

A Case Study of the Bonfires of Saint John Celebration



Picture 1: Alicante (n.d.b). Sketch of official adult bonfire.

Master Thesis

By

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Foreword

“It is a honor for me to be involved in the celebration of my city Alicante” (Member respondent # 2)

“I feel enthusiastic and happy about the possibilities of experience around this important celebration in Alicante city” (Local respondent #1)

I would like to thank those people that helped me to be able work on and complete my Master’s Thesis. Firstly, thank-you to the interviewees who participated in the interviews. I have a high appreciation to each of you due to your contribution of information towards this thesis. Additionally, I am really thankful for your time and dedication by responding to all of the questions.

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To my family, thank-you for encouraging me to continue with this thesis, even when I faced difficult moments. I am really grateful for the love and support from my family and friends.

Abstract

Key words: Saint John Bonfires, celebration, identity, image, sense of coherence, decision-making and evaluation experience.

It was Jose Maria Py who officially constituted the Bonfires of Saint John celebration many years back in 1928. Jose Maria Py made the initial efforts to organize a citywide party, thinking about the positive implications to attract tourists and also for benefit of the people of Alicante.

This study is an investigation and discussion of ideas around the Saint John Bonfires celebration. The discussion represents some perspectives from two different stakeholder groups involved in the celebration.

The conceptual and theoretical framework encompasses a comprehensive frame of reference on the history and evolution of the event; a variety of perspectives from both local people and members of commissions; and also the sense of coherence that individuals have when the celebration takes place in the city Alicante. The main academic references used for this study include the work of Getz (2007), introducing a complete foundation on the definition of event and conceptual considerations. This work also provides satisfactory explanation about the antecedents and choices of stakeholders. Several articles about Antonovsky's (1979) concept of *sense of coherence* are included in this study to obtain a clear definition and understanding.

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Due to the essence of this study and the conjecture of results, a qualitative methodology was selected using eight informants, divided into two groups: local people and members of the organizing commissions. This study includes several methods such as participant observation and perspectives of the researcher, based on a case study. The findings of the study were examined against the three main research questions: What is the Bonfire of Saint John celebration in Alicante? How do the local people perceive this celebration? What differences exist between the perceptions of participants and non-participants? How strong or weak is the sense of coherence of residents in the environment where the celebration takes place?

Saint John Bonfire's celebration presents a long and rich history that has experienced evolution along the years. The findings introduce relevant outcomes for this celebration. The informants expressed a positive experience, strong identity and meaning of the celebration. As with every event, it is also possible to find some negative experiences, such as noise and ruckus, and these concerns will also be addressed.

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A case study of the Bonfire of Saint John Celebration

This chapter will review the background of the festival and justify the selection of Bonfire of Saint John's festival as a theme for study. The main research questions will follow. It is initially thought that the significance of this celebration takes on different meaning for local people and the members of official organizations due to the different manners in which they celebrate. For instance, local people see the celebration as an important marker in the city where culture and tradition is represented. They also find meaning in engaging in social activities that breaks the routine of daily life. It could be suggested that members experience similar meaning, though feel an enhanced level of dedication, commitment and pride due to their participation in a commission. They have added meaning as a 'representative' of the city during this time.

Background and motivations for the study

According to social science authors, events are considered a relevant and necessary component in the formation of human bonding and community. Throughout history to present day, humans have conveyed a need to congregate and perform collective activities at singular dates and times. Wide ranges of activities are performed during celebrations. One of the strongest inherent drives that we have as social figures, is the need to 'belong' to a society or religious entity. Celebrations are the extension of this need to belong. Events may also be seen as an advantageous and entertaining for outsiders. (Baum, Deery, Hanlon, Lockstone & Smith, 2009)

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Cultural and community events aspire to sharing core values and animating local activities. This increases community cultural significance, serving the needs of exceptional groups, keeping community heritage and increasing local honor (Derrett, 2004). Events may be considered as fun or even cherished by attendees and participants. Events can denote the recreations, ambitions and encouragement expressed through the beliefs and faiths of the broader community group (Baum et al., 2009).

Based from this position, this thesis proposes to address three principal objectives:

- To identify the main perceptions that individuals, such as local people and members of organizations have in relation to the celebration. These perceptions could include differences in identity, interpreted meaning, images or general experience. Identification is a main theme that contributes to the understanding of ‘celebration’ as experienced by the different stakeholders groups.
- To provide increased awareness and enhanced knowledge on the Bonfires of Saint John Festival. Additionally, for practical use towards the future research of this celebration.
- To contribute to the understanding and knowledge around the concept *sense of coherence* in relation to city festivals.

The main intention for this work is to select a topic that relates to personal experiences, and that sparks interest and curiosity. This can be found in seeking out the real origins of Saint John Bonfires celebration in the city of Alicante, Spain. Considering the scope of the festival and involvement of most of the residents of Alicante, it is useful to investigate the variety of perceptions that exist surrounding the celebration. It is likely that

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different stakeholders experience a variety of emotion and perceptions in relation to the festival. There is also value in a study that looks at the image, identity and meaning for those indirectly and directly participating in the festival and determine who has a close connection, while identifying the essence of their culture and customs. There are both negative and positive experiences of all events; this study aims to uncover some of these responses.

Geographical location of the festival .The city of *Alicante* is situated in the Eastern coast of Spain beside the Mediterranean Sea. Alicante is located in the southern area of the Valencia region.



Picture 2: Alicante (n.d.d). Location of Alicante.

The current population of Alicante city is 329,947 habitants and the city is divided into forty-one neighborhoods (Alicante, n.d.a). The main language is Spanish, however, many local individuals speak the dialect from Valencia region called Valenciano (Spanish Town Guides, n.d.). Alicante has experienced a quick pace of development in the city due to marked increases in economy as a result of the growing tourism industry (Spanish Town Guides, n.d.).

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Picture 3: Alicante (n.d.c). Image of Alicante

An extensive series of attractive holidays and leisure activities are offered throughout the year and this is an additional stimulant. The city has a lot of desirable offers for different audiences, beyond sun and beach. (Spanish Town Guides, n.d.)

General Overview of the Bonfires of Saint John Celebration. The real origin of the Bonfires of Saint John celebration dates back to 1822 when town-folk started an official celebration of the summer solstice. This festival was initially considered a farmer ritual. Residents began to celebrate the festival by lighting bonfires, to celebrate to the night of Saint John. Unfortunately during the early times, this celebration was looked upon negatively and eventually forbidden by authorities. However a resident named Jose Maria Py helped to reorganize the celebration and alter public opinion so that participants could contribute in building an annual ‘party,’ something that has transformed into the festival of today. In 1928 when Jose Maria Py registered the event, others started to burn bonfires in the streets (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). From that moment onwards people adopted the festival as their own and organized different activities held on the streets around the city. Saint John Bonfire’s celebration takes place from 19th to 24th of June each year (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). These dates are the principal days of activity during which time as many as

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90 bonfires are lit in various districts around the city, each containing a respective bonfire monument (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). This element is what makes the festival spread across the entire city, because every neighborhood has its own bonfire commission.

Research questions

Saint John Bonfire's celebration started officially in 1928 and has undergone transformations and grown in size with every passing year. It is considered the official celebration of Alicante city involving many different groups of people. As such, it is only logical that there are different perceptions and experiences between the different participants. Including local people and the members of commissions.

This study therefore asks the following research questions:

- What is the Bonfire of Saint John Celebration in Alicante?
- How some local people, as stakeholders, perceive this celebration?
- What differences exist between the perceptions among participants and non-participants?
- How strong or weak is the sense of coherence of residents within the festival environment?

Conceptual Framework

This chapter introduces a conceptual framework applicable for the evaluation of Saint John Bonfire's celebration. Principal considerations are Getz's theory on event studies and *antecedents* and *choices*. The section begins with definitions of an event and different types of forms and functions associated with planned events. The main characteristics of identity, image and stakeholders experiences will also be reviewed.

The definition of Event

Events can be defined as the coming together of people and activities, or occurrences at a given time and place. They are unique circumstances that compose a noteworthy occurrence. (Getz, 2007) For the purpose of this study we will explore the understanding of events as composed by Getz (2007), who describes them as transitory manifestations where planned events are organized and programmed with a specific itinerary. Additionally, planned events are attached to a particular geography. Events can be private or public. They occur at a place including a particular set of resources, taking place at one, or multiple sites, or possibly large public spaces. Of noteworthiness is the idea that while events can take place in the same setting on multiple occasions, they can never be replicated or recreated in exactly the same manner every time.

Core characteristics can be reused and represented in the same way with planned events, however it will never be possible to have an equal experience on each occasion. This phenomena is linked to the contextualized feelings and perceptions of participants, conditions

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that result from the blend of time, place and situation. Though the visitors at a particular event may be the same, their experience will always be new. Therefore, ‘uniqueness’ can be considered one of the strongest features of events. (Getz, 2007)

Above and beyond experience, events can also pose other significant functions for society, primarily the “community-building and cultural development (possibilities) to fostering national identities ” (Getz, 2007, p. 403). These elements are of particular importance for investigation in this study.

Time and a place are fundamental considerations in building events. Time is the quantification of experience, which could be calculated in a cyclical manner such as in calendar year or as a mechanical sense, such as the momentary feeling. Time provides a profitable diversion for participants. (Getz, 2007) Place is defined as the ‘energetic territory’ constituted into two manners: socially and established by community (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). It can be argued that place and culture might influence the way of organization and presenting the event. Furthermore, it is believed that having planned events unfold in a particular location provides a momentary change and can thus shape the experience of participants. One could suggest that the community elaborates a main theme and role of the event to be able to represent culture, history and so forth of the place. This can generate *place identity* to the area where the event takes place. (Getz, 2007) This topic will be expanded upon later in the section on *identity*.

Planned Events

Getz (2008) asserts that “planned events are spatial-temporal phenomenon, and each is unique because of interactions among the setting, people, and management systems—including design elements and the program” (p.404). This suggests that planned events are related to forms and functions, as well as experience and meaning. Events could be classified according to the main functions and forms contributing to the particular significance and participation of individuals, desiring experience from the different types of planned events. This provides a typology where it is possible to see different forms and functions of planned events in a variety of categories (Getz, 2007).

By applying Getz’s description of events and their components to this thesis, it becomes clear how to identify the primary functions and forms of the Saint John Bonfires celebration. An analysis of this understanding and the different components will follow in the discussion section of this thesis.

Local and community events. Events that target the local scale and contribute towards community-building hold many benefits for participants and attendees alike. For example, local events can instill a sense of pride and contribute towards a sense of belonging. Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris, McDonnell (2006) write that local events are engaging, while “strengthening a feeling of belonging and creating a sense of place” (p.16). There are many interpretations and definitions for ‘community’ and community events. First off, community can be explained as a group of individuals that live in a same territory or area and time. Community events are defined as a group of individuals that elaborate and establish an

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event in a particular geography and age. (Beeton, 2006) They use facilities, services and government resources to be able to establish and organize these said events. An example could include “family-fun events that are considered to be owned by a community because they use volunteer services from the host community, employ public venues like streets, parks and schools, and are produced at the direction of local government agencies or non-government organization (NGOs) such as service clubs, public safety organizations or business associations” (Bowdin et al., 2006, p.16).

Hallmark and iconic events. Getz (2007) defines hallmark events as those established with institutions at the center of their cultural groups or population.

It is suggested that *hallmark events* play an important role in community-building and in developing the locale where they take place. Culture, public-interest, nature and promotion help to popularize these events. Along with these traits, location becomes a significant factor due to the associations of place for the participant groups. (Getz, 2007)

The concept of *iconic events* explains famous events that are designed to be very special and widely remembered. Iconic events refer not only to recognition and prestige; they can also refer to graphic and symbolic events that strongly represent the views of participant group and geography in a global forum (Getz, 2007).

Media event. The primary purpose of *media events* are to engage a target audience through media personnel working in television, print, radio or web-based media outlets and transmit to the spectators or the larger public through these contacts. These events can also utilize media, most commonly the Internet, to reach their target audience. It is undisputedly the case that media is a powerful tool to engage various audiences across a global setting.

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Media can be included at any event, regardless of the style or construction. This contributes to raising awareness and internationalizing. (Getz, 2007)

Special events. There are several interpretations of *special events*, though two stand out as appropriate for this study. Goldblatt (2010) suggests that special events occur at an exceptional moment in the life of an individual or participant.

On the other hand, Getz (1997) refers to special events from a client perspective stating that a customer can view this as “an opportunity for a leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience” (p.3 cited in Shone & Parry, 2004). There are several characteristics that can lead to an event being ‘special’ including: being festive, spirited, unique, of quality, authentic, including tradition, adding hospitality, drawing on a theme or being symbolic (Bowdin et al., 2006). With this being said, this category is very subjective. It is essential to accept that those events labeled as ‘special’ are entirely dependent on the perception and variety of differing viewpoints originating from the participants.

These definitions are particularly useful for the research presented in this study because it is likely that individuals have different perceptions of the same event. One can assume that the term special can vary from one person to another person. This concept will be used to analyze elements of the Saint John Bonfires celebration.

The following diagram shows the interconnection of factors that can lead to a *special event*:

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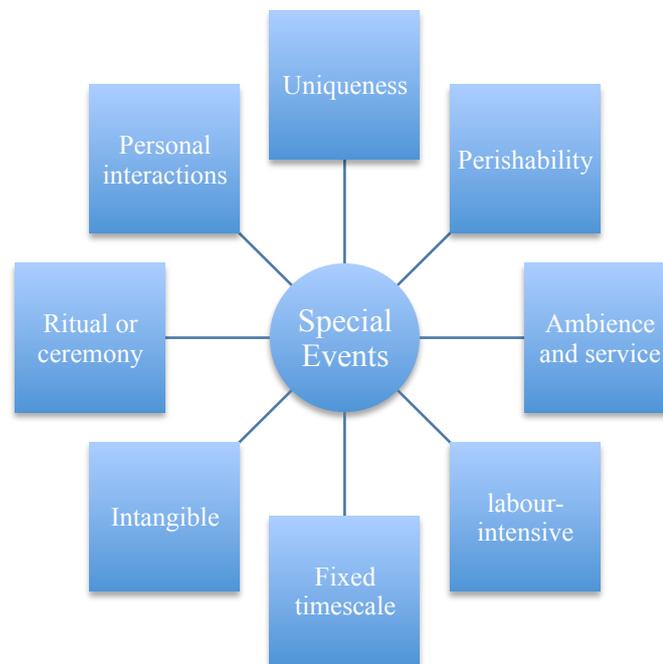


Figure 1. Characteristics of special events as a service. (Shone et al., 2004).

These characteristics are further explained to add insight into the framework for the event studied in this thesis (Shone et al., 2004):

Uniqueness – Events are characterized as unique because each will differ from the other in distinct ways. It is believed that events can be repeated many times, but there will always be different variables that prevent it from being the same every time.

Perishability of events – Social science explanations suggest that every event might have an equal line of uniformity. Despite this, there are variables that make them completely different and time sensitive.

Intangibility – this term refers to those things that you cannot touch. It is possible to feel it by sensory experience or participation.

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Ritual and ceremony – Rituals and ceremonies are acts of doing that define events and make them special.

Ambience and service – These factors are the most relevant for the result of any event. People that are involved in the event create the ambience. However, it can also be other factors that make a satisfactory or unsatisfactory ambience.

Personal contact and interaction – Inside the event, it is possible to find staff, participants, visitors, and others who interact with one another. These actions determine the appropriate quality of experience inside of the process of the event.

Spectator and interactive events. The main characterization of spectator event is when attendees do not have a directly active role. The spectator experience is based on watching, enjoying and responding to the event without taking direct part of the main organized activity. On the other hand, there is an interactive function in these types of events due to the important associations and alliances made possible through the experience design. (Getz, 2007)

Events forms

Cultural celebrations. Contemporary conceptualizations suggest that culture is the primary instrument for individuals, societies and nations to characterize and define themselves (A Cultural Policy for the City of Edimburgh, 1999, cited in Ali-Knight & Robertson, 2004). Cultural events are the catalysts for this expression. Cultural events commemorate a significant moment of time or date in the society. They make statements, expressing meaning through events that combine the general community and the cultural and

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artistic ideals of many populations (Getz, 2007). Additionally, culture contains the resurgence of the community and stimulates participation (in the elaboration of a global and sustainable societies) (Ali-Knight & Robertson, 2004).

Cultural events are composed of festivals, parades, conferences, music events, religious ceremonies, amongst others. These gatherings add significance towards the celebration of festivity (Getz, 2007).

Heritage commemoration. Getz (2007) describes these events as “memorial services, specific ceremonies or broader events (even festivals) designed to honor the memory of someone or something” (p.34). This requires that the event or festival include something symbolic, or interpretative into its program so that the personality or essence is remembered (Getz, 2007).

Parades and processions are a collection of individuals that walk or drive together in a line with a distinct purpose and typically in costume, serving as mood motivators. They possess a special enjoyment and spectators can watch them pass with energy and joy. (Getz, 2007) Parades help to build spectacles. The philosophy is that parades are popularized as ‘attractions’ and they become an efficient means to communicate and influence experience (Duffy, 2009). Parades and spectacles also help the public develop a sense of belonging, which comes about through the utilization of different variables (Duffy, 2009). Those variables are “iconic or symbolic images of national belonging” (Duffy, 2009 p. 92). Parades can be characterized by performances, spectacles of amusement and festivity (Getz, 2007).

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Religious events are in fact speculated to be the origin of many modern day events and customs. Across multiple regions in the world, the organization and function of festivals can be traced back in time through religious celebrations and their associated communities (Duffy, 2009). Many current day celebrations are in fact still connected to folkloric cultural practices and linked to historical religious or pagan ceremonies. One example is the ceremony of summer, or solstice, originally a Pagan commemoration of the equinox practiced through summer day activities (Duffy, 2009). Today, religious events can be understood as those that integrate holy ceremonies and traditions considered ‘pure’ or ‘divine,’ and specific to each religion (Getz, 2007).

Arts and entertainment. Every spectacle is embodied in the area of planned events. There are strong associations between the concept of art and its place within festivals and events (Ali-Knight & Robertson, 2004). Art can be used to send messages and shape atmospheres within a variety of celebrations. Art also has characteristics built inside culture and the history of a community (Ali-Knight & Robertson, 2004). From a historical perspective, art was considered as musical performances, dances in theaters, as well as the exhibition of fine arts (Hughes, 2000). Over time the semiotics of art has transformed due to new meanings, uses and multimedia (Ali-Knight & Robertson, 2004). The concept of entertainment has also transformed over time. Entertainment can be perceived from a practical sense like a festivity, experience, creative exhibition or event. The experience of coming together at an event or celebration is in itself entertainment, though the intentions may not always align (Getz, 2007).

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Entertainment can be experienced in a passive way. For example, a person can engage in entertainment for enjoyment without necessarily having to ‘work’ by contemplating cultural or historical ideas. Entertainment does not require a strong connection to cultural practices, significance or values (Getz, 2007).

There are three types of arts and entertainment forms:

Performing arts - It is possible to have natural and unplanned performances by people and collectives who do not fall into the categories of events and entertainment (Getz, 2007). Performing arts can be expressed through high culture, popular culture, film and television as well as fashion. All these forms can involve a variety of different people, professional or untrained, with a variety of relevant characteristics and attributions (Ali-Knight and Robertson, 2004).

