

# Planning alternative model and strategy for tourism development in the region

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper, to develop a strategy for tourism development for the Irpinia Region of Italy, with a focus on special events as a mechanism to drive the economy forward and develop tourism. The paper will outline by way of empirical research collected from various organisations and countries throughout the world. Critical success factors will be highlighted presenting a model for working with regional, national organisations to build a cohesive framework. It will also demonstrate the economic and social impact attributed to special events. To conclude the paper will show that an acceptable level of community engagement with a professional event organisation and key partners will bring about long term sustainable model for community, cultural celebration and economic benefits.

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## Introduction

Special events are considered to be highly sort after by many countries, regions, and cities in the western hemisphere. Over the last twenty years special events have become a signature event for many up and coming and accredited international destinations. European destinations such as Barcelona, Vienna and Paris etc all have a signature event that draws in revenue and builds on the economic profile for those respective locations. It has been commented on by Dwyer, Forsyth and Spurr (2005) that special events not only bring about an international recognition, it also has the benefit to draw down funding from Government who are prepared to facilitate with large expenditure. They also go on to purport that civic pride can be a direct result and benefit to the local inhabitants. The cultural aspect associated with civic pride is an area that will be discussed in the later part of the paper.

The general theme of this paper, to present a sustainable model for the implementation and long term expansion of special event imbedded with partnership affiliation at a strategic level. That will ultimately set out to enhance and engender regional tourism from an international market.

## Literature Review

The growth of special events in numbers, typology and popularity has been enormous in recent years for many countries. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports, and Chairman of the Dubai Shopping Festival Supreme Committee has stated in 2010 that tourism within the region is a direct exponent of festival and special events for the UAE and affiliate states.

*“He explained that festivals and events in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah only complement each other to achieve the main objective in driving growth of UAE's tourism industry. These events, he added, were instrumental to UAE's economy and provided the residents of UAE an opportunity to not only experience international festivals but provided a platform for the exchange of cultures, something that UAE is known for”.* (Albawaba, 2010).

Over 15 years the region has attracted 40 million visitors plus and a consumer spending of AED 80 billion. Dubai Summer Surprises, one of many events dates back 12 years and has seen a continual growth in audience and economic spend.

This growth in the UAE has a strategic vision attributed to the DSS event, linked in part to Emirates airline an official sponsors for the past 12 year and has re-signed in 2010 to continue that relationship.

A similar model can be drawn from a region within the UK where special events has simulated civic pride, economic growth with a sustainable job market linked directly to the type of events. In the executive summary published by North Yorkshire Culture (2007), it clearly demonstrates

how a strategic vision in partnership with Yorkshire County Council, City of York Council and a national government funding agency the Arts Council of England has transform the economy, the region and sub-region whilst improving the quality of life for residents and visitors.

The Yorkshire region is host to a number of festival and events: York's Festival of Food and Drink and Viking Festival, Harrogate's International Festival and Crime Writing Festival, the Scarborough Jazz Festival and Whitby's Musicport on the coast, the Grassington and Swaledale Festivals in the west of the sub-region. With that selection comes a powerful compelling brand, and an international reputation for the entire region and sub-region. The published report also highlights the economic expenditure attributed to the region by the selection of festivals and events.

*“Every year they turnover in excess of £19m. There is a direct audience spend of £105m. Secondary spend reaches £250m. The sector sustains 300 jobs and secures a further 1500 in the rest of the economy”.*

The report researched and published the type of products for the first time and has shown the strength in transforming the region, quality of product and civic pride. The report also highlights that data supplied has given the event organizer's evidence in partnership with strategic partners to become world class cultural products complementing a world class built and natural heritage.

The North West region of England and in particular Manchester with the City Council as the main driver, set out a strategic model to drive the economy forward and for Manchester to become an international destination by 2010. Manchester has a population of approximately 2.5 million inhabitants and is considered to be the 2nd city in the UK after London.

Of the five objectives written in 2003, festival and events was given prominence as an objective to enhance the city and region. In 2007 Manchester city council launched The International Festival to the world market, a biannual festival of original and new work. An international cultural and Arts festival which has become the signature event for Manchester. Manchester City Council In January 2004, approved a £2m underwriting of the International Festival. This was also complimented by the Arts Council of England and the North West Development Agency. Early economic impact studies estimated £34 million to the Manchester economy also supported by the private sector with a potential audience 270, 000.

Financial backing for this event was published in the Manchester City Council report and resolution 2007.

*“MIF has now obtained committed or contracted sponsorship deals equalling £2.5m towards its target of £2.8m, as well as public funding of £1.5 million, consisting of £1.25m from Arts Council (including £500,000 Urban Cultural programme funds) and £250,000 from Salford City Council The original target being £3m for all other public and private income to match the Council's contribution of £2m”.*

The independent evaluation of the first International festival in June - July 2007 by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre titled the Ascent of Manchester.

