

INFLUENCE OF FESTIVAL POSITIVUS TO THE CITY OF SALACGRĪVA

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Abstract

Major events have the potential to have positive or negative effects on the people and communities that interact with them. Destinations are affected mainly in two ways during large scale events – economically and socially. Economically – concerning the profitability for the location that the event can possibly bring, and socially – the effect on local communities living in the area. Present paper aims to determine what influences does the festival POSITIVUS, with its scale, have on the city of Salacgrīva.

Introduction

POSITIVUS is an annual three-day music festival, taking place in Salacgrīva, Latvia since 2007, it's also the biggest music festival in the Baltic States. It offers a wide array of different performers, and plentiful other entertainment options for its visitors. Also, the attractiveness of the city is mentioned to be one of the main factors why this festival is so desired.

Aim:

- Study of POSITIVUS festival's influences on the city of Salacgrīva.

Tasks:

- To get acquainted with theory of social and event possible influences.
- To collect information about tourism in Salacgrīva.
- To study information about POSITIVUS festival.
- To conduct a survey with aim to find out the opinion of locals about the festival's potential influences.
- To arrange an interview with Salacgrīva entrepreneurs and employees.
- To analyze data acquired from surveys and interviews and develop conclusions and suggestions.

Methodology

As the methods for this study, literature research, interviews and surveys were used. Multiple online articles were analyzed to gain general understanding of the influences events can possibly have on cities where they take place, this method is necessary for creation of interviews and surveys. Using semi-structured interviews as the qualitative method, managers and other employees were interviewed from 7 different businesses in Salacgrīva, to get an insight into the way how festival can influence business, interviews as a method was chosen to adapt questions to each business separately. As for the quantitative method, 57 surveys were given to locals of Salacgrīva with the aim of receiving their opinion about the possible influences the festival POSITIVUS has on the local community, surveys include specific questions and can be easily analyzed, drawing the general trend of answers.

Literature review

People involved in major events, after years of experience, know the potential of these events to influence the people and communities that interact with them, as well as, the power of any event influencing a certain geographical area economically, environmentally and socially. No event can take place without somehow impacting the surrounding environment positively or negatively.

The environmental impact for the place of event is an important concern for organizers of any event. The interest of sustainability, sound strategic management and cost effectiveness are the main factors to be considered while organizing events. In some cases, organizers may understand the negative implications on the environment, and want to minimize them by limiting the resources put into the festival. The positive environmental impacts have to be identified if existent, and preserved where possible.

The economic impacts are the total amount of additional expenditure generated within a defined area, as a direct consequence of staging an event. Visitor spending refers to financial resource expenditure in concerning geographical area from event-related visitors such as spectators and attendees. This includes accommodation booking in nearby hotels, hostels and other, meals in restaurants that are located near the event's venue, spending in any shops and markets.

Quantitative research analysis

Using surveys for the quantitative part of the research, 57 locals were questioned, giving each respondent 2 questions, first one being an open question, with the aim of finding out, what in the respondent's mind are the influences of the festival POSITIVUS to the city of Salacgrīva, respondents were allowed to list all the influences they can think of, and optionally explain their answers. The results and summary of answers are collected in a pie chart below (Fig. 1)

32 of respondents (42%) mentioned economic benefits to the city as the biggest influence of the festival, mentioning that, in their mind, the festival brings in so much financial resources to finance the city's upkeep and business sustainability for the rest of the year.

The second most frequent answer was that festival brings pollution to the city, which was mentioned in 23 surveys (30%), answers included complaints about the trash that gets left behind after the festival, mostly in the green areas of the city, and the damaged area of festival's venue.

The next most frequent answer was crime that appeared in 12 surveys (16%), respondents mentioned incidents due to alcohol or narcotic influence in the days of festival. Generally, local people don't feel the threat from the festival's community, but incidents keeps the awareness and experience of previous years has prepared local people how to deal with issues brought with the festival.

Another influence mentioned by the respondents was that POSITIVUS makes the city of Salacgrīva more popular and recognizable, in other words, it promotes the city to the world. This effect appeared in 9 of the surveys (12%). The reason why such little amount of respondents mention this effect of POSITIVUS is simple – most of respondents consider the festival very distant from the city itself, promoting only the venue, the beach nearby and everything that's accessible within arm's reach, neglecting what Salacgrīva has to offer to these visitors.

