

Role of events in Tourism Promotion and building city image – A study on Balijatra in Cuttack

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Abstract

Local festivals are increasingly being used as instruments for promoting tourism and boosting the regional economy. The use of local festivals as an instrument for tourism development has gained worldwide momentum in recent years. While in some instances time-honoured existing local cultural or religious events have been revived or repackaged as tourism events, in other cases new festivals have been invented and promoted for the singular purpose of drawing new visitors to a city or region. Building a good image of a city or state so as to differentiate it and to make it unique in tourists' minds is a vital condition nowadays, in a world of global competition. This image may be created by taking advantage of local culture and values' promotion or by organizing festivals and special events. There are various festivals and events held every year somewhere in the world that add image and competitive advantages to host cities. In order to illustrate this idea, the paper presents Balijatra festival hosted by Cuttack city that is turning itself into real "urban agglomerations" during this event. The study analyses the role of this festival on the tourism development & promotion of this Cuttack city and the importance gained by the city after organizing these event.

Keywords: Balijatra, Cuttack, culture, Tourism, Events, Festival.

1. Introduction

Events and festivals are an essential part of the urban life, having generally, very diversified themes, such as thematic festivals, political events, cultural activities, sport events, religious meetings, etc., and can be held at an international level (such as: Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, World Expo), as well as at a national level (for example: Oktoberfest from Munich, Las Fallas (The Festival of Carpenters and Fire) from Valencia, The Ice Festival from Harbin (China), The "George Enescu" Festival from Bucharest, Romania). Such type of events are becoming more and more important both for the urban development (having a great impact on the image of the host city), as well as for its inhabitants, as research related to this area have developed rapidly, becoming a popular subject. **Events** "represent a way of selling the city "as a product", by attracting tourists, as well as industries and investments". Events of global importance (Olympic Games, World Expo or FIFA World Cup) offer opportunities for the host cities. This way, most of the urban areas (Munchen, Montreal, Moscow, Seoul, Barcelona, Sydney, Salt Lake, Torino, Beijing, and Vancouver) which have been the host of the Olympic Games have taken advantage of this opportunity to present and

sell themselves. According to the Romanian Explicative Dictionary, the word “*festival*” means “*an artistic manifestation with a diversified schedule, having an occasional or periodical character*”, or “*an artistic manifestation (musical, theatrical etc.) comprising a series of representations and having a festive character*”.

Today, tourism is considered as a source of income in many countries. Therefore, it is necessary to promote it well so as to make it more profitable. However, there are many ways of tourism promotion and one of them is by organizing events and festivals.

On the one hand, festivals and cultural events play an important role in the promotion of cultural tourism or tourism in general. Festivals act as a hook to attract tourists and to increase their average spending and length of stay. In addition to that, festivals contribute to the cultural and economic development of a country; that is to say, festivals help to develop the pride and identity of the local people, and also to share their culture with others. Moreover, the cities that hold this kind of festivals certainly will flourish in terms of infrastructure and employment. Besides, many other sectors will benefit from these festivals, especially the services that are related to tourism: accommodation, restaurants, transportation, and so on. Furthermore, festivals provide tourists with the opportunity to see how the local communities celebrate their culture and how this affects the community development. It also helps the visitors to interact with the host community and help people enjoy and meet their leisure needs.

Since we were kids, we all remember the joy and excitement of festivals: the colorful clothing, the live music and the sweet smell of cotton candy. Although times have changed, festivals are still a source of enjoyment for many. For those in the tourism industry, festivals carry a positive impact in three parallel areas: attracting tourism, improving the place’s image and supporting the local community.

Attracting tourism

First and foremost, festivals are a great anchor for attracting tourism. While the destination is always available, having a time-limited event encourage visitors to take advantage of this opportunity and visit the place during the event. Festivals are also a prime opportunity to get to know the local culture and experience the essence the place. During the event, visitors have a unique chance to interact with the local community, gaining a deeper experience of the ambience, customs and local culture.

Improving the place’s image

Along with tourists, festivals attract journalists and other opinion leaders. For these audiences, festivals are a ‘media-event’, generating an opportunity for a magazine or a news story. Such stories may be different from the destination’s typical media frame – i.e. the way in which it’s regularly covered in the news media. Such media events are expending the place’s image and creating a window for positive media coverage. At the time of the festival, it is easier for destinations to demonstrate their positive facets, focusing the media’s attention on favourable occurrences. As part of getting ready for the festival, places can also prepare for the expected media attention. That, including the preparation of media kits, press room and local guides to show guests around.

