

EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF SMALL-SCALE DANCE FESTIVALS: THE CASE OF SAMOS

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Abstract. Cultural events, such as festivals, foster intercultural dialogue, promote social cohesion, and increase knowledge about the culture of the region where they take place. This study aimed to examine how educational level, place of residence, and income influence the perceived social impact of the Samos dance festival on the local community. The sample consisted of 211 Samos dance festival participants, and the research was carried out in the framework of the Triple Bottom Line (T.B.L) approach, first introduced by Elkington (1997) which analyses sustainability through three pillars, one of which is social. Data collection was carried out using the Dallas questionnaire (2018), focusing on questions related to social impact and demographic characteristics of festival attendees. The results showed that the social impact of the festival is highly valued across the entire sample. Permanent residents rated all aspects of social impact more positively than visitors. This assessment can be explained by the deeper connection of permanent residents with the local community. Regarding the level of education, contradictory results were observed, with both postgraduate or doctoral degree holders and secondary school graduates rating the social impact higher than other participants. Additionally, income level appeared to partially alter their perception of the festival's social effects, especially among participants from lower economic backgrounds. In conclusion, the Samos dance festival has a significant positive social impact on the local community.

Keywords: dance; festival; social impact.

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Introduction

The inherent human need for social interaction, communication, and collaboration has been a key factor in the emergence of cultural practices, such as festivals. Cultural festivals saw significant development during the 20th century, particularly after World War II, as they aimed to rebuild societies, uplift citizens' morale, revitalize cities, and stimulate artistic works (Rolfe, 1992).

The concept of a "festival" has been defined in various ways throughout the literature. One such definition describes festivals (organized events) as "temporary occurrences with a predetermined beginning and end. Each event is unique and originates from its management, program, location, and participants" (Getz, 2005, p. 16). Festivals share common characteristics, primarily the cultural significance and the dynamic creative output resulting

from meticulously planned and diverse programs, all serving a specific purpose (del Barrio et al., 2012).

What sets festivals apart from other events is their strong association with religious celebratory events, emphasizing socio-cultural symbolism and rituals. Consequently, the festival themes are often deeply rooted in community identity (Çelik et al., 2013; Duffy et al., 2017).

Festivals and events can yield social benefits for the host community by fostering a sense of cohesion among permanent residents and enhancing the community's social services (Yolal et al., 2012; Yolal et al., 2016). Additionally, festivals can initially provide opportunities for cultural exchanges between permanent residents and visitors, as well as opportunities for entertainment and recreation for locals (Arcordia & Whitford, 2006). Thus, they play a significant role in the lives of permanent residents (Getz, 1997; Gursoy et al., 2004).

According to Skoultzos (2014), festivals can serve as a powerful means of strengthening and improving the social bonds within local communities. To achieve this, all necessary conditions that enhance the connection between festival and local community must be ensured. A strong connection leads to the activation of collaborations and synergies, creating a climate of local solidarity within the community. The perception of permanent residents that the festival is a community asset is crucial for both festival and local community. Cultural events and festivals can contribute to the development of social capital, fostering a more humane, flexible, and enjoyable living environment in the city.

Additionally, festivals play a vital role in preserving and reinforcing a city's historical and cultural traditions (Hede et al., 2007). They provide visitors with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture, gaining insight into the values, customs, and traditions of the community's permanent residents.

Furthermore, Skoultzos (2014) emphasizes that permanent residents benefit from interactions with visitors, gaining new educational and cultural stimuli. While such exchanges are not always effortless, when mutual and sincere communication is achieved, the intellectual and moral benefits can be significant. Cultural events also enhance the cultural education of the permanent residents themselves, bringing them closer to their cultural heritage and encouraging them to engage more with cultural activities and public life. Naturally, achieving this requires continuous and dedicated effort from all parties involved. Moreover, the organization itself must meet certain fundamental prerequisites to become a noteworthy cultural institution that positively motivates the local community (Skoultzos, 2014).

Festivals and events provide opportunities for celebrating significant personal and public occasions as well as important milestones and themes in people's lives (Mair, 2019). Their positive impact on the host community includes reinforcing traditions and values, fostering the adoption of new social norms, and introducing fresh cultural elements that encourage volunteerism, community participation, and multicultural interactions (Derret, 2004).

