THE MANAGEMENT OF A GOVERNMENT-HOSTED FESTIVAL FROM STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES: INTERNATIONAL MANISA MESIR PASTE FESTIVAL[1]

Mustafa TEPECİ[2]
Department of Tourism Management, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0001-9311-1532

Ceren İŞÇİ
Department of Tourism Management, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0002-5712-1482

Zehra Gökçe SEL
Department of Tourism Management, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0001-6305-0492

Selim KIROVA
Department of Tourism Management, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0002-9025-6725

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine how a local government hosts and manages a large-scale festival from the perspectives of stakeholders, including the organizing committee members, government entities, academics, businesses, tourists, and residents. The study investigates the way International Manisa Mesir Paste Festival (hereafter Mesir Festival) is managed and detects how different entities explain the reasons of the success or failure of the public festival as well as providing recommendations to increase success. The research applies a qualitative method to explore the determinants of the success of this festival organization. In this study, researchers conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders. The findings reveal that public administration is prevalent and dominant in deciding the content and administration of the Mesir Festival. Three significant main themes were determined: shortcomings, benefits or contributions, and recommendations. The results indicate that the festival did not achieve any notable economic, social, or cultural gains, thus, shortcomings of the festival exceed its benefits. This research provides valuable insights into the study of festival management by extending our understandings of government-hosted and managed festivals.

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[2] Address correspondence to Mustafa Tepeci (Ph.D.), Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Business, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Manisa, Turkey. E-mail: mtepeci@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Major targets of both for-profits and not-for-profits (public) festivals are ensuring the success and sustainability of the events. Profit seeking festivals consider cost and earnings from the festival operations and services and adopt a marketing orientation (Todd et al., 2017). From economic and tourism related functions, festivals play a significant role in tourism destination by influencing tourists' decision making, promoting tourism destination, enriching visitor experiences and building and contributing to the destination image (Adongo & Kim, 2018; Andersson & Getz, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2004).

Most festivals are organized by public sectors and they do not seek profit, but serve the community (Andersson & Getz, 2008, p. 206; Mair, 2019, p. 3). Governments and municipalities support local or community festivals and events because they yield a range of benefits such as attracting new visitors to the destination, providing entertainment and recreation for the participants, improving festival related venue structures and the quality of life of residents, exposing a local culture of the region to visitors and strengthening a feeling of belongingness (Cho et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019).

In addition to the economic benefits, the social and cultural functions of festivals are of great importance for the destinations. Festivals add value to local culture, tradition and customs, as well as increase social cohesion, cultural and social progress (Frost & Laing, 2015; Mair, 2019; Quinn, 2006). Whether they are profit and not-for-profit sector festivals, some festivals have stalled or failed, some others have attained longevity and turned into hallmark tourist events and permanent business affairs (Todd et al., 2017).

The support of key stakeholders is fundamental to the realization of the economic, social, cultural, and ecological role of festivals at the tourism destination (Adongo & Kim, 2018; Andersson & Getz, 2008; Todd et al., 2017). For longevity and sustainability of festivals, all stakeholders must be involved in the planning process, and their goals and aspirations should be taken into account. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) assumes that an organization should consider and produce value for all stakeholders when committing their planning and operational actions.

Local festivals and events have become an important tourism product for attracting tourists to any destination (Adongo & Kim, 2018), and destinations use festivals as part of their destination marketing strategy (Getz, 2008). Economic, cultural, social, and environmental benefits are the goals that festival organizers, local authorities and funding agencies wish

to achieve; however, there is less evidence as to whether festivals are successful in achieving these goals or how these goals can be achieved. Whilst the potential gains of festivals have been clearly stated in many studies, studies on how to best attain these desired gains remain insufficient (Mair & Weber, 2019, p. 210). Further, the reasons for the success or failure of festivals needs to be investigated in detail to contribute to the knowledge gap in festival research.

The study explores how Mesir Festival is managed and detects how different entities explain the reasons of the success or failure of the festival as well as providing recommendations to increase success. The Mesir Festival involves culture, history, faith, and health themes that bring people from all over the world to Manisa in Turkey (Döner & Tepeci, 2014). The festival has been celebrated for 483 years and was included on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012. It is funded, staged and managed by an organizing committee which consists of the Governor Office, Metropolitan Municipality, Local Municipality, Association of Tourism and Promotion of Manisa and Mesir, and Provincial Culture and Tourism of Manisa. Considering the economic, social, and cultural effects of the festivals on the destinations, the governments assume various roles such as the host and manager of a festival, the provider of public resources, and the organizer of the festivals. Yet, it is rarely questioned how local municipalities or governments manage large-scale festivals and events involving numerous public, private, and civic organizations for their implementation (Cho et al., 2019, p. 174). The fragmented nature of previous research creates difficulties for researchers and practitioners in trying to determine existing knowledge and any research gaps (Mair & Weber, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Getz (2010, p. 30) defines festivals as "*themed and public celebrations.*" Getz et al. (2010, p. 30) further asserted that "*festivals celebrate community values, ideologies, identity and continuity.*" Festivals are a social phenomenon that are found in almost all cultures. In addition, cultural identities, historical continuity, and an ability to survive physically are believed to be strengthened by festivals (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006, p. 5). Considering that different cultural groups always need to celebrate creativity at a particular time and place (Turner, 1982, p. 11), festivals are intertwined with the social and cultural life of individuals. These events have become part of culture and social life (Derrett, 2004, p. 33). Festivals provide knowledge and

recognition about history, culture, traditions, aesthetics, folklore, music, dance, food and drink, myths, and other experiences of destination in which they take place. The themes and types of festivals are varied such as arts, religion, agriculture, culture, history, and local community themes (Wilson et al., 2017).

Getz (1997) states that performances in cultural events such as festivals are tools for learning and observing cultural elements of attendees. From this perspective, the interactions of participants from different cultures are of most interest. Festivals that bring unique characteristics of region and its people, have a strong connection with the tourism phenomenon. The people of the region participate in festivals both as visitors and as employees and thus contribute to the return of social benefits. People feel more valuable, and social life is encouraged by festival participation (Gursoy et al., 2004). Sharing different cultures via exchange forums, developing an image of the venue as a cultural side, and entertaining attendees can be defined as the main purposes of festivals (Rolfe, 1992). Cultural festivals play an essential role for local communities in strengthening a sense of identity by promoting and preserving tradition and heritage. A local festival reflects a communities' core values and educates them about their history.

