

# Events and the Governance of the Territory: The Festival “La Notte della Taranta” in Apulia, Italy

Azzurra Rinaldi, Sara Sergio  
University of Rome Unitelma Sapienza, Rome, Italy

Events are an important attraction for tourist destinations (Getz, 2008). Even in well-known destinations for their sea, events can attract different types of tourists and can help counteract seasonality (Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974). In Apulia (Italy), this happens thanks to the “La Notte della Taranta” Festival, which was born in 1998 and is currently the largest European music event dedicated to traditional music, able to attract over 230,000 viewers from around the world every summer in the Salento region. Analyzing the Festival “La Notte della Taranta” from an economic and legal point of view has been the main purpose of our research.

*Keywords:* tourism, destination management, tourism development, cultural festivals, governance, local government

## Introduction

In Italy, tourism is one of the most dynamic productive sectors. According to the latest data released by the World Bank, international arrivals in the country are increasing from 2005 and reached 52.4 millions in 2016. In 2016, the overall contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was 11.1% of the Italian GDP (186.1bn €): Italy is ranked 8th for the absolute amount of the size of T&T to GDP (WTTC, 2018).

The country is characterized by the presence of archaeological, architectural, artistic, and cultural sites that require an adequate planning in terms of the services offered. It is therefore necessary to increase the tools that can guarantee the development of tourism both at a national and at a local and territorial level. Italian territory is an expression of culture, a term that can take on a plurality of meanings. Firstly, culture refers to the person—to be understood as an individual—and concerns the development of knowledge; according to another meaning, the term culture belongs to the community, in which a subject lives and therefore concerns values and ideals. Until the middle of the 20th century, culture was considered an elite phenomenon, known only to those who were able to appreciate the beauty and cultural value of a good.

The culture was reserved only to those who held power and was allowed to those who could be able to enter the graces of the powerful. This has led to delays in introducing incentive mechanisms for visiting museums and cultural heritage in general. In this context, the relaunch of tourism in all its facets is inserted, with great attention to creating the conditions for the development of our country in a homogeneous territorial strategy, favoring employment and making tourism the most important industrial sector on which Italy can

---

Azzurra Rinaldi, Ph.D., Senior Researcher in Economics, Head of the Bachelor’s Degree Tourism Economics, Department of Law and Economics, University of Rome Unitelma Sapienza, Rome, Italy.

Sara Sergio, Ph.D., Researcher in Administrative Law, Department of Law and Economics, University of Rome Unitelma Sapienza, Rome, Italy.

count for growth. But, for an economic strategy on tourism to be really effective, however, we can not ignore the regulatory framework within which economic agents act. When looking at tourism from a legal point of view, reference is made to a set of legal rules governing this particular economic sector. The legislator's attention to this phenomenon is actually almost recent, but despite this, the socio-economic evolution of tourism has led to considerable progress in legislation.

The crucial importance of tourism has determined a deep intervention of the public power in the discipline of tourism, in relation also to the different implications on public order, on the protection and enhancement of the territory, on the need to safeguard the artistic and cultural heritage. The attention to the tourism sector is linked primarily to the territorial aspect, to the will to safeguard the territory, and to protect and promote culture. The development of a territory is mostly based on the attention that the institutions (and first of all the local authorities) place in it. Tourism is in fact closely connected to the government of the territory, to the protection of the landscape, to the protection and enhancement of the cultural heritage present in a specific place, besides being one of the sources of revenue for local government (Rinaldi, 2011). The tourist use of a territory also requires a territorial planning policy to ensure a more balanced use of places based on the paradigm of sustainable development and at the same time an active collaboration between administrations to ensure the creation of infrastructures and communication networks that allow a place to become a tourist destination and a source of wealth. And indeed, the activity of development and promotion of tourism is left to the intervention of a plurality of subjects (both public and private) who act to guarantee the economic development of the tourism sector and to protect the territory in a broad sense. In this context, local administrations are also asked to manage the externalities deriving from the exploitation of the natural resources that are used in the tourism sector (Rinaldi, 2012). The knowledge of a territory becomes essential to know its history, to understand its values that can remain etched in the mind of the traveler as an emotion of memory. And a territory, like that of Salento (in Apulia, Italy), which is characterized by the presence of archaeological, architectural and cultural sites requires to qualify the network of services through which we can guarantee the use, information, and tourist accommodation, exploiting the presence of the cultural event of "La Notte della Taranta" (literally, the night of tarantula) that allowed Salento to be known abroad. And to do this, the best way is to support the development of particular forms of tourism, which can even be more sectoral, such as cultural tourism, tourism linked to traditions, religious tourism. In this way, a new idea of land use develops, in which the administrations merge different factors, from the protection and promotion of the territory to their valorization, guaranteeing a use of the territory in compliance with its nature as a public resource: An integration between urban planning and territorial planning becomes necessary. Ultimately, the transformation activities of the territory for tourism must be carried out in full compliance with the provisions of the Tourism Code as well as with the provisions on territorial governance (both at state and regional level), which at the same time are required to respect the rules on the protection of the environment, the landscape and cultural heritage and which, in a broad sense, concern the legal regulation of the territory, an expression of its transformation. The festival is a cultural, even more than a touristic event.

