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Festival Venue that makes sense- A study of Skansen arena in Stockholm

Saeid Abbasian¹, Isak Benyamine² and Anna Lundberg³

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Corresponding author: Saeid Abbasian, Department of Environmental Studies and Tourism, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Alfred Nobels Allé 7, 141 89 Huddinge, Sweden
Email: saeid.abbasian@sh.se

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Additional information is available at the end of the article

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate how the open-air museum of Skansen in Stockholm as venue for celebration of Persian Fire Festival is assessed by the festival's visitors. The study is based on a delimited part of a larger online survey with 280 completed questionnaires including both close-ended and open-ended questions, and a qualitative thematic analysis method has been used in this paper. The results show a high level of appreciation of the Skansen venue that gives the visitors positive emotions, meanings, place attachment, place identity and a sense of place. Contributing factors have been the high status of the venue that has given the visitors pride and dignity; security and safety of the venue; size of the venue; and the natural beauty of the venue. The most important disadvantage factor has been the lack of accessibility combined with lack of sufficient public transport. The results have implications for the Swedish society, for the policy makers in Stockholm city and for both the host and the organiser of the festival and gives rise to new debates on immigrants' socio-cultural integration into Swedish society. This paper gives a contribution to existing literature on festival venue and its impact on the visitor's overall assessment of the festival.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Saeid Abbasian is Associate Professor in Social Geography and currently is working as senior lecturer in Tourism Studies at The Department of Environmental Studies and Tourism at Södertörn University in Stockholm. In his teaching he has mainly focus on sustainable urban/city tourism. His research interests include various aspects related to tourism, plus woman-owned and immigrant-owned businesses.

Isak Benyamine, PhD in education, is currently staff member of the Research unit at The National Touring Theatre in Sweden and member of the teaching staff at The Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Education at Stockholm University. His research interests include different aspects of educations in the artistic field.

Anna Lundberg is Associate Professor in Gender Studies and currently is working as senior lecturer at The Department of Thematic Studies at Linköping University. She is also a member of the Research unit at The National Touring Theatre in Sweden. Both her research and education interests include gender and feminist studies as well as cultural issues related to these areas.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

What does a Swedish national cultural heritage mean to individuals from several ethnic minorities who celebrate their own ethnic cultural festival there? This article looks for answers to this question by focusing on the Persian Fire Festival's participants and their perceptions of Skansen open-air museum in Stockholm, which is also a Swedish national cultural heritage. The results of this research indicate a high level of appreciation of Skansen venue; it gives the visitors positive emotions, meanings, place attachment, place identity and a sense of place. The high status of the venue that has given the visitors pride and dignity; security and safety of the venue; size of the venue; and the natural beauty of the venue have been the most contributing factors to this recognition while the lack of accessibility and lack of sufficient public transport means have been the most disadvantages attributed to Skansen.

Subjects: Social Sciences; Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Built Environment; Geography; Museum and Heritage Studies

Keywords: Skansen; sense of place; place attachment; place identity; Persian fire festival; Stockholm; tourism

1. Introduction

The festival venue and its importance for festival visitors' satisfaction has been touched by many earlier studies. Festival venues are attractive places for both visitors/tourists and local inhabitants (Gudny, 2013). A festival organizer normally lacks own venue and is forced to hire it from a host and there are different types of venues, both outdoors and indoors (Prentice & Andersen, 2003). The organizer also needs to think about many important factors to create satisfied visitors (Wan & Chan, 2013). One of these factors is the festival's physical environment i.e. the venue/arena where the festival is held (Cheon, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2000; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Ozdemir & Culha, 2009). Nevertheless, the festival venue is not a single phenomenon but consists both physical setting and important elements such as service facilities and their quality, setting design, atmosphere, ambience, conditions and accessibility (Borger et al., 2016; J. Lee, 2014; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Papadimitriou, 2013; Tanford & Jung, 2017; Van Zyl & Queiros, 2009; Yoon et al., 2010). Especially festival venue's location and accessibility contribute to participation and satisfaction among the visitors (e.g., Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Leenders et al., 2015; Van Zyl & Queiros, 2009; Wan & Chan, 2013).