Festival Organizations

The purposes of festivals differ in several ways: they may pursue economic, cultural, social or environmental value, and they may be organized for not-for profit purposes or commercial purposes (Chang, 2020; Jarman, 2021). Festivals may be organized for urban regeneration, for changing a city's image, for destination marketing purposes and to serve as a showcase for creative industries such as music, visual arts, fashion design, and advertising (Chang, 2020).

The structures of festival organizations may be grouped into three models based on ownership and governance (Andersson & Getz, 2009, p. 255). A *public model* occurs when festivals are arranged and sponsored by a government or municipality in which costs and revenues are consolidated by government bodies and local authorities. Public festivals build upon local government grants and to some extent on ticket sales. In general, volunteers or workers of a public organization perform duties that they were assigned to do by their superiors. Decisions are taken by superiors in public festivals, but, centralized decision making benefits public festivals since decisions are taken quickly and implemented by everyone in the chain

of command. *The non-profit model* associates institutions that actualize festivals by gathering resources from a range of stakeholders and generating actions that interest them in some way. In the *private business model*, firms invest capital and other resources in festivals to generate profits. Considering the stakeholders, the local authority is the most important stakeholder of public festivals since they provide grants for the occasion. On the other hand, festival participants and tourists are great contributors to non-profit and private festivals. For non-profit festivals, volunteers are also considered crucial. Interestingly, the literature does not refer media as a critical stakeholder in any type of festival, and public festivals consider the audience as a stakeholder of less importance (Andersson & Getz, 2009, p. 258-259).

The organization of events requires professionalism at every stage of management functions. The governance of festivals includes leadership, planning, decision making, organizational structure, and volunteer participation. Getz (2002) recognizes that planning, human resources, and organizational culture are the most important determinants of the success of festivals. Organizers express the growing complexity of organizing festivals, and a lack of expertise is obvious in the organization of the festivals (Frost & Laing, 2015). According to Wilkinson (1993), successful event management is possible only if three conditions can be fulfilled: definitions of duties and responsibilities should be stated accurately in order to ensure that the needs of the event management can be met; the assigned duties and responsibilities must be given to persons and groups with characteristics that can fulfil them; a formal and feasible structure and an open planning process are needed to fulfil responsibilities; and the needs and organizational structure that cannot be clearly defined will cause the activity to fail regardless of whether it is big or small (Tiew et al., 2021).

There has been increased government involvement in event and festival organizations because governments desire to have influence on how events are marketed and managed (Devine & Devine, 2015). The government, or any political power, seeks to manifest its values and get support from the public. Further, events can offer a marketing opportunity which some governments utilize to reimage and re-brand their country or a destination within the country. Thus, events play a critical role in positioning destinations against their competitors (Duffy & Mair, 2021).

Government involvement in festivals is desirable for economic, social and environmental concerns. A lack of interest and demand from the private sector enforce governments and public institutions to engage in

events and festivals (Devine & Devine, 2015). Governments could benefit from festivals as these events can help overcome seasonality problems of tourist destinations and increase spreading earnings across the economy. Governments also bolster events for social equity considerations so that anyone in the community can afford to participate in some free-entry events; thus, increasing social cohesion, civic pride and mutual understanding. From an environmental mindset, however, events could place negative impacts on the resources and generate waste that have to be governed through different practices such as planning, regulations, penalties, or incentives. There are growing calls and pressures on governments to make certain that festivals are planned and realized in a sustainable way (Liu et al., 2019).

Festival Success

Festivals that support the development of the region and local people have become an integral part of tourism and marketing strategies today. As stated before, the economic, social, cultural, and ecological benefits are the goals that festival organizers seek to achieve at tourism destinations (Adongo & Kim, 2018). These benefits or impacts can be incorporated as a definition of festival success (Getz et al., 2010). Events and festivals have positive effects on the local economy by increasing income and creating employment opportunities for the local community. Festivals can be organized in off-seasons which create extra demand for tourism destinations and allow infrastructure and business areas to develop in the festival destination (Getz et al., 2010).

From a social perspective, festivals give opportunities for cultural sharing between different social groups and thus add to social cohesion within communities. Visitors get the opportunity to learn about unique cultural heritages and local traditions and customs. Moreover, social interaction leads to a sense of kinship in host communities, and this foster ties within society that enhance local pride in the community (Pavluković et al., 2017). Festivals also provide a space for displaying local culture to visitors and through cultural exchanges common understandings develop between hosts and guests. Festivals can create memorable experiences for visitors with attractive event programs (i.e., shows, stories, costumes) in the event venue (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002), thus promote destinations. Moreover, festival organizers show a greater awareness of green policies and develop events that are environmentally friendly (Adongo & Kim, 2018; Todd et al., 2017). Festivals often support public transport, lower on-site waste, reuse water, recycle, and promote green practices whenever

possible which draws appreciation from environmentally sensitive participants.

In a competitive festival environment, assessing festival success is a complicated issue. Yeoman et al. (2021) point out that the current literature undertakes internal success factors of festivals with a limited probing of the external environment and its influences. For example, previous studies reported that major success factors were long term viability, the role of local communities, variety of the program, products and service quality, visitor satisfaction and loyalty, effective promotion and marketing practices, management of the event, and stakeholder collaborations. Many studies focused on economic returns, and others included social, cultural, and environmental impacts as criteria for success. Yeoman et al. (2021) conclude that festival success is determined by the external environment as well and do include external political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legislative (PESTEL) factors.

The existing literature also concludes that some festivals have failed or stalled because of a lack of planning and management talent, inadequate promotion and marketing, unattractive venue, unchangeable event programs, a lack of sponsorship and budget, and inadequate collaboration among stakeholders (Getz, 2002). Unsuccessful festivals can have costs and negative impacts for the local community. These costs and impacts include negative environmental impacts (e.g., air and environmental pollution, congestion), increased prices of goods and services at the destination, and cultural degeneration and changes in the lifestyle of local people (Gursoy et al., 2002). Consequently, festival planners and organizers can achieve good results by determining the criteria that best evaluate festival success and by anticipating and eliminating failure factors and negative impacts.

Festival Stakeholders

Stakeholder refers to different groups of people that can influence or be influenced while organizing a festival. Freeman (1984, p. 25) defines stakeholders as "…*any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives.*" In a festival, there are various types of stakeholders such as visitors, residents, businesses, and public bodies which can have a direct or indirect effect on the process and success of the festival (Rust, 2020).

