

# **Constructing an intangible cultural heritage experiencescape: The case of the Feast of the Drunken Dragon (Macau)**

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## **Abstract**

Given the minimal attention that researchers have given to how various stakeholders contribute to festival experiencescapes in destination settings, this paper examines how an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) experiencescape is constructed, focusing on a local- and national-level listed heritage item in Macau. In-depth stakeholder interviews are conducted to identify involvement in the event by government officials, organizers, performers, shop owners and tourists. Organizers and performers were found to play key roles in delivering experiences and the researchers determined that participation by most visitors is spontaneous. Government plays a supporting and coordinating role, with local community representatives engaging actively in operational aspects. The participation by local shop owners in creating the experiencescape is modest. This study contributes to knowledge by proposing an ICH experiencescape framework that conveys a multidimensional “-scape” concept, and shows the progressive formation and refinement of experiences before, during, and after visitation.

**Keywords:** Experiencescape; intangible cultural heritage; Feast of the Drunken Dragon; Macau; stakeholders; festival.

## **Highlights:**

- Literature on the experiencescape concept is extended into the ICH context;
- Most visitors participate in the festival spontaneously;
- Multiple stakeholders’ roles and interactions are identified and analyzed;
- A conceptual framework is proposed for the multidimensional “-scape” concept;
- Experiencescape is an approach to interpret various dimensions of experience.

## 1. Introduction

As