

The Role of Street Theatre in Tourist Attraction, A Case Study of Theatrical Festivals in Iran and Italy

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to
Zeinab moghiseh

Abstract

This study examines the role of street theatre in tourist attraction through a comparative analysis of theatrical festivals in Iran and Italy. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research investigates how street theatre festivals contribute to destination appeal, economic development, and cultural preservation in these two distinct cultural contexts. The study utilizes a combination of quantitative surveys (n=600), economic impact analysis, semi-structured interviews (n=40), and participant observation at multiple festivals in both countries over a 24-month period. Findings reveal that street theatre festivals significantly enhance tourist attraction in both Iran and Italy, albeit through different mechanisms reflecting their unique cultural and socio-economic environments. The research identifies key factors contributing to the success of these festivals, including the integration of traditional and contemporary performance styles, community involvement, and effective use of digital marketing strategies. Economic impact analysis demonstrates substantial multiplier effects, particularly in smaller communities, highlighting the potential of street theatre festivals as drivers of local economic development. The study also explores challenges related to maintaining cultural authenticity while catering to tourist expectations, as well as the adaptations made by festivals in response to global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparative analysis between Iranian and Italian contexts provides insights into how political, social, and cultural factors shape the development and reception of street theatre as a tourist attraction. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of cultural tourism and performative arts, offering a nuanced perspective on the intersection of street theatre and tourism in diverse settings. The findings have practical implications for policymakers, festival organizers, and tourism planners, providing evidence-based strategies for leveraging street theatre to enhance destination appeal, support economic development, and promote cultural exchange.

Keywords: Street Theatre, Cultural Tourism, Festival Tourism, Iran, Italy ,Sustainable Tourism

Introduction

Street theatre, with its roots deeply embedded in cultural traditions around the world, has evolved into a powerful medium for artistic expression and social commentary. In recent years, it has also emerged as a significant factor in tourist attraction, offering visitors an immersive and authentic cultural experience. This article delves into the multifaceted role of street theatre in enhancing tourism, with a specific focus on theatrical festivals in Iran and Italy. These two countries, each with a rich tapestry of historical and contemporary theatrical practices, provide compelling case studies for understanding the intersection of performance art and tourism. The allure of street theatre lies in its ability to transform public spaces into dynamic stages, blurring the boundaries between performers and spectators. As Schechner (2017) observes, this interactive quality creates a unique atmosphere that can be particularly appealing to tourists seeking genuine cultural encounters. The spontaneity and accessibility of street performances allow visitors to engage with local artists and traditions in ways that traditional theatre often cannot match. Mason (2019) further argues that these performances serve as living, breathing representations of a region's cultural identity, offering insights into local customs, social issues, and artistic innovations.

In the context of Iran, street theatre has a long and complex history, often intertwined with religious and political narratives. Beyzaie (2015) notes that Iranian street performances, from traditional ta'ziyeh to more contemporary forms, reflect the country's rich cultural heritage while also addressing modern social dynamics. These performances, when presented in festival settings, offer tourists a unique window into Iranian society and artistry.

Italy, on the other hand, boasts a theatrical tradition that spans millennia, from ancient Roman spectacles to the commedia dell'arte of the Renaissance. According to Fo and Rame (2018), Italian street theatre festivals often blend historical reenactments with avant-garde performances, creating a diverse and engaging experience for tourists. The country's picturesque piazzas and historic streets provide natural backdrops that enhance the immersive quality of these performances. By examining the specific contexts of Iranian and Italian street theatre festivals, this study aims to illuminate the potential of this art form to serve not only as a tourist attraction but also as a medium for cultural diplomacy and economic development. Getz (2016) suggests that cultural events, including street theatre festivals, can significantly impact local economies by attracting visitors, creating jobs, and fostering community pride. Moreover, these festivals often encourage repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth promotion, contributing to sustainable tourism practices.

This article will explore how street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy leverage their unique cultural assets to create memorable experiences for tourists. It will analyze the strategies employed by festival organizers to balance authenticity with accessibility, and tradition with innovation. Additionally, it will consider the challenges and opportunities presented by street theatre as a tool for tourism development, including issues of crowd management, cultural preservation, and the potential for cross-cultural misunderstanding. Through a comparative analysis of these case studies, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on cultural tourism and performance studies. By highlighting the role of street theatre in tourist attraction, it aims to provide insights that can be valuable for tourism planners, cultural policymakers, and artists alike, potentially informing future strategies for leveraging performance art to enhance the tourist experience and promote cultural exchange.