Support the local community

For the residents themselves, festivals are a unique occasion to celebrate the local culture and interact within the community. In the tourism context, festivals can boost the local community in two major ways. First, people of the local culture are being flattered by the international interest in their culture. This enhances the residents' pride and promotes the preservation and cultivation of the local culture. Second, the tourists and visitors are spending money within the community, enhancing the local economy and supporting restaurants, hotels and other tourism-related businesses.

2. Review of Literature

A relatively new strategy among destinations is to use events in strategically building the brand (Getz, 2005). Events are part of the attraction of a destination and as such should be included in the integrated marketing campaign for the destination and incorporated into a destination's branding strategy (Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules & Ali, 2003). This implies the need to evaluate the contribution of an event not just in terms of the direct financial contribution that it generates but also in terms of its consistency with the destination brand values. Events with well-established brands can be used to enhance the brand identity of the destination. This may be referred to as co-branding, which Chalip & Costa (2005) describe as the practice of pairing the event's brand with the brand of the destination. The desire is thus that characteristics of the event's brand will transfer to the destination's brand, and vice versa (Xing & Chalip, 2006). According to Jayaswal (2009, p. 23) "the key to a successful destination-event co-branding strategy is to identify the associating network of competitive destinations and then host an event that can reinforce, change or add desirable associations"

Ros Derrett concludes that Festivals have played a significant part in the cultural life of communities. It seems groups of people have understood the capacity of such gatherings to lift spirits, transfer knowledge and enhance neighbourliness. Festivals emerge from the local lived culture and allow residents and visitors to be involved with their creation. "The publicity festivals and events can generate for a community not only have a cumulative impact on the location as a tourist destination but also feed into the image and identity of the community and assist with creating an appealing and consolidated sense of community." (Ros Derrett, 2007) and Williams (1965, p.57) suggests that by participating in festivals we find a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience that hardly needs explanation. Festivals, as a social phenomenon, permit encounters with authentic expressions of culture.

Festivals and events are seen to build social capital and in community development terms showcase the strengths of a community at play and to demonstrate its capacity to cope with external stresses and disturbance as a result of social, political and environmental change (Adger, 2000).

The image of a place is usually very important in attracting visitors and place image research has been particularly prevalent in the tourism studies field. Research has tended to underline the complexity of the image concept (for example, Jansson, 2003), a

point that is made clear when reviewing the image literature, although in broad terms, images could be described as the 'currency of cultures' (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998), reflecting and reinforcing particular shared meanings and beliefs and particular value systems.

3. The study area

The study area is limited to Cuttack city, is the former capital and the second largest city in the eastern Indian state of Odisha. It is also the headquarters of the Cuttack district. Cuttack is located at [20°31'23"N 085°47'17"E](#) and has an average elevation of 36 metres (118 ft). The city is spread across an area of 192.5 km² (74 sq mi). The city, being a Cuttack Municipal Corporation which consists of 59 wards.

4. Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the study include:

- To become familiar with event and festival tourism.
- To know the potentials of Balijatra in promoting tourism and Building the image of Cuttack City.
- To suggest a suitable model and other recommendations for organizing the event in a most effective way.

5. Methods of data collection

The study includes collection of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from the local people and the organizers of Balijatra in Cuttack. The secondary data was mainly collected from the relevant books, magazines and websites.

Festival Tourism in Orissa

Tourism in Odisha, India has grown considerably in recent years due to the various attractions of Odisha, ranging from wildlife reserves and beaches to temples and monuments and the arts and festivals. Tourism has been now recognized as an industry in Orissa and sizeable revenue is earned for the State from domestic as well as foreign tourists. The idea of tourism was first mooted by the Government during the 3rd Five Year Plan. It was revamped during the 5th Five Year Plan. The creation of Department of Tourism, Govt. of Orissa dates back to 1973.

Odisha being a land of ancient and sacred temples, and a state where three religions flourished, is thronged by pilgrims throughout the year. There are a large number of fairs and festivals celebrated in the state. There are festivals relating to each religion, tribal festivals, and festivals relating to Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of the Puri Temple, and many seasonal exhibitions and fairs as well as special festivals such as the Konark Festival, the Rajarani Music Festival, the Puri Beach Festival etc. Odisha is the bastion of rich cultural heritage with its historical monuments, archaeological sites, traditional arts, sculpture, dance and music. From the time immemorial Odisha attracts a large number of scholars, artists and tourists. For the development and promotion cultural tourism in Odisha, the Government has been giving special emphasis on rich cultural festivals of the state.

