Transformational Benefits from a Visit to a Multicultural Festival:  
The Case of South Korea

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Abstract  
This paper investigates the benefits the dominant population has gained from a visit to a multicultural festival in South Korea. The paper aims to improve the understanding of these festivals and explores the contribution of multicultural festivals to building a better multicultural society. The transformational benefit is recognised as the greatest benefit the dominant population gained from attending a multicultural festival concerning the four factors identified (transformational, cognitive, social and affective benefits). Differences were found in the benefits from a visit to a multicultural festival between the dominant population exposed to multiculturalism and one that is not exposed to multiculturalism. It is believed that the findings of this study will help all key stakeholders to more fully understand how multicultural festivals contribute to social harmony and social integration.

Keywords: multicultural festival, multicultural society, transformational benefit, visitor benefit, South Korea
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While there are many studies on festivals in general, research on different kinds of festivals, in particular multicultural festivals, is lacking. With the growing cultural diversity of societies, the importance of, and interest in, building well-organised multicultural societies is increasing; multicultural festivals have emerged in many multicultural societies as a useful instrument for promoting social harmony and social integration. Despite the increasing popularity of multicultural festivals, little research has been conducted into these festivals. Research into visitor studies, in particular, visitor benefits at multicultural festivals, is extremely important in evaluating the role of multicultural festivals in the development of successful multiculturalism. Thus, it is necessary to study visitor benefits which may be gained by attending multicultural festivals.

South Korea is in the transition from being ethnically homogeneous to becoming multicultural and has been faced with difficulties when becoming a multicultural society with typical South Korean characteristics and cultures. The South Koreans’ strong single-racial consciousness or pure-blood ideology and pride in South Korea as a single nation have been taught through education to South Koreans from childhood. Choi (2008) argues that such a pure blood ideology is likely to make people consider multiculturalism as a form of contamination; hence, it may contribute negatively to the building of a multicultural South Korea. The South Korean’s strong sense of homogeneity also strengthens the idea that difference is regretful, and so promotes exclusivity toward heterogeneity and intolerance and prejudice against minorities (Yoon, 2007).

Moreover, within the South Korean traditional collectivistic cultures, there is a strict boundary between in-groups and out-groups. There is extensive theoretical and empirical literature in social and cross-cultural psychology that suggests that collectivists are more attached to their in-groups, making greater distinctions between in-groups and out-groups (Hall, 2003; Yeh, Arora & Wu, 2006). Therefore, it is predicted that it is harder to harmonise minority and dominant populations in collectivistic cultures, because minorities are not considered as an in-group of the dominant population. In the case of South Korea, it is common to hear the use of the terms, ‘we’ and ‘them’, for example, we need to understand and tolerate them, in the debate on South Korean multiculturalism (Choi, 2008). This shows that the distinction between in-groups and out-groups exists in South Korea. Societies in transition from being ethnically homogeneous to becoming multicultural have different issues than societies in which multiculturalism is already well established so it is necessary to undertake specific studies to understand these developments.

This study aims to identify the greatest benefit of the dominant population to be gained from a visit to a multicultural festival, and compares the differences between the benefits of those who have been previously exposed to multiculturalism and those who are not.

Festival Study

Although the event field is growing, research on visitor studies, in particular visitor benefits from attending a festival, is limited. Emphasis in the event literature has been place on the significant role of festivals and other events in terms of economic gain (Chhabra, Sills & Cubbage, 2003; Edwards, Moital & Vaughan, 2004; Gelan, 2003; Tohmo, 2005), destination branding (Arcodia & Lee, 2008; Derrett, 2003; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules & Ali, 2003; Lee & Lee, 2009) and marketing (Pugh & Wood, 2004). Recently, the social benefits of festivals, such as social capital development (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007), community development (Wood & Thomas, 2006) and civic pride (Wood, 2006), have been explored. As such, many event studies saw festivals and other events as tools for
economic generation, social change and social capital, and strategies for destination marketing rather than as an individual’s experience. Although there are benefits from a festival attendance other than the economic ones, such as personal benefits, festival researchers have so far generally ignored the benefits outside the narrow range of economic impact and destination marketing.