The stakeholder approach focuses on organizations' micro and macro environment that affect organizational processes. There are some

strategic decisions about relationships with stakeholders such as growing, developing, maintaining, and abandoning (Batt & Purchase, 2004) or defending, monitoring, collaborating, and involving (Todd et al., 2017). This approach suggests that apart from the financial shareholders, there are other groups that may affect organization processes in different ways. Thus, festival managers must develop relationships among stakeholders so that they achieve collaboration and contributions from all parties.

Festival stakeholders may be classified in several ways. Reid and Arcodia (2002) offer a model indicating how events involve primary and secondary stakeholders; primary stakeholders are described as those on whom the festival is dependent (i.e., attendees, employees, participants, spectators, sponsors, suppliers, volunteers) whilst secondary stakeholders comprise businesses, essential services, government, host community, media, and tourist organizations. Primarily, stakeholders are categorized into internal stakeholders, who have a direct stake in the organization, and external stakeholders, whose stake is indirect. Liu et al. (2019, p. 297) suggested four main stakeholders for sustainable festival tourism: tourists, local people, government agencies (governorship, municipality, etc.), and businesses. In another classification, stakeholders were analyzed functionally as owners, employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, consumer advocates, environmentalist, special interest groups, media, governments, and local community organizations (Todd et al., 2017, p. 496).

Liu et al. (2019) assert that sustainable festivals should be encouraged, and this can be achieved by considering the perspectives and demands of all stakeholders. For the creation, stabilization, and sustainability of festivals, a communication network including official, state, and private stakeholders should be established, where information and ideas can be shared sincerely and openly and decisions taken with the participation of all parties (Getz, 2008; Quinn, 2006). The quality of relationships and cooperation between stakeholders has a direct impact on the success and sustainability of festivals. Liu et al. (2019) recognized the importance of multi-stakeholder participation in sustainable festival development and determined the sustainability indicators as environment, economy, politics, culture, society, and technology. According to the degree of importance among the four stakeholders in sustainable festival tourism, tourists were ranked the highest followed by residents, state institutions and business owners (Liu et al., 2019).

Previous research points out that stakeholder studies make businesses the center of attention, but neglect to investigate the content and

dimensions of interactions and collaborations among stakeholders. Though different actors from the business world (i.e., stakeholders) gather ``*to find a common approach to an issue than effects them all and that is too complex to be addressed effectively without a collaboration*`` (Roloff, 2008, p. 234-5). Roloff (2008) contends that organizations collaborate in multi-stakeholder networks, but stakeholder theory focuses on organizations themselves, not on collaborations between them. Because any organization's stakeholder context is unique (Donaldson & Preston, 1995), there is a need to investigate how stakeholder interaction and collaborations produce value and achieve the best results in a festival setting.

International Manisa Mesir Paste Festival

Manisa, with over 417.000 inhabitants, is a historical city which is located in the Aegean Region of Turkey. It is close to Izmir and the airport. The first known settlements around the region date back to the 14th century BC (Tepeci et al., 2019). The destination is famous for its history and the cultural symbol of Mesir Paste. The Mesir Festival, which is celebrated every year on the last week of April, is the most prominent tradition among the cultural values of the destination. In 2012, the Mesir Festival was included on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The festival contains many aspects, such as culture, heritage, tradition, religion, history, health, and gastronomy (Erdogan-Aksu, 2017). Although the main theme of the Mesir Festival is healthcare, it should be acknowledged that the festival has been shaped by the roots of historical tradition and spiritual rituals, of which religious and national values constitute a significant part (AREGEM, 2012).

The Mesir Festival has been celebrated since 1539. The festival, which has not lost its cultural and historical texture, has both art and cultural dimensions as well as health and faith tourism activities. Mesir paste contains 41 kinds of spices and is scattered to the public from the minarets of the historic Sultan Mosque. The activities listed on the event program are "music and dance activities," "visiting the historical mosques," "food contest," "festival cortege," "music and dance performances," "art events," "fairs and congresses" and "Mesir paste mixing ceremony" (Tepeci et al., 2019).

The emergence of Mesir paste as a medicinal food is based on a historical story (Erdogan-Aksu, 2017). Hafsa Sultan, mother of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, had contracted a disease that could not be diagnosed and cured in Manisa. For the treatment of this disease, *Merkez*

Efendi, the Central Head of the Sultan Mosque Madrasah prepared a paste consisting of a mixture of 41 kinds of plants and spices. This medicinal mixture, known today as Mesir paste, cured Hafsa Sultan in a short time. Hafsa Sultan, who is known for her kind personality, wanted to distribute the reclaimed mastic to the public on Nowruz Week (the first day of Spring). Mesir paste wrapped in small papers is thrown from the Sultan Mosque's minarets and rooftops. From that day onwards, this story provides the festive occasion in which Mesir paste is distributed from the Sultan Mosque in the same period every year.

The festival aims to let people re-enact this historical reality by bringing people to the mentioned historical period by embodying the festival with historical reenactments such as the ceremony representing Hafta Sultan's commendation to *Merkez Efendi*, the dissemination ceremony, praying ceremony for the souls of those who contributed to initiation of mesir, and a cortege march. Historical animation activities are social, cultural, educational, and entertaining, and consist of recreating and realizing facts and perspectives from the past, such as dressing in the clothes of the period, listening to their music, and eating their meals (Erdogan-Aksu, 2017, p. 95). The scattering of tons of mesir paste from the domes and minarets gathered around the Sultan Mosque is the most crowded and exciting part of the festival every year. The fact that this ritual is the last event of the last day of the festival and that it coincides with the weekend break contributes to the high level of participation.

As it can be understood from its historical story, the Mesir Festival is organized by the government. In the historical story, Merkez Efendi and Hafsa Sultan were scattering mesir paste from the minaret of the mosque to the public and now mesir paste is being scattered by the ruling protocol of the period today. Preservation of the festival within the scope of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List is a major factor for the government in its supporting the festival financially. The governmental institutions organizing the festival sponsor the festival and create economic vitality because the money is spent locally.