Since the middle of 1980s the outdoor Persian Fire Festival has been celebrated in Stockholm in the middle of march mostly by people of Iranian origin in northern suburb areas, in open football fields mainly in district Hallonbergen, that has been easily accessible by underground. After 2010 the Swedish National Touring Theatre (Henceforth Riksteatern) became an active part to organize the official celebration of the festival in Stockholm downtown. Riksteatern belongs to Swedish civil society sector, and the Fire Festival can be classified as a non-profit festival (see Andersson et al., 2009). Between 2010 and 2018, Riksteatern organized the festival in The Royal Garden, just 500 m from the parliament and Central Train and Underground station. The Royal Garden is a meeting place and a living room tightly surrounded by restaurants, cafés, businesses and shopping centers, main street and residential buildings. In 2019, the event was held in the prestigious open-air museum of Skansen, located 2.5 km from The Royal Garden. The festival has been opened by Swedish ministers including the Prime Minister on several occasions.

The Fire Festival is an ethnic-cultural festival that consists of live multi-ethnic music, show, entertainment, dans, fire- jump ritual, and it lasts five hours. Excepting Swedish Iranians and other ethnic groups such as Kurds from Turkey and Iraq, Azeris, Tajiks, Afghans, also native Swedes visit and celebrate the festival. The participant artists have represented these ethnic groups over the years. Even though this festival has been held for almost four decades and despite its importance for different ethnic groups there is no research-based knowledge focusing on the festival's venues and their value for the visitors. In particular, there is no knowledge on the festival venue of Skansen and its different attributes in the eyes of visitors. In the other words, a research gap is existing which the following paper aims to fill.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the open-air museum of Skansen in Stockholm as venue for celebration of Persian Fire Festival is assessed by the festival's visitors. By this paper, we hope to give a contribution to existing literature on festival venue and its impact on the visitor's overall perception and assessment of the festival. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1. How the visitors of the Persian Fire Festival in Stockholm assess the choice of Skansen as venue?

RQ2. What advantage/disadvantage factors could be linked to this assessment?

In this paper, the words venue, arena and place are used as synonyms since they all aim at same thing i.e. a geographically delimited festival setting/festival meeting place (see e.g., Davis, 2016; Davis & Martin, 2014; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013; Quinn, 2005). Other synonyms to these terms are festival environment (Cheon, 2016; K. Kim et al., 2007; D. Kim et al., 2016; Kwon, 2010; Tanford & Jung, 2017) and festivalscape (Anil, 2012; Yoon et al., 2010). Nevertheless, many authors (e.g., Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013) consider the festival itself as arena i.e. both as social and physical construction. Furthermore, if the festival itself is the main attraction in tourism context then the venue itself constitutes the destination (Prentice & Andersen, 2003), and in the following paper the festival setting is discussed as physical and social construction.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1. Festival venue as social construction

A festival venue as a place can be studied as social construction that creates meaning and identity. There are different spatial/geographical levels of places, from one's own room to the whole world (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Knox & Marston, 2016; Massey, 1995), and festival venues can be considered as geographically very delimited places according to this definition. The importance of places generally and particularly in festival context has been widely touched by authors from various discipline areas such as Human Geography, Environment Psychology and Sociology. Human geographers (e.g., Cresswell, 2004; Knox & Marston, 2016; Massey, 1995; Massey & Jess, 1995) have considered places as social constructions; they shape our identities, beliefs, attitudes, values, behavioral patterns, and they create meaning for us as we create meaning for them as well. Knox and Marston (2016) claim that a place that once has been physically constructed by humans is allocated different meanings from different people. By this means people socially construct or reconstruct the place through their own subjectively interpretations of the place, their cognitive image creation of the place, their identity creation of the place and all attitudes and values including feelings and behavioral patterns that are allocated to the place. At the same time, individuals that have a personal connection to the place identify themselves with the place and all its attributes. By this means there is a mutual connection between place and people; people make places and places make people, and they create identity for each other.

2.2. Place attachment and identity in festivals

Places in general create both meanings, place attachment, positive emotions and place identity (Foote & Azaryahu, 2009; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle et al., 2005; Lau & Li, 2015; Williams & Stewart, 1998) and this could also be applied for festival venues, settings, environments as well (Milligan, 1998; Williams et al., 1992). Festival venues can therefore be analysed in the light of theories of place attachment and place identities as the outcome of the visitors' interaction with them (S. Kim et al., 2017). By place attachment in festival context means a visitor's attachment to the venue and the meanings attributed to that place that also has an impact on her/his assessment of the festival quality (Campelo et al., 2014; J. J. Lee et al., 2012; S. Kim et al., 2017; Lee & Kyle, 2014; Williams & Vaske, 2003). Place attachment is defined by Kyle et al. (2005) as the affective and emotional relationship a visitor has with a specific place. Place attachment not only decides the perception and evaluation of the festival but also decides the visitors' future behavioral patterns in term of loyalty and revisit of the same festival (Chung et al., 2011; J. J. Lee et al., 2012; Lee & Kyle, 2014).

