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THE EFFECTS OF THE FESTIVALS IN THE LIGHT OF SUSTAINABILITY

Festival tourism is a dynamically growing sector of tourism, the number of festival visitors are increasing, and the travel motivations for this reason are strengthening. The festivals use and shape their natural and social environments and they play an important role in the environmental, economic and social sustainability of their regions. Taking into account the tourism effects of festivals, it is important to interpret the issue of sustainability. Our main research questions are: How does the festival affect the lives of the local community? What does it cause in the economy of the region? How does it change the immediate environment? The research has two parts. Firstly, Hungarian festivals are analysed and evaluated on the basis of the information available on their websites. There are seven pre-determined criteria factors: 1. the quality of locals' lives; 2. change and enlargement of employment structures; 3. change of value-system; 4. development of individual, family and social relationships; 5. expressions of creativity; 6. local community organizations; and 7. change and preservation of traditions. The second part of the research was a series of interviews, where the main criteria were the same seven ones. The aim of the study is to highlight the most important points in terms of sustainability and to present positive examples of how festivals can positively contribute to sustainability issues.

Introduction

Festival tourism is one of the most dynamically growing area of tourism. It is proved by the European Eurobarometer Committee's research which mentions that festivals as the motivation for travelling since 2009, and the festivals also constitute a major attraction in destinations (IPK, 2008; Sulyok & Sziva, 2009). The economic impacts of festivals have been researched since the 1960s, however, the sociocultural effects have not been analysed expect some research (Rátz, 1999; Kundi, 2013).

The aim of our research is to examine how the festivals could impregnate to the life of local community and what impacts they have to the sustainability. It was analysed by content analysis of the festivals' websites and individual structural interview of festival organizers. Our main research questions are:

- How does the festival affect the lives of the local community?
- What does it cause in the economy of the region?
- How does it change the immediate environment?

Theoretical background

The relationship between festivals and tourism goes back for a long time. By the 21st century these events became one of the most important forms of celebration culture (Szabó, 2012). Besides the events organized for the locals, recently the number of festivals aimed to target tourist has risen so much, it would be hard to keep count of them (Smith, 2009).

Many researchers examine the concept of festivals; nevertheless, there is not any definition which is commonly accepted. According to Getz (1997) the festival is identified as attraction, image builder, and the animator of static attractions and the catalyst of development. The definition of the Hungarian Festival Association has more concrete points: all the cultural, artistic, gastronomical, sport or other series of events could be named festivals which are themed (one or more themes, organized regularly in one or more locations, with a previously announced programme and they aim to provide an experience that has high quality, transmits values and knowledge but also it is an enjoyable leisure social activity) (Inkei, 2010).

According to the data from 2011 and 2014, art festivals are dominant in Hungary. The most common is to find festivals with a few thousands or a few ten thousands visitors. The ratio of foreigners is decreasing, which means that festival tourism is becoming a more and more important motivational factor for travelling as part of domestic tourism (Ásványi & Márta, 2016).

Font & Harris (2004) referred to the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), which means that sustainability has three aspects: environmental, social and economic. The cultural aspect was later added to the social part (Getz, 2009 in Andersson & Lundberg, 2012). There are a lot of events which have taken into account other issues beyond the economic aspect. The British Bestival is famous for its environmental awareness, where the waste recycling and renewable energies play prominent roles. The Australian Byron Bay International East Coast Blues and Roots festival (Bluesfest) has the objectives to organize a festival which honours the local community and contributes to its development (Bodnár, 2016). The goal of the festivals in supporting sustainability is that the events are a healthy, natural and functioning ecosystem.

The festivals aimed to target the local people, not tourists, which was important because of building communities and positively influencing life quality. Organizing a festival could renew culture and/or strengthen local identity and acquiring facilities (organizing, cooperation), which could be very useful in the field of economic life (Smith, 2009). It is an interesting question whether events meant to attract locals can also have touristic significance (McKercher et al., 2006).

It is quite common that a festival for locals is changed to be attractive for tourists as well. In this case, there could be problems about the loss of authenticity, the

giving up of artistic value and the devaluing of culture (Smith, 2009). This means the balance between the interest of the local community and the tourists has to be found. The pressure from sponsors and mass tourism could also appear to be a danger factor, since it can make the festival one-sided. At the same time, the lack of tourists could contribute to the end of the event (Smith, 2009).