In the festival, to which the government officials personally attend as a protocol, the government ensures the continuation of the order and demonstrates its power (Erdogan-Aksu, 2017). The Mesir festival is an important event since it has a deep-rooted story and, thanks to this story, it connects the participants and acts as a scene for cultural communication. To increase this cultural communication and to bring the festival an international scope, the organizing committee promotes the festival in

domestic and international arenas, and it invites ambassadors, students, athletes, folklore groups, and eminent guests to the festival from neighboring countries as well as sponsoring their travel and accommodation expenses. There is no entrance fee to the festival area, and all organized events are free of charge for participants. Thus, social, cultural, and political goals are given more weight and even preferred over economic gains.

METHODOLOGY

The present study investigates how a local government hosts and manages a large-scale festival from the perspectives of stakeholders, including the organizing committee, government entities, academics, businesses, tourists, and residents. The current study aims to describe and examine a limited situation in depth (Merriam, 2013) and to be limited by certain parameters such as a specific time and place (Creswell, 2013) which necessitated the case study design. The purpose of this case study is to understand and reveal the stakeholders' assessments of the Mesir Festival in terms of organizational structure, evaluation (shortcomings, perceived benefit, festival content, stakeholder participation, festival marketing) and longevity.

Table 1. *Dimensions and Sub-dimensions in Developing Interview Questions*

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions in developing interview questions	Source
Organizational structure	Organizing team Management responsibility Festival budget and sponsorship	Getz and Frisby (1988); Getz (1993); Allen et al. (2002); Preston (2012); Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007)
Evaluation	Festival program Cultural elements Benefits (economic, social, cultural) of organizing the festival regarding the Manisa destination Shortcomings of the festival Collaboration of stakeholders Festival marketing	Gursoy et al. (2004); Andersson and Getz (2008); Morgan (2008); Yan et al. (2012); Tanford and Jung (2017); Adongo and Kim (2018)
Longevity	Longevity of the festival Recommendations for improving	Getz (2002); Andersson and Getz (2008); Liu et al. (2019)

The main research question of the current study is how Mesir Festival is managed. Addressing this question, the study detects how different stakeholders explain the reasons of the success or failure of the public festival as well as provide recommendations to increase success. An interview form was developed for the field study. First of all, three

dimensions and eleven sub-dimensions adapted from the festival tourism literature were determined for the basic research questions. Later, fifteen semi-structured interview questions were generated within the scope of these dimensions. The transformation of the determined dimensions into the questions was carried out by two expert researchers from the research team. A semi-structured question type was preferred because the sample unit consisted of different stakeholders and some stakeholders had insufficient information in some dimensions (for example, the organizational structure of the festival was not known by the tourists). Identified dimensions, sub-dimensions, and the relevant literature cited are shown in Table 1.

Sampling and Data Collections

Purposeful sampling was preferred for data formation. In the current study, it was necessary to use the purposive sampling method, one of the non-probabilistic sampling techniques, due to the fact that as the exact number of the population was not known, it was difficult to determine a sampling frame, and there is no generalization claim in the research. Maxwell (2018) states that one of the purposes of selecting purposive sampling is to select the groups and participants that will allow the research questions to be answered in the best way and one with which you can establish the most productive relationships. In accordance with the stated purpose, the research participants were selected from those who were thought to have more knowledge about the Mesir Festival and were involved in the organization of the festival.

In the phase of sampling, some organizing committee members were determined and interviewed. Then, some of them, in turn, guided us to find other stakeholders who could give detailed information about festival organization. Assuming that they will know more about the Mesir Festival, residents who have lived in Manisa for many years as well as tourists who had participated in the festival more than once, were chosen for data collection. The sample of the study comprises Metropolitan Municipality Officials assigned for the festival organization, the Vice Governor of Manisa, the Director of Association of Tourism and Promotion of Manisa and Mesir, and the Cultural Director of Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, hotel and travel agencies managers, local residents, and festival tourists. The sample contains both governmental and non-governmental entities, private businesses, and other stakeholders such as residents and tourists. Researchers stopped the interviewing process when the data became saturated. Data saturation, meaning that no new codes

emerged from the analysis, was reached after 22 interviews. Two additional interviews were performed in which data saturation was confirmed without additional material as suggested by Francis et al. (2010, p. 1234).

The current study is based on Lui et al.'s (2019) festival stakeholder classification. In this study, stakeholders were classified as business owners, government agencies, tourists, and residents. 22 stakeholders were interviewed during the data collection process of the current research. These participants consist of 8 tourism business owners and managers, 8 government agencies (5 public officials and 3 academicians at local university), 3 tourists, and 3 residents. The profiles of the participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Profiles of the Participants*

Stakeholders	Respondents' Position	Gender	Age
1. Travel Agency	Manager	M	43
2. Hotel	General Manager	M	45
3. Hotel	General Manager	M	38
4. Hotel	General Manager	M	48
5. Travel Agency	Manager	M	50
6. Hotel	General Manager	M	55
7. Hotel	General Manager	M	35
8. Hotel	General Manager	M	35
9. Şehzadeler Municapality	Public Relations Director	M	56
10. Metropolitan Municipality	Public Relations Director	F	45
11. Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism	Director	M	55
12. Association of Tourism and Promotion of Manisa and Mesir	President	M	56
13. Governor Office	Vice Governor	M	51
14. Academics	Associate Professor (History)	M	60
15. Academics	Professor (Tourism)	M	50
16. Academics	Professor (International Trade)	M	58
17. Tourist	Government employee	M	26
18. Tourist	Officer	F	28
19. Tourist	Civil servant	M	52
20. Resident	Volunteer-Graduate Student	F	28
21. Resident	Retired-Book seller	M	65
22. Resident	Officer	M	41

All interviews were recorded via voice recorder after permission had been granted by respondents. The duration of the interviews lasted approximately 45 to 90 minutes. Tourists and local people were interviewed at the researchers' offices, and the other participants were interviewed at their offices in their own institutions. Interviews were conducted face-to-face by a member of the research team with a prior appointment. Data collection was carried out between July 2018 and March 2019.

Validity and Reliability

All the authors of the study participated in the Mesir Paste Festival held in recent years, observed the organization, and the structure of the festival, and exchanged views with local people, organizing committee members, entrepreneurs, and visitors. Therefore, they were informed about the organization of the festival, its advantages, problems encountered, and its potential contributions. The observations and participations of the researchers improve the validity of qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013, p. 250-251). The data analysis was made with descriptive and content analysis methods. In addition, the word cloud analysis showed the visual representation of the text data related to the subject. The use of such different analyses and alternative approaches strengthens the internal validity of the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 291). The findings of the study were shared with the stakeholders and the stakeholders endorsed the findings that reflect the current state of the festival; thus, contributing to the validity (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 291).