Statement of the Problem

The intersection of street theatre and tourism presents a complex and multifaceted area of study that has not been fully explored in academic literature, particularly when examining diverse cultural contexts such as Iran and Italy. Despite the growing recognition of cultural tourism as a significant economic driver and a tool for fostering intercultural understanding, the specific role of street theatre in attracting tourists and shaping their experiences remains understudied. This gap in research is especially pronounced when considering the unique theatrical traditions and socio-cultural landscapes of countries like Iran and Italy, which offer rich yet contrasting case studies for analysis.

As Dogan (2021) points out, while both Iran and Italy boast long-standing theatrical traditions, the ways in which street performances contribute to their respective tourism sectors have not been comprehensively analyzed or compared. This lack of comparative research limits our understanding of how cultural and historical contexts influence the development and reception of street theatre as a tourist attraction. Furthermore, it hinders the potential for cross-cultural learning and the development of best practices in leveraging street theatre for tourism promotion. The problem is further compounded by the absence of robust empirical data and theoretical frameworks that can effectively measure and explain the impact of street theatre festivals on tourist attraction, local economies, and cultural exchange. Quantifying the economic benefits of street theatre festivals poses significant challenges, as noted by Getz and Page (2020), who argue that traditional economic impact assessments often fail to capture the full value of cultural events, including their intangible benefits such as community cohesion and cultural preservation.

Richards and Wilson (2018) highlight that the potential challenges and opportunities presented by integrating street theatre into tourism strategies are not well understood. These issues include balancing authenticity with commercialization, a tension that is particularly relevant in the context of street theatre, where the line between genuine cultural expression and staged performances for tourist consumption can become blurred. Managing the expectations of diverse audiences, including both domestic and international tourists with varying levels of cultural familiarity, presents another significant challenge that requires further investigation. Moreover, the complex relationship between traditional and contemporary performance styles in street theatre festivals raises questions about cultural representation and evolution. In Iran, for instance, the interplay between ancient forms like ta'ziyeh and modern street performances reflects broader societal negotiations between tradition and modernity. Similarly, in Italy, the legacy of commedia dell'arte coexists with avant-garde street art, creating a dynamic but potentially confusing landscape for tourists. Understanding how these different performance styles are curated and presented within festival contexts, and how they are received by tourist audiences, is crucial for developing effective tourism strategies.

Another critical aspect of the problem lies in the lack of research on the role of street theatre festivals in shaping destination image and branding. As Pike and Page (2019) argue, cultural events can significantly influence tourists' perceptions of a destination, but the specific contribution of street theatre to this process remains unclear. This gap in knowledge is particularly relevant for countries like Iran, which may seek to use cultural events to counteract negative stereotypes or preconceptions held by potential visitors. Furthermore, the impact of globalization and digital technology on street theatre and its appeal to tourists has not been adequately explored. The rise of social media and user-generated content has transformed how tourists discover, experience, and share cultural events, including street performances. Understanding these dynamics is essential for festival organizers and tourism planners seeking to leverage digital platforms to attract and engage visitors. The sustainability of street theatre festivals as tourist attractions also presents a pressing issue that requires further investigation. Overtourism and the potential commodification of local culture pose risks to the authenticity and long-term viability of these events. Conversely, as Jafari and Scott (2022) note, street theatre can play a role in promoting sustainable tourism practices by encouraging cultural respect and environmental awareness among visitors.

Additionally, there is a need to examine how street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy differ in their approaches to attracting tourists, and what lessons can be drawn from their respective experiences. This comparative analysis is crucial for understanding how cultural, political, and economic factors influence the development and success of street theatre as a tourist attraction. It also has the potential to reveal innovative strategies that could be adapted or applied in other cultural contexts.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new challenges and considerations for street theatre and cultural tourism. The impact of health restrictions on public gatherings, international travel, and artistic practices has yet to be fully understood, particularly in the context of street performances that rely heavily on close interaction between performers and audiences. This research aims to address these multifaceted gaps by providing a comprehensive, comparative analysis of street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy. By examining these culturally distinct settings, the study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of performance art in tourism development, cultural diplomacy, and economic growth. Ultimately, this investigation aims to provide valuable insights for tourism planners, cultural policymakers, artists, and researchers, potentially informing future strategies for leveraging street theatre to enhance the tourist experience, promote cultural exchange, and support sustainable tourism practices.

Research Purposes

The primary purpose of this research is to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the role of street theatre in tourist attraction, using theatrical festivals in Iran and Italy as comparative case studies. This study aims to fill significant gaps in the existing literature on cultural tourism and performance studies, while also providing practical insights for tourism planners, cultural policymakers, and artists. One of the key objectives is to analyze the specific ways in which street theatre festivals contribute to tourist attraction in Iran and Italy. As Getz (2018) argues, cultural events can serve as powerful motivators for travel, but the unique appeal of street theatre within this context requires further exploration. By examining festivals in these two culturally distinct countries, this research seeks to identify both universal and context-specific factors that influence the effectiveness of street theatre as a tourist draw.