It is an expression of the collaboration between public and private bodies that act on the territory.

Relevant is the collaboration between public and private subjects, the private-public partnership that testifies that the event has been able to achieve the economic, media and tourist importance it has today.

The public administration and the private subjects work together for the realization of a coordinated activity aimed at achieving a single result, that is to enhance the touristic performance of the Salento area.

Indeed, during the last year, the event has been financed by the following public subjects: the Apulia Region, the La Notte della Taranta Foundation, the Diego Carpitella Institute, University of Salento, Union of the Municipalities of the Grecia Salentina. Besides the public funding, even private subjects financed the event: Canon (Hi-tech), Conti-Zecca (wine), Mangiatorella (water), Leadri (roads), Nuovarredo (furniture).

### **The Festival: “La Notte della Taranta”**

It is widely acknowledged that festivals make an important contribution to the economic development of local areas. Indeed, festival and local events provide opportunities for tourism promotion, economic outcomes, and increased investment inflows in the host regions (Getz, 2008; Van de Wagen, 2005). Furthermore, they contribute to contrast seasonality in the tourism sector (Huang, Li, & Cai, 2010; Boo & Busser, 2006; Mehmetoglu & Ellingsen, 2005).

To define the festivals, we can use the work of Cudny (2013). The authors list the basic features of festivals:

varied, uncommon events, unconnected with work, they celebrate elements significant in the life of a given community, consolidating it, they are often related to the culture and religion of local communities, they often consist of many different social and cultural events, they are often regular events connected with art and culture. (p. 1)

One of the factors from which tourists seem to be more attracted to festivals is the culture, sometimes exotic, represented (Quinn, 2010), besides the unusual atmosphere, sharing the experience with similar people, learning more about the world. Events like festivals also respond to a desire for cities and towns to share their culture and traditions with the rest of the world. At the same time, they are a source of income for cities, although their impact is complex to measure.

We know that popular traditions may represent an instrument for the growth of a territory and for the tourist development of a destination.

And indeed, those events represent a singular instrument to stimulate the economic, social, and juridical context of a geographical area and allow a territory to get out of the isolation to which it is often condemned by the process of globalization (Malo & Perini, 2013). Indeed, in the last 20 years cultural events grew at an international level recently and festivals have become one of the fastest growing types of tourism attractions. This process has also led some territories to redefine their cultural, urban, and economic identity.

We have been able to verify that the development of tourism in a place can also be achieved through local culture, using the instrument of the cultural event to attract attention to the territory, the environment and not least even to guarantee the economic growth of a geographical area.

Regarding specifically to the development of tourism in a territory due to cultural events, it is important to note that the study we conducted was precisely focused on a territory that has very unique aspects, which differentiate it from other places in our country.

We affirmed before that the phenomenon of “La Notte della Taranta” was born in a geographical area in the south of Salento and in particular in the Municipalities of the so-called Grecia Salentina, in the Apulia Region. The Apulia Region is located in Southern Italy and the Grecia Salentina is in Salento, the south-eastern side of the region.

The Grecia Salentina is an hinterland territory of the Province of Lecce, in which a linguistic minority uses a language called griko, which is not very different from the modern Greek.

The history and development of this territory are linked to the history and development of Salento.

It is in this part of the territory that an inter-municipal association was formed which took the name of the Union of Municipalities of the Grecia Salentina.

This association includes the municipalities of Calimera, Carpignano Salentino, Castrignano dei Greci, Corigliano d'Otranto, Cutrofiano, Martano, Martignano, Melpignano, Sogliano Cavour, Soleto, Sternatia, and Zollino.

The birth of the Union of Municipalities of Grecia Salentina is closely linked to the will of the administrators who governed the municipalities mentioned above in the 1990s.