The location of the festival might be a critical point, as well as the handling of the development of such locations. Due to the fact that most common areas give home to the events, there is always a dependent relationship between the event and the authorities which lead to long licencing procedures. The date changes also share the same critical characteristics which demand flexibility from the different stakeholders. Getz (1997) points out the difficulties of the negative image and successful management of publicity. He claims that a number of destinations do not recognize the benefits of festivals because of these critical, failure factors (Getz, 1997) which cause economic unsustainability.

The key point is to value realistically the circumstances of the settlement and determine the sustainable development from the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects. The economic sustainability is the aspect which is valued by all festival organizers. Nowadays the environmental sustainability also has an increasing role. However, the importance of social-cultural sustainability is undervalued and gets less attention. (Jászberényi et al., 2016) This is why our aim is to highlight the best practices for all the three aspect of sustainability.

Methodology

The effects of festivals could be examined at economic, physical, environmental, social and cultural levels. While the economic impact of festivals is a widely-researched area (Jászberényi, 2016), the socio-cultural effects are under-researched.

The tourist arriving to the particular festival and destination, and the locals greeting them, and their relationship plays an important role in the socio-cultural impact of festivals, and the touristic development of the destination also effects it (Kundi, 2013).

While examining the socio-cultural impacts, our aim was to demonstrate from the aspect of sustainability how the festivals change the locations directly, how they influence the economic, environmental and social sustainability. We used seven categories (Rátz, 1999) to analyse these sustainability aspects:

- the quality of locals' lives,
- change and enlargement of employment structures,
- change of value-systems,
- development of individual, family and social relationships,

- expressions of creativity,
- local community organizations,
- change and preservation of traditions.

While analysing these factors, their embeddedness in local communities was a key point. In other words, what the locals' attitudes are towards the festival, how much they support it, how much it means to the possibility of preserving the local traditions and cultures, how it contributes to the change of value-systems, how it strengthens the family and social relations, how it helps the creativity and the organizations of the local community and how it changes the employment structure. We examined all of the seven criteria from the sustainable point of view and valued them by the principle of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Our research was divided into two parts. The first phase of the research was made in a university course (Event management), Tourism and catering third year students (50 people) chose a festival and they interpreted the festival website along the seven criteria. The content analysis was used because it is a flexible research method to analyse documents and written materials (Babbie, 2003; Hoffmann et al., 2012). From the festivals selected by the students, 40 festivals' websites contained information for each criterion. In our research, these 40 festivals' websites were analysed. We conducted content analysis also, in which the theoretical codes were determined along the seven criteria and the open codes were applied to highlight the principles of sustainability.

In the second phase of our research individual structured in-depth interviews were made with 15 festival organizers. We used these to more deeply explore the socio-cultural impact of festivals for sustainability (Golnhofer, 2001). In selecting the festivals the first aspect was to be among the 40 analysed ones. Our aim was to include more types of festivals in the sample, in terms of the genre, the number of visitors, the proportion of foreign visitors and the target group. The questions of the structured interview were formulated along the seven criteria using the results of content analysis.

In our present research, we aimed to explore the social-cultural impacts of festivals along the principles of sustainability. It was not our goal to generalize the results, but rather to highlight the positive examples.

Results and conclusions

Presenting the results of the content analysis and interviews, we highlight the dominant answers along the seven criteria considering sustainability aspects.

In the respect of the *quality of local life* there are positive and negative impacts. Considering the *economic sustainability*, the services improve and more and more

are needed. It is a good way for the local enterprises to show their products and services to people who do not meet them any other places. It also means over return for the settlement (village or town) which they can use for development and investment as Sopron does due to the Telekom Volt Festival. The marketing impacts also serve the economic sustainability, as the festival is a good marketing tool for the settlements, it encourages their image and it can provide recreation for the destination. Regarding the *social sustainability*, the festivals warm the local people's life, it is a good way for relaxing and having fun, at the same time it also enhances the togetherness. In many festivals locals provide accommodation for the guests of festivals, which can be a valuable income, as at the Ördögkatlan Festival in Villány, more people have money due to the festival.

