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Factors impacting on tourism arrivals in Greece: A study on
the alternating forms of tourism.

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Athens, Greece,

March 2025

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Without your support, none of this could have been real.”

Abstract

Tourism today no longer involves just visiting a destination. That has moved forward into many alternative kinds of tourism, like agro-tourism, kids tourism, religious tourism, athletic tourism, self-proving tourism, wellness tourism, eco-tourism, archaeological tourism, gastronomic tourism, and even gambling tourism. All these alternative types of tourism have been gaining popularity, which has helped diversify the global tourism industry, with travellers seeking new memories through more authentic and immersive experiences. So they not only aid in economic growth but also in the sense of cultural exchange, environmental consciousness and road development, resulting in more vibrant and sustainable tourism.

One type of tourism with a tremendous untapped potential in Greece has to do with Festival tourism. Thousands of Greeks travel abroad every year to festivals of global standard, but Greece itself has not yet become a substantial festival location on the world map. As a country, however, despite its diverse culture, fantastic nature, and deep-seated music and arts, the government has never been fully able to maximise its potential and attract international audiences to the festival scene. This is an economic and cultural opportunity lost; festival tourism is a proven driver of significant revenue, a buoy for local economies and a portfolio enhancement for a destination's global image. Nevertheless, even though this topic is pertinent and potentially influential, there is a notable scarcity of research within the context of Greece examining its evolution and ramifications.

This dissertation aims to examine the festival tourism ecosystem in Greece: The state of the sector, the pitfalls, and prospects for development. It will further compare festival tourism to any other alternative forms of tourism to see how it overall contributes to the national economy. This research will demonstrate the best practices from different countries and determine the factors that contribute to the successful promotion of festival tourism, which leads to recommendations for Greece to become a top-tier festival tourism destination.

Keywords: Festival Tourism, Alternative Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Tourism Economy, Tourism Development.

Περίληψη

Τα τελευταία χρόνια, ο τουρισμός έχει εξελιχθεί πέρα από την παραδοσιακή ταξιδιωτική εμπειρία, περιλαμβάνοντας μια ευρεία γκάμα εναλλακτικών μορφών, η καθεμία από τις οποίες απευθύνεται σε διαφορετικά ενδιαφέροντα και προτιμήσεις. Αυτές περιλαμβάνουν τον αγροτουρισμό, τον παιδικό τουρισμό, τον θρησκευτικό τουρισμό, τον αθλητικό τουρισμό, τον τουρισμό ευεξίας, τον οικοτουρισμό, τον αρχαιολογικό τουρισμό, τον γαστρονομικό τουρισμό και ακόμα και τον τουρισμό τυχερών παιχνιδιών. Καθώς οι ταξιδιώτες αναζητούν ολοένα και περισσότερο εξατομικευμένες και βιωματικές εμπειρίες, αυτές οι εναλλακτικές μορφές τουρισμού αποκτούν δημοτικότητα, συμβάλλοντας στην ποικιλομορφία και τη βιώσιμη ανάπτυξη της παγκόσμιας τουριστικής βιομηχανίας.

Μια ιδιαίτερη μορφή τουρισμού που διαθέτει τεράστιες, αλλά ανεκμετάλλευτες, προοπτικές στην Ελλάδα είναι ο φεστιβαλικός τουρισμός. Κάθε χρόνο, χιλιάδες Έλληνες ταξιδεύουν στο εξωτερικό για να παρακολουθήσουν διεθνώς αναγνωρισμένα μουσικά και πολιτιστικά φεστιβάλ, ενώ αντίστοιχα η Ελλάδα δεν έχει ακόμα καθιερωθεί ως σημαντικός διεθνής προορισμός φεστιβαλικού τουρισμού. Παρά την πλούσια πολιτιστική της κληρονομιά, τα μοναδικά φυσικά της τοπία και τις βαθιά ριζωμένες καλλιτεχνικές της παραδόσεις, η χώρα δεν έχει εκμεταλλευτεί πλήρως τις δυνατότητές της για την προσέλκυση διεθνών επισκεπτών φεστιβάλ. Αυτό αποτελεί χαμένη οικονομική και πολιτιστική ευκαιρία, καθώς ο φεστιβαλικός τουρισμός μπορεί να αποφέρει σημαντικά έσοδα, να τονώσει τις τοπικές οικονομίες και να ενισχύσει τη διεθνή εικόνα της χώρας μας ως προορισμός.

Στόχος της παρούσας διατριβής είναι η διερεύνηση του οικοσυστήματος του φεστιβαλικού τουρισμού στην Ελλάδα, αναλύοντας το υφιστάμενο τοπίο, τις προκλήσεις και τις ευκαιρίες ανάπτυξης. Επιπλέον, θα συγκρίνει τον φεστιβαλικό τουρισμό με άλλες εναλλακτικές μορφές τουρισμού, ώστε να αξιολογηθεί η συνολική του συμβολή στην εθνική οικονομία. Μέσα από την ανάλυση βέλτιστων πρακτικών από άλλες χώρες και την αναγνώριση κρίσιμων παραγόντων επιτυχίας,

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η έρευνα αυτή φιλοδοξεί να παρέχει χρήσιμες πληροφορίες για την ενίσχυση της θέσης της Ελλάδας ως κορυφαίου προορισμού φεστιβαλικού τουρισμού.

Λέξεις – Κλειδιά: Φεστιβαλικός Τουρισμός, Εναλλακτικός Τουρισμός, Πολιτιστικός Τουρισμός, Τουριστική Οικονομία, Ανάπτυξη Τουρισμού.

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1. Introduction

The tourism business is constantly transforming in response to the ever-increasing needs and wants of travellers worldwide. Festival tourism is one of the emerging segments, offering immense economic and cultural growth possibilities. Festival tourism is rising, with tourism patterns now focusing on experience and immersion-based travel styles. It provides destinations with the chance to appeal to both domestic and international tourists.

In this context of rapid evolution and fierce competition, nations compete for an identity as premier festival tourism destinations, drawing upon their cultural wealth, maximising beauty, and leisure activity opportunities. With its long history, rich traditions and scenic environment, Greece is perfectly positioned to play a significant role in the world festival tourism market. But the country, despite its cultural wealth, hasn't yet fully tapped into this sector, with the country's thousands of festival-seeking Greek travellers going abroad. Greek festivals worldwide generally have lower international attendance.

The system of festival tourism in Greece: Towards a new growth mechanism. This research aims to contribute to strategic tourism management and economic development by analyzing the role of alternative forms of tourism in relation to other types of alternative tourism and exploring how festival tourism can fit into such a framework. It is essential to comprehend the challenges and opportunities that this field entails in order to make Greece a leading, attractive, and competitive festival tourism destination in the years to come.

1.1 Background and Importance of the Topic

Tourism's profit potential has historically been a key pillar of economic development, cultural exchange, and regional growth. The industry has grown over time from its traditional types to include a variety of alternative tourism segments based on diverse interests and credentials. Among these, one of the newest forms of travel is festival tourism. Major festivals around the world contribute significantly to local economies, attracting enormous crowds, stimulating business activity and raising a destination's international profile.

This one, of course, overshadows by far the most famous Greek celebration, even if the local ones up in the mountains are inspiring. Although many festivals are held throughout the country — from music and film festivals to those centred on Indigenous culture — their status and economic importance internationally seem under-researched. In recent years, the Greek traveller has looked abroad for festivals, and therefore, Greece has a long way to go in becoming a key player in the international festival tourism market. This opens the door for critical questions regarding not only the current state of festival tourism in Greece and the forces that are shaping its evolution but also how it may effectively benefit the national economy.

Although there is growing international interest in festival tourism, the academic research concerning such a sector in Greece is sparse. There is a need to figure out how and to what extent the potential for growth of presentations was similar to those of other alternative forms of tourism identified here to assist decision-makers with choices on policy and growth potential. This research addresses this need by investigating the festival tourism ecosystem in Greece, the challenges that exist and are being explored, and measures of its sustainable growth.

1.2 Research Problem and Gap in Literature

Festival tourism, which can be seen as a subform of cultural tourism, is known to encourage regional economic development, increase community interaction, and preserve cultural heritage (Getz, 2008). Despite these advantages, there is still a considerable gap in the literature regarding the strategic management and sustainability of festival tourism within Greece. Although studies have been conducted about the global festival economy and socio-economy, relatively few have concentrated on the peculiarities and opportunities posed by Greek enterprises.

Conventionally, previous studies demonstrate the importance of festivals in prolonging tourism seasons and expanding the diversity of tourist offerings (Huang et al., 2010; Boo & Busser, 2006). Most of this research, however, is on mega-events, and little is known about regional and smaller festivals (Bres & Davis,

2001). Festivals are an integral part of cultural expression in Greece but often do not contribute sufficiently to sustainable tourism development on this basis. This neglect is especially pronounced in peripheral regions, where festivals can provide mechanisms for economic revitalisation and cultural preservation (Lavranos et al., 2021).

In addition, the significance of digital tools and social media for festival promotion has been recognized (Bossey, 2019). However, little is known about how Greek festivals use these channels to gain visibility and engagement. Knowing how well a festival is present on the digital landscape is essential for reaching and engaging a bigger crowd and staying economically sustainable.