The Union of Municipalities of Grecia Salentina has thus assumed the role of leader in the activity of valorization of the griko territory. And the valorization of that territory could actually be realized using just the cultural traditions.

This gives rise to the process that has resulted in the now well-known event which is "La Notte della Taranta". The Union—thanks to its being a real local body—has been able (and still continues today) to enjoy substantial economic funding both at regional and European Union level, through which not only finance "La Notte della Taranta", but also allow to recover all those popular traditions that were slowly disappearing; not least the same griko language.

The festival—today known not only in Italy but also abroad (great attention to the event comes from China for example)—was born in 1998 and is an expression of the enhancement of local music, local traditions, and local territory. Born in order to enhance local music, the "La Notte della Taranta" Festival has been able to involve, over the years, many different actors: artists, administrators, tourists, entrepreneurs, observers, and scholars. Thanks to particularly positive side factors (including good food and the landscape of exceptional beauty), the event has become an exceptional tool for territorial marketing not only on the national scene, but also on the international one.

The cultural event of the "La Notte della Taranta" certainly rests on a substratum of territorial culture that can be considered very close to the definition of social capital for which "social capital differs from other forms of human capital as it is usually formed and handed down through cultural mechanisms such as religion, tradition or inveterate habits" (Fukuyama, 1996, p. 26). From this point of view, a shared value system, tradition and the desire to emphasize one's own identity represent cohesion points able to realize the aggregation of individuals who live and work in the territory. We could even speak of territorial social capital (Gastaldi, 2003), meaning the complex of economic, social, and cultural characteristics of a territory in their relations with the physical-natural specificities. The festival fits perfectly into this framework, as a place of appreciation of the territorial social capital. In fact, cultural specificity is one of the key elements in the concept of territorial social capital: It is the basis of development policies that are able to strengthen the cultural identity of the territory, while at the same time creating opportunities for economic growth for the tourist destination. The dimensions of the festival and its relevance led then in 2008 to the establishment of the La Notte della Taranta Foundation, which not only organizes the festival, but also aims to define the management strategies, promoting initiatives for the enhancement and protection of the Salento area, from a cultural and touristic point of view. The evolution of the phenomenon, steadily rising, led to the creation of the itinerant festival in 2000, involving 15 municipalities. Our first objective was to analyze, in terms of the economic and legal governance of the territory, the impact of the "La Notte della Taranta" for the population of the area and for local producers of goods and services. In addition, we wanted to see if the tourist destinations involved have been able to

counteract seasonality, attracting incoming flows even in the rest of the year. Finally, we wanted to understand how a musical event could have implications for urban planning law, land planning, and tourism development. In order to evaluate the development of the territorial area, we have used the available data series, which allowed us to analyze not only the trend of incoming tourist flows but also their composition. Since one of the objectives of the research was to analyze the government of the territory in the management of such an event, we used the data released by the municipalities belonging to the Union of Grecia Salentina, which is the area in which the event is being held. The availability of historical series has enabled us to test the impact of the festival on the development of the tourist destinations involved. The analysis of the data allowed us to ascertain that, thanks to a popular cultural event, the destinations involved have benefited from a growing flow of visitors. Consequently, local tourist revenues have increased as well as the wealth of the local population, through a multiplier effect. In addition, the growing presence of tourists on the territory has provided a stimulus for the emergence of new entrepreneurial initiatives. The research has led us to understand how a territory can develop through popular traditions and music. The international importance of the “La Notte della Taranta” Festival has allowed the Salento area and in particular the municipalities of Salentina in Greece to make known to tourists a territory rich in natural, cultural, and historical beauties. The festival has stimulated the collaboration between public, economic, and cultural subjects with the aim of favoring the creation of new productive processes that have a decisive influence on the development of the territory. Our research has produced important correlations between culture, territorial development and economic growth of a tourist destination. Local development is a process based on the exploitation of the resources of a given territory, in which the complementarity between public and private subjects is fundamental. An additional step could be made by elaborating forecasts for the future development of the tourist area.

### **The Economic Impact of the Festival**

According to the Third Report on “Tourism that does not appear in Puglia”, recently realized on behalf of Puglia Promozione by Mercury Consulting, in the year 2000 tourism in Apulia was worth 2.6% compared to the national value in terms of overnight stays and 2.3% in terms of arrivals. In 2016 it is worth 3.6% of stays and 3.2% of arrivals. The study shows how the performance of Apulia was the best among all Italian regions, exceeding the overall growth of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Marche, and Sicily.