In this context, Y. Lee et al. (2008) look for a relationship between festival atmosphere, emotions created, satisfaction and loyalty, whilst J. Lee (2014) do an attempt to link this emotional attachment to the arena as social and physical construction through the environmental psychology's theory of emotional response to physical environments presented by Mehrabian and Russell (1974, as cited in J. Lee, 2014). The author talks about stimuli factors (e.g., factors in the physical but also social environment) that create positive emotions with the festival visitors and thereby a kind of attachment to the environment and loyalty intention and return to the place. It is a kind of assessment/evaluation the visitors do after their visit and it results in to an "approaching

response". The opposite (avoiding response) is also valid if the overall assessment of the environment by the visitors is negative. However, J. Lee (2014) applies this theory in his work and quantitatively measure many stimuli factors and items to find out a relationship between these factors and items and the visitors' satisfaction and loyalty to the festival environment.

By place identity (here in festival setting context) as a part of one's personal identity means cognitions, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and values one has towards a specific place and its functionality (Davis, 2016; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; C. Lee, 2001; Proshansky et al., 1983; Suntikul & Jachna, 2016). Jaeger and Mykletun (2009) claim that a festival arena creates identity both for festival visitors, organizers and the community where the festival is held. Other authors (e.g., Kirillova et al., 2014; Richards & Wilson, 2006) consider the physical environment of festivals as important factor to create positive experiences for festival visitors. Davis (2016) considers place identity and attachment as two mechanisms that decide a visitor's perception of a festival venue and its physical environment. Williams and Vaske (2003) emphasize that people identify themselves with a place based on their individuals cognitive and emotional attachment to the place. S. Kim et al. (2017) and Davis (2016) claim that this identity and attachment is based on the visitors' interactions or relationship with the festival's physical setting. Other authors define both place identity and place attachment as emotions to the venue (e.g., Davis & Martin, 2014; J. J. Lee et al., 2012. see also Kyle et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2017) or as meanings that are created through these emotions (Johnstone, 2012). J. J. Lee et al. (2012) consider place identity as synonym to social bonding (psychosocial/emotional tie to the place) that together with place dependence (strongly preference of the place in issue compared to other places) are covered by place attachment as whole.

2.3. Sense of place in festivals

A third theoretical concept connected to places, beside place identity and place attachment but also linked to them, is the sense of a place as a positive psycho-social impact of the festival. Sense of place can be defined as sense of belonging/place belonging and connection to a physical place (Hammit et al., 2006). It can also be defined as all feelings, emotions, values, meanings, perceptions, attitudes, attachments that individuals and groups have towards a specific place (Foote & Azaryahu, 2009; Gregory et al., 2009; Lau & Li, 2015; Williams & Stewart, 1998) and through which they associate with a certain geographic place. Festivals in general create good reputations for hosting communities (Getz, 2012) and a sense of belonging among local inhabitants there the festivals are held (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009). It means in the other words that a festival, including its arena, create such positive feelings for people and places. To describe and explain sense of place in festival context, authors (e.g., Cresswell, 2005; Ma & Lew, 2012; Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Zhao & Bell, 2007) define place-specific (locally rooted and location dependent) respectively place-nonspecific festivals (location independent). However, place-specific festivals are suggested to create more community sense of place (Cresswell, 2005; Ma & Lew, 2012). The term can also mean that a place distinguishes itself strongly compared to other places and has a strong identity and authenticity with both visitors and locales (Belhassen et al., 2008). Here, place differentiation, place uniqueness, place authenticity and place distinctiveness are used to highlight why some places give better sense and identity than other (see e.g., Belhassen et al., 2008; Lau & Li, 2015; Richards & Wilson, 2006).

Festival arenas, both as social and physical constructions, can create a sense of place belonging and strengthen one's identity (Bird, 2002; De Bres & Davis, 2001; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009, 2013; Karlsen, 2007; McCabe, 2006; Morley, 2001). It can also be applied for all individuals regardless of ethnicity and geographic area (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013) specially in an urban context (McClinchey, 2008; Waitt, 2008). In line with these arguments and with support from Nelson and Hiemstra (2008) respectively, Mitchell (2003), Chacko (2013) argues that immigrants strive for a sense of belonging to the community through their own festival arenas at urban public spaces that normally are occupied by the majority people. This is their struggle against exclusion and alienation they feel from the mainstreaming society; they conquer festivals' physical and social spaces to

achieve such belonging and visibility. Especially, a festival arena with symbolic value for the host society can be an extra important element for such recognition, inclusion, acceptance and identity (Chacko, 2013).