Literature – comes in the form of printed text that can be communicated through books, magazines, and blogs amongst others (Getz, 2007). Books and brochures are used in festivals and event settings to convey the spectacle and performance. Literature can also be considered art, when it is written and presented in a specific style and it contains references to entertain the public (Getz, 2007).

Visual arts - includes the use fine arts through painting, sculpture and handicrafts, as well as multimedia, film, photography and display. There can be many visual art forms included in the area of planned events such as sculptures, monuments, and posters (Getz, 2007).

Experience and Stakeholders

According to Getz (2008), experience can be framed into three interconnecting dimensions: the conative dimension, where people are doing or behaving; the affective dimension relating to emotions, moods, or attitudes; and the cognitive dimension affecting awareness, perception, understanding. The relationship of these faculties explains the manner of experience.

In social science disciplines there are many broad definitions of experience. From one position, experience has been characterized as a continuous flow of impressions and emotions that take place when perceptions are formed (Carlson, 1997). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) pointed out that flow experience is defined as areas of profound immersion, center and extraordinary assimilation in confronting activities.

Event experience. O'Sullivan & Spangler (1998) have constructed *event experience* into coherent stages: first, participation and consuming; next, being physically, mentally, socially and spiritually and emotionally engaged; afterwards experiencing a shift in knowledge, skill, memory or emotional response; developing a conscious perception of having encountered, lived through or attended an event; and lastly, an effort directed at addressing a psychological or internal need (O'Sullivan & Spangler, 1998).

Five models of experience have also been theorized, including:

1. Stages: where events or feelings occur prior to, during and after a specific encounter.

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2. The actual experience: which are factors or variables that influence participation and shape outcomes.
3. Needs being addressed: the meeting of internally selected criteria.
4. Roles of the participant and other people involved: that includes personality, expectations, behavior and contributes to shaping outcomes.
5. Roles and relationships with the 'provider' of the experience: this includes the ability and willingness to customize the experience and or control it.

Safe experience. Unarguably, the main event organizers of any genre are ethically and legally required to responsibly ensure that their event is safe environment for their attendees. Despite awareness, it is always possible to find some risks and encounter trouble at any type of public gathering. People react and respond individually and the experiences that individuals have during festivals are therefore unpredictable (Getz, 2007).

Regardless of the unpredictability, it is possible to identify warning signs and troubleshoot in order to help protect people in the case that something undesirable should occur. By definition, warnings are designed to give relevant information to individuals to protect them against dangerous experiences (Cox, Wogalter, Stokes, & Murff, 1997).

A design of the planned event participation

To provide a deep explanation and understanding about the planned event experience model, it is adequate to reference the different stages rituals that an individual might have when experiencing a celebration. Van Gennep (2004) explains that there are three phases in a ritual: *a pre-liminal stage* when the individual experience the disconnection from its routine

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life, *a liminal stage* when there is a passage into another domain of reality and *a post-liminal stage* meaning a reintegration into the normal routine life again.

Getz (2007) utilized this theory from the author Van Gennep (2004) to explain the term *communitas* as a momentary phase in which individuals are together and they are not in the normal routine life. Therefore, those individuals have something particular in common with the rest of people that experience the same (Getz, 2007). The main characteristic of *communitas* is that those individuals look to obtain the social phase at a durable stage.

In order to explain the *liminal/liminoid zone and communitas*, it is necessary to blend explanations from two authors including Jafar Jafari (1987) and Falassi (1987). The explanations from these authors support the model from Getz (2007), delving deeper into elation with the event experience.

Firstly, Jafari (1987) explained in his “model of tourist culture” that *liminality* can be considered disconnection from the original place of an individual from the habitual culture. In this way, the tourist culture is created (Jafari, 1987). Going through travel, an individual realizes new things and accustomizes to another place during an unfamiliar event. Falassi (1987) adds the concept of “time out of time”. This term can be explained as that moment that individuals experience in an event is momentary and it is out of the normal routine life (Falassi, 1987). The *model of the planned event experience* by Getz (2007) further combines these ideas to explain the findings of this study.

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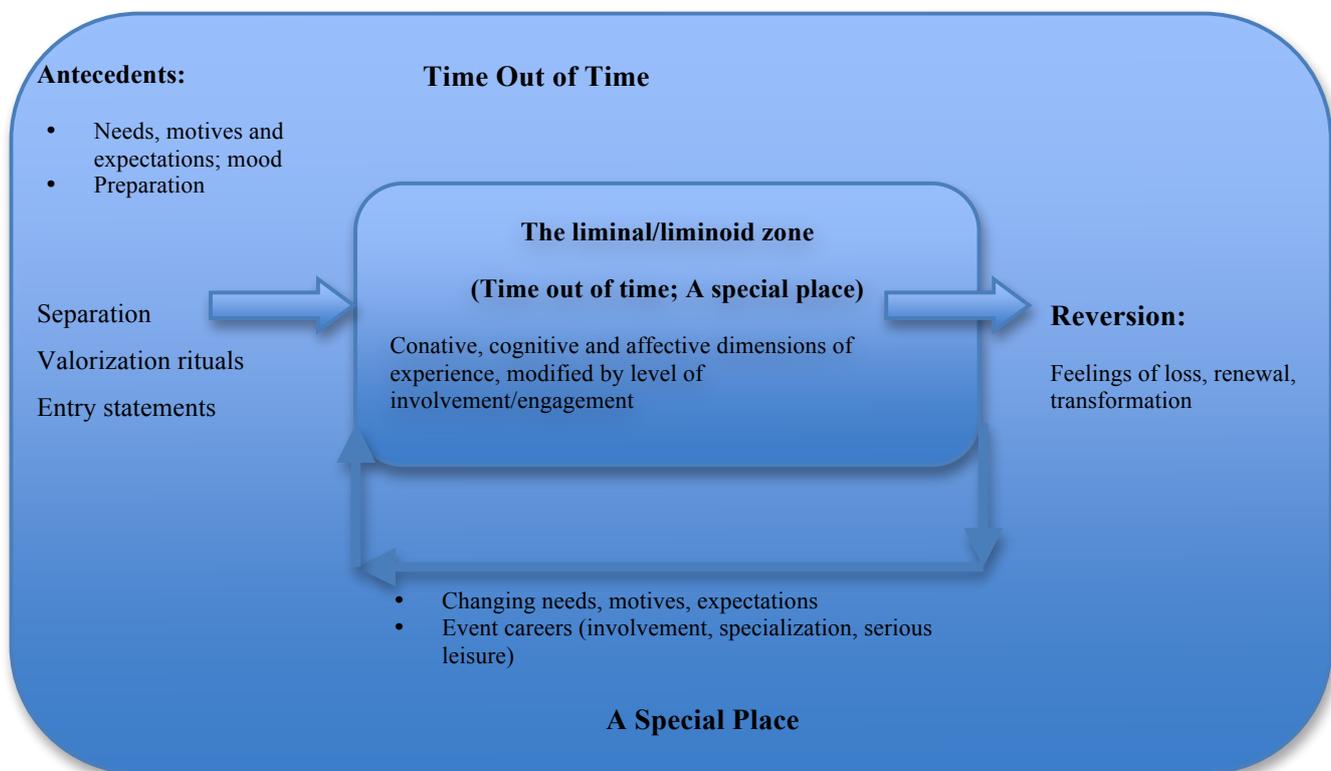


Figure 2. A model of the planned event experience. (Getz, 2007, p.179)

In this model, the *liminal/liminoid*, is characterized in both spatial and transient ways. Inside of this area there are several elements such as the way of design, programming, and the arrangement of the people, visitors and participants. This area is called *special place* because the designers and participants use decoration to transform a place, giving it a ‘before and after’.

According to Getz (2007) meaning is transmitted through several elements or characteristics such as symbolism and opening ceremonies. These two things can be represented by logos, announcements and themes, among others.

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Getz (2007) also provides an explanation based on the concept of *liminality*. It can be argued that the place/time factor exists in the thoughts of the visitors at a certain event. Furthermore attendees and participants can fantasize about the way the event is or will be (Getz, 2007).

Types of planned event experience

Generic event experiences are predictable elements at each performance. This is more related to specific situations where people act out their feelings, rather than with the event itself or other main characteristics that define the event theme (Getz, 2007). It is worth adding that individuals may have special motives for participating or visiting the event. These motivations qualify as *generic private values*. Take for instance the motivation to relax, where certain forms of recreation become commonly used as distraction and thereby become generic. It might be the case that participants and attendees of generic events will not experience any kind of deeper meaning or transformation from an event, as their main intention might be simply put, to have fun or relax (Getz, 2007).

In the *specific event experience* there are correlations between specific types of planned events and the specific outcomes and experiences they offer (Getz, 2007). There are arts and entertainment events, cultural celebrations, religious and spiritual events and spectacles.

Cultural celebrations. One should be reminded that experience is connected to feelings and can be cognitively sparked by geographic place, between individuals and affected by different dimensions of culture. Historical places for instance spark certain experiences that can, over time, be shaped into celebrations. Social performances, traditions

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and food and drinks are key elements of cultural celebration. These types of events offer a platform to meet local people. They create a sense of belonging due to shared time with family, specific cultural groups and overall communities (Getz, 2007).

Spectacles are distinguished by having something visual and symbolic included in their structure. Spectacles are formed by people, or actors and the audience, as well as performers and passive observers. Some people consider spectacles and festivals as antonyms, as it is found that spectacles can have a negative affect on festivals and ceremonies. Festivals are intended to provoke involvement and participation while spectacles instigate merely passive observation. It is possible however, for spectacles to have a positive social impact because they help bring people together. They can be a vehicle to attract audience to a festival setting, when there would have been hesitancy at the outset. (MacAloon, 1984b)

Stakeholder theory

A stakeholder is a person that has a direct interest in the event at hand. A stakeholder could be “any individual or group who can affect the firm’s performance, or who is effected by the achievement of the organizations objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p.25). For the sake of this study, a stakeholder is understood as someone who encourages the founding principles, performances and development of festivals and events. Getz and Anderson (2008) state that stakeholders have a progressive objectivity. Defining stakeholders results in mapping out the different level of actors and their involvement, reminding to remember and include all people with interests (Brønn & Berg, 2005).

Stakeholder attributes. It is believed that stakeholder theory emphasizes the “interactions of power, legitimacy, and urgency” (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997 cited in Getz

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& Andersson, 2008, p.7). These characteristics might formulate complete principles. Power can be related to ethical boundaries, devising specific rules, while also having the force to persuade and do something that the individuals desire. These explanations about power can help to establish the future relationship of stakeholders and participants. Legitimacy is concerned with universalized expectations and agreed upon reasoning; where normally, the performances of an individual are advantageous, suitable with collective creation of measures, benefits, feelings and descriptions. (Schuman, 1995; Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997, p.865 cited in Getz & Andersson, 2008) Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) suggest that urgency arises when stakeholders demand instantaneous results. Power, legitimacy and urgency can be known as *saliency* (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Stakeholder experience. Within the festival setting there are stakeholders with a variety of different experiences and vested interests (Getz, 2007; Getz & Andersson, 2008). The most common types of stakeholders in festival settings are guests, participants, media audiences, performers, or producers and organizers, officials, regulators, sponsors, and suppliers and vendors. Each of these groups will have a different experience and level of expectation of the same festival or event (Getz, 2007). Different stakeholders have their own roles and communications styles. They influence the organization of the festival and exercise their power to guide the festival strategy and development (Getz & Andersson, 2008). Each stakeholder group has a variety of expectations and attitudes that make them singular and significant (Getz, 2007).

Meanings linked to planned event experience

Meaning can be created throughout moments of collective congregation, where population and culture mix within the setting of an event (Getz, 2008). It is believed that the significance of events can have a lasting impact on the participants (Getz, 2008). Whatever this impact may be remains subjective and hypothetical, however, as the experience and outcome of an event cannot be correctly forecast beforehand (Getz, 2007).

Identity

According to the formative work of Erikson (1963, 1971) identity is understood as “a process located both within the core of the individual and in the core of his/her communal culture” (Wearing, Stevenson and Young, 2010, p.42). Places provide important realms of significance towards the progression of people and their self-reflection. Through these means, individuals work to find their authentic selves (Wearing et al., 2010). Identity can also be referred to the superficial appearance or persona of a community (Ind, 1997).

The term ‘*community*’ needs to be explained to understand the concept of identity because both are interconnected. ‘*Communities*’ are societal groupings that suggest solidarity and can be perceived and defined in many ways. They are not synonymous grouped populations, but are somewhat subjective formations of social groups that share certain characteristics. Festivals are a useful catalyst to establish communities. (Dunstan, 1994) Many believe that festivals offer satisfying benefits for society (Derrett, 2004). Festivals and events offer fluctuating experience, knowledge and activities that can build and preserve elements of community (Derrett, 2004). Moreover, festivals and events can also be mechanisms to help

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participants maintain the social health of their community, while also offering consistent (possibly annual) meeting grounds (Derrett, 2003).

In a community, people change and contribute their own customs and way of life through cultural festivals, while at the same time tourists are provided with a satisfying experience glimpse of the region's uniqueness (Derret, 2004).

Following the concept of identity, Breakwell's (1986) theory of identity describes three doctrines of: distinctiveness, continuity and self-esteem. Distinctiveness refers to how individuals strive to develop their own uniqueness, aside from others in their social world. These distinctions influence people in their communities, thereby shaping distinctions at a mezzo level. For example, an individual could acquire particular conditions, behaviors or habits that arise through interactions within a community or home and this influences others and eventually spreads. This explains why the identities of individuals are often shaped by their locations, in sync with other people living in the same area. Differentiations therefore arise from place to place. (Twigger-Rosset et al., 1996)

When a person has self-practiced consistency, there is continuity. The real essence of a memory of a place stimulates continuity. Take for instance the centralization of phenomena in the community that trigger individuals to remember specific things, environment or history from the past. It is believed that these characteristics develop connection and continuity in the individual's self-concept. (Twigger-Ross et al., 1996) Therefore, it might also be relevant to combine continuity with the concept of *sense of belonging*. In this way, it is possible to have a deep understanding about the continuity that Twigger-Ross et al., (1996) mentioned with the three doctrines. It is believed that sense of belonging can have both genealogical and

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territorial roots. These two features suggest obstacles for foreigners, or outsiders. The base of local progress and development originates from a sense of belonging, proving people with a sense of authority (Ekman, 1991). To help stimulate a sense of belonging, residents of a community can involve themselves in the organization of events, or participation in festivals in their city (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013).

Finally, *self-esteem* can be described as the effect of productive opinions and feelings about oneself within a group of people or as a single individual. One's self-esteem affects behavior and belonging, thereby relating to the individual's perception of the communal value (Twigger-Ross et al., 1996). It can be advantageous to foster an individual identity (Wearing et al., 2010). There are three different ways to categorize individual identity: stages, the personal identity, the social identity and the collective identity (Snow, 2001). *Personal identities* can be considered as the principal aspects and significance one has pertaining to him or herself as objects. Everyone has unique attributes and special characters that define who they are juxtaposed to others (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

Social identity is the necessary and crucial desire for individuals to have an identity and belong to a larger framework of society (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). There are those who gain from their relationships with others and those who are dependent on others, within the framework of social identity. There are also those who predominantly follow other individuals (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

In addition to these two levels of identities, there is another classification of *interpersonal and collective identities* (Jaeger et al. 2013). This "captures the shared sense of one-ness or we-ness" (Jaeger et al., 2013, p.3). It is believed that groups of people can share

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common aspects and that they participate in building authentic sensations and devices. One could argue that identity is relevant as well, due to the composition of knowledge, generating recognition of community or place and the creation of an image of the place.

Place and identity. Social science researchers find the studies of place and identity to be linked. The study of place has become an increasingly more popular theme of research over recent decades. Place is considered to be a defined location inhabited by individuals and containing things (Derrett, 2003). It can be said that people who have a close interconnection with the scenario, or material territory, may shape the place with their sense and way of feeling (Tuan, 1974). Population, culture and larger society are embedded in place (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Place identity can be defined as a variety of thoughts, images, meanings and impression that are closely linked to emotions and related to a concrete natural place (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983). Cuba & Hummon (1993) join place and identity as ‘who we are as a person,’ linked to the place where we live, work and play.

Belk (1988) writes that ‘place’ is constructed by phenomenon or things. Place identification is related to a person being bound to a geographic area with social constructs and ties. Reversely, place is compounded by the sum of the combined identities of the people occupying the space (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). This type of identity represents the individual’s socialization within the real world (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).

It is relevant to highlight the understanding of the ‘*sense of place*’ due to its links with place and identity. This explains the process of when people become engaged in a local festival, how they develop strong attachments to their community, or physical place. (Derrett, 2003) When communities organize a festival they typically do so according to the sense of

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local people and include performance, organization, music, and other elements relevant to them personally. Through this, residents form significant meaning in their culture, customs and identity. (Oakes, 1997) The location of a festival can retain this culture, custom and identity (Duffy, 2000).

According to Massey (1994), the sense of place can be perceived as a series of communal associations. Through the representation and activity of participants, clear tastes and sense form and eventually lead to an ethnic, or group scene (Duffy, 2000).

In a festival setting or event, visitors can sometimes determine the ‘identification’ of local people and locate the differences between visitors and participants (Duffy, 2000). Participants contribute to a sense of place by expressing their own identities, perhaps through the use of customs, lifestyle choices or expressed personalities (Oakes, 1997). The term ‘sense of community’ is also linked with the term place and identity as festival participants may have a sense of community through their engagement in a festival with certain perceptions and feelings (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998).

Festivals offer a way to convey values and community characteristics to a larger audience, while being reminded of their community’s identity. Additionally, beyond providing interconnection, festivals can offer assistance, contribution, security, belonging, status or power to a group of people or individual (Derrett, 2003). Many believe that intense bonding occurs when a community organizes a festival due to the acts of habitants working cooperatively to achieve specific results (Duffy, 2000).

Derrett (2003) writes that a population can convey its wellbeing through the sense of community and joined events. A model of ‘*community well-being*’ has been developed to

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ensure access to community health and ensure sustainability. This model captures the perceptions and values of a community and their sense of togetherness. The community well-being model includes principles of incorporation, distributing data beyond frontier, originating communal exchange, and utilization of figures, legends, tales and chronicles. (Derrett, 2003)

Image

Lynch (1960) defines image as the amount of thoughts, ideas, opinions, perceptions that individuals might have about something in particular or general. An image can be considered the individual impressions originating in the mind of people in a space (Espelt & Benito, 2005). Images can also be illustrations, recognitions and memories. The image of place and individuals from a community can be captured and reproduced through festivals. Within a festival there are many opportunities for activities, experience and the creation of image. (Derrett, 2004)

In the end, images are mere perceptions and do not necessarily reflect the original intention or reality and are effectually shaped by the perceiver (Schneider & Sönmez, 1999).

Antecedents and Choices: “Why do you attend an event?”

There are many reasons to participate in, or visit an event. To develop an adequate explanation the following model illustrates how principal characteristics are formed and their assistance/participation at planned events. One can state that this model cannot be perfected

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because it is not possible to have knowledge of all series of antecedents. It is more adequately used to anticipate future actions (Getz, 2007).

