hotspot and a preferred destination for sun-seekers and water sports enthusiasts.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.valenciaport.com/en/ports/valencia/the-port/>

In addition to its geographical advantages, Valencia's location has influenced its cultural heritage. The city has been influenced by various civilisations, including the Romans, Moors, and Christians, who left their architectural, artistic, and cultural imprints. Valencia's historic city centre, with its mix of mediaeval, Gothic, and modernist architecture, is a testament to its rich history and multicultural heritage.

In conclusion, Valencia's strategic position on the Mediterranean coast and its proximity to major waterways have shaped its economic, cultural, and historical development. Its access to fertile agricultural land, thriving port, and stunning coastline have contributed to its agricultural industry, trade connections, tourism appeal, and vibrant cultural heritage. Valencia's position as a gateway to the Mediterranean has made it a city of diverse influences and opportunities, making it an enticing destination for both locals and visitors alike.

In the heart of Valencia, history unfolds in the streets and walls that have witnessed the city's transformation over the centuries. As already mentioned, the story begins with the ancient Romans who founded the city in the 2nd century BC. Valencia emerged as a strategic Roman colony, a testament to its remarkable geographic location and access to the Mediterranean. As time passed, like for any other city, Valencia's urban fabric evolved.

The evolution that the city of Valencia undergoes from its foundation to the structure we know it today is illustrated in the numerous cartographies drawn at different times throughout its history.

In the Middle Ages, the old town was encircled by walls, first during the Muslim era and then again during the Christian era in the 14th century. The burgeoning population, among other factors, constrained explicit expansion within these limits. These walls, now a vestige of history, shaped present-day streets like Guillen de Castro, Jativa, and Colon, serving as not just defensive bastions but also points for tax collection and quarantine during epidemics.

The irregularity of the streets can be noted especially in the northern part of the city, whose centre is the cathedral, and contrasting with the southern part which has undergone transformation from the 19th century. New streets and squares, such as Plaza del Ayuntamiento and Plaza del Mercado central, punctuate the southern precinct, symbolising a shift in the city's spatial dynamics.

The old town has a compact layout, due to the fact that during the centuries the population grew inside the borders of the walled enclosure, which had the effect of a progressive densification of the layout. The edification, initially of low height, has progressively seen a verticalisation and morphological and social deterioration, which gave rise to processes of renovation and replacement by higher buildings of greater quality.

The land use during the pre-industrial period was residential, industrial (silk) and for maritime commerce.

Presently, the main challenges for the old town are the physical deterioration of streets and buildings which give rise to social deterioration, leading to the ageing of the population and the concentration of marginal classes in the centre, particularly migrants.

These facts, together with the tertiarisation of the land that causes the emptying of the land outside business hours, have led to current policies for the physical and social rehabilitation of the centre. In Valencia, this policy was called the Integral plan for the rehabilitation of Valencia (RIVA) of 1992, with the objective of reinvigorating the historical centre, attracting new inhabitants, and supplying new social services to the area. Unfortunately, from 2000 the project was paralysed, coinciding with the decrease in financial support.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the growth of the city mandated urban area extensions. The changes were driven by agrarian prosperity, a first process of industrialisation (around the wood, furniture and metallurgy industries) and the transport revolution (layout of a dense railway network that had the city as its centre and expansion and modernisation of the port of El Grao), which consolidated the export function of the city and turned it into an import and redistribution centre.

Valencia's growth necessitated the demolition of the 14th century Christian walls in 1865 and the creation in their place of an outer ring road, which became the main street.

It was carried out surrounding the old town to the south, in various phases that are limited by large roads. The first phase took place in 1877, between the old town and the great roads of the Marqués del Turia and Fernando el Católico, and had a grid-based plan inspired by that of Cerdá in Barcelona, a plot of rectangular blocks, with large interior patios, large, quality houses, modernist style. The second extension had to wait until 1907, which expanded the previous one and extended the city to the old Camino de Tránsitos (Avenida de Pérez Galdós and Peris Valero), which were replanned as a third ring or outer roundabout.

The Law of Economic Houses, enacted in 1925 with the aim of enhancing living conditions for the working class, sparked the creation of homogenous housing blocks characterised by uniform facades and spacious interior patios. These residential developments were strategically erected in expanding areas, exemplified by the Finca Roja, situated in proximity to the railway station. The inauguration of this housing complex occurred in 1933, and subsequently, in 2011, it underwent a comprehensive rehabilitation process, reflecting an evolution in urban renewal initiatives catering to the changing needs and dynamics of the community.

Industrial worker neighbourhoods predominantly emerged in the port vicinity and the southern sector, characterised by modest residences constructed from substandard materials prone to rapid decay. These areas, primarily developed to accommodate the labour force associated with industrial activities, bore witness to housing structures that, due to their inferior quality, experienced premature deterioration and challenges in long-term sustainability.

In addition, urban growth led to the expansion of the urban area at the expense of the orchard and to annex between 1870 and 1900 neighbourhoods close to the expansion, such as Rusafa, and surrounding towns, such as El Campanar, El Cabañal, El Grao, etc., then still differentiated from the big city, but currently assimilated into the urban area.

El Cabanyal-Canyamelar has been the fishing quarter of the city of Valencia since the end of the 19th century. It still maintains the reticular urban plan that derives from the alignments of the old fishermen's shacks. However, since 1998 the neighbourhood has been threatened by a municipal project that seeks to extend Avenida de Blasco Ibáñez to the sea, which runs through its central part. The project involves the destruction of 1,651 homes, thus disappearing the urban fabric of fertilisers this complex that was declared a Site of Cultural Interest (BIC) in 1993, by dividing the population into two completely isolated halves.

In the vicinity of the port and the railway stations of El Cabanyal or the Port of El Grao they settled in the s. XIX multiple factories and warehouses dedicated to all kinds of activities: oils, wines, grain, wood, tar, barrels, wineskins, etc. Even today the names of the streets recall that industrial past, (Calle de los Hierros, Maderas, Serrería, Industria...). It was a true industrial area, similar to the current industrial estates. The vast majority of these factories have already been demolished or have been unoccupied for decades.

In the second half of the s. XX, industry and services grew notably and with them immigration, population and urbanisation, giving rise to an extensive periphery in which industrial areas were installed, neighbourhoods to welcome immigrants to the west and south of the expansion and different facilities urban:

- The south of the city, as a result of drawing up a new artificial course for the Turia, which borders the city on the west and south. The work, which began to be planned since the flood of 1957, was put into practice in the mid-1970s and has also meant the creation of a high-capacity traffic ring road, since the new channel is flanked by dual carriageways.

- The highways of Madrid and Barcelona.

- The north of the city, since the old channel became a green space. Recently, the City of Arts and Sciences has been built, which has revitalised the city for tourism. Facilities have been

created on the left bank of the river: a new university campus, a fairground, sports facilities. In addition, the reclassification of the area allowed the construction of large apartments, inspired by the sinuous shapes of the adjacent buildings.

In recent years the growth of the city has spilled over into the peripheral municipalities to form a large urban agglomeration. Along with these spaces, and as in the rest of the cities, the Valencian periphery has a very powerful residential land use, based on subsidised housing (VPO - vivienda de protección oficial) and private and single-family homes for upper social classes. These neighbourhoods have a regular plan.

Currently, the functions of the city are industrial (metallurgy, mechanical constructions, chemicals, wood and furniture, textiles, food) and tertiary, in which, in addition to tourism, political-administrative ones must be considered, as a result of the location in the city of Parliament and other institutions of the Autonomous Community.

Yet, urban growth had its consequences. As the city expanded, it encroached upon the fertile lands of the Huerta, a historic region encompassing about 120 kilometres around Valencia.

The Huerta, an emblem of local and regional identity, bore witness to the encroachment of urban development on its rich agricultural fields. The orchard has been the big loser in the process of urban expansion, since the rich fields are being invaded by buildings.

Amid the expansion and industrialisation, Valencia's importance as a port city grew. The city's export function was solidified, and it evolved into an import and redistribution centre due to a dense railway network and the modernisation of the port of El Grao.

The effects of urbanisation and the changing cityscape have been far-reaching, influencing every facet of Valencia's identity and growth.

Yet, Valencia's journey is not only marked by its historical transformation but also by its emergence as a tourism hub. The city's history is intertwined with its appeal to tourists, and the next paragraph of our narrative unfolds through its role as a destination for travellers exploring its rich cultural.

