

CREATING LOCAL EXPERIENCES OF CULTURAL TOURISM THROUGH SUSTAINABLE FESTIVALS

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ABSTRACT: Events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to visitors from other generating zones plus the potential for grants, or sponsorships (Getz, 1997), either by direct or indirect intent. The events in turn are seen as an important tool for attracting visitors and building the image within different communities. This paper reports on research related to festivals' contribution in the development of cultural tourism. Festivals attract culture tourists to local community events to promote enriching exchanges between tourists and resident. The case studies within this research demonstrate how the Leeds West Indian Carnival and in the last decade has developed to become a centre piece events for the local community each year by attracting local, regional and international visitors.

RESUMEN: Los eventos tienen el potencial de generar una grande cantidad de turismo cuando son ofrecidos a los visitantes de otras zonas generativas, más el potencial de las subvenciones o patrocinios (Getz, 1997), sea por intención directa o indirecta. Los eventos a su vez son vistos como una herramienta importante para atraer visitantes y crear una imagen dentro de diferentes comunidades. Este estudio informa sobre la investigación relacionada con la contribución de festivales en el desarrollo del turismo cultural. Los festivales atraen los turistas culturales a los eventos de la comunidad local para promocionar el intercambio enriquecedor entre los turistas y residentes. Los estudios de casos dentro de esta investigación demuestran cómo el "Leeds West Indian Carnival", en la última década, se ha desarrollado, convirtiéndose en una pieza central de eventos para la comunidad local de cada año, atrayendo a visitantes locales, regionales e internacionales.

INTRODUCTION

In current economic climate festivals play an important role for towns, cities or whole regions. Festivals are considered to contribute significantly to the cultural and economic development wealth of the United Kingdom. Festivals have major impacts on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities. The festival organisers are now using the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events to attract visitors and create cultural image in the host cities by

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holding festivals in the community settings. The desire for festivals and events is not specifically designed to address the needs for any one particular group. The hosting of events is often developed because of the tourism and economic opportunities additional to social and cultural benefits. Festivals are being used by the organisers to express the relationship between identity and place and play a very important role in raising civic consciousness. Festivals are an important expression of human activity and contribute significantly to the social and cultural life of their host communities.

Festivals have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to visitors from other generating zones plus the potential for grants, or sponsorships, (Getz, 1997) either by direct or indirect intent. The government now supports and promotes events as part of their strategies for economic development, nation building and cultural tourism. The Festivals in turn are seen as an important tool for attracting visitors and building the image within different communities. They are identified as one of the fastest growing forms of leisure- and tourism-related phenomena (Dimmock & Tyce, 2001). Festivals are increasingly linked with tourism in order to generate business activity and incomes for the host communities. Yeoman (2004) says that festivals can lengthen tourist seasons, extend peak season or introduce a “new season” into a community. Events such as festivals do not only serve to attract tourists but also help to develop or maintain a community or regional identity.

As far as events and tourism are concerned, the roles and responsibilities of governments as well private sector and society in general have significantly changed over the last decade. The situations have been changed where the state had the key responsibility for tourism development and promotion to a world where the public sector is obliged to reinvent itself by relinquishing its traditional responsibilities and activities in favour of provincial, state and local authorities. This indicates the growing influence on the behaviour of governments and business in general of development of event and tourism industries. This suggests that festivals impact on the host population and stakeholders in a number of ways. These factors are primarily concerned with a plethora of impacts, social, cultural, physical, environmental, political and economic all of which can be both positive and negative.

This paper initially reviews literature related to cultural tourism and the role of festivals in the creation of opportunities for community orientated events and festivals which contrast with tourist orientated events which have tenuous links with local communities. Moreover, the paper will argue that community based events and festivals provide an

opportunity for the celebration of local identity and community empowerment and create tourism for the local area.

The case studies within this paper will explore the development of cultural tourism and multi-cultural festivals and events with the UK, and the positive contribution that these events play in solidifying community relations with development of the cultural tourism.

Cultural Tourism and Multi-cultural Festivals

Culture is very complex and problematic to define. Over the years a number of different definitions have been presented by the literature. In modern day, culture is being viewed in a broad holistic way to express a set of social interactions, rules, values and beliefs linked to national or local identity. Tylor (1924, p.1) defines the classic definition of culture as:

That complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Cited in Reisinger and Turner (2003)

The meaning of culture has constantly changed throughout history, meaning that there is not a universally accepted definition. Tomlinson (1991) explains that hundreds of definitions exist, meaning that culture can encompass all of the definitions.