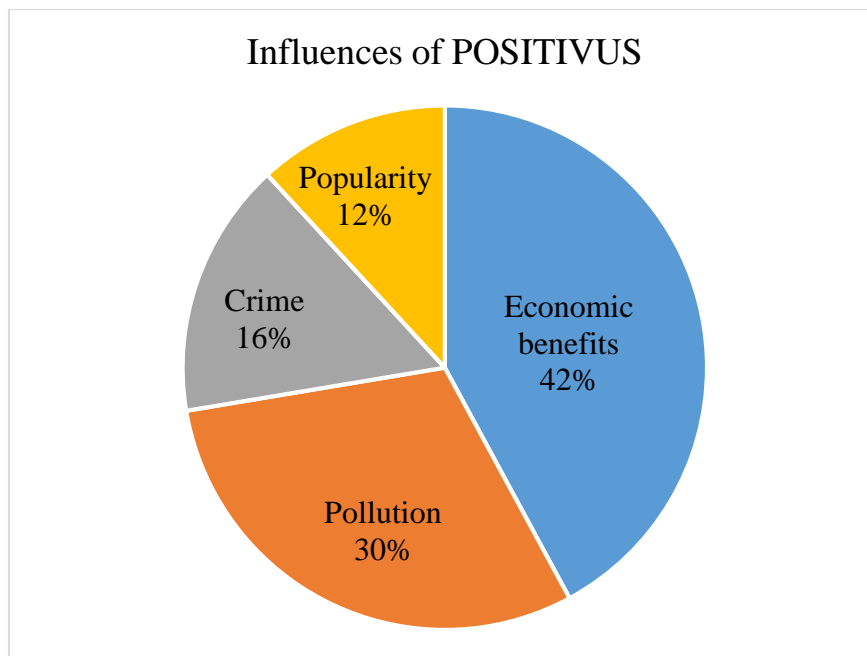


Fig. 1. Influences of POSITIVUS.

The aim of the second question was to find out if the local community agrees to the fact that POSITIVUS is overall beneficial to the city. Respondents were given a selection of answers from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”. Also for this question, respondents were keen on expressing their opinion about the chosen answer. The results of the survey are collected in a graph below (Fig.2)

None of the respondents gave the answer “strongly disagree” and only 3 answered with “disagree”, and from separate conversations with respondents, an opinion was received that the festival isn’t necessary to the city because it cannot bring anything good to the city.

13 respondents chose the answer “Neutral”, with the explanation of lack of knowledge about anything positive that’s brought to the city with the help of POSITIVUS, but the optimistic view of festival’s scale and potential influence in the future.

The most popular answer to the second question was “strongly agree”, chosen in 21 surveys, and “agree”, chosen in 20 surveys, which leads to the conclusion that according to local respondents, POSITIVUS brings benefits to the city of Salacgrīva. Some expressed the opinion that city has become more organized due to festival’s influence, at least in the summertime, while others mentioned huge economic benefits that festival is known to bring to local businesses.

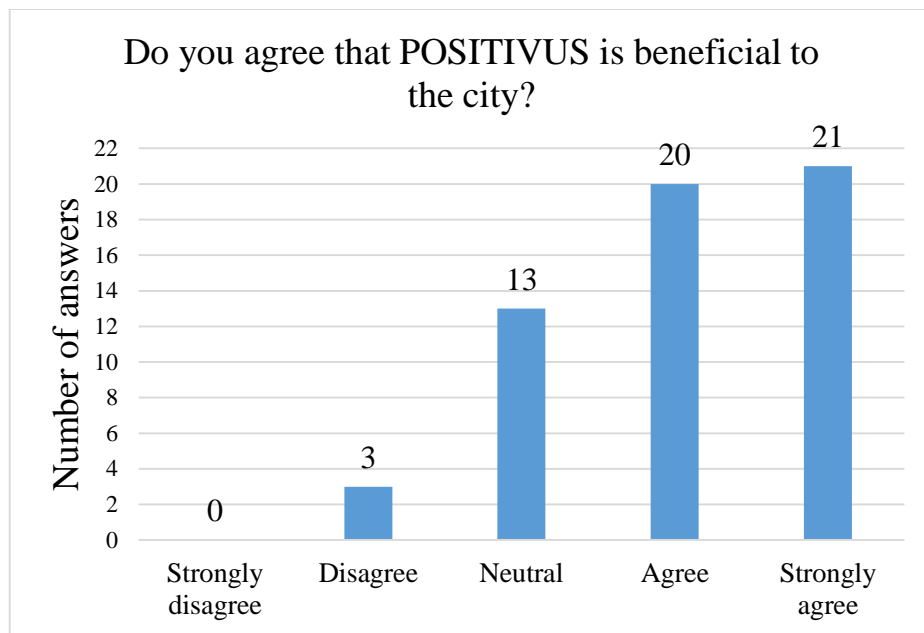


Fig. 2. Is POSITIVUS beneficial to Salacgrīva?