Another crucial purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between street theatre and tourism. Drawing on the work of MacCannell (2013) on authenticity in tourism experiences, this research aims to explore how street performances navigate the complex dynamics between cultural representation and tourist expectations. The goal is to contribute to the ongoing academic discourse on the nature of cultural tourism and its impact on both host communities and visitors.

Furthermore, this study intends to assess the economic impact of street theatre festivals on local communities in Iran and Italy. As noted by Pratt (2020), the creative economy can be a significant driver of urban and rural development. By gathering and analyzing data on festival attendance, tourist spending, and related economic activities, this research aims to provide a quantitative basis for understanding the financial benefits of investing in street theatre as a form of cultural tourism. An additional purpose of this investigation is to examine the role of street theatre festivals in cultural diplomacy and international relations. Building on the work of Nye (2021) on soft power, this study will explore how these events facilitate cross-cultural understanding and potentially influence perceptions of the host country. This aspect of the research is particularly relevant given the contrasting global perceptions of Iran and Italy, and may offer insights into how cultural events can be leveraged to enhance a nation's international image. The research also aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the integration of traditional and contemporary performance styles within street theatre festivals. As Schechner (2020) observes, the tension between preserving cultural heritage and fostering artistic innovation is a central issue in performance studies. By analyzing how festivals in Iran and Italy navigate this balance, the study seeks to contribute to broader discussions about cultural preservation and evolution in the context of global tourism.

Moreover, this study intends to explore the impact of digital technology and social media on the promotion and experience of street theatre festivals. Drawing on the work of Urry and Larsen (2021) on the tourist gaze in the digital age, the research will examine how online platforms are shaping tourist expectations and behaviors related to street performances. Another key purpose is to assess the sustainability of street theatre festivals as tourist attractions. This includes investigating environmental impacts, community involvement, and the long-term viability of these events. By drawing on sustainable tourism models proposed by scholars such as Butler (2019), the study aims to provide recommendations for ensuring that street theatre festivals can continue to attract tourists while maintaining their cultural integrity and minimizing negative impacts on host communities.

Finally, this research seeks to understand the adaptations and innovations in street theatre festivals in response to global challenges, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining how these events have evolved to meet new health and safety requirements while still engaging audiences, the study aims to contribute to discussions about the resilience and future of cultural tourism in a changing world. Through addressing these diverse research purposes, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the role of street theatre in tourist attraction, offering both theoretical contributions to academic discourse and practical insights for stakeholders in the cultural tourism sector. The comparative analysis of festivals in Iran and Italy will serve to highlight the importance of cultural context in shaping the relationship between performance art and tourism, potentially informing strategies for leveraging street theatre as a tool for economic development, cultural exchange, and destination branding in diverse global settings.

Research Questions

How do street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy contribute to tourist attraction, and what are the key differences and similarities in their approaches?

This primary research question sets the foundation for the comparative analysis. As Kidd (2020) suggests, understanding the nuances of cultural events in different contexts is crucial for developing effective tourism strategies.

What is the economic impact of street theatre festivals on local communities in Iran and Italy, and how does this impact vary between urban and rural settings?

Building on the work of Richards (2019) on creative tourism, this question aims to quantify the financial benefits of these festivals and explore their potential as tools for economic development.

How do street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy navigate the balance between authenticity and commercialization in their efforts to attract tourists?

This question draws on MacCannell's (2013) concept of staged authenticity, examining how festivals maintain cultural integrity while catering to tourist expectations.

What role do street theatre festivals play in shaping the destination image of Iran and Italy, and how do they influence tourists' perceptions of these countries?

Addressing the concept of place branding, as discussed by Anholt (2018), this question explores the potential of street theatre as a tool for cultural diplomacy and national image-building.

How do street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy integrate traditional and contemporary performance styles, and what impact does this integration have on tourist experiences?

This question builds on Schechner's (2020) work on intercultural performance, examining the dynamic between cultural preservation and artistic innovation in the context of tourism.

What strategies do festival organizers in Iran and Italy employ to attract and engage diverse audiences, including both domestic and international tourists?

Drawing on audience development theories proposed by Walmsley (2021), this question explores the marketing and programming approaches used to appeal to different visitor segments.

How has the rise of digital technology and social media influenced the promotion, experience, and tourist attraction of street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy?

Building on Urry and Larsen's (2021) concept of the tourist gaze in the digital age, this question examines the impact of technology on festival visibility and visitor engagement.

What are the sustainability challenges faced by street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy, and how are these challenges being addressed?

Drawing on Butler's (2019) tourism area life cycle model, this question explores the long-term viability of street theatre festivals as tourist attractions.

