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POSITIONING IN MONTSERRAT’S FESTIVALS
Music, media, and film

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Introduction

Cultural aspects of a society are of growing interest in the relationship that exists between community development, the arts, and tourism activities. This interest and involvement extends beyond economics and has given rise to a number of critical questions concerning the value and potential opportunities as well as the challenges that exist for a tourism destination. The prospects and potential for developing unique cultural offerings or products, including music-related events, provide numerous benefits. When managed effectively, this can diversify tourism activities and help sustain tourism during challenging times of economic downturn, social or environmental crises, along with providing resourceful connections between visitors and the host community.

Festivals and events, for instance, are increasingly used to market tourism destinations while also being closely associated with other tourism marketing and branding initiatives (Baez & Devesa 2014; Getz 1991; Hall 1992; Quinn 2006; Tikkanen 2008; Yu & Turco 2000). However, festivals and events have often been singularly dominated by measures of value in terms of economic significance of the festival or event itself with less investigation into the overall impact of the event that are not as easily identifiable or objectively measurable (Getz & Frisby 1988; O’Sullivan & Jackson 2002; Quinn 2006). As part of cultural tourism, interest in the history of a location and those that have lived in the local community offers a wealth of contribution to the tourism product for a location. This information for the tourist may assist a mindful traveler who may leave a destination with a heightened awareness and increased appreciation of the many unique historical and cultural components of the area (Moscardo 1999). In this regard, music and destinations that have influenced music may also help to enhance images and memories that leave a lasting impression far beyond the activities of the trip itself. Music, for example, which often captures the celebrations of the past, trials, and tribulations or even possible events of the future, may help enhance the tourism experience along with affinity to the destination or event associated with a region (Getz 2008). For example, Calypso and Soca musician Alphous “Arrow” Cassell’s legendary global hit track, “Hot Hot Hot”, easily connects to the ongoing and active volcanic eruptions that exist on the island of Montserrat, which also captures the challenges and opportunities that this island faces with the continuous natural disaster and threats of pyroclastic volcanic eruptions.
With a population of approximately 5,100 residents, music is a hallmark of this tiny British Overseas Territory with even a Montserrat Idol talent competition among up and coming resident artists (Discover Montserrat 2017).

A number of famous artists have recorded sessions at AIR Montserrat, including Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Elton John, Black Sabbath, Dire Straits, Duran, Eric Clapton, Lou Reed, Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Sting, The Rolling Stones, The Police, and Ultravox (Air Studios 2013). Sharing with the world where Alphonsus “Arrow” Cassell emerged, and how the beauty of the island of Montserrat has inspired his music, will provide another marketing attribute to the current tourism marketing product. Tourists may similarly also attach themselves to the destination as well as the artist on a deeper level than merely for arousal or limited entertainment enjoyment. Lashua, Spracklen, and Long (2014) proposed that music tourism is a historical phenomenon of modernity with the cultural aspect of live music connecting travelling musicians with locals and tourists at festivals, concerts, orchestras, music halls, and impromptu street performances. The encounters tourists have with music can also have a representative sense of place with a tourism destination with distinct memories and narratives among people, music, and place (Connell & Gibson 2003). The emergence of celebrity endorsement in a wide array of fields is becoming very common in the vast global area of advertisement, marketing, and brand recognition (Kim, Long, & Robinson 2009). In an era where celebrity personality or identity provides a symbolic meaning and value to the associated environment, the marketing potential can be recognized through a number of channels and forms (Stern 1994; Wee & Ming 2003).

### Literature review

#### Celebrities, music, and tourism

While many studies have investigated celebrity endorsement, the influence of celebrities, and persuasion in a number of diverse areas, this topic has not been closely linked to tourism (Johns, Weir, & Weir 2015; Kim, Agrusa, Lee, & Chon 2007; Kim, Lee, & Prideaux 2014; McCartney & Pinto 2014). Celebrity- or film-induced tourism, however, has seen accelerated attention for ongoing business development and the creation of new tourism markets in addition to associated licensing and merchandising (Beeton 2008). Furthermore, research suggests that the intangible benefits of hosting a film or television and audio music broadcast, as well as having a celebrity from an area, can enhance the image and increase awareness of the image of a destination (Han & Lee 2008; Kim et al. 2007) just as a film-induced festival can help to enhance the image of a destination (Frost 2017). Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee, for instance, has hosted an average of 500,000 annual visitors to the exhibit area and mansion since opening June 7, 1982 with over $32 million annual revenues in worldwide merchandising and licensing for the brand of Elvis or the “King of Rock & Roll” (Sanz 2012). The Sound of Music is another illustration – released in 1965 and having received five Academy Awards, more than 40 years later, it is still the most popular organized tour of all time in Salzburg, Austria (Im & Chon 2008). The movie King Kong set in the backdrop of Trang An Landscape Complex located in Ninh Binh Province of North Vietnam has experienced accelerating visitor interest (Tong 2017) coupled with recently being designated a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In the Caribbean, Trench Town, Jamaica, home of legendary artist Bob Marley, is a world famously designated the home of reggae and has developed as an alternative tourism attraction (Boxill 2004; Rhiney & Cruse 2012).
Similarly, by way of example, interest in Korean pop artists and TV dramas has been attributed to the release of widely exposed TV and audio programming in a wide number of countries, particularly, although not exclusively, in Asia (Kim et al. 2009). Africa, North America, and Europe have also experienced increased growth in popularity along with an increased interest in the associated Korean cultural activities such as music, food, fashion, and cosmetics to name a few. In addition to the direct economic impact of the production itself, substantial benefits have emerged and increasingly realized through tourism (Kim et al. 2007).