Culture is wide ranging; Yeoman et al. (2004) says that culture ranges from, high culture such as the arts to popular culture such as contemporary culture which embraces diverse subjects as football, music and television.

Richards (1996) takes the view that culture is seen as a process or a product of an individual or group activity.

In terms of tourism, culture is seen as a product and a process, Bonink and Richards (1992) identify sites and monument approach and conceptual approach which attempts to describe the motives attached to cultural tourism.

Meehan (1996) reinforces this, believing that tourism is typified as the experience and consumption of place.

If the definition is extended to festivals and events, then Yeoman et al (2004) state that:

“That it can be seen that cultural events have benefits to both the art world and the tourist destination”. (p.3)

Communities in the last decade have become more disjointed and social frameworks are determined by the individual interest or standard

of living rather than society in general. The cultural events can play a major role in developing local communities to become more globalised and enhance the destination for prospective visitors. Fam et al. (2004) stated that “Cultural dimensions are very dynamic in society”, which creates great dimension for society to enjoy the positive cultural interaction which occurs when tourists visit the cultural festivals to cure the self belief of individuals. Moreover, in the last few decades the cultural festivals have developed a culture of their own. The researches and visitors now treat culture as terms of traditions, rituals, practices and journey of expressions. In western society if you are involved in tourism or festivals it is treated as part of every day life and it is part of cultural belief (Urry, 1990). The theme of culture has grown over the last two decades but no clear definition of culture has been accepted by the community has a whole. Culture in modern day terms is seen as a product by governments, large organisations and individual people to develop their own standing in the given market. Wyman (2003) states that culture plays an important part in the society:

“...In an economic climate where we hear so much about crisis in health and education, it is important to remember that culture, too, is an essential element of a healthy society. It's not an either-or situation. Health is necessary for life; culture makes life worth living...”

<http://www.culturematters.ca/index.html>

There has been a significant interest in the cultural festivals. Before cultural festivals were associated with key calendar moments, linked specifically to particular seasons and heritage sites. The development of cultural festivals has a considerable impact on local community development and regeneration of cities. In the last ten years festivals have contributed considerably to the cultural and economic development wealth of the western countries. A cultural festival in its various different forms has a huge economic impact on development of cultural tourism, management and planning to the local community. The festival organisers are now using the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events to attract tourism visitors and create cultural image in the host cities by holding festivals in the community settings. The desire for festivals and events is not specifically designed to address the needs for any one particular group. The hosting of events is often developed because of the tourism and economic opportunities additional to social and cultural benefits.

Figure 2 shows the process that culture tourism is driven by different destination and famous heritage sites to attract visitors.

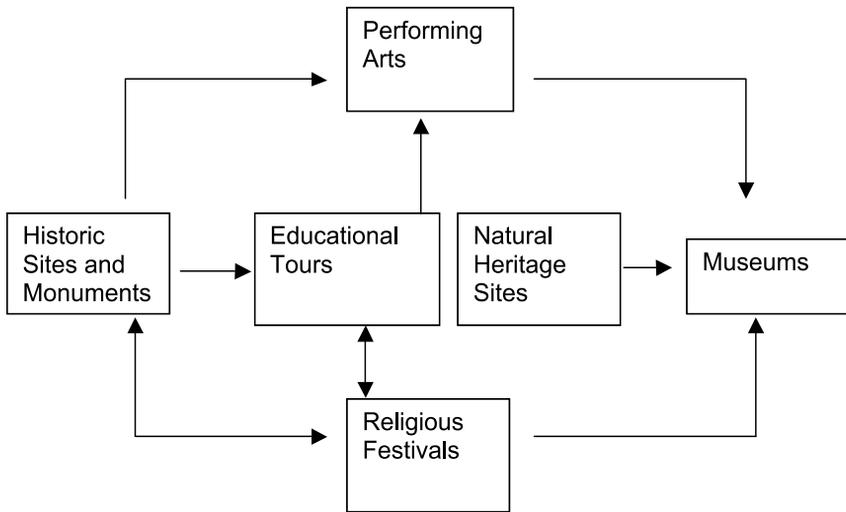


Figure 2. Figure shows the process that culture tourism is driven by different destination and famous heritage sites to attract visitors.