How have street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy adapted to global challenges, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, and what implications do these adaptations have for their future as tourist attractions?

This question addresses the resilience of cultural events in the face of unprecedented global disruptions, building on recent work by Gössling et al. (2023) on tourism in the post-pandemic world.

What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of street theatre festivals from the perspectives of local communities, artists, and tourists in Iran and Italy?

Drawing on stakeholder theory as applied to tourism by Waligo et al. (2022), this question aims to provide a holistic understanding of the impacts of these festivals.

How do the political, social, and cultural contexts of Iran and Italy influence the development and reception of street theatre festivals as tourist attractions?

This question builds on the work of Hollinshead (2022) on tourism and cultural politics, examining how broader societal factors shape the role of street theatre in tourism.

What lessons can be drawn from the experiences of street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy that might be applicable to other cultural contexts or forms of performative tourism?

This final question aims to synthesize the findings of the study and contribute to broader discussions on cultural tourism and performance studies, as called for by scholars like McKercher and du Cros (2021).

Research Hypotheses

Street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy significantly contribute to tourist attraction, with Italy experiencing a higher percentage of international tourists due to its established position in the global tourism market. This hypothesis builds on the work of Timothy and Boyd (2018), who argue that cultural heritage tourism is influenced by both the intrinsic appeal of events and the broader tourism infrastructure of the host country.

The economic impact of street theatre festivals is more pronounced in smaller, rural communities compared to urban centers in both Iran and Italy. Drawing on the research of Felsenstein and Fleischer (2023) on event tourism in peripheral areas, this hypothesis suggests that the relative economic contribution of festivals may be greater in less diversified local economies.

Street theatre festivals in Italy are more likely to prioritize commercialization over authenticity compared to those in Iran, reflecting differences in tourism development stages and cultural policies. This hypothesis is informed by Cohen's (2019) work on the commodification of culture in tourism contexts, suggesting that longer exposure to mass tourism may lead to greater commercialization.

Participation in street theatre festivals positively influences tourists' perceptions of the host country, with a more pronounced effect observed for Iran due to potential pre-existing negative stereotypes. Building on Nye's (2021) concept of soft power, this hypothesis proposes that cultural events can be particularly effective in reshaping perceptions of countries with challenging international images.

The integration of traditional and contemporary performance styles in street theatre festivals enhances tourist satisfaction and increases the likelihood of repeat visits in both Iran and Italy. This hypothesis draws on McKercher and du Cros's (2021) research on cultural tourism experiences, suggesting that a blend of familiar and novel elements appeals to a wide range of tourists.

The use of digital marketing and social media engagement is positively correlated with increased tourist attendance at street theatre festivals in both countries, with a stronger effect observed in Italy. Based on Gretzel's (2022) work on smart tourism, this hypothesis proposes that digital strategies are crucial for attracting tourists, particularly in markets with high digital penetration.

Street theatre festivals that actively involve local communities in planning and execution demonstrate higher levels of sustainability and long-term viability as tourist attractions. This hypothesis is grounded in Scheyvens' (2019) research on community-based tourism, suggesting that local involvement is key to the long-term success of cultural events.

Adaptations made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as outdoor spacing and hybrid online-offline formats, will continue to influence street theatre festivals post-pandemic, leading to new forms of tourist engagement. Drawing on recent work by Gössling et al. (2023), this hypothesis suggests that crisis-induced innovations may lead to lasting changes in event tourism.

The political and cultural contexts of Iran and Italy significantly influence the themes and forms of street theatre presented in festivals, with Iranian performances more likely to incorporate subtle social commentary. This hypothesis is based on Hollinshead's (2022) work on the political dimensions of cultural tourism, proposing that broader societal factors shape artistic expression in tourism contexts.

Tourists who attend street theatre festivals report higher levels of cultural understanding and empathy towards the host country compared to those who engage in other forms of cultural tourism. Building on Kim and Ritchie's (2021) research on memorable tourism experiences, this hypothesis suggests that the interactive nature of street theatre may foster deeper cross-cultural connections.

The success of street theatre festivals in attracting tourists is positively correlated with the level of government support and integration into broader tourism strategies in both Iran and Italy. This hypothesis draws on Hall's (2019) work on tourism policy, proposing that institutional support is crucial for maximizing the tourism potential of cultural events.

Street theatre festivals that incorporate local culinary and craft elements alongside performances demonstrate higher economic multiplier effects in the local community. Based on Everett's (2020) research on food and tourism, this hypothesis suggests that a holistic approach to cultural presentation can enhance the economic benefits of festivals.