## 3.2 History of tourism and touristic image of Valencia and surroundings

Destination images contribute a lot to tourists' choice of destination. "Image distinguishes destinations from one another and is an integral and influential part of the traveller's decision-making process" (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997). The intangibility of destinations cannot be verified before purchase.

Tourism is one of the Valencian Region's most important industries, due to its sunny conditions (there are almost 3,000 hours of sunshine per year) and beaches (Agencia Estatal de Meteorologia, n.d, Yepes and Medina, 2005, p84)

The 1960s in Spain is the decade of the development of sun and beach tourism. The increase in wages and the reduction of the working day allowed to popularise a phenomenon until then only reserved for the wealthier class. The arrival of the Seat 600 and other utilities of the time brought the dream of many families of spending a vacation by the sea. The phenomenon of mass tourism had hence started. The Valencian coasts began to receive tourists at a dizzying pace, until 1973, when the figures exceeded millions of tourists. The famous slogan Spain is different had caught on (Las Provincias, 2015). Starting in the 1960s, a government-driven economic diversification effort prioritised tourism as a key sector, paralleled by the growth of the real estate industry. Initially centred around hotel construction, this evolved into residential accommodations catering to tourism. This surge fostered robust tourism and residency, propelling the Valencian Community among Spain's most prominent tourist destinations.

From that moment hotels and residential complexes are built and ambitious plans for urban development are undertaken. The wide offer of sun and beach (or Sun and Sea), the climate and the accessible price were the main reasons for the success of the Valencian coast as a tourist destination (Las Provincias, 2015).

To 2019, in the Valencian community, tourist activity generated about 15,5% of the regional GDP (Impactur, 2019). Recreation and vacation represented the main reason for travel, accounting for 76.9% of the total, an increase of 6.4%.

Tourists who travelled for business and professional reasons represented 11.5% and have evolved very positively (41.6%); Lastly, trips to visit family and friends, 11.6% of the total, have decreased (-1.4%).

Nowadays, the city is internationally known not only for the Paella or the City of Arts and Science, but also for its street life and group celebrations. Many of these are unique cultural

events, based on the rich Valencian festive tradition and with very important heritage values, but which are also linked to valuable contemporary and cosmopolitan events. Due to its long history, Valencia is a city with innumerable festivals and traditions, including Las Fallas, which were declared festivals of international tourist importance on January 25, 1965 and Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, on November 30, 2016; and the Tribunal des Aguas, also declared in 2009 as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In addition to this, Valencia celebrates its Semana Santa Marinera, a historic Corpus Christi procession and the Valencia fair in July (Valencia City Council, nd)<sup>17</sup>.

Valencia has crafted a compelling city brand that captures its essence and resonates with diverse audiences. The city's brand revolves around the following key aspects:

The city embraces the Mediterranean lifestyle, showcasing its pleasant climate, stunning beaches, and a relaxed atmosphere. It promotes a laid-back and enjoyable experience, where visitors can indulge in delicious cuisine and immerse themselves in the region's rich cultural heritage.

Innovation and modernity are integral to Valencia's brand. The iconic City of Arts and Sciences exemplifies the city's forward-thinking approach and commitment to technological advancements. Valencia positions itself as a hub of innovation, attracting businesses, startups, and events that foster creativity and cutting-edge ideas.

The city takes pride in its cultural heritage and vibrant festivals. Historical landmarks like the Valencia Cathedral and Silk Exchange highlight the city's storied past.

The city's gastronomy is another focal point of its brand. Valencia is renowned for its iconic dish, paella, and invites visitors to indulge in a culinary journey. Vibrant food markets like the Central Market provide opportunities to savour local delicacies and explore the dynamic dining scene that combines tradition and innovation.

Valencia demonstrates a commitment to sustainability and green initiatives. The city promotes responsible practices, eco-friendly events, and urban development that prioritises green spaces. By embracing sustainability, Valencia aligns with the global trend of responsible tourism.

Valencia's brand capitalises on its accessibility and connectivity, offering convenient transportation options domestically and internationally. Its modern infrastructure, including an international airport and efficient public transportation system, makes it a convenient and desirable destination for tourists, businesses, and conferences.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.valencia.es/es/cas/la-ciudad>

With its vibrant blend of history, culture, innovation, culinary delights, sustainability, and accessibility, Valencia's city brand positions it as an alluring destination that caters to a wide range of interests. Visitors are invited to experience a unique combination of tradition and modernity, creating lasting memories in this captivating city.

Valencia has established itself as a prominent host city for a wide range of international events.

Year after year, it becomes the chosen setting for renowned cultural and sporting spectacles that attract global attention. The America's Cup de Vela, the Formula 1 European Grand Prix, the SuperBikes World Championship<sup>18</sup>, the CampusParty, the Valencia ATP Tennis Championship<sup>19</sup>, the Moto GP Valencian Community Grand Prix, the Global Champions Tour, and the MTV Winter are just a few examples of the impressive events that place Valencia prominently on the international calendar (Visit Spain, 2024)<sup>20</sup>.

These events bring together participants and spectators from around the world, fostering a vibrant and diverse atmosphere in the city. They showcase Valencia's remarkable attributes and contribute to its reputation as a premier destination for cultural and sporting experiences. From the thrilling sailing competitions of the America's Cup to the high-octane races of the Formula 1 Grand Prix, Valencia's natural assets and well-equipped facilities create an ideal environment for such globally recognized events.

Additionally, the city's commitment to hosting major sporting events is evident through the SuperBikes World Championship, where motorcycle racing enthusiasts witness thrilling battles on the track. The Valencia ATP Tennis Championship showcases top-tier tennis talent competing in a picturesque setting. Meanwhile, the Moto GP Valencian Community Grand Prix brings the adrenaline-fueled action of motorcycle racing to Valencia's renowned Circuit Ricardo Tormo<sup>21</sup>.

Valencia also embraces its cultural side with events such as the MTV Winter, which infuses the city with the energy of live music performances. Furthermore, the Global Champions Tour, a prestigious show jumping competition, highlights Valencia's dedication to hosting world-class equestrian events (Valencia Tourism, 2024).

Last but not least, the Festival of Las Fallas stands as one of the most emblematic events in Valencia's calendar. It brings the city to life with its stunning displays of intricate and satirical

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.fim-moto.com/en/calendars/view/fim-superbike-world-championship-valencia-valence-5695>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.atptour.com/en/tournaments/valencia/573/overview>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.spain.info/es/resultados-busqueda/?lq=&reloaded=q=&sh=agenda&sort=score+desc&filterMun=Valencia>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.circuitricardotormo.com/>

monuments, fireworks, parades, and the burning of the Fallas sculptures. This unique celebration, recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, showcases Valencia's rich traditions and artistic craftsmanship (Visit Valencia, 2024a).

In conclusion, Valencia's inclusion in the international calendar of cultural and sporting events is a testament to its appeal as a host city. These events, including the renowned Las Fallas festival, attract global attention, contribute to the local economy, and reinforce Valencia's reputation as a vibrant and captivating destination for both participants and spectators.

Valencia's urban narrative, closely entwined with its portrayal as a hub of commerce and tourism, has voraciously absorbed the city's cultural essence. The prominence of mega-architecture and mega-events has eclipsed all other local cultural or heritage events, crafting an image focused on spectacle, inadvertently alienating many residents who feel disassociated from these elements often associated with corruption and extravagance. This prioritisation of international promotion by the regional and local administrations has marginalised local cultural practices. Yet, amidst this overshadowing, some local initiatives have persistently sought alternative promotion avenues, albeit with less support.

However, over the past two decades, Valencia has witnessed a staggering surge in tourism, welcoming other segments like cruise travellers, catalysed by improved connectivity and varied attractions including Erasmus tourism, fairs, and congresses. The city has undergone tangible changes in its tourist infrastructure, witnessing a significant rise in accommodations and dining options. However, the surge in high-end hotels aligned with the city's grandiose image has faced profitability challenges, leading to closures or transformations into lower-tier establishments (Carrasco and Garrido, 2017).