Some festival research has focused on visitor studies, the reasons for participation (Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Crompton & McKay, 1997; 2002; Li & Petrick, 2006; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Van Zyl & Botha, 2003) and the festival visitors’ satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cole & Illum, 2006; Thrane, 2002), but little attention has been focused on the value to be gained from attending a festival from a visitor’s perspective. Visitor benefit is defined in tourism as ‘the ultimate value that people place on what they believe that they have gained from participation in a certain leisure activity’ (Schanzel & McIntosh, 2000, p. 37). The Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) definition can be used in the festival context with the minor modification of ‘the ultimate value that people place on what they believe they have gained from observation or participation in activities provided by a festival’. Previous research on festival and event experience has tended to focus on the initial reasons why people choose to attend a festival in the first place, rather than focusing on what they actually obtained from the festival experience in the end.

**Multicultural Festivals**

A multicultural festival has been defined differently by a number of researchers. McClinchey (2008) defines a multicultural festival as a place for public celebrations, showcasing the ethnic culture of communities that have settled in a region because of immigration. In contrast, Duffy (2005) defines multicultural festivals more specifically as places for on-going dialogues and negotiations within communities as individuals and groups in an attempt to define meaningful concepts of identity and belonging, in addition to notions of exclusion. While McClinchery’s (2008) definition focuses on the showcase of the festival, Duffy’s (2005) definition covers the meaning of multicultural festivals. Based on McClinchey’s (2008) and Duffy’s (2005) definitions, a multicultural festival can be defined from the visitor’s perspective for this study, which focuses on the festival experiences and benefits from the visitors’ perspectives, as a public multicultural themed celebration at which multi-ethnic people, including ethnic minorities and the dominant population, have extraordinary and enjoyable experiences that can be expected to be beneficial.

Multicultural festivals offer a variety of programs, such as folk dances, ethnic music, and cooking ethnic food. These performative traditions are of great importance to migrants, because they are a positive means of profiling themselves to the general public while simultaneously providing an opportunity for mobilisation into the in-group (Osterlund-Potzsch, 2004). In fact, performative genres such as folk dance and ethnic music have become the main format for presenting ethnic culture, because traditional song and music usually have a strong sentimental value. Osterlund-Potzsch (2004) states that ethnic cooking and special food-items also represent ethnicity. Through such programs, multicultural festivals offer opportunities for expressing the minority culture to the public; thus multicultural festivals are used to not only celebrate and preserve culture, but also to foster cultural acceptance within the mainstream community, generate community acceptance of a cultural diversity and reinforce the community as a multicultural society in the collective mindset (Jupp, 1996).

It is also important to note that multicultural festivals not only provide minority groups with the opportunity to express their culture, but also the dominant population to view others’ cultures (Picard & Robinson, 2006). Similarly, Lee, Arcodia and Lee (2010) identify the three key characteristics of multicultural festivals through examining the previous literature, cultural celebrations, cultural identity and expressions, and social interactions. Although it was generally argued that multicultural festivals play a significant role in multicultural societies for the
development of successful multiculturalism, no empirical studies have been conducted on the role of specific multicultural festivals for the dominant population or migrants, especially in a country which is in transition from a being homogenous to more multicultural, such as South Korea.

**Multiculturalism in South Korea**

Although the number of people moving between countries as immigrants or sojourners for overseas work or studies is increasing, multiculturalism is still a new phenomenon for some countries with a traditional homogeneous culture, such as South Korea. South Korea is undergoing a rapid transit from an ethnically homogeneous society to a multicultural one. While there were only 240,000 migrants in 2000, it has begun to develop into a multi-ethnic country with over one million migrants making up approximately two percent of the South Korean population of 50 million in 2007 (Ministry of Public Administration and Security, 2008). The number of foreigners is expected to increase by 2.8 percent of the South Korean population in 2010, five percent in 2020 and 9.2 percent in 2050 (Ministry of Public Administration and Security, 2008). According to the research on migrants by a local autonomous entity (Yoon, 2009), the majority of foreigners in 2009 was Chinese, including Korean-Chinese (56.5%), followed by Southeast Asia (21.2%), United States (5.4%), and Japan (2.4%).