Music, film, or a TV program can provide a medium to spread philosophical, cultural, or even political messages and meanings of a region (Mercille 2005). Furthermore, symbolic themes of featured events, historical cultural traits, and physical characteristics can be linked from the ordinary everyday life to the world of mass media (Iwashita 2008). While mass media has emerged from a number of forces, the idolization of celebrities, including musicians and actors, may represent a contemporary cultural trend that is evident in many parts of society today (Koernig & Boyd 2009; Lord & Putrevu 2009).

A number of risks associated with film-induced and music tourism may include the potential negative impacts on the host community including increased congestion, loss of privacy, dilution of cultural authenticity through commercialization, and the demonstration effect which has been acknowledged through a number of related studies in various tourism destinations (Beeton 2008; Fisher 2004). In the case of film-induced tourism, for example, Jewell and McKinnon (2008) argued that misinterpretations and misconceptions result when the image of the destination that is portrayed on screen differs from the authentic history and culture of that destination. When a destination duplicates the consumptive patterns of the portrayed culture through the media, a demonstration effect occurs through this borrowed commercialization process (Fisher 2004). Furthermore, a number of studies indicate that invented stories or characters at filming destinations draw attention to issues of authenticity of the tourism product and gaps in the associated images that really exist along with unrealistic expectations of the destination itself (see, for example, Jewell & McKinnon 2008).

Characteristics of celebrity icons may also lead to differentiated risks throughout various cultures that have widely varying interpreted cultural meanings (Gakhal & Senior 2008; Parulekar & Raheja 2006; Wang, Hsieh, & Chen 2002). The symbolic communications model proposed by Spears, Mowen, and Chakraborty (1996) attempts to demonstrate the culturally connected world through linkages on a continuum relative to culture and nature. Product meaning is then created through associations with a bundle of symbols that can transfer the meaning between the symbol and product and advertised to the consumer through different systems of communication (Spears et al. 1996).

Challenges exist, however, that can lead to misinterpretations or misconceptions if not carefully positioned. Destination Product Placement (DPP) in films is a concept that refers to the deliberate and explicit use of a destination in a film that offers significant growth opportunities to promote a destination or even a fictitious destination as demonstrated in the latest two Disney movies including Frozen staged with the backdrop of Norway and Moana staged in Hawaii. With significant worldwide media exposure through the two films, controversy (among natives, residents, and tourists) continues to surround the cultural depiction of the characters and representation of the area. Nonetheless, it is likely that as technology such as mobile, cloud, and cognitive technologies, including digital storytelling, evolve, there will be more strategic placement of music, film, and media sources to complement the attributes of a festival, event, and tourism destination.
Tourism destinations can host spotlight events for small destinations that focus on a unique aspect of the place in order to reposition an image that may overcome negative media coverage of a disaster or unsafe location by using celebrities or opinion leaders who can assure traveler safety from their own opinion and experiences (Avraham 2014). The celebrity or opinion leader endorsement can also reinforce a unique cultural attribute such as a music festival, for instance, that may benefit a tourist want or need. The relationship between a festival or special event and tourism is a way for associated images that can be transferred to changing the destination brand as well as strengthening and enhancing the benefits of the brand through the physical, natural, and cultural aspects of the destination (Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali 2003). Destinations engaged in supply-side marketing and development promote messages that focus on trends, unique attributes, authenticity, and high quality to enhance a sense of place. A holistic approach proposed by Richards (2017) aims at broader placemaking activities through the use of special events to involve local stakeholder groups for increased social cohesion and investment opportunities. In the case of a natural disaster, bringing together community residents and local businesses with tourists can help to increase consumer confidence as well as investor relations in having an operating environment that offers synergies to stimulate visitation and spending in addition to increasing the profile of a destination.

