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Emporda music festivals as tourism diversification tools

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1. Introduction

“Festivals aren’t just music; they are an ambiance, a whole” said one of our informants. This ambiance, this whole, not only refers to musical quality, but to the attending public, the artists’ and organizers’ passion and especially the venue (Gibson and Connell, 2003). Such emphasis on the venue is not anodyne; it represents an opportunity for territories to claim their place in a competitive world.

This paper focuses on territorial dynamics generated by five international music festivals in the Emporda region (Spain), in the framework of a research program funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and carried out by the TUDISTAR research group^[1], based at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. This program aims to analyse how various Spanish rural areas apply specific diversification strategies based on cultural tourism. Emporda was one of the chosen case studies. It represents a complex rural area with a beach-based tourism tradition. This dual feature represents a double challenge: generating territorial dynamics and diversifying the tourist sector.

On the one hand, rural areas in particular are suffering the consequences of globalization (Kousis, 1998; Leach and Winson, 2008; Long, 2004; Perez, 2005). The concentration of economic activity decision-making closer to metropolitan areas (Sanchez, 2007) constitutes a disadvantage for remote and seasonally deserted rural regions. Besides, regional competition has taken over from inter-city competition so that territories need to work together in order to increase their possibilities of surviving at a worldwide level (Amin, 2011; Matlovicova et al., 2010; Scott, 2010; Van Aalst and Van Melik, 2012).

On the other hand, the beach-based tourism model has become obsolete and traditional destinations are trying to diversify in order to preserve their coastal

landscape from further urban sprawl and reduce dependence on seasonal activities (Aguilo et al., 2003; Chapman and Speake, 2011; Escudero, 2011; Lozoya et al., 2014; Martin, 2003). Cultural tourism is one of the solutions chosen by this kind of destinations because, while it can initially be just complementary to the beach-based product, hopefully it may become the main one. Moreover, in a global context, new and more competitive beach-based destinations are appearing, offering a better-preserved environment and more modern and affordable tourist services. Traditional destinations can no longer compete so they need to find innovative products in order to attract new tourists (Garay and Canoves, 2011; Salva, 1998).

Investing in ephemeral events is nowadays a very tempting cultural policy because it is cheaper in the short term. Therefore, every city or town -even the humblest one- organises its own festival (De Caro, 2012). In line with this trend, music festivals are one of the chosen strategies in Emporda. Although they have existed for the last fifty years as a complement to beach-based tourism, nowadays they aim to attract their own public through their ambiance and innovative proposals. In this region every year there are numerous festivals of different relevance and music genres, from classical to jazz and to alternative music (Benedicto et al., 2009). Two key questions arise in the analysis of this phenomenon: first of all, whether or not such variety has a significant impact on the potential audience, composed essentially by holidaymakers but also, in some cases, by a more specialised public; and, secondly, what implications arise in the development of music festivals as an innovative tourist and/or cultural product that could become a driving force in local development processes.

Prior studies have focused on music festivals from different approaches, such as the sociology of the audience (Bowen and Daniels, 2005), the anthropology of music (Marcon, 2011; Mas i Anto, 1988), local development (Gonzalez, 2010) especially regarding social (Sharpe, 2008; Brennan-Horley et al., 2007) and economic (Gibson and Connell, 2005; Tohmo, 2005) impacts (Herrero et al., 2011), etc. There are also researchers working on festivals as new strategies to create or develop destinations (Nagy and Nagy, 2013; Prentice and Andersen, 2003). The current paper focuses on how further development of already

existing tourism products can provide an opportunity to diversify the local tourism portfolio through the enhancement of local heritage following cultural tourism principles. More precisely, by analysing the stakeholders involved (Getz et al., 2010; Prado Zago et al., 2013), this paper aims to identify the implications of the process of reinvention of international music festivals in Emporda region by focusing on two aspects: territorial features (networks developed and identity issues); and the role of the tourist industry in a diversification process from beach-based to cultural tourism..

Firstly, cultural tourism is analysed in the current global context. Then festivals are situated in this new cultural strategy. After presenting the case study and methodology used, the results obtained from the analysis of Emporda festivals as a potentially viable and innovative product are discussed. The final conclusions summarize the main effects of festivals on the region, local identity and the tourist sector, and provide a prevision of future trends.