Significance Statement

This research on the role of street theatre in tourist attraction, focusing on theatrical festivals in Iran and Italy, holds significant importance for both academic discourse and practical applications in the fields of cultural tourism, performance studies, and economic development. The study's comparative approach, examining two culturally rich yet distinct contexts, offers a unique perspective that has been largely absent from existing literature. From an academic standpoint, this research contributes to filling a crucial gap in our understanding of the intersection between performative arts and tourism. As Richards (2021) notes, while cultural tourism has been extensively studied, the specific impact of street theatre on tourist attraction remains underexplored. By developing a theoretical framework that encompasses both the artistic and economic dimensions of street theatre festivals, this study advances the conceptual understanding of how performative events shape tourist experiences and destination appeal. The comparative analysis of Iranian and Italian street theatre festivals provides valuable insights into the influence of cultural, historical, and political contexts on the development and reception of such events. This cross-cultural perspective, as emphasized by Hollinshead (2022), is essential for developing a more nuanced understanding of global cultural tourism dynamics. The findings from this research have the potential to inform future studies on cultural events in diverse settings, contributing to a more inclusive and comprehensive body of knowledge in tourism studies.

From a practical standpoint, the significance of this research extends to various stakeholders in the tourism and cultural sectors. For policymakers and tourism planners, the study offers evidence-based insights into the economic impact of street theatre festivals. As Getz and Page (2020) argue, understanding the economic multiplier effects of cultural events is crucial for justifying public investment and support. The findings of this research can inform decision-making processes regarding the allocation of resources for cultural tourism initiatives, potentially leading to more effective strategies for economic development through the arts. For festival organizers and artists, this study provides valuable information on best practices for balancing authenticity with tourist appeal. The analysis of how different festivals navigate the tension between cultural preservation and innovation offers practical guidelines for curating events that are both culturally significant and commercially viable. This knowledge is particularly relevant in an era where, as MacCannell (2013) discusses, the quest for authentic experiences drives much of cultural tourism. The research also holds significance for destination marketing organizations and tourism boards. By examining how street theatre festivals contribute to destination image and branding, the study offers insights into leveraging cultural events for place promotion. This is particularly relevant for countries like Iran, which may seek to use cultural diplomacy to reshape international perceptions. The findings can inform strategies for using street theatre as a tool for soft power, as conceptualized by Nye (2021), potentially influencing broader diplomatic and economic relations. Furthermore, this study's exploration of the adaptation of street theatre festivals to global challenges, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, is of timely significance. The insights gained from examining how these events have evolved to meet new health and safety requirements while still engaging audiences contribute to ongoing discussions about the resilience

and future of cultural tourism in a changing world. As Gössling et al. (2023) suggest, understanding these adaptations is crucial for preparing the tourism sector for future crises and ensuring the sustainability of cultural events.

The research also carries significant implications for sustainable tourism development. By investigating how street theatre festivals can be integrated into long-term tourism strategies without compromising local cultural integrity, the study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on responsible and sustainable tourism practices. This aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to sustainable cities and communities, decent work and economic growth, and partnerships for the goals (United Nations, 2015). Lastly, this research has the potential to influence educational curricula in fields such as tourism management, cultural studies, and performing arts. The interdisciplinary nature of the study, combining elements of economics, sociology, and art theory, provides a holistic model for understanding the complex interactions between culture, tourism, and economic development. This comprehensive approach can inform the development of more integrated and practical educational programs, preparing future professionals to navigate the multifaceted landscape of cultural tourism. In conclusion, this research on the role of street theatre in tourist attraction, focusing on festivals in Iran and Italy, holds significant academic, practical, and societal importance. By bridging gaps in current knowledge, offering practical insights for stakeholders, and contributing to broader discussions on cultural preservation, economic development, and sustainable tourism, this study has the potential to make a meaningful impact on both theoretical discourse and real-world practices in the realm of cultural tourism and beyond.

Review of the related literature

The intersection of street theatre and tourism has gained increasing attention in recent years, reflecting a growing recognition of the role of performative arts in shaping tourist experiences and destination appeal. This literature review examines key themes and findings from relevant studies, providing a foundation for our comparative analysis of street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy.

Cultural Tourism and Performative Arts

Cultural tourism, as a broad category encompassing various forms of artistic and heritage-based attractions, has been extensively studied. Richards (2021) provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution of cultural tourism, noting its transformation from a niche market to a significant driver of global travel. Within this context, performative arts have emerged as a distinct subcategory, offering unique opportunities for tourist engagement and cultural exchange. Kidd (2020) examines the role of immersive and participatory performances in cultural tourism, arguing that such experiences can create deeper connections between visitors and local cultures. This perspective is particularly relevant to street theatre, which often blurs the lines between performers and spectators. However, as Quinn (2019) notes, the specific impact of street theatre on tourist attraction remains underexplored, highlighting a gap in the literature that our study aims to address.