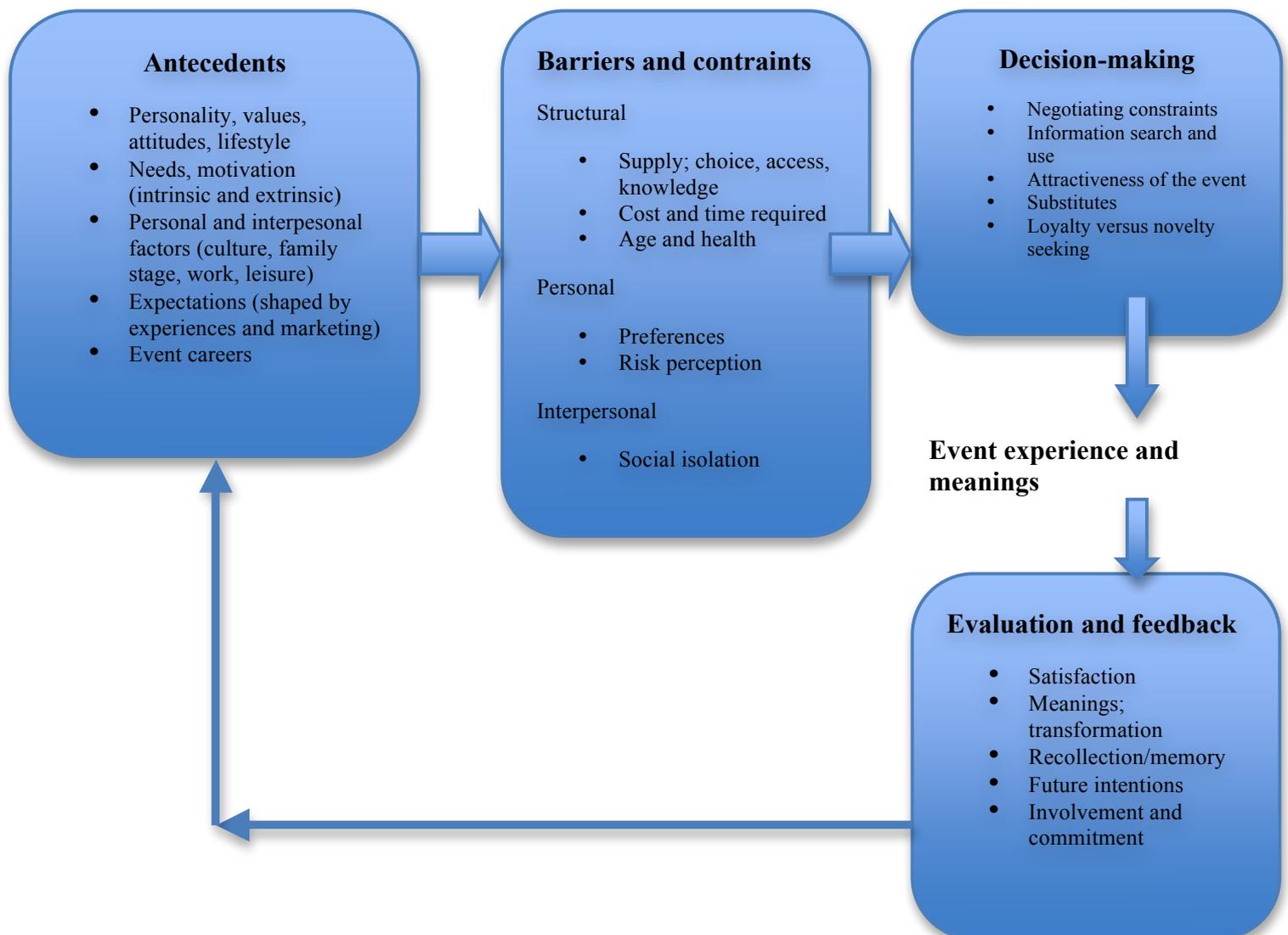


Figure 3. A framework for studying the antecedents and decision-making process for attending planned events (Getz, 2007, p.236)

Antecedents

“Antecedents are all those influences that shape interest in, demand for, choice, and actual event attendance or participation (Getz, 2007, p.236).” A set of variables exist that help to explain the main purposes of antecedents:

Values – Rokeach (1973) described values as the relevant ambitions or principles in a person’s life. Values are considered as a standard key in an individual way of life.

Attitudes. Allport (1937) defined attitudes as “learned predisposition to respond to an object or class of objects in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way” (p.238). Moreover, it is possible to associate attitudes with “conative (action and behavioral intention), affective (evaluation and effect, or emotion) and cognitive (perception and belief) components” (Getz, 2007, p.238).

Self-Actualization and Peak Experience

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, self-actualization appears at the peak of the pyramid as an advanced social state (Getz, 2007). Self-actualization can be considered a “growth motivation, or a process of seeking”(Getz, 2007, p.239). On the other hand, a peak experience is accessible to every individual. One should not forget that “peak experience is a heightened sense of control over the body and emotions, and a wider sense of awareness” (Getz, 2007, p.239)

Do People need events?

The answer to this is affirmed by actions of individuals throughout history and the formation of events across the globe and through time. People desire events in their surrounding environments. People discover and connect with many personal, social, cultural and economic factors. One could go so far as to say that events help to meet human needs. (Getz, 2007)

Motivation

It can be argue that character is stimulated, conducted, and incorporated by *motivation* as a subjective circumstance (Iso-Ahola 1980). Once an individual has the purpose to experience a festival they take action, generated by the push to meet a need. Motivation is a push or pull factors that occurs before an individual experiences something (such a festival). Isa-Ahola (1982) has described escape-seeking and push-pull factors as two forms of motivation. The definition of escaping “is the desire to obtain psychological (intrinsic) rewards through travel in a contrasting (new or old) environment” (Isa-Ahola 1982, 261).

Expectations

Motives and needs could be two factors explaining expectations. Expectations are formed by communicating on the area of events and the recommendations that people provide when they have experienced it (Getz, 2007).

Decision-Making

Decision-making is the meditation of forces where circumstances, antecedents and indicators are part of a process to commit to one direction over another, offering different outcomes. (Getz, 2007)

Information: search and use

Is it a routine decision or unique? If the decision is a routine one, it may not be necessary or time efficient to conduct research. However, when the decision is unique an abundance of information is required to informatively weigh options. This may require a larger time investment. It is also interesting how risk factors can be managed, or information utilized for success when people experience the event. Festival problems could include dangerous spaces or unfulfilled expectations (Getz, 2007). Seeking out information could provide the necessary security in this case.

Attractiveness of the event

Event attractiveness is linked to the power and influence of an event. Attractiveness also provides marketing potentials for the event. Principal attractiveness factors could include: the quality of environment, the itinerary, having been satisfactorily organized, the size, the brand and reputation, its exclusivity and the climate (Getz, 2007).

Substitution. It will nearly always be the case that alternatives can be found, or substitutes arranged at any given event. Individuals have a free choice; to continue going to the same event or to swap for another (Getz, 2007).

Decision to Attend or Participate

There is a difference between those who attend an event and those participate in it. Five stages that characterize the decision-making process can be classified: “(1st stage) before the festival goers leave for a festival venue, (2nd stage) moving towards the festival, (3rd stage) the on-site of the festival, (4th stage) returning home, and (5th stage) post-evaluation” (Kim, Choi, Agrusa, Wang & Kim, 2010, p.308)

Post-experience evaluation and feedback

The feedback and the evaluation post-experience comes through the analysis process taken from participant opinions, whether they be positive or negative. It is thought that if, for instance, the views of individuals are positive, they will have a satisfaction and a deep social and personal meaning for them. This requires that they will repeat the event and feel shared identify. If the feedback is negative it may indicate that attendees did not have a satisfactory experience and perhaps do not feel a sense of identify or have enough knowledge about event to be able to participate or attend.

Sense of coherence

Antonovsky developed the concept *sense of coherence* basing it in the investigation of “individual resistance resources against stressful encounters” (Geyer, 1997, p. 1772). It is to be conceived as a (worldwide) coordination catering to particular perspectives on the way, or situation (Antonovsky, 1987, p.75 cited in Geyer, 1997). Antonovsky (1987) writes that a sense of coherence “is a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring or thorough dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving

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from ones internal and external environment in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are a challenges, worthy of investment and engagement” (Cited in Hochwalder, 2012).

In addition to the definition of SOC, there are three possible elements pertaining to sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987, p.19 cited in Geyer, 1997):

Comprehensibility: This element is concerned with the cognitive conduction of ones background. This factor explains that the community is clarified as logical, reasonable, designed, harmonized, presentenced and expected.

Manageability: indicates the range to which people examine supplies to be independently accessible, or to encourage them deal sufficiently with requests or troubles.

Meaningfulness: is characterized by motivational elements and determines whether a circumstance is evaluated as stimulation and whether it is valuable to realize responsibilities and speculations in order to deal with it.

If an individual places high on three of these measures, they may have developed sense of coherence. Individuals with a high sense of coherence are identified to cope better in more challenging situations and do not evaluate danger to the same extent, particularly in relation to uncontrollable circumstances. These individuals develop new skills and create learning experiences out of situations. This impacts the additional improvement of ones sense of coherence. There are possible benefits that individuals with a higher sense of coherence

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have. For example, people might have success with the preservation of particular equilibrium and health (Geyer, 1997).

Conclusion

To summarize, this section presents the principal aspects of concept and theory to be used for analyzing the findings from this study. This includes concepts such as the sense of coherence, meaning, identity and image to providing analytical understanding from the different perspectives presented in this study. Some of the terms in this chapter, such as different types of events, were included to provide background on the purpose of holding festivals and their potential benefits. These concepts may be included for informative purposes and are not necessarily included in the analysis section of this chapter.

Methodology chapter

This chapter introduces the case study and methodological choices applied for data collection and analysis. The methodological tools introduced in this chapter provide the framework for this study. This study utilizes qualitative research. As such, the investigation of authenticity and reliability will be discussed to support the strength of qualitative research employed. The chapter ends with a discussion of the term triangulation, due to specific combinations of data collection.

Research design

There are four different research designs, according to Neuman (2009), which are considered the most relevant for the purpose of conducting research: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and evaluation research. The issues of meaning, experience, and identity have been common topics in other studies related to tourism looking at festivals and the social experience of events. The event investigated in this study has not been academically recorded before. There is no pre-existing research data on this festival therefore it is appropriate to say that the exploratory design is the most adequate to meet the research objectives. There are, however set-backs to conducting exploratory design from an analytical perspective; in such designs all data is considered relevant as it is information seeking in nature. All information and data could be relevant for consideration, therefore it was important to frame this research as a case study and keep the main objectives always in sight.

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Case study

A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (for example a “case”) set within its real-world context - especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p.4 cited in Yin, 2012, p.18). Yin (2012) writes that case studies can represent three main features: answering ‘how and why’ questions, providing an overview of circumstances, and an overview of the contemporary set of events. “Case studies can provide a kind of deep understanding of phenomenon, events, people, or organization” (Berg, 2007 p.285).

The case study presented in this thesis includes the description and history of the Bonfire’s of Saint John Festival for the purpose of learning about different perceptions that stakeholders such as local people and direct participants of the celebration hold. In addition, it is possible to see the level of *sense of coherence* that both stakeholder groups have when the celebration takes place in the city. The knowledge of all stakeholders and participants interviewed in this study speaks to the history and evolution of the event. The Saint John Bonfires celebration has experienced a huge evolution along years. The initial objective to collect people and celebrate the summer solstice was transformed by new currents such as religious, artistic and cultural trends. In the beginning of the celebration in 1938, there were a handful of bonfires lit throughout the streets. Today there are a total of 90 bonfires blazing throughout the city during festival days. This ensures that the entire population of Alicante is touched to some extent, whether they are directly or indirectly involved in the ceremony. There are roughly three ways to participate in the festival: as a member of one of the commissions, as a local resident or as a tourist. Some people participate in the smaller events

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of concerts, parades and so forth. The area of Alicante has a huge variety of facilities and varying entertainment for local people and visitors. It is possible to accommodations ranging from inexpensive to five stars in the city. Within the city there are lower, middle and upper class residents. The different levels of classes all have a potential to participate in the festival. The Bonfires of Saint John is an inclusive festival. With roots in pagan rites this popular celebration has evolved over time to a loud, boisterous and visually stimulating street party.

By framing a case study of the Saint John bonfire's celebration and groups associated with this festival in Alicante and surrounding region, this study aims to understand the elements of participants' beliefs, their values and understand how festival practices shape local identity and relationships to the location. For this reason, qualitative research was selected as the main methodology because in order to provide a deep understanding of local meaning and knowledge. This study does not aim to be representative; it serves to discover the thoughts and opinions of a selection of local people and members of commissions.

The history and evolution of this event has been retained in festival activities, from the early celebrations to current days. Over time the festival experienced multiple transformations and new features were introduced along the way. Accordingly, the practices and underlining meaning has shifted over time, affecting individuals from Alicante and also members from the organizations in Saint John Bonfires.

This case study presents an analysis of a small variety of perspectives and opinions held by individuals participating in the Saint John Bonfires. Here it is also valuable to review the differentiations of thoughts and similarities of opinions between the two groups, including members of commissions and general public from Alicante. These differing perspectives are

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relevant because each suggest a variation of identity, sense of belonging and personal meaning in connection to the festival. These findings suggest that individuals form their own meaning through this celebration in their city, which affects their physical and social connection to the location.

The case study will discuss the concept of *sense of coherence* in connection with the festival in the analytical section of this study. The Saint John Bonfires celebration is a rather large event that takes place around the whole city. For this reason, it is also interesting to uncover the level of coherence that some individuals feel in connection to the festival and city.

Approach

Historical comparative research is the examination of “aspects of social life in a past historical era or across different cultures” (Neuman, 2009, p.12). This tool helps to analyze situations or aspects of ‘community life that relate to chronicling events of the past and understanding a variety of customs (Neuman, 2009). In order to meet this study’s objectives, it is important to isolate the different activities of Saint John Bonfire’s celebration as they occurred on a timeline. By doing so, this describes the evolution of the event in the different periods, how and when changes occurred, which suggests the real essence of the event. Historical comparative research is used as a research tool to link theory and testing with data collection that views time as a consideration (Neuman, 2009). The research conducted for this study includes data collection from different historical books, journal articles, photographs of the event and web pages. This data could be considered as primary source. The primary source data collected for this study is considered to be quality due to the

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collection method, where the researcher cited the most relevant background material and worked off direct referral systems.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research was the most suitable approach for this case study due to the nature of the research questions, which investigate the different perspectives and experiences of festival participants, primarily considering two different stakeholder groups. There are several characteristics of qualitative research that make appropriate links to this case study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998):

- It is connected with the significances that people have with circumstances in their lives.
- Researchers acquire terms, new awareness and comprehension from the design of documents, as qualitative research is inductive.
- It is focused, especially useful for historical and experiential platforms, where individuals discover themselves.
- Qualitative research accesses the variety of opinions, thoughts and views that individuals have throughout their daily lives.
- Qualitative researchers can find meaning and value in a variety of investigations, along different scales from the individual to macro.

Social science authors associate the unique approach of participant observation with qualitative research. Qualitative research also uses techniques such as interviewing, examination of exploratory normal context, photography, historiography, ethnography research, among others (Berg, 2007).

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The two methods of data collection most appropriate for this study include structured in-depth interviews and participant observation.

Methodological tools

Interviews

Open-ended interviews were used in this study to collect data that speaks to individual answers, with unexpected outcomes. This type of interview helped to collect large and valuable amounts of material for the study that are contextually relevant (Yin, 2012). Additionally, individuals that participated in these interviews could elaborate their own reality freely and express the different aspects of their worlds using their own words, adding personal understanding into the case (Yin, 2012). The selection of respondents is an integral consideration when using open-ended interviews. In the case study presented here, the objective is not to make generalizable statements about the entire population, but to obtain specific responses on perspectives and experiences of different individuals and targeted groups (Yin, 2012). The respondents who participated in interviews for this study were main festival organizers of the Saint John Bonfires celebration and a selection of local residents.

The population selected for this study includes residents of Alicante and select individuals who are members of commissions, and non-government organizations from Saint John Bonfires. In order to ensure that the researcher received a variety of perspectives that could reflect the ideas of various participating groups, the researcher chose respondents of different ages, backgrounds and sexes. The respondents ranged in age from 20 to 57 years old. The ethnic backgrounds of the informants were similar, they all came from Spain and originally from Alicante. The respondents were selected by applying the snowball-sampling

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method where the researcher was reached new contacts and groups through referrals (Neuman, 2009). In order to contact people in each group, especially members of Saint John Bonfire's celebration, the researcher needed to ask respondents to contact other potential informants and each worked through these connections and networks. This was helpful for the informants working in the commission, who were knowledgeable of other potential informants from this group as they work together cooperatively.

The researcher made contact with four members of the commissions, and four local people (total number of interviews conducted was eight). A sample of this size provided some foundations of general thought and opinion, providing a variation of different perspectives between members and local people in Saint John Bonfire's celebration.

Due to the geographic location of the researcher and time constraints, the interviews were conducted through email response using a set interview guide. The interview contained a notice of ethical consideration and instruction set as well as the topics, questions and purpose for the interview for local (see appendix B) and member of commissions (see appendix C). By using email as a means to communicate and collect data, the informants had the space and time to consider each question thoroughly and respond on their own schedule. The interviews were conducted from April 2013 to May 2013. The researcher wrote initial presentation e-mails including the main purposes this study and explanation of each interview question. The researcher included information on the importance of those answering. The participants have a unique knowledge about the issue and could answer in the manner they saw fit. The informants were kept anonymous to protect their individual opinions and experiences and are

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thus referred to as: Local respondent #1, local respondent #2 and so forth as well as member respondent #1, member respondent # 2 and so forth.

The interviews included questions like:

1. *“What is the Saint John Bonfires event in Alicante? / How has the event evolved from the origin of the celebration until today?”*

The main purpose of this question is to collect descriptive information that explains the history and evolution of the event. Through this it was possible to learn how participants viewed and described their own event.

2. *“What is your general opinion about the event?”*

Participants were asked to describe their thoughts and opinions about the event and general circumstances.

3. *“What type of impact do you think that the event can make for the city itself?”*

This question asks the informant to draw connections between the festival’s activities and the observable outcomes. These impacts can have either positive or negative interpretations.

4. *“What image does the city project prior to and following the event? Is it positive or negative?”*

Respondents were asked to describe the potential positive or negative images that members of the city might have around the event, or the general image of the city itself. This question was important to uncover how the festival might actively change the image of the city, or shape particular features.

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5. *“What does the event mean for you? / What does it mean for you to be included in the commissions and participate?”* The first question was asked to local resident respondents and the second question directed to members of the commissions of Saint John Bonfires celebration. By dividing the questions, it is hoped to draw more comparative lines between the experience as a local and the experience as a festival organizer.

6. *“How does the event shape identity? Describe the key factors for which identity is shaped.”* This question was structured to bring out ideas on how elements of the event are personalized, or become conformed over time.