2. Cultural tourism in a global context

Some authors consider tourism to be both development's best friend and its worst enemy (Juan i Tresserras, 2011). The connections between cultural tourism and globalization require a strong boost on diversity and cultural identity. The Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference (1995) defended the need for "*promoting cultural heritage as a local identity factor in a global context and encouraging the creation of cultural tourism products based on active leisure and heritage in order to face the necessary reconversion of the tourist sector in the Mediterranean area*" (Toselli, 2006:176). International organizations like ICOMOS establish that, in a globalised context, it is necessary to protect, preserve, understand and promote cultural diversity and heritage (ICOMOS, 1999).

This trend encourages local communities to rediscover and reinforce their cultural identity by enhancing their heritage as a cohesive factor; at the same time, visitors are renovating their interest in culture (Garay and Canoves, 2011; Toselli, 2003). In this context, cultural tourism meets the need of the enhancement, affirmation and recovering of the elements that characterize and identify each community.

Cultural tourism can be based on visiting cultural structures (museums, archaeological sites, etc.) or it can include a tourist experience (Cuccia and Rizzo, 2011) focused on heritage (Canoves et al., 2004; Gibson and Connell, 2003; Hugues and Allen, 2005). Within the wide range of products and alternatives included, music is a growing sector, that offers an equally wide and varied range of festivals aiming at different sectors of the public. From this point of view, it could be argued that festivals are getting cultural tourism out of the museums and monuments and placing music at the centre of tourist motivations.

3. Cultural tourism and music festivals

Given that festivals can be understood as part of cultural and, more precisely, musical tourism, it can be argued that there are few studies about them from this perspective and that they have not even been considered in UNWTO's projections for 2020. No national tourism organizations, such as the Spanish Institute of Tourist Studies (IET), have a specific tool to measure either their increasing importance or their social and economic impacts. Nevertheless, in 2000 the Integral Plan of Spanish Tourism Quality (PICTE) (D.G.T., 1999) included a subsection on product diversification. This document supported the promotion of the cultural sector, including musical proposals. Festivals could thus be considered as "*containers*" of musical tourism and cultural products.

In order to identify the origin of festivals, one has to go back to the Dyonisia held in Athens, extraordinary cultural and social meetings that attracted travellers from the entire Greek world. However, nowadays recreational elements have become the main motivation. Therefore, festivals today are, above all, artistic, cultural and entertainment events rather than a moment of self-celebration of the community, of its identity, ideology and historical duration. In this respect, festivals are recreational events and tourist attractions that are gaining importance (Ferrari, 2002; Prat and Canoves, 2014).

As has been argued, no systematic treatment of this phenomenon from a theoretical approach exists (Trezzini and De Lucia, 2004). However, festivals could be considered a specific sector within the wider framework of live shows, but with special features (Bocciero, 2007). It could then be said that festivals nowadays are based on three well-defined principles; firstly, an artistic principle

that creates a symbiosis between the artistic, theatrical or musical event or performance and the place of cultural meeting and exchange; secondly, a political principle that envisages festivals as tools for local development and tourism promotion (Gibson and Connell, 2005); finally, an economic principle *“aiming to ensure that a company uses the festival to guarantee to their clients its interest and sensitivity towards the arts and culture”* (Trezzini and De Lucia, 2004).

Hence, the considerable expansion of festivals in recent years has principally been based on the promotion of events as tourist and entertainment attractions, indissolubly linked to the image of the place in which they occur. Their increasing relevance over the last decades has attracted not only the attention of artists and supporters of the arts, but also economists, social researchers, local institutions and renowned commercial brands targeting the public who attend such events. Thanks to their potential as attractions, festivals have become highly effective place marketing tools. They can attract significant investments and generate economic recovering processes in territories hosting these events (Pravettoni, 2011). However, a permanent cultural policy must exist in order to avoid a cultural desert once the festival has finished (De Caro, 2012). Bearing that in mind, music festivals in particular have been pinpointed in the Spanish context as one viable way to save a decadent tourism industry. They provide added value to the mere attendance at an artistic event. They become social and business meeting places, where the natural purpose is the exchange of ideas and cultural -and even commercial- incitement.

According to Luis Hidalgo (2008):

“The combination of leisure, freedom, some degree of adventure, contact with friends, a stay in an unknown city and extreme schedules complement the musical elements that attract each person to his/her festival. It is crystal clear that at a strictly musical level, concerts are better enjoyed one by one, where nothing distracts or distorts retention, concentration and enjoyment capacities. In general, auditoriums are also better conditioned. However, a festival isn’t just about music and that is precisely its appeal”.