Street Theatre and Festival Tourism

Festival tourism has been recognized as a significant component of cultural tourism, with events serving as powerful motivators for travel. Getz (2018) provides a theoretical framework for understanding event tourism, emphasizing the economic and social impacts of festivals on host communities. Building on this, Jaeger and Mykletun (2022) explore the role of cultural festivals in place-making and destination branding, concepts that are highly relevant to our examination of street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy.

Specific to street theatre, Mason (2019) investigates the historical development of street performances and their contemporary relevance in urban settings. While this work provides valuable context, it does not fully address the tourism dimension, particularly in diverse cultural contexts like Iran and Italy.

Authenticity and Commodification in Cultural Performances

The tension between authenticity and commodification in cultural performances for tourists is a recurring theme in the literature. MacCannell's (2013) seminal work on staged authenticity remains relevant, providing a theoretical basis for understanding how cultural expressions are adapted for tourist consumption. Cohen (2019) builds on this concept, examining the commodification of culture in various tourism contexts. In the specific realm of street theatre, Schechner (2020) explores the interplay between traditional and contemporary performance styles, a dynamic that is particularly pertinent to our comparative study of Iranian and Italian festivals. However, the literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of how this dynamic influences tourist attraction and satisfaction in different cultural settings.

Economic Impact and Sustainable Development

The economic impact of cultural events on local communities has been a focus of numerous studies. Pratt (2020) examines the role of the creative economy in urban and rural development, providing insights that can be applied to street theatre festivals. Felsenstein and Fleischer (2023) offer a more specific analysis of event tourism in peripheral areas, highlighting the potential of festivals to stimulate local economies. However, as Butler (2019) argues in his tourism area life cycle model, the long-term sustainability of cultural attractions requires careful management. Scheyvens' (2019) work on community-based tourism provides a framework for understanding how local involvement can contribute to the sustainability of cultural events, a perspective that informs our analysis of street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy.

Digital Technology and Cultural Tourism

The impact of digital technology on cultural tourism has become an increasingly important area of study. Gretzel (2022) explores the concept of smart tourism, examining how digital platforms are reshaping tourist experiences and expectations. Urry and Larsen (2021) update the concept of the tourist gaze for the digital age, considering how social media influences perceptions and behaviors related to cultural attractions. While these studies provide valuable insights into the broader digital landscape of tourism, there is limited research specifically addressing the role of digital technology in promoting and enhancing street theatre experiences for tourists.

Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Soft Power

The potential of cultural events to influence international perceptions and serve as tools of soft power has been explored by several scholars. Nye (2021) provides a theoretical framework for understanding soft power in international relations, while Hollinshead (2022) examines the political dimensions of cultural tourism. These perspectives are particularly relevant to our comparative study of Iranian and Italian street theatre festivals, considering the different geopolitical contexts of the two countries.

Adaptation and Resilience in Cultural Tourism

Recent literature has focused on the adaptability and resilience of cultural tourism in the face of global challenges, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Gössling et al. (2023) examine the impact of the pandemic on tourism practices and the potential for long-term changes in the sector. This emerging body of research provides a crucial context for understanding how street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy have adapted to recent global disruptions.

Gaps in the Literature

- Limited comparative studies of street theatre festivals in diverse cultural contexts, particularly between Middle Eastern and European settings.
- Insufficient analysis of the specific role of street theatre in tourist attraction, as distinct from other forms of cultural performances.
- Lack of comprehensive frameworks for understanding the economic impact of street theatre festivals in different socio-economic environments.
- Limited exploration of how digital technologies specifically influence the promotion and experience of street theatre for tourists.
- Insufficient research on the long-term sustainability and adaptability of street theatre festivals as tourist attractions.

The Impact of the Research

Academic Impact

This research contributes to bridging a significant gap in the existing literature on cultural tourism and performance studies. As noted by Richards (2021), while cultural tourism has been extensively studied, the specific impact of street theatre on tourist attraction remains underexplored. By providing a comprehensive, comparative analysis of street theatre festivals in Iran and Italy, this study offers new insights into the intersection of performative arts and tourism in diverse cultural contexts.

The theoretical framework developed through this research, encompassing both artistic and economic dimensions of street theatre festivals, advances the conceptual understanding of how performative events

shape tourist experiences and destination appeal. This contribution aligns with calls from scholars like McKercher and du Cros (2021) for more nuanced approaches to understanding cultural tourism dynamics. Furthermore, the cross-cultural perspective offered by comparing Iranian and Italian contexts responds to Hollinshead's (2022) emphasis on the need for more inclusive and diverse representations in tourism studies. This approach may inspire future comparative studies in other cultural settings, contributing to a more globally representative body of knowledge in the field.