To bridge this gap, it will be important to take a broader view of festival tourism in Greece in terms of strategic management practices, sustainable measures and the adoption of digital marketing strategies. This type of research would offer valuable recommendations for decision-makers and stakeholders seeking to leverage festivals' potential as tools for sustainable tourism development.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The current study examines the festival tourism ecosystem in Greece and aims to shed light on, rationally, its economic implications, obstacles to development, and potential growth. The following are the research objectives and questions:

Research Question 1: To what extent does festival tourism contribute to Greece's local and national economy?

Rationale: Finding economic benefits from contributing to festival tourism has a significant role for policymakers and stakeholders. Massive festivals can help the local economy by attracting tourists, increasing employment and encouraging local businesses (Mules & Dwyer, 2005).

Research Question 2: How does festival tourism's direct and indirect economic impact measure against other alternative types of tourism, such as agritourism and ecotourism in Greece?

Rationale: Comparative analysis allows for scrutinising the relative strengths and weaknesses of festival tourism compared to other forms of tourism, which can assist

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in the strategic decision-making process and resource distribution (Getz & Page, 2016).

Research Question 3: What are the core challenges and opportunities to develop and promote festival tourism in Greece?

Rationale: These factors must be discovered in order to outline the appropriate approaches for propelling the festival tourism industry. Examples are limitations in infrastructure, a limited amount of funds and competition from other locations (Mair & Whitford, 2013).

Research Question 4: In which ways are Greek festivals employing digital marketing strategies and social media platforms to improve visibility for international tourists?

Rationale: To reach as many people as possible, you need to promote yourself online (which we know has become something that cannot be avoided in this digital age). The more we know about what is being done and what can be done, the better we can increase international visitors (Bossey 2019).

Research Question 5: What sustainability practices are applied in Greek festival tourism, and how do they influence festivals' long-term sustainability? Sustainable practices create a favourable festival image, helping attract environmentally friendly tourists (Getz, 2008).

1.4 Research Motivation

The impetus for this study derives from the analysis of festival tourism, which is an increasingly important economic and cultural force in many states, and the role the quintessential cultural capital of Greece can play in this sector. Festival tourism, an area of cultural tourism, has been distinguished for its potential to draw international travellers, boost local economies, and improve the world's perception of a place (Getz, 2008). Even with these critical advantages, Greece has still not taken full advantage of its potential as a festival tourism destination. This study aims to examine the determinants that contribute to the growth of this sector and provide

practical recommendations in order for Greece to be steadily established as one of the top festival tourism locations.

One of the fundamental motives for this research is the contribution of festival tourism to the economy. Events/Festivals — Events are known to yield substantial profit for host destinations with the influx of masses, business stimulation, and the creation of jobs on an international stage. Several countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany, now have well-developed festival tourism sector and benefit from the increase in the number of tourists and the development of the local economy (Boo & Busser, 2006). However, festival tourism in Greece is an underdeveloped segment, as local events are unable to draw significant international attendance. This poses really interesting questions regarding the economic impact of festival tourism in Greece and what kind of tactics can be applied to support its development.

The second driving factor for this research is the relative scarcity of studies regarding festival tourism in Greece. Although numerous academic studies have examined various forms of alternative tourism, such as agrifood tourism (Huang et al., 2010), ecotourism, wellness tourism, athletic tourism and religious tourism, little has been written on the importance of festival tourism in the broader context of the Greek tourism ecosystem. With the state's sanctified efforts to add breadth to its tourism landscape, it is critical to unpack how festivals shape tourism demand. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the economic, social and cultural impact of festival tourism in Greece and providing empirical evidence regarding its benefits and problems.

Moreover, this study is justified by the necessity of exploring the challenges and opportunities of festival tourism development in Greece. Although Greek festivals are an opportunity to experience the rich traditions, history and artistic expression of Greece, few available research studies clearly define the obstacles facing the approach to increasing interest in this country through festival tourism methods: inadequate funding, infrastructure or promotion of festival tourism practices (Lavranos et al., 2021). It points to the fact, after all, that many Greeks prefer to join a festival overseas, leading one to suspect that there may be something lacking in the local festival scene. By addressing these critical issues and opportunities, this research will provide practical recommendations that could ultimately help to

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improve the organization of Greek festivals, enhance visitor experiences, and elevate the international status of Greek festivals.

Additionally, the impact of digital marketing and social media on festival tourism is another potential area for study. As festivals become increasingly popular in the modern digital landscape, organizers are required to exploit the potential of online platforms to promote the festival, gathering audience attention and creating brand awareness (Bossey, 2019). A study of how Greek festivals employ digital means for marketing and whether they are on the same page with international best practices which could offer valuable insights regarding the enhancement of festival marketing and visitor experience.

Overall, this study aims to provide valuable and evidence-based insights to decision-makers for making better-informed strategic tourism management decisions in Greece. This research seeks to actually contribute to developing clear recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, as well as stakeholders through an analysis of the festival tourism ecosystem, a comparative study of other alternative forms of tourism, and an exploration of alternatives to develop festivals. Therefore, it aims to take part in the broader conversation around sustainable tourism development and economic diversification for Greece, making sure that it opens new doors in festival tourism.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

The research has been divided into five main chapters, which include different aspects. The organization makes sense, moving from the introduction and theoretical framework to the research methodology, data analysis, and findings with conclusions and recommendations.

The first chapter discusses the research topic and the significance of festival tourism within the context of the broader tourism industry. It describes the research problem, objectives, research questions, and study motivation. This chapter also describes the research background, which helps explain its importance to academia and industry stakeholders.

The second chapter outlines the framework of festival tourism and the role of festival tourism in the tourism industry. What is also covered here is tourism's

positive and negative effects and influences on the local economies, how traditional tourism differs from alternative tourism, and the analysis of festival tourism as a specific and vital tourism segment. In addition, this chapter also establishes a framework for developing research propositions by reviewing existing festival tourism literature and synthesizing key trends and challenges.

The third chapter describes the research design and methodology and explains how data were collected and analyzed. It outlines the sample selection process, survey instrument, and data collection while also justifying the use of econometric analysis to assess the impact of festival tourism. The chapter covers the reliability and validity of the research methodology.

The fourth chapter presents and interprets the research data. It starts with descriptive statistics and moves into correlation and regression analysis, observing the relationship between festival tourism and economic impact. We will also compare festival tourism with other alternative forms of tourism and analyze the current state of festival management in Greece. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion of the main findings that align with the research objectives.

The last chapter summarizes the study's key findings and their implications for Greek tourism development. It provides suggestions for policymakers, festival organizers, and tourism stakeholders on how to enhance festival tourism management and promotion. In addition, this chapter presents the study's limitations and recommendations for future research on the phenomenon of festival tourism in Greece.

2 Theoretical Development

Well-defined theoretical frameworks in academic research help build or analyze the relationship of key constructs, concepts, or variables. As a thesis topic regarding Greek festival tourism, the theoretical framework should provide a sufficient basis for the research by establishing the theories and models that guide the festival's dynamics, the behaviour of the visitors, and the economic and cultural impact of their visit.

Theoretical frameworks connect and build on the existing literature explored through empirical research, creating a more structured divisive space. They

delineate constructs central to the explored phenomenon and clarify its limits, as seen in visitor motivation, experience quality, stakeholder relationships, and tourism development strategies. This alludes to the factors influencing festival tourism that are better understood utilizing well-established theories from tourism studies, event management, consumer behaviour, and economics.

By exposing the study to be built on a more systematic knowledge base, a theoretical framework also adds to the study's validity, grounding it in existing knowledge. It serves as an interpretative lens through which data can be viewed, providing analytical meaning to findings rather than mere descriptions. This could be vital for a study that aims to compare festival tourism against other forms of alternative tourism and examine its economic implications. Utilizing theoretical lenses presented through visitor engagement models, economic impact assessment frameworks or tourism management theories, this thesis can do so in a much more refined and academic manner.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework helps in developing hypotheses and propositions for the research. In this way, the present investigation will likely formulate relevant hypotheses that can assess the significance of festival tourism in Greece's tourism development. Additionally, this knowledge assists researchers in identifying suitable research approaches and analysis methods, helping ensure data collection and interpretation appropriately align with research goals.

This theoretical framework is, therefore, a critical component of this thesis. When systematically tested, it will provide structure and academic exactness to the research into festival tourism in Greece since such tourism is a relatively unexplored study area. It facilitates a thorough analysis of the industry, offering insights that enrich theoretical knowledge and serve practical purposes for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and festival organizers.

2.1 The Economic Impact of Tourism on Local and National Economies

Tourism is a vital player in the working mechanism of both local and national economies. It serves as a driver for economic development, job creation, and infrastructure development. Its profound influence spans multiple sectors, highlighting its importance in modern economic contexts.