They represent a special moment to establish links with other cultures and, at the same time, to establish roots in that particular territory. They therefore favour the renovation of community identity and can generate a cultural and artistic impact at a national and international scale (Ferdinand and Williams, 2013). Besides, a festival is mainly an immaterial artistic experience the contents of which can be revealed through multiple –and even an unlimited number of– show projects around the same basic element or theme. This phenomenon was defined as “*the circumstantial size of the cultural product*” (Colbert and Cuadrado, 2010), referring to all ephemeral circumstances that have an influence on and modify the perception of the show while it is being enjoyed, because “*the same piece can't be seen twice as exactly the same, even by the same person*” (Colbert and Cuadrado, 2010).

Promoters interviewed for this case study stated that a festival as a cultural product becomes a means to achieve wellness and enjoyment. Even when music festivals are not economically lucrative, they offer “*the possibility for a group of people to express, celebrate, and/or promote their love for a particular activity, place, past or event*” (Gibson et al., 2010:290). The successful combination of a festival’s different elements favours the return of the audience, thus generating a typical viral marketing mechanism. This phenomenon favours product development, opening up a wide range of possibilities.

Finally, the concept of heritage has evolved from the monument to the site, from the aesthetic and symbolic interest of a particular point to the story and the meaning transmitted by the whole (COE, 2000). Festivals are excellent examples of ensemble. As will be seen from the results obtained by this study, they happen in a physical place, usually a place of architectural, artistic and/or symbolic interest and they broadcast immaterial heritage as music, tradition and a unique ambiance surrounding the event.

4. Case study

4.1. Emporda and music festivals

The case study on which this paper focuses is located in Emporda, which is part of the Girona region in north-eastern Spain (see Fig. 1). As has already been pointed out, it is a tourist destination that is trying to diversify its tourism sector to decrease dependence on its coastal assets by partially shifting the focus

towards the diversity of its landscape and its rich cultural heritage. There is, however, disagreement on the viability of this policy. According to Cuccia and Rizzo (2011), “*the contribution of cultural heritage in reducing tourism seasonality is rather limited in destinations close to the sea*”. By way of contrast, other authors consider that such events are often the icon of the areas where they take place (Van Aalst and Van Melik, 2012). At the outset, it would, however, appear that the music festivals that have been held in Emporda for decades today represent an opportunity within this expanded and diversified cultural tourism portfolio.

Fig. 1. Location of Emporda region



Source: Laboratori d'Informació Geogràfica I Teledetecció (LIGIT, UAB) for the research group TUDISTAR (UAB) (2014)

A study carried out by Girona's regional government in 2009 analysed the impact of summer music festivals in the region (Benedicto et al., 2009).

According to this study, festivals are “*any event including basically a live musical programme lasting longer than one day*”. Following this criteria, forty-three music festivals were identified in the entire region. In 2009, twenty-seven of them took place in Emporda, proving the high concentration of this kind of event in the area. In fact, the proliferation of music festivals in Emporda and, in particular, on the Costa Brava has led to a certain sensation of saturation of this kind of events that potentially constitutes a huge obstacle to their quality and, indeed, survival. Only eight of these twenty-seven music festivals were of an international nature and only four of them included *international* in the title. Therefore, most of them can be classified as local events that are not perceived as innovative proposals, but rather quite the opposite, as a multiplication of a common strategy. According to the interviews carried out during this study, some of the international music festivals in this region are even perceived as non-innovative proposals. For this reason, as emerges from the present study, some promoters are trying to offer added value by linking their proposals to gastronomic, artistic or other typical Emporda cultural elements in order to distinguish their particular festival from the rest. This paper focuses on the evolution of the international events in their quest to emerge as innovative products.

Emporda music festivals go back many years. The Festival de la Portaferrada (1958) and the Festival de Calonge (1968) are the oldest and longest standing ones and are well renowned. However, the most popular ones –the Festival Castell de Peralada (1987) and the Festival Jardins de Cap Roig (2000)– have become the key referents among the cultural and tourism attractions on the Costa Brava (Girona’s coastal area) and Emporda, bringing in every year not only thousands of spectators but also international artists from all around the world. It can therefore be argued that Emporda has undoubtedly a long tradition in the organisation of festivals, some of which have become famous worldwide while others are restricted to a more local level of renown. In all cases, in a context of obsolete tourism models where the future of many destinations depends on their ability to reinvent their power of attraction (Garay and Canoves, 2011), the fact that festivals already exist in the area could lead to the identification of such events as an excellent opportunity for local development

and differentiation in an otherwise homogenous context, simply by upgrading their quality and reinforcing their links to the territory.