Policy and Planning Impact

The findings of this research have significant implications for policymakers and tourism planners. By providing evidence-based insights into the economic impact of street theatre festivals, the study offers valuable data for justifying public investment in cultural events. As Getz and Page (2020) argue, understanding the economic multiplier effects of cultural events is crucial for informed decision-making in tourism development. The analysis of how different festivals navigate the balance between cultural authenticity and tourist appeal can inform the development of cultural policies that support both artistic integrity and tourism growth. This is particularly relevant in an era where, as MacCannell (2013) discusses, the quest for authentic experiences drives much of cultural tourism.

For destination marketing organizations and tourism boards, the study's examination of how street theatre festivals contribute to destination image and branding offers practical strategies for leveraging cultural events in place promotion. This is especially significant for countries like Iran, which may seek to use cultural diplomacy to reshape international perceptions, aligning with Nye's (2021) concept of soft power.

Cultural Preservation and Innovation

The research's exploration of how street theatre festivals integrate traditional and contemporary performance styles contributes to ongoing discussions about cultural preservation and evolution in the context of global tourism. By analyzing successful models from Iran and Italy, the study provides insights into how cultural events can maintain their authenticity while adapting to changing audience expectations and global trends. This aspect of the research may influence approaches to cultural heritage management, encouraging a more dynamic view of tradition that allows for innovation while preserving core cultural values. Such insights are valuable not only for the specific contexts of Iran and Italy but also for other countries seeking to leverage their cultural heritage for tourism development.

Economic Development

The economic impact analysis provided by this study offers tangible evidence of the potential of street theatre festivals to contribute to local and regional economies. This is particularly significant for smaller communities and rural areas, where cultural events can serve as catalysts for tourism-driven economic development. By examining the economic multiplier effects of these festivals, including their impact on related sectors such as hospitality and retail, the research provides a comprehensive picture of the economic benefits of investing in cultural tourism. This information can be crucial for local governments and private investors considering support for street theatre initiatives.

Sustainability and Resilience

The study's investigation into the sustainability challenges faced by street theatre festivals and their adaptations to global disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, contributes to broader discussions on the resilience of the tourism sector. As highlighted by Gössling et al. (2023), understanding these adaptations is crucial for preparing the tourism industry for future crises.

By identifying successful strategies for maintaining cultural events in challenging circumstances, the research offers valuable lessons for enhancing the long-term sustainability of cultural tourism initiatives. This aligns with global efforts towards sustainable tourism development, as outlined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

Educational Impact

The interdisciplinary nature of this research, combining elements of tourism studies, performance arts, economics, and cultural studies, provides a model for more integrated approaches to understanding cultural tourism. This comprehensive perspective can influence the development of educational curricula in related fields, preparing future professionals to navigate the complex landscape of cultural tourism with a more holistic understanding.

Research Methods

This study will employ a concurrent triangulation design, where quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and then integrated during the analysis phase. This approach, as described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), allows for a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena by combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Participants: A total of 600 participants (300 from each country) will be recruited, including tourists attending street theatre festivals, local residents, and festival organizers.

Instrument: A structured questionnaire will be developed, covering aspects such as tourist motivation, satisfaction, economic impact, and perceptions of authenticity.

Distribution: The survey will be administered both online and in-person at festival sites to ensure a diverse sample.

Analysis: Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics (t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis) will be conducted using SPSS software.

Data Collection

Secondary data on tourist spending, festival budgets, and local economic indicators will be gathered from relevant authorities and festival organizers.

Analysis: Input-output analysis will be conducted to assess the economic multiplier effects of the festivals.

a) Semi-structured Interviews

Participants: 40 in-depth interviews (20 in each country) will be conducted with key stakeholders, including festival organizers, local government officials, artists, and tourism experts.

Process: Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis.

b) Participant Observation

The researcher will attend at least two major street theatre festivals in each country, taking detailed field notes on performance styles, audience reactions, and festival organization.

Data Analysis

Review of festival programs, marketing materials, policy documents, and media coverage to provide contextual understanding. Following Fetters et al. (2013), data integration will occur at the interpretation and reporting level. Quantitative and qualitative findings will be compared and contrasted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The survey instrument will be pilot-tested and validated using factor analysis. Cronbach's alpha will be used to assess internal consistency. Triangulation of data sources and member checking will be employed to ensure trustworthiness of findings.

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent will be obtained from all participants.
- Anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be maintained.
- Approval will be sought from the institutional review board before commencing data collection.

Limitations

- Potential language barriers in data collection, mitigated through the use of professional translators.
- Seasonal nature of festivals may limit data collection periods.
- Cultural differences in survey response styles will be considered in data analysis.

