

Socio-Cultural Impact Of La Tomatina Event in Spain essay

It is known that Spain has a rich cultural history based on the oldest traditions of the nation. Spanish fiestas and festivals attract attention of thousands of tourists from all over the world. They symbolize the nature of Spain and its people. All Spanish fiestas and festivals are colorful and rather noisy. Sometimes they are a little bit chaotic, but always tremendous fun. There are a great number of different fiestas and festivals in Spain. The largest events are La Tomatina, the famous Valencia tomato fight festival, Tamborrada de San Sebastian, the popular San Sebastian drum festival, Fiestas de la Vendimia Riojana, the well-known La Rioja Wine Festival, and many others. (Culture in Spain: Festivals, 2011)

It is known that the origins of most of Spanish festivals lie in religious feasts which in most cases honor the patron saint. Every day throughout the year one can find some fiesta or festival that takes place in one of the parts of Spain, "either at local, regional or national level". (Fiestas and Festivals in Spain, 2011)

However, any fiesta or festival which is held in Spain has its impacts on society, country's economy, culture and environment, both positive and negative ones. Festivals contribute greatly to the cultural and economic development of the country. (Hughes, 2000) Moreover, festivals have great impact on the development of cultural tourism which gains its popularity in many countries of the world. (Raj, 2003) Today festivals in Spain are developed as annual events which attract thousands of visitors and create cultural image of the host towns and cities. Socio-cultural impact of such events as festivals in Spain is of great importance for the successful development of the nation.

My goal in this paper is to carry out the impact analysis of La Tomatina event in Spain, with particular emphasis on socio-cultural impacts, including positive and negative ones.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF LA TOMATINA EVENT IN SPAIN

La Tomatina is a popular festival which is annually held in Spain. The main peculiarity of this festival is that the participants of the festival are involved in the real tomato fight which is a great fun. (Shone & Parry, 2005) It is known that La Tomatina Festival is held on the last Wednesday of August in one of the Spanish towns, Bunol. Moreover, it is known that La Tomatina Festival is organized during the annual week of festivals held in the Valencian town of Bunol in order to honor the city's patron saints: San Luis Bertran and the Virgin de los Desamparados. People celebrate them with colorful parades and concerts, different cultural events and culinary competitions. (Valencia Gets Ready for La Tomatina, 2011)

According to the historical data, the first La Tomatina Festival was officially held in 1950, when the town authorities allowed the young people of Bunol to organize a tomato fight. However, the first illegal tomato fight was held in 1945, when several young people wanted to participate in the parade of gigantes y cabezudos and used tomatoes as weapons in their fight. They repeated this action several subsequent years, but each time the police stopped their fights. It is known that this festival was banned several times, but it did not lose its popularity. In 1957, it was decided to establish official rules and restrictions of this event. Some of these rules

include the following ones. First of all, it is necessary to crush tomatoes before throwing in order to avoid serious injuries. Secondly, it is not allowed to use any other vegetables or fruits instead of tomatoes. Thirdly, the participants of the festival should give way to the fire trucks with tomatoes. This action lasts only one hour. The end of the fight is announced by the second shot. (La Tomatina, Official Site, 2011)

La Tomatina Festival is considered to be the largest food fight in the world. In 2011, about 40,000 participants from all over the world took part in this event. About 100 tons of tomatoes were used in the fight, valued at about \$35,000. (Valencia Gets Ready for La Tomatina, 2011)

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT-RELATED ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE SPANISH FIESTAS AND FESTIVALS INCLUDING LA TOMATINA EVENT

It is not a secret that any fiesta or festival held in Spain or in any other country of the world is considered to be a colorful event organized by a local community. Moreover, festivals serve not only to provide entertainment for both the local residents and the visitors, but also they serve to meet some specific needs of this or that community. (Hunнан & Williams, 2010) Such celebrations as festivals also provide a sense of belonging to social, geographical or religious groups. Modern Spanish festivals are focused on different cultural and ethnic issues, and are used to inform other members of their old traditions and beliefs. Besides, festivals are used as a means of unity among people of different nationalities. There are a great number of festivals in Spain that is why the impact-related issues pertaining to the Spanish fiestas and festivals are different. The most popular festivals include arts festivals, music festivals, religious festivals, film festivals, folk festivals, wine festivals and food festivals. La Tomatina event is related to food festivals. (Types of Festivals, 2007)

As La Tomatina event is known throughout the world, thousands of tourists come to the small Spanish town of Bunol each year in order to take part in this festival. According to the statistics, about 9,000 of local residents and over 21,000 of tourists from different countries of the world gather in the streets in order to start “a massive tomato food fight”. (Wolcott, 2010) That is why one of the most important impacts of La Tomatina festival in Spain is economic impact. The statistics shows that “over 60 million people visit Spain each year bringing in on average \$46 billion dollars”. Spain’s economy is known as one of the fastest growing economies in Western Europe. Moreover, “its tourism spending is the second highest in the world, going behind the USA who has the highest with \$74 billion”. The numerous festivals which attract such mass amounts of tourists from all over the world have a positive impact on Spain’s economy. (Wolcott, 2010)

The other impact-related issues pertaining to fiestas and festivals include social and cultural impacts. Most festivals and events are known as “key tools for urban regeneration and reviving and refocusing urban and rural communities”. (Festivals and Events: Beyond Economic Impacts, 2005)

Moreover, it is known that festivals and fiestas attract mostly young people. It means that young people can have a chance to develop their communicative skills, to become more open and independent. Cultural impact of

festivals is focused on local and national identity, cultural diversity and “interaction with other arts forms and creative industries”. (Festivals and Events: Beyond economic Impacts, 2005)

One more impact-related issue pertaining to festivals is connected with environment pollution. It is known that large numbers of people gathered in such small town as Bunol create a dangerous environmental situation including air pollution and noise pollution caused by the cars and other vehicles of the tourists. (Shaw & Williams, 2003)