4.2. Methodology

On the basis of the aforementioned study (Benedicto et al., 2009) that identified twenty-seven summer festivals in Emporda, those with international projection (8) were selected for further consideration. The organisers of all of them were contacted and finally five different festivals were pinpointed for in-depth analysis, because of their inherent interest and international impact. This analysis included in-depth interviews with stakeholders linked directly and indirectly to the festivals. These interviews provided the authors with data about the stakeholders themselves, the events and the territorial features. These three aspects constitute the basis of the research methodology, as the posterior analysis was organised according to these same three parameters, considered by the authors to be the most significant variables in the construction of successful, innovative products.

As depicted on Table 1, five promoters were interviewed, about their motivations to create and/or participate in this kind of event, their satisfaction with respect to: their duties and responsibilities; the evolution of the festival; its characteristics (funding, promotion, etc.); its connections to the territory and to other activities; the social and economic impacts of these events; and the future prospects of the festival and the territory.

Table 1. Festivals studied

Besides the promoters and managers, in-depth interviews were undertaken among other stakeholders from the public and private sectors that form part of the environment surrounding the event (see Table 2). Certainly their actions and opinions needed to be considered in order to completely understand the phenomenon. Hence, a further five interviews were carried out in order to learn about: their corresponding roles and responsibilities in these events, whether it be a in a business capacity or related to their administrative functions; their motivations and the benefits achieved through participation; the difficulties encountered in each one's particular sphere of action; their future plans in

relation to the events; and their opinions on the festival's links to the local area and its perspectives for the future.

Table 2. Indirect stakeholders interviewed

Once the interviews had been transcribed and, in some cases, translated, the texts were analysed using Atlas Ti (Blanco-Romero, 2005), a text analyser software that extracts qualitative data from keywords. Five subjects of interest were established regarding the goal of the research: the *person*, the *product*, the *stakeholders*, *innovation* and *territory*. Then, several keywords were defined (see Table 3) for each subject of interest and these were extracted from the interviews by Atlas Ti and placed in order.

Table 3. Keywords identified

Once the keywords had been identified and ordered by subject of interest, a network was created to show the connections among keywords and between keywords and subjects, a useful tool to provide an overall view of the different connections and thus facilitate their understanding and interpretation. Some keywords corresponded to several subjects (see keywords in italics on Table 3).

The results can be explained through three dimensions: territory, identity and tourism (in consonance with the title of the program in which this research is framed). The material provided by the stakeholders during the interviews has made it possible to examine the following aspects. In the first place, with regard to territory, the results will show to what extent territorial features -like location or history- favour the development of this kind of event and, at the same time, the degree to which festivals highlight these features by defining the link between music festivals and their venue. In the second place, the results regarding identity will summarise the role of festivals in reinforcing local identity. Finally, the results of the analysis of the third dimension –tourism- will explore the topic of festivals as a product, how they are created and commercialised, and especially their added value.

4.3. Results: Territory, identity and tourism in Emporda

4.3.1. Emporda: Festivals and territory

Emporda is strategically located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Pyrenees, just south of the French Languedoc-Roussillon region (see Fig. 1). This location furnished Emporda with historical and artistic relevance, so that at an early stage in mass tourism development it became a top level beach-based tourism destination, focused on the Costa Brava. The existence of seasonal tourist flows has encouraged the creation of summer festivals all around the region given that in summer these areas have sufficient potential public to attend events (Herrero et al., 2012).

The connections with the cities of Barcelona and Girona are decisive, as an important percentage of the audience comes from these areas of influence areas. The proximity of Emporda to the south of France is also important due to the existence of a long-standing festival tradition in the neighbouring region.

On the other hand, music festivals emerge as a double-sided cultural product, because of their artistic content, on the one hand, and, on the other, their setting in an architecturally rich environment, which affords a considerable enhancement and upgrading of local historical and architectural heritage. Such cultural environments are generally fragile and frequently give rise to technical and logistical difficulties, but they ensure a unique environment: *“There is the Roman cloister that creates an excellent ambiance and people go there during the break”* (festival promoter). We can therefore argue that festivals, because of their ability to highlight landscape and heritage, provide Emporda region a great opportunity for local development based on endogenous resources.

4.3.2. *Emporda’s distinctive identity*

Emporda’s tourism and cultural sectors –the latter especially linked to the artist Salvador Dalí– have worked as Emporda’s vector of visibility, broadcasting its identity in a more effective way than other sectors. The results obtained from the interviews show that festivals have become a key tool in broadcasting Emporda’s cultural features to the world since they have emerged as the icon of the corresponding town or village at an international level (Gibson et al., 2010). *“The mayor is thrilled because we put his town on the map”* (festival promoter).