Although, the festivals also have negative impacts on the locals' lives, which are mainly realized in the field of *environmental sustainability*. It causes loud noise, the settlement is dirty after the event, and it also destroys the environment which reveals the organizers to the importance of environmental consciousness. On the Komárom Days Festival (Komáromi Napok) every year, the organizers try to expand and make more beautiful the green areas of the city and before the festival they develop the physical environment of the event site by asphaltting and renovating the buildings). During the festival the transportation is overcrowded and there are traffic jams, which makes locals' lives harder in their everyday lives and also the capacity of the place of the settlement is not big enough for so many people. Now there are festivals which are outside the settlement to avoid this negative impact. For example, the Voluta International Watercarneval (Voluta Nemzetközi Vízikarnevál) in Mosonmagyaróvár, which is outside the city, so it does not hold up the traffic and does not disturb the tranquillity of locals. To prevent or solve the negative impacts, it sometimes causes positive impacts in the fields of economic and environment sustainability, as with the Ozora Festival, where environmental awareness is an objective and verifiable as the area is presented in a clean and surprisingly high order, and the waste material of the environmentally friendly flush toilets replaces about 80% of fertilizer used on the surrounding soil.

The festival organizers think that the festivals cause mainly positive impacts for *the quality of life*, but they also mention negative impacts. Festivals invigorate the lives of local people, they give them entertainment and relaxation facilities, which are good for social networking. From economic sustainability, the festivals represent a good marketing opportunity for the city and encourage the positive image of the city. One of its main positive impacts is that festivals provide opportunities for regional cooperation which are also good for the economy and social sustainability. The festival organizers said that festivals do not have such a bad impact on the environment but they recognize the noise, the mange, the crowd which are such negative impacts that they should solve them somehow because all three

sustainability aspects are addressed positively at the Mediawave International Film and Music Festival, which is organized outside of the city to avoid the negative impacts for locals.

The impact on *employment structure* mainly affects the *economic and social sustainability*. The festivals cause positive impacts on more industries, as they generate the tourism industry; the accommodations are nearly 100% full of guests and hospitality also well-utilized during the festivals. A lot of local people are involved in the security service as in Fishing on Orfű. For local businesses these festival days mean the biggest rate of the whole year income, as they could sell most of their products during the festivals. On the website of Szigliget Walleye Festival (Szigligeti Süllőfesztivál), there are recommendations to catering, accommodations and wineries, and they employ local and regional handicrafts as the festival aims to extend the tourist season to boost local businesses. In the Savaria Historical Festival (Savária Történelmi Fesztivál) the number of permanent jobs also grows which increases the employment, and make positive impact on economic sustainability. Most of the festivals have volunteers especially students or retiring people as in Water-Music-Flower Festival (Víz-Zene-Virág Fesztivál), where also mainly due to the graduation requirement a lot of students volunteer at the event. The Győrköc Festival is also well known as almost all the people who work there are volunteers. The festival also impacts on the employment structure geographically, as not just the local people, but also people from the region could show their products during the festival, as Vac Wordly Gaiety (Váci Világi Vigalom), where at first just the local residents sold their wares but now tradespeople come from all over the country.

Festival organizers experience that for the settlement the festivals have more and deep impacts than for the region. Local NGO-s could help more on festivals and could appear better, but occasionally we also found NGO-s from the region. The big difference is in the permanent jobs, as for people from the region working on the festival it is only a seasonal job. They think that being a volunteer in a festival is really important for locals, as it is a tradition in Hollókő Easter Festival.

The *change of value system* is realized in more fields but mainly impacts on social sustainability. There are values which promotes an approach to different ages, as the kid-centric Győrköc festival in Győr show that this type of events also can be a good relaxing programme for kids not just for adults, and the family members can enjoy themselves together very well at festivals too. There are a lot of festivals where the guests can donate blood which raises awareness of the help of others as in Hungarikumok festival in Szeged where the opportunity of blood donation is given on every day of the event. The festival also can serve to help others but in another way, such as embracing young musicians. The Veszprém Street Music Festival (Veszprémi Utcazene Fesztivál) provides an opportunity for both local and other undiscovered young musicians to familiarize them with festival experience and the

audiences. In the heart of the city there is space anywhere to play music. For locals the festival is particularly important, a large proportion of the population (mainly 15–30 years) participate in at least one day to see their friends' performance. The local identity is also a good value which can be strengthened by the festivals, and as it means local people like to live and work in their settlement, it is essential from the *economic sustainability* aspect. In the Szombathely Savaria Historical Festival (Szombathelyi Savária Történelmi Fesztivál) the local patriotism appears, people are proud of their city and celebrate its creation. More and more festivals incite people to do sport activities. The Szeged Wine Festival organizes dragon boat race and half marathon. The values of gastronomy appear on festivals in several ways, for example Sweet Days in Győr (Édes Napok) we can see the countless ways of the use of chocolate. The Szigliget Walleye Festival draws the attention of the Hungarian wines, lake fishes and the importance of fish consumption. The environment and the awareness of environment as values can be found for example on Szeged Youth Days (SZIN – Szegedi Ifjúsági Napok), which also obtained the International Greener Festival Award, so the *environmental sustainability* could also appear in this field of festivals.