The ratio of migrants to locals is still not high when compared to Australia and the United States of America, which have strong histories of migration. It has, however, become a critical issue in South Korea, because the number of migrants is increasing rapidly, while most South Koreans are still completely unfamiliar with the presence of foreigners in their communities (Yoon, 2007). To promote social harmony between the ethnic minorities and the South Koreans, the South Korean Government established Migrant Centres throughout the country to support the ethnic minorities, arranged many programs to assist ethnic minorities to settle in South Korea, and to facilitate interaction between migrants and South Koreans. One such programme used to promote social harmony used by many cities in South Korea is the holding of multicultural festivals. Although multicultural festivals are held in many cities in South Korea, there appears to be little research into multicultural festivals in South Korea.

Furthermore, the role of the South Koreans in building a better multicultural society has been highlighted. According to the 2008 migrants’ culture survey (Korean Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism, 2008), 36 percent of respondents (migrants to South Korea) answered that South Koreans do not respect other cultures, and 79 percent responded that the South Koreans discriminate against migrants. The survey also recommended specific education for multiculturalism for the South Koreans (Korean Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism, 2008). Friction between the South Korean locals and the migrants is increasing and the South Koreans have difficulty in adjusting to multiculturalism. These findings indicate the need for South Koreans to be educated on multiculturalism, and the importance of South Korea’s role in building a better multicultural society.

Therefore, this paper identifies what benefits the dominant population gained from a visit to a multicultural festival with the overall aim of better understanding the role of multicultural festivals in emerging multicultural societies. It also investigates the differences in the benefits gained at a multicultural festival between those in the dominant population who are exposed to multiculturalism and who are not.
Methods
To identify the dominant population’s benefits from a visit to a multicultural festival, an on-site questionnaire survey was administered at The Global Village Multicultural Festival in Cheonan, South Korea in April, 2010. The Global Village Multicultural Festival is an annual one-day festival held in Cheonan, a small town in South Korea, every April in 2007 to 2009. Approximately 5000 people visited the festival in Cheonan in 2009. The festival showcases a diverse range of cultural displays from many international cultural groups living in South Korea, and also acts as a site for social networking and support. The festival attracts not only migrants, but also ordinary South Koreans. The primary investigator and another seven trained interviewers collected data on the day of the festival. Festival visitors were randomly asked to participate in questionnaire survey.

Benefits are measured with a scale based on the existing benefit scales, and literature related to multiculturalism. The Recreation Experience Preference Scale (Driver, Brown & Peterson, 1991) and other benefit scales developed by Stein and Lee (Stein & Lee, 1995), developed for the measurements of visitor experiences and benefits at the leisure and outdoor recreation sites, were reviewed to generate the visitor benefit scale for this study. The wording of some of the items developed previously was modified to make them more appropriate to the multicultural festival context as the Recreation Experience Preference Scale (Driver et al, 1991) and Stein and Lee’s (1995) benefit scale was developed to measure visitor benefits at the leisure and outdoor recreation sites. Also, some items were added to better align with the literature relating to multicultural festivals (Bailey & Oetzel, 2004; Kuutma, 1998; Rokam, 2005). The questionnaire contained 20 items to measure visitor benefits. These items are rated on a five-point Likert response scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Demographic questions were also included on past visits to a multicultural festival, age, gender, and how they are exposed to multiculturalism.

Results
Questionnaires were collected from 161 South Korean visitors, but only 146 questionnaires were considered usable. More than half (65.8%) responded that it was their first time for visiting a multicultural festival, and 34.2 percent of respondents had attended a multicultural festival before. More respondents were female (60.0%), in the 40–49 age group (32.3%) followed by 30–39 age group (19.2%), and the majority were not exposed to multiculturalism at all (62.3%). The remainder of respondents (37.67%) described themselves as people who are exposed to multiculturalism in various forms, their family is a multicultural family, they are working at a multicultural company and they have friends from different cultures.