Mostly, tourists who choose Apulia are returning consumers. We know that there are four elements characterizing returning consumers:

- (1) The retention rate (the ability of the brand/destination to grow loyal customers);
- (2) The conversion rate (the ability to convert the awareness in trial);
- (3) The salience (the ability of the brand/destination to represent itself to the tourists that still don't know it);
- (4) The relevance (the ability of the brand/destination to be chosen).

What about Apulia? 50% of the 700 consumers that have already visited Apulia would like to come back. Indeed, according to a research released in 2016 by Travel Appeal (and that has been commissioned by the Apulia Region), in 2016, 83.9% of tourists who came to Italy declare a positive sentiment. In Southern Italy, the percentage rises to 85% and it is 86.8% in the administrative center of Lecce. The event consists of a series of concerts located in the municipalities of the area and a final concert held every year in the town of Melpignano. From 2007 to 2016, the local events hosted 607 musical groups performing, involving 4,228

musicians, thanks to the efforts of the 18 Municipalities committed in the organization of the events. During these years, more than 2,780,000 spectators attended the events. The final concert, in the same period, hosted 68 Italian singers performing, 42 singers from all over the world, 49 performers joining the local Orchestra and had been attended by over 1,485,000 spectators. As we may see in Figure 1, the number of participants at the final event is rapidly increasing in the last years. In fact, if in 2007 the participants at the final concert amounted to 5,000, in 2016 they reached 200,000.

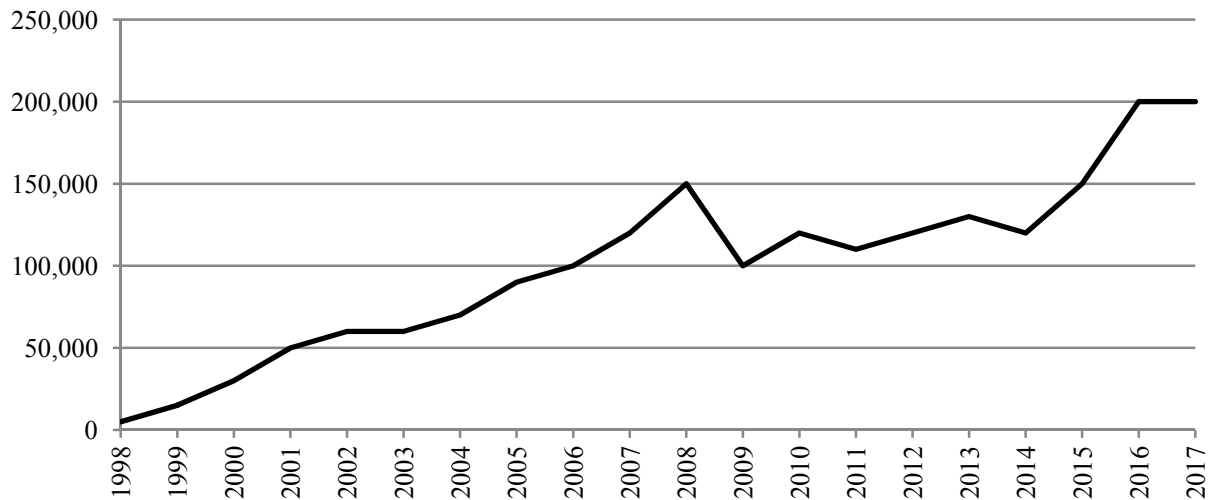


Figure 1. Number of people attending the final concert of the Festival "La Notte della Taranta".

Source: Our elaboration on data released by the Foundation "La Notte della Taranta".

As it is well known, there are two variables that are commonly used to assess the impact of tourism (or tourism events, like ours): tourist arrivals and tourist revenues. In order to estimate the impact that the festival has had on the territory, we analyzed the data of tourist arrivals in each of the municipalities in the area.

Data highlighted that tourists choosing the area of the Grecia Salentina increased in the last decade, as we may see in Figure 2.