However, as summer festivals become international events, they could end up by causing a fracture with local culture if they disregard their connection to their

environment, their *ambiance*. On the other hand, this connection can also add an international character to the festival and encourage the external transmission of local values. The complexity of the festival concept rests on this paradox since it directly connects local and international scales, and requires a delicate balance in order to retain the benefits and, at the same time, remain an opportunity.

4.3.3. Festivals: New/Old Emporda Tourism Products

Of the twenty-seven music festivals that took place in the area in 2009 (Benedicto et al., 2009), six were classical music festivals, three blues and jazz festivals, and a further three focused on alternative music. The remainder weren't specialised in any particular musical genre. Such variety has a significant impact on the potential audience, because the generic nature of most of these events points a priori towards their capacity to attract different sectors of the general public. Moreover, as holidaymakers constitute the majority of the potential public, most promoters seem to believe that a generic event can attract a larger audience. On the contrary, as the results of this study show, the promoters of specialised festivals believe that such specialisation is one of the keys for success, because they attract a target audience and this is preferable in the quest to develop music festivals as an innovative tourist and/or cultural product that could become a driving force in a local development process.

The current study has analysed festivals as tourism products, including their different production phases, starting with the promoter, going through the technical stages to the event management and promotion aspects, stressing the topics of innovation and added value.

According to the evidence accumulated, the promoters' main motivation is to be creative and to meet a challenge, as well as generating profits for the territory. In addition, the initiative provides the promoter with personal satisfaction. Interviewees considered that festival quality is higher when it is organized by cultural sector professionals than when local government representatives take charge, even though –paradoxically- Emporda festival funding is mainly public (Benedicto et al., 2009), as is that of most European festivals (Frey, 1994). In fact, all the cases studied receive funds from national and/or regional administrations. There are also sponsors who mainly offer logistic support.

Press releases, internet and word of mouth are the most common promotion strategies. The target population for promotion covers Costa Brava's summer holidaymakers, Barcelona and Girona -and their hinterlands- and the south of France.

In order to face the potential problem of saturation previously mentioned, these festivals try to bring some added value to their proposal. It can reasonably be argued that the most interesting strategy studied in this case is the Schubertiada packages that combine various tourist products (festival, accommodation, guided visits and museum tickets). From economic and social points of view, this initiative is a real innovation since it has led to the creation of a network that incorporates both private and public stakeholders (Cuccia and Rizzo, 2011; Nelson et al., 2011). The packages were first created as recently as 2011, so it is difficult to establish precisely the profits generated during the three past editions. However, the hotel managers interviewed were contacted after each edition and two of them declared positive results regarding the number of reservations, requests for later editions and, in fact, have even been contacted by a tour operator interested in selling their packages. Only one of the hoteliers believes that this product had no impact on his business the first year and he did not participate in the second and third editions. By contrast, other hotels joined in this proposal in 2012 and 2013, proving that the tourism industry seems to be interested in collaborating with festival promoters and local public and private cultural stakeholders. It can therefore be concluded that the Schubertiada packages have been useful tools in making this network possible.

To sum up, these international summer music festivals constitute one of the key differentiating tourist products that enhance Emporda as a destination. In this respect, festivals are in their maturity phase and they will need to diversify and innovate to avoid running the serious risk of disappearing as a product (Garay and Canoves, 2011). The Schubertiada packages as well as other proposals, such as specialisation that is the case, for instance, of classical music festivals-, are examples of valid innovative measures for these events and products.

4. Conclusions

It is clear that some Emporda summer festivals are world renowned and have become the icon of the towns in which they are held. The region's favourable conditions for organising this kind of event have, to some extent, led to a situation of excessive supply and competition within a small area. One of their main features at present is the search for added value in a global and competitive context, by offering local products which, in turn, reinforce and enhance local identity. These proposals are proof of a collective effort to develop the territory in a new direction by diversifying the economic activity – tourism- that has been Emporda's driving force for more than fifty years. Whether or not music festivals are indeed innovative proposals that could play a part in this diversification is a matter of discussion.

Hence, Emporda music festivals could constitute an opportunity to diversify a territory that still largely depends on an obsolete tourism model, although it is also true that . Summer festivals have existed in Emporda for decades as a complement to beach-based tourism. Today, in the context of the expansion of cultural tourism, they are being rethought and impregnated with new meaning, as, on the demand side, they become the main travel motivation for an increasing number of visitors and because, in a global context, they provide new opportunities for a territory with an already well-established and highly appreciated identity. Future research should be able to contribute to this proposal by analysing old and new products in different contexts, by identifying the characteristics of the audiences attending these events and by developing new tools to measure innovation. Creating innovative tourism proposals in a completely explored world is a real challenge in the twenty-first century.

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