3. Materials and methods

3.1. The research site

Skansen is a larger hillside park and open-air museum, located on the fringe of Stockholm city center with panoramic views over the city and the Stockholm archipelago. To achieve Skansen, one should come to Central Train station first, then take bus or tram. It is found in the high-status district of Djurgården, where many popular touristic attractions are located such as The National Museum, The Vasa Museum and the amusement park of Gröna Lund. Skansen is more known internationally than Royal Garden and has greater national symbolic value. It was founded by the scientist and ethnologist Artur Hazelius in 1891 and is the oldest open-air museum in the world (www.skansen.se, 2020). Hazelius developed detailed typologies regarding Swedish houses, ethnic groups, animals and customs and created a cultural heritage of Sweden where authenticity became the main concepts in the construction of the accomplished, ideal Swede. He re-introduced symbolic and important fete-days such as the Midsummer Eve, St. Lucy's Day, and Walpurgis Night in order to arouse patriotic sentiment in the population and protect the conception of Swedish heritage. The emphasize on folkloristic and pagan traditions of these feasts, rather than the Christian cultivation contributed to make Skansen a popular venue. The celebrations became a concern for all swedes due to that the events were broadcasted live on national radio and later on national TV (Bäckström, 2012). Skansen requires an entrance fee year around for each visit. In 2019, attendees of the Persian Fire Festival were offered an entrance fee of 140 SEK (15 US \$). In addition, all Skansen visitors must pass through a routine security control to enter.

3.2. Data collection procedure

Following research paper is based on a delimited part of a larger research project on the Fire Festival and its visitors (see next section). The overall methodology approach in the project has been qualitative based on an online survey with both close-ended and open-ended questions. The reason behind this choice of questions was to achieve more detailed information and deeper knowledge and insights on the topic that might be a little complicated (Greene, 2012; Starr, 2014). Between 30th of March and 30th of April 2019, the survey was placed on two Swedish web addresses: the Persian Fire Festival's own Facebook page [<https://sv-se.facebook.com/eldfesten>] aimed at general public in Stockholm; and, on a website in Farsi, [<https://www.stockholmian.com>] that is visited by people of Iranian, Kurdish, Afghan and Tajik background. The reason behind the choice of the two platforms was to include all ethnic groups in Stockholm including native Swedes that might participated in the celebration. The questionnaire was written in Swedish and contained 11 close-ended questions (mostly about important background variables of the visitors) and six open-ended qualitative questions and an additional final question. Many of the questions, both open-ended and close-ended, required explanations and justifications and it was compulsory to answer to all questions. The survey collection resulted in 280 completed questionnaires and the answers were presented in a PDF report consisting of diagrams, figures and texts. This survey is totally EU adapted in accordance with GDPR law (General Data Protection Regulation) which entails that the respondents have been totally anonymous. That makes us unable to see which persons with which gender, age, ethnicity or educational background are behind the individual answers or the quotations we have used in this paper.

3.3. Data analysis method

In this paper we have chosen to focus on three questions in the survey that deals with the festival venue: *Have you been to Skansen before? What does the place mean for how you experience the Fire Festival? What do you think about the celebration of the Fire Festival at Skansen?* While the first question contained close-set options, the two other questions were open and required explanations and justifications. This study uses a thematic analysis, which is a flexible technique to find out

which themes, patterns and metaphors are recurrent in a qualitative data (Terry et al., 2017). The analysis procedure consists by review of data; coding of data; constructing themes; reviewing potential themes and naming them; and finally producing the report (Terry et al., 2017) (Figure 1). Concerning validity and reliability (Bryman, 2015) of this delimited research, both are high since all 280 respondents received the same three relevant questions, mentioned upon, that touched the significance of the festival venue clearly. Further, the fact that the respondents gave relevant and clear answers and explanations, facilitated to measure the data correctly and based on it even the analysis has been made in a reliable way.

Despite our access to analysis software (Nvivo 12) the analysis was done semi digitally- semi manually. Both the digital and out-printed surveys around those three above mentioned questions were reviewed several times. Thereafter, the text was condensed through codes/coded unites. In the next step core categories and common themes/patterns were discovered and highlighted. At this stage relevant quotations were sought to link to these patterns as well as a reconnection to relevant earlier research. The results of the answers to the three questions were thematized and are illustrated by Figure 2. The quantitative demographic data in the original survey has been only used as a background data for the following research. Despite the delimitation of the questions, the saturation has been reached since 280 individuals have answered to all three questions which makes the data suitable for a qualitative analysis (Terry et al., 2017).