Tourism potential of Balijatra

The District of Cuttack is named after the principal town as well as the head quarter of the district of the same name. The word Cuttack is an anglicized form of the Sanskrit word **KATAKA** that assumes two different meanings namely “military camp” and secondly, the capital fort of the Government protected by the army. Cuttack which is one of the oldest cities of India and was the capital city of Odisha for almost nine centuries was built as a military cantonment in 989 A.D. by the king Nrupendra Keshari as stated by the distinguished historian Stirling. He based his opinion upon the Madalapanji, a chronicle of the Lord Jagannath Temple of Puri. The city however, attained glory early in the 12th century as the Capital of Imperial Gangas whose empire stretched from the river Ganges in the north to the river Godavari in the south. This Capital town continued to prosper during the rule of the successive dynasties, except for a brief period of unrest when in mid-fourteenth century Firoz Shah Tughluq invaded Odisha and let loose on orgy of vandalism, looting and destruction. After the death of Mukunda Deva, the last Hindu king of Odisha, the suzerainty of Cuttack passed on to the hands of Mughals. By 1750, Cuttack was under Maratha rule and grew fast as a business centre, being a convenient point of contact between Marathas of Nagpur and the English merchants of Bengal. It was occupied by the British in 1803 and became the capital of the Odisha Division in 1816. From then onward till 1948 when, the capital was shifted to Bhubaneswar, the city remained as the administrative headquarters of Odisha.

Balijatra Festival in Odisha marks the culmination of all the religious festivities held in the month of Karthik, which is considered the most sacred month in a calendar year. It is held on the full moon day in November–December which is celebrated all over Odisha as **Karthik Poornima**, which commemorates Odisha’s ancient maritime legacy.

Balijatra Cuttack Utsav is a hugely popular fair held for about seven-eight days on the banks of Mahanadi River in the fort area of Cuttack city from where the traders of Odisha (Sadhabas) used to take voyages, along the sea trade route, on huge boats called **Boita**. To celebrate the glory of the ancient times, the people in Cuttack as well as of the rest of Odisha sail small boats made out of cork, coloured paper and banana barks etc in the river and water bodies. The ritual of launching said tiny paper boats lit by lamps placed inside it is known as **Boita Bandana**. One can marvel at the spectacle of thousand lamps floating in the rivers and water bodies.

In the city of Cuttack and other places huge images of “**Kartikeswar**” the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati (known as the God of war as he led the army of ganas against the demons) are built and worshiped. At night, they are taken out in procession and are immersed in the river Mahanadi near a Shiva temple. There are two schools of thought regarding coinage of the name of the festival. Some are of opinion that on this day the Sadhabas were sailing off to Bali and therefore, the name. Some others believe that ‘Sri Chaitanya’ the great Vaishnavite saint of Bengal on his way to Puri landed on this day at Cuttack after crossing the sand-bed (i.e. "Bali") of the river Mahanadi. It is festival where lakhs of People congregate at the fairground where innumerable varieties of goods are bought and sold. People also enjoy boating with friends and family in the moonlit night. Over the year, in sociological parlance,

this huge market with commodities and appliances signifying traditional crafts to modern amenities and appliances, signifies rural-urban continuum.

Main Attractions

- **Demonstration Stalls**

The demonstration stalls are installed for Carpet Making, Dhokra casting, Tussar silk handloom & Value addition on Terracotta. The stalls turn to be the main focus of attraction for the visitors due to their live demonstration on activity based skill.

- **Food Stall**

Food stalls in Bali Jatra sale Oriya delicacies from different parts of the State. The famous delicacies like Rasagola of Salepur, Rasabali of Kendrapada, Mouthwatering Thunka Puri and Dahibara Alooudum of Cuttack, Chhenajhilli of Nimapada, Chenapoda of Nayahgarh, Palua Ladoo of Bhadrak etc.

- **Lunch of new Products and Projects**

The reputed companies wait for Bali Jatra to launch their new products. This event helps corporate houses to promote their brands in a big way. Various public welfare projects are being inaugurated on this Occasion.

- **Night Cultural Programmes**

People wait for this fair with a lot of merry making in their minds. Because Bali Jatra provides a lot of cultural programmes in a single spot i.e. Bali Jatra ground. The famous Oriya Jatra Parties come to this fair to play their shows. The ethnic Oddissi Dance becomes the attraction for the visitors in every evening. Melody parties and Orchestras attract young mass to the Bali Jatra venue.