7. *“Describe a positive or negative experience during event. How do you perceive the event during its main days? What types of feelings do you have when the event taking place in the city?”* The main purpose of these questions is to provide a space for evaluation about the event experience. Respondents might explain their own experience and the level of satisfaction they have.

8. *“What is the main purpose that you visit, experience or are attend the event during the celebration? What is the reason that you participate in a commissions in the Saint John Bonfires in Alicante?”* The first question was circulated to the local people and second question is intended for the Saint John Bonfires organization members. The main intention is to stimulate thoughts on decision-making and motivation.

Participant Observation

According to Angrosino (2007) participant observers are researchers “who balance the objective collection of data with subjective insights that results from an ongoing association with the people whose lives they seek to understand (p.xv).” In addition to utilizing open-

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ended interviews the researcher conducted field research during the Saint John Bonfires celebration. As a researcher and former resident of Alicante, the researcher is both an observer and a participant. The researcher lived in Alicante for twenty years and this has influenced my role as 'insider' because of the researcher involvement with the celebration and personal experiences. To add to this, the researcher professional training and current physical distance from the study area, while living in Norway, provides some 'outsider' outlook to the activities. During the research process the researcher was able to tap into deeper insights on the topic and understand challenges and elements based from my previous hands-on experience. In this way, the researcher may be considered an 'outsider' because the researcher am removed and have not participated in any commissions. The researcher also found that it was easier to access my initial key informants because the researcher know the environment and have friends who participate in the event and others who are indirectly involved as locals. The researcher initial contact and introductions were made to informants through skype. The researcher followed up with e-mail dialogue. The researcher used a key informant and friend as an aid to collect possible respondents from members of commissions because there is a barrier to reaching them usually. The researcher presented the questions through e-mail and explained the study and its purposes. (Appendix A)

Intersubjectivity. The researcher is originally from Alicante and have lived and participated in the celebration of Saint John Bonfire's celebration for twenty years. The researcher personal experience, as both a local person and members of a commission, made it possible for the researcher to have subtle knowledge about the celebration. The researcher additionally conducted participant observation during the last festival (June 2012). In that overlapping position as researcher and participant, the researcher attempted to understand the

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different opinions and thoughts that attendees had. It is understandable that a difference of opinion between local people and members of commissions could exist because their perception and purposes are not the same.

Analysis

The main form of analysis used for processing the data in this study was coding. Before beginning with analysis or coding, the researcher needed to translate all of the data and interview transcripts from Spanish to English. When researchers code in qualitative research, it facilitates gathering a variety of views, thoughts and themes. After doing so one can locate categories naturally occurring in the interview content and subsequently create classifications of the data themes (Richards, 2005). It is believed that codes can be deductive or inductive. In this thesis inductive coding was used because the researcher developed different categories and analysis based from the responses of the interviewees. Those interpretations are quite similar to the original ones. To add to this, coding provides organization and the ability to see themes latent in the data (Richards, 2005). Coding helps to indicate what the section explains and how it is to be classified and also adds significance to the overall thesis (Richards, 2005). Codes are also applied to centralize all the data about a given topic originating from different sources. In this way it is possible to compare different perspectives, experiences and also use the knowledge of a specific individual, or several people, or setting. It is believed that coding encourages the researcher to conduct a concentrated analysis of a particular problem in the data. (Richards, 2005)The researcher developed coding mechanisms through the use of a finding table where the main key words of each question answered by the participants were collected. Afterwards, the researcher

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interpreted each question to obtain the principal topics used for the results and the discussion. Lastly, the researcher analyzed each theme against the backdrop of the main results and using the conceptual framework. According to Bryman & Burgess (1994) qualitative data needs to be realized through explanations, investigations and finally interpretation of the results, all surfacing from the researcher's data collection. Throughout the analysis and discussion phase the researcher utilized personal knowledge about the event and included certain opinions and thoughts in relation to the responses from informants. In this way, deep knowledge was enhanced with details the respondents may have forgotten to mention.

Authenticity and dependability

Qualitative studies differ in nature from quantitative studies, in that qualitative research looks to gain depth on a particular topic, tracking the everyday lives of informants. Qualitative data also looks for non-generalizable richness in the particular opinions and perspectives of the informants. As such the concepts of authenticity and dependability are more suitable for qualitative approaches, rather than the concepts of reliability and validity, which are quantitative constructs (Brink, 2006). Given the involvement of the researcher having both an insider and outsider role, this study could never be entirely objective (Angrosino, 2007). It is important to also highlight that, in qualitative studies, it is not possible to obtain true reliability and validity because no one study can ever be replicated exactly the same and all data is contextually based. The data is subjective due to the experience and knowledge of informants and role of researcher (Neuman, 2009).

In order to provide value, authenticity and the dependability of data in this study I have followed strict codes of ethical consideration. The researcher was thoughtful in

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the selection of informants for interviews and reflective on their role as participant observer. The use of historical comparative research also ensured that past events were chronicled by dependable sources (Angrosino, 2007).

The dependability of a study is concerned “with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informants’ accounts, as well as the researcher’s ability to collect and record information accurately” (Selltiz, Wrightsman & Cook 1976 cited in Brink, 2006, p.119). It is also relevant to address the trustworthiness of the study. In order to evaluate the dependability in this study, the researcher have used participant observation, interview and historical books to compare against findings. Participant observation was used as a tool for data collection within the festival setting. The researcher has also pulled information from twenty years of personal experience gained from previous festival attendance. It is possible to say my familiarity with the research area and key participants has added to the dependability of this study. This familiarity also affected the quality of the research by aiding the screening process when with informants. The researcher could ensure that the informants were qualified to provide satisfactory responses to meet the study aims.

Each group of participants during the interview process received the same interview-guide with the same wording, questions and instructions. They were all interviewed via email and approached in similar manners. It is speculated that incorporating both secondary and primary data helps increase the reliability of a thesis, by exploring different sources. This provided an opportunity to compare earlier findings with my own knowledge and findings during the analysis phase.

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Authenticity refers to “when the strategies you have used are appropriate for the “true” reporting of participants’ ideas, when the study is fair, and when it helps participants and similar groups to understand their world and improve it” (Daymon and Holloway, 2011, p.84). According to this definition there are some specific factors that contributed to the authenticity of my study: The researcher accessed data through a blend of observations, interviews and historical documentation. Experience and observation can be backed by the historical data and findings the researcher accessed from records in published books. The researcher introduced quotes from the respondents and also included historical information about the celebration of the Bonfires of Saint John in in the results section. The researcher own personal experience and participation in the celebration over the course of twenty years contributes to strengthening the research’s validity, both in advance of the data collection and during.

The idea of *reflexivity* is also an important consideration for this qualitative study, especially due to the utilization of participant observation. *Reflexivity* can be defined as the how the researcher should reflect upon how every object of investigation is impacted by the human resources and actions of elaborating studies and the influences of researcher themselves. It is possible to find these affects in each step of the investigation. This type of social study might be a channel that permits clarifications and impacts in both ways. In this way, it is possible to obtain different structures that can be addressed to variety of audiences (Davies, 2008). Reflexivity is also present in my choice to add to my participant observation with additional methods such as literature review and interviews. This supports the results and by providing adequate evaluation of the results without just the influence of the researcher’s experience.

Triangulation

The concept triangulation is defined as “the combination of methods or sources of data in a single study” (Denzin 1978; Patton 1980 cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998 p. 80). This study has applied mixed methods including ethnography, qualitative study and the historical comparative method. The researcher has used different methods of collecting data, including interviews to individuals of Alicante, the experience of the researcher in the celebration, as well as historical and academics books and articles in the newspaper and online. The intention of this was to provide historical information on the festival as well as added perspectives of attendees.

Conclusion

The utilization of mix-methods was employed in this study to collect revealing and reflective data on the perspectives of local residents and organizing members of the Bonfires of Saint John Festival. This study presents authentic and dependable data due to the inclusion of academic articles and books and a blend of data collected from interviews and the researcher’s hands on experience. The researcher role as participant and former resident could provide subjective influences, so this requires added consideration throughout all stages of the research process.

Findings and analysis

This section thoroughly examines the data collected during the research phases in 2009 in 2013 through literature analysis, open-ended interviews/ surveys and participant observation. The main findings from this data are presented in two parts: firstly, the findings are organized and presented in a matrix table format where key words are drawn out of this study's main research questions; secondly, the key themes, which have emerged from the trends in findings, are explained in more thorough detail including the perspectives of informants.

General overview of data

This study has used three types of data collection as discussed in the methodology chapter: observation, interviews and thorough literature review. The most important source of material was obtained through interviews. The informants for this study were divided into two groups for interviewing purposes: group #1 included local people and; group #2 included members of commissions. The researcher's opinions were included in some areas. After the initial analysis the groups were further subdivided into individual respondents, for example: local respondent #1, local respondent #2 as well as member respondent #1, member respondent #2. This categorizing allowed for the differences between each group to surface and be analyzed. Personal quotations are included highlight the specific perspectives of festival participants to stimulate discussion.

History of the Bonfires of Saint John Celebration

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The Saint John Bonfires celebration began as a ritual of burning valueless objects during the arrival of the summer solstice. Jose Maria Py was the original founder in 1928, who took transformed the annual ritual into a largerscale celebration, recognizing that Alicante had a need to develop its own festival. Jose Maria Py saw the potential to integrate the annual bonfires with a broad city-wide party, like the annual festival of Valencia. Despite initial resistance the Saint John Bonfire's celebration became legitimate through the International Tourist Interest. The principle acts and activities during the main days of the festival include fireworks, parades, bonfires of wood in every district of Alicante and commissions where people meet together to celebrate the party. On the final night the bonfires are burned.

To review the research objectives, this study investigates the different perspectives between festival participants and the local town residents regarding the celebration of Saint John Bonfires in Alicante. Additionally, to explore the concept of *sense of coherence* in respect to the active or passive individuals connected to the festival. This study aims to provide insight around the research questions: What is Saint John Bonfire's celebration in Alicante? How do the local people as stakeholders perceive the celebration? What differences exist in the perception among participants and non-participants? How strong or weak is the sense of coherence of residents that are inside of the environment of the celebration?

The respondent groups of locals and the members required specialized questioning due to the different nature of their status (the local people not being official members of the organizing commission). Therefore the main research questions for local informants focused more on meaning and interpretation of the celebration. For example: "*What does the event*

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mean for you? / What has your experience been? What is the main purpose that you visit or attend the festival during the celebration period?” Those with official roles within member organizations were asked: *“What does it mean for you to be a member of commissions and participate in the festival? / What is the main reason that you choose to participate in a commissions team during the celebration?”*

Coding of core elements

This section presents the main responses from the informants and categorizes findings using key words. The interviews are divided between the two groups of local residents and members in the following table:

<i>Local People</i>				
Questions	<u>Respondent # 1</u>	<u>Respondent #2</u>	<u>Respondent #3</u>	<u>Respondent #4</u>
1. What is Saint John Hogueras in Alicante?	Celebration. The event is well-known since ancient times and has become a tradition.	A significant event. It is well known and traditional. It helps to stimulate tourism. The main days are very colorful and there is a party feeling everywhere. It Starts on June 19 th with the settle of every bonfire in all districts around Alicante. There are two type of bonfires: one for adults and another for children	It is the most important event that happens in Alicante. It is also of international interest and creates tourism. It brings together many visitors of every nationality.	An annual celebration. Each neighborhood has its own bonfire. Bonfires represent the current issues.
2. How has the festival evolved over time from the beginning until current practice?	In the beginning people burned old furniture. Now it is about creative monuments. Those monuments are bonfires of kind wood.	There is a long evolution but I don't really have information. I only experience the event, watching the bonfires and parades, etc.	I do not know anything about the history of Saint John Hogueras. I only have information about the activities that happen nowadays.	There is a long history with a lot of changes over time. It is well known that before people used to burn old furniture and today they burn monuments.
3. What is your general opinion about the event?	I think it is beautiful because of all activities.	It is spectacular! Very colorful and there are parties everywhere across	The event is thinking about how to include all ages. There are many activities and it	I do not like the festival. There is too much money spent on the party and it

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		the city.	brings tourists. The principal act is the most important for me because it is fireworks	creates a lot of noise.
4. What type of impacts could the festival have on the city?	It attracts tourism. Those tourists can participate in the party.	Tourism and perfects the environment	It has a visual impact. Creates tourism and then many bonfires are lit in the streets. Adds many concerts, music, parties, fireworks, etc.	Brings many people from other areas in Spain and other parts of the world.
5. What type of image does the city have before and after the event? What are the positive and negative effects?	Positive: creates an influx of tourism Negative: no control over city maintenance. Makes the city dirty for some time.	Positive: Happiness and good feelings Negative: Spends a lot of money on parties and the city becomes quite dirty.	Positive: it changes the mood of the city: people dress in traditional costumes and do official acts. Negative: there are many drunk people, accidents, ambulances, robberies and injuries.	Negative: makes the city dirty. Positive: but with the decoration in the streets, bonfires and also commissions, it is also very beautiful.
6. What does the event mean to you?	It is the principal event in my city. I do not have time to be member for the bonfire. I do like and enjoy seeing the bonfires and parties around the city. Enjoyment.	To be with the important people that I like to spend time with.	Celebrate and enjoy the party with friends and family.	The celebration does not mean anything for me.
7. Describe how you identify with the event.	There are a variety of acts that represent my culture and my history.	I am from Alicante. The festival is music, party, environment and color.	I participate in indirect way.	I do not identify with the festival or like it. There is too much noise, you cannot move around by car, there are many traffic jams and the road are blocked.
8. Describe a past positive and negative experience during the festival.	Negative: sounds of fireworks. Every morning and during the day, there are many fireworks in the streets. Positive: When my daughter represented the bonfire in our neighborhood.	Positive: To see bonfires and good times with friends. Negative: Noises of fireworks, music, etc.	Negative: When I had to work those days. It was very stressful and I became very tired.	Negative: noisy, streets are dirty, people drunk on the streets.

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9. What types of feelings do you have in the city during the festival days?	I feel like it is the best celebration in the world. I have a powerful feeling because it is the main celebration in Alicante city.	The feelings are stress, enjoyment and happiness.	I feel good. Color, people in the streets, music, smell of fireworks.	The atmosphere is neutral for me when I am with my friends. I feel comfortable with many people in the streets.
10. How do you perceive the event during its main days?	Illusion and happiness.	Proud and satisfied.	First, I feel happiness and second, stress.	I do not have any type of feeling because I do not like it.
11. What is the main purpose that you visit, experience or join the event during the celebration?	To see the most bonfires possible. To see fireworks and fireworks.	I attend because I am from and I live in Alicante.	To be in the party with my friends and see act that I like, such as the fireworks.	I live in this city and it is the main and important celebration of the city. I do not participate indirect or direct manner.

Table 1. Key words of local people responders

<i>Members of Commissions</i>				
Questions	Respondent #1	Respondent #2	Respondent #3	Respondent #4
1. What is Saint John Bonfires in Alicante?	It is the traditional celebration of the city.	A typical event in Alicante.	The cultural, historical and religious event in Alicante.	The principal, representative celebration in Alicante.
2. How has the event evolved over time from the beginning until current days?	Before: wasn't organized and people burned old furniture. Nowadays: it is huge, organized and includes new art with the monuments of bonfires.	Before: it was a pagan celebration and now it is mixed with catholic celebration and it is cultural too.	It has a long history and experienced many changes. First, there were fewer bonfires in every neighborhood and now it has spread to the whole city.	Before it was a pagan ritual, after catholic celebration and now it is mixed together with artistic monuments and cultural events.
3. What is your general opinion about the event?	It is more than a simple event. Members share same similar feelings: love, work, illusion and effort throughout the year to make the celebration possible. It has beautiful lights, people can walk	I have loved the celebration and belonged in the commission since my childhood. I like the festival due to the Atmosphere. It feels like holidays, there is a smell of gunpowder,	It is a lot fun and many partying during those days. It represents the real culture of Alicante people	It is a big celebration and it is considered a tourist attraction. It draws international and national tourists.

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	peacefully in the streets, see artworks in every district, there is a smell of fireworks in the air. You feel the noise and life everywhere. All these things make Alicante magical.	there are many parties and lots of joy. It is fun and 'close.'		
4. What type of impacts do you think that the event has on the city?	Positive ones: to keep traditions of the city alive. It is a tourist attraction and benefits the restaurants, shops and town. Negative: people sometimes act without respect and create a lot of garbage.	The impact that the city has during the celebration is very visual because of bonfires monuments and typical dress of Alicante.	Positive: enjoying themselves, delicious smell of food in the streets, wonderful decorations everywhere. Negative: stress, noises, many people in crowds and cars in the streets.	Positive: every monument in each neighborhood. Negative: the city becomes very dirty.
5. What image did the city have before and during the event? What do you think it is positive or negative?	Before: a normal summer city. During the event: a magical city.	The image is noticeably different. Before: routine. During the event: many people in the streets and good feelings.	It is a magical city during the celebration. Before: It is a normal city.	The image of the city changes a lot because before it is nothing special, but when the event is in the city it is possible to see a lot of colors, smells, noises, etc.
6. What does it mean for you to participate as a commission and during the festival?	Powerful and relevant meaning. I feel belonging, part of a community that shares the same feelings of family, union, dedication. I feel representative of my district and proud from where I am and what I participate in. To be chosen 'Beauty' of commission like I have, gives you the opportunity to represent the community where you live and participate together.	Huge responsibility. A lot of devotion and dedication. Introduction of the summer and the reward after a year of effort. Participation makes me feel important and does something great for my city.	It is an honor to be in commissions. It means responsibility and to be part of my culture and live the history of the city.	Helping in the creation of the event every year and also helping to keep this celebration alive every year.
7. Describe the principal reasons that you identify with the event.	It is my original city, my culture and my history in this event. Representation of my commission as Beauty. With and without mistakes, I love my city and all the sides that it has. This event reminds me of love from my childhood.	I participate in a commission throughout the year. All activities and work we do comes together to make the celebration possible.	I identify with those people that help to make the celebration possible.	Typical dress, food, fireworks, music and those elements of the festival.
8. What type of	I feel love, respect,	I feel joy, celebration,	I feel happiness and	I feel proud,

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feelings do you have when the event takes place in the city?	passion, illusion, happiness and devotion.	envelopes with music and parades. No concerns.	devotion.	enjoyment, enthusiasm, gladness and respect.
9. Describe your positive or negative experiences during the event.	Most of the time it is positive. I experience: group membership, representation and participation, and working together and enjoying my people. The experience is not only four days, it lasts the whole year.	All positive. The only negative issue is the competitiveness between bonfires commissions.	All is positive for me. This celebration is part of me and when I experience it, I do not feel anything negative.	All positive, but the only negative part it has are those individuals that visit the celebration and have no respect. The ones that get very drunk and cause problems.
10. How do you perceive the event during its principal days?	Happiness, illusion, without any problems and part of the party.	Full of people, joy, celebration...	Many happy people, colorful, delicious smells.	A lot of people and celebration the beginning of the summer.
11. What is the reason that you participate in a commission for the festival?	From the time that I was chosen from my commission as Infant beauty, I started to love the celebration from that moment. From those activities that I lived in that moment make me to feel to participate and be a member.	My family.	My family and identification with the activities in the celebration.	It is a tradition in my family to be a member in the commissions in Saint John Bonfires.