- **Impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** In 2024, the travel and tourism sector is expected to contribute an unprecedented \$11.1 trillion to the global GDP, representing 10% of the total GDP. That is a 12.1% increase from the year before and a 7.5% limit-up from a previous high in 2019. (Reuters, 2024)
- **Creating Jobs:** Tourism accounts for over 348 million jobs worldwide in 2024, exceeding the 2019 record before the pandemic by 13.6 million jobs. This includes direct jobs in hospitality, transportation, and entertainment, as well as indirect jobs in those satellite industries that support the customer-facing sectors. As a sector that creates thousands of varied job opportunities, the industry's significant contribution to global employment cannot be overstated. (Reuters, 2024)
- **Local Economic Growth:** At the local level, tourism fuels local economic development by attracting investment, scaling up infrastructure, and stimulating cultural exchange. In addition, for example, Scotland's national parks create more than £700 million annually from the visitor economy, which aids local communities in terms of tourism spend and employment opportunities. This new revenue supports small businesses, funds local services and encourages the development of our communities. (The Times, 2024)
- **Foreign Exchange Earnings:** Tourism is more than necessary for foreign exchange earnings, as it contributes to the national reserves and balances trade deficits. More international tourists mean greater demand for local products and services, which boosts local currencies and economies. For instance, Southern European economies around Spain and Greece show strong economic growth buoyed by tourism and visitors – Spain expects record numbers of visitors contributing to GDP growth of 2.7% and Greece 2.2% in 2024. (Le Monde, 2024)
- **Infrastructure Development:** The expansion of tourism can require the construction of infrastructure like airports, roads, and public utilities, resulting in benefits for local communities. In Greece, for example, tourism has stimulated development projects in the Cyclades islands, like port enlargements and new road constructions to accommodate more visitors. These initiatives come as a response to the growing demand for eco-friendly travel, but they also pose challenges like preserving local culture amidst commercialization and environmental degradation. (Le Monde, 2024)

- **Challenges and Considerations:** While tourism can generate valuable economic inputs, it can also lead to significant issues such as environmental harm, cultural commodification, and economic leakage, whereby the financial benefits fail to stay within the local economy. On the Cyclades islands, we see the shortcomings of unregulated tourism: water shortages, waste management problems, and rising rents due to seasonally available properties. (Le Monde, 2024)

Tourism helps shape local and national income brackets. Given its ability to generate income, create employment, and provide the bedrock for infrastructure development, it remains a significant driver of the economy. Nevertheless, careful planning and inclusive policy design can eliminate the accompanying challenges to ensure sustainable and equitable growth.

2.2 Conventional vs. Alternative Forms of Tourism

Tourism is an ever-changing and diverse industry that serves many needs. Until the late 1990s, tourism was based primarily on traditional or mass tourism models. However, as the tourism industry has evolved to be more environmentally, socially, and culturally aware, there has been a growing interest in alternative forms of tourism. This section examines the vital contrasts between conventional and alternative tourism regarding goals, impacts, and visitor experiences.

Conventional tourism, or mass tourism, involves mass tourist flows to traditional products, e.g. sun, sea, and sand vacations to popular tourist destinations. This sort of tourism is commonly organized by tour operators, often consisting of standardized packages with minimal variation in the experience from one person to another. It prioritises tourist numbers and economic growth at the expense of social and environmental sustainability (Butler, 1990). Well-known examples are coastal resorts, cruise tourism and urban sightseeing.

Conventional tourism, in particular, has long played a significant role in economic development, especially in areas blessed with charming climates or interesting historical sites. These include environmental degradation, cultural commodification, seasonal employment, and overtourism in fragile destinations (Holden, 2016). An ever-increasing concentration of visitors at iconic sites and the stress on local

infrastructure have raised concerns about the sustainability of the mass tourism model.

On the other hand, alternative tourism is more sustainable, small-scale, and driven by the local community. It includes numerous forms of niche tourism, including ecotourism, agritourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, and festival tourism. Examples of how alternative tourism seeks to reduce the negative impact of tourism and orient visits toward a more meaningful interaction between visitor and community (Weaver, 2006). This type of Tourism often involves travelling to less crowded locations, slow travel styles, and heightened attention on local culture, surroundings and personal enrichment

Alternative tourism is characterized by its orientation toward environmental, economic, and sociocultural sustainability. Another clearly sustainable approach, ecotourism, promotes conservation efforts in natural areas and responsible travel to those areas, contributing to education and local economies (Honey, 2008). In much the same way, cultural tourism makes it possible for tourists to connect with local traditions, festivals and elements of heritage in a respectful and immersive manner, which enhances intercultural understanding.

The alternative tourism is also more flexible and provides an exclusive, tailored experience. As travellers become increasingly aware of their environmental impact and look for deeper connections on their trips, alternative tourism is on the rise. This international attention does stand to be recognized as an alternative solution to the ills of conventional tourism as well as an alternative model for more inclusive and responsible development (Sharpley, 2006).

However, alternative tourism has its set of challenges. Greenwashing, little regulation and limited scalability reduce its effectiveness and credibility. Moreover, although alternative tourism has a generally positive impact in sustaining, it still needs strong management to prevent being repeated such as mass tourism, especially in sensitive ecological or cultural areas (Mowforth & Munt, 2015).

In summary, traditional tourism is still financially valuable, but alternative tourism is more eco-friendly and culturally sensitive. With the mounting international climate crisis, cultural loss, and over-tourism, promoting sustainable tourism practices becomes increasingly vital for the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry.

2.3 Understanding Festival Tourism: Definition, Characteristics, and Global Trends

Festival Tourism Definition:

Festival tourism is the act of travelling to a festival, which addresses an event, usually staged by a community, that centres around a theme, such as the festival of leisure, a season of the year, or a community ritual. They are also major tourist attractions designed to provide an authentic experience of the culture and identity of the host community. Festival tourism can be viewed as a specific type of tourism because the main reason for travelling is either to take part in a festival or to watch it (Cudny, W., 2013).

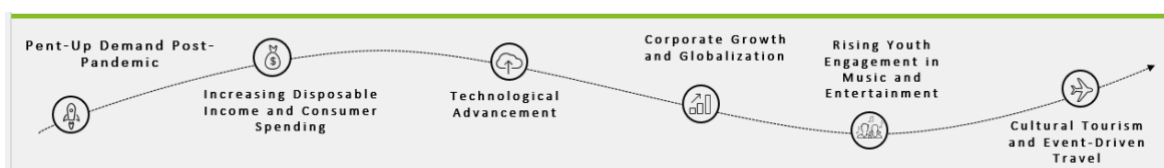
Characteristics of Festival Tourism:

1. **Cultural Expression and Preservation:** Festivals often serve as a platform for the community to express and preserve their cultural heritage, showcasing traditional music, dance, art, and rituals. Not only does it entertain, but it also assists in preserving and promoting cultural identity: Cudny, W. (2013)
2. **Participating and interacting with other people in the festival:** Festivals give communities a chance to socialize with each other and share the experience together. Aided as they are by their diverse culture, these localities act as a point of engagement for both residents and tourists, sharing experiences and constructing social networks (Wood E., et al., 2023).
3. **Economic Impact:** Festivals can have positive economic effects for the local community, including increased tourism revenue, job creation, and the stimulation of local businesses. Such festivals draw tourists who pay for lodging, meals, and other services, thus enhancing the local economy (Yolal M., et al., 2016).
4. **Temporal and Spatial Specificity** Festivals are often spaced out at certain times and at certain places, frequently in conjunction with historical or seasonal events. The temporality and spatial specificity can condition the travel patterns and tourists can organize their visitations on those events (Dychkovskyy S., & Ivanov S., 2020)

5. The festival's uniqueness and the memorable experiences that result in personal enjoyment and learning. Festivals offer an intense immersive experience that gives tourists access to cultural and social aspects of the festival (Zhang S-N. & Deng F., 2022).
6. Destination Image and Branding: Festivals can add to the image of a destination by making it more appealing to potential tourists. These marketing tools showcase a place's unique cultural characteristics and help shape tourists' perceptions and decisions (Greg Richards & Maria del Pilar Leal Londoño, 2022).

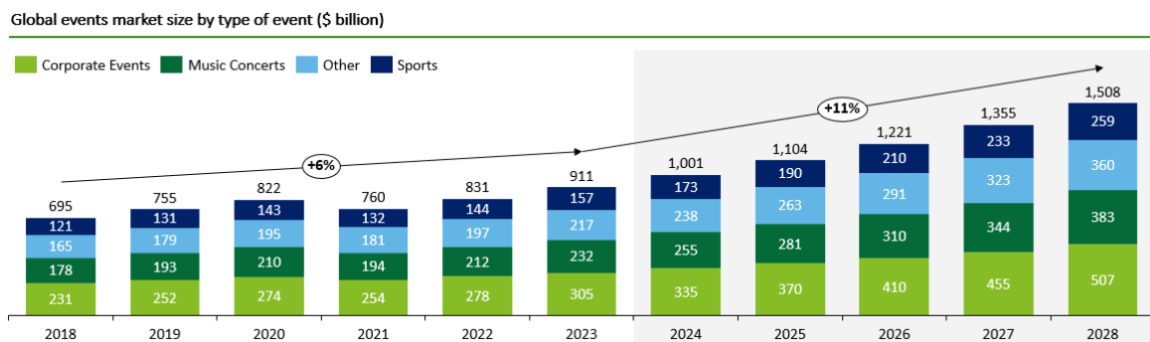
Here are some key Trends of Festival Tourism according to the report conducted by Deloitte: Some major macroeconomic and cultural currents are driving the growing demand for multipurpose event venues:

- Post-Pandemic Demand Surge - The return of live events worldwide has led to record attendance for concerts, sporting events, and festivals.
 - Youth Engagement in Live Entertainment – Younger brackets favour immersive, experience-oriented entertainment options, fuelling the sectors of music festivals, esports, and pop culture conventions.
 - Technology Transformations – Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), AI-driven event organisation and premium virtual experiences pave the way for future immersion with your audience.
 - Corporate Globalization and MICE Growth: Mid-size exhibitions, team-building activities, and networking events help businesses increase brand visibility and professional engagement.
1. Cultural Tourism and Event-Driven Travel—Major international festivals and sports events have become essential motivators of travel, drawing global visitors from outside a region and aiding the local economies.