- **National Level Pallishree Mela**

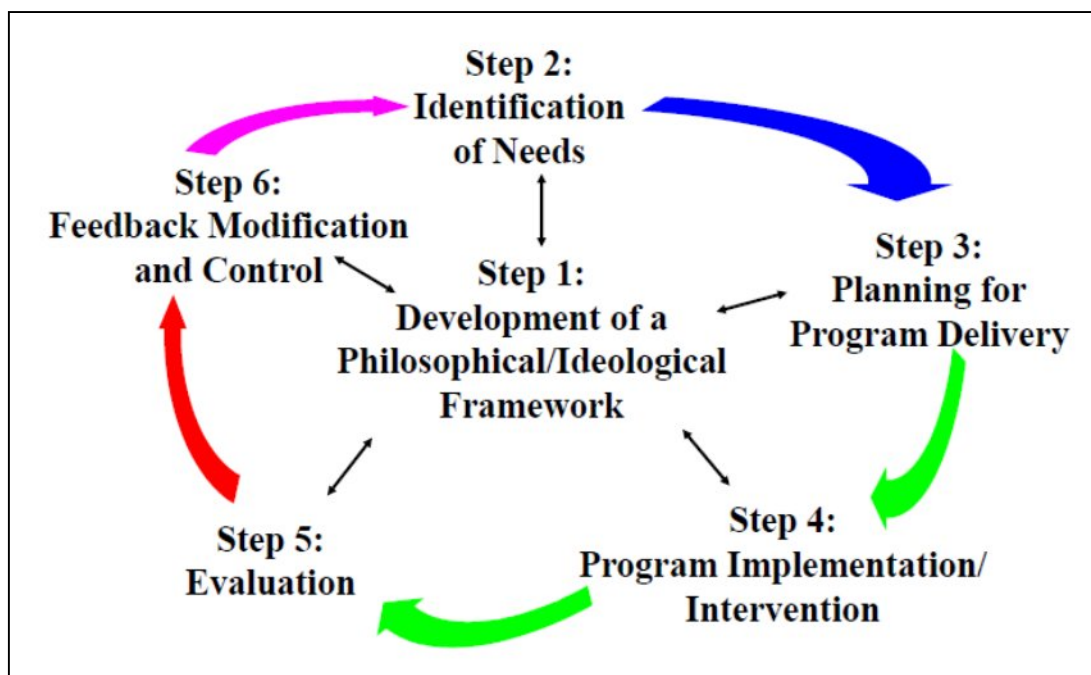
The main objective of the mela is to popularize the ethnic & other rural products of different states and districts & to create opportunities for artisans/producers to build up long term marketing tie up with prospective buyers across the country. Among all other marketing channels organization and participation in exhibition is one of the key channel. This exhibition facilitates the future marketing prospects and wide contacts with the following outcomes:

- Display, demonstrate and sale of products.
- Provide a platform to the Swarojagaries to interact with the prospective buyers.
- Facilitates the buyer-seller meet.
- Provide a forum for technology transfer.
- Producers get the feedback from the final consumers and are able to know the market tastes and preferences.

6. Recommended Model for better impact of Balijatra

“The industry of festivals and events has started developing from the beginning of the 1990, and today there is a vivid interest for any kind of festival and event, at an international, national and local level. Festivals help promoting the areas in which they take place, attract numerous tourists, and can be regarded as a new type of tourism”. The image of a destination, product or service can be improved or worsen thanks or due to the success or failure of a

festival or event. The characteristics of festivals and events are unique, and this is the main reason why we can't have a standard management model to fit all of them. No matter the reason why an event was organized, there are numerous participants, and each has his own expectations. In Odisha, festivals and events have started to conquer new grounds, and organizers try to bring to Odisha the ideas from abroad, and to organize international festivals. It's highly important, when such a festival or event is organized, to take into consideration all the aspects: economic, social, cultural, and also the future aspects which are going to have an impact on that certain area, after the festival is over. If, at the end the festival the outcome isn't the desired one, and the tourists and participants aren't satisfied, they'll keep in mind to never come back to this event and to the city, and it will be difficult for the organizers to win back their public. This is way, Balijatra needs to be very well planned and to take into account all aspects, and in such a way that everybody has to win. For a greater impact, organizers of Balijatra should take into consideration organizing the event in a logical order (Figure 1), in such a way that the impact will be the greatest, the organization will be thorough, and the participants will be satisfied and which will improve the image of a the Cuttack city in general as well as from tourism point of view.



For a good development it's essential to respect Step 2: Identifying the needs. This step sets the organizational requirements, and also the needs of the public/tourists, as well as participants. The stage of identifying the needs can have exceptional results and all the „actors” can win, if it's well done. Step 3 can be made directly by the organisers which organizes the event. It's important that these needs cover in an objective way the idea of the festival and the expectations of all involved parties.

Also, the festivals organized in Cuttack, or in any other big city, should focus on Step 3: Planning the event, and on Step 4: Implementing the event. These two stages are essential for the success or failure of the festival. Even if planning the event goes exceptional, implementing the event should be done according to the initial plan, without any successive changes or modifications during the event. For any festival it's important that the plan of the event to comprise modern and attractive tools, in such a way that the public is satisfied and willing to come to future editions. Regarding Step 3, the ones who project the festival need to take into account the benefits of the festival, the established objectives (number of spectators/participants, satisfying the interest for culture, a certain level of profit, etc.), budgets, the management program, promotion and marketing etc. Projecting and planning the event are two very difficult procedures, upon which depends the success or failure of the event. This is why these two activities need to be taken care of by a team of specialists, or by a consultancy firm, in such a way that the final result will match the festival type and the goals of the festival.

7. Discussions and findings

Orissa has become one of the world's most-watched and hottest inbound and outbound tourist markets. Festival Tourism is developing rapidly in Orissa. It plays a positive effect in integrating regional tourism resources and enhancing the popularity of a tourist destination. The Balijatra festival is unique of its kinds which have some special features that differentiate it from other cultural festivals of Orissa.

Balijatra has a huge potential which through continuous efforts will help in promotion tourism and improve the image of Cuttack city. As per the study, the negative findings of Balijatra that could be improved for the promotion of tourism in Cuttack and in turn will improve the image of the city are:

- There is a shortage of accommodations for the visitors in Cuttack and also there are no proper restaurants.
- The roads connecting to Balijatra are very narrow and also not maintained well which causes over congestion during the festival and there is no proper traffic management system.
- Only local artists are invited to perform in Balijatra during the evening cultural programmes.
- Lack of proper publicity of the festival.
- Balijatra attracts a large no. of traders and the visitors; however no proper steps are taken by the organisers to maintain the cleanliness in the destination.
- The festival is still waiting to be considered by the department of tourism, Govt. of Odisha. No proper steps have been taken by Orissa tourism for the development and promotion of this festival from tourism point of view.

8. Recommendations

The city requires good number of hotels and restaurants to cater the needs of the tourists during festival and also throughout the year. Establishment of both Luxury and Budget accommodation is the need at present

- The festival need to be publicized properly. There should be more promotions about the festival. The organizers could put up posters on the bus stations or even paint the advertisement on the bus. TV and newspaper are the common media for people, but more cutting-edge technology could be attached at local and domestic level. Further collaboration with foreign organisations and Medias, Road shows and internet technology are required for international publicity.
- The roads to the festival venues must be widened and maintenance work has to be undertaken from time to time.
- More attention has to be given on high standard of performance during the festival. Therefore, a high calibre of artists should be invited to perform, including both star performers and lesser-known artists from Orissa, India and abroad.
- Effective marketing of the festival is also required. Professional marketing strategies are needed in order to prepare and execute an integrated campaign for building both domestic and international attendance at the festival. This campaign should cover both the end consumers and the travel trade, i.e. travel agencies, tour operators and other allied organizations.
- Management of traffic is highly essential for the easy movement of the visitors.
- The municipal corporation must look after the cleanliness of the venue and the sanitation facilities need to be improved.
- Department of tourism, Government of Orissa must take necessary steps for the inclusion and promotion of this festival like other tourism promotional festivals of Orissa. Tourism brochures must be published about the festival. Well in advance, the festival must be included in the Orissa tourism websites which will help the visitors to plan their trip in advance.

9. Conclusion

Balijatra Festival can be a major catalyst to augment the footfall of Inbound Tourism from ASEAN region because of its international reach showcasing the rich maritime tradition of ancient India. So, the event should not be looked upon as a local festival only. This will be the responsibility of Odisha Tourism to develop this as an event based tourism product.

So, taking cues from the Government of India's 'Look East' policy, both India and Odisha Tourism should reach out to the captive, yet affluent market of ASEAN region through an awareness drive and capitalizing on the ancient socio-cultural linkage of Kalinga. The Union and State government must jointly promote this week-long cultural extravaganza of Balijatra Festival at an international arena, particularly in the ASEAN countries. Odisha Tourism needs to invite the embassies of Sri Lanka and all the South East Asian countries to participate in the Balijatra event and express solidarity to the common socio-cultural heritage of ancient Kalinga. Also, FAM tours for media and tour operators from these countries need to be organised. The Balijatra event has to be highlighted by Odisha Tourism through road shows and cultural events in various cities of Indonesia such as Bali, Java and Sumatra. Also, in Bali, which is Hindu dominated region of Indonesia. Furthermore, the weak areas of the festival must be looked into in order to promote tourism and make it an eminent city among the visitors.

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