The diversification of market segments, notably the rise of cruise tourism, has contributed to the city's international positioning. Public initiatives supporting this sector's growth, coupled with factors such as congestion in other European ports, have bolstered its presence in Valencia. Despite these advancements, the city grapples with contrasting realities stemming from its history and rapid modernisation. New developments aimed at revitalizing outdated areas, juxtaposed with elite residential spaces amid traditional neighbourhoods, highlight the urban disparities within the metropolitan area (Carrasco and Garrido, 2017)

However, this international rebranding has come at a considerable cost, reflected in the city's substantial debt. Valencia's transformation, propelled by major events and showcase architecture in alignment with the New Urban Policy's pursuit of competitiveness and global appeal, has indeed redefined its tourist landscape. While controversies linger around the

economic and social costs, the city's unprecedented surge in tourist influx, particularly from abroad, stands as a testament to this shift. Yet, debates persist around the sustainability and limitations of this growth trajectory, hinting at the need for discussions about alternative resources amidst the city's monumental tourism surge, catalysed despite economic downturns and initial infrastructure challenges (Carrasco and Garrido, 2017).

## 3.3 Las Fallas

### 3.3.1 Studies of the festival

The first exploration into a specific topic related to Las Fallas can be traced back to 1987 when poster artist Rafael Contreras Juesas conducted a study on the festival's posters. However, the thesis emerging from the realm of Social Sciences was crafted by Antonio Ariño Villarroya in 1990. His work provided a sociological perspective on the festival and paved the way for several books on the history of Las Fallas. In the same year, he also played a crucial role in establishing the *Associació d'Estudis Fallers (ADEF)*.

Subsequently, in 1993, Gil Manuel Hernandez Martí delved into a doctoral thesis examining the Fiestas of Valencia during the Franco era. He explored the intentional symbolic reconstruction, especially of Las Fallas, to serve the strategic interests of the ruling regime.

Then, in 1996, Xavier Costa Granell undertook another doctoral thesis focused on Las Fallas, employing a sociological lens. What set his work apart was the innovative perspective he brought to the table, reflecting on the role of tradition in contemporary sociology. He joined two Fallas commissions, conducting an ethnographic study from within the Falla community.

A decade later, Antonio Colomina Subiela defended his doctoral thesis. His contribution was significant, shedding light on the materials, techniques, and aesthetics of Falla art, as well as the restoration and maintenance of these creations.

In 2009, José Luis García Nadal, from the Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science at the University of Valencia, presented his doctoral thesis. He examined the use of metaphor, imagination, and aesthetic creation in crafting a Falla. These, he argued, were instruments wielded by popular culture in its struggle against authority and tools for catalysing social change.

That same year, Jesús Ovejero Olmeda's study emerged. His thesis explored the work of Fallas artists beyond the construction of Fallas themselves. He researched their contributions to the entertainment and leisure industry, such as in cinema and theme parks.

Concluding this section, it's worth noting the doctoral achievement of Luis Alfonso Perez-Ramos Hueso in 2015. His analysis focused on the representation of various themes, including healthcare, education, and pedagogy, within Las Fallas, primarily through the medium of the *El Turista Fallero* magazine.

The genesis of Las Fallas, a festivity steeped in the rich tapestry of Valencian culture, marks an intriguing and vital chapter in the cultural history of the region.

At the outset of our scholarly quest, we are ready to explore the premises that gave rise to this iconic celebration. Much like a finely woven tapestry, Las Fallas reveals the intricate interplay of sociocultural and historical factors that have sculpted its unique character. It is, in essence, a small world that captures the spirit of Valencia, echoing the rhythm and the temperament of its people. This festival is not merely an event but a living embodiment of a collective and shared spirit that connects generation and resonating through time. As we delve deeper into the layers of this celebrated tradition, we unearth the underpinnings of its birth, the nuanced threads that weave the fabric of Las Fallas, and the cultural significance it continues to hold in the modern world. This thesis will not be merely a journey through history but a voyage into the heart of Valencia itself, where the past and present converge, and where tradition meets innovation.

However, it is noteworthy that there has been a scarcity of in-depth studies examining the social impact of Las Fallas. Surprisingly, the most recent official report dates back to 2008, reflecting a considerable gap in understanding the festival's evolving role in Valencian society. In this context, this research endeavours to bridge this shortcoming by embarking on a comprehensive exploration of Las Fallas' social impact, aiming to uncover its multifaceted effects on the community, identity, and cultural fabric of Valencia. Through rigorous examination and analysis, my study aspires to offer fresh insights and enrich our comprehension of how this vibrant celebration shapes, influences, and reflects the Valencian society of today.

### 3.3.2 Premises for the birth of the festival

The transformation of Las Fallas into a major celebration was a remarkable process, one that can be comprehended by deepening into the historical context and examining the changes that occurred within the celebratory subject. The Valencian sociologist Antonio Ariño conducted an in-depth sociological analysis of the Las Fallas festival, examining it through the lens of sociology. His seminal work, titled "La fiesta de Las Fallas. Una liturgia civil del

valencianismo temperamental", written in 1992, delves into the festival's significance as a civil liturgy of the passionate Valencian identity. Ariño's research offers valuable insights of the cultural, social, and symbolic dimensions of Las Fallas, shedding light on its role in shaping and reflecting the complex tapestry of Valencian society.

According to Ariño's work, the elevation of Las Fallas to the status of a grand festival took place in the wake of a crisis within the Corpus Christi festivities, an event primarily of religious significance, tightly regulated by official institutions. The Corpus Christi celebration was charged with hierarchical and orderly values, reinforcing the societal stratification through its reliance on transcendental authority.

Amid several attempts by the city's ruling classes to create alternative festivities, such as the Feria de Julio in 1811, the Artistic Carnival in 1894, and the May Festivals in the early 20th century, the ascendancy of Las Fallas eventually took place. This elevation was driven by the fact that Las Fallas embedded values in harmony with the distinct characteristics of the emerging social structure. Las Fallas, with their unique features, allowed individuals from all social strata to, at least in part, identify themselves with the values that the elaborate sculptures and ritualistic practices embodied.

The traditional working-class communities, who had historically been the focal point of the festivities, found pleasure in events that blurred distinctions and fostered a populist and democratic spirit. These celebrations ridiculed the dominant powers, appealing to the common people, and celebrated specific elements of their subculture, like hedonism and sensuality.

The middle classes lead the aesthetic reform of the festival, as they became actively involved in organising committees and earned prestige within the neighbourhood and broader society. They introduced significant innovations, including the appointment of "falleros de honor" and "falleras mayores," serving as symbolic intermediaries for the participation of the upper classes. The upper classes, in turn, endorsed the aesthetic renovation of the traditional floats and the strategic promotion of tourism associated with the celebration. They welcomed the elevation in status that came with honorary positions, participating in the festivities with an air of condescension and deferential paternalism. This evolution of Las Fallas from a regional tradition to a transcendent and unifying celebration reflects the interplay of social dynamics, making it a compelling subject for further analysis in this thesis.

In a pluralistic and somewhat secularised society marked by the socio-political strife between Blasquistas and clericals, Las Fallas emerged as a secular and enigmatic festival that allowed for convergence and integration. In a city experiencing cultural homogenisation and the

erosion of its traditional, unique culture, while having only a budding innovative industrial bourgeoisie (predominantly driven by export trade, agrarian activities, and the tertiary sector), along with subtle hints of assimilation of modernism and avant-garde influences, the evocation of an idealised past and an idyllic rural life became fundamental symbols in mobilising the broader identity of Valencian heritage.

Las Fallas expanded beyond the city limits, reaching out to the towns and drawing in the identification of the emigrant population, ultimately becoming a celebration of this shared, generic Valencian identity. In a class-based society, they appealed to the collective populace, representing a populist ideology that overcoming social inequalities and exploitation, fostering dreams of a more profound, horizontal, and authentic community.

As a result, Las Fallas evolved into a kind of Valencianist liturgy or cult, characterised by a self-referential nature that reflected a secular religiosity. The grand festival operated as a liturgy and dramatisation of collective identity, often described as "the celebration that vividly paints the regional character," "the flame of Valencianism," or "the festival of the people." This intricate process created a sense of osmosis, where elements of culture and identity merged, forming a unique Valencian narrative, beautifully underscored by the vibrant colours of Las Fallas.