Source: Raj et al. (2009, p.71)

Sustainable Festivals

The nomenclature of events include mega, special, social, major, hallmark and community events. Events are categorised due to their size, scope and scale. Moreover, events can be categorised according to their type or sector, such as conference and exhibitions, arts and entertainment, sports events, and charitable events. The accepted practices exchange, (APEX), Industry Glossary of terms, (CIC, 2003), cited in Bowdin et al. (2006, p. 14) defines an event as:

“An organised occasion such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, etc. An event is often composed of several different yet related functions.”

Events are explicitly linked to fundamentals of the human race – social and cultural values, and the more basic ladders of social inclusion, a sense of belonging and a sense of identity, (Garcia, 2003). Dwyer et al., (2000) support the view that organising and managing a planned event involves many component parts and many stakeholders. Often the decisions to organise and host events are taken from different stakeholder viewpoints. Good economic rationale is a strong indicator coupled with the social and cultural benefits to a destination; raising awareness of community/social issues, enhancing the exchange of ideas, networking and business contacts. Often neglected and often

ambiguous are the social elements of the three pillars of sustainability. The scope of any framework should encompass those working, participating and attending the event and consider social inclusion as a key principle to widening participation and encourage interest from all aspects of the surrounding community. Social inclusion within events should include:

- Awareness of group's needs participating at the event
- Creation of a structured policy statement to ensure equity and equality for all
- Induction and training of all staff and volunteers in the awareness, recognition and self-management of equity and equality for all.
- (Garcia, 2003; UK Sport, 2005; DCMS, 2001).

Significantly the move towards the creation of a number of published frameworks for sustainable event management has provided not only a sense of professionalism in light of contemporary concerns, but highlighted best practices within the industry, advice and guidance, practical solutions, and an inward looking sense of the importance of events in modern society.

There have been many major developments towards the events industry becoming sustainable. McDonough and Partners, (1992) created for example the Hanover principles, designed with sustainability principles in mind for the Expo world fair 2000, in 1992. In February 1994, Lillehammer, Norway, presented the first "green" games in the history of the Olympics, (Lesjo, 2000). The northern English city of Sheffield set out to develop the World Student Games as a catalyst for economic and social regeneration, (Bramwell, 1995), and the Sustainable Exhibition Industry Project, (SEXI) set to reduce waste as a first step towards sustainable development within the exhibitions sector of events, (MEBC, 2002).

Development of Community Festivals and Destinations

Festivals can impact upon the host community in a number of ways. These impacts can be perceived either positively or negatively by the host community. Dissatisfaction amongst local residents is likely to impact upon the event's sustainability and long term future (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Getz, 2007; Raj et al., 2009). It is therefore necessary to continually research how events are perceived within the host community for the events' sustainability but also as a moral obligation to the community.

Festivals have changed over the years; before festivals were associated with key calendar moments, linked specifically to particular seasons and heritage sites. Over the last decade these have been changed

and developed upon, and there is now a broad and diverse range of festivals events taking place all over the world.

Getz (1997, p.1) introduces festivals events as a:

“Events constitute one of the most exciting and fastest growing forms of leisure, business, and tourism-related phenomena.”

Raj et al (2009, p.3) introduces festivals events as a:

“Festivals provide an opportunity for local people to develop and share their culture. If we understand ‘culture’ to mean the personal expression of community heritage, we can see how festivals may create a sense of shared values, beliefs and perspectives within a local community.”

The revolution in festivals has been stimulated through commercial aspect to meet the changing demand of local community groups and increasing business opportunities for the event organisers and local businesses. Festivals play a major part in a city and local community. Festivals are attractive to host communities, because it helps to develop local pride and identity for the local people. In addition, festivals have an important role in the national and host community in context of destination planning, enhancing and linking tourism and commerce. Some aspects of this role include: events as image makers, economic impact generators, tourist attractions, overcoming seasonality, contributing to the development of local communities and businesses, and supporting key industrial sectors.

The peoples and communities that host the festival provide the visitors with a vibrant and valuable culture. In addition, culture is the personal expression of community heritage, community perspective, it provides cultural opportunities for the visitors to enjoy and experience local illumination and culture. Raj et al. (2009) states that local authorities uses festivals to attract visitors to the area.