Qualitative research analysis

To gain a deeper understanding of how festival POSITIVUS influences the city of Salacgrīva from the economical point of view, semi-structured interviews were conducted with multiple entrepreneurs and employees in the Salacgrīva city. Businesses visited include accommodation enterprises – hotels and guest houses, catering enterprises – restaurants, cafes and canteens, souvenir shops and Tourism Information Center.

The framework of interviews included 5 questions, which were later accompanied with a deeper discussion to determine the details. Questions were slightly altered depending on the enterprise visited. More general questions were given to Tourism Information center, instead of focusing on a certain business, questions were asked about the city. All of the interviews were conducted in Latvian and later translated in English for this study. The prepared questions were:

- Who are your main clients/visitors?
- When do you have the most clients/visitors?
- Does festival POSITIVUS somehow influence your city/business?
- Has POSITIVUS caused any problems in the city/business?
- Do you change the way you work during the days of festival?

The aim of the interviewing process, as determined before, was to define influences encountered by different businesses, caused by festival's POSITIVUS organization in the city of Salacgrīva.

For Salacgrīva's accommodation enterprises, according to the research, main clients are Estonian and Finnish guests, accompanied by other guests from all around the world, including Central Europe, even United States of America and Canada. As for seasonality, most guests for the accommodation sector come during summertime, from May to September, while during off season, guests come less, when in summer season hotels and guesthouses are 80-100% booked, in winter

figures between 40-60% occupancy were mentioned. When asking about POSITIVUS influence on bookings, restaurant load and similar aspects, interviewees revealed that for the past few years, the days of festival and approximately a week before, are always 100% booked, even pre-paid a year in advance. Apart from being totally booked for the days of festival, the employees of accommodation sites mentioned that POSITIVUS doesn't change much in their work due to the fact these hotels and guest houses are almost fully booked for the whole summer season by other tourists anyway. None of the interviewees expressed the need to change anything in their working approaches for the days of festival because in most accommodation sites, there is always someone working at the reception. Hotels with their own restaurant usually rise the employee count for more efficient service during these days.

As for catering enterprises, such as restaurants, cafes and canteens, the guest profile mostly depends on the season, while hotels experience diversity throughout the year, catering sites tend to receive foreign tourists only during the summer. Just with few mentioned exceptions, during the winter season – locals, Latvians from other cities and Estonian visitors use the option to eat in the city of Salacgrīva, while in the summertime, interviewees mentioned guests from Estonia and Finland the most, but also many examples of guests from Russia, Denmark and China. The most popular answer to the question about high and low season of catering enterprises was that people come when the sun is up, while if it's not, the city, as well as, their eating halls, seem to be empty. But of course, more people are visiting these places during the summer, and just like hotels, the approach to work changes with the season. POSITIVUS influences catering-related businesses more than accommodation sector, because it doesn't involve long term commitment and has no booking limits. Even though food is available in the area of festival itself, many people go to the city only to get food. The festival's visitors ensure a constant flow of clients for the catering enterprise for at least two weeks and in the days of festival, some restaurants and cafes enlarge the number of employees, extend their working hours and raise their supply resources to serve clients that come from the site of festival.

The next interviewed sector was the souvenir and similar product distributors, and during the interviews, they revealed that their main clients year to year are Russians, Finns, Swedes, Lithuanians and Poles. The interview lead to the discovery that Latvians are rarely interested in buying souvenir-like products in Salacgrīva because they don't feel like tourists. The business of distributing locally-made products, souvenirs and similar items is also seasonal, like any other sector reviewed previously, the representatives also mentioned May as the beginning of high season and September as the end. The little shop don't get many visitors from October to April, with the exception being December, the month of gifting, so this month is also considered a part of their high season. The interviewees reveal that POSITIVUS influences them very positively, which they can see from the constant flow of visitors during the festival days that are not only going to look at what's offered but are also ready to buy something, and it's clearly visible that the visitors coming from the festival have acquainted themselves with the information about possibilities in the city, such as, places to eat, places to see and where to shop more conveniently. Not only the information found on Facebook and Instagram helps this sector with visitors, but the strongest marketing tool in their case is word-of-mouth marketing. Usually, the employees of these shops do not notice any incidents that are caused by the guests of the festival, because if incidents happen, they happen in the festival's territory or the businesses, after years of experience are able to prevent them. The only complaint the interviewees express is the littering. During the last few years, city has ensured that there are enough places to put the trash, but this issue still needs more attention. Public restrooms do not function properly during these days and aren't cleaned enough. Also, the city doesn't provide people with enough information about parking restrictions, which causes chaos on

the streets. The businesses of local product and souvenir distribution extend their working hours during the days of festival.