Table 2. Key words of members of commission responders**Group elements**

Reviewing the table of findings conveys that main themes and topics have been similarly experienced by some respondents, as well as the by the researcher. In the history and evolution of the celebration section the results are presented with a backdrop of literature and pictures. The main themes that arose from interviews included: 'forms and functions of Saint John Bonfires,' 'history and evolution of Saint John Bonfires,' 'general perception of Saint John Bonfires by local people and members,' and 'decision-making.' Subthemes naturally arose from the main topic '*perception of the celebration*' which included 'sense of coherence,' 'comprehensibility,' 'manageability and meaningfulness.' As well as 'identity,' 'image,' 'meaning,' and 'experience and evaluation of the celebration.' The *decision-making*

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heading also had naturally occurring subthemes including ‘motivation,’ ‘attractiveness of the event’ and ‘loyalty to the event.’

The following section is an introduction of the finding themes, presented as an overview prior to the discussion section.

The History and evolution of Saint John Bonfire’s celebration.

Antecedents of the celebration. Earlier chronicles have taught that the origin of the festival developed through ancient farmer rituals, the Saint John night and Ninots de carrer taking place in Alicante (Martin and Martinez, 2001). Three characteristics from historical practice have been identified and connected to the features of present day practice, for example: the elements of fire, water and ephemeral constructions (Martin et al., 2001).

Accordingly, it is relevant to this study to review the histories of these two original practices.

Saint John Night. Linking to Saint John night, it is written that summer solstice celebration took place in many towns around Mediterranean Sea, in areas of Spain and particularly around the whole Europe during XVII and XVIII century (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.; Martin et al., 2001; Martin, 1995). It is believed that those celebrations of Saint John night were pagan rites (Martin et al., 2001). The celebration honoured “cyclic nature changes, summer rhythm of farm work and, of course, the regulation of social life because of the greater number of hours light” (Martin et al., 2001, p.20).

The Christian world strategized to replace the celebration of the summer solstice with celebration of Saint John (Martin, 1995). This new festivity broke the earlier expressions from the pagan population. In the same way, it was possible to utilize the power and spirit from

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those individuals and maintained the principal commemoration of Saint John during the days around the 23rd and 24th of June. (Martin et al., 2001)

The principal celebrations and rites during the night of Saint John included bonfires where they deposited material things that would not be used during winter (Martin et al., 2001; Martin, 1995). These bonfires were placed around different areas in the city (Martin et al., 2001). Individuals performed other types of activities that characterized the festivity such as: shooting fireworks, lifting balloons, going to the beach or vegetable gardens, dancing with other neighbors together with the sound of music and eating a traditional dinner like “coca amb tonyina, condolina wine and brevas” (Martin, 1995, p.50). The original festive rites came from popular superstitions that make Saint John night *a magical night with prophylactic values*. For example to “take bath in the sea and jump over the flames of bonfires in a shaped blade” (Martin, 1995, p.51). Those rituals were thought to help avoid sickness and to use spells that promoted love and passion (Martin et al., 2001).

During the change of the century the festival encountered certain shifts that contemporized the performances and typical customs of the past (Martin et al., 2001). Initially residents changed their mentality and economic status and an upper class was formed. This social class preferred to celebrate the festival in a different way than lower class. As a result, private clubs were created where elite people could meet together and indulge in special culinary arts. The lower socio-economic classes continued with the same activities and rites (Martin et al., 2001).

According to the Alicante government those elitest performances and ceremonies did not contribute to shaping a positive image of the city and certainly not the

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reality of the greater population of Spain (Martin, 1995). Consequently, the government wanted to ban the festival for Alicante people and particularly for the initial participants. It was also considered dangerous because of the use of fire and other materials related to the fire. For this reason a series of rules were advertised where Alicante residents were expected to comply (Martin et al., 2001). In the year of 1888 the municipality power forgot to publish the rules and residents took the opportunity to schedule the festival once more, this time with an even more extraordinary series of events (Martin, 1995).

Ninots de carrer. Ninot is defined as “ a doll that caricatured a social architect or a specific character, and criticized aspects of society and life with the help of popular verse explications”. (Martin et al., 2001, p. 23)The origins of Ninots de carrers were linked to the celebration of les fester de carrer in Alicante (Martin, 1995). Those festivities were centralized, arranged by certain streets within certain neighborhood of a given city. Neighbors took the prototype of the actual ninot.



Picture 4: Hoguera Jose Antonio (2013a). Ninots de carrer 2012. Hoguera Jose Antonio.

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Picture 5: Hoguera Jose Antonio (2013b).Ninots de carrer 2012.Hoguera Jose Antonio.

During the first years of the bonfires, the ninots were popular and regular components of the monuments (Martin et al., 2001). Over time artists and professional people surfaced and some images from the past began to be replaced by fantastic visual arts. During the late eighties one particular artist gained attention, introducing the Ninots de carrer. This artist wanted to create an illusion that the ninots were in fact real people, in order to create confusion among the public. These were the small origins of the monuments displayed around the city today, with the same humoristic and ironic manner (Martin, 1995).

The festival beginnings .The social well-being and a positive international economy were driving forces for building an annual festival. Additionally, Alicante was situated in a perfect locality in 1928 (Velasco, 1982). The city had a need to elaborate a plan that attracted valuable tourists. Jose Maria Py and Ramirez Cartagena capitalized on these benefits and facilities to elaborate and present the idea of the Saint John Bonfires festival in Alicante (Martin, 1995). The started by writing an article in the newspaper about a festival that they wished to create with similarities to that in Valencia (Velasco, 1982).

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Jose Maria Py is from Cadiz (Spain) and he lived for many years in Valencia. Hence, he well informed about the Saint Joseph Falles Festival in Valencia. Ramirez de Cartagena felt a passionate love for Alicante city and its inhabitants. These were motivations for the two to construct a new festival in Alicante with similar characteristics to Les Falles of Valencia, with the difference of landing around the summer solstice (Martin, 1995).



Picture 6: Jose Maria Py. Les Fogueres de San Juan.

To start with, Jose Maria Py sought after money and powerful support from the middle class, which were in suitable economic situation at that time. Jose Maria Py took less than three months to organize the first Bonfire celebration (Martin, 1995).

The government authorized the celebration of the festival on the 30th of May in order to celebrate in 23rd and 24th of June in 1928. The creators emphasized the relevance of the party, giving the opportunity for the Alicante inhabitants to celebrate it without any problems (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). Previously it had not been a popular festival in Alicante, and the creators wanted to revive the old rituals and revitalize the Saint John Bonfires (Martin et al., 2001).

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1932. The women protagonists started to be higher in class and were included in the ceremony as a decorative figure, representative for the times in 1932. The inclusion of women helped the creation of a small ceremony named “The election of Fire Beauty”. This ceremony was considered a social affair and spectacle. Women included in this segment were beautiful and dressing with traditional dress, shoes and hairstyle (Velasco, 1982).



Picture 7: Amparito Quereda Bernabéu “Fire Beautiful 1961”. Les Fogueres de San Juan.

The Civil War. The Saint John festival was disrupted for a total of two years after its inception. This took place during the civil war in Spain during 1937 and 1938. When the war ended, the Gestora Commission wished to restart the festival in the city during 1939. They wanted to do in the same way like before however it was not possible to put the equal number of monuments as in 1936. The Gestora Commission planned to place a monument in the most famous avenue of Alicante. From that moment this monument represented the sad days when inhabitants lived during the Negrin president time. The monument was named “La fuga”. (Velasco, 1982)

The festival was celebrated in the same way as before with total normality after 1940. The celebration was, and is significant for Alicante people and especially those

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individuals who participate in direct way. The Saint John Bonfires was and still is considered as International Interest Tourist Festival and this helped people cross borders in 1984. (Martin, 1995)

Early years. Participation and attendance grew with every year. As such the numbers of commissions grew subsequently. The organizations and commissions started to create more activities each year (Ferris, 1996). One example is the celebration of the bonfire in the month of December from 1983. In the same way, the media started to play an important role in the evolution of the festival. Every newspaper, local radio and broadcast documented the celebration and some years later documentaries were also made about the festival. This fuelled the Alicante people to participate and made the festival possible each year. (Martin, 1995)

Important changes in the festival

The festival presented an important evolution over society and practice over time due several changes specific aspect. The principal changes are:

- Rapid increase of participation to the festival by Alicante people and foreigners. The expansion of the festival around the whole city.
- Saint John Bonfires obtained the International Interest Tourist Festival title in 1984.
- In the beginning festival years, there was a competition between neighborhoods to compete with the best decorations and organizations. Today, there are mainly cordial relationships between neighborhoods and commissions. The

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principal act is to meet families and friends together and have a marvelous time together.

- The festival received positive administrative and secured funding. As a result, it was constituted as a legal entity. Furthermore, it has a local patrimony that is named foguerer house.
- The initiation of contests to obtain metallic prizes travels, cars, etc. by the help of the Gestora Commission and local media.
- The inclusion of young artists made it possible to have meaningfully progression in the constructions of monuments and barracks covers. There was also the inclusion of an idea to create satirical and critical monuments.
- The creation of insurance for those participants who are directly involved in the festival by the Gestora Commission.
- The inclusion of Play Back contest and the increase of young participants.
- The inclusion of children such as the children bonfires and infant beauty.
- The creation of Popular Barrack, considered a social phenomenon.
- Impartial jury in the election of Fire Beauty and her Dames de Honor in Alicante.
- The gradual participation of Alicante City Hall in the formation of activities and performances, such as a fireworks contest, the increase of posters announcing awards, the traditional peregrim to Santa Faz monastery in Alicante, the

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spectacular decoration during the festival, and the facilities such as chairs, public transport and museum dedicated to Saint John Bonfires history. (Ferris, 1996)



Picture 8: Beauty of a commission.

Photograph taken by Guijarros, S. (2012a)



Picture 9: Election of a beauty in a neighborhood

commission. Photograph taken by Guijarros, S. (2012b)

The principal acts always present in the festival

According to historical documentation, many acts are still present in the festivals of today and have not changed much, such as parades, small events and the election of Fire Beauty. This also includes decorations in the streets and la Crema. It is also possible to forget barracks and the monuments (Bonfires) that are present every year due as they are the principal protagonists of the festival. There are also numerous visits to the monuments around the whole city by participants, visitors and local people. (Ferris, 1996)

The festival development in the streets at the present day

The meaningful development of the festival during each year is supported by the rapid increase of participants and visitors. The entire city is wrapped with activity, including

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barracks, parades, and bonfire monuments in every neighborhood (Martin et al., 2001). It is well known by inhabitants that every act is present in every area of Alicante. This is why many streets are blocked and cars and people have experienced a difficult time being mobile. They have to walk long distances and wait long periods of time to take a public transport. All these activities and performances are during three or four days (From 19th to 24th of June). Women and men dress up with traditional costumes and lead parades. They receive applause, exchange awards, medals, ribbons/bands and titles (Ferris, 1996).

In addition to the variety of acts, it is possible to see a unique social life emerge during the ceremony. The main participants of every neighborhood invite their neighbors to their They have friendly and happy exchanges and moments during those days because all rivalries between neighbors disappear during the party (Martin, 1995).

The Saint John Bonfires festival requires extensive dedication from the media to cover the festival. The press commits many pages and banner titles in the newspaper. Likewise, it is possible to see the celebrations on TV the night when the bonfire monuments are on fire and when there are parades. This provides those not in Alicante to enjoy the festivities from a distance (Martin et al., 2001).

In spite of the significance and involvement of the festival for Alicante people and visitors, it is possible to see different opinions from the inhabitants, participants and tourists. It is important to say and highlight that these groups of people do not experience the party in the same way (Ferris, 1996). Participants that are directly included in the festival have a positive vision and propagate an enormous illusion, feeling satisfied even with the annoyances of increased noises and inappropriate behaviors of some (Martin et al., 2001). On

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the contrary, Alicante residents that do not participate in the festival sometimes wish escape the city for those days thinking there is just chaos and mess (Ferris, 1996).

The absorbent festive activity

The festival has two types of participants: one is called festero and the another is an individual attendee enjoying the entertainment. Festero is someone who lives for the festival, taking it on as a second job in order to ensure the festival happens each year (Martin et al., 2001). Those individuals work as volunteers during the festivals days and throughout the year. Some people have important positions in the celebration, such as: the president of commission, administration, accountant, performers and so fort (Ferris, 1996). These people are considered familiar, traditional and integrated in the traditions of their own cultural city (Martin et al., 2001).



Picture 10: Members with traditional attire.

Photograph taken by Guijarros, S. (2012c)



Picture11: Little girls enjoying the party.

Photograph taken by Guijarros, S. (2012d)

Policy

An enforced policy is necessary during the festival days to control the number of visitors and the population during those days. This also helps to control and avoid problems

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between people and official institutions. For instance, when the mayor of Alicante announces the beginning of the festival (that is named “pregon”) someone needs to supervise and present rules to avoid trouble (Ferris, 1996).



Picture 12: Jose Navarro (2012). Pregon: announcement of the celebration. Informacion

Coca and party

The oldest politician said “Pan and circo” (bread and circus) to keep the population calm and without any conflict. Contemporary governing says “coca and festa”. These words infer that inhabitants and visitors have a kind of freedom during the celebration days and can take on the governing of the city (Ferris, 1996).

The noise of the party

One of the most common elements of this festival is the noise. The celebration cannot have the real essence without noise. Some noises include:

- Harmonic and rhythmic noise from music and bands including cheerful and lively street parades.

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- Strong noise from fireworks and strakes.
- Loud noise spree in orchestras that are playing in the night in barracks and racos.
- Unbearable and infuriating noise from those individuals that do not live the party actively. (Ferris, 1996)

Alicante residents not able to participate in the festival can have a difficult time surviving the noise during these days. Music, fireworks, and massive amounts of loud people is the main problems of sound. This is quite alarming for those who wish to live in their city without a festival. It is not possible to sleep or be relaxed at any given time during the festival days and it is an uncomfortable change for some. Many problems are present during the main days of activity, people experience stress and nervous attitudes. (Ferris, 1996)

Exhausting program

There are many acts and performances before, during and after Saint John Bonfires. Participants and visitors find themselves exhausted during the main days of the festival. This results from frantic activities that take place all over the city and one is exhausted trying to experience everything there is to experience. The official program starts before of the official festival days and when the bonfire monuments are placed in the streets. There are several acts surrounding this. The official program that is present does not show all the official acts that occur throughout the year, it focuses on the main days of the festival (Ferris, 1996).

The program of the festival: Alicante Bonfires:

<i>Official Programme of Saint John Bonfires celebration, 2012</i>	
Tuesday, June 19	• 14:00 pm. IXXV session mascletás (fireworks) contest. Place of the Stars.

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	<p>Pyrotechnics Turis, SL, of Turis (Valencia)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19:00 pm. Becerrada for Municipal Bullfighting School. Calves livestock Juan Ruiz Palomares for students Genaro Alvarez, Ruben Luna, Adrian Velasco, Maria Serra and Jorge Rico. • 24:00 hours. Plantá of bonfires infants and “Ninots carrer”
Wednesday, June 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantá of bonfires, barracks and decoration in the streets. • 08:30 hours. Visit children’s bonfires jury. • 14:00 pm IXXXV session mascletás (fireworks) contest. Place of the Stars. Brothers Pyrotechnics Fireworks Ferrández, SL. • 19:00 PM. Bullfight. Bulls from the ranch of Carmen Lorenzo and San Pelayo for right-handers Juan Jose Padilla, David Fandila “El Fandi” and Jose Maria Manzanares. • 23:00 pm. Fire arrival show. Light show, sound and pyrotechnics in Avenude Oscar Esplá Maissonave corner.
Thursday, June 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 08:00 hours. Despertá (wake up) in all districts. • 08:30 hours. Visit bonfires jury, commissions on the streets and district decorate. • 14:00 pm. XXV III session mascletá (fireworks) contest. Place of Stars. Pyrotechnics Gironina, SL, Pedralba (Valencia). • 19:00 pm. Bullfight. Bulls of livestock Zalduendo for righties Morante de la Puebla, Julian Lopez “El Juli” and Cesar Jimenez • 20:00 pm. Offering Flower Parade. • 23:00 pm. Music in all commissions in the streets.
Friday, June 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 08:00 am. Despertá (Wake up) in all districts. • 08:30 hours. Visit jury awards them more innovative fogueres • 11.00 hours. Parade awards. From the Town Hall Square, to the Portal de Elche. Official Tribune. • 14:00 pm. IV contest session mascletás (fireworks) XXV. Place of the Stars. Pyrotechnics L'Alacantina of Focs i Artifici, Alicante. • 19:00 pm. Bullfight. Bulls of the Port of San Lorenzo livestock for righties Enrique Ponce, Sebastian and Miguel Angel Perera Castella.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20:00 pm. Offering flowers parade. • 23.00 pm. Orchestras in barracks and commissions.
Saturday, June 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 08:00 hours. Despertá (Wake up) in all districts. • 11.30 hours. Award ceremony of offering flowers, bonfires month contest innovative use of Valencian in "llibrets". Blue hall Hon. Town hall <p>Official Reception festive officials and guests. Blue hall Hon. Town hall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13'00 Tribute to Gabriel Miró. • 14:00 pm. V XXV session mascletás (fireworks) contest. Place of the Stars. Caballer Pyrotechnics, Inc. (Valencia) • 18'15 hours. Heifers with picks. Martelilla livestock steers for righties Jesús León, Palencia and Daniel Borja Alvarez. • 21.00 hours. International Folk Parade. • 23.00 pm. Orchestras in barracks and commissions.
Saturday, June 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 08'00 hours. Despertá (Wake up) in all districts 12'00 hours. Mass fires officer. Cathedral of St. Nicholas of Bari • 14:00 pm. V XXV session mascletás (fireworks) contest. Place of the Stars. Pyrotechnics Marti, SL, Burriana (Castellón). • 18'15 hours. Bullfight. Bulls of livestock Barley Gago for righties Rafael Rubio "Rafaelillo", David Mora and Ruben Pinar. • 24'00 hours. Monumental palm. Summit of Mount Benacanti. Brothers Pyrotechnics Fireworks Ferrández, SL <p>Then Bonfire cream of the official and official bonfire child. Square of City Hall. Next, cream of bonfires, and covers bonfires commissions infants.</p>
Monday, June 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19:00 pm. Bullfight. Bulls of livestock Albarreal for righties Manuel Diaz El Cordoba, Fco Rivera "Paquirri" and Fco José Palazón.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24'00 hours. I LXVII meeting international fireworks competition. Playa del Coco. Caballer Pyrotechnics, Inc. (Valencia)
Tuesday, June 26	<p>Then fireworks light at Paseo de Gómiz, for the same pyrotechnics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24'00 hours. II session LXVII international fireworks competition. Playa del Coco. Pyrotechnics Valencia. <p>Then fireworks light at Paseo de Gómiz, for the same pyrotechnics.</p>
Wednesday, June 27	<p>24:00 hours. III session LXVII international fireworks competition. Playa del Coco. L'Alacantina of Focs i Artifici, Alicante.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Thursday, June 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24'00 hours. IV session LXVII international fireworks competition. Playa del Coco. Pyrotechnics Marti, SL Burriana (Castellón). <p>Then fireworks light at Paseo de Gómiz, for the same pyrotechnics</p>
Friday, June 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24'00 hours. V session LXVII international fireworks competition. Playa del Coco. Brothers Pyrotechnics Fireworks Ferrández, SL <p>Then fireworks light at Paseo de Gómiz, for the same pyrotechnics.</p>
Saturday, June 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 00'45 hours. "Nit del Foc" on the Esplanade of Spain. Show correfocs, by "Els dimonis emplomats" Beneixama (Alicante).
Sunday, July 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20:00 pm. Coso Multicolor. Avenida de Alfonso el Sabio.