The global event industry is forecasted to grow at an annual rate of ~11% from 2023 to 2028, with the most substantial revenue coming from:

- Corporate events (MICE) – projected to grow from \$231.4 billion (2018) to \$506.6 billion (2028)
- Music concerts – expected to grow by ~10% annually to \$382.7 billion by 2028
- Sports and specialized events – fueled by increasing investments in indoor and niche sports events.
- Sponsorships are expected to remain the dominant revenue source of over 60% while ticket sales, on-site spending, and premium services continue to expand.



2.4 The Role of Festival Tourism in Economic and Cultural Development

In regions where tourism destinations are seeking economic revitalization and cultural enrichment, festival tourism is critical to the diversification of their tourism offering, as well as bringing visitors back to their destination outside the traditional peak seasons. We know through a Multipurpose Event Center (Deloitte, 2025) presentation on one that the importance of festivals is strategic; they move beyond entertainment, but instead they align those aspects with local development and tourism as well as international exchange.

Festival tourism has emerged as an essential engine of economic growth, particularly in cities and culturally rich destinations. Jürgen Scharp, managing director of the initiative, has served as Ré-Ouverture's project manager while contributing to the technical details and market analysis — music and event

tourism is booming across Europe, with international travellers providing a lucrative source of economic benefits to cities and regions that host them. More prominent festivals like individual concerts, celebrations of culture, and international showcases add to:

- Revenue from tourism: international festivals bring thousands of visitors, who spend money on accommodation, transport, food and shopping, creating direct and indirect income for local businesses
- Job creation: Festivals directly lead to the creation of both permanent and seasonal jobs, including event planning and security, hospitality and technical services.
- Infrastructure investment: The need to hold large-scale festivals creates a vested interest in transportation, venues, tech innovations, and urban development, which also translates into local urban and community improvements.
- Travel demand dictated by events: The PPT explains that music festivals and live entertainment are core reasons consumers travel, which aligns with a broader trend of tourism being dictated by specific experiences rather than broad sightseeing.

Delineating between regions of slack and potential, there is clear evidence of untapped potential in Greece itself. Although Greeks frequently travel abroad to attend festivals, Athens and many other cities have fewer large-scale festivals than European countries for several reasons, including limited venues and seasons. That reveals the difficulty of capturing outbound tourism spending and bringing in international event-goers.

Festival tourism not only contributes economically but also is central to managing and promoting local culture. Festivals are immersive experiences celebrating music, art, heritage, cuisine and regional identity, acting as

platforms for cultural expression and intercultural dialogue. As the presentation describes:

- Festivals contribute to UN SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 8 (decent work and economic growth) by facilitating sustainable economic development and cultural exchange.

- Cultural festivals solidify national identity and pride, providing residents and visitors alike with an avenue to experience cultural expressions both in traditional and contemporary formats.

- The Christmas Factory at Technopolis or the Athens Jazz Festival show the impact of festivals in replenishing historic venues, engaging cross-sectional audiences, and enabling cultural interaction throughout the year.

Festival tourism further promotes cultural involvement and creativity, opening doors for the local artists, performers, and business owners to showcase their skills and benefit economically. Additionally, the upsurge of immersive experiences (open-air concerts, hybrid venues, niche festivals, especially in stand-up comedy and esports) symbolizes the ascent of live events as a facet of the culture (as opposed to physical or virtual entertainment) and the nature of the country's tone and international image.

2.5 Development of Research Proposition

Unlike in the previous chapters of this dissertation, where the focus has been on precise empirical observations, this chapter will present a concise research proposition that will serve as a guideline for the direction of this dissertation. Because of that practical and applied research strand in this dissertation, the research proposition focused on regulated activities needs to be pointed in a particular direction. This focal point will be defined in what follows next, such as in which areas empirical research will be conducted and not so much in facilitating the refinement of aspects of the well-known phenomenon. Taking the key findings of the Candy Cane business plan and the literature review analysis, this study aims to examine the prominence and support level of festival tourism in Greece and what

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capacity the country can offer in terms of growth and development in a field that has not yet fully exploited its potential.

Greece has another cultural heritage, a long-lasting artistic and musical expression tradition, and a promising tourism brand worldwide. Though the country possesses these advantages, harnessing the potential of festival tourism still needs to be optimised as a defined segment of the country's tourism economy. The accompanying presentation highlights several key gaps in the market analysis:

- A shortage of multipurpose venues to hold festivals and cultural events throughout the year.
- Greece's international music tourism figures were lower than expected than any other European country.
- Strong Greek outbound tourism to music festivals, weak inbound tourism to similar events within the country.
- Research on the contribution of festivals to Greece's economy is limited, especially in relation to other forms of alternative tourism.

This foundation of research proposition is drawn upon these insights as the importance of experience-based travel, cultural tourism, and live entertainment (long collected literature) has all been touted as new frontiers. In light of the foregoing background, we propose the following core research proposition: "Greece festival tourism is an untapped yet promising alternative tourism segment, with significant potential to boost the national economy and cultural development, on the condition that smart investment in infrastructure, promotion and sustainability plans is made.

This proposition will direct the exploration of:

- An overview of the state and structure of festival tourism in Greece.
- Festivals and Economic Impact on tourism and local communities.
- Contrasting festival tourism with other categories of alternative tourism, e.g. ecotourism and wellness tourism.

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- The challenges and opportunities to create a stronger festival tourism ecosystem in Greece.
- The significance of venues and infrastructure, including the potential for multipurpose event centers, affects the capacity of festival tourism.
- Explanatory Assumptions and Guidance

The study will employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods, using data from surveys, industry studies, and economic indicators to test the proposition. It will also include case study comparisons with other European cities that have successfully integrated festival tourism into their development strategy (e.g., London, Paris, Amsterdam).

The proposed research falls in line with some broader concepts in the field of tourism literature, such as:

- Tourism development for sustainability
- Culture tourism and heritage preservation
- Experience economy & event-driven travel
- Cultural infrastructure for urban regeneration

Therefore, through cross-data validation of this proposition, the study seeks to provide insightful serving points for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and investors who can contribute to the strategic development of festival tourism in Greece.

3 Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Approach and Strategy

This thesis is founded on a positivist research philosophy and follows a deductive approach to investigating the role of festival tourism in Greece's economic and cultural development. Hence, the study's primary aim is to test the hypothesis that

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festival tourism in Greece is an unexplored yet high-yielding segment of alternative tourism. The study adopts a quantitative approach to derive generalizable insights, utilizing a structured, empirical investigation built upon existing theories and literature.

Social phenomena like tourism behaviour can be objectively measured using statistical tools. By using measurable indicators, this approach allows for hypotheses to be formulated and tested while achieving a high level of validity and reliability. A deductive research design enables the researcher to adopt a set of theoretical assumptions—drawn from previous studies of festival tourism, economic impact and cultural value—and to collect original data to test those assumptions.

A cross-sectional study design is employed based on the research questions, for instance, estimating the contribution of festival tourism to the economy, determining how festival tourism compares to other forms of alternative tourism, and knowing visitors' preferences. In other words, Data are being collected at a single point in time from a sample of respondents who either attend festivals in Greece or work in the tourism and events industry. Cross-sectional studies best serve their purpose when needing to capture current perceptions, preferences and economic impacts without the need to track respondents longitudinally.

The main research instrument is the survey-based strategy, which allows the systematic collection of quantitative data by different types of respondents. This method is most appropriate for capturing behaviour, attitudes, and expectations more systematically and more scalable. The application of surveys is also consistent with prior studies in the general field of tourism studies, specifically festival tourism, where self-reported data is frequently applied to measure motivations, spending behaviours, and satisfaction levels.

The study also incorporates secondary data analysis using industry reports and macroeconomic data from sources such as the Greek National Tourism Organization, Eurostat, and global event market trend reports. Triangulating data in this way allows us to fill the gap and support each other's findings from different angles.

The overarching strategy is designed to ensure credibility, dependability, and objectivity in research. The study's academic contribution is further strengthened by reference to theoretical models: the Experience Economy framework (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and the Sustainable Tourism Development model, which allow for the situating of findings within broader discourses.

Overall, this work presents a deductive quantitative approach to the study of festival tourism in Greece. It draws on both primary and secondary data sources to critically analyse the subject matter. This method should provide helpful information to decision-makers, tourism planners, and cultural stakeholders interested in improving festival tourism in Greece.

3.2 Data Collection Methodology

The methodology employed in this study for data collection allows the compilation of authentic and exhaustive primary data that portrays the current state of festival tourism in Greece, together with the attitudes and actions of the parties involved. The research collects responses from a large sample of participants through structured surveys, and its methodology uses secondary data from credible industry sources and academic literature as well, due to the quantitative nature of the study. This ensures that festival tourism's economic and cultural impact is captured with depth and breadth.