The analysis of the findings was made by the authors separately and the results were compared. In general, it was observed that the analyses of the researchers were compatible with each other. These comparative analyses are important for the reliability of the study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 291). In the study, a qualitative analysis program was used. The use of such programs increases the reliability of the study by minimizing human errors (Creswell, 2013, p. 254).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data obtained from interviews were subjected to content and descriptive analysis. The main themes and sub-codes resulting from the analysis were presented as the findings of the study. The researchers have transcribed all voice records into text file. Open coding method was applied for analyzing the texts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). During open coding process, main themes and subthemes have been determined (Patton, 2002). The findings of the research were explained by referring to quotes derived from the interviewers. More than one researcher participated in the analysis process for the reliability and validity of the study. Data analysis was made in line with the principles of sufficient participation and maximum diversity (Merriam, 2013).

The interview data acquired from stakeholders were transferred to Nvivo 11 package program and subjected to content analysis. Four separate,

independent researchers analyzed and compared the themes, codes, and data matching, and reached a consensus. Codes reiterating twice or less frequently were excluded from the analysis.

Themes and Codes

In the first stage of the analysis, questions about festival organization (stakeholders except 3 tourists answered these questions) were analyzed. These descriptive questions consist of questions about the organizing team, management responsibility and sponsorship. Participants (n=19) of the study stated that the organizing committee included various actors. In that committee, everybody had different duties and responsibilities. The head of the committee was the vice governor of Manisa. The committee consisted of five main actors including Governorship, Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, Metropolitan Municipality, Şehzadeler Municipality, and Association of Tourism and Promotion of Manisa and Mesir. The festival budget is determined by the committee, and Manisa Metropolitan Municipality and Şehzadeler Municipality provide monetary support. The interview findings revealed that public administration at the committee was dominant. The private sector was not represented at the committee, and they were not included in the decision making of the festival.

In the second stage, the data obtained from the evaluation and longevity dimensions were analyzed. Three themes and 21 codes were attained as a result of the content analysis. The dimensions and sub-dimensions (organizational structure, evaluation and longevity, see Table 1) in the conceptual framework were renamed according to the codes that emerged as a result of the analysis (see Table 2). In the data analysis, themes of *shortcomings, benefits* and *recommendations* were noted. Table 3 presents the themes and codes attained. The codes were also shown in Table 3 with frequencies and based on the stakeholders who mentioned the specific code.

Ten negative codes were determined within the scope of "Shortcomings". Codes of "festival gaining an international scope in recent years", "contribution to the promotion of destination", "generating economic benefits" and "increasing social interactions and the sense of belongingness'" were determined under the theme of "Benefits or Contributions of Festival". Finally, "Recommendations for the Mesir Festival" theme included 7 subthemes.

Table 3. *Themes and Codes*

THEMES	CODES	TOURISM BUSINESSES (n=8)	PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS (n=5)	ACADEMICS (n=3)	TOURIST (n=3)	RESIDENT (n=3)	TOTAL (n=22)
Shortcomings of the Festival	(-) Inadequacy of the festival program content - not reflecting the local cultural values adequately - unfavorable content	6	-	1	2	3	12
	(-) Insufficient number of visitors	3	1	3	3	2	12
	(-) Lack of festival promotion	4	3	1	1	3	12
	(-) Lack of collaboration and support of stakeholders in the organization of the Mesir Festival	7	1	2	-	-	10
	(-) Insufficient economic benefits to the area	4	1	1	-	1	7
	(-) Souvenirs do not reflect the local cultural values	2	1	1	-	1	5
	(-) Decreasing number of visitors – decrease in interest	2	1	-	-	1	4
	(-) Negative environmental effects of the festival	-	-	1	1	2	4
	(-) Inadequacy of accommodation capacity	1	-	2	-	1	4
	(-) Lack of professional tourist guides and human resources at the destination	1	-	1	-	1	3
Benefits or Contributions	(+) Festival gaining an international scope in recent years	1	1	3	-	1	6
	(+) Contribution to the promotion of destination	1	1	-	1	1	4
	(+) Generating economic benefits	1	-	1	-	2	4
	(+) Increasing social interactions and the sense of belongingness	1	-	-	2	-	3
Recommendations	Stimulating promotion- prioritizing health themes in promotion	6	2	2	3	1	14
	Enhancing collaboration among stakeholders	3	5	3	-	3	14
	Improving and diversifying the festival program	5	1	2	1	3	12
	Integrated and experimental marketing	4	-	2	2	2	10
	Increasing the budget	3	-	2	-	1	6
	Offering variety of local souvenirs	1	-	2	1	1	5
	Physical improvements and arrangements at the festival area	2	-	2	-	-	4

Theme 1: Shortcomings of the Festival

Negative (10) codes appeared under the shortcomings of the festival theme (Table 3). Within the scope of negative evaluations, the codes stated by a great majority of the participants (n=12) were related to the inadequacy of the festival program content, insufficient number of visitors and a lack of

promotion for the festival. According to the participants, the reason for insufficient number of visitors is the lack of festival promotion and inadequate aspects of the festival program content:

"…..None of the attendants from neighboring cities or invited participants arrive specifically to visit the festival. Ways to make the festival more attractive to tourists must be considered. People relate Mesir only with a cortege and the dissemination event (throwing Mesir Paste from the minarets). We know nothing of other aspects of the program. I don't think the core of the festival is well-represented." [Respondent 2]

"Our biggest criticism is the failure to attract people and promote the event well enough. The festival is not adequately included in the national press. It's unknown even in Izmir (15 miles away from Manisa; the third biggest city in Turkey). There is almost no promotion involved here." [Respondent 21]

Another negative aspect stated by the participants was the lack of collaboration between stakeholders and support for them (n=10). Moreover, insufficient economic benefits to the area (n=7), souvenirs which do not reflect the local cultural values (n=5), decreasing numbers of visitors and decrease in interest (n=4), and negative environmental effects of the festival (n=4) were also detected as shortcomings. Lack of collaboration and support for stakeholders have been stated most frequently by tourism businesses in the area (n=7). The lack of collaboration has been explained by participants that the tourism businesses in the area, members of the Tourism Management Association, or other stakeholders, primarily the university, are not included in the Mesir Festival Committee (the committee in charge of the organization). A participant stated this issue as follows:

"A committee led by the Metropolitan Municipality and the Governorship… They decide on their own…" [Respondent 1]

Tour operators and local people state that there is a decline in the number of tourists. Moreover, participants asserted that the festival does not create enough economic benefits. The souvenirs which do not reflect the culture of the area were also detected as one of the shortcomings. A participant stated that nonlocal souvenirs are sold at the festival as shown in the following quote:

"We had a great idea about what we can do for souvenirs in Manisa. The artisans and craftsmen can make local souvenir products. The local artisans and craftsmen said that they can make local and cultural handmade products, but there was no action. Imported scarves and shawls are sold to foreigners who visit Manisa. Those are foreign things for Manisa" [Respondent 21]

The festival also has some negative impacts on natural environment (n=4). After the mesir paste ceremony, there are lots of garbage around the event area and at the foot of Spil Mountain. In addition, mesir packaging was found to be of particular concern to local residents:

"Only mess and dirtiness remains. Environmental pollution is created in a large scale. Come and see what Ulupark looks like on Sunday, such a disrespect." [Respondent 21]

"….however, I think it is also harmful to nature and the environment. The litterers come and watch the promenade from the mountainside. They destroy the fields there" [Respondent 22]

The participants also mentioned weaknesses in regard to the accommodation capacity of Manisa and the lack of tourist guides in the area. First, Manisa does not have enough accommodation to host tourists for an international festival (n=4). Second, there is a lack of expert local professional tourist guides to introduce the destination to the guests and also insufficient qualified human resources in festival tourism (n=3). Respondents explained this issue in the following quotes:

" … but our hotels do not have enough capacity. People have to stay in the surrounding provinces. You invite them to Manisa. But they stay in Izmir. I think this is a big problem." [Respondent 1]

"The manpower involved in the festival is inadequate and unqualified. Training people for the festival operations should be provided, and there should be some human resources to work voluntarily within the scope of the festival. University students can take part in paid and volunteer work within the festival, but they also need to be trained. The number of guides who can provide guidance services to visitor groups in Manisa is also insufficient." [Respondent 18]

Theme 2: Benefits or Contributions of the Festival

Most frequently reiterating positive code (n=6) has been that the festival has gained an international scope in recent years. Opinions of participants stating this notion gather around two focal points. First, the notion that the festival's identity gained an international dimension after 2012, when it was included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, despite not having a significant effect in practice. The second point is the festival program having an international dimension in recent years especially with inclusion of invited foreign ambassadors and folklore groups. However, all participants stating their opinion on this aspect (n=6) agreed that no foreign tourists visit the festival, and that the majority of foreign guests are either

invited or assigned participants. The notion of internationalization was stated as follows by the participant 18:

"As of 2012, Mesir Festival has been included in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, accelerating the efforts for internationalizing the festival before 2012. Visits by foreign tourists are also highly limited. Most foreign visitors are invited by town administrators, ambassadors, and folk-dance groups of mostly Balkan and Turkic republics." [Respondent 18]

As a positive aspect in the impact of the Mesir Festival, it was stated that the festival contributes to the promotion of destination (n=4), generates economic benefits (n=4), and enhances social interactions and the sense of belongingness among residents (n=3). The following statements were made on this aspect:

"…contributes to the promotion of the region. [Respondent 1]" "…Additionally, I can say that it provides an environment to establish relationships and socialize among people from highly different economic, cultural, and professional groups due to its central location." [Respondent 1]

"The festival provides short-term positive economic outputs for both local shops and accommodation businesses. During the festival, the population of the central city increases and the city marketplace becomes reinvigorated. Visitors do spend money, even if at a low level. For example, a person staying for a day at the organization area spends money for food and beverages, souvenirs, and shopping activities."[Respondent 15]

Theme 3: Recommendations for Mesir Festival

Stakeholders made suggestions regarding how the Manisa Mesir Festival can attract more visitors. The recommendations are classified into seven key codes. First, improving promotion activities (n=14) was recommended by stakeholders. The suggestions offered in this regard include increasing the promotion budget, promoting the festival in TV programs, increasing social media displays, making interactive web pages, focusing on international promotions, promoting the festival by participating in fairs, changing the promotional language and deploying storytelling techniques, increasing the attraction of the destination with documentaries, contacting media representatives (and influencers), highlighting the theme of health in the festival, and thus addressing third age tourism needs and preferences.

Second, cooperation should be increased among all stakeholders. Participants suggested collaboration among all stakeholders in the mesir organization in general (n = 14). Within the area of festival shortcomings,

the participants (n = 10) stated that there is no cooperation in the organization of the festival and that stakeholders should be included in all stages of festival organization. For instance, by improving collaborations with the university, the festival committee could offer more space (e.g., conference rooms, recreational and sport facilities, restaurants, cafes, and shopping mall) and activities (theatre, music, art exhibitions, handicrafts, fashion shows) to festival participants.

Third, a need to improve and diversify the festival program (n = 12) was expressed. Suggestions on this subject include organizing theater performances, focusing on entertainment, organizing different traditional competitions (horse riding, tennis tournament, art contest etc.), conducting conversation days, organizing various scientific events and conferences at festival time, organizing local food competitions, using different locations for mesir distribution (distribution in the form of giveaways to prevent congestion during distribution ceremony), and arranging mesir preparation workshops.

Employing integrated marketing communications and experiential marketing (n=10) were the fourth suggestion. This could be achieved by organizing mesir tour, creating routes in Manisa, forming package programs, and ensuring that festivals and other attractions are visited. The respondents (15 and 22) explained the integrated marketing communication issue with the following words:

> *"It would be wrong to wait for foreign visitors to come to Manisa only to attend the Mesir Festival. Cultural and historical values should be presented as visitor attractions to tourists. Manisa has three of the first seven churches of Christianity in Sardes, Theatre and Philadelphia, tour groups should be brought to Manisa at the week of Mesir to experience the city."* [Respondent 15]

> *"There is nothing in the festival to reflect our local culture. There is excavation in Sart. There is a small replica house. It is important to display all these riches and attractions of Manisa. The places in the city center should also be well organized so that tourists experience all touristic offerings and spend money."* [Respondent 22]

Participants suggested to carry out experiential marketing practices at the destination. Experiential marketing practices are related to the mesir ceremony and the active participation of its participants. For example, a participant (20) offers the following suggestion regarding experiential marketing:

"Big boilers should be set up in the city center at various points on the festival day. In these boilers, mesir paste should be prepared by mixing 41 kinds of spices in front of the tourists. Tourists should be given a chance and opportunity to prepare their own Mesir paste." [Respondent 20]

Fifth, the budget needs to be increased (n = 6). It was stated that the budget should be increased in order to expand the promotion and program content of the festival. Further, with a higher budget a professional team may be hired to improve services and the content of the festival.