Modern and traditional festivals are organized with the goal to encourage active public participation, celebrating themes that appeal to specific groups or communities with common interests or cultural identities. This characteristic differentiates one festival from another (Sala et al., 2016; Mair, 2019). All festivals have a central theme along with various programs aimed at promoting a specific type of experience, where the celebrations incorporate emotional, intellectual, and behavioral experiences (Getz, 2010). Festival experiences are considered the

key driver for success and audience engagement, as they have the ability to spark imagination, evoke memories, and elicit strong emotions (Robertson et al., 2015; Luonila et al., 2020).

In Greece, festivals maintain a strong local character, encompassing activities from various fields such as Greek dance, theatre, music, and cinema. In recent years, the number of festivals organized across the country has steadily increased in Greece. While the exact number remains difficult to determine due to insufficient documentation, it is undoubtedly significant, as most municipalities host some form of festival (Konsola & Karahalis, 2010). The concentration of the Greek urban system with the two largest cities playing a dominant role in every sector of economic activity is also reflected in the cultural sector, where this dominance is even more apparent (Konsola & Karahalis, 2010).

Festivals exert both direct and indirect influences on the community, economy, culture, and environment, at both small and large scales in the regions and cities where they take place, a fact that has attracted scientific research interest in various fields over the past decades (Georgoula, 2018). One such festival is the Panhellenic Dance Festival of Samos.

For the past five years, Samos has hosted the annual Panhellenic Dance Festival, successfully organized by the Samos Dance Club—CHOR.OS—under the auspices of the Municipality of Eastern Samos. The event, which started in 2018 and continues to grow and develop, represents a meeting point for enthusiasts of Greek dance from various regions of Greece. The festival is warmly welcomed by participants as it provides a unique experience delving into the world of Greek dances. The 250 to 350 dancers who take the stage each year, embodying the diversity of traditions, breathe life into the Ancient Theatre of Pythagoreion. The multi-level coordination of CHOR.OS, along with the generosity of sponsoring businesses and the assistance of volunteers, enable the organization of a multi-day festival that attracts visitors from all over Greece.

The festival's highlight is the grand performance of Greek Dances, held at the Ancient Theatre of Pythagoreion, delivering a visually and artistically stunning experience for audiences. The continuation of this annual event enhances the reputation of Samos as a hub of cultural exchange and promotion of tradition. Over the past five years, this festival has evolved into a significant event that showcases culture and tradition through dance, fostering unity and exchange of experiences among different regions of the country.

The 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival took place from September 1st to 3rd, 2023, with the participation of 250 dancers and 10 cultural associations. Organized by the Samos Dance Club (CHOR.OS), for the 5th consecutive year, the festival remained committed to its mission of bringing together dance groups from across Greece, as well as international participants and local dance clubs, for a grand performance in the heart of the island. Beyond its artistic dimension, the three-day celebration of tradition and culture aimed to introduce participants to the natural beauty, coastal and mountainous villages, and cultural heritage of Samos (CHOR.OS, 2023).

Methodology

Purpose

The aim of the research was to examine how the educational level, place of residence, and income influence the social impact of the dance festival on the local community of Samos.

Participants

The statistical population of the study comprised all dancers and spectators aged 18 and above who attended the 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival in Samos. The sample of 211 participants was randomly selected, representing approximately 20% of the population, and included both active participants (dancers) and audience members (spectators). The distribution of the participants according to gender and educational level is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Instrument and Procedure

The research was conducted under the framework of the Triple Bottom Line (T.B.L.) model introduced by John Elkington (1997), which involves analysing sustainability based on three main pillars: economic, social, and environmental. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire developed by Dallas (2018), designed specifically to evaluate cultural and social sustainability in events. This tool aligns with the T.B.L. framework as it incorporates questions addressing economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The motivation for selecting the Dallas survey was our belief that its questions and structure aligned well with our specific needs. Specifically, it has been used in the evaluation of cultural and dance festivals, making it particularly suitable for the current study.

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions measures on a 5-point Likert scale, allowing for consistent and quantifiable responses. Its structured format also facilitated data collection from a large sample, ensuring comparability across the responses. The current study not only evaluated the festival's outcomes but also aligned them with broader sustainability goals, demonstrating the applicability of the TBL in cultural and social contexts.

The research was conducted during the 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival of Samos, held from September 1st to 3rd, 2023, specifically shortly before the end of each day, with questionnaires distributed to both spectators and dancers of the Panhellenic Festival of Samos.

Statistical analysis

In the statistical analysis, descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were applied to examine the demographic characteristics of the participants. Additionally, a one-way ANOVA and t test for independent samples t-test were conducted to evaluate the social impact of the festival.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the total sample consisted of 211 individuals, the majority of whom were females, followed by a smaller percentage of males and other who indicated "other" as their response.