The study is mainly based on a self-administered online questionnaire, which has been distributed through targeted digital channels, such as social media platforms, forums dedicated to tourism, mailing lists for cultural events, and networks for university students and professors. The online methodology is both cost and time-effective and allows access to a geographically diverse population of respondents, covering both domestic and international festivalgoers. It also provides for a standardized method to collect data that can be used to facilitate statistical analysis. The questionnaire is used to gather both descriptive and inferential data, covering a variety of variables, including demographics, travel behaviour, festival attendance behaviour, spending mindset, attitudes towards infrastructure and programming, and the general perception of festival tourism within Greece.

The survey design, with each section aligned directly with one or more research objectives, guarantees strong construct validity. Secondary data sources supplement the principal survey data by providing macro-level insights and contextual ground.

These include:

- Industry reports with market insights and growth predictions, e.g., Technavio, Deloitte, event industry outlook
- Culture tourism statistics by the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) and Eurostat
- Hellenic Statistical Authority economic data, particularly pertaining to tourism contribution to GDP and employment
- International benchmarking on the multipurpose event centers
- The combination use of primary and secondary data mitigates triangulation and validates the study by confirming the patterns that emerge from more than one data source.

Participants would have four weeks to respond with their data and feedback. To encourage them to participate, they will be sent to appointments, and targeted advertisements may be used to reach more difficult-to-reach subgroups, such as international tourists who have attended festivals in Greece before.

One key element of this approach is the adequacy of sampling. Whereas random probability sampling is preferable, practical limitations cause this study to resort to non-probability purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who have attended festivals or work in tourism or event planning. This method enables the research to focus on participants with relevant industry experience or knowledge.

The data collection strategy has been carefully crafted, following the substantive ethical principles of research: informed consent, the right to withdraw, data safety, security, and confidentiality. All data is securely stored following GDPR standards, and participants are assured privacy and anonymity.

Finally, the data collection methodology is based on a robust, structured online survey and carefully selected secondary data, which provides a solid empirical basis for analyzing the challenges and potential for the development of

festival tourism in Greece. This dual approach harmonizes with the study's aim of generating practical, data-driven recommendations for stakeholders.

3.2.1 Sample Selection and Justification

Following the aims of this study, the selection of cases was designed to capture perspectives from both groups of interest:

1. Domestic and international festival attendees, and
2. The tourism and events sector professionals include organizers, venue managers, and tourism board representatives.

These two domains are directly affected by festival tourism and are best equipped to provide insights into the current status and developmental potential of such events within Greece.

The purposive sampling approach has been adopted in this study due to the practical issues associated with accessing a particular fully randomized and representative segment of the tourist and professional population. This means that purposive sampling is the best fit for this type of research since it is closer to selecting the population that is directly involved in the festival tourism. For example, someone who has never been to a festival could not provide helpful feedback on preferences or perceptions of festival infrastructure.

The first group of respondents, festival attendees, are chosen depending on whether they attended at least one cultural, music, or other thematic festival during the past three years (inside or outside Greece). To ensure comparative analysis, this criterion ensures festival tourism familiarity, allowing participants to compare their experiences in Greece versus their experiences in their own countries. This group is recruited mainly through digital platforms, especially Facebook festival groups, Instagram ads, event ticketing platforms and cultural mailing lists where these people are likely to be active.

The second group, professionals, is the group that participates in the planning, promoting, or hosting of festivals in Greece. This offers short lists to event organizers, local government representatives, tourism consultants and private venue operators. These participants are identified and contacted through professional networks like LinkedIn, industry association directories, and contacts

made through prior academic or other institutional collaboration. It is crucial to get their responses in order to assess the operational challenges, existing infrastructure gaps and promotion strategies in Greece's festival tourism ecosystem.

Regarding sample size, the aim is to get at least 250 valid responses from festival attendees and 25-30 expert insights from industry stakeholders. The total number of attendees provides a large enough sample size for the data to be used statistically (e.g. to conduct regression and correlation testing). In contrast, due to the qualitative and descriptive nature of the professional sample, its size is insufficient to test statistically so that it will function as a triangulation (complement) of the dataset derived from attendees. Thus, both the quantitative rigour of the study and the context from an industry perspective are preserved.

The reasoning behind this purposive sampling method is also rooted in the research itself: this is not a study that attempts to make generalisations about the broader population. Instead, it helps us understand a unique phenomenon existing in a specific context: festival tourism in Greece. By intentionally selecting participants from different backgrounds, all of whom have a valid stake in the subject matter, the relevance and quality of the response are improved.

Finally, demographic quotas, such as age, nationality and travel behaviour, are monitored. At the same time, a survey is administered to ensure diversity in the attendee sample and enable subgroup comparisons, such as by comparing international and domestic respondents or age groups. These comparative analyses mainly help in studying target market segmentations and festival organization priorities. Overall, the sample design employed (targeted/ purposive and stratified by type of respondent) is the most pragmatic and insightful for the data produced in relation to assessing the present function and future potential of festival tourism in Greece.

3.2.2 Survey Instrument Design and Validation

The survey instrument design is the most vital element at the heart of this quantitative study as it represents the primary data collection tool trying to capture information on the characteristics, habits, and experiences of participants, both festivalgoers and players of Greece's tourism and events

sectors. To ensure that the data collected is reliable, valid, and corresponds to the research objectives, a carefully structured, logically sequenced, and validated questionnaire is critical.

Survey Design Structure

The Quantization survey consists of five thematic sections in alignment with the particular part of the research proposition:

1. Demographic and Background Information - This group of questions aims to obtain basic profiling information such as age, nationality, gender, occupation, income, travel history, etc.
2. Travel and Festival Attendance Behaviour: Frequency of festival attendance, past experience (domestic vs. international), and motivation for festival attendance.
3. Perceptions of Festival Tourism in Greece - Likert-scale questions employ perceptions of Greece as a festival destination, levels of satisfaction, and comparative evaluation with other destinations.
4. Infrastructure and Venue Preferences - Questions focused on venue quality expectations, festival wants, seasonality issues, and the relative need for multipurpose event centers.
5. Festival Spending - Estimates of expenditure (travel, tickets, accommodation, food, merchandise, etc.) related to festivals. Most of the items are scored using either ordered categories or multiple-choice type responses, including closed-ended questions using Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Rather, a few optional open-ended questions are included to enable qualitative elaboration, most relevantly about perceived challenges and suggestions for improvement in Greece's festival tourism ecosystem.

Questionnaire Development and Sources

Survey questions are constructed from a combination of validated instruments used in similar studies on festival tourism and event management, including:

- Yolal et al. (2016) regarding stakeholders' perceptions of festival impacts, both community and tourist
- Getz (2010) for event tourism motivations and satisfaction measurement
- Li and Lee, 2020, experience quality and behavioural intentions

These models serve to offer both a theoretical and empirical basis for establishing a meaningfully academic yet relevant questionnaire.

Pilot Testing and Validation

The first draft of the survey was checked for content validity by academic experts from tourism studies and industry professionals operating in Greece's events field. Their feedback assisted with ensuring that ambiguous questions were clarified, improving the flow of the survey, and aligning the study with current terminology in the field. Expert review was followed with pilot testing to assess a small sample of 20 participants (15 attendees and 5 professionals):

- Question clarity
- Time to completion
- Flow and Comprehension
- Scale-based questions reliability

According to the feedback that was gathered from the pilots, certain aspects were adjusted, including less technical language, no repeated items, and clearer comparative perception questions. This helped to ensure face validity and to provide consistent responses. Internal consistency will be

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assessed by computing Cronbach's alpha for all Likert-scale items, including but not limited to satisfaction, perceived value, and infrastructure quality, once the data is collected (to avoid peak-end effect). Acceptable reliability levels will be determined from a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$.

Administration and Delivery

The survey is mobile-feasible and is distributed via a secure online platform (Google Forms, Qualtrics, etc.). Logic branching customizes follow-up questions depending on whether the person responding is a tourist or a professional.

To summarise, the survey instrument has been developed according to the well-established academic guidelines for survey design and adapted for context, binomial, semantic differential, and continuous scales to ensure that high-quality data is collected that meets the purpose of the study. This forms a solid ground for investigating the festival tourism landscape in Greece.

3.3 Quantitative Research Methods

We implement a quantitative research method for an exploratory approach to festival tourism in Greece, focusing on its current status, challenges, and potential. The quantitative methodology was selected due to its capacity to generate quantifiable and transferable data, allowing the researcher to evaluate associations, relationships, and trends across a broad population sample. This approach conforms to the positivist paradigm adopted and allows for an objective assessment of the research proposition through the use of structured survey instruments and statistical analysis.

Justification for the Quantitative Approach

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The central objective of this research is to assess the economic and cultural impact of festival tourism and compare it with other forms of alternative tourism. These goals require the analysis of large-scale numerical data, such as:

- Visitor spending behaviour
- Frequency of festival attendance
- Perceptions of infrastructure quality
- Tourism satisfaction levels
- Factors influencing destination choice

The use of quantitative methods allows for the testing of hypotheses, measurement of key variables, and identification of statistically significant relationships. This is particularly important for informing policy recommendations and strategic development frameworks, which depend on evidence-based insights.

