

It's Festival Time: The Role of Cultural Events in the Tourism Industry

They don't call them festivals for nothing; it is exciting, unique and full of life; it is a prime opportunity to attract tourism, generate positive media coverage and boost the local community.

Since we were kids, we all remember the joy and excitement of festivals: the colorful clothing, the live music and the sweet smell of cotton candy. Although times have changed, festivals are still a source of enjoyment for many. For those in the tourism industry, festivals also carry a positive impact in three parallel areas: attracting tourism, improving the place's image and supporting the local community.



Attracting Tourism

First and foremost, festivals are a great anchor for attracting tourism. While the destination is always available, having a time-limited event encourage visitors to take advantage of this opportunity and visit the place during the event. For example, although many people are interested in visiting Brazil, the famous carnival in Rio de Janeiro creates a feeling of unique chance, pushing potential visitors to take full advantage of the activities. Festivals are also a prime opportunity to get to know the local culture and experience the essence of the place. During the event, visitors have a unique chance to interact with the local community, gaining a deeper experience of the ambience, customs and local culture.

Improving the Place's Image

Along with tourists, festivals attract journalists and other opinion leaders. For these audiences, festivals are a 'media-event', generating an opportunity for a magazine or a news story. Such stories may be different from the destination's typical media frame – i.e. the way in which it's regularly covered in the news media. Such media events are expanding the place's image and creating a window for positive media coverage. At the time of the festival, it is easier for destinations to demonstrate their positive facets, focusing the media's attention on favorable occurrences. As part of getting ready for the festival, places can also prepare for the expected media attention. That, including the preparation of media kits, press room and local guides to show guests around.

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Support the Local Community

For the residents themselves, festivals are a unique occasion to celebrate the local culture and interact within the community. For the residents of Munich, for example, the Oktoberfest is a long standing tradition where they can meet their friends, take pride in the Bavarian culture and enjoy local dishes such as Würstl, Brezn and Schweinsbraten. In the tourism context, festivals can boost the local community in two major ways. First, people of the local culture are being flattered by the international interest in their culture. This enhances the residents' pride and promotes the preservation and cultivation of the local culture. Second, the tourists and visitors are spending money within the community, enhancing the local economy and supporting restaurants, hotels and other tourism-related businesses.

By Eran Ketter

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