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Perspective of *Taiwan Lantern Festival*

Alison Shin-Yi Huang

Introduction

In 2000, the Tourism Bureau (Taiwan) announced a set of new policies to develop the tourism industry in Taiwan. The main purpose of these new policies was to meet the challenge of globalisation in the twenty-first century. The policies revealed the strategy of adopting a localised approach to festivals and to promote them to the international tourism market. This would encourage local government, cultural workers and event companies to get involved and to increase the development of the festivals industry in Taiwan. Since then festivals have sprung up like mushrooms, with events such as commercial activities or agriculture products being wrapped up into festival modes (Chiu, 2012). The policies encouraged the rapid growth of festivals in Taiwan and this has led to debates such as: lack of sustainable planning, community involvement, or a long term business strategy and the consequential unstable quality, wasted budgets and high homogeneity. All these issues are discussed here.

Following on from the tourism policies, the Tourism Bureau (Taiwan) selected twelve major events which correspond to the annual twelve month calendar, and created a brand for the project that provided tourists with different choices of activities to organise during their visit. In the first stage the twelve major events were distributed in different cities and mainly focused on traditional and religious activities (Li, 2007). Today the project has been rebranded and expanded to *Time to Celebrate - Taiwan Tourism Events*, in which the number of recommended events has risen to thirty-four and comprises a variety of different types of events (Tourism Bureau Taiwan, 2015).

In the recommend events, *Taiwan Lantern Festival* is the largest in scale and has the biggest budget of those listed by the Tourism Bureau and local government. The festival has been held for 26 years since 1990. Over that time, the scale and the costs of the festival have significantly changed, for example, between 1990 and 2015 the number of festival visitors has increased from 1.2 to 13.7 million.

The festival is held on January 15 (Lunar calendar). As well as the *Taiwan Lantern Festival* other lantern festivals such as *Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival*, *Taipei*, *Taichung* and *Kaohsiung Lantern Festivals* are held at the same time. The form and style of the *Taiwan Lantern Festival* and *Taipei*, *Taichung* and *Kaohsiung Lantern Festivals* are