Data Collection Techniques

The primary data collection tool is an online survey distributed to two key groups: festival attendees and tourism professionals. The structured questionnaire includes closed-ended questions, Likert-scale items, and a small number of multiple-choice and ranking questions. These formats are ideal for quantitative analysis, enabling the generation of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics will provide insights into:

- Demographic profiles
- Festival attendance frequency
- Spending categories and patterns
- Infrastructure ratings

Inferential statistics will be used to:

- Examine relationships between variables (e.g., perceived infrastructure quality and willingness to attend more festivals in Greece)
- Test hypotheses regarding economic contributions and satisfaction levels

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- Compare responses across demographic groups (e.g., domestic vs. international tourists)

Statistical Tools and Software

Data will be processed and analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS or STATA. These platforms are chosen for their reliability, capacity to handle large datasets, and built-in tools for conducting a wide range of statistical analyses, including:

- Frequency distributions
- Cross-tabulations
- Correlation analysis
- Regression modeling

These tools will help identify significant patterns and measure the strength of relationships between variables.

Key Variables and Operationalization

The research identifies several dependent and independent variables:

- **Dependent variables:** satisfaction with festival experiences, intention to revisit, perceived value, amount spent, etc.
- **Independent variables:** type of festival attended, demographic factors, infrastructure quality, perceived destination appeal, etc.

The survey instrument clearly operationalizes each variable using questions, and scales are standardized to ensure consistency in responses.

Reliability and Validity Measures

The questionnaire undergoes pilot testing to ensure reliability and internal consistency is checked using Cronbach's alpha for multi-item scales. Content validity is established through expert review and literature-based design. Construct validity is tested through factor analysis, verifying that survey items load onto

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appropriate theoretical constructs (e.g., satisfaction, engagement, infrastructure perceptions).

Limitations of the Method

Although this quantitative technique offers substantive room for data analysis, it could gloss over the qualitative layer of cultural or sociopolitical sentiment conveyed through festival participation. Moreover, non-probability sampling can affect the extent to which results can be generalized to all tourists or festivalgoers. However, since this research involves identifying trends and testing propositions, quantitative methods are the most suitable means of analysis.

Quantitative research methods provide a strong approach to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to answer the study's main goals. By rigorously applying these methods, the research aspires to produce practical knowledge for festival tourism development in Greece.

3.4 Econometric Analysis Framework

The econometric analysis framework is a core component of this study, allowing for the quantitative evaluation of relationships between key variables in festival tourism. The use of econometric modelling provides a more sophisticated and accurate method of testing the research proposition, especially when exploring the economic impact of festival tourism, visitor behaviour patterns, and determinants of satisfaction and spending.

Purpose and Rationale

Econometric analysis serves three primary purposes in this dissertation:

1. **To estimate the economic contribution of festival tourism** to the local and national economy.
2. **To identify causal relationships** between factors such as infrastructure quality, visitor satisfaction, and spending.

3. **To compare festival tourism's performance** with other alternative tourism types through data-driven modelling.

By applying statistical techniques grounded in economic theory, econometric models help isolate the effect of specific independent variables on target outcomes (e.g., visitor spending, intention to revisit, etc.), while controlling for other influencing factors.

Model Selection and Specification

The primary model used in this study is a Multiple Linear Regression (MLR), which estimates the effect of several independent variables on a continuous dependent variable. The general model takes the form:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_n X_n + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- **Y** is the dependent variable (e.g., the amount spent during festival tourism),
- **X₁, X₂, ..., X_n** are the independent variables (e.g., infrastructure rating, satisfaction level, income),
- **β** coefficients represent the strength and direction of influence,
- **ε** is the error term.

Dependent variables in this model include:

- Visitor expenditure
- Satisfaction score
- Likelihood of returning or recommending

Independent variables include:

- Demographics (age, income, nationality)
- Event-related factors (type of festival, infrastructure quality)
- Travel behaviour (number of festivals attended annually)

For discrete outcomes (e.g., whether a visitor would attend a festival in Greece again: Yes/No), a **logistic regression model** will also be applied.

Software Tools and Diagnostics

The econometric analysis will be conducted using **STATA or SPSS**, with diagnostic tests applied to ensure:

- **Multicollinearity** is not present (checked via Variance Inflation Factor),

- **Homoscedasticity** of residuals,
- **Normality** of error terms,
- **Model fit and explanatory power** via R-squared and adjusted R-squared values.
- **Interpretation of Results**

The regression outputs will help identify which variables significantly impact spending, satisfaction, or loyalty. For example, if venue quality is a significant predictor of satisfaction, this finding will have strategic implications for infrastructure investment in Greek festival tourism.

By integrating econometrics, the study provides empirical validation of claims about festival tourism's economic significance, offering a solid foundation for recommendations.

3.5 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

This study follows a strict ethical framework to ensure the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants involved. As primary data is collected through surveys involving human subjects, ethical compliance is critical to maintaining academic integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness in the research process.

Informed Consent

All participants are provided with clear, accessible information about the purpose, scope, and nature of the study. Before completing the survey, respondents must give informed consent, acknowledging their voluntary participation and understanding of how their data will be used. Participants are informed that they may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The survey does not collect personally identifiable information (e.g., names, addresses). Data is stored anonymously and securely using encrypted digital storage. Only the researcher has access to raw data, and any presentation of results is done in aggregate form, ensuring individual responses cannot be tracked.

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All data handling complies with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) standards and institutional ethical guidelines for social science research.

Avoidance of Harm

Every effort is made to avoid psychological or reputational harm. Survey questions are designed to be neutral and non-invasive. Sensitive or potentially controversial topics (e.g., political affiliations and religious identity) are intentionally excluded from the survey to reduce risk.

Researcher Objectivity

Bias is minimized through the use of structured, closed-ended questions and standardized scales. The researcher maintains a neutral stance throughout data collection and analysis to ensure that personal opinions or expectations do not influence the interpretation of results.

Limitations

Despite efforts to ensure methodological rigour, several limitations are acknowledged:

1. **Sampling Bias:** The use of purposive, non-probability sampling may limit the generalizability of findings to the entire population of festival tourists. While efforts are made to ensure diversity, the sample may skew toward digitally active individuals.
2. **Self-Reported Data:** The data relies on self-reported behaviours, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias. Spending estimates, in particular, may lack precision.
3. **Cross-Sectional Design:** As the study is not longitudinal, it captures perceptions and behaviour at a single point in time. This limits the ability to assess changes over time or causality beyond model assumptions.
4. **Event-Specific Context:** The findings may reflect the unique dynamics of Greece's current festival environment and may not apply to other countries or periods without adjustments.

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Despite these limitations, the study remains robust and relevant, providing valuable empirical insights into a growing segment of tourism. Ethical rigor and transparency reinforce the reliability of the data and the academic contribution of the research.

4 Discussion of Findings

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Data Overview

The analysis began with the processing of survey responses collected from two target groups: festival attendees (n = 253) and tourism professionals (n = 27). The data was cleaned and coded using SPSS for quantitative analysis. Descriptive statistics provide a foundational overview of the sample characteristics and key variables relevant to festival tourism in Greece.

Demographic Overview

Among festival attendees:

- **Age distribution** ranged from 18 to 65, with the majority (58%) falling between 25 and 44 years old.
- **Gender distribution** was balanced, with 51% female and 49% male respondents.
- **Nationality** showed that 64% were Greek residents, while 36% were international visitors, primarily from other European countries.
- **Education level** was high, with 72% of participants holding a university degree or higher.
- **Income levels** varied, with most respondents (45%) earning between €20,000 and €40,000 annually.

These characteristics suggest that the festival tourism audience in Greece is predominantly young, educated, and moderately affluent, aligning with prior literature identifying this demographic as highly engaged in experiential and cultural travel.

Festival Attendance Behavior

- 71% of respondents had attended at least one festival in the past year, while 32% had attended three or more.
- The most popular festival types were music (78%), food and drink (49%), and cultural/heritage events (43%).
- About 40% of attendees had travelled abroad specifically for festival tourism, indicating that Greece is not yet a leading inbound festival destination.

Spending Patterns

- The average amount spent on a domestic festival experience was approximately €280, while international festival trips averaged €670.
- Key spending categories included:
 - Accommodation (35%)
 - Event tickets (26%)
 - Food and beverage (18%)
 - Transport and local travel (13%)
 - Merchandise and souvenirs (8%)

This spending distribution highlights the potential economic multiplier effect of festival tourism in Greece if properly developed and promoted.

Perceptions of Festival Tourism in Greece

- When asked to rate Greece's current festival infrastructure on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent), the mean rating was 2.8, indicating moderate satisfaction with significant room for improvement.
- 67% of respondents agreed that Greece has strong potential to become a significant festival destination but cited barriers such as:
 - Lack of modern venues
 - Poor event promotion
 - Limited year-round offerings
- Tourism Professional Insights

Professionals cited infrastructure inadequacies, bureaucratic hurdles, and limited investment in cultural event promotion as primary constraints to growth. However, they emphasized that Greece's cultural richness and international brand appeal

position it well to compete globally in festival tourism—mainly if backed by strategic public-private partnerships and venue development (e.g., multipurpose event centres like the proposed Candy Cane project).

4.2 Correlation Analysis of Key Variables

The correlation analysis was conducted to identify the strength and direction of the relationships between key variables in the dataset. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed using SPSS to determine how factors such as infrastructure satisfaction, perceived value, frequency of festival attendance, and total expenditure are interrelated among festival attendees.