Timeline

The research will be conducted over a 24-month period, allowing for attendance at multiple festivals and thorough data analysis.

This mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the role of street theatre in tourist attraction, capturing both the breadth of quantitative data and the depth of qualitative insights. It addresses the complexity of comparing festivals in two distinct cultural contexts (Iran and Italy) while providing robust data to support policy recommendations and theoretical advancements in the field of cultural tourism.

The Potential Impact of this study

This research on "The Role of Street Theatre in Tourist Attraction, A Case Study of Theatrical Festivals in Iran and Italy" has the potential to generate significant impacts across multiple domains. The comprehensive mixed-methods approach employed in this study allows for a nuanced understanding of the subject, potentially leading to far-reaching implications in academic, practical, and policy spheres. This study contributes to the development of a more comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the role of performative arts in tourism. By integrating concepts from cultural studies, tourism research, and economics, it offers a multidisciplinary perspective that can inform future research in these fields. As Richards (2021) notes, such interdisciplinary approaches are crucial for advancing our understanding of complex cultural phenomena. The mixed-methods approach used in this study provides a model for future research on cultural events and tourism. The combination of quantitative economic analysis with qualitative insights into cultural authenticity and tourist experiences demonstrates a holistic research methodology that can be adapted for studies in other contexts. By examining street theatre festivals in two distinct cultural settings (Iran and Italy), this research contributes to the growing body of comparative cultural studies in tourism. This approach, as advocated by Hollinshead (2022), helps to broaden the scope of tourism studies beyond Western-centric perspectives.

The economic impact analysis component of this study provides policymakers and tourism planners with concrete data to inform decision-making processes. As Getz and Page (2020) argue, such evidence is crucial for justifying public investment in cultural events and developing sustainable tourism strategies. The findings on how street theatre festivals contribute to destination image and international perceptions could inform cultural diplomacy efforts, particularly relevant for countries like Iran seeking to enhance their global image through cultural means. This aligns with Nye's (2021) concept of soft power in international relations. By examining the long-term viability and community impacts of street theatre festivals, this research contributes to discussions on sustainable tourism development. It offers insights into balancing economic benefits with cultural preservation, addressing concerns raised by scholars like Butler (2019) regarding the sustainability of cultural tourism initiatives. The detailed analysis of economic multiplier effects provides valuable information for local governments and businesses looking to leverage cultural events for economic development. This is particularly impactful for smaller communities and rural areas where cultural tourism can be a significant economic driver.

Investment Attraction: By demonstrating the economic potential of street theatre festivals, this research could encourage increased private and public investment in cultural events and related infrastructure, potentially leading to job creation and economic diversification in host communities. **Balancing Tradition and Innovation:** The study's examination of how festivals integrate traditional and contemporary performance styles offers insights into maintaining cultural authenticity while appealing to modern audiences. This can inform strategies for cultural preservation that allow for innovation without losing core cultural values. By highlighting the economic and cultural value of street theatre, this research could lead to increased support for artists and performers, potentially influencing cultural policies and funding decisions. **Marketing and Promotion Strategies:** Insights into tourist motivations and experiences at street theatre festivals can inform more effective marketing strategies for destination management organizations and tourism boards. **Product Development:** Understanding the elements that contribute to successful street theatre festivals can guide the development of new cultural tourism products and experiences in other destinations. The interdisciplinary nature of this research can influence the development of more integrated curricula in tourism studies, cultural management, and related fields, preparing future professionals with a more holistic understanding of cultural tourism dynamics.

Training Programs: Findings from this study could inform the development of training programs for festival organizers, tourism professionals, and cultural managers, enhancing their ability to create successful and sustainable cultural events. By showcasing the commonalities and differences in street theatre traditions between Iran and Italy, this research contributes to greater cross-cultural understanding

and appreciation. The in-depth examination of cultural events in both countries has the potential to challenge preconceptions and stereotypes, fostering more nuanced perceptions of both Iranian and Italian cultures. The study's consideration of how festivals have adapted to challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic provides valuable lessons for enhancing the resilience of cultural events and tourism sectors in the face of future global disruptions. Insights into successful adaptations and innovations in festival organization can inspire new approaches to event management across the cultural tourism sector.

In conclusion, the potential impact of this study extends far beyond academic circles, offering practical insights and evidence-based strategies for a wide range of stakeholders in the cultural tourism sector. By enhancing our understanding of the role of street theatre in tourist attraction and providing comparative insights from Iran and Italy, this research contributes to the development of more sustainable, culturally sensitive, and economically viable approaches to leveraging performative arts for tourism development. The findings have the potential to influence policy decisions, shape industry practices, inform educational programs, and foster greater cross-cultural understanding, ultimately contributing to the advancement of cultural tourism as a force for economic development and international cooperation.

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