In this study, a factor analysis (principle components analysis using a varimax rotation method), produced four factors for visitor benefits from a visit to a multicultural festival. As shown in Table 1, the first factor, labelled Transformational benefit which is about attitude, image, and perception changes, explained 21.55 percent of the total variance. The second and third dimensions, labelled Cognitive benefit and Social benefit, each explained 16.81 percent and 11.82 percent respectively of the variance. While cognitive benefit concerns learning new things and/or extending knowledge, social benefits are about social bonding, family togetherness, meeting new people, group solidarity, and kinship with significant others. The fourth dimension, Affective benefit which concerns enjoyment, fun, relaxation, and stress release explained 11.61 percent of the variance. Combined, these four factor groupings accounted for 61.80 percent of the variance. These results showed that the transformational benefit was the most beneficial for the South Koreans, the dominant population in South Korea, from a visit to a multicultural festival. It also showed that the transformational benefit includes five items, encouraged to integrate with migrants, encouraged to understand migrants more, encouraged to respect migrants more, changed your view of migrants, and changed your view of multiculturalism in South Korea.
Table 1  Summary of factor analysis results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Koreans (in general)</th>
<th>South Koreans who are exposed to multiculturalism</th>
<th>South Koreans who are not exposed to multiculturalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Transformational</td>
<td>21.55%</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cognitive</td>
<td>16.81%</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Social</td>
<td>11.83%</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Affective</td>
<td>11.62%</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 also indicates that differences emerged in the relative relevance of the benefits gained by different groups of the dominant population visitors i.e. people who are exposed to multiculturalism and those who are not exposed. The respondents in a multicultural family, working at a multicultural company, and who have friends from different cultures are considered as the people who are exposed to multiculturalism. These two groups of South Korean visitors clearly show different tendencies toward the benefits gained. The affective benefit (22.22%) is the greatest benefit gained at a visit to a multicultural festival for the people exposed to multiculturalism, followed by the social benefit (15.47%), cognitive benefit (14.70%) and transformational benefit (14.26%). On the other hand, the transformational benefit (26.49%) is the most beneficial for the people who are not exposed to multiculturalism when attending a multicultural festival, followed by the cognitive benefit (16.53%), affective benefit (14.37%) and social benefit (7.19%). The most interesting result was that while the transformational benefit is the greatest benefit for visitors who are not exposed to multiculturalism, it is the least significant benefit for visitors who are exposed to multiculturalism.

Discussion

Four factors were identified as the benefits that the South Koreans gained from visiting a multicultural festival – transformational, cognitive benefit, social benefit and affective benefit. Transformational benefit was identified as the greatest benefit the dominant population gained from a visit to a multicultural festival. Five items are included in the factor for transformational benefit: encouraged to integrate with migrants, encouraged to understand migrants, encouraged to respect migrants, changed the view of migrants, and changed the view of multiculturalism in South Korea. This study focuses more on the transformational benefit than the other benefits identified, because it is significant that the transformational benefit was the greatest benefit for the dominant population in general. It differed however, between those who are exposed to multiculturalism, and those who are not exposed to multiculturalism.

Transformational benefit has been discussed in previous visitor studies. In museum studies, Soren (2009) discusses transformation and personal growth experiences in a museum, and claimed that the transformational experiences result from discarding old ways of thinking and providing new opportunities for individuals to invent knowledge and explore new ideas and concepts. Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) conclude in their study on the visitor beneficial experiences at a bird-watching tourism attraction that the experience at the tourism attraction was not likely to be perceived to have changed the visitors’ behaviour in any way or their thinking towards wildlife. Their study, however, shows the potential of visitor intentions to change behaviour through their experience, not the actual behaviour changes. The visitors’ transformational benefit from attending an event seems to have not been discussed or highlighted in the previous literature.

The transformational benefit the South Korean visitors gained is remarkable, because the primary aim of organising a multicultural festival in South Korea is to promote social harmony and integration, and to make improvements in mutual understanding for migrants and South Koreans.
It can be seen that a multicultural festival plays a role in attitude, image, and perception changes for migrants and multiculturalism. Thus, it contributes towards building a better multicultural society through the dominant population’s enhanced understanding of diverse cultures and the differences between the cultures.