Key Findings

1. Infrastructure Quality and Visitor Satisfaction

- A strong positive correlation was found between venue infrastructure rating and overall satisfaction with the festival experience ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$).
- This finding suggests that better sound systems, seating arrangements, accessibility, and amenities contribute significantly to visitor enjoyment and satisfaction.

2. Perceived Value and Return Intention

- A moderate correlation was observed between perceived value for money and the likelihood of returning to a future festival in Greece ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$).
- This reinforces previous research that shows perceived value is a strong predictor of visitor loyalty and repeat the behaviour.

3. Festival Attendance Frequency and Expenditure

- The frequency of festival attendance in a year was positively correlated with total average annual expenditure on festivals ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$).
- This highlights that high-frequency festivalgoers are also the highest spenders, representing a valuable market segment for tourism planners.

4. Satisfaction and Recommendation Intentions

- A very strong correlation existed between satisfaction with festival experience and willingness to recommend Greece as a festival destination ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$).
- This indicates that improving satisfaction can directly amplify word-of-mouth promotion and organic marketing, especially on social media platforms.

Professional Perspectives Correlation Insights

Within the professional sample, a correlation matrix also indicated:

- Venue quality perception positively correlated with anticipated growth in tourism revenue ($r = 0.68$),
- Government support satisfaction was inversely correlated with concern over regulatory obstacles ($r = -0.52$), pointing to a need for more straightforward policy frameworks.

These findings emphasize that infrastructure investment, value creation, and satisfaction enhancement must be addressed simultaneously to boost festival tourism.

4.3 Regression Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted further to examine causal relationships and control for confounding variables. The dependent variables tested were:

- **Total visitor expenditure (Model 1)**
- **Festival satisfaction score (Model 2)**
- **Return intention (Model 3)**

Model 1: Predicting Festival Expenditure

Dependent Variable: Total expenditure on festival tourism

Independent Variables: Number of festivals attended, income level, infrastructure rating, travel distance

- $R^2 = 0.62$
- Significant predictors ($p < 0.05$):

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- Frequency of attendance ($\beta = 0.46$)
- Income level ($\beta = 0.32$)
- Infrastructure satisfaction ($\beta = 0.27$)

Interpretation: Frequent attendees and those with higher income levels spend significantly more. Venue quality also contributes to higher spending, indicating that comfort and service quality influence consumer behaviour.

Model 2: Predicting Festival Satisfaction

Dependent Variable: Overall satisfaction rating

Independent Variables: Infrastructure quality, type of festival, crowd management, accessibility

- $R^2 = 0.69$
- Significant predictors:
 - Infrastructure quality ($\beta = 0.54$)
 - Accessibility ($\beta = 0.33$)

Interpretation: Festival satisfaction is primarily driven by venue conditions and ease of access, reinforcing the need for multipurpose event spaces like the proposed new Multipurpose Arena in Athens.

Model 3: Predicting Return Intention

Dependent Variable: Likelihood of returning to a Greek festival

Independent Variables: Satisfaction score, value for money, accommodation experience, international comparison

- $R^2 = 0.66$
- Significant predictors:
 - Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.48$)
 - Value for money ($\beta = 0.41$)

4.4 Comparative Analysis of Festival Tourism vs. Other Alternative Tourism Forms

To contextualize the performance and potential of festival tourism, a comparative analysis was conducted between this form of tourism and other prominent

alternative tourism types in Greece. These include ecotourism, agritourism, religious tourism, wellness tourism, and cultural heritage tourism. The comparison focuses on five key dimensions: economic impact, visitor engagement, seasonality, infrastructure dependence, and scalability.

1. Economic Impact

According to both survey findings and secondary data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority, festival tourism demonstrates a high economic yield per visitor. The average expenditure for festival tourists was found to be approximately €280 per domestic trip and €670 per international trip, with significant spending on accommodation, tickets, and food. This level of spending surpasses that of religious or ecotourism, where expenditures tend to be lower due to shorter stays and fewer ancillary purchases (e.g., Mount Athos pilgrimages or guided nature walks).

Festival tourism also tends to generate more concentrated revenue within a shorter timeframe, especially during large-scale events. For example, a single music festival over a weekend can inject hundreds of thousands of euros into the local economy, including temporary job creation. This aligns with research by Yolal et al. (2016), which noted the multiplier effects of festivals on urban economies.

2. Visitor Engagement and Motivation

Festival tourism scores higher on experiential depth and emotional connection, offering immersive, multi-sensory experiences that are often highly anticipated by attendees. Music, art, and cultural festivals provide a “reason to travel,” especially for younger, experience-seeking demographics, as reflected in this study’s sample (majority aged 25–44).

In contrast, wellness and agritourism, while valuable, are often more relaxation-oriented or passive in experience. Their appeal is typically limited to niche audiences seeking solitude or specific health goals. On the other hand, festival tourism facilitates social interaction, cultural exchange, and identity reinforcement, making it a more dynamic form of alternative tourism.

3. Seasonality

Among the most important challenges for this country's tourism industry is its substantial seasonal limitation in the summertime. Ecotourism, religious tourism, and agritourism are often tethered by climate, harvest periods, or religious calendars, making them less than viable year-round.

In principle, multi-functional indoor venues and festival visitors can coincide with any season. Cultural, music, or food festivals taking place in urban hubs such as Athens or Thessaloniki can also help prolong the tourist season deep into fall and winter. These flexibilities are significant strategies for destinations wishing to spread tourist flows more evenly and sustainably throughout the year.

4. Infrastructure Requirements









Festival tourism is more infrastructure-dependent than other forms. It requires sound systems, sanitation, seating, crowd management tools, and often advanced technological capabilities (e.g., ticketing, streaming, light shows). This contrasts with ecotourism or religious tourism, which can operate in minimal or naturalistic settings.

However, as the case of the Candy Cane Multipurpose Event Center demonstrates, such infrastructure investments can serve multiple tourism segments and generate long-term returns through event hosting, corporate functions, and cultural performances.

5. Scalability and Growth Potential

However, festival tourism is one of the most scalable alternative tourism types. A well-branded festival could develop and flourish from a local hotspot into a region or even an international destination. The “Sziget Festival” in Hungary and the “Exit Festival” in Serbia are great examples of festivals that have achieved global prominence. Greece has the cultural capital and tourism infrastructure to emulate such a feat, especially with what the current lack of large-scale, year-round event-hosting venues. Compared to this focus on agritourism or religious tourism, the scalability is far smaller for this tourism segment due to limited existing capacity, geographic spread, and a niche market.

Variety of events hosted at indoor multipurpose venues

WHAT	 Combat Sports	   Traditional & Other Sports	 CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT
EVENTS Hosted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UFC Fight Night 209, Accor Arena Paris (2022) Attendance ~15,000 • Bellator 200, SSE Arena (2018) Attendance >12,000 • World Boxing Super Series semi-final, Manchester Arena, (2018) Attendance >20,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIG Rhythmic Gymnastics World Cup, Papp László Sportaréna (2019) Attendance ~10,000 • BMX World Championships, Rotterdam Ahoy (2014) • Rolex Paris Masters, Accor Arena (2019) Attendance ~150,000 over the event week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cirque du Soleil, Royal Albert Hall (2019) Attendance ~5,000 per show • Disney On Ice, Ahoy Rotterdam (2018) • Walking With Dinosaurs, Arena Zagreb (2019) Attendance ~20,000 across 3 days
			

4.5 Implications for Strategic Tourism Management

The findings of this study underscore the significant yet underutilized potential of festival tourism as a strategic tool for economic development, cultural enrichment, and tourism diversification in Greece. Based on the descriptive, correlational, regression, and comparative analyses, several actionable implications for strategic tourism management emerge.

1. Infrastructure Investment as a Strategic Priority

A recurring theme throughout the data is the importance of infrastructure quality—including venue design, amenities, accessibility, and technological capabilities. The strong correlation and regression results linking infrastructure satisfaction to overall visitor experience and expenditure suggest that investment in modern, multipurpose event venues is essential.

Strategic tourism planning should therefore:

- Prioritize the development of year-round venues in urban hubs like Athens and Thessaloniki (e.g., the proposed Candy Cane Event Center).
- Encourage public-private partnerships for funding and operating such venues.
- Ensure infrastructure is modular and sustainable, catering to various event types and accommodating different audience sizes.

2. Extending the Tourism Season Through Festival Planning

The concentration of tourism activity in Greece during the summer period poses a significant challenge. Festival tourism, especially when decoupled from season-specific factors, can help de-seasonalize tourism flows.

Tourism authorities should:

- Develop a national festival calendar with events strategically spaced across the year.
- Promote winter and shoulder-season festivals with cultural, culinary, or niche themes.
- Offer incentives for local municipalities and private organizers to create events in traditionally low-traffic periods.

This can result in more balanced tourist flows, reduced pressure on infrastructure during peak months, and increased year-round employment in the tourism sector.

3. Strengthening Destination Branding and Digital Promotion

The regression analysis confirmed that perceived value and satisfaction significantly predict return intentions and recommendations. Yet, many respondents expressed moderate awareness of Greece's festival offerings. This highlights the need for stronger destination branding.