In contrast to mainstreaming research with such data collection that is heavily based on quantitative approach (Hesse-Biber, 2010), the emphasize in this research is qualitative. The

Figure 1. The qualitative thematic analysis

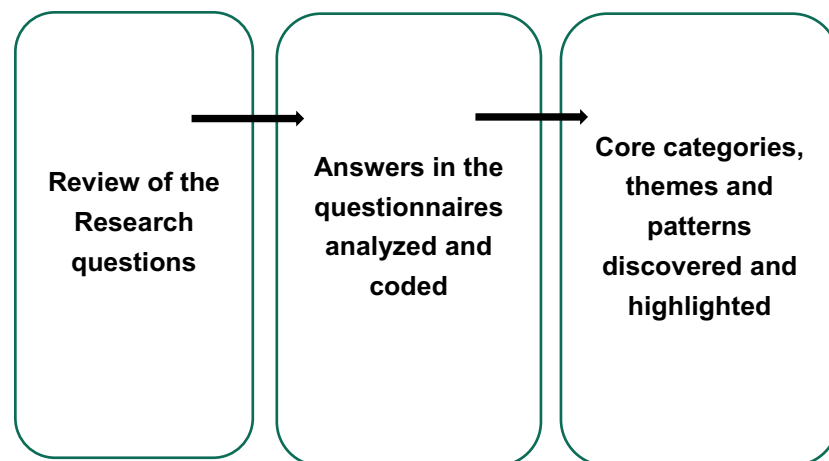
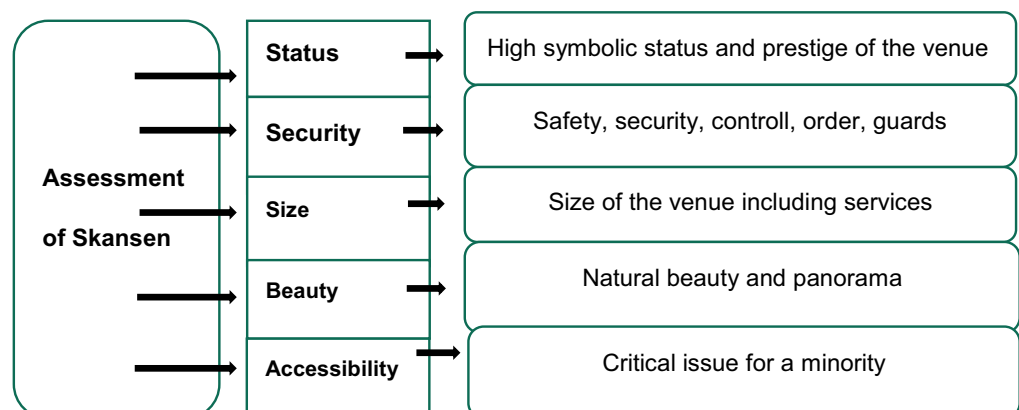


Figure 2. Assessment of Skansen through recurrent themes.



research has been inductive i.e. reconnection to earlier research and conceptual framework was shaped after the thematizing of the data was finished (Willig, 2008). It also means that, in difference with the deductive quantitative approach, we had no theoretical hypotheses in advance to prove when we shaped the original questionnaire (Willig, 2008).

4. Results and discussion

Most of the interviewees were aged more than 40 years old and the majority of them were men. Almost equally less than half of them lived in Sweden for more than 21 years, respectively, less than 21 years while 4% reported that they were born and raised in Sweden. Eighty-three percent of the respondents called themselves Swedish-Iranian and the remaining respondents called themselves Swedish Afghan, Swedish Iraqi, Swedish and other. A pre-dominant majority had received an academic education, of which 8% had a PhD, and a pre-dominant majority had also an employment while the rest either were students, unemployed or retired. An absolutely majority of them came from Greater Stockholm and the remainder came from municipalities in immediate proximity. Most of the visitors came to the event with friends and family members and most of them had been participating in the festival for the third time or more. Also, a predominant majority of the responders had earlier visited Skansen open air museum prior to the Persian Fire Festival.