The report presented through quantitative research, 200,930 attendance, created 34 jobs, it was estimated the festival achieved an economic impact value of £28.8 million.

The Greater Manchester Destination Management Plan 2007-8 set out a strategic vision for Manchester to become an international destination by 2010, benchmarking the city along side New York, Barcelona and Paris etc.

#### Taken from one of the five objectives 2003 - 2008:

Events: to increase the interest in, and visitors to the city through the creation of a world class events programme that builds on the success of the Commonwealth Games and strengthens the Manchester brand.

Apart from the objectives four key targets were set out in the plan for 2010:

- To increase staying visitor nights from 8.5million in 2003 to 10.5 million
- To bring in 955,000 overseas visitors – an increase of 214,000 in 7 years
- To increase staying visitor spend from £1billion (2003) to £1.34 billion
- To support 65,000 (FTE) jobs (from 56,965 in 2003)

In 2010 Manchester City Council, Marketing Manchester, Manchester Tourist Board and the North West development Agency all agree that Manchester has exceeded its targets and met the objectives to become and granted the status of an International Tourism Destination City.

Before setting out the strategic model for the Irpinia region one should consider another area of the event sector located in Italy, and one which has shown a weak international competitiveness in comparison to other global locations. Thus it will strengthen the argument as to why special events can be an effective tool to drive the local and regional economy.

The Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition (MICE) industry in Italy has seen a significant drop in market position. With new global players, the Italian offer and demand has lost out to cities such as Vienna, Barcelona, Berlin and Paris. Where those cities win over in terms of international profile according to Qumsieh, Golinelli, Petruzzellis and Trunfio (2009) the cities stated above are competitive because the infrastructure is suitable for international conventions with a coordinated approach from strategic partners such as the Convention Bureau. This strategic approach is brought together to market the offer as a destination location. The data comes from the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) published in 2006.

The Italian market share of convention cities is only 8%. Where Vienna has 14% and Paris with the lowest has 9%. This is tempered against historical heritage destinations such as Rome, Florence and Venice. Locations with a historical connection should be a main driver for a cohesive marketing approach from the local council, tourism board, destination managers, Convention Bureau and affiliated organisations.

## Strategic partnership programme for tourism development

To strengthen the Irpinia region as a tourism destination with a positive impact to the host community and sub-regions, organisations and government bodies must come together and assist the local inhabitants at ground level. A clear plan constructed in partnership that reflects the historical and cultural heritage inherent within the location and population. This level of engagement has proven to engender civic pride and collective ownership by the local inhabitants. Ownership at this level must be continued throughout the life cycle of the proposed special event. The appointment of a professional event organisation is also paramount in creating a product that meets with international quality standards and target audience.

Financial assistance and support in the first instance should come from local government situated in the region. This type of strategic commitment gives the product a firm footing to move forward and achieve further strategic partnership, funding and private sector financial support. A model that has consistently worked for festivals and special events throughout the world, Nottinghill Carnival London has maintained financial support from the local council and the Mayor of London office. Without that strategic support the event could not sustain the 30 year history and the title of the largest cultural festival in Europe.

To maintain authenticity so that commercialism and overcrowding to the destination does not take centre stage over and the organisation's primary importance is not purely led by generating revenue. Close relationship with the local inhabitants over time in the early growth cycle of the product will diminish discrepancies between both parties. Without this level of synergy between local residents and organising body, belief and perception from the local community may present adverse friction in the business relationship and possible non-engagement.

Where the region is endowed with exceptional cultural, historic and natural resources, this potential may allow the region to become a World Heritage site. This will add to the marketing capability of the overall destination at a national and international level. With that further funding can be obtained as part of the strategic infrastructural development.

To ensure the region can maintain a consistent level of tourism over each season and spread the impact throughout the region a number of events should be scheduled that reflects duration, location, cultural differences and potential audience profile.

Apart from setting up a business model to develop tourism a methodology and measurement instrument must also be in place to assess the impact of the special event. This method should work around a number of givens; the region's biodiversity and cultural heritage. A longitudinal study that investigates audience perception of the location and events including community engagement plus civic pride. A direct and indirect independent economic spending study commissioned on a two year cycle will aid in the strategic support from local government and private sector organisations, if the results are favourable.

## Conclusion

In concluding this paper it is evidently clear that special events when planned from a collective partnership approach with a strategic aim, linked to a package that is seasonal, delivering a product that differentiates within the location can engender community pride and induce tourism spend within a region or sub-regions. Cumulative research has shown the economic and social benefits to a location can come from a local, national and international perspective. From investigating the wider sector of events a strong argument was established to demonstrate that special events over the MICE industry requires significantly less financial investment to obtain positive and sustainable economic results in the short to long term. One must also be aware that speculative and anecdotal information should not be presented as a representation of the diverse products planned or delivered.

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