Sixth, souvenirs should be original and locally produced (n = 6). Participants state that souvenirs representing the region (e.g., Lydian coins, figures representing Aigiai and Sardes, various knick-knacks, statuettes, handicrafts, etc.) should be sold in shops.

Lastly, the seventh recommendation is that physical improvements and arrangements at the festival area must be considered (n = 4). For example, places where the public can watch the shows and seating places in the event area should be created.

Festival Perception

In the second stage of the analysis, stakeholders' descriptions of the Mesir Festival were examined and a word cloud was created. The main purpose of this analysis is to reveal the perspectives of the stakeholders towards the Mesir Festival. Less than three-letter words and conjunctions of "and" and "or" were not included in the analysis. In addition, the words Mesir, paste, and festival and words not directly related to the festival were excluded from the analysis. Suffixes, similar words and reinforcement suffixes taken by words were accepted as one word. Word strings that have a single meaning (e.g. distribution ceremony, Sultan Mosque) were combined before the analysis. The words used synonymously according to the meanings of the words are clustered as a single word. For example, the mosque used by the participants is the Sultan Mosque where mesir distribution is made. Therefore, Sultan Mosque and mosque are counted as the same word. The clustering of words was carried out by four independent researchers, word groups were compared, and a consensus was reached. A double-sided control was made in the translation of the words into English. The determined Turkish words were first translated into English by two expert academicians, then the translated words were further translated and checked by two different academicians, and a consensus was reached on the final words. Words with less than two

repetitions are not included in the word cloud. Common words in the word cloud are shown in the center and in larger characters (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Perception Against Mesir Festival: Word Cloud*

The frequency and percentage information of the words in the word cloud are included in Table 4. According to the findings, the first 10 words and word strings frequently used by stakeholders as the following: historical (f=47), distribution ceremony (f=33), stirring (f=26), traditional (f=24), Manisa (f=23), event (f=22), parade (f=19), health (f=16), and field (f=16). When Table 4 is examined, the words frequently used by the stakeholders can be grouped as the cultural value of the festival (historical, traditional, value, celebration, etc.), the festival program (distribution ceremony, stirring, parade, etc.), the relationship of the festival with tourism (cultural heritage list, tourism, participant, promotion, preservation, etc.), and the concepts related to economic activity (benefit, shopping, etc.).

Table 4. *Perception Against Mesir Festival: Word Frequency Distribution*

Word	Similar Words	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Historical	historic, past, retrospective, annual, before, for years, centuries old, old, in old times, ago, before, back, in time, rooted, well established	47	10,28%
Distribution ceremony	throwing, scattered, passing out, grabbing, catching a piece of Mesir paste	33	7,22%
Stirring	blended, mixed, cooked, mixture, confection	26	5,69%
Traditional	custom, culture, essence, core, original, authentic, cultural, ritual	24	5,25%
Manisa	city of princess, city, province	23	5,03%
Event	events, art events, activities, organization	22	4,81%

Parade	cortege, member of Janissary band (of musicians)	19	4,16%
Health	wellness, welfare, healing, cure, medicine, ailment, physician	16	3,50%
Field	square, place, Cumhuriyet square	16	3,50%
People	human, individuals, kids	13	2,84%
Value	worthiness, richness, merit	11	2,41%
Celebration	celebrated, festivity	11	2,41%
Faith	belief, believe in	10	2,19%
Sultan Mosque	mosque, complex of buildings adjacent to a mosque	10	2,19%
Significant		9	1,97%
Ceremony	ceremonial, celebration	8	1,75%
Nowruz (new day)	on the day of Nowruz	8	1,75%
Exhibition	photography exhibition, art gallery	8	1,75%
Animation	costume, performer, representation, characters	8	1,75%
Participant	attendance, guest, visitation	7	1,53%
Cultural heritage list	list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity	7	1,53%
Ottoman		7	1,53%
Community	People	7	1,53%
Program	scheduled, contents	7	1,53%
Pray	Islamic memorial service	6	1,31%
Dome	from minarets	6	1,31%
Concert	Concerts	6	1,31%
Shopping	sales, souvenir	6	1,31%
Food contest		5	1,09%
Sultan	Hafsa Sultan	5	1,09%
Metropolitan municipality		5	1,09%
UNESCO		5	1,09%
Association	society, committee	5	1,09%
Change		5	1,09%
Spices	herb, plant	5	1,09%
Demonstration	theatre, cinema, film	4	0,88%
Togetherness	unity, collectiveness	4	0,88%
Institution	establishment, organization, nongovernmental organization	4	0,88%
Ruler	Prince	4	0,88%
Booth		4	0,88%
Festivity		3	0,66%
Benefit	Contribution	3	0,66%
Preservation	protected, conserved	3	0,66%
Tourism	touristic, touristic	3	0,66%
Promotion		3	0,66%
Conference	panel discussion, conversation	3	0,66%
Merkez Efendi (Chief physician of the Sultan mosque)		3	0,66%
			100%

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the interview data revealed that three significant main themes were determined regarding the perspectives of the 22 participants. These themes are called shortcomings of the festival, benefits or contributions of the festival, and recommendations for the festival. As can be seen from Table 3, shortcomings of the festival exceed the benefits. One can conclude that the management of the festival was not successful, and

the festival did not accomplish its desired goals such as contribution to the promotion of destination and generating economic benefits.

For the shortcomings of the festival four categories were dominant and each category was mentioned by ten or more participants. First, the festival program is insufficient, and the content does not reflect local cultural values sufficiently. Thus, inviting artists who are not suitable for the sprit and identity of the festival, the lack of activities in the program, and the repetition of the same events every year cause a decrease in visitor interest. Nevertheless, festival attendees want to experience the authentic cultural and social values of destinations and expect to see a surprising and innovative festival program (Cho et al., 2019; Todd et al., 2017).