Organizers mainly highlight the knowledge and love of the culture, they think one of the most important roles of festivals is to change people's minds about the culture and to show them how beautiful it could be. They also mention the gastronomy, as festivals provide an opportunity for regions to show their gastronomy, special foods or drinks or how to cook it. More of the organizers said that the festival could encourage the identity of locals, they are proud to the city or the region. The kid-centric character starts to be an important element of festivals, as they want to entertain families, and not just the young generation.

The *development of individual, family and social relationship* can be experienced in every festival, which serves firstly the *social sustainability*. The festivals could be family celebrations also, the locals invite their distant relatives and it strengthens the family relations. This type of event is also suitable for interacting people, people can have new friends, and they can be together on the festival next year or they can also meet other days of the year in the settlement, so it can cause plus income for the city, which impact on the *economic sustainability*. In Summerfest the locals have new friendships with foreigners too. Some people knew their love and come back later as a family, so children also will be traditional festival guests and for example on Szeged Youth Days (SZIN) there was a marriage proposal in 2015. On Beach Festival in Zamárdi (Strand Fesztivál) there are forums on the website, where people can find a car, a free tent, almost everything, so anybody can go alone, he or she can be sure to find people with whom they can have fun. On Tokaj Wine Festival (Tokaji Borfesztivál) the leaders marching along with local people, they can have better relation, and people will be more loyal to the city. The residents of the

surrounding settlements also know each other better, so for example The Pumpkin Festival (Tökfesztivál) has a strong community building impact in the region.

In the organizers' answer it reveals that festivals are mainly good for recognizing new people, having new friends and strengthening the relationships with the family. Almost all of them mentioned that the attachment to the city is the relation which changes the most due to the festival.

The *expression of creativity* could appear in three ways, as imaginative installations and works, as programs or in the field of gastronomy. One of the best examples for creative installations on Volt Festival there is a Volt Art Zone, where in front of the eyes of the public they form furniture from pallet involving adventurous people, which mainly encourage the *environmental sustainability* of the festival. The programmes are various in festivals, but the creative ones could be parades for example in baroque costume in Vác, or shows/exhibitions as falconer show and Old-timer exhibition in Hungarikumok. The creativity in gastronomy is expressed as interactive pastry making in Hungarikumok or cooking fish soup in a giant cauldron in International Tisza Fish Festival (Nemzetközi Tiszai Halfesztivál). The programs and gastronomy examples serve the *social sustainability*.

The organizers think that the creativity could appear mainly as installations and they also try to organize more and more creative programmes, but they do not see the gastronomy as a part of creativity.

The *local community organizations* could be an important part of festivals, which is an essential element from the *social sustainability* aspect. Typically the following organizations participate as organizer in festivals: the local government, the local NGOs, the educational institutions, the local media-partners, the local sponsors and wine makers. But there also organizations who are performers on the festival: local music groups and bands in classical and pop music, dance clubs and tradition preserving associations. Although there are organizations which are informal, just providing the opportunity for visitors to be together with the others: the blood donation in (Szekszárdi Szüreti Napok), the competitions as the Powerful Man Competition in, the parades in Pálinka and Little Pig Picnic in Zalaegerszeg (Pálinka and Mangalica Majális), and to collect donations as visitors could give donation in Szigliget Walleye Festival to the SOS Kidvillage in Kecskemét.

The festival organizers want to give opportunity for local NGO-s to show themselves and be more recognized by locals and people from the region, that's why the performers are mainly the local dance and music bands. They aspire to cooperate with the local wine makers and craftsmen so the guests could taste and buy from local enterprises which are also good for *economically* to the city.

The last criterion is to *change and preserve the traditions*. There are traditions related to gastronomy, folklore or culture. The main gastronomy traditions which appear on festivals are for example the gastrotours (wine, ramson), the cooking

competitions, the pig slaughter, the vintage parade. There are folklore programs as folk bands or Swabia folk traditions and other authentic programs. We can meet cultural or historical programs which also preserve traditions as archery and horse-riding program in Water-Music-Flower Festival or the baroques parade. All of these programs mainly related to the *social sustainability*. The organizers try to do everything that the preservation of traditions could appear on more and more fields of the festival.