Case study of Montserrat

Montserrat is an island of less than 103 square kilometers and is part of the Leeward group (Lesser Antilles) located in the Eastern Caribbean between Antiqua and Guadeloupe. From a previous high of 12,000, there are now only 5,000 residents that remain in a safe zone on the island following the volcanic eruption of the Soufriere Hills volcano in 1995 which left two-thirds of the island uninhabitable including the capital of Plymouth (UN data 2015). Active volcanos remain a part of Montserrat with ongoing threats of pyroclastic volcanic eruptions as well as hurricanes passing through the warm Caribbean waters. An overseas territory of the United Kingdom, Montserrat is governed by a chief minister, executive council, and a legislature consisting of eleven members, of which nine are elected (Riches & Stalker 2016). Construction of port facilities, including a ferry service from Antigua and the opening of Gerald’s Airport in the newly developing capital of Little Bay, has improved communication and access to the island. For volcano monitoring, the Montserrat Volcanic Observatory serves the island for both scientists and officials in addition to hosting educational tours for locals and tourists.

Event bundling in Montserrat

In 2010, a unique literary festival entitled “The Alliouagana Festival of the Word” took place at the Cultural Centre in Little Bay on the island of Montserrat as a world-class literary festival, with presentations by internationally recognized authors providing storytelling, book-signings, readings, music, dramatic presentations, and workshops. Alliouagana is a name derived from the Amerindians referring to Montserrat as the land of the prickly bush (Fergus 1975). Preceding the event was the first symposium in the Alphonsus “Arrow” Cassell memorial lecture series that has continued annually to date. This engaging event attracts visitors to Montserrat from a number of markets including the creative and cultural industries which is naturally of significance to developing economies. The local community as well as external supporters make it possible to host the annual literary festival in
Montserrat with volunteers providing specialized services throughout the event. Involving the community in this approach also provides a wealth of reciprocal learning opportunities among the different generations in the community, and this, in turn, has helped to facilitate and promote positive dialogue and change in the tourism management system. Furthermore, other celebratory events such as St. Patrick’s week that recognizes the African and Irish heritage, the Montserrat Christmas Festival featuring the Masquerades, and Calabash Festival also help to convey many of the traditions and customs of Montserrat in a festive spirit (Fergus 2006).

While Montserrat has been the location set for a number of films, the history of Calypso music along with the famed music success of “Arrow” predominates in media recognition and celebrations. Ironically, an advantage for Montserrat in attracting a niche tourism market, as well as literary and music inspired artists, is the appeal of the active volcano which also fascinated Henry Nelson Coleridge when he visited Montserrat in 1825. The spectacle of volcano can be linked to some of the disaster literature that has emerged from Montserrat in an attempt to show how life engenders the creative arts. Therefore, the significance of the literary festival and symposium enriches the depth of understanding and cultural inquiry into the richer aspects of Montserrat that exists beyond the celebratory effect of hosting the festival that has typically taken place on the island on an annual basis. Bundling the symposium with the festival allows synergies to sustain both the events. Being relatively low-scale events with less than 300 participants, economies of scale are a challenge, as well as attracting ongoing vendor support. Sponsorships, associated vendor participation, along with event participation among locals are necessary for the continuation of the complementary events.

A bundled package which includes Montserrat’s attractions (diving, hiking, bird watching, snorkeling, volcano viewing and education) combined with special rates for accommodation and on island transportation was proposed as part of advertising the Festival in an effort to fill as many of the 150 beds available for visitors. November being a shoulder season for tourism on the island, hoteliers were encouraged to provide attractive rates to extend hotel occupancies. Groups of writers around the world were one of the target market segments, with special attention paid to the regional potential market in Guadeloupe, which has historically had a high interest but underutilized inbound market to Montserrat (Government of Montserrat 2017). Attracting the Montserrat diaspora back to the island for the festival and encouraging them to remember the island the way it was before the volcanic eruptions is another significant niche market. Having the Festival during the second weekend in November positions it well for the availability of scheduled flights and lower travel costs, and as the cold sets in up north, this makes the Caribbean a more attractive destination. The art and craft sector was involved in developing a range of attractive handmade and souvenir items displayed for sale at the venue, with locally produced items carrying the event’s logo, such as bags, visors, and hats, along with other representative commodities and memorabilia.