Table 3. Official program of Saint John Bonfire's celebration 2012, (Comunitat Valenciana, n.d.)

Crowd on the streets

It is not possible to visualize how many people live in Alicante until the individuals come out for the festival days. Half of the population plus some thousands of visitors make the streets of Alicante full of people during the festival days. They meet together and have social activities during the festival. However, it is a fact that many people in the streets are not always positive due to the principal act in the festival is the fire (Martin et al., 2001). It can be dangerous when the monuments are alight on the night of 24th as so many people are gathering to see them in such a small place (Ferris, 1996).

Firefighters time

The firefighters have a prodigious interest and participation in the celebration of Saint John Bonfires. Alicante people consider them heroes during the 24th night when the monuments are on fire and need to be extinguished. Similarly, the firefighters have another function in this night; it is a tradition for firefighters to put water on the individuals that are present when the monuments are on fire. Individuals are supposed to speak the innocent firefighters out of this. The firefighters do not say or announce to the people which is the order of the fire of monuments. This way people do not concentrate in the same place and visitors and participants are spread around the city (Ferris, 1996).

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The festival attendees are exhausted the morning after frantic parties especially on the last night (Martin et al., 2001). Some individuals who do not participate in the festival are actually relieved when the festival is over. Cleaning services are hired by the state to clean the

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city after the celebration and restore it to normality. After the party, cars and public transport routine to their normal schedules (Martin, 1995). From this moment onwards summer begins in the city and the Alicante residents take their vacation. After a short vacation, the commission members meet to start planning the next year's Bonfires of Saint John Festival (Martin et al., 2001).

Saint John Bonfires Terminology

The manager "La gestora". Each of the different commission groups need to be administrated under governing guidelines from the city and an executive governing body called "La Commission Gestora de les Fogueres de San Joan." The creation of this governing agency came from the original festival coordinator who established the festival in July 1929 (Ferris, 1996). Every participant of the festival has a manager called *La Gestora*.

La Gestora has evolved over time and seen some extraordinary changes over the last seven decades (Martin et al., 2001). The first major change is the amount of people that belonged to the original governing body versus today; there were originally only 6 organizers. The organizers and administrative personnel used to meet in the houses of member participants during the festival origins and now they have a high functioning office space where everything is organized. The members are regarded as being in a high position. Today the president of the organization is officially elected through public nomination (Ferris, 1996). It is written in historical documents that originally the Mayor of the city elected the president. La Gestora became increasing more powerful along years. Especially so when democratic government came to the city (Ferris, 1996).

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Parades. Small parades and huge cavalcade take place in every neighborhood across the city downtown during the days of the festival (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). The most important parades are:

- ***Pasacalles:*** Described as small parades that take place in every district of the city in the morning or afternoon. Participants of every commission wish to show the best of their neighborhood by showcasing traditional music and instruments (dulzainas and tamboriles) (Ferris, 1996).



Picture 13: Small parades in the neighborhood “pasacalles”. Photograph taken by Guijarros, S. (2012e)

- ***Entrada de Bandas:*** this parade has a specific, controlled itinerary around the main streets of downtown. Normally, it is celebrated on weekend, but it does not have a particular date. This parade comes to life with the help of every district commission member. Participants meet together and go through the parade with traditional and typical dress for the festival. The main attractions are the pageant beauties and their dames, coming from every district (Martin et al., 2001).

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Picture 14: Entrada de Bandas parade. Photograph taken by Guijarros, S. (2012f)

- *Folkloric International Parade:* This parade is celebrated on the 23rd of June during the evening. It is one of the most famous and visual parades taking place in Alicante city. Participants come from all parts of Spain (and some from around the world) to present their traditional costume and dances on spectacular floats (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.).
- *Flowers offering* - on June 21st and 22nd a religious ceremony named “Flower offering” takes place. It is considered one of the oldest rituals inside of Saint John Bonfire’s celebration. The principal performance of activity is to offer flowers in a marvelous parade to Remedio Virgin (patron and perpetual mayor of the city). Every neighborhood offers original flower bouquets held by the beauties and dames have during the parade. When they arrive to the city hall at the end of the parade they offer their flowers to the Virgin. The Remedio Virgin is located outside of the city hall. The dames build a huge wall of flowers in symbolic placement.

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Picture 15: Flower-offering parade. Photograph taken by Guijarros, S. (2012g)

La Barraca. A barraca is a type of outdoor restaurant with many tables and chairs set up on the streets where people collect to consume delicious food and drink and musicians play music to entertain the guests. The food is prepared and served outdoors. Usually a barraca is a place for a group of friends that meet together during the festival days and is the starting point of their activities. They eat, they drink and they dance in the streets. This is how residents start to involve themselves in the party. Barracas can be considered the heart of the festival; it is where people meet to socialize and spend money on food and beverage that eventually ends up paying for the festival (Ferris, 1996).



Picture 16: Photograph of a commission in Saint John Bonfire celebration.

Informacion (n.d.)

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Aesthetic. Numerous plastic artists can develop their ideas for Saint John Bonfire's celebration and contribute to a unified aesthetic across the city. Professional sculpture artists and painters contribute to designing a unique architectural setting, which usually adopts a pyramidal style. The monument builders use their imagination and fantasy and create things of varying scale, effects of light and color. (Sebastiá, 1988)

In general terms, the monuments (bonfires) are defined as large wooden catafalques with cardboard, reaching considerable heights. It is a complex plastic work, which the individual artists work on throughout the entire year and complete for June. Creating the monuments takes a long time and is a complex and creative process. Artists need to plasma their ideas into a model or sketch until the monument becomes reality (Sebastiá, 1988).

Builders of monuments (Bonfires)

The quality and monumentality of monuments have also seen changes since its inauguration. Alicante artists are considered masters of paint and sculpture today. Artists develop their ideas and inspirations with the first monuments. Artists are attracted to building monuments by the free flow of ideas and conception (Ferris, 1996). The original craftsmen of bonfires who developed the first monuments did not use criticism in the field. They started to have more freedom from the government after a couple of decades and today they are truly artistic pieces (Martin et al., 2001). The artists want to show a deep sensitivity and communication, and also they want to manifest dissatisfaction with certain political characters and events from their everyday life (Ferris, 1996).

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The construction of monuments started by drawing ideas on paper. This was shaped into a model that would lead to the final construction. There are three phases in the process of building monuments:

- The first phase is building characters and ornaments modeled from the mud. Then, when the form is achieved, it must be reproduced in paperboard, for drawing up a mold from a negative figure and introducing cardboard soaked in oil or glue. Once it is dry, the artists have to remove the mold interior and they obtain in the form of cardboard from the first molding clay.
- The second phase includes a timber frame construction with chassis, needed for architectural fulfillments. This is an important role as a support structure or skeleton inside the monument. This job is realized by master carpenters due to its complexity and the requirement to have knowledge about the resistance of wood.
- The third phase is the preparation and support of the base ready for paint. On this base the cardboard is covered with plaster hands, the plaster is smoothed and polished with sandpaper and a very thin polychrome finish is added. (Sebastiá, 1988)

The entire set of figures, ornaments and geometric shapes go through a stage of primer and subsequent polishing. It is the mantle color that separates and defines each character, the motives and backgrounds that make up the scene. (Sebastiá, 1988)

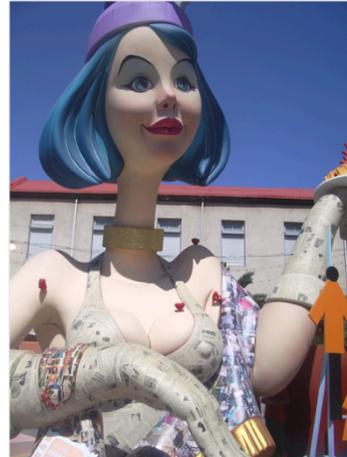
Each monument can be described as unique. They are not connected with any of the classic or vanguard currents and they are not committed to any 'isms' (Ferris, 1996).

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Picture 17: Children Bonfire. Photograph taken

by Guijarros, S. (2012h).



Picture 18: Adult Bonfire.

Photograph taken by Guijarros, S.

Llibret was born on the same day that the festival was first celebrated in 1928. It was and is necessary to elaborate the festival in a type of book/magazine to satisfy the needs of participants and neighbors. Moreover, to establish a communication between committees and the districts Bonfires neighbors (Martin et al., 2001). The content of *Llibret* can varied a little bit though there are typical recurring topics:

- **Greetings from the commission to the district:** to express gratitude to those who cooperate economically.
- **Photos of the beauties:** candidates to the Fire Beauty pose for eternity.
- **Photo of the commissioners:** photographed in their holiday finery.
- **Sketch of the stake:** spread over the whole page.
- **Explanation:** If the sketch is not enough, this account of each monument will explain the more subjective intentions of each monument.
- **Program festivities:** this carefully details most of the festivities and is often written in a humorous manner.

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- **Illustrations:** the llibrets always have been a vehicle for the expression of prestigious artists who have shaped his art in the graphic (Ferris, 1996).

Posters and pregones (proclamations) might respond to the authors' personal positions, characteristics of the day and age and social pressures an artist may feel. These are perceptions of the party and its protagonists (Ferris, 1996). Not everything disappears after burning of the monuments on the night of Saint John – a second scenario allows ideas to be concentrated in permanent archetypes, models, different ideologies saved for archives (Martin et al., 2001).

A poster is considered an artistic product that has a particular series of characteristics:

- It is a message supported by an image and a text. There is an iconic message where the image takes priority over the text and occupies most of the surface of the poster.
- The image is made on a flat support.
- The poster is destined to be seen by many people simultaneously. It must set out image to be as streamlined as possible and immediate in its reading (Ferris, 1996).



Picture 19: Announcement poster. Les Fogueres de San Juan (n.d.)

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Finally, *pregones* (proclamation) are constructed as pieces of literature to the public in direct acts and are subject to certain requirements of the oral communication. (Ferris, 1996)

Polvora (Wildfire). This word comes from the word *pulvis-eris* meaning gunpowder in Latin. The composition of wildfire is a mixture of saltpeter, sulfur and charcoal. Heat is used to inflame fluid, which causes a great expansion of power. These small explosions and fires are used to add to the festivities of Saint John Bonfires. (Ferris, 1996).

The Saint John festival fireworks

Fireworks have been an important part of the Saint John Bonfires festival for many decades. During 1936 a contest of fireworks on were lit on June 22nd. From that moment onwards fireworks became a visual inclusion. It can be said that the fireworks display is included among all productions and the variety of fires make the master pyrotechnic. Perhaps the most complex and exquisite element is that the composition of fireworks reflects the ability and character of the preparer (Martin et al., 2001).

La Crème. *La Crème* is the most meaningfully and possibly sad day for the Alicante people as it marks the end of the celebration. On the night of June 24th, also called Saint John night, the celebration starts with a gigantic palm firework at the highest point of the Benacantil Mountain. This is the beginning of the celebration and the bonfires are lit in every district of the city. Every monument burns with the accompaniment of traditional music. It is common for people to cry when the monuments are destroyed by fire and all the wonderful monuments are finished for this year. The festival marks its end at midnight when the fires of the last monument are extinguished (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.).

Music: from guitars to horns. Music has an important role in the Saint John Bonfires festival. Don Miguel de Cervantes said that ‘when it comes to music, there can be nothing wrong.’ Individuals listen to many types of music during the celebration of festival (Ferris, 1996). For example, the most simple and rudimentary sounds and interpretations of the parade written by composers. Music is the main accompaniment with every event (Martin et al., 2001). Music is played in the morning, evenings or night. It is also used as a way to announce the new festival day, or at sunset when bonfires and the commission beauties will parade their gala clothes (Ferris, 1996).

The Saint John Bonfires Festival has its own hymn that is well known to Alicante residents. The anthem of this festival describes the activities and characters of Alicante people. It becomes the glue of every small event during the main festival (Martin et al., 2001).

Forms and functions of Saint John Bonfires

This section introduces various interpretations of the festival from the viewpoint of the local people and the members of commissions. In addition, it is included the results from the researcher experience on the celebration. Various characteristics of the event are reviewed and local knowledge and opinions are presented.

Review of the primary results:

Local people. Two respondents from this group highlighted the local connection of Saint John Bonfires as ‘Alicante’s celebration.’ One respondent said that “*it is the main celebration in Alicante city*” and annual, taking place from June 19th to 24th each year. Saint John Bonfires is characterized as a cultural and historical celebration. As one respondent

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stated: *“I believe that Saint John Bonfires celebration represents the culture and history of Alicante people”* (local respondent #1). Each respondent referenced that the celebration has a variety of acts and smaller events that take place during the primary days. Each local respondent spoke about the vibrancy of parades, fireworks and music. Local respondent #4 emphasized that *“each neighborhood is involved with the celebration and it can be said that the celebration is accepted as Alicante’s identity.”*

Members of commissions. According to the viewpoint from member respondents, Saint John Bonfire’s celebration is a cultural and local celebration. One of the respondents from this group believed that *“Saint John Bonfires is the principal and representative celebration of the people from Alicante”* (Respondent #4). The celebration is characterized by its traditions, culture, religion and history. The tradition of burns those objects that are not useful. In addition, the culture of Alicante people such as dressing typical costume, food, music, activities and act. The example that respondents from the member group identified; was the custom of attendees dressing in the typical traditional costumes of Alicante. Additionally, special traditional food is served during the festivities. Additionally, the member respondents underlined that every district of Alicante has a bonfire that is a bonfire monument representing current issues. Those bonfires monuments are elaborated with wood and it has represented artistically paints and figures.

Researcher experience. The participation as a local during 20 years and also three years as a member in a commission contribute to obtain and contract results from the responders of the interview. The investigator found that as local and member responder said early, the celebration has a variety of forms and functions. Those forms and functions are

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religious because of the celebration of Saint John night and also because one of the parades is dedicate to Remedios Virgen who is the most important personage on the city. However, the researcher recognized through all the years experience that this celebration has pagan and ritual characteristics as its origins. The reason is because still individuals of Alicante jump in the bonfires on the beaches and also they do rituals with the fire such as fireworks. Finally, the researcher came up with artistically element that Saint John Bonfires celebration has with the elaboration of bonfires. Traditionally were normal bonfires where people burn old furniture. Nowadays, particular artistic that elaborate the bonfires dedicate the whole year to elaborate and create the bonfire monument. That is why one of the principal characteristics is that this celebration is artistically because of that.

General perception of Saint John Bonfire's celebration by local people and members

This section reviews the different perceptions held by the local respondents and member group respondents interviewed for this study. Furthermore, it is added the researcher results from its experience. Their responses were organized into subtopics: 'sense of coherence,' 'identity' and 'level of satisfaction.'

Sense of Coherence

It is a big challenge to link the term 'sense of coherence' with the different feelings that individuals from the celebration and the city experience during the festival. The results that surfaced in interviews from both groups, the locals and the members of the commissions, suggest that there is a level of coherence between the groups. In addition, it is presented the level of sense of coherence from the investigator of this study due to its participation. The

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term sense of coherence has three elements to consider: '*comprehensibility*,' '*manageability*' and '*meaningfulness*.'

Review of the principal results:

Local people. Local respondents brought up issues with the noise, dirtiness and stress around the festival days when residents are required to have regular workdays regardless. They presented that they do not have control the side-affects from the festival that impact their regular everyday lives, but how they do understand that this is temporary and has a benefit for the city in other ways. They understand that this is the main celebration of Alicante and they seemed to generally like the environment of the celebration including the temporary decorations, bonfires, lights in the streets and increase of people. It is understandable how local people would react negatively towards the increase of noise, disturbances and crimes like robberies and many drunken people. However, they do like to enjoy the celebration because they feel it is important for the city.

Comprehensibility:

"I perceive with enthusiasm and happiness because I can feel the party in everywhere" (Local respondent # 1)

"I see experience that the festival is a lot of noise during those four days" (Local respondent # 2)

"The event provides perfect environment" (Local respondent # 2)

"The event is spectacular and it is very colorful. The land and party is vibrant everywhere in the city" (Local respondent # 2)

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“... good nights with my friends” (Local responder 2)

“I experience just an average time when I am with my friends. I feel comfortable when there are many people in the streets” (Local respondent # 4)

Manageability:

“I do not feel comfortable with the sounds of the fireworks and fireworks” (Local respondent # 1)

“Negative experience because of the noises in the streets due to people, fireworks, music, etc.” (Local respondent # 2)

“I feel stress because I cannot walk in the streets” (Local respondent # 3)

“I cannot move by car, there are many traffic jams and blocked roads” (Local respondent # 4)

“Many concerts in commissions make too much noise until very late in the night. It is disturbing and uncomfortable for some residents” (Local respondent # 3)

“... it is common to see many drunken people, ambulances, and robberies and injured individuals as well” (local respondent #3)

“...when I worked in a restaurant: it was a lot of work and long hours without any breaks. From this experience, I could see that when you have to work a difficult job and satisfy the needs of visitors and participants of the event, you do not enjoy the festival the same way. It is very stressful and tiring” (Local respondent #3)

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“The first feeling is happiness. The second feeling is stress because it is not possible to walk in the streets. It is a lot of people. In addition, it is very hot. The last feeling is when you spent the whole night in different parties and after, around 8:00 in the morning the members of every commission start firework shows in every area of Alicante - I cannot sleep well” (Local respondent #3)

“I have a negative experience because of the noise, dirty streets and drunk people”(Local respondent #4)

Meaningfulness:

“My personal feelings are very powerful because Saint John Bonfires is the main celebration in Alicante city (which is my city). My opinion is that Saint John Bonfires is the best celebration in the world” (Local respondent #1)

“... to see the highest number of bonfires around the city, parades and chiefly fireworks and fireworks” (Local respondent #1)

“... my daughter was chosen to be dama from a commission of our neighborhood...”(local respondent #1)

“... to be with the important people that I like to be with” (Local respondent #2)

“... watch bonfires in every district of Alicante.” (Local respondent #2)

“... is to celebrate and enjoy the party with my friends and family without worries and troubles” (Local respondent #3)

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“I live in this city and it is the main, most important celebration of the city” (Local respondent #4)

Members of commissions. The member respondents presented a positive image of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of the Saint John Bonfires. These informants are involved with different commission of their neighborhood in different ways. Accordingly, they outlined more positive characteristics about the festival.