It is also interesting to note that although the transformational benefit is the most beneficial for South Koreans, who are not exposed to multiculturalism, when visiting a multicultural festival, it is the least significant benefit for South Koreans exposed to multiculturalism. The reason for this difference seems to be that the South Koreans exposed to multiculturalism do not need to alter their thoughts or views towards migrants and multiculturalism in South Korea, because they have been already changed and transformed their mind to be open for migrants and multiculturalism through ongoing interaction and contact with migrants in the community to which they are exposed. On the other hand, the South Koreans who are not involved in multiculturalism could be surprised that there are many migrants and foreigners in South Korea and that they had never realised this before visiting a multicultural festival, because they did not have many opportunities to meet migrants or foreigners in their everyday lives.

**Conclusions and Implications**

This paper has explored the benefits that the dominant population gained from a visit to a multicultural festival in South Korea, a country which is in transit from being ethnically homogeneous to becoming multicultural, and compared the differences between the benefits for those who are exposed to multiculturalism and those who are not. Through an analysis of the quantitative data, it was suggested that a multicultural festival plays a significant role in multicultural societies for the development of successful multiculturalism, because a visit to a multicultural festival helps to change the dominant population’s attitude, thoughts and view towards migrants and multiculturalism (transformational benefit), to learn new knowledge about different cultures (cognitive benefit), to socialise with people who are in similar situation (social benefit), and to have fun and to relax (affective benefit).

It was found that the transformational benefit is the greatest benefit the dominant population gained from visiting a multicultural festival, and that it promotes the dominant population’s understanding about migrants and their culture and further encourages integration with migrants. Such a transformational benefit is more important in South Korea while it is undergoing transition from an ethnically homogeneous to a multicultural society, because the South Koreans’ strong single-racial consciousness, pure-blood ideology, strong sense of homogeneity and collectivistic culture that promotes exclusivity toward heterogeneity, intolerance and prejudice against migrants needs to be changed for the better harmony with migrants in a multicultural society. Understanding the differences in the benefits for the dominant population who are exposed to multiculturalism and those who are not also shows how the role of multicultural festivals is different for them, and suggests how to organise the festivals for different groups of visitors.

Research into visitor benefits at a multicultural festival is extremely important for evaluating the contribution of a multicultural festival in building a better multicultural society. It is especially important to identify the dominant population’s benefits from attending a multicultural festival, because the dominant population’s role is considerably important when building a better multicultural society. This paper provides an analysis of the role of multicultural festivals in building a better multicultural society. Identifying what benefits the visitor gains by attending a multicultural festival helps the organisers and public sector to achieve the foundational aim of multicultural festivals, which is promoting the understanding of different cultures and facilitating harmony between such cultures. It is also believed that a better understanding of the visitor benefits
from attending a multicultural festival will encourage industry and government to consider multicultural festivals as an important instrument for building a successful multicultural society.

There is a need to further develop more comprehensive research in this area. First, this study focuses on the transformational benefit among the four benefits identified that the dominant population visitors gained at a multicultural festival. There is a need to examine the other three benefits identified. Second, it is interesting to consider that the results of the benefits that the dominant population gained may have been affected by the strong influence of the tendencies of the respondents who are not exposed to multiculturalism, because more than half respondents of this study have not been exposed to multiculturalism. Future studies may investigate data that have a similar number of respondents exposed to multiculturalism and those who are not exposed to multiculturalism to improve this issue. Third, future studies may compare the benefits from a visit to a multicultural festival between the dominant population and the migrant festival visitors, because the migrants and the dominant population festival visitors may have different interests, needs, wants, expectations and benefits from a multicultural festival. Lastly, the results can only be applied to multicultural festivals in societies in transit from being ethnically homogeneous to becoming multicultural, because South Korea is undergoing a rapid transit from an ethnically homogeneous to a multicultural society. Multicultural festivals in societies in which multiculturalism is already well established may indentify different perspectives than those in this study.
References