“Over the last decade, local authorities’ strategies have begun to state the importance of festivals in promoting tourism and developing the social and economic cohesion, confidence and pride that connect local authorities with the communities they serve.” (p.19)

The festivals also provide support to those who pursue economic opportunity related to sharing community culture with the broader world.

Celebration of Local Identity

Events are identified as opportunities for social interaction, helping develop community cohesion, by increasing cultural and social under-

standing. They are also outward manifestations of communally agreed values and interests, unique to that community. They are said to engender pride in the community and are an opportunity to positively showcase the community. (Shone & Parry, 2004; Getz, 2007).

Community events are often established with the purpose of developing community cohesion, spirit and pride. The Notting Hill Festival became The Notting Hill Carnival in 1964 when a local social worker saw an increase in the West Indian population within the area. She hired a steel band to play at the festival to represent, and to attract, that substantial segment of the community to the event (Bowdin et al., 2001). Another example is The Edinburgh Festival, which started in 1947 to develop community spirit, post World War II (Allen et al., 2005).

Events can be used as a positive distraction from a social crisis (Bowdin et al, 2001; Allen et al., 2005) or it can be an opportunity for people to interact and socialise. Goldblatt (2000) partly attributes the recent growth in the events industry to the fact that people in modern day society are given fewer opportunities to interact and socialise, which they desire. Goldblatt (2000) emphasises the importance of events, as being an opportunity for ‘meaningful contact’ saying:

“With the advance of technology individuals are seeking more high touch experiences...Events remain the single most effective means of providing a high touch experience.” (p.18)

Having identified that events can be an opportunity to develop community cohesion, events can also have negative social consequences. Events brings together people with varying opinions, beliefs and behavioural traits, therefore there is the risk for some disturbances to take place. This risk needs to be managed if the social benefits of the event are to be perceived. Examples of negative social behaviour at events includes: alcohol and drug abuse, violent outbreaks, or general rowdy and yobbish behaviour (HSE, 1999; Getz, 1997; Yeoman et al., 2004).

Methodology

A qualitative approach was chosen in order to study the community’s opinions and perceptions. Qualitative data was collected on the success of the events at developing community cohesion to emerge which articulate a strong sense of local identity, with multi-cultural communities demonstrating cohesive social networks. The findings of this research show us that events and festivals have the capacity to celebrate community identity particularly in multi-cultural events and festivals within the UK. The case studies within this research demonstrate how the Caribbean Carnival has been identified as being an opportunity for interaction between people of different backgrounds and an opportu-

nity to share skills and talents. In addition, the main aim of the event was identified as 'integration and togetherness' evidence that the event is perceived by the community to be an opportunity for 'meaningful interaction' between different cultures and backgrounds. Leeds Asian Mela has been identified as having fairly low levels of community cohesion, but has become a centre piece event for the local economy each year, where local hotels, restaurants, taxis, public transports and small stall traders have planned their business activities around these events.

These approaches were combined as suggested by Finn, Elliott-White and Walton (2000), as a strategy to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of each method. The research purpose and importance of respondent participation was explained prior to all interviews, to acquire 'informed consent'. This also served to persuade the participant of the value and credibility of the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 1997).

Appropriate assurances were made regarding confidentiality and anonymity as recommended by Bell (1993) and Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996). All interviewees were also asked for permission to tape-record dialogue.

In addition, secondary data were used through the whole study. The secondary research was undertaken in the form of a literature review of key theories and current related research. This took the form of researching books, journals, newspaper articles, online journals and the Internet. This was essential in demonstrating awareness of the current state of knowledge on the subject and how the proposed research would add to what is already known (Gill & Johnson, 1991).

Discussion of Results

The paper will discuss the key findings of the primary research conducted for Caribbean Carnival and Leeds Asian Mela. The findings will be critically discussed in relation to the literature reviewed. In comparing the literature and the case study data, similarities can be highlighted and discrepancies can be evaluated and justified. The two events will be analysed and reasons for differing perceptions of community cohesion for the events will be suggested.

Case Study: Leeds West Indian Carnival

The Caribbean carnival is an annual event celebrated in the city since the early 1960s. The carnival is one of the oldest Caribbean carnivals in Europe. In its earlier days the Leeds West Indian Carnival used to go into the city centre, that tradition changed during the 1980s. The carnival has out grown its original setting since the early 1980s and now it takes place around the local communities of Chapletown and

Harehills. The carnival has created multi-cultural spirit for people of all races and nationalities attending the event during the August bank holiday each year since 1967. Carnival founder Arthur France said:

“This continues to be one of this city’s most important and enjoyable family attractions.”