Comprehensibility:

“During Saint John Bonfires, the street is our house. Alicante has many beautiful lights and people can go peacefully in the streets and enjoy different artwork presented in every district. People can breath a smell of fireworks and feel the noise everywhere. All these things make Alicante magical.” (Member respondent # 1)

“...it becomes a tourist attraction, many people come to see our event and it is possible to see the benefit of this tourism with added customers in the restaurants and shops” (Member respondent “ 1)

“...the entire atmosphere of holidays, the smell of gunpowder, the party and especially the joy that people share. It is a party that from my point of view is both fun and intimate” (Member respondent # 2)

Manageability:

“Members express similar feelings: love, work, enthusiasm and effort all throughout the year to make the celebration possible” (Member respondent # 1)

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“Love, respect, passion, enthusiasm, happiness and devotion” (Member respondent #1)

“...representation and participation, and working and enjoying things together with my people.” (Member respondent #1)

“...the competitiveness between bonfires commissions” (Member respondent #2)

“It is possible to see how people are happy, there are colorful places, delicious smells and so much more” (Member respondent #3)

“...enjoyment of people, delicious smell of food in the streets everywhere and wonderful decorations.” (Member respondent #3)

“The negative part it of the event are those individuals that visit the city and do not have respect” (Member respondent #4)

Meaningfulness:

“... to belong in a community that shares the same feeling of family, union, dedication. To represent my district and be proud of who I am and participate with others.” (Member respondent #1)

“To be chosen Beauty of my commission. It gave me the opportunity to represent the community where I live and participate together” (Member respondent #1)

“Participating in a commission makes me feel important and I do something great for the enjoyment of my city” (Member respondent #2)

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“The main belongingness I feel from this party, is with my family” (Member respondent #2)

Researcher experience. Based in the experience of the researcher and what the investigator expressed, it can be name the difference opinions from each group:

Comprehensibility:

“Saint John Bonfires celebration is well organized with the variety of activities and acts. I can see from my experience that organizers, policy and bonfires know well how to handle every problem and also to control every street.” (Researcher)

Manageability:

“I perceive the celebration with enthusiasm and enjoyment. The unique issue is the not good organization with the public transport that make to arrive late to every place” (Researcher)

Meaningfulness:

“The real meaning is to be together with my people and also with my friends that we celebrate together” (Researcher).

The researcher found that in its experience and also participation as a member of the celebration, it could not manage satisfactory three punctual issues such as the public transport, noises until late in the night and also the traffic jam in the streets. That generate stress to the researcher and also it has similar characteristics with the local people that expressed the same issues. In addition to this, the investigator recognize that city hall spend a lot of money in the

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elaboration of the bonfires monuments and also in the whole decoration, etc. That is why the researcher came with up with the not comprehend well about this because the city has many economic problems. However, the researcher contrast this two negative this related to manageability and comprehensibility with the element meaningfully as a strong characteristic for the researcher. The investigator found that as a local the celebration has a strong meaning for itself because during the celebration it is reflect the real essence and behavior of Alicante people. The celebration is part of all Alicante people and also for the researcher of the study. That is why every year is celebrated even with all troubles that make to the city and also to individuals of Alicante.

Identity

This section presents the main findings from local people informants and the members related to how they identify with this celebration. Furthermore, it is expressed the main results from the researcher experience.

Review of the principal results:

Local people. The local people identified with the festival in different, non-uniform ways. For example:

“I identify with the variety of acts that represents my culture and history. Those acts are: parades, fireworks, burning of bonfires” (Local respondent #1). “I am from Alicante and the music, party environment and the special color leads me to identify with the celebration.”

(Local respondent #2) The two local respondents identified with the party because Saint John Bonfires has different types of small events that are organized throughout the main days. Two

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of the individuals shared positive feeling such as enthusiasm, happiness and pride. One local respondent did not identify with the celebration at all, due to the negative impacts on their routine lives. “I do not identify with the celebration because I do not share the feeling of wanting noise and ruckus...” (Local respondent #4)

Members of commissions. According to the comments from these informants, they felt a higher level of identification with the celebration than the local people. Primarily, these identified with how people work together to make the event possible. Additionally, due to the festival representing the original culture and history of the city of Alicante. One of the member respondents expressed: “*I feel identify with those people that help to make possible the celebration.*” (Member respondents #2) Another member pointed out that: “*Saint John Bonfires helps to keep the traditions of the city alive*” (Member respondent #1). These findings contribute to having a *sense of belonging* with this celebration.

Researcher experience. The researcher found that the real identity on the celebration is because of people. In the way that people live the celebration such as dedicating their time as a voluntary to arrange and also elaborate the party for those days are representative for the researcher. The reason is because of link between the proudest to represent your neighborhood and also the city to the rest of the country.

Image

Local people and members shaped differing images, prior to the celebration and during the celebration days. In addition, it is introduced the image that the researcher perceive. The impact that these images have will be discussed here.

Review of the principal results:

Local people. All respondents paid attention to how the festival shapes Alicante as a tourist destination during the Saint John Bonfires. Those respondents pointed out that many tourists come to visit and participate indirectly in the party. Another image is that the city has many artistically created bonfires taking place in neighborhoods all over the city. That makes the image of the city artistic and colorful. One of the local respondents said: *“It is a visual image in the city because of the distribution of bonfires around the entire city”* (Local respondent #3). Another local responder underlined that: *“there are many concerts, music and fireworks in the city”* (Local respondent #3). That is why it is relevant to suggest that the image of the city can be represented as both noisy and musical. Saint John Bonfires can be experienced by different ages, from infants to adults due as many activities cater to almost everyone. One local respondent highlighted that: *“The event is thinking of all the ages”* (Local respondent #3). It is interesting that Saint John Bonfires makes the Alicante people feel ‘party.’ For instance, one local respondent pointed out that: *“It is possible to find and contemplate a spectacular decoration around the city with lights in the streets, bonfires, commissions with a particular decoration street restaurants”* (Local respondent #4). Therefore this is also an image of party and entertainment.

On the other hand, there are also negative images of the festival. For example: *“There is no control over cleaning and there is a lot of rubbish in the streets”* (Local respondent #1). It can be said that the festival image can be ‘dirty’ because of the huge influx of people on those days.

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Members of commissions. All the member respondents highlighted that the image of the city changes before the celebration and after. For instance, “*It is a normal summer city before the celebration and when the celebration takes place, it is as a magical city*” (Member respondent #1). The image of the city is of ‘full participation and inclusion’. This explains why there is concurrently an image of ‘pride’, where attendees are dedicated and feeling love for Alicante city. These informants wanted to show that it is possible to create an image that represents each and every Alicante person. “People dress in typical and traditional costumes; there is a smell of delightful traditional Alicante food and there is traditional music signifying Saint John Bonfires” (member respondent #4). It is the members of the commissions that open up participation in the creation, creating an image of ‘celebration’.

Researcher experience. The researcher came up with the same opinions and thoughts that local and member responders have. During the experience and also its participation, it was possible to see a variety of images such as artistically because of decoration, traditional dress, bonfires monuments, etc. In addition, the researcher highlights too that the city is recognized as tourist place before and during the celebration. The unique difference is that during the celebration is something additionally and it is not only sun and beach.

Meaning

Each respondent and the researcher alluded to meaning with every response. Despite similarities each individual perceptions of meaning were heterogeneous and unique.

Review of principal findings:

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Local people. These respondents underlined that the principal meaning of the Saint John Bonfires as a celebration and to enjoy time with significant people such as friends and family. *“The real meaning of the celebration of Saint John Bonfires is to be and celebrate with the important people that I like to be with”* (Local respondent #2)

Members of commissions. All respondents share the commonality that the meaning to participate in the celebration and belong to a commission from their neighborhood is due to representation, responsibility, dedication of Alicante people and love for the city. One informant wrote *“Saint john bonfires has a powerful and significant meaning for me. I belong to a community that share the same feelings of family, union, dedication, representation of my district, proud...from where I am and participate in.”*(Member respondent #1). Another respondent said that: *“It is a huge responsibility. I participate to make the party possible those days because it is really a job the year throughout”* (Member respondent #2)

Researcher experience. The researcher recognized that the main meaning to experience and participate in the celebration is because it likes to be part of the celebration and also add the contribution to keep this tradition more years.

Experience and evaluation of the celebration

This section introduces the results of the experience and the different ways that informants evaluate the celebration. The interviewer asked informants to convey their positive or negative experiences and describe their interpretation of the celebrations.

Review of the principal findings:

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Local people. All local respondents shared negative experiences of the event. Most of these experiences related to: *“A lot of noises in everywhere from music, fireworks, people”* (Local respondent #2) In addition to this negative experience, it is possible to introduce: *“When I had to work those main days of Saint John bonfires celebration. It is very stressful and tiring”* (Local respondent #3). Finally: *“during the celebration, the streets are very dirty, people are drunk in the streets”* (Local respondent #4).

Only two local respondents presented positive experiences of the event. One of them said *“ I had a good experience during the celebration when my daughter represented as our beauty”* (Local respondent #1). The second responder pointed out that *“I had a positive experience of the event because of my friends and I like to see all bonfires around the city”* (Local respondent #2).

Members of commissions. According to the viewpoints of different members, all their experiences were concretely positive. One of member respondents argued *“ all is positive for me. This celebration is part of me and when I experience it, I do not feel anything negative”* (Member respondent #3). However, another member brought up negative elements, saying *“the unique negative experience is the competitiveness between bonfires commissions”* (Member respondent #2). In addition, *“The negative experience of the event is when those individuals that visit the celebration do not treats other with respect”* (member respondent #4). One of the members brought up that *“the experience of member of commissions is not only four days, it is the whole year. There are more small events related to this event along the year”* (Member respondent #1).

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Researcher experience. The researcher experienced and participation on the celebration found that most of its experience is considered as a positive. That is why the investigator repeated every year during twenty years. The reason of this positive experience is because the whole celebration as it is presented and also people of Alicante meet together in the streets and it is possible to feel the celebration in everywhere. That is made a positive experience for the researcher. However, the investigator found three main troubles that make to have a negative experience in the event in some moments such as traffic, public transport and also noises. Those problems were named earlier in this section. Nevertheless, those issues do not have a relevant importance for the researcher to give up with the celebration.

Decision-making

This section introduces the results of local people and the members of commissions regarding how and why they make decisions as they do. Additionally, I have added my own motives for participating in the celebration. This topic presents three subtopics including '*motivation,*' '*attractiveness of the event*' and '*loyalties of the event.*'

Motivation

This subsection presents the results of both groups and researcher around motivations for visiting or experiencing the event.

Review of the principal results:

Local people. The four local respondents presented different answers relating to the motivation they felt to involve themselves in the event. Motivation exists in the pull to partake

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in the different activities and bonfires. One of the local respondents pointed out: *“my main purpose to visit the Saint John Bonfires celebration is because I want to see the highest number of bonfires and fireworks possible ”* (Local respondent #1). Another motivation was because they live and are from Alicante city and their participation seems logical. Local respondent #4 said: *“I live in this city and it is the main and important celebration.”* An additional motivation was to be part of a group: *“my motivation is to be in the party with my friends”* (Local respondent #3).

Members of commissions. This group answered that the celebration and their participation is due to direct connections. Three of the four informants in this group linked their motivation to participate in a commission is due to their own family. One of the member respondents said *“when I was born, I started to be member and participate in all activities with my family. The motivation is my family and custom”* (member respondent #2). Another member informant pointed out *“it is a tradition in my family to be a member in the commission in Saint John Bonfires celebration”* (member respondent #4).

Researcher experience. The researcher recognized that the local respondent group was motivated to to participate and experience the celebration because it is the principal celebration of the city and representative of their municipal identity. The breath and allure of celebration was, itself a motivating factor for me to take part.

Attractiveness of the event

This section presents the results relating to what both the groups and researcher perceive as attractive to visit and participate in the event.

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Review of the principal results:

Local people. According to the local people group, the main attractiveness of this event comes down to the activities that take place over the main days. Two of these informants pointed out that “*Saint John bonfires is spectacular because of all colors, lights, dresses, food*” (local respondent #2) and “*...many people in the streets, music, fireworks, bonfires, decoration*” (local respondent #3). However, one of the informants brought up that “*I do not like the celebration because it is you spend a lot of money in the elaboration of the event over the festival days* ” (local respondent “4). This was a deterrent not to visit the city.

Members of commissions. All informants have the common opinion that the celebration, people, decoration, the party and bonfires are attractive elements to lure in audience. Respondents pointed out the attractiveness of the celebration is everything and that is why it is special and magical. Furthermore, the desire to participate in a commission is due to the shared feelings to have unity and be one. “*Love, respect, passion, illusion, happiness and devotion are the main feelings that make possible to be in a commission because all of participants of my one have the same like me*” (member respondent #1).

Researcher experience. The researcher found that the principal attractiveness is the people itself and also the bonfires monuments. That is what makes to the researcher too to attract to the celebration. It can be seen this attractiveness as a value for the researcher due to this type of bonfire monuments are unique in Alicante and also in Valencia.

Loyalty to the celebration

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This part of the subtopic reviews the loyalties both groups and the researcher have in connection to Saint John Bonfires celebration. Specifically, if they promote a positive image and intend to return in future years.

Review of the principal findings:

Local people. All of these informants live in Alicante. They do not really say if they are loyal or will return to the festival, though it is implied that many will return as they live there and it is part of them. One informant underlined “*I live in Alicante and I am there those days, but I do not participate indirect and direct manner in the celebration because I do not like it*” (local respondent #4).

Members of commissions. According to the explanation from these member informants, they present loyalties to their celebration because they are members of commissions, they are one of the responsible members to collaborate in the festival and they feel a desire to continue their volunteer roles.

Researcher experience. The investigator found that it has a high loyalty to experience and participate for those reason that were named earlier. However, due to the distance and the researcher does not live in Alicante in the current days, it makes difficult to visit the event. However, when it has the opportunity goes to celebrate. It would be interested to add that through the experience and also the observation of investigator this loyalty from itself and also for local and member’s responder are linked with the topic named before.

Conclusion

To summarize, the main results and analysis of each topic expressed different opinions and thoughts that both groups and the researcher had in relation to the celebration. One could suggest that the results show a positive perspective from the different topics. Simultaneously, there is possibly weak enthusiasm from one of the local respondents. Some negative experiences were highlighted, however these are normal concerns present in almost any type of largescale organized event. Nevertheless, member respondents felt more enthusiasm and joy from their experiences and also the perspective they had of the event. As mentioned in the conceptual framework, some of the themes are repeated from the different perspective of each informant. In this way, it is possible to obtain a deep understanding of the themes.

Discussion: The variety of perspectives about Saint John Bonfire's celebration

Introduction

This chapter presents the explanation of the results in this investigation in connection with the theoretical framework. The discussion chapter will explore the study findings relating to the '*forms and functions of Saint John Bonfire celebration*', '*general perception of Saint John Bonfires celebration by local people and members*' and the '*decision-making*' processes. The varying results from each group and theoretical terms will be presented and discussed to obtain an adequate explanation about each topic.

What is Saint John Bonfire's celebration? How do some local people, including stakeholders, perceive the festival? What differences exist between the perceptions of the members of commissions and local people? To what extent does the sense of coherence of commissions members differ from some local people, in relation to the event?

The investigation presented in this study has reviewed these questions and the significance of their findings and the information has been elaborated and evaluated. This offers supplementary information topics on the Saint John Bonfires celebration and the different perceptions between members and local people regarding the celebration.

Forms and functions of Saint John Bonfire's celebration

It can be argued that the Saint John Bonfires celebration is considered a planned event. According to Getz (2008) planned events have a design, organization and also a program with the different activities, acts, events that are going to be during the main days. The Saint John

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Bonfires is considered the official celebration in Alicante city (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). According to Ali-Knight et al. (2004) *cultural celebration* are characterized for the main instruments such individuals, society and the area that represent them. In addition, cultural celebrations are presented parades, religious ceremonies, etc. That is why, Saint John Bonfires is considered a celebration in Alicante because of during those days are different event forms that are characterized as relevant and principal to make possible the Saint John Bonfires celebration. According to the experience and observation of the researcher, those events forms are also identified like: *heritage commemoration* because Saint John Bonfires desires to commemorate the memory of someone and something. This commemoration is with the parade to the Virgen Remedios with the flowering offering parade (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). In addition to heritage commemoration, it is possible to say that the celebration can include some *religious events* because the Saint John Bonfires celebration is emergence from ritual pagan traditions that after are transformed into catholic activities. However, the researcher explained that it is possible to find and experience some acts with characteristic pagan such as jump in the bonfire and also the rituals with fire. As state by Duffy (2009), religious events combine folkloric cultural practices and religious and pagan ceremonies. Saint John Bonfire's celebration has it origins in pagan ceremonies, but after the Christianize entered in this ceremony to make a change and give importance to the Saint John and also the solstice summer (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). Furthermore, the celebration integrates also *arts and entertainment* because the principal characteristic of the celebration and also the protagonist are the bonfires monuments. The researcher observation and also participation included that this celebration is not only party and music. It has a lot of work in the creation

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and elaboration of the monumental bonfires. In addition, artist elaborate poster to announce the celebration with a topic every year.

On the other hand, it is believed that Saint John Bonfire's celebration introduces several functions such as *local and community events, hallmark and iconic event, media event, special event, and spectator and interactive events*. The reason is because the celebration has the feature to create honor in the society and the sensation to keep the celebration every year (Bowdin et al., 2006). In addition, this celebration is considered important and a foundation for the society and the place itself. Getz (2007) describes *hallmark and Iconic events* as those characterized as significant for the community and also for the place and also it has a recognition and prestige. For this reason, Saint John Bonfires could be included under this definition as it is recognized as International and National Touristic Interest (Les Fogueres de San Juan, n.d.). This celebration is presented in the media because every act, activity and also parades are retransmitted by television in the official channel of the city. There is also coverage in the newspapers, radio and Internet. This is done to keep the individuals clear about what has happened during these main event days and also to reach people unable able to visit and experience the celebration. That makes possible for people, such as myself, to have a close connection with party even if those individuals cannot participate.

The Saint John Bonfire's celebration is composed of several small events including concerts, art monuments and street decorations and parades. It is believed that local people and the members of the commissions respondents experience and perceive the event in very different manners. This is mainly associated with the fact that commissions are the prime

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organizers who work within a tight community throughout the entire year, while local residents are participants for just a few days a year during the festival. The festival members live and work for the event to take place and are very dedicated. However, local people responders celebrate the festivities less directly because the festival takes place throughout their city and social places. In this way they are involved in all aspects, not just the 'participation.'

General perception of Saint John Bonfire's celebration by local people and members

This section will review several subtopics, which explains the constructed findings against a theoretical backdrop to obtain a clear comprehensibility of each subtopic. The subtopics include '*sense of coherence,*' '*identity,*' '*image,*' '*meaning*' and '*experience and evaluation of the celebration.*'

Based on the responses of informants from both groups, it could be suggested that the group of commissions members corresponded with the term sense of coherence at a higher rate than regular local residents. That means this group presents high levels in all dimensions including '*comprehensibility,*' '*manageability*' and '*meaningfulness.*' Taking the explanation of Geyer (1997), those individuals that have high levels of all three dimensions will be less likely to perceive situations with insecurity or struggle with manageability. Additionally, those people are less likely to perceive all situations as challenging (Geyer, 1997). It is believed that member responders of the celebration do not experience any negative moment because they perceive all the party as something important for their lives. According to the interview responses, the member informants managed with stressors like noises, drunken

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people, robbery and so forth easier than the respondents from the local group. Due to higher levels of *sense of coherence*, it is likely that the member informants will generate innovative experiences create learning experiences (Geyer, 1997).

