CultureCase

The positive and negative impacts of a cultural festival

This research was conducted by **Marco Scholtz, Pierre-Andre Viviers** and **Limpho Maputsoe** at **North-West University, South Africa**

Summary

This paper analysed the social impact of the Macufe Festival in Bloemfontein, South Africa. It is one of Africa's largest festivals, running over 10 days and attracting 140,000 people each year. The festival is perceived to lead to four outcomes: 'community enhancement, community degradation, tourism growth and increased public spending and interaction'. In general, 'residents experience an overall increase in their perceptions of their city as a result of the festival'. However, 'there has been a significant increase in undesirable activities as a result of the festival'. In terms of the local economy, 'the festival [is] the reason why more tourists are visiting the city, which leads to more opportunities for businesses as well as the development of more recreational activities'. Additionally, people 'perceive an improvement in their everyday environment regarding the beautification of the area, upgrading of public transport, and better communication among community members'.

Macufe is a celebration of African arts and music

The festival was launched in 1997 with 'approximately 30,000 attendees. However, the number of attendees has escalated and now over 140,000 people attend the festival annually'. The study is based on 425 questionnaires were completed by residents living close to the festival in 2015. Three quarters of the people surveyed said they would attend the festival that year.

Deeper analysis revealed that the four social outcomes influence one another

The authors advise that ‘better management of increased public spending and interaction (which is more easily controllable) will lead to tourism growth (which is perhaps more tricky to manage)’. The language spoken by respondents played a significant role in forming perceptions towards the festival, meaning that the organisers should think about how to bridge the cultural divides in Bloemfontein to attract wider support for their event.

Keywords

festivals **survey** **South Africa** **tourism**

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