“Our events in the run up to Carnival Day provide something for everyone as well as giving the whole city the chance to come together in one big party.”

(Yorkshire Evening Post, 2002).

Behind the colour and music of the carnival there is a deeper meaning rooted in the experiences of Caribbean people arriving in England around a time of great change in the late 1950s and early 1960s. So it was a search for identity, for community and belonging that led to the carnival being developed in the early 1960s in the area of Notting Hill in London. As stated by the William Stewart the founder of the initial Caribbean carnival in this country.

“This great festival began initially from the energies of black immigrants from the Caribbean, in particular, Trinidad, where the Carnival tradition is very strong, and from people living locally, who dreamed of creating a festival to bring together the people of Notting Hill, most of whom were facing racism, lack of working opportunities and poor housing conditions resulting in a general suppression of good self-esteem.”

Source:<http://www.mynottinghill.co.uk/nottinghilltv/carnival-countdown.htm>

The carnival has created that platform for the Caribbean people to come together and share their social and cultural differences with the local community from numerous backgrounds. It is about people coming together and people having fun.

The attendance at the event varies from 10,000 to 100,000. The attendance at the actual carnival site is 80,000, as procession leaves the Potternewton Park the numbers of carnival watchers grows in large numbers. Over the last ten years the tourist to the area has grown in large numbers, because the event itself has attracted tourism to the area by its glorious and characteristic of the event. However, the other element is the image of the carnival expressing an invisible side of local and international culture being developed by the event over the years to attract more and more visitors to the area.

The carnival has created a very special image for the city of Leeds, because it has brought local community together and enhanced the local image which has attract tourism from all over the country and people come to the carnival as far as Caribbean Islands.

Leeds West Indian Carnival in the last decade has developed as a natural outgrowth and benefited the local economy. However, the economic development of this festival have impacted upon the local small and large businesses, during the period leading up to the event. The festivals have become centre piece events for the local economy each year. The local hotels, restaurants, taxis, public transports and small stall traders have planned their business activities around these events. Moreover, cultural tourism to the local area has increased over the last decade, visitors are attracted to these festivals as far as Asia and Caribbean Islands. The event-tourism has been increased, which has developed greater economic and cultural benefits to the local areas.

Case Study: Leeds Asian Mela

The Leeds Mela has been held annually at Peel Park since 1996. An intoxicating Festival in its own right, the Leeds Mela is the second largest after Bradford Mela and a rare blend of party and pleasure trip. The Leeds Mela has created a unique image in the city, over the last 10 years. The Leeds Mela perfectly illustrates its unique role, where it brings people from different cultures together demonstrating various forms of expression. This also brings with it pride and traditional Asian arts to the city of Leeds.

The Yorkshire Post newspaper stated that:

Thousands of people of all ages, creeds and colours turned out to celebrate the Bradford Mela this weekend, the biggest Asian-orientated festival in Europe. Peel Park was awash with colour, comedy, music and dance for the free two-day festival, finale to the Bradford International Festival.

(Yorkshire Post Newspaper, 2002).

The Leeds Mela has attracted over 60,000 people during the festival weekend. This has a great economic impact on the city of Leeds, as local small businesses gain vital revenue from the festival. Visitors spend great amounts of money during the duration of the festival, it out weighs the social and physical problems that are encountered by the locals.

The social dimension of events is a very important part of many of the proceedings, since key features are directly linked to the community celebrations and festival. The social and physical factors, however, are less tangible than economic impacts and therefore more difficult to understand and reconcile.

Moreover, Leeds Mela brings the local community together to celebrate the diverse cultures within the community. Over the last decade Leeds Mela has become a major multicultural event for the city

of Leeds and has demonstrated the advantages of cultural diversity to the rest of British society. In addition, the festival has created great economic impacts for the local community and enhanced local businesses that benefit from the actual event.

Leeds Mela in 2006 started charging £1 entry fee due to experiencing financial difficulties and in 2007 the event changed formats. The date of the festival changed to tie in with the Bollywood Awards, hosted in Sheffield. It became a two day event and the name changed from the Mela to 'Bollywood in the Park'. The entrance fee was raised to £3/5 per day, on account of the Bollywood stars fees which badly affected attendance figures – dropping to an estimated 30,000 people. In 2008, the event was cancelled, claiming that there was a lack of sponsorship due to the 'credit crunch'. The future of the event is uncertain. However, the event has been enjoyed by many, with only relatively minor disturbances.