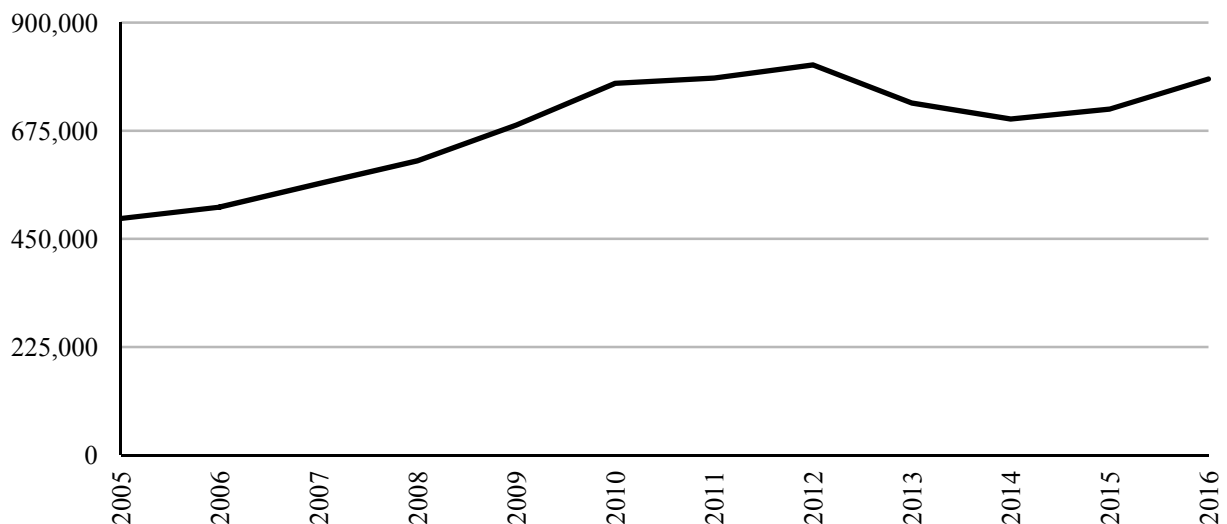


Figure 2. Tourist arrivals in the area of Grecia Salentina.

Source: Our elaboration on data released by the municipalities.

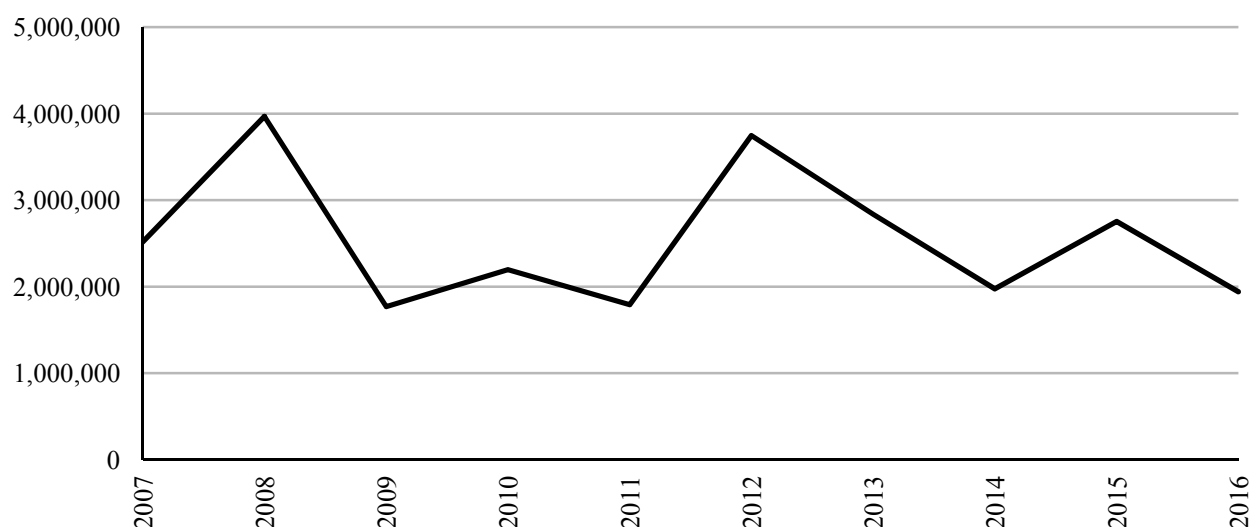


Figure 3. Festival “La Notte della Taranta”—Minimum Economic Impact in €.  
Source: Our elaboration on data released by the Foundation “La Notte della Taranta”.

While in 2007 the tourists who chose the area for their holidays were about 492,000, in 2016 the volume of tourist arrivals almost reached 783,000. The data let us suppose that the festival represented, for the towns involved, a promotional tool that allowed them to be known, even if they are very small towns. As for the economic impact of the festival, we used data on the minimum economic impact (tourists who chose to travel to the Salento region only for the Festival “La Notte della Taranta”) and the potential economic impact (tourists who visited the Salento region for other purposes and then decided to go to the festival). The trend of the minimum economic impact from 2006 to 2017 is very unstable (Figure 3). During the last 10 years, there have been three peaks: in 2008, 2012, and 2015, but the overall value of the economic impact is decreasing, from about 2.5 million € in 2007 to more than 1.9 million € in 2016 (while the highest value is in 2008, with almost 4 millions and the negative peak is in 2009, with about 1.8 millions €).