Second, although it has deep-rooted history and a world heritage, the Mesir Festival did not receive the necessary attention from tourists, and the number of visitors to Manisa was below the expectations of the stakeholders. The participants of the festival are generally local people, but it has not been successful in attracting domestic and foreign visitors. Third, there were inadequacies in the promotion of the festival. Some participants stated that the festival is almost not promoted and a bigger budget should be allocated for promotion. Social media promotion, promotion of the festival at tourism fairs, and the shooting of TV, documentaries, and films would be effective in the promotion of the festival. Mair and Weber (2019, p. 211) report that social media increases festival attendance as well as positive word of mouth marketing. Mesir is made of herbs and spices, and the basis of its historical story is health. An effective marketing language that emphasizes the health aspect and the authentic cultural values of Manisa on social media would stimulate attendance at the festival.

Fourth, a lack of collaboration and support of stakeholders emerged as another important negative category. A collaborative approach is not adopted in festival management. The Mesir Festival is held under the direction of the Mesir Committee, and the committee has 5 members—the Governor Office, Metropolitan Municipality, Local Municipality, Association of Tourism and Promotion of Manisa and Mesir, and Provincial Culture and Tourism of Manisa. The festival is arranged and sponsored by the metropolitan and local municipalities, and costs and revenues are consolidated by these local authorities. A public execution committee consisting of subordinates and officers of the governor's office and municipalities perform routine duties of festival services that were assigned to them by their superior officers. From this structure, one can conclude that Mesir Festival in general lacks sophisticated management and professional

expertise. Consequently, there is a need for active collaborations among all stakeholders including the tourism businesses, residents, tourists, associations, vendors, sponsors, environmentalist groups, and the media for festival sustainability (Adongo & Kim, 2018; Liu et al., 2019; Todd et al., 2017).

The sustainability of festivals has been related to the event life cycle (Getz, 2002). The event life cycle influences the management structure, when people remain on the organizing committee for a long time they do not have creative ideas to revitalize the event in the decline stage. Reliance on the same people for a long time to organize a festival and giving them excessive responsibilities may lead to burnout (Frost & Laing, 2015). This seems to be the case of the Mesir festival since governor and municipality officials are responsible for the planning and conducting of the festival though they are not experts on these issues. Conversely, as in the organization of the Mesir Festival, the decisions are taken by superiors in public festivals; centralized decision-making benefits public festivals since decisions are taken quickly and implemented thoroughly by everyone in the chain of command (Andersson & Getz, 2009; Devine & Devine, 2015).

For the benefits or contributions of the festival, four categories emerged as the festival gaining international scope, contributing to the promotion of destination, generating economic benefits, and increasing social interactions and a sense of belonging. The small numbers of mentions (three to six) of these benefits indicate that the festival has a limited benefit to the area. In recent years and especially in 2012, the festival was included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, and foreign guests and officials (folklore teams, athletes, etc.) are invited. However, this internationalization effort does not mean that the festival is seen as an attraction factor by domestic and foreign tourists.

For the recommendations of the festival, there are some aspects of Manisa that need to be developed in festival tourism. These aspects are primarily prioritizing health aspects in festival promotion, enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, improving and diversifying the festival program, and including integrated and experimental marketing activities. Other shortcomings of the festival such as inadequate accommodation capacity, lack of professional guides and human resources in festival tourism, and poor quality of souvenirs available also need attention for festival operation. The first two of these shortcomings, in the case of high demand, can be overcome by utilizing the accommodations and human resources from the province of Izmir, which is geographically very close to

Manisa and considered as a well-developed tourism center. In addition, human resources can be trained by Manisa Celal Bayar University. Participants also evaluate the gift items sold at the festival as a weakness. In particular, the souvenirs presented and sold at the festival are criticized for not reflecting the culture of the region. However, considering the historical background of the region, there are many historical symbols that can utilized as souvenirs (e.g., money coins, ancient and natural landmarks).

The festival is not yet seen as a tourism activity by many stakeholders. The word cloud presented in the research supports this idea. The expressions used by the participants about the festival are concentrated on the cultural values of the festival, while the expressions about tourism are not frequently used. Participating stakeholders stated that to call the festival a tourism activity, it should be included in the integrated and experiential tourism marketing activities of the region. It is recommended that package tours should be organized for the natural and cultural attractions in the region (e.g., Sardes, Theatre, Philadelphia, Aigai, Spil Mountain, Kula houses, hot springs, etc.), tour routes should be determined and developed to be congruent with the festival dates. In the context of experiential marketing, the festival participants should be offered extraordinary experiences that will increase their entertainment-education-aesthetic-escape experiences. For example, in the entertainment-education experience axis, the participants could stir and cook Mesir Paste accompanied by a Chef, who work with participants by giving oral and applied knowledge.

The theoretical contribution of the study is threefold. First, this research provides valuable insights into the study of festival management by extending our understandings of government-hosted and managed festivals. The public committee is required to be expert in organizing and implementing the festival to improve economic, social, and cultural gains from the festival. Stakeholders' interactions and collaborations in festivals are pivotal for their success and sustainability (Adongo & Kim, 2018; Cho et al., 2019). Second, it adds to the knowledge in festival management literature by analyzing both shortcomings and benefits of festivals at the same time. The organizing committee and other stakeholders provided detailed information for the shortcomings, limited benefits of and recommendations for improving the festival. Previous research in general investigated gains of the festivals and these studies were insufficient to determine the attainment of the desired benefits (Andersson & Getz, 2008; Frost & Laing, 2015; Getz, 2008; Quinn, 2006). Third, this study explored the

reasons for the failures or success of the festival. As stated before, major reasons for the failures are that a collaborative approach is not adopted in festival management and the organization of Mesir Festival in general lacks sophisticated management and professional expertise. On the other hand, the centralized decision making process benefits the Mesir Festival because decisions are taken by the public committee and these decisions are implemented thoroughly and quickly by the subordinates as previous studies suggested (Andersson & Getz, 2009; Devine & Devine, 2015).

The private sector, universities, local people, NGOs, trade associations, media are not represented in the organizing committee as stakeholders. However, the relevant literature (e.g., Adongo & Kim, 2018; Andersson & Getz, 2008) suggests that it is almost impossible to achieve success in destinations without an understanding of planning based on collaboration with all stakeholders. Many stakeholders participating in the research state that they want to feel a part of the festival and play a role in its management and planning. Considering these findings, it could be concluded that effective stakeholder collaboration will increase belief and a sense of ownership of the festival as well as triggering financial benefits and creating a moral voluntary service for the organization.

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