The Leeds Mela attendees has provided different experiences over the years:

“embraced the festival that encouraged the education and celebration of a variety of cultures without the feeling of prejudice.”

(Leeds Mela- Bollywood in the Park, 2007a).

Roundhay Park resident Sir Jimmy Saville, spoke of how wonderful it is to have events such as the Mela held at Roundhay Park as “the park is for the people”. He also went on to say that he feels:

“...very honored that we (Roundhay residents) play host to such a wonderful and colourful occasion.”

(Bollywood in the Park Turns up the Heat, 2007)

The attendee's reviews varied dramatically. Here are a couple of examples of negative reviews:

“I have to say I didn't enjoy it...but the Bradford Mela was 100% better.”

“I think Leeds Mela should stop forever because loads of fights break out - the stars get bottles thrown at them. I won't be going again.”

(Zahira and Singh in Summer Melas 2004)

Some of the more positive reviews spoke of the event's broad cultural appeal saying there was a:

“...real cross-section of Leeds' population, of all ages and backgrounds.”

(Aslam, 2006)

Richard Edwards said how important the event is following the terrorist attacks “to see all the different cultures just rubbing along” enjoying themselves, others just simply said they had a “fantastic time”, or a “great day” (Leeds Mela 2004).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion this paper has raised issues of the complexity of organising and managing two distinct community festivals in the same district. However, they have dramatically differing levels of deprivation which is noted as an effecting factor of community cohesion. Carnival has been running much longer than the Mela, which may contribute to the event having statistically higher awareness than the Mela. The Mela, having faced financial difficulties, was cancelled last year (2008), with the future of the event uncertain. Both events were identified as being a positive tool for developing community cohesion, however both had also faced social disruption, with a triple murder one year at the Carnival, and talks of fighting at the Mela. Whilst community festivals have an important role in income generation, the creation of an ‘experience industry’ (Richards, 2001) makes communities susceptible to ‘brutal marketing’ (Kotler et al., 2003) where local communities become an invisible part of festivals which are promoted essentially to boost tourist visitation to destinations. The case studies within this paper demonstrate Carnival has become what Getz (2007) termed as a ‘permanent institution’. To become a permanent institution the community needs to be able to identify with the event’s values and message and to have accepted the event and its worth (Allen et al., 2005; Getz, 2007; Raj et al., 2009). The Carnival represents the community’s values as it is a community led event; organised by a local committee to involve local residents. The primary research identified the area to have a majority black population, who will therefore identify with the cultural theme. Also the Carnival has high levels of deprivation yet the community perceives the Carnival to be an opportunity to positively showcase the area. Engendering pride in the community is a communally agreed value that the entire community can identify with, irrespective of ethnicity. It was also suggested that the event is becoming more of a community event than a culturally specific event. Although it is good that the event can be celebrated by people from many different backgrounds, it is important not to lose the authenticity of the event. Many local residents value the event as being a celebration of the culture and traditions, therefore if the authenticity of the event was lost this may cause tension amongst the community.

Leeds Asian Mela in the last decade has developed to become a centre piece event for the local economy each year, with local hotels, res-

taurants, taxis, public transports and small stall traders planning their business activities around these events. The festival has become 'educational events' for other communities to understand the different cultural aspects of South Asian Communities, with the Leeds Asian Mela in particular has creating an image to enhance tourism for the City of Leeds. The Mela could increase its levels of community cohesion by involving the local residents more, as the majority of the participants were unsure of local involvement in the event. As a predominantly white area, involving more of the local community may influence more white people to come to the event; increasing the event's cultural diversity. However it was felt that the event is an opportunity to have 'meaningful' interaction between cultures and the main aim of the event was identified as 'integration and togetherness'. This highlights that the event has the opportunity to develop. A possible reason why there is less cultural diversity at the event than that of the Carnival is that the Mela charges for entry. Non-Asian participants may be less likely to attend the event as they are unsure of the worth of the event, and value for money. Any pricing changes would need to be carefully considered with the objectives of the event; for the community (festival definition) or for business (fair definition) (Getz, 1997; Raj et al. 2009).

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Submitted: 20th September 2010 Final version: 20th October 2010 Accepted: 02nd November 2010 Refereed anonymously