The local respondents did not seem to have the same level of sense of coherence do to their perception of many uncontrollable, uncomfortable and possibly dangerous moments during the festival. The local informants identified noise and crowded streets as unpleasant factors. These issues suggest that they have lower levels of comprehensibility and manageability of the celebration. In addition, the experience of the researcher might be linked with the local responders because it experienced the same feelings that those people. However, the investigator expressed and recognized its high importance to the meaning of the celebration. According to Pallant and Lae (2002) individuals that have a weak sense of coherence are sensitive and perceiving situations with stress. They are also usually less effective in their everyday lives. When the festival takes place, the local informants expressed agitation from the parties, sounds and crowding. Despite this being an entirely normal trade-off for the benefit of having a local festival, some of the local respondents and also reseracher were provoked by these conditions. It is believed that some people can manage well and others less so. Therefore the differences between the informants are understandable.

The explanation that Erikson (1963; 1971) provides with the term '*identity*' is connected with the results obtained from all respondents and also the researcher (Wearing et al., 2010). According to Erikson (1963; 1971) "identity is described as a process located both within the core of the individual and in the core of his/her communal culture" (Wearing et al., 2010, p.42). Local people, members and the researcher identify with the essence of the culture

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and their community. This includes the various practices and activities that take place at Saint John Bonfires during the main days. These activities represent the culture of the city and also elements of the people. It is due to the efforts of participants that this festival can occur. Accordingly, members responders feel more identified with the core of the festival due to their working partnerships throughout the year in preparation of the celebration. In addition, the researcher presents a strong identification with the celebration too because of the people of Alicante city. When reviewing the '*sense of place*' and '*sense of community*' with the members, local people and researcher, each had a slightly different connection. This could also be explained by the fact that member's responders participate throughout the year celebration in Alicante. These members express feeling strong links to their community, family and neighborhoods. They express actively participating in the event planning and festival execution. Furthermore, the researcher has a close connection to the member informants because it experienced this participation being a member of a commission. These considerations suggest that the member informants and also researcher fit with the definition of '*sense of place*.' According to Derrett (2003) a '*sense of place*' is when the residents of a place feel connected to their environment and partake in activities that bind social figures with their space. They can also collaborate to establish an event in their area. It is therefore logical that those individuals have a strong connection to a community or place. The term '*sense of community*' is described as the variety of feelings that people might have when they fully participate and contribute to a larger body of people, or in the creation of an event (Derrett, 2004). This description might be linked with the thoughts and opinions that member's responders and also with the experience of the researcher have about their identification with a celebration. As member informants pointed out, the work does not consist of four days

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alone; it requires a yearlong dedication. The local informants expressed feeling more connected by the way that they participate during the festival activities, such as visiting monuments throughout the city. One could speculate that their *sense of community and place* is more connected with their experience as opposed to commitment. Local people collaborate by visiting, being and seeing. The concept *sense of belonging* is also relevant. “Saint John Bonfires celebration helps to keep the tradition of the city” (Member responder 1). Ekman (1991) explains that *sense of belonging* describes supporting furtherance and the evolution of events. It is believed that the celebration helps to keep traditions alive, those that historically characterized Alicante. Due to the high participation of local people and members it is possible to keep this traditional celebration active each year.

The respondents interviewed and the participation of the researcher for this study all has unique perspectives and experiences. Although they may have held similar opinions, not all local people identify with the celebration of Saint John Bonfires. This can be seen with local respondent #4, who did not feel connected to the festival in anyway and instead felt that it caused a hindrance to their everyday life. When an event unfolds in a specific place, some people will feel involved while others do not feel a part of the process or a sense of belonging. This may be caused by a clash of values or outlooks. There are other elements that connect to identification, such as meaning, satisfaction and image.

The ‘*meaning*’ that individuals might have attached to an event can differ due to personal, social and cultural variables (Getz, 2007). Therefore, it is important to highlight the real perceived meaning that both groups and the researcher have as related to the Saint John Bonfires celebration. It can be said that if they feel identified with the celebration, there is

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underlying meaning to the event. For local people, the real meaning of the celebration is to be with the significant people in their worlds, such as friends and family. The researcher expressed too the same meaning and this is their meaning. On the other hand, members also gain meaning from the relationships they develop through jointly organizing the event together. This can be considered social meaning due to working together with like-mindedness to facilitate a an event targeting the whole city. There would undoubtedly be a strong union between the broader community and also the individual.

Following the main perceptions that both groups and researcher have, one can discuss the images that individuals have when the event takes place in their city. Lynch (1960) defines image as the impressions, ideas, thoughts and perception general that individuals have about something. The definition of Lynch corresponds with several of the interview and researcher findings, obtained from local people and members of commissions. Firstly, local people and researcher have the image of Alicante as a tourist destination. During festival days, many visitants come to behold and experience the celebrations. In addition to this, the researcher bring hat the city is considered touristic only in the sun and a beach manner. Due to the celebration, it can bring another type of tourist and also image different from those visitants. Another image they have is the decoration and the bonfires in every area of Alicante. Some believe that decorations and monuments make the city special and magical. This ‘special’ time is heightened by the addition of noise and music. Schneider et al., (1999) writes that the individuals and their acts and activities contribute to shaping the image of a certain place. In the case of the Alicante locals, it is due to their presence and participation in the festival atmosphere that the image of ‘party’ really comes alive during the celebration.

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As can be noted by the local informants in this study, however, it is also possible for Alicante locals to have a negative image of the festival. This image is formed by unpleasant elements like the dirtiness of streets and public areas and ‘careless’ environment shaped by the behaviors of some foreign attendees. Some member informants also acknowledged this negative image.

The image commissions seemed to have formed revolves around values of dedication, love and pride. Based from interviews, it seems also likely that members have formed the image of coordination and organization. Members highlight that the city has changed its own image through the course of having an annual festival. The real impression the informants wished to convey was surrounding a belief in unity, with an annual celebrations that touches the entire city and encourages each neighborhood to participate.

To summarize, the main image of the festival is about cooperation, collaboration and participation. All of these elements are considered a package that produces the image visitors and residents possess from the community (Derrett, 2004).

Moving on from the analysis of the festival’s image and image it creates for the city of Alicante, it makes sense to explore the ‘*experience and evaluation of the celebration*’ from the perspectives of respondents. The local people and member informants expressed different perspectives relating to the evaluation and experience of the event. First off, the local informants said that they had some negative experiences of the annual festival. Regardless, based on analysis of the interviews as a whole, it is clear that the local informants do have some positive experience because three of them are motivated to continue participating and attending the event each year. All four respondents from the local group believed that the

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festival was generally a good thing for the city and for tourism. The local informants express a desire to continue attending the festival in order to experience a good time with their friends and family and those closest to them. Local people connected their satisfaction of the event to the people themselves, moreso than the external activities (aside from the physical beauty of the event unfolding in their city).

On the other hand, the member respondents presented almost an entirely positive evaluation of the event. As Getz (2007) claims, if the individuals have a positive feedback from the event it is because they feel identified with it and this adds meaning. It is quite understandable that members convey positive evaluations of Saint John Bonfires due to their very committed roles. Their direct participation and volunteer time ensures that they interpret the event as a success once it comes to an end. Finally, it is interesting to add that the researcher experience is closed and linked with the member informants because it has experience the celebration as a participant and as a local. However, it has pointed out some troubles, but there are considered as a normal in every event.

Decision-making

This section presents some unexpected findings explaining the '*motivation*', '*attractiveness of the event*' and '*loyalty to the celebration.*'

As Getz (2007) explains, there is a difference between attending an event and participating in an event. That difference is clarified between the varied activities of local people, who are the individuals that attend the celebration, and the members of commissions who participate in the celebration and perform. In addition, it is possible to include the both perspective from the researcher experience due to it has been both in a different years. There

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are three characteristics that compose decision-making processes for both groups. The first characteristic is *motivation*. Local people feel motivated to attend the celebration for a variety of reasons such as visiting the activities and acts for entertainment. The informants from this study expressed doing this because they are from Alicante and it is the main celebration in their city; additionally that they enjoy the shared experiences with their close friends and family. Iso-Ahola (1980) writes that individuals have the motivation to attend or participate in an event because they have the drive to meet a need. The local people have needs to join the celebration because it is a representation of their city, thus part of their identity. In the same manner, researcher recognized its motivation. Members conveyed their main motivation as keeping up a custom or tradition in their own family. This means that members of commissions in Saint John Bonfire's celebration follow the tradition of previous family members, desiring to belong to an organization in their neighborhood and to represent a pride, identity and strong geographic meaning.

The attractiveness of the event an event is also a significant motivational factor for participation and attendance. According to Getz (2007) there are many characteristics that make the event attractive, such as the quality of an environment, the itinerary of events, the satisfactory of arrangement, its size, epoch and reputation and also its exclusivity. It is likely that the 'exclusivity of being an organizer and performer in a commission is an attractive draw. Local people, members of commission and researcher point out that the principal attractiveness is of the Saint John Bonfires celebration are the special activities and also the general atmosphere of the party. Getz (2007) states that these factors are necessary to draw in attendees and make an event attractive. The members of commissions interviewed for this study stated that everything in the party is attractive, which is why they enjoy the event and

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feel comfortable. One local respondent raised an issue with the amount of money spent on putting the celebration together each year, making this an unattractive element of the event (local respondent #4). Some believe that Saint John Bonfires has a reputation for being costly. This money is spent to prepare each bonfire and monument and also for decorating each district. This could be reversed into a positive element, being that the money spent on decorations actually makes the city special and attractive for a period of time, furthermore that it makes this time stand out from the regular everyday. The local informants expressed spending a lot of money on food and extra things during the event as well.

How loyal do residents and members feel towards attending or participating in the celebration every year? The *loyalty to the celebration* is absolutely clear from the interview responses of members and also from the researcher. This is to be expected considering that they are the main organizing body and they have made a huge investment into the festival. The researcher expressed its loyalty by experience during 20 years. This loyalty extends to their self-concept as Saint John Bonfires celebration is a lifestyle for many. To some, this is the highlight of their year. "Loyalty might also be a lifestyle factor stemming from events that fit one's work-life and social calendar" according to Getz (2007, p.252). The local informants on the other hand are loyal due to the tradition of the festival and popularity. All the local informants interviewed for this study point out that Saint John bonfires celebration is a traditional celebration in Alicante and also it is the most important in this city.

Future research

According to the view of the researcher, it is important to have a further research in this celebration in Alicante for several reasons:

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Firstly, the perspectives of data collected for this study can change every year with the evolution of the festival. These changes do not alter the perspectives of the informants introduced in this study, however add additional relevant understanding to the findings presented here. In this way, the study can be further actualized.

During the interview and analysis process, additional topics arose. This celebration in Alicante has additional issues to cover in order to improve the quality of the festival. This includes reviewing the styles of organization, types of people that visit, and responding to inadequate waste management and policing. That is why it would be significant to study how it is the organization and management the celebration, the involvement of the different stakeholders that elaborate the celebration every year and how the city can handle this type of event in an improved economical way.

I also recommend dedicating an entire study to the concept of sense of coherence and stress, as formulated by Antonovsky (1987)

Lastly, for further research to conduct interviews with informants face to face, in order to obtain the real essence of every perception and opinion from the individuals' experience.

Conclusion

This study has contributed a characterization and analysis of various aspects of the Saint John Bonfires celebration in Alicante city, Spain. It gives wider explanation about the different perceptions of informants from local people's perspectives to those from the members of commissions. In addition, the opinions and thoughts from my own experience as researcher have been included throughout the study. This study used the perspectives of inclusion, positive and negative experience and city pride as considerations of the festival. The concept of *sense of coherence* was defined and understood through the different elements of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness in relation to the celebration in Alicante city. Sense of coherence also examines identity, meaning and image in relation to festival activities. This thesis presented findings from eight respondents with different positions and relationships to the festival, and also the researcher results effectively answering the research questions:

What is Saint John Bonfire's celebration?

It might be argued that Saint John Bonfire's celebration is a local and cultural festival with religious roots in Alicante city. It is believed that this event has a variety of influences from different times including pagan rituals, a focus on the summer solstice, but also the inclusion of Christian beliefs with the inclusion of Saint John. In addition, it is considered local because the entire city is involved during the principal days and the celebration takes place across the entire city.

According to the history, it might be said that Saint John Bonfires celebration is rich in many traditions such as burn old furniture in old days and elaborate bonfires monuments with

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artistically manner in the current days. It is possible to say and also the founder Jose Maria Py said that Saint John Bonfires is especially for Alicante people highlights it. The reason is because in the way is celebrated the party it has a particular understanding for those individuals that live and are from Alicante. Those particular things are the bonfires monuments, fireworks, voluntary work in the commissions of every neighborhood, etc. Finally, it might be pointed out that Saint John Bonfire's celebration consists: the monuments of bonfires, commissions, parades, fireworks, traditional music and dress, and also decoration and illuminations on the streets.

How do the local people as stakeholders perceive the event?

According to the four local respondents, the main perspectives are a weak positive due to they can see more from outside manner. Those four local responders highlighted some negative aspects and also that they cannot controlled during the celebration. Those aspects are related to the noise, control of the traffic and also about the public transport. It can be argued that those elements are quite normal during an event because if it is focus in this event, it is needed to block many streets and areas to be possible to have the party outside. Those people that were interviewed in the group of local people, they feel less blazed with the celebration because their perspective and experience it is from outside the celebration because they do not experience in direct manner.

However, they believe that the celebration is absolutely important for the city and they feel enthusiasm and gladness because they feel identify with the celebration. The identification with the celebration might be because it is represented the history, culture and

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traditions as it is named earlier. Those four local responders live the celebration with those people that are close to them and they want to experience and live in the same way.

What differences exist between the perception among members of commissions and local people?

It was possible to see some differences on the perception between those individuals were interviewed. For example, the four members responders pointed out that to be a member and also experience and participate in the celebration is a honor and prouder because they represent and are the important part of the celebration. However, those four local responders perceive more the celebration as a party with friends and family. Member's responders and local responder highlighted that the celebration is relevant and principal in Alicante city. The reason is because they keep the traditions such as burn bonfires, music, food, typical dress, etc. every year and that is possible to see the sense of belonging.

How weak or strong is the level of sense of coherence between local responders and members responder?

To summarize, it is clear that the four member responders present a strong sense of coherence due to they understand and perceive as a logical the event in the city. The reason is because those four individuals participate in the creation and also in the direct participation in the celebration. They want to make possible that everything is arranged and controlate in adequate manner. In addition, the four members try to manage well all issues and troubles that can appear when an event is n the city. It is believed that it is normal that some situations are uncontrollable for many people. In relation to the meaning, it might say that those member

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responders meaning is related to the family, tradition and also it presents the voluntary work, love, prouder and enthusiasm for the celebration.

In the case of those four local responder have a weak sense of coherence due to two of the three elements are not high. Those responders always highlighted that there are some issues with the noises, traffic, etc that they cannot control and also they do not see as a logical. Nevertheless, those individuals present a strong meaning that is related to family, friends and also because the celebration is a part important for the city and that involves the inhabitants.

Limitations of the study

The researcher confronted four primary limitations during the development of the investigation, however these limitations seem to have had no impact on the study's findings.

Qualitative studies do not have a principal guideline to follow during the realization of the study (Neuman, 2009). Due to the free flow of qualitative studies, it was possible to be flexible with the informant's responses, but it was also difficult at times to obtain clear and concise answers that are measurable. Therefore there is still some subjectivity in this study and it is not representative of the entire population of locals and members in Alicante, rather a glimpse of some participant's perspectives.

Secondly, the geographical location of the researcher has been a limitation to data collection, given that most printed materials and background data was of limited circulation in Spain, while the researcher was in Norway. The convenience of meeting up with informants for a second interview was not an option as a result. Interviews were conducted via email

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dialogue to allow flexibility in the different time schedules. Some individuals did not feel comfortable or did not have the enough time to talk with the researcher by other means, so this was appropriate. However email dialogue proved to be limiting as some questions were responded to with adequate detail or elaborated. Despite sharing the same language, a future study would benefit from a field research trip for data collection.

The third limitation is due to the methodological selection of qualitative study, only eight people were interviewed in depth therefore their perspectives are not representative of the larger population, nor can they be generalized. Nevertheless, Neuman (2009) explains that qualitative studies reach the core of topics in a more exhaustive format, to provide an understanding of the thoughts and opinions of a few individuals and develop deep knowledge.

Another limitation of the study was about the language barrier. The questions and answers of the interview were made in Spanish due to those individuals that participate in the interview does not speak English. Some words and expression were complicated to translate from Spanish to English and lost part of their meaning. Some concepts do not have an adequate translation from Spanish to English. That explains why some words are kept in Spanish, to avoid loosing the nature of the concept and explanation.

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Appendix A: Request e-mail interview

Dear...

I am a graduate master student at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management at the University of Stavanger in Norway. I am in my last year of my master and I am writing my master thesis as principal part of my program study.

The topic of my thesis is about Saint John Bonfires celebration in Alicante. I thought it is an interesting event to study because what I saw not so many researchers have had the interest to investigate it. I would like to focus and analyze the meaning, experience, identity, perspectives from the two different groups of stakeholders such as: residents from Alicante city (they are not members of any bonfire) and members of bonfires. In addition to this, it would be also interesting to see the knowledge about the event such as history and evolution from the beginning until nowadays.

I would like to highlight that this thesis applies a qualitative research. For this reason, it is relevant to collect my data through interviewing people from the groups I have named before. It will be sincerely appreciative if you can have the opportunity to participate in this interview. The interview will be conducted by Skype or sending by e-mail. We can have the interview or send the question in the end of March. This interview is confidential and the achievement, it is to acquire the principal thoughts and opinions about each group.

I am looking forwards to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Best Regards

Aranzazu Lopez Garcia

Appendix B: Guideline of questions to Local people

1. What is Saint John Bonfire's celebration?
2. What is the evolution of the celebration from the Henning to current days?
3. What is your opinion about the celebration?
4. What is the main reason that you visit, experience or are near to the celebration?
5. What does it mean for you the celebration?
6. Describe the main reasons of why you feel identify with the celebration and people of Alicante in general. In the case of you do not feel identify, please explain the reasons.
7. How do you perceive the celebration during the main days of the celebration?
8. Describe your positive or negative experience of the celebration.
9. What type of feeling do you have when the celebration is in the city?
10. What type of impacts do you think the celebration have in the city?
11. What image presents the city before and during the celebration? What do you think is it positive or negative?

Appendix C: Guideline of members of commissions

1. What is Saint John Bonfire's celebration?
2. What is the evolution of the celebration from the Henning to current days?
3. What is your opinion about the celebration?
4. What is the reason that you participate in a commission of Saint John Bonfire's celebration in Alicante?
5. What does it mean for you to be a member of a commission in the celebration?
6. Describe the main reasons of why you feel identify with the celebration and people of Alicante in general. In the case of you do not feel identify, please explain the reasons.
7. How do you perceive the celebration during the main days of the celebration?
8. Describe your positive or negative experience of the celebration.
9. What type of feeling do you have when the celebration is in the city?
10. What type of impacts do you think the celebration have in the city?
11. What image presents the city before and during the celebration? What do you think is it positive or negative?