



Title: Bullfighting's tourism, economic impact and local support

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Abstract:

Although being a controversial spectacle, bullfighting is a cultural event with an undoubtedly relevant touristic and economic impacts. Consequently, local support for bullfighting may be influenced by perceptions of the economic returns generated as a result of hosting this spectacle, which are mostly derived by the attraction of tourists. This paper characterises bullfight tourism and computes the economic impact of a bullfight fair, what allows to examine the extent to which perceived economic impacts affect local support for bullfighting. As a case study, we investigate the bullfighting fair in Olivenza (Spain). After conducting a survey to nearly 700 people during the development of the fair, expenditure results of residents and visitors are primarily used to estimate the total economic impact of the event through an input-output model. An ordered probit regression and a logit model are next estimated to evaluate whether residents' support for the fair is connected with the perceived economic impact. The findings reveal that local support, specially from those attending the fair, is influenced by perceptions of positive impacts.

Keywords: tourism, bullfight, economic impact, Spain

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Bullfighting is a controversial activity that takes place in many countries around the world. In several countries it is increasing its popularity (a booming activity in South Asia, according to Chio, 2018), while in others it struggles to survive or is seriously in danger (see the total or partial bans in Catalonia and Ecuador) (Carrillo Donaire, 2015). Some works have studied the economic impact of this type of events (most remarkably Medina, 2016 for Spain). The main claim for such an effect is the expenditure of visitors and tourists attending it. There is a vast literature analysing the economic impact of cultural events from a tourism's point of view. Nevertheless, to our knowledge, no work analyses bullfight as a singular cultural event with a touristic and economic impact.

The local support to massive festivals has also been studied in academic works, including the analysis on the impact of locals' quality of life (Yolal et al., 2016). Given the controversial debate on *corridos*, we hypothesise if the local support they receive is somehow affected not only by image that the city can have, but also by the perceived economic impact of the event.

This paper introduces bullfighting within the tourism literature, and focuses on a specific event, the "Feria del Toro" in Olivenza, Spain. The aim of our work is manifold, and is innovative in all its objectives. First, we describe bullfighting and the controversial character it has, even in Spain, together with its economic and touristic dimension. Second, we describe the economic impact of a bullfight fair, and the expenditure patterns of bullfight tourists. And third, we evaluate the support to the event, but also the agreement with the fair being essentially devoted to bullfight, by considering the residents' perceived advantages and disadvantages.

We use the 2018 edition of the *Feria del Toro* in Olivenza, Spain. Our results display a major cultural industry, with a large although not major support. This event attracts tourists with significant purchasing power or, at least, willing to pay more than the average tourist in the country. Finally, we find that as far as the event is driving more benefits than costs to the town, residents are not only satisfied with the fair, but also agree with the event being devoted to bullfights if it is for the good.

Main conclusions

From a tourist point of view, bullfighting is one of the selected products that contribute to design a strategy of tourism differentiation, because you can only attend it in a very reduced number of countries in the world. In the same vein, many tourists coming to Spain, aim at attending a *corrida* as symbol of the country. And from an economic point of view, bullfighting events generate activity flows that have a direct and indirect impacts on the territory where they are held. In the Spanish case, the economic figures surrounding bullfighting in its most diverse forms (closed arenas and public spaces such as streets or country sites) are beyond of doubt: 25 million spectators, 200,000 employments and 1,6 billion euros. Despite these aggregated data, to date there is no scientific research analyzing the quantitative economic effects on a specific event.

This paper analyses the *Feria del Toro* of Olivenza (the first relevant bullfighting event on the Spanish bullfighting season). Its total economic impact has been estimated at 5,3 million euros, of which 3,04 million euros are direct impacts (on the regional or national economy) and 2,3 million euros are indirect impacts (also on the regional or national economy).

These absolute figures are particularly remarkable if they are related to the unique characteristics of the event. First, the event is celebrated only for three days a year. Secondly, the number of people attending the event exceeds the total population of the municipality where it is celebrated (more than 12,000 visitors, using the most conservative estimates). And, thirdly, the average expenditure per tourist and day during the event (310 euros) more than doubles the average expenditure of the usual tourist that visits the country. Consequently, the celebration of such a specific event for a few concrete days generates an economic impact high enough to conclude that the celebration of bullfight *corridas* is cultural and tourist events clearly sustainable from an economic point of view.

In addition to the economic perspective, from a social point of view, the *Feria del Toro* also has a significant impact. Although a large percentage of the population living in the municipality does not attend the bullfights, the satisfaction with this cultural event was almost excellent (60% rated a score of 9 or 10 on a 0-10 point scale). The support to the bullfighting character of the fair is positively associated with the perceived advantages of the event, and negatively its disadvantages.

From our results, some implications for the management of this type of events could be deduced. In the first place, public administration should continue supporting the celebration of this *Feria del Toro* due to its demonstrated effects on the local, regional and national economy. Although there may be problems of mass tourism during the celebration of the event (parking difficulties, excessive noise and waste generation, mainly), the positive economic impacts far outweigh these problems. The return of public investments dedicated to the celebration of this bullfight event is more than guaranteed. Consequently, it is an event that should be object of a promotion strategy aimed at its consolidation in both national and international tourism markets, because of its proven economic efficiency.

Secondly, the remarkable tourist dimension of this cultural event, which generates economic benefits not only at the local level but also at the regional and national level,

should be associated with two clear development strategies. On the one hand, its consideration as an event of regional interest, which it should generate sources of public financing beyond the municipal sphere, justifying the contribution of regional economic funds for its celebration. And, on the other hand, its candidacy for a Party of National Tourist Interest, not only because of the attraction it generates among Portuguese *aficionados* but also because of its ability to attract tourists from other nationalities, provided that appropriate promotional campaigns are designed.

Finally, and third, the high level of support from the local population, the creation of jobs before and during the fair, together with the protection of the bull breed and the conservation of the extensive livestock farming where the bull breed is born, grows and reproduces, are factors that, in addition to the demonstrated economic viability presented in this research, turn the *Feria del Toro* into a fully sustainable tourist product. This factor, the promotion and marketing campaigns of this tourist event, based on its sustainability and its specific geographical location (as a differentiating element) are emerging as medium and long term success factors.

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