The last interviewed enterprise was Salacgrīva Tourism Information center, and they were able to give more data about the general situation in the city. The information center cannot monitor all activity taken in the city, which was the issue mentioned if the data isn't completely accurate. The results of the interview show that most Salacgrīva's visitors are Latvians from other cities, with over 2000 annual visits, while the main foreign visitors in descending order of visits are Estonians, Germans, Lithuanians, Finns and Russians. The flow of city's visitors is obviously changing every year, the summer is the season when people want to travel much more, having more free time due to vacations, being able to visit the sea due to the weather and so on. Altogether, the information center has a record of 2969 visits in the summer of 2016, which is more than half of total annual city visits. The festival POSITIVUS was praised in the interview, mentioning the boost of city's recognition, economic benefits to the municipality and opportunity for the local businesses and independent bodies to come up with initiatives and new ideas of business. POSITIVUS has changed the way some places in the city are viewed, for example the meadow where the festival is taking place is perceived as a camping site whether the festival is there or not, the skate park becomes a canteen during the festival and any backyard can be turned into a parking lot. Also, during the festival, more offers appear from the local entrepreneurs to take part in different kinds of activities all around the city with the aim of profiting off the festival's visitors, because city has gained the experience that people attending the festival are ready to spend their money and are allowing the local businesses to offer their services that are not used any other time of the year. Every local vendor profits during the days of festival. The festival's visitors are not known to cause any issues for the city due to the fact that all recorded incidents have happened in the territory of the festival. The contract for the rent of the land for the festival's venue is signed for 9 more years in advance guarantees large amount of people in the city for 3 days every years, which gives the confidence for local businesses to adjust their working approaches to be able to profit off the festival. The city wasn't ready for the couple first years, so at first festival caused chaos, but after gaining enough experience, if the right approach is chosen, the festival becomes an opportunity for anyone in the city to benefit.

Conclusions

1. Festival POSITIVUS is a large scale event that has the power to influence the surrounding area
2. The city of Salacgrīva is located near the border of Estonia that provides high amount of guests from Estonia and Finland.
3. Accommodation sector of Salacgrīva doesn't receive high boost of any kind because of the festival due to the city's location.
4. Catering enterprises and souvenir distributors accept more clients because of the festival, but this festival is not crucial to their existence.
5. Festival guarantees tourist flow for a certain amount of time every year
6. Local entrepreneurs and any service vendors have the opportunity to profit off festivals visitors by offering services demanded.
7. Many years were needed for the city of Salacgrīva to adapt to the scale of POSITIVUS festival.
8. Festival ensures profit and recognition to the city of Salacgrīva and the businesses located in the city, but is not crucial for existence of the city and these enterprises due to location and constant tourist flow from Estonia and Finland.

Recommendations

1. City of Salagrīva should employ more people in keeping the area clean, at least for the days of festival.
2. Municipality of Salacgrīva should provide more information about the services offered by the city and actual restrictions for the visitors, such as, restrictions for parking.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Semi-structured interviews

Protocol

Date: 12-13/03/2017

Location: Salacgrīva, Salacgrīva city

Length of each interview: 5-10 minutes

Informant profile: Managers and other employees of accommodation, catering, souvenir/local products distribution businesses and Tourism Information Center.

The Institutions:

- Pasēdnīca
- Rakari
- Kapteiņa Osta
- Pie Laša kundzes/Kambīze
- Pļavas
- Made in Salacgrīva
- Salacgrīva Tourism Information center

Questions asked: 5

Questions (altered during the interviews):

- Who are your main clients/visitors?
- When do you have the most clients/visitors?
- Does festival POSITIVUS somehow influence your city/business?
- Has POSITIVUS caused any problems in the city/business?
- Do you change the way you work during the days of festival?

Appendix 2

Survey

Respondents: Locals of Salacgrīva, chosen at random.

Questions asked: 2

Questions:

- What, to your mind, are the influences of festival POSITIVUS to the city and the local community? (open question)
- Do you agree that festival POSITIVUS is overall beneficial to the city of Salavgrīva? (scale from 1 to 5, 1 being “strongly disagree”, 2 – “disagree”, 3 – “neutral”, 4 – “agree” and 5 – “strongly agree”, with personal comments encouraged)