The organizers claimed that the festivals have positive impacts on the settlement and region from the three sustainability aspect.

As the analysed festivals is organized since more years, the locals and people from the region is waiting and preparing for it, and they make inquiries about the program and tickets, it is really important from the social sustainability part. Most of the time the festival mean the primary income for locals and local enterprises in the summer as locals could give guests accommodation and SMEs realize their products and services which encourages the economic sustainability. For the environment the festival could cause negative impacts, but the organizers have to ensure the safety during events, the clearness after the festival, so locals will support to organize it and have positive image about the event.

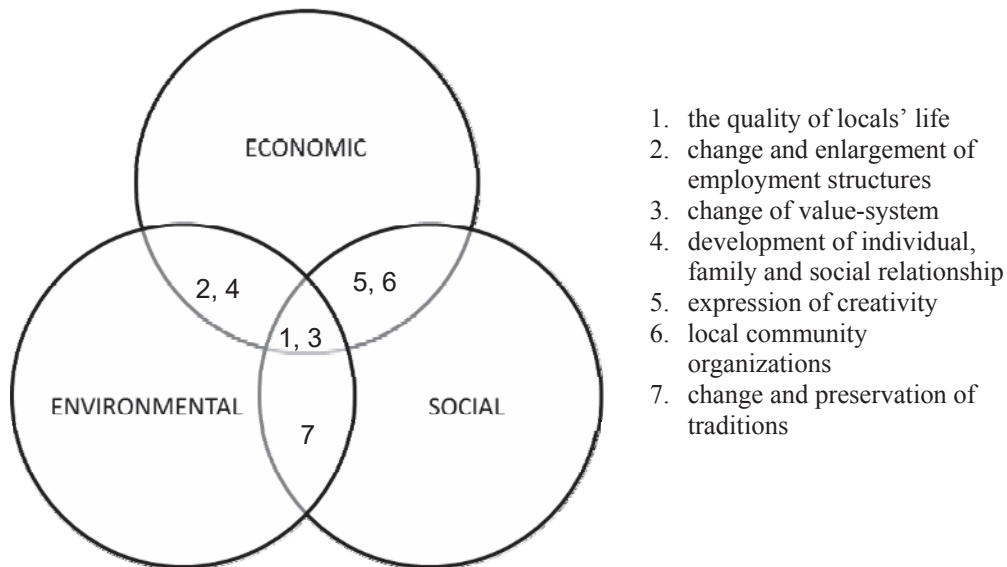
Conclusions

Analysing the socio-cultural impacts of festivals, the following figure summarized that the festivals impact on which field of the three sustainability principles along the seven criteria (*Fig. 1*).

As we analysed the socio-cultural impacts, the area of *social sustainability* appear every criteria, as the festival create positive values for local community by the possibility of entertainment, the participation of organizing, the strengthening of relationships and the creative, unique and traditional programs.

The *economic sustainability* of festivals is demonstrated by the increasing income of local businesses, the development of the settlements, the expansion of employment structure. The local residents like to live in the settlement and they want to work here, they are proud of their residence and invite guests also outside the festival.

However, we can meet not only the positive examples in the field of environmental sustainability, as the environmental load of the festivals affects negatively the settlement and the local community. Although it provide a good opportunity for the organizers to develop a positive image in stakeholders' mind with the reduction and solution of negative impacts, as well as with environmental awareness.



1. the quality of locals' life
2. change and enlargement of employment structures
3. change of value-system
4. development of individual, family and social relationship
5. expression of creativity
6. local community organizations
7. change and preservation of traditions

Figure 1: The impacts of festivals on sustainability along the seven criteria
(Source: own edition)

Our main research questions could be answered by the results of content analysis and interviews. The festivals affect positively the lives of local community. The economy of the region could be strengthened by the positive impacts of the festival. The festivals have positive but also negative impacts on the environment but the organizers try to solve and preserve them.

However, the festivals also raise a number of dilemmas. The internationalizations and the continuous increase in the number of visitors might affect the loss of authenticity and culture, and the abandonment of the art fair. These priorities are hard to be reconciled as the aim of the analysed festivals is to preserve tradition by involving the local community and also attracting tourists. There are further research fields in this topic such as the effect of increase in' number visitors for authenticity or the change in relationship between local inhabitants and tourists which mainly impact the sustainability of the festivals.

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