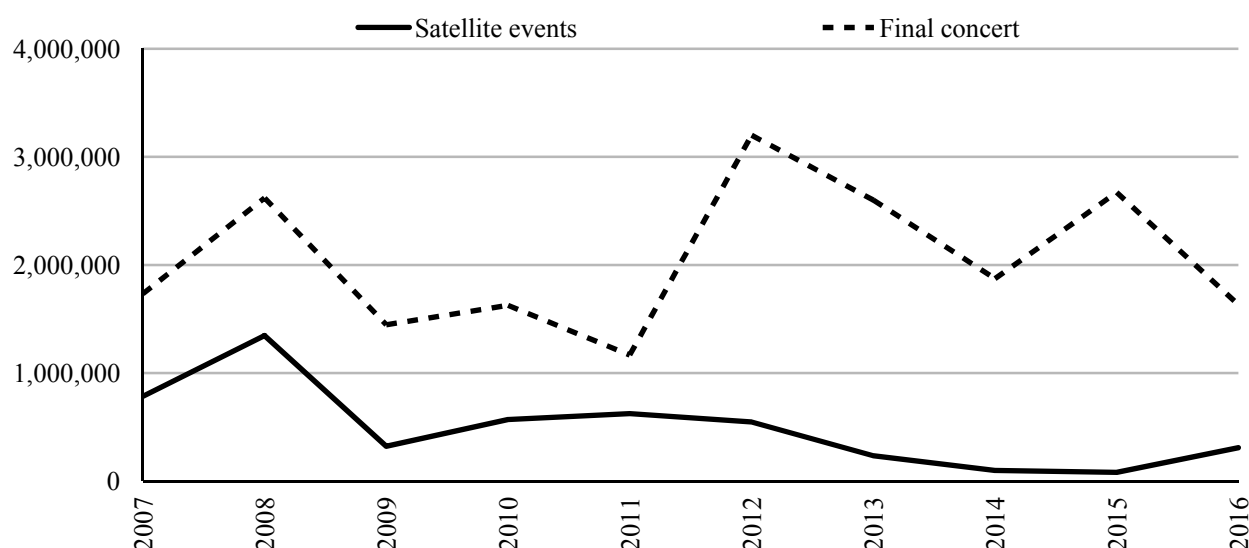


Figure 4. Festival “La Notte della Taranta”—Minimum Economic Impact by event category in €.  
Source: Our elaboration on data released by the Foundation “La Notte della Taranta”.

Among the tourists that chose Salento just to attend the festival, the highest volume of revenues is related to the final event, which we may presume they attend more with respect to the other events in the other towns (Figure 4). Furthermore, the total impact of the final concert, which is not steady during these years, is similar in 2016 with respect to 2007 (respectively, 1.7 and 1.6 million €). Even if from 2007 and 2009 the two kinds of events show a similar trend, from 2009 on, the trend of the impact coming from the satellite events is quite stable, while the impact of the final concert is very irregular, showing a positive peak in 2012 (3.2 million €) and a negative peak in 2011 (almost 1.2 millions €).