4.1. High appreciation of arena

The main recurrent pattern/theme that is discovered through the analysis is the high appreciation of Skansen by the interviewees. A pre-dominant part of the interviewees shows high level of appreciation and recognition of Skansen as festival venue for the Persian Fire Festival. This is clear through their answers to two qualitative open questions on what place means to them for how they experience the Fire Festival, respectively, what they think about celebration of the Fire Festival at Skansen. Concerning the first question, they got for example, the chance to compare between various places (Iran, elsewhere in the World, Hallonbergen, Royal Garden, Skansen) and their impact on the meaning of the festival celebration. A minority answered either the place does not matter but the ambience, the tradition, the content and with whom one celebrates, or answered in favour for Royal Garden. Few respondents also mentioned Iran or Hallonbergen as best place. Nevertheless, strong positive words such as Excellent, Magnificent, Fantastic, Elegant, very good, Good, loved it, Nice, Wonderful, Beautiful, have been repeatedly mentioned by many of the visitors to describe their overall positive appreciation of the Skansen venue. Here, some quotations that illustrate these answers:

“The most important thing is to celebrate it, but Skansen was the best.”
“I think if it was celebrated in Skansen it would be better.”

By the strong positive words above one can realise positive emotions to the physical atmosphere of the venue which in their turn are signs of created meanings, place attachment and probably a link to place identity (Foote & Azaryahu, 2009; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle et al., 2005; Lau & Li, 2015; Milligan, 1998; Williams et al., 1992; Williams & Stewart, 1998). These words can also be signs of an approaching response (Mehrabian and Russell 1974, as cited in J. Lee, 2014) created by the stimuli factors in the venue environment. A pre-dominant majority of the respondents have been visiting the Skansen prior to the festival and they are surely aware of the symbolic importance of the place for Swedes. The words above also surely hide a latent information such as pride and dignity which means that the venue gives the visitor a stronger identity than before. Without speculating around the reasons behind such high appreciation, it is important to catch what factors most probably contributed to such assessment.

As a direct consequence of the theme above, we wanted to find out which factors or characteristics of the place that contribute to such appreciation and recognition. Several recurrent themes were discovered in the answers to indicate how some dissimilar factors contributed to the high recognition of the venue. They are presented as follows below.

4.2. Status

Status or symbolic status of the Skansen was mentioned by many respondents through words such as High class, High Status, Historic/ancient place, Famous place, Place for traditions, Luxury, Honorable, which most probably gave these respondents a sense of pride. Here, these persons who had earlier visited this city tourism attraction, link their answers to metaphors with cultural/historical/symbolic value of the venue for the nation. This could be illustrated by following quotations:

“The higher status of the place the greater pride one feels.”
“Of course, Skansen is much finer and is of high class.”
“The fact that it is celebrated in a high-class place means that it is great.”

This result is consistent with earlier research (Foote & Azaryahu, 2009; Gregory et al., 2009; Hammit et al., 2006; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009; Lau & Li, 2015; Williams & Stewart, 1998) that emphasized how strong senses of places can be created at a specific festival venue in term of meanings, emotions, attitudes, values, attachment, perceptions, belonging. This historical high-status venue with high national symbolic value, distinguishes itself to other places with strong identity, authenticity, uniqueness (Belhassen et al., 2008; Lau & Li, 2015; Richards & Wilson, 2006). The place has created extra value for the festival visitors and a sense of pride and dignity which might indicate to a stronger identity and place belonging created with the visitors (Bird, 2002; De Bres & Davis, 2001; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2009, 2013; Karlsen, 2007; McCabe, 2006; Morley, 2001).

4.3. Security

Security and safety were also mentioned by many respondents both with these words but also with other words such as Guards, Order, Control, Fight that were mentioned in this context. It is understandable since Skansen, compared to Royal Garden, is rather isolated and visitors to Skansen should go through a gate that is strictly controlled by security measures but also inside the arena there are guards and security staff. Such preconditions are not functioning properly in the open plaza of Royal Garden that is tightly surrounded by shops, cafes, offices, residential buildings and main street. Here some quotations:

“Good control before and guards everywhere. It was excellent, and I can say that it was one of the best that I experienced. It was less fights than it was in Royal Garden.”
“It was felt safer in Skansen. I think safety was better this year.”

One more aspect close to those mentioned upon was the issue of organisation on Skansen as host that was mentioned by several respondents. Skansen, as open-air museum, has its own routines but they have surely gone through all their routines (for example, security routines) with the festival organizer in advance to get best result of the event. These results are coherent with earlier studies (Borger et al., 2016; J. Lee, 2014; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Papadimitriou, 2013; Tanford & Jung, 2017; Van Zyl & Queiros, 2009; Yoon et al., 2010) that emphasized how important service facilities (including safety and security) at the venue are for the visitors' overall assessment, ambience and comfort. Here, security and safety service as embedded parts of the service infrastructure in the festival arena are significant factors to create satisfied visitors.