Collaboration with such agencies as the Montserrat Tourist Board, the Hospitality Association, the Montserrat Arts and Crafts Association, ground transportation, and tour Guides Association was essential for the success of events along with forging alliances with other festivals that are held throughout the region. As a corollary to the weekend activities, a book stall with selected titles for sale, music offerings, a food court offering local and regional cuisine, a craft market and pampering sessions with massage therapists and reflexologists was also of high interest to the event participants. Dramatic performances are much loved by Montserratians at home and abroad with music shows that have tended to draw sizable crowd including high participation from local residents. Presentations were recorded and guest presenters interviewed by the media to provide advertising content for future festivals. The
potential is there for income generation through the sale of recordings of performances of each year’s festival, but this has implications for various rights including those of the authors and so require skillful negotiation.

The future of the festival and symposium events is strongly linked to the new developments in the country as well as evolving creative, entertaining, and life enrichment themes. Having the festival in close proximity to accommodation units reduces the administrative costs of the events along with making use of the existing resources, available infrastructure, along with active local participation and creative human potential that exists on the island.

**Conclusion**

The uniqueness of cultures through creative works such as music that can portray a “way of life” may be as appealing to tourists as an unspoiled beach or breathtaking landscape (Agrusa 2006). More than ever, tourists are seeking experiences which expose them to unique offerings at a travel destination, including distinct cultural resources. Music is one form of cultural expression that may help to provide another opportunity for tourists who may want to learn the different ways of life and experience those new cultures, first hand.

With tourists increasingly seeking to experience unique cultures and traditions on a more personal level to enrich their own lives, contact with the local population can promote mutual understanding that benefits both tourists and the local residents (Fredline & Faulkner 2000; McDonnell, Allen, & O’Toole 1999). Significant opportunities to diversify the economic base through increased employment opportunities and investment in conservation of the environment, along with projects to help preserve the local culture and traditions of the past, can evolve through responsible tourism development (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules 2000).

Such an approach to responsible cultural tourism encourages tourists to “get off the road” in order to encounter the authentic traditions of a culture while providing an enriching experience for both residents and tourists (Agrusa 2006). In the process, cultural tourism also encourages local residents to be more engaged with tourists because they are more closely involved in participating in how their culture will be represented to others. Travel marketers are becoming more aware that the increasing demand for cultural tourism is a lucrative economic and social benefit to a region. Increasing recognition in terms of providing a richer tourism experience that builds on cultural opportunities, community involvement, and environmental quality is becoming more apparent to tourism planners along with local and regional development authorities (Madrigal 1995). Integrating the local cultural and artistic aspects can provide tourists the opportunity to engage in an array of activities; therefore, strategic bundling may also allow Montserrat to differentiate itself from competing destinations that may be able to offer similar commodities. Therefore, bundling to sustain the niche events should include products and service that embrace an authentic flair of local culture and highlight the talented artists who have contributed to the uniqueness of Montserrat while also engaging those residents who aspire to share their artistic and creative talents with tourists in the future.

Music and literary festivals can support a sense of place for Montserrat and help to communicate the challenges the island has yet highlight the unique cultural underpinnings of the culture. Music and literature can support the old with the new, and in the case of Montserrat, with a troubled history, from the devastating Hurricane Hugo in 1989 to the ongoing pyroclastic volcanic eruptions and environmental threats that still exist, the constructed historical structures and landscape may be covered with ash, but the reconstruction
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and expressions through music and literature are thriving. Celebrating the past through music and literary festivals can bridge the memory of past events with the present as well as provide a hope for the future. The positioning of festivals to connect tourists and locals among a wide range of demographic segments and characteristics is fluid. Staiff and Bushell (2017) propose that co-determination of events provides placemaking while the place provides the underpinning for events. The reciprocity of this dynamic relationship can be realized and communicated through the music and literary event that enhance the cultural capital of a tourism destination.

With the increased presence of social media, even some of the smallest, most remote destinations and small-scale festival events can have a worldwide presence to share their story. Prentice and Andersen (2003) argued that festivals can help to reposition the image of a destination as well as a region, while social media, according to Garay and Soledad Morales Pérez (2016), can widely enhance the image of a festival through greater channels of communication and integration of collaborating marketing intelligence. The potential exists for increased exposure, targeted and personalized marketing, along with sponsorship opportunities to support the sustainability of an event. Music and literary festivals in particular are akin to storytelling, and in the era of digital technology, with mobile, cloud, and cognitive computing applications, a new channel of opportunity exists to promote sense of place among increasingly integrated platforms. For small-scale festivals taking place in Montserrat, crowdsourcing and cloud-based applications for new knowledge and sources of cultural capital can provide new sources of continuity to not only communicate and engage festival participants, tourists, and locals but sustain the memories and voices of calypsonians.

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