A compelling fusion of secular celebration and Valencian identity is evident in the metamorphosis of Las Fallas into a sacred icon of modernity. This transformation reflects a secular form of nationalism as a sort of religion. The festival embodies a collective Valencian identity, celebrating local luminaries and evoking historical heroes. The adoption of regional symbols and hymns further deepens this connection. This fusion is exemplified by the enthusiastic incorporation of Valencian traditions in municipal events, symbolising the strong and enduring link between Las Fallas and Valencian culture. During those years, anthems and flags resounded and fluttered in the city's atmosphere like never before. Virtually no significant event occurred without the presence of the Senyera, concluding with a fervent rendition of the Hymn. In numerous cases, even the Fallas themselves began to ignite to the harmonious strains of the Hymn. This transformed the once light-hearted act of burning these sculptures, traditionally meant to expel social ills, into a moment charged with sacrificial emotion. It became a form of offering, a manifestation of profound Valencian fervour. Every year, from March 1 to 19, Valencia throws itself into the celebration of Las Fallas, a festival that combines tradition, satire and art and symbolises the coming of spring. Las Fallas are, above all, a neighbourhood festival that managed to become the biggest festival of the city in 1936 to later inspire almost a hundred other towns with its ritual work,

keeping at the same time its original character (Cucó, 2008: 67). The Fallas festival has advanced far beyond the Valencian region and today is held in other Spanish municipalities such as Barcelona and Majorca, as well as in other countries, for instance Argentina<sup>22</sup>. Las Fallas is a festival rich in tradition, and there are several terms and concepts that are integral to understanding this vibrant celebration.

Here are a few more key words and phrases to know:

1. Cremà: This term translates to "burning" in English. It refers to the moment of Las Fallas when the ninots and fallas sculptures are set on fire in massive bonfires, marking the conclusion of the festival.
2. Casa de Falla: This translates to "Fallas house" or "falla committee." Fallas committees are local neighbourhood organisations responsible for creating and financing the ninots and fallas sculptures and organising various events and activities during the festival.
3. Mascletà: this is a daily pyrotechnic display of fireworks and firecrackers that occurs in the city's main square, often in the afternoon. It's known for its precise and rhythmic explosions, creating a mesmerising auditory experience.
4. Plantà: This term means "setting up" or "installation." It refers to the moment when the ninots and fallas sculptures are erected throughout the city, typically on March 15th.
5. Ofrenda de Flores: Translating to "Flower Offering," this is a heartfelt part of Las Fallas where falleras (women dressed in traditional Valencian attire bring bouquets of flowers to the statue of the Virgin Mary. Over the course of several days, a massive floral cloak is created, draping the statue.
6. Castell: This term is related to the tradition of building human towers, often seen during Las Fallas. Castells are a symbol of Valencian culture, where teams work together to create intricate and towering structures.
7. Romería: A "romería" is a religious pilgrimage or procession, and it's a common element in the more traditional aspects of Las Fallas. Participants may carry religious icons through the streets as a form of devotion.

These words and concepts provide deeper insights into the various customs and activities that make Las Fallas a unique and culturally rich celebration in Valencia.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/inscription-valencia-fallas-festivity-unesco-representative-list-intangible-cultural>

# Chapter 4

## 4.1 The analysis of social impacts of Las Fallas

The methodology employed for this thesis encompasses a comprehensive approach integrating diverse sources of information to establish a nuanced understanding of Las Fallas and its multifaceted social impacts. Utilising secondary data sources, such as scholarly research papers, academic articles, and reputable databases, forms the backbone of this study, providing a robust theoretical foundation and empirical evidence. Official platforms like the Ayuntamiento de Valencia offer critical insights into the historical, cultural, and logistical aspects of the event. Moreover, analysis extends to online news archives, offering real-time perspectives and contemporary narratives surrounding Las Fallas. Complementing these structured sources, unconventional data collection strategies, including public opinion inquiries through digital platforms, are employed to capture the subjective experiences and perceptions of citizens, thereby enriching the analysis with qualitative dimensions. This blend of resources aims to present a holistic evaluation of Las Fallas, drawing from authoritative scholarly discourse, official records, contemporary news discourse, and community sentiments to foster a comprehensive, multi-dimensional understanding of this cultural phenomenon.

In further investigating the intricate social impacts, this study makes reference to the detailed tab method introduced by Getz (2007) in his examination of the broader social implications of events. This approach involves an exhaustive analysis framework developed by Getz, which comprehensively dissects the multifaceted social repercussions resulting from events. By adopting and adapting this method to the specific context of Las Fallas, this thesis aims to systematically explore and unveil the diverse social dimensions embedded within this cultural phenomenon. Getz's tabs offer a structured and comprehensive way to categorise, analyse, and interpret the varied social impacts, allowing for a meticulous examination of their intricate interconnections and influences on the local community and broader societal fabric. Integrating this methodology into the study ensures a meticulous dissection of the event's social dynamics, enriching the understanding of its significance and implications within the societal context.

Building on the robust methodology outlined earlier, the examination now delves into the intricate social impacts of Las Fallas, drawing inspiration from the detailed tab method

introduced by Getz (2007). This approach extends beyond the event's logistical and cultural aspects, employing an exhaustive analysis framework to comprehensively dissect the multifaceted social repercussions that emanate from the celebration.

As said, the socio-communitary dimension is invested by the production of events going to solicit modifications on the sense of belonging to the place, on the local identity, on the propensity or otherwise to welcome the cultural diversity brought about by external visitors. The possible responses are of various intensities, from protests against the event, to a renewed commitment to the community and acceptance of cultural diversity, or from opposition to a distorted image of the community conveyed by media communication. The interaction between event and society can have positive and negative effects (Bottini, 2022, p66).

As every kind of event, the festival of Las Fallas in Valencia, brings both positive and negative social impacts.

Delving deeper into these impacts, one can gain a deep understanding of how Las Fallas affects the local community and its broader implications. From fostering a sense of cultural identity and unity among Valencians to striving with environmental concerns and potential disruptions, Las Fallas embodies a complex social tapestry that merits exploration. This exploration will allow us to appreciate the festival's multifaceted nature and its profound influence on Valencia's social fabric.

Turning our attention to the impacts of Las Fallas in Valencia, we begin by highlighting the positive facets of this vibrant festival.

Building upon the theory that events and festivals significantly contribute to social engagement, Las Fallas stands as a vivid embodiment of this phenomenon. As extensively discussed in the literature, events like Las Fallas go beyond mere celebrations. On the positive side, Las Fallas encourages community engagement and participation, creating a strong sense of unity among residents. People come together to construct the Fallas, intricate monuments that are displayed throughout the city, and organise vibrant parades. This fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens social bonds within the community.

As we have already seen in the theory, festivals contribute to new workplaces, as well. The festival of Las Fallas promotes the creation of new job places and the preservation of the traditional ones. The creation of the giant Fallas monuments during the Festivities, for example, contributes to the creation of jobs for artisans in Valencia. This traditional craft requires the expertise and skills of various artisans, including sculptors, painters, designers, carpenters, and other craftspeople (Intergrupacio Falles de Valencia, 2008).

Artisans work tirelessly to design, sculpt, paint, and assemble the intricate pieces that make up the monument. They bring their artistic vision to life while paying attention to every detail, ensuring that the Fallas are visually stunning and convey the intended message or social commentary (Interagrupacio Falles de Valencia, 2008).

As the Fallas are large-scale projects, their creation requires a dedicated team of artisans, often working in collaboration. This collaborative effort not only fosters a sense of community among artisans but also promotes the exchange of knowledge and skills. It provides an opportunity for artisans to showcase their talents, hone their craft, and further develop their artistic abilities (Belda et al., 2018).

The Festivity of Las Fallas attracts a significant number of tourists and visitors from around the world. The presence of these elaborate Fallas monuments enhances the cultural and artistic appeal of the festival, making it a major tourist attraction. The increased tourism and public interest generate a demand for the craftsmanship of local artisans, leading to job opportunities in the creation of Fallas, as well as in related sectors such as design, decoration, and event management (Interagrupacio Falles de Valencia, 2008).

Furthermore, the festival's economic impact extends beyond the creation of the Fallas themselves. The influx of visitors stimulates the local economy, creating additional employment opportunities in sectors such as hospitality, tourism services, retail, and food and beverage. The demand for accommodations, dining, transportation, and souvenirs generates a ripple effect that benefits various businesses and indirectly supports the livelihoods of artisans and craftsmen (Interagrupacio Falles de Valencia, 2008).