4.4. Size of the venue

Size of the place with including activities and services were mentioned and appreciated by many respondents in expressions such as Big/Bigger place, Enough place, Space, and similar words. Here, follow two quotations that can be representative:

“I really prefer Skansen because the area was large enough to accommodate large group of people with no conflicts, and also easier to organize different events and activities.”
“... I prefer Skansen for it is a complete venue with all the amenities and restaurants the made the crowd scatter round the celebration and it was not over crowded like other years in Royal Garden.”

Also, these results are coherent with earlier research (e.g., J. Lee, 2014; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Papadimitriou, 2013; Yoon et al., 2010) that emphasized how the environment of arena including its design, facilities, amenities, atmosphere, comfort are important factors to the visitors' satisfaction.

4.5. Beauty

Beauty of Skansen was mentioned by many of the respondents with different words which we interpreted as contributing factors to their high appreciation of the arena. Skansen is a big hillside venue and open-air museum with natural beauty, and panorama over the city and the Stockholm archipelago. Words such as Beautiful, Fantastic, Panorama, was mentioned by these respondents in addition to other value-added words mentioned earlier such as Magnificence, Wonderful, Elegant mean that the arena has been perceived as an attractive place (Gudny, 2013).

"It's the perfect place. High place you can see all of Stockholm and reminds me of my mountain town."

4.6. Disadvantage factors

A minority of the respondents were against celebration at Skansen and in favour for Royal Garden through pointing out some disadvantages of Skansen. Furthermore, several of those who in general were positive to arrangement in Skansen gave examples of disadvantages for the arena. These factors might be attributed to Skansen arena but in opposite be good functions of Royal Garden.

The most important and dominant such has been the lack of *accessibility* and *centrality* combined with lack of enough public transport to the venue. In general, all these respondents have not had anything negative against the venue itself, but their critiques are based on the loss of time to and from the venue and the dissatisfactory function of public transport means in the issue.

"Very nice arrangement but the transport possibilities made it almost impossible to get there and home which created boring feelings."

These results are in consistency with earlier research (e.g., Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Leenders et al., 2015; Van Zyl & Queiros, 2009; Wan & Chan, 2013) that confirmed that festival's location and its accessibility are important factor for decision making to participate but also create satisfaction among the visitors.

Also, the food service at Skansen was not convincing for several dissatisfied respondents. In this group, also people that appreciate the arena in general are included. These people complained on lack of food, low-quality and expensive food, lack of enough food courts, it was a bit to go to food courts. In this context the Royal Garden has much better function since it is surrounded by many restaurants. This result is coherent with Papadimitriou (2013) that confirmed that amenities quality (here food and beverage) is important for festival visitors. Despite the beauty of Skansen and its characteristic as hillside venue, several persons mentioned this characteristic causes problem for elder people to go up to the arena. Finally, few of the respondents mentioned darkness of the arena, lack of benches for older and disable people, cold, lack of parking, while a few also believed that Skansen was a small venue. These last results are coherent with earlier research (e.g., Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Yoon et al., 2010) that found comfort-related factors as creating satisfaction for visitors.

5. Conclusion, implications, limitations and suggestions

5.1. Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to investigate how the open-air museum of Skansen in Stockholm as venue for celebration of Persian Fire Festival is assessed by the festival's visitors.

The results of this study facilitate to take a critical approach to a part of the literature that has been presented earlier in this paper. Human geographers' theories on places as social construction (e.g., Cresswell, 2004; Knox & Marston, 2016; Massey, 1995; Massey & Jess, 1995) can be mostly applied for those places people have a continuously/daily contact with e.g., through work or housing. Here, groups of immigrants from the Middle East living in greater Stockholm area have once come to the Skansen venue to celebrate a festival. Still, the venue creates meanings, place attachment, positive emotions and place identity for them (Foote & Azaryahu, 2009; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle et al., 2005; Lau & Li, 2015; Williams & Stewart, 1998). Most of the participants show a sense of belonging/place belonging (Hammit et al., 2006) that is linked to the Skansen's authenticity, uniqueness and distinctiveness (Belhassen et al., 2008; Lau & Li, 2015; Richards & Wilson, 2006) as national cultural heritage compared to Hallonbergen's football fields and the Royal Garden that lacks such special position. Still, all these positive factors cannot necessarily result in loyalty to the venue and return to it (Chung et al., 2011; J. J. Lee et al., 2012; Lee & Kyle, 2014) because the relative isolation of this site is a problem for many potential visitors and functions rather as a negative stimuli factor for these people with "avoiding response" (J. Lee, 2014).