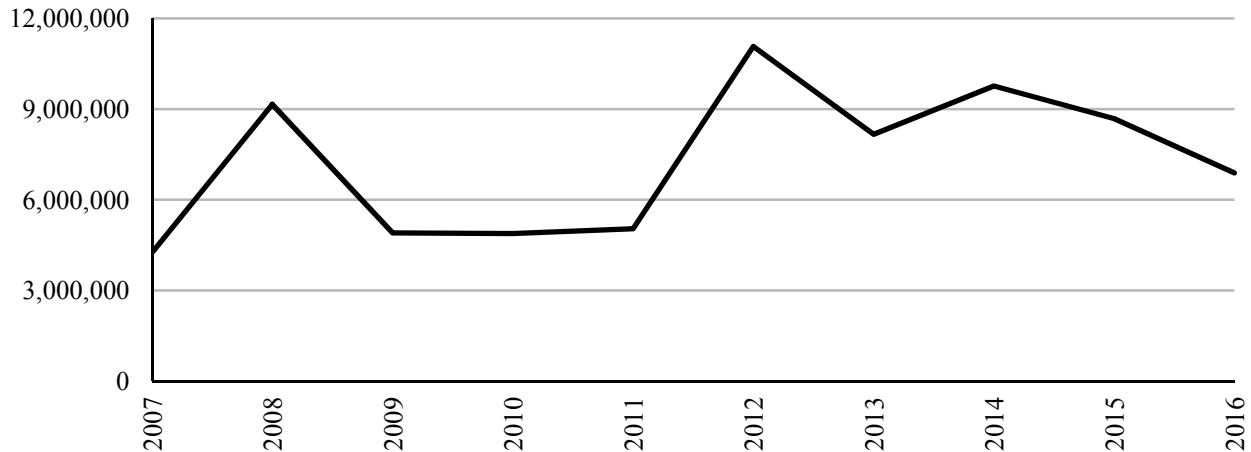


Figure 5. Festival “La Notte della Taranta”—Potential Economic Impact in €.

Source: Our elaboration on data released by the Foundation “La Notte della Taranta”.

Besides the minimum economic impact, we also used the data on the potential impact, that is the impact deriving from tourists visiting Apulia and the Salento region for other purposes, but who still decided to attend the festival.

Interestingly, these data (Figure 5) show an increasing trend during the last decade, starting from 4.2 million € in 2007 and reaching almost 6.9 millions € in 2016, with the highest level in 2012 (more than 11 millions €) and the lowest one in 2008 (almost 4.9 million €).

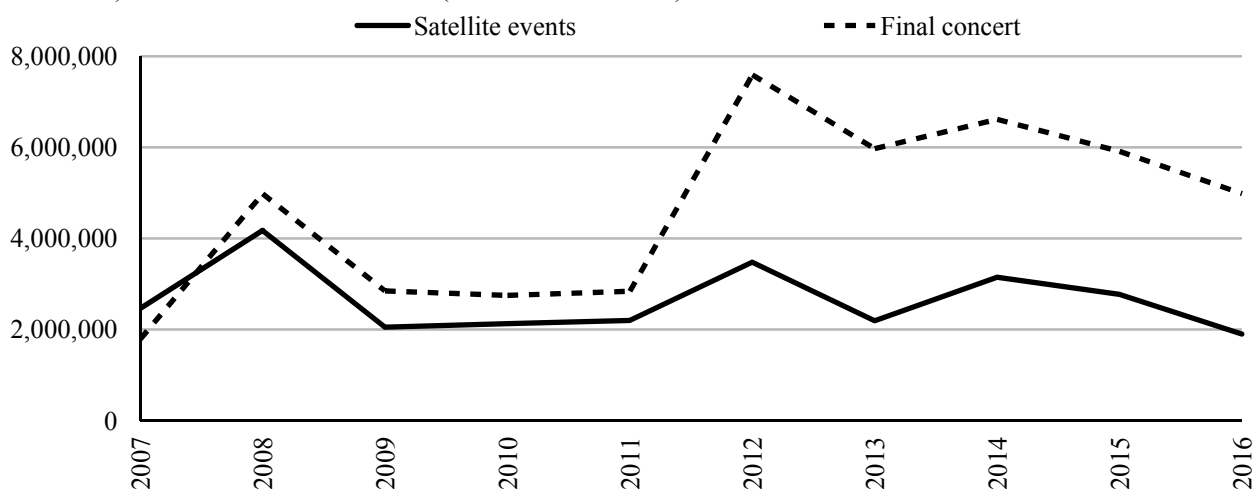


Figure 6. Festival “La Notte della Taranta”—Potential Economic Impact by event category in €.

Source: Our elaboration on data released by the Foundation “La Notte della Taranta”.



Even in the analysis of the potential economic impact, data have been disaggregated on the basis of the type of event (main event, satellite events). The first reflection that is suggested by the data represented in the Figure 6 is linked to the performance of the economic impact in the two categories of events: Even in this case, this trend is very similar until 2011 while in the subsequent years the impact of the final concert performs much better. From 2012 on, the trend of the economic impact is decreasing both for the satellite events and the final concert.

### Conclusions

Tourism festival is rapidly growing in many countries. It is a tourism sector in which economic aspects are combined with regulatory norms linked to the governance and also to the public support to the events. The festivals attract a growing number of tourists, as they respond to the need to get in touch with local cultures and with traditions, music, food, and places of which the tourist feels to perceive the true essence.

Even by the local administrations, festivals are increasingly being used as tools for promoting tourism and supporting the local economy. This is one of the reasons why we are observing a rising public assistance intervening in the organization of festivals.