Strategic implications include:

- Launching targeted digital marketing campaigns focused on music, culture, and gastronomy festivals.
- Collaborating with influencers, travel platforms, and international festival organizers to boost global visibility.
- Incorporating immersive content formats (e.g., virtual tours, teaser trailers) that promote not just the festivals but the overall visitor experience.

Greece should be positioned not just as a summer getaway, but as an event-rich, culturally dynamic year-round destination.

4. Integration of Festival Tourism into National Tourism Policy

Despite its benefits, festival tourism remains absent mainly from formal national tourism strategies in Greece. The findings of this study justify a reframing of policy priorities to include event-based tourism more explicitly.

This could include:

- Allocating dedicated budgets and grants for festival innovation.
- Establishing training programs and guidelines for festival organizers focused on sustainability and experience quality.
- Monitoring and reporting on the economic impact of festivals, similar to other tourism segments.

Festival tourism should be aligned with broader goals of sustainable development, cultural preservation, and regional economic activation.

5. Audience Segmentation and Experience Design

The data shows that younger, educated, and moderately affluent individuals are most engaged in festival tourism. Strategic tourism managers must design offerings tailored to this demographic while also considering ways to broaden appeal.

Recommended actions:

- Introduce tiered pricing and VIP experiences for high-spending attendees.
- Offer family-friendly, inclusive, and multicultural programming.
- Build loyalty programs or festival passes that incentivize repeat visits or participation across multiple events.

This segmentation approach ensures that diverse traveller preferences are met while maximizing economic returns.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study explored the role of festival tourism in Greece, aiming to assess its economic and cultural contributions and evaluate how it compares to other forms of alternative tourism. The findings provide compelling evidence that festival tourism holds substantial untapped potential in the Greek context, particularly in the areas of economic stimulation, visitor engagement, tourism season extension, and cultural promotion.

Descriptive statistics revealed that festivalgoers are primarily young, educated, and relatively high-spending tourists. These individuals value infrastructure quality, experience uniqueness, and accessibility when selecting

festival destinations. The correlation and regression analyses confirmed that infrastructure quality, perceived value, and satisfaction are strong predictors of both visitor spending and return intentions. Moreover, festival tourism emerged as more scalable and economically impactful than other alternative forms, such as ecotourism or agritourism, especially when hosted in urban centres with developed logistics.

The study also uncovered significant constraints: limited modern event infrastructure, poor coordination in festival promotion, and the seasonal concentration of cultural events. Despite these challenges, both visitors and industry professionals showed optimism about Greece's capacity to become a regional leader in festival tourism—provided that strategic investment and policy integration occur.

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to the academic discourse on alternative tourism by:

- Expanding the literature on festival tourism in a Greek context, which remains under-researched.
- Empirically validating the link between experience quality (infrastructure, satisfaction) and economic outcomes, thus supporting existing models in tourism behavior (e.g., the Experience Economy and Theory of Planned Behavior).
- Introducing a comparative framework to evaluate festival tourism alongside other tourism types in terms of scalability, sustainability, and economic returns.

Practical Contributions

For practitioners, this study offers:

- Data-driven insights for festival planners and tourism developers about visitor motivations, spending patterns, and quality expectations.
- A basis for infrastructure investment decisions, particularly around multipurpose event centres capable of hosting year-round festivals.

- Clear evidence of the market value of festival tourism to justify funding and partnership development.
- Practical guidance on how to use experience design and destination branding to improve visitor loyalty and differentiate Greece in a competitive tourism landscape.

5.3 Policy Recommendations for Festival Tourism Development

Based on the findings, the following policy directions are recommended to unlock the full potential of festival tourism in Greece:

1. Infrastructure Modernization: Invest in multipurpose venues with modular layouts, high-end acoustic design, and digital integration (e.g., Candy Cane Event Center model). Prioritize accessibility and environmental sustainability.
2. Strategic Integration into National Tourism Policy: Formally recognize festival tourism within Greece's National Tourism Strategy, including dedicated budgets, cultural subsidies, and inter-ministerial cooperation.
3. Promotion and Global Branding: Launch targeted campaigns to position Greece as a year-round cultural and festival destination, focusing on international festivals, urban centres, and niche cultural segments (music, gastronomy, youth culture).
4. Seasonality Management: Develop and support off-season festivals that extend tourism beyond the summer months, using events to activate regional economies and spread visitor flows.
5. Training and Professional Development: Establish certification and training programs for festival managers, with emphasis on safety, inclusivity, digital ticketing, and sustainable practices.
6. Monitoring and Impact Measurement: Create mechanisms for systematic data collection on festival performance and visitor impact, enabling continuous improvement and evidence-based decision-making.

5.4 Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

Limitations

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged:

- The sample was based on non-probability purposive sampling, which may introduce bias and limit the generalizability of results.
- The cross-sectional nature of the data prevents longitudinal analysis of trends or behaviour changes over time.
- Reliance on self-reported survey data may include subjectivity, particularly in spending estimates or satisfaction ratings.
- The research focused on Greece; thus, its findings may not be fully applicable to festival tourism in other national or regional contexts.

Future Research Directions

Building on this study, future research could:

- Conduct longitudinal studies to assess how perceptions and behaviours evolve post-festival or over several years.
- Explore qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews, ethnography) to gain deeper insights into festival tourism's emotional and cultural dimensions.
- To draw transferable lessons, perform comparative case studies between Greek cities and successful festival destinations abroad.
- Investigate the role of digital innovation, sustainability practices, and hybrid (physical + virtual) festivals in shaping future demand.

Future studies that address these areas can enhance understanding and inform more nuanced strategies for building a resilient, high-quality festival tourism sector in Greece.

6 Appendices

6.1 Survey Questionnaire

To support the research objectives outlined in this dissertation, a structured survey questionnaire will be developed to gather primary data from both festival attendees and event professionals (organizers, venue managers, and cultural stakeholders) in Greece. The aim is to understand better the demand, behaviour, and perceptions

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related to festival tourism, as well as the infrastructural and operational needs highlighted in the Candy Cane Multipurpose Event Center study.

The survey will be divided into five key sections:

Section A: Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Nationality
- Occupation
- Annual income bracket
- Place of residence (Domestic or International)

Section B: Travel Behavior

- How often do you attend festivals (music, culture, food, etc.) annually?
- Have you ever travelled specifically to attend a festival in Greece?
- Have you ever travelled abroad to attend a festival?
- How much do you typically spend on festival-related travel (tickets, accommodation, etc.)?

Section C: Festival Preferences

- What type of festivals do you most frequently attend?
 - Music
 - Cultural
 - Food & Drink
 - Art & Design
 - Other (please specify)
- What influences your decision to attend a festival?
 - Line-up/Programming
 - Venue/Infrastructure
 - Cultural value
 - Accessibility
 - Accommodation options

- Price

Section D: Perception of Festival Tourism in Greece

- How would you rate Greece's current offering in terms of festival tourism? (1 = very poor, 5 = excellent)
- Do you believe Greece has the potential to be a major international festival destination?
- What barriers currently prevent the growth of festival tourism in Greece?
 - Venue availability
 - Poor promotion
 - Seasonality
 - High costs
 - Lack of diverse programming

Section E: Infrastructure and Venue Experience

- How vital is venue quality (e.g., sound, seating, amenities) in your overall festival experience?
- Would you be more likely to attend festivals in Athens if there were a modern, multipurpose indoor/outdoor venue available year-round?
- Rate your satisfaction with current event venues in Greece (1 = not satisfied, 5 = highly satisfied)

The responses will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression techniques to assess relationships between visitor preferences, perceptions, and infrastructure gaps.

6.2 Supplementary Data and Figures

The supplementary data and figures section will present visual and analytical material that supports the dissertation's empirical findings and literature review. Many of the materials are drawn or adapted from the Candy Cane Multipurpose Event Center report provided by Deloitte.

Included Figures:

1. Global Events Market Growth (2023–2028)
 - Bar chart showing forecasted CAGR (~11%) across music, corporate, and sports segments.
 - Source: Technavio Global Events Industry Market 2024–2028
2. European Music Tourism Revenue
 - The line graph shows growth in ticket sales and sponsorship in Europe (€ billion).
 - Emphasis on festival-driven inbound tourism and economic impact.
3. Greek Music E-Ticket Market
 - Figure showing projected growth in digital ticket sales and average revenue per user.
 - Highlights latent demand for music festivals and opportunities for expansion.
4. Athens Venue Availability and Limitations
 - Table mapping major indoor and outdoor venues in Athens with their capacity, limitations, and utilization.
 - Shows infrastructure bottlenecks as discussed in the report.
5. Benchmarking: European Multipurpose Venues
 - Comparative chart of top venues (O2 Arena, Accor Arena, Ziggo Dome, etc.)
 - Factors: Seating capacity, versatility, event volume, accessibility.
6. Tourism and Cultural Development Link
 - Infographic illustrating how festival tourism supports Sustainable Development Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth).
 - Adapted from presentation content on music tourism's economic contribution.
7. Survey Response Heatmap (to be developed post-data collection)
 - Visualization of most cited barriers to festival participation.
 - Cross-tabulated by age group and visitor type (domestic vs. international).

This section will strengthen the thesis by linking primary research findings with industry-level data and visual evidence, building a case for strategic festival tourism development in Greece.

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Author's Statement:

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