Table 1. *Gender of participants*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Men	93	44,1%
Women	103	48,8%
Other	15	7,1%
Total	211	100,0%

Regarding educational level (Table 2), the majority of participants held a high school diploma, followed by those with a Master's or Ph.D. degree.

Table 2. *Educational level*

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
Middle School	4	1,9%
High School	81	38,4%
University	56	26,5%
Master – PhD	70	33,2%
Total	211	100,0%

Regarding participants' net income (Table 3), the majority of them reported incomes ranging from 1€ to 500€, followed closely by participants reporting incomes between 1000€ and 2000€

Table 3. *Monthly net income level*

Income Level	Frequency	Percentage
1€-500€	62	29,4%
501€ - 1000€	41	19,4%
1001€ - 2000€	45	21,3%
2001€ and above	31	14,7%
No answer	32	15,2%
Total	211	100,0%

Regarding the origin of the participants (Table 4), the majority were permanent residents of the island of Samos, while visitors represented a smaller percentage.

Table 4. *Permanent residents and visitors*

	Frequency	Percentage
Permanent residents	143	67,8%
Visitors	68	32,2%
Total	211	100,0%

Social impacts

To explore the social impacts and the influence of the festival on the local community, valuable insights can be gleaned from Table 5. The results reflect a clear positive evaluation, as evidenced by the high mean scores of the festival's social effects on the Samos community, with all variables measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Table 5. *Mean and standard deviations of social impacts*

Social Impacts	M	SD
Do you think that the 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival contributed to raising your awareness of the cultural heritage of the island of Samos? (Item 1)	4,81	,50
How much do you agree –with the following sentences: "I would recommend to relatives and friends to participate in the Panhellenic Dance Festival in Samos in the future" (Item 2)	4,92	,36
"The 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival in Samos provides recreational and educational opportunities for both visitors and permanent residents" (Item 3)	4,84	,44
"The island of Samos improved as a result of the 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival" (Item 4)	4,73	,61
"The 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival increases the participation of Samos' community and its citizens" (Item 5)	4,77	,58
"The 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival is a source of pride for the island of Samos" (Item 6)	4,86	,49

Social impact and educational level

To determine whether there are statistically significant differences according to the educational level, starting from the responses comprising the social impacts, analyses of variance (One-Way ANOVA) was conducted. The results revealed that educational level is indeed a differentiating factor concerning participants' awareness of Samos culture, their future participation in the festival, the provision of recreational and educational opportunities, the island's improvement, increased community and citizen participation, and a source of pride for the island of Samos (Table 6).

Table 6. Differences in social impact in relation to educational level

Social Impacts	F	p
Item 1	$F_{(2,208)}=4,48$,012*
Item 2	$F_{(2,208)}=4,78$,009*
Item 3	$F_{(2,208)}=6,73$,001*
Item 4	$F_{(2,208)}=11,0$,000*
Item 5	$F_{(2,208)}=3,58$,030*
Item 6	$F_{(2,208)}=5,28$,006*

Note. *. $p < 0,05$.

To identify differences among educational levels regarding the aforementioned social impacts, the Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc test was conducted. In this context, "tertiary education" refers to participants who have graduated from university, while middle school corresponds to junior high school. In Greece, secondary education refers to high school, and tertiary education includes only university. The social impacts showing statistically significant differences concerning participants' educational levels are as follows:

- **"Awareness of Samos Culture" (Item 1):** Significant differences were observed between participants with tertiary education ($M=4.64$, $SD=0.61$) and those with secondary education ($M=4.86$, $SD=0.44$). Additionally, there is a significant difference between participants with tertiary education and those holding a postgraduate (Master's or Ph.D.) degree ($M=4.89$, $SD=0.43$).
- **"Future Participation" (Item 2):** Significant differences were found between participants with tertiary education ($M=4.80$, $SD=0.55$) and those with secondary education ($M=4.93$, $SD=0.33$). Moreover, there is a statistically significant difference between participants with tertiary education and those holding a postgraduate degree ($M=5.00$, $SD=0.00$).
- **"Provision of Recreational and Educational Opportunities" (Item 3):** Similarly, there are statistical differences between participants with tertiary education ($M=4.66$, $SD=0.61$) and those with secondary education ($M=4.92$, $SD=0.31$). Additionally, a significant difference is observed between participants with tertiary education and those holding a postgraduate degree ($M=4.90$, $SD=0.38$).
- **"Improvement of the Island" (Item 4):** Significant differences exist between participants with tertiary education ($M=4.41$, $SD=0.89$) and those with secondary education ($M=4.81$, $SD=0.47$). Furthermore, a statistically significant difference is noted between participants with tertiary education and those holding a postgraduate degree ($M=4.87$, $SD=0.37$).
- **"Increase in Community and Citizen Participation" (Item 5):** Here, only one statistical difference is observed between participants with tertiary education ($M=4.41$, $SD=0.89$) and those with a postgraduate degree ($M=4.87$, $SD=0.61$).
- **"Source of Pride" (Item 6):** Finally, there are statistical differences between participants with tertiary education ($M=4.68$, $SD=0.66$) and those with secondary education ($M=4.91$, $SD=0.47$). Additionally, a significant difference is found between participants with tertiary education and those holding a postgraduate degree ($M=4.94$, $SD=0.28$).

Social impact of permanent residents and visitors

To examine whether there are statistically significant differences in social impacts based on the origin of participants (permanent residents or visitors), independent t-test samples were conducted for each question (Table 7). The results indicate that there are statistically significant differences between permanent residents and visitors regarding participants' awareness of Samos cultural heritage, their future participation in future editions of the festival, provision of recreational and educational opportunities, views on the island's improvement, increase in community and citizen participation, and the source of pride for the island of Samos.

Table 7. *Differences in social impacts in relation to permanent residents or visitors*

Social Impacts	t	p
Item 1	t ₍₂₀₉₎ =2,41	,012*
Item 2	t ₍₂₀₉₎ =1,84	,009*
Item 3	t ₍₂₀₉₎ =2,11	,001*
Item 4	t ₍₂₀₉₎ =2,24	,000*
Item 5	t ₍₂₀₉₎ =2,34	,030*
Item 6	t ₍₂₀₉₎ =,098	,006*

Note. *. p < 0,05.

According to Table 8, it appears that permanent residents rate all aspects of social impact better compared to visitors to Samos.

Table 8. *Mean and standard deviations of social impacts per resident and visitors*

Social Impact		M	SD
Awareness of participants regarding the culture of Samos	Permanent residents	4,87	,448
	Visitors	4,69	,580
Future Participation	Permanent residents	4,95	,299
	Visitors	4,85	,466
Providing entertainment and educational opportunities	Permanent residents	4,89	,430
	Visitors	4,75	,469
Improvement of the island	Permanent residents	4,79	,615
	Visitors	4,59	,604
Increasing the involvement of community and citizens	Permanent residents	4,83	,556
	Visitors	4,63	,621
Source of pride	Permanent residents	4,86	,525
	Visitors	4,85	,432

Social impacts and income of participants

To test for statistically significant differences regarding categories of monthly net individual income and the questions composing the social impacts, statistical variance analyses (One-Way ANOVA) was conducted. From the results, it was evident that income constitutes a differentiating factor concerning the improvement of the island and the increase in community and citizen participation (Table 9).

Table 9. Differences in social impacts based on income levels

Social Impacts	f	p
Item 1	$F_{(4,206)}=1,15$,330
Item 2	$F_{(4,206)}=,97$,110
Item 3	$F_{(4,206)}=1,75$,064
Item 4	$F_{(4,206)}=7,17$,001*
Item 5	$F_{(4,206)}=6,10$,001*
Item 6	$F_{(4,206)}=2,53$,065

Note. *. $p < 0,05$.

To examine the differences between categories of monthly net individual income regarding the aforementioned social impacts, the Least Significant Difference (LSD) Post Hoc Test was conducted. Specifically, statistically significant differences in social impacts were observed among different categories of monthly net individual income of the participants.

- **"Improvement of the Island"(Item 4):** Statistically significant differences were observed between participants with monthly income of €1-500 ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 0.30$) and those with income of €1001-2000 ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.72$), and between those with income of €2001 and above ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.79$). Additionally, there was a statistically significant difference between participants with monthly income of €501-1000 ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 0.42$) and those with income of €1001-2000 ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.72$).
- **"Increase in Community and Citizen Participation"(Item 5):** Similarly, there were statistically significant differences between participants with monthly income of €1-500 ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 0.30$) and those with income of €1001-2000 ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.65$). Additionally, statistically significant differences were observed between participants with monthly income of €501-1000 ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.40$) and those with income of €1001-2000 ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.65$).