Our study focused on the Festival “La Notte della Taranta” that takes place during the summer from 1998 in Salento, in the Apulia Region (Italy). After having framed the public structure that made the organization of the festival possible, we analyzed the data on tourist arrivals and the economic impact of tourism in the area of Grecia Salentina, where the events are hosted.

The results show an increase in tourist arrivals, but a decreasing economic impact, suggesting the need for new policies in order to use local festivals as a tourism strategy. Policy implications in this case are related to increasing the spending of visitors and their volume. Popular culture, the traditions highlighted by the “La Notte della Taranta” event should impose a review of the policies for the promotion of the territory. The attention should then allow the Municipalities of the Grecia of Salento to put in place policies aimed at developing different types of tourism.

The cultural event should be considered an instrument through which to create other types of tourism related to the festival.

Despite the data on the economic impact, the festival confirms that the relationship among culture, environment, cultural heritage is ultimately the factor that can guarantee the development of a territory. Indeed, what the Union of Municipalities was able to achieve was precisely the enhancement of its territory that became a real tourist destination: Salento is chosen as tourism destination by a growing number of tourists who have been able to know the beauty of this area thanks to the event of “La Notte della Taranta”.

In this context, the extraordinary success of the Festival “La Notte della Taranta” can be considered as an example for the whole Southern Italy.

### References

- Boo, S., & Busser, J. (2006). Impact analysis of a tourism festival on tourist's destination images. *Event Management*, 9(4), 223-237.
- Cicchetti, A., Gola, M., & Zito, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Public Administration and Tourism Market*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli Editore.
- Cudny, W., Korek, P., & Rouba, R. (2012). Resident's perception of festivals—the case study of Łódź. *Slovak Sociological Review*, 44(6), 704-728.

- Cudny, W. (2013). Festival tourism—the concept, key functions and dysfunctions in the context of tourism geography studies. *Geographical Journal*, 65(2), 105-118.
- Felsenstein, D., & Fleischer, A. (2003). Local festivals and tourism promotion: The role of public assistance and visitor expenditure. *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(4), 385-392.
- Fukuyama, F. (1996). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gastaldi, F. (2003). Territorial Social Capital and Promotion of the Local Development. *Archivio di Studi Urbani e Regionali*, 76, 15-29.
- Getz, D. (2008). Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 403-428.
- Huang, J. Z., Li, M., & Cai, L. A. (2010). A model of community-based festival image. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 29(2), 254-260.
- Malo, M., & Perini, A. (2013). Promotion, Information, Tourism Hospitality. In V. Franceschelli and F. Morandi (Eds.), *Tourism Law* (pp. 82-106). Torino: Giappichelli.
- Mehmetoglu, M., & Ellingsen, K. A. (2005). Do small-scale festivals adopt “market orientation” as a management philosophy? *Event Management*, 9(3), 119-132.
- Pegoraro, L., & Giupponi, T. F. (2002). L'autonomia normativa degli enti locali nella riforma del titolo V della Costituzione (l. cost. 3/2001). In U. De Siervo (Ed.), *Osservatorio sulle fonti* (pp. 283-302). Torino: Giappichelli.
- Pollice, F. (2002). *Tourism destinations. A Geographical Analysis of the Tourism Policies*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Quinn, B. (2010). Arts festivals, urban tourism and cultural policy. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure & Events*, 2(3), 264-279.
- Rinaldi, A. (2011). Tourism Taxes: How to Choose? *Tourism Sciences Review*, 2(3), 97-104.
- Rinaldi, A. (2012). Externalities and tourist tax: Evidence from Italy. *Tourism Sciences Review*, 3(2), 79-91.
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Beliveau, D. (1974). Hallmark events: An evaluation of a strategic response to seasonality in the travel market. *Journal of Travel Research*, 14, 14-20.
- Santagata, R. (2014). *Tourism Law*. Torino: Utet.
- Stankova, M., & Vassenska, I. (2015). Raising cultural awareness of local traditions through festival tourism. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 11(1), 120-127.
- Tubertini, C. (2007). Il turismo tra Stato, Regioni ed enti locali: Alla ricerca di un difficile equilibrio delle competenze. *Le Istituzioni del Federalismo*, 1, 21-40.
- Vandelli, L. (2015). *The System of Local Authorities*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Van de Wagen, L. (2005). *Event management: For tourism, cultural, business and sporting events* (2nd ed.). Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education Australia.
- WTTC. (2018). *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017. Italy*. London: WTTC.