The arena that has been studied as a social construction makes sense. What distinguishes the Skansen venue compared to other places (like Royal Garden) is its unique position as a national cultural heritage and its symbolic value for all Swedes; something that also seems to be known for the majority of the respondents. It gives a sense of belonging to the Swedish Iranian community in the country and city that despite four decades in Sweden still is characterized by both integration on one side and segregation and marginalization on the other side. In line with that, the utterances and expressions from the respondents gives novel meanings to the venue of Skansen. Consecrated with the aim to maintain and protect a Swedish heritage, the Persian Fire Festival seems to be able to enlarge this aim by including the contemporary multicultural society of Sweden. The respondents reconstruct the Skansen venue through their own subjectively metaphors of the place. For instance, it reminds one of the respondents of his/her "mountain town" in Iran, which metaphorically incorporate Skansen as a place of belonging also for Swedish Iranians. Additionally, by reflecting upon the fact that Skansen can accommodate larger group of people and by that organize different events and activities at the same time, the respondents can strengthen their group identity by the different affordances of the venue. They conquer the venue of Skansen as a resource and possibility to transform their identity, to counteract exclusion and alienation and to become visible and included (Chacko, 2013). Skansen becomes by that a physical and social space to achieve belonging, visibility and transformation.

Both the physical environment of the place and its beauty but also psycho-social comfort-related factors included in it (such as security and other service facilities) have contributed to this positive assessment. One conclusion here could be that such historical places with high prestige are good places to be used as festival arena. Nevertheless, the host and the festival organizer need to assure a good accessibility to Skansen through better functioning public transport means.

5.2. Managerial and theoretical implications

The results in this study have implications for the Swedish society, for policy makers in Stockholm city and for Skansen and Riksteatern as host and organizer. The results indicate that such festivals in such places like Skansen contribute to the integration of migrants and their senses of belonging to the city and society. With borrowed words from Knox and Marston (2016) the Skansen arena as social construction and the Fire Festival create stronger meaning and identity for the visitors. The festival visitors might reason that Skansen belongs to Stockholm and Sweden and therefor it belongs to them as well. In long term it can also create more opportunities for the mutual social and cultural integration of these groups and the mainstreaming society. Nevertheless, the organizer (Riksteatern) might need to think about the issue of accessibility and transport means.

This study has also implications for event researchers especially those who have been studying multi-cultural/multi-ethnic events and their positive impacts on multicultural western societies. The study gives new insights regarding psychosocial well-being of immigrant groups and how traditional festivals arranged in a new cultural context can have a positive impact. It raises questions such as how better integration in the society can be achieved through multi-cultural/multi-ethnic events in the local community. In tourism context, another question would be how to create more attraction for Stockholm and Skansen among potential tourists and through this kind of annually multi-ethnic celebration.

5.3. Limitations and further research suggestions

This study has some methodological limitations that might indirectly create bias in some extent. Most of the respondents here are of Iranian origin both of high-educated but also well-integrated in the labour market. This is a methodology dilemma since these respondents cannot be totally representative for all Swedish Iranians. This group has in average good educational level but still shows a relatively high rate of unemployment compared to European immigrant groups. Therefore, it will be necessary to include other Swedish Iranians in future studies as well, not only the well-educated and well-integrated. The over representation of Swedish Iranians shows also that other ethnic groups like Afghans and Kurds have been less visible in this study. One more important issue might have been the Swedish language that has been used in the questionnaire. Perhaps a larger number of people (especially among relatively newly arrived Afghans) could express themselves if the questionnaire was also prepared in Persian.

Through the following study one suggestion for further research could be to study whether the Fire festival can have an impact on the Stockholm's tourism and hospitality industry since we have no knowledge on it yet. One more suggestion would be to conduct separate investigations with Swedish Afghans and present the festival's weaknesses and strengths from their perspective. A third suggestion would be to investigate the attitudes of young Swedish Iranians of second or third generation towards the celebration of the Fire Festival.

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Author details

Saeid Abbasian¹
 E-mail: saeid.abbasian@sh.se
 Isak Benyamine²
 E-mail: isak.benyamine@hsd.su.se
 Anna Lundberg³
 E-mail: anna.a.lundberg@liu.se

¹ Department of Environmental Studies and Tourism, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Alfred Nobels Allé 7, 141 89 Huddinge, Sweden.

² Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Education, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.

³ Department of Thematic Studies, Gender Studies, Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden.

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