Discussion

According to the literature, the social impact of an event is linked to subjective criteria, such as pride, cultural awareness, and the entertainment and educational opportunities provided by a festival (Rozier et al., 2016; Andersson & Lundberg, 2013). The results of the study indicate that the social impact of the festival is highly rated by the entire sample. Furthermore, the way participants assess social impacts aligns with findings from previous research (Rozier et al., 2016; Andersson & Lundberg, 2013; Sherwood, 2007; Jago et al., 2005). Among the reported social impacts, participants expressed a strong intention to attend future editions of the festival, and they viewed the event as both an entertaining and educational experience.

An interesting finding emerged regarding educational level. Participants with postgraduate or doctoral degrees, as well as those who completed secondary education, actually rate all aspects of social impact higher than others. Specifically, secondary education graduates show more sensitivity towards culture, future engagement, and perceived more entertainment and educational opportunities compared to tertiary education graduates. Moreover, participants with postgraduate or doctoral degrees expressed a stronger appreciation of the island and perceived the festival as a significant source of local pride. A common point regarding

education is that tertiary education graduates provided the lowest ratings across all aspects of social impact. The reasons behind this trend are unclear and warrant further investigation in future studies.

Additionally, the net income levels of the participants appear to partially affect their perception of social impacts, especially among those with lower economic backgrounds. Interestingly, individuals with lower income express higher expectations and appraisals in areas such as future engagement, entertainment and educational opportunities, improvement of the island and increased community participation. This differentiation based on income levels underscores the need for organizing cultural events while considering social differences and the participants' economic needs. For instance, most festival attendees have low incomes, highlighting the necessity of planning events that are accessible and affordable. Furthermore, participants with lower income levels report the highest ratings regarding island's improvement and community and citizens participation. The explanation can be that people with lower incomes tend to have fewer opportunities and limited experiences in participating in similar events. As a result, they are more likely to perceive small-scale cultural events as significantly beneficial to the local community and their fellow citizens, in contrast to those with higher incomes. This approach can enhance participation, ensuring that all permanent residents, regardless of their financial situation, can enjoy and benefit from cultural activities, thus contributing to overall social welfare. Moreover, the fact that admission is free is a significant factor that enhances the accessibility of cultural events to all permanent residents, regardless of income. This policy encourages the involvement of the local community and creates an environment that promotes social cohesion and interaction.

Finally, permanent residents rate all aspects of social impacts higher than visitors. Permanent residents experience the effects of an event more profoundly due to their emotional connection to their place. Additionally, locals have a better diachronic perspective on the evolution of their area compared to visitors, which may shape their beliefs. Permanent residents have more direct contact and experience from daily life on the island, while visitors have a more limited or superficial understanding of the social realities of the area. Also, it is observed that most participants are from the island of Samos, highlighting the local character of the festival. This is significant because it shows that permanent residents feel the need and interest to participate in cultural events related to their place of residence. Therefore, the presence of locals at the festival can be a strong factor for its success and sustainability over time.

Regarding future participation in the festival, there is a strong intention to return, which enhances its sustainability. At the same time, it enriches participants' intercultural experiences as the event continues to feature dance groups, performances, and unique customs from various regions of Greece.

The present study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by focusing on the underexplored area of dance festivals. By examining the 5th Panhellenic Dance Festival, it provides valuable insights into the outcomes of such events while offering a framework for understanding their broader role in cultural promotion, community engagement, and environmental development. This approach highlights the originality of the research and contributes to the exploration of an underexamined area, thereby enriching the academic discourse surrounding cultural and community-focused festivals.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the research underscore several key points, with the most significant being:

- The festival has a significant social impact on the local community. Participants express a strong sense of pride, perceive improvements on the island, and recognize the festival's value in providing both entertainment and educational opportunities.
- The festival is associated with the educational level. Specifically, participants with either secondary education, postgraduate or doctoral degrees tend to appreciate the social impact of the dance festival to a greater extent compared to those with tertiary education.
- Participants' net income influences their perception of the festival's social impact. Participants' income significantly differentiates the social impacts of cultural events, with individuals with lower incomes expressing higher expectations and appreciation for the event. This highlights that accessible and economically feasible events will enhance their participation and social cohesion.
- The majority of attendees were permanent residents rather than visitors, reinforcing the festival's strong local character and significance within the community. Additionally, permanent residents of Samos rated the festival's social impact higher than visitors, indicating a deeper connection to and direct engagement in the island's social processes.

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