However, the creation of new job places is not limited to artisans. The history of Valencia is also deeply intertwined with the silk industry, which played a pivotal role in the city's development. The cultivation of mulberry trees in the orchards surrounding Valencia ensured the essential food source for silkworms, allowing for the production of silk, a valuable and sought-after material. The craft workshops in Valencia became known for their expertise in creating textiles from silk, showcasing the city's rich tradition of silk production. One significant aspect lies in the festival's close ties to the Silk Routes, a network of ancient trade routes connecting the East and West. The historical significance of Valencia as a major silk city highlights its role as a pivotal hub along these trade routes. The city's prominence in silk production led to the development of textiles adorned with elaborate embroidery worn by Falleros, participants in the festival of Las Fallas. These costumes feature embroidered silks and special fabrics in a variety of colours and patterns, showcasing the intricate craftsmanship

and artistic skills of the artisans. The use of ancient manual silk looms in the production process adds a sense of heritage and authenticity to these costumes<sup>23</sup>.

Recognising the significance of silk in Valencia's history and cultural identity, the initiative "Valencia - city of silk" was launched in 2015. This initiative aimed to preserve and promote the tradition of silk production in the city, highlighting its importance as a cultural and economic asset. By celebrating the artistry of silk weaving and its connection to Valencia's heritage, the initiative aimed to raise awareness and appreciation for this craft<sup>24</sup>.

The "Valencia - city of silk" initiative serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of silk in the city's cultural fabric. It showcases the intricate skills passed down through generations and reinforces Valencia's reputation as a hub for silk production and craftsmanship. Through the preservation and promotion of this tradition, Valencia continues to celebrate its historical connection to silk, keeping alive the rich heritage of this valuable material and its contribution to the city's cultural identity. For centuries, the Valencian silk industry has been intricately woven into the fabric of Las Fallas' cultural heritage. Today, this rich legacy persists as the demand for silk endures, driven by the festival's traditional attire. Silk remains a prized commodity within select sectors linked to Las Fallas, fuelling the thriving factories and bustling stores that proudly showcase these time-honoured garments. This sustains the ancient artistry of hand-weaving silk, ensuring its resplendent existence amidst the vibrant tapestry of the festival's traditions (Unesco, 2016).

The fusion of silk with the festival's attire not only honours tradition but also heralds local craftsmanship and industry. Passed down through generations, the meticulous techniques of silk weaving continue, preserving the essence of artisanal mastery as an indispensable facet of Las Fallas' cultural identity.

Moreover, the craftsmanship involved in silk production embodies a marriage of tradition and innovation. Artisans, driven by a passion for the past and an eye on the future, blend age-old techniques with modern adaptations, infusing the festival's attire with timeless allure and contemporary relevance. This harmonious interplay mirrors the dynamic evolution of both Las Fallas' iconic dress and the enduring spirit of the Valencian silk industry—an eternal testament to the festival's enduring legacy and cultural significance.

Shifting our attention to the realm of education and learning, events serve as a powerful catalyst for them, offering unique avenues for experiential learning. They give opportunities to acquire new knowledge and insights that extend beyond conventional educational settings.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://es.unesco.org/silkroad/content/larga-vida-las-fallas>

<sup>24</sup> <https://ruta-seda.comunitatvalenciana.com/ruta-de-la-seda/recursos/fallas-de-valencia>

Within the dynamic atmosphere of events, learning becomes an engaging and enriching experience.

The Fallas festival offer a unique opportunity for educational innovation through technological integration. It advocates for leveraging the festival's inherent motivation to drive educational experiences across all levels, emphasising critical perspectives and technological dimensions (Giroux, 2015; Martínez-Luna, 2016). By tapping into students' fervour for the Fallas, it delves into identity-related issues and explores novel approaches to representation and image analysis (Planella, 2017; Hernández-Hernández, 2007). Additionally, it highlights how the festival's components resonate profoundly with younger generations, connecting heritage knowledge, technological applications, the nexus of technology, science, and art, the festive spirit, image creation, shared spaces as repositories of knowledge, and addressing societal and political concerns through artistic expression (Gómez-Redondo et al., 2016; Caeiro and Muñiz, 2019; Zubiaga and Cilleruelo, 2020; León-Mendoza, 2019; Rodríguez-Ortega, 2018). Educators are encouraged to harness this potential by infusing the ephemeral artistry of the Fallas into teaching practices, fostering engaging learning environments, and transforming classrooms into collaborative creative hubs (Barthes, 1982; Laddaga, 2006).

Contrasting the predominantly traditional artisanal approach of most Fallas artists, often constrained by market pressures and conservative aesthetic norms, this perspective champions an alternative educational paradigm (Patiño, 2017; Alsina et al., 2018; Even-Zohar, 1990; Monreal-Ramírez, 2019). It seeks to accentuate aesthetic elements, social critique, and collaborative student involvement, diverging from entrenched Fallas conventions. The suggestion is for educators to introduce new symbolic dimensions rooted in artisanal crafts while spotlighting aesthetics, social criticism, and collaborative student endeavours, aligning more closely with youthful identities, collaborative ethos, identity assertions, and the flow of information.

Furthermore, this discussion scrutinises the prevalence of kitsch aesthetics within the Valencian Fallas tradition, tracing its origins to cultural, social, and political contexts, particularly from the Franco era. However, it also acknowledges dissenting voices, exemplified by experimental Fallas, which defy conventional norms and catalyse innovative conceptual and technological advancements while upholding the festival's participatory tradition.

The cited innovation, educational enhancements, and diverse impacts of the Fallas festival contribute positively to society. They foster progressive educational methods, encourage

critical thinking, nurture cultural awareness, and promote creative collaboration among students. Moreover, the shift towards experimental Fallas signals a departure from entrenched conservatism, embracing fresh perspectives, and stimulating technological and artistic innovation within the festival—a trajectory indicative of societal openness to change and evolution. These facets collectively contribute to a more dynamic and inclusive social landscape, enriching cultural discourse and fostering a spirit of innovation and adaptability.

The Festival of Las Fallas, like any other event, is not immune to criticism and has faced various challenges over the years. One area of concern has been the impact on the city's infrastructure and historical monuments. As the festival gained popularity among tourists, the city of Valencia has made efforts to maintain and protect its treasured and historic areas.

The construction and burning of the Fallas sculptures, while an integral part of the festival's tradition, can inadvertently lead to damage to the urban environment. The intense heat generated during the burning of these massive structures can cause scorching of nearby buildings, particularly those made of wood or with sensitive facades. This can result in the need for costly repairs and restoration work.

Furthermore, as revellers throng the streets to witness the spectacle of the fallas' incendiary finale, there have been instances of damage to architectural landmarks.

Residents have filed complaints about the degradation of historical monuments, prompting action from the city council (Levante, 2022)<sup>25</sup>. The festival of Las Fallas has left a noticeable impact on monuments. There is a need to emphasise to festival attendees the importance of respecting historical landmarks and refraining from using them as impromptu urinals. Additionally, concerns have arisen regarding the aftermath of festivalgoers in the vicinity of the festivities or Fallas tents, with streets often found strewn with cups, vomit, and plastics. It is essential to address these issues to prevent Las Fallas from experiencing undesirable consequences similar to other chaotic events. Authorities should consider implementing measures to mitigate these concerns (Soriano, 2019).

Moreover, throughout the duration of the Fallas festival, the city centre experiences a surge in opportunistic individuals unabashedly utilising improvised carts, notably on bustling streets like Xàtiva, even during daylight hours. An ongoing challenge persists with the uncontrolled exhibition of food, capitalising on the proximity to festival committees. This lack of regulation not only raises immediate concerns related to sanitary control but also poses

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.levante-emv.com/valencia/2022/03/08/lonja-blinda-nuevo-vandalismo-fallas-63580717.html>

broader implications and consequences for both public health and the overall integrity of the festival experience (Soriano, 2019).

The illegal sale of drinks and food in the heart of the city centre during Fallas compromises public health standards by circumventing necessary sanitary controls. The absence of oversight and adherence to hygiene protocols increases the risk of foodborne illnesses and other health-related issues among festival attendees. Moreover, the unregulated commerce disrupts the festive ambiance and compromises the integrity of the event, as it deviates from established norms and official guidelines (Soriano, 2019).

Beyond the immediate health and organisational concerns, the illegal sale of food and drinks undermines the economic ecosystem associated with authorised vendors and businesses. This informal commerce detracts from the legitimate revenue streams of licensed establishments, impacting the local economy and diminishing the potential for sustainable growth and development.

To address these issues, it becomes imperative for authorities to not only enforce existing regulations but also to consider proactive measures that deter and penalise illegal vending practices. By doing so, the festival can maintain its vibrancy while upholding public health standards, ensuring a safer and more enjoyable experience for all attendees.

The Festival of Las Fallas in Valencia is a dynamic and vibrant celebration that involves processions and parades featuring large sculptures and floats that traverse the city's streets. While these elaborate displays are a testament to artistic creativity and cultural richness, they can exert unintended pressures on the city's infrastructure.

One significant concern is the wear and tear on road surfaces. The repeated passage of heavy floats, coupled with the immense crowds, can lead to road damage such as potholes, cracks, and uneven pavements. Repairing these surfaces is not only costly but also diverts resources that could be allocated to other civic projects.

Additionally, the festival places stress on Valencia's historic bridges and structures. Some of these architectural gems may not be well-equipped to handle the weight and vibrations generated by the procession of large floats, potentially resulting in structural damage or the need for costly reinforcement and maintenance work.

The underground infrastructure, including water and sewage systems, is not immune either. Heavy vehicles and foot traffic during Las Fallas can compact the soil and displace underground pipes and cables, increasing the risk of leaks or service disruptions.

Public transportation also faces challenges, as the festival often requires alterations to transportation routes, inconveniencing residents and visitors who rely on these services and potentially causing overcrowding on alternative routes.

Furthermore, the financial costs associated with repairing and maintaining infrastructure damage incurred during Las Fallas can be substantial, diverting funds away from other crucial urban development projects.

Another issue associated with the festival is the environmental impact, particularly related to air pollution caused by burning polystyrene foam.

These impacts, while primarily environmental, also have social implications as they directly affect the local population. In addition to the metallic components employed for coloration, the combustion of fireworks releases gases and fine particles into the atmosphere. A research investigation conducted in Valencia amid the Las Fallas festivities detected a transient surge in pollutants. These included minute particles, nitrogen oxides, and sulphur dioxide (Moreno et al, 2007). These pollutants have the potential to exacerbate symptoms for individuals suffering from asthma and are commonly present in elevated concentrations in urban areas like Milan and Warsaw. The revelry of fireworks at celebratory events conceals indeed another hidden threat to public health, as revealed by a recent study from the University of Birmingham and the Health Effects Institute. This study underscores the significant impact of fireworks on air quality, generating up to eight times the average concentration of particulate matter (PM), with potential short-term health repercussions, particularly for those with respiratory conditions (Singh et al., 2019).

The findings of this research extend beyond traditional events to encompass festivals like Las Fallas. The unique fireworks displays during Las Fallas contribute to negative health impacts, exacerbated by specific weather conditions and the release of metallic fumes at ground level from handheld fire-crackers. Considering these findings, a comprehensive 'toolkit' for future research and recommendations is proposed. This includes the issuance of air quality alerts before fireworks events, comprehensive data collection during these events, and global satellite measurements to understand pollutant variations. Additionally, there is a call for in-depth studies on the health effects associated with acute exposure to fireworks-related pollutants. The thesis emphasises the need for regulation and mitigation strategies to address the often-overlooked health impacts of festive fireworks. By adopting a proactive approach, such as issuing air quality alerts and regulating emissions, communities can minimise exposure, especially for vulnerable individuals. The study's insights contribute to the broader

discourse on safeguarding public health during celebratory events marked by fireworks, urging a balance between tradition and the well-being of communities.

Another major concern is the excessive noise generated by fireworks and firecrackers during the festival. Noise pollution during the festival has been a significant concern for residents, with some complaining about the excessive noise generated by the festivities.<sup>26 27</sup> The loud explosions can cause disturbances, especially during the nightly firework displays, affecting the quality of life for residents. These devices not only generate discomfort among passers-by and neighbours but also pose risks, as burn injuries and accidents can occur each year.

In the thesis “Loud Music and Leisure Noise Is a Common Cause of Chronic Hearing Loss, Tinnitus and Hyperacusis”, Pienkowski critically examines the looming threat of hearing impairment associated with festivals, spotlighting the heightened risk posed by exposure to excessive leisure noise, a prevalent concern during vibrant events like Las Fallas. The research delves into the intricate world of decibel levels, shedding light on the pervasive issue of festivalgoers routinely encountering sound intensities that surpass recommended thresholds for safe auditory experiences.

The vibrant celebrations pose challenges especially for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and sensory processing differences. The sensory overload from explosive noises, crowd, strong odors and disruptions to routines can lead to emotional distress and challenging behaviours (Reinaldo, n.d; Vithas Valencia, 2019).

In Terrades' insightful research titled "Phobofobias: Ilustración de los terrores irracionales" from 2018, the examination of irrational fears extends into the specific realm of Las Fallas and its associated phenomena, notably delving into the profound apprehension and anxiety triggered by the explosive fireworks integral to the festival. Beyond a mere analysis of general aversions to loud noises, this study scrutinises the psychological intricacies underlying the intense reactions induced by the pyrotechnics within the context of Las Fallas. It navigates the complex interplay between celebratory fireworks, their high decibel levels, and the subsequent psychological impact on individuals experiencing phobias or heightened fear responses, illuminating the multifaceted nature of these irrational fears and their unique manifestation during the festival. This insightful exploration offers a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between the cultural context of Las Fallas and the psychological implications of its celebratory elements, contributing a nuanced perspective to the broader discourse on irrational fears and their contextual triggers.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://audioactiva.es/como-afectan-las-fallas-a-nuestra-salud-auditiva%EF%BF%BC/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.lasprovincias.es/fallas-valencia/quejas-ruidos-fallas-petardos-verbenas-20190311141630-nt.html>



necessary for safety and the elaborate installations, as well as increased noise, can disrupt daily life, affecting residents, local businesses, and even the flow of everyday traffic (Bild et al., 2022). Striking the right balance between celebrating a cherished tradition and minimising inconveniences is a delicate task. It highlights the importance of thoughtful urban planning and community involvement when selecting event locations. The availability of open spaces, squares, and designated areas for festivals can significantly enhance the experience, as they provide room for parades, performances, and communal activities while mitigating the impact on regular city life. Ultimately, the availability of space plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of a city's cultural events, determining whether they are embraced as joyful celebrations or endured as disruptive intrusions.

Smith A et al. explore the multifaceted impact of festivals on urban spaces, emphasising their role as both celebratory events and agents of urban transformation. They delve into how festivals can disrupt daily life, particularly examining their effect on the inclusivity of public spaces and the contested nature of their influence on urban landscapes.

In this context, the renowned Las Fallas festival in Valencia serves as a case study, shedding light on how such events can lead to the de-territorialization of urban spaces. The festival of Las Fallas also raises questions about the potential frustration and disruption experienced by residents due to the closure of streets and the reconfiguration of public spaces during the festival. The study explores how festivals like Las Fallas contribute to the reshaping of the urban environment, impacting the daily routines of citizens and challenging the conventional use of public spaces. Las Fallas, an iconic festival in Valencia, serves as a captivating case study for understanding the complexities of festivals in urban spaces. The festival, renowned for its spectacular pyrotechnic displays, intricate sculptures, and lively street celebrations, stands out as a symbol of Valencia's cultural identity. However, beneath the surface of its festive exuberance lies a nuanced exploration of how such grand events can disrupt the daily life of urban residents.

The de-territorialisation of urban spaces during Las Fallas is particularly evident in the way the festival redefines the usage of public areas. Streets that are usually conduits for pedestrian and vehicular movement are temporarily repurposed for artistic displays and communal gatherings. The festival challenges the conventional understanding of how urban spaces should function, prompting a reevaluation of the balance between the needs of residents and the desire to host grand cultural events.

In examining Las Fallas, the study sheds light on the tensions that arise when festivals become integral parts of urban strategies. The festival, while contributing to the cultural

richness of Valencia, also poses challenges in terms of ensuring inclusivity, accessibility, and minimal disruption for those who call the city home. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for urban planners, policymakers, and residents grappling with the evolving role of festivals in shaping the identity and daily life of their cities.

Finally, safety considerations are essential for the well-being of participants and onlookers. The crowds that converge for the festivities demand meticulous crowd management. Moving through densely crowded areas requires precision to avert accidents and ensure a smooth flow of people. Structural integrity becomes a focal point, particularly with the towering Fallas – elaborate sculptures that demand engineering scrutiny to prevent collapses and potential harm.

As the festival crescendos into the symbolic burning of Fallas, fire safety takes centre stage. Rigorous protocols govern this spectacle to avoid unintended blazes and guarantee the safety of all involved. Pyrotechnic displays, integral to the festival's allure, demand careful orchestration, with experts overseeing their execution and clear guidelines for spectators.

Emergency services stand as vigilant guardians, their rapid response crucial amid the festival's grandeur. Public awareness campaigns play a pivotal role, disseminating safety guidelines and fostering responsible behaviour among attendees. Security measures, a global imperative, are seamlessly integrated, ensuring a secure environment without compromising the festive spirit.

Las Fallas, with its grandeur and intricacies, is a harmonious convergence of tradition and modernity. Yet, embracing this cultural extravaganza mandates an unwavering commitment to safety, preserving the joyous essence of the celebration while safeguarding the well-being of all who partake in its spirited revelry.

## 4.2 Contrasting measures

To tackle these negative impacts listed in the previous paragraph, the city government of Valencia has taken several measures. They have implemented noise control regulations to limit the use of loud fireworks during certain hours, particularly during late night hours when residents are more likely to be sleeping<sup>28</sup> These restrictions aim to minimise the noise disturbances experienced by the local population.

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<sup>28</sup> [https://www.eldiario.es/comunitat-valenciana/valencia/fallas-cogen-impulso-limitaciones-prohibido-botellon-tirar-petardos-noches-verbenas-control-ruido\\_1\\_8802131.html](https://www.eldiario.es/comunitat-valenciana/valencia/fallas-cogen-impulso-limitaciones-prohibido-botellon-tirar-petardos-noches-verbenas-control-ruido_1_8802131.html)

As it concerns the environmental impact, particularly related to air pollution caused by burning polystyrene foam, in response, some Falla committees have considered returning to traditional construction materials such as wood and papier-mâché to mitigate the environmental concerns (Botella & Fernandez, 2023).

Efforts have also been made to improve waste management during Las Fallas. The Fallas festival in Valencia attracts massive crowds, leading to significant waste generation. Efforts by the City Council and others aim to manage this waste effectively. Initiatives like 'Por unas Fallas sostenibles' promote reusable cups to reduce plastic waste. Measures include installing bins for plastic packaging and promoting the three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Special campaigns incentivise recycling efforts, while efforts to minimise environmental impact include using less toxic materials in construction. Enjoying Fallas sustainably requires collective action and responsible consumption (Redes, 2018). Furthermore, the initiative, led by the City Council, the Department of Environment, and the Provincial Council of Valencia, aims to transition towards more sustainable practices within the festival. Pere Fuset, the Councilor of Festive Culture, emphasised the need for excellence in managing the festival, especially since the Fallas were declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. As part of this initiative, comprehensive studies on the festival's sociological impact on the fallero collective and tourists' preferences have been conducted<sup>29</sup>.

Moreover, the city government has focused on enhancing security measures and crowd control strategies to ensure the safety and well-being of both residents and visitors. These actions aim to prevent overcrowding and potential accidents, providing a more secure environment during the festival.

Wristbands equipped with RFID technology prove to be an excellent solution for Fallas casales in Valencia, enhancing security and optimizing the falleros' experience. These wristbands enable various functionalities, including access control to designated areas, monitoring of venue capacity, and streamlined payments at the bars, contributing significantly to crowd management efforts during the Fallas festival. By regulating access to restricted areas and providing real-time information on venue occupancy, these measures help prevent overcrowding and ensure a safer environment for festival attendees. While primarily implemented within Fallas casales, these technologies align with the evolving digital

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<sup>29</sup> <https://fallas.com/index.php/es/main-noticias-es/main-noticias-organizacion-es/4773-fallas-mas-sostenibles>

landscape of festivities, enhancing user experience and operational management in specific venues associated with Fallas celebrations<sup>30</sup>.

In making decisions to address these issues, the city government involves various stakeholders, including residents, festival organisers, tourism representatives, and environmental groups. Public consultations, feedback mechanisms, and collaboration with local associations and community leaders are often employed to ensure the involvement of the public in decision-making processes related to Las Fallas.

It is important to note that specific actions and initiatives may vary from year to year as the city government continually evaluates and adjusts its approach to address the evolving concerns and needs of the community.

In conclusion, while the Festival of Las Fallas brings joy and celebration, it is not without its challenges and criticisms. Efforts have been made to address concerns related to infrastructure degradation, environmental impact, noise pollution, and street closures, demonstrating the city council's commitment to finding a harmonious balance between the festival's traditions and the well-being of the local community. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the existing gaps in research concerning the negative social impacts of the Festival of Las Fallas and the strategies implemented to mitigate them. The absence of recent official reports analysing the festival's social implications, with the last comprehensive study dating back to 2008, highlights the pressing need for further investigation and analysis. This deficiency presents a unique opportunity for future research endeavours to delve deeper into the multifaceted social impacts of Las Fallas and to explore innovative measures aimed at addressing them. By recognising the limitations of current knowledge, my thesis serves as a catalyst for stimulating future research initiatives in this area. Moreover, it underscores the importance of adopting a holistic approach to understanding the festival's social dynamics, considering factors such as community cohesion, cultural preservation, and socio-economic inequalities. Moving forward, my thesis can inspire scholars, policymakers, and stakeholders to collaborate on interdisciplinary research projects aimed at promoting sustainable tourism practices and fostering social inclusivity during Las Fallas. As articulated in the Strategic Plan for 2020 (Valencia turística, hacia el 2020), the city's commitment to sustainable tourism serves as a guiding framework for future endeavors, providing a roadmap for implementing evidence-based interventions to enhance the festival's social sustainability and overall societal well-being.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.idasfest.es/blog/tecnologia-pulseras-fallas-valencia-seguridad>

Tab. 1 resume of socio-cultural and political outcomes with application of the tab. elaborated by Getz (2007, p304)

Stressors and causal forces	Socio-cultural and political outcomes	Responses and countermeasures
Expenditure/investments in events/culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunity-costs. Cultural preservation and promotion is prioritised so money are diverted from other projects.</li>   <li>- Stimulation of the economy job creation, preservation of traditional jobs, consequently safeguarding arts, craft and the other traditional sectors of the city of Valencia i.e: the giant monuments “Falla” and the floats made by local artists and craftspeople, valencian clothing, famous traditional costumes weared by the Falleros, valencian goldsmith, pyrotechnics, bands, banners, magazines, small-medium enterprises<sup>31</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Support for the production of the event. Possibility to participate in voluntary form. According to the exchange theory, those who see a possible income, are probably to support the event (ex. artisans). Those who do not play an active role in the event might not participate and not support it.</p>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.valencia.es/cas/actualidad/-/content/ayudas-econ%C3%B3micas-sectores-tradicionales-y-fallas-1>

<p>Events tourism, host-guest interaction</p>	<p>Among the negative impacts we can ascribe episodes of vandalism, the degradation of monuments caused by tourists. Urine and mountains of waste against protected and emblematic building of the city<sup>32</sup>.</p> <p>Conflicts not exclusively tourist-guest, but general discomfort towards the event people making so much noise. The loud street parties or Verbenas are not always welcomed by some local residents (throwing of loud bangers, marching bands on the street at 8am). (Rhead &amp; Marin, n.s)<sup>33</sup>.</p> <p>The mascletà is one of the loudest fireworks displays in the world. Sound levels can</p>	<p>As stated by the councillor of the City Council Carlos Galiana (2023), a very intense work of persuasion and organisation has been carried out in order to celebrate Fallas in a safe way, which is essential for the world of Fallas and for many sectors linked to the festival.</p> <p>Deployment of security measures Increase in controls. Agents of the Civil Guards, explosive detection dogs, firemen<sup>35</sup></p> <p>Among the responses there are: the designation of historically important areas in the UNESCO list.<sup>36</sup> Installation of portable toilets, increasing surveillance assistants, diffusion of dissuasive posters and messages in the city and increasing of street lighting in order to prevent any uncivil behaviour (City Council, 2022)<sup>37</sup>.</p> <p>The City Council has launched a campaign to improve understanding between falleros and local residents in an attempt to get the casals not to cross the line with the noise and for the residents to join the festivities (Rhead &amp; Marin. n.d).</p>
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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/2019/03/16/5c8cbb9621efa06b198b45ab.html>

<sup>33</sup> Rhead & Marin <https://247valencia.com/business-as-usual/>

	reach 120 decibels. (Samper, 2008). <sup>34</sup> Firecrackers generate discomfort among residents and hearing damage.	
Event related-development, activities, traffic	More than 400 streets closed	Regarding the closure of streets people are recommended not to move by car. It is possible to use the metro, public and sharing transports.
Other negative externalities	Pollution caused by fireworks (Benet S, 2017) <sup>38</sup> .	Use of sustainable materials to contribute to a cremà that is as clean and respectful as possible with the environment, which minimises the emission of polluting gases, and valuing the use of natural materials; (City Council, 2023).
Community involvement	Some might feel owner of the event, others might feel excluded: “them versus us”.  Vision of the event: image of a celebrating, warm and welcoming society against image of a noisy society.	Activate marketing actions by the city and the government to orientate the opinion and the perception of the events in the society.
Media coverage	Potential changes in the perception of the event from media coverage	Strict monitoring of media coverage to promptly respond to any negative externalities reported by them

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.soitu.es/soitu/2008/03/14/salud/1205508433\\_519153.html](http://www.soitu.es/soitu/2008/03/14/salud/1205508433_519153.html)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.lasprovincias.es/sociedad/guardia-civil-despliega-medidas-seguridad-preventivas-fallas-20230313143511-vi.html>

<sup>36</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/782/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.valencia.es/cas/actualidad/-/content/la-lonja-y-las-fallas-1>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.lavanguardia.com/local/valencia/20210309/6266551/petardos-movilidad-mas-contamina-aire-fallas-valencia.html>

## Conclusions

Las Fallas transcends its status as a mere celebration; it serves as a catalyst for fostering unity and social cohesion among Valencians. The festival's essence lies not only in the elaborate sculptures and vibrant displays but in the collective participation and shared experiences it engenders. Residents actively engage in constructing the intricate Fallas monuments and organising lively parades, nurturing a sense of union and belonging within the community. However, within this vibrant tapestry, nuances exist as certain inhabitants might experience a sense of exclusion or discomfort amidst the fervour of the festival, highlighting the complex interplay between individual preferences and the festival's grandeur.

The economic significance of Las Fallas extends beyond the festival's duration. It serves as a significant driver of economic vitality by generating job opportunities, particularly within the artisanal and hospitality sectors. The fusion of ancient silk traditions with contemporary festivities sustains local craftsmanship while attracting tourists, contributing substantially to the city's economy. Initiatives such as "Valencia - city of silk" not only preserve cultural heritage but also showcase the city's legacy in silk production. This unique blend of tradition and modernity not only sustains local industries but also attracts visitors, fuelling the local economy.

The festival offers a unique platform for educational innovation, integrating technological dimensions and identity-related issues into learning experiences. However, existing challenges suggest a need for more innovative and collaborative approaches to education within the festival's context. By harnessing the festival's inherent motivation, educators can infuse technological advancements into pedagogy, providing students with engaging learning experiences. Challenges persist in diverging from entrenched aesthetic norms, signalling the need to explore more progressive educational methods aligned with evolving societal dynamics.

Despite its social richness, Las Fallas poses challenges to Valencia's infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and daily life. The festival's exuberance strains infrastructure, leading to concerns about wear and tear on roads, structural integrity of historical monuments, and disruption to public transportation. Balancing tradition with responsible management becomes imperative, necessitating robust urban planning strategies, adherence to safety protocols, and regulatory measures to mitigate negative impacts. Addressing these

challenges while harnessing the festival's positive influences is essential for a sustainable and inclusive celebration.

Understanding the multifaceted social impact of Las Fallas lays the foundation for informed decision-making and stakeholder collaboration. The festival's profound influence on community cohesion, economic vitality, and educational innovation underscores the need for a balanced approach that respects tradition while addressing contemporary societal needs. This research emphasises the importance of managing the festival's impact on Valencia's social landscape responsibly.

Future research endeavours could delve deeper into the nuanced socio-psychological impacts of Las Fallas on diverse demographic groups. Exploring innovative infrastructural resilience approaches during festivals and integrating sustainable practices to mitigate social repercussions represent crucial areas for further investigation. This ongoing exploration will contribute to a more holistic understanding of Las Fallas' enduring influence on Valencia's social fabric.

Future research endeavours in the realm of Las Fallas' social impact offer exciting prospects for delving deeper into the multifaceted socio-psychological influences across diverse demographic groups. While the festival has been widely celebrated for its cultural richness and community engagement, there remains a rich terrain to explore the festival's differential impact on various segments of the population. Understanding how different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, or cultural affiliations experience and interpret the festival's celebrations could unveil layers of social cohesion or dissonance within the Valencian society.

Additionally, investigating innovative approaches towards ensuring infrastructural resilience during festivals like Las Fallas stands as a pivotal area for future research. Exploring sustainable practices and adaptive measures within urban planning and festival management could mitigate potential social repercussions arising from infrastructural strains. Understanding how to strike a balance between preserving tradition and implementing modern solutions that cater to the evolving needs of the community during large-scale events holds significant promise.

Furthermore, exploring the festival's influence on social inclusivity and accessibility represents a burgeoning area ripe for investigation. Understanding how Las Fallas impacts residents with disabilities, marginalised communities, or those with sensory sensitivities could unravel critical insights into fostering a more inclusive festival environment. This

exploration could lead to the development of strategies ensuring the festival's enjoyment and participation for all, irrespective of individual differences.

Moreover, investigating the long-term societal impacts beyond the festival's immediate duration could provide valuable insights. Analysing how the festival influences community dynamics, intergenerational traditions, and the evolution of cultural identity over time could provide a deeper understanding of its enduring influence on Valencia's social fabric.

By addressing these research avenues, scholars and practitioners can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Las Fallas' intricate social dynamics. Insights gleaned from such research could inform policymakers, urban planners, and festival organisers, guiding them in creating more inclusive, resilient, and socially impactful events that resonate positively within the Valencian community and beyond.

In conclusion, the resonance of the Las Fallas festival within the community is evident through its widespread acclaim and enthusiastic support among a significant portion of Valencia's inhabitants. This collective embrace of the festival underscores its pivotal position within the cultural richness of the city, serving as a unifying force that transcends diverse societal segments. Las Fallas has seamlessly woven itself into the very fabric of Valencia's identity, fostering a profound sense of belonging and local pride.

This remarkable phenomenon not only thrives due to local endorsement but also gains substantial traction through the proactive role undertaken by the government in championing the event. Government initiatives aimed at promoting Las Fallas do more than highlight its cultural significance; they serve as a dynamic platform to showcase a vibrant and positive image of Valencian society on a global stage. The government's multifaceted engagement extends beyond promotional efforts, encompassing measures aimed at preserving the festival's essence while addressing contemporary societal needs and challenges. This proactive stance not only accentuates cultural heritage but also reflects a deep commitment to nurturing community spirit and celebrating diversity within a cohesive societal framework.

Moreover, the festival's endorsement by the government amplifies its socio-economic impact, attracting tourists, bolstering local businesses, and creating employment opportunities. This concerted support from governmental bodies serves as a testament to the festival's significance as a cultural asset and a catalyst for fostering unity and civic pride among the inhabitants.

Las Fallas, with its rich traditions, exuberance, and community engagement, stands as an inspiring model for cities worldwide. Its successful integration into Valencia's cultural landscape showcases a harmonious blend of heritage preservation and contemporary

celebration, offering a blueprint for other cities seeking to enrich their cultural offerings. The festival's ability to bring together diverse communities, foster social cohesion, and promote local pride could serve as an ideal template for export and emulation.

The festival's global appeal extends beyond its entertainment value; it serves as an exemplar of how cultural festivities can become a cornerstone for local identity while also fostering a vibrant tourism industry and boosting the local economy. Las Fallas' ability to strike a balance between tradition and innovation, celebrating rich heritage while embracing modernity, positions it as a beacon of inspiration for cities worldwide seeking to cultivate their unique cultural identities and promote societal unity.

In essence, Las Fallas stands not just as an iconic celebration within Valencia but as a shining example for cities globally, showcasing how cultural heritage, community engagement, and governmental support can converge to create an enduring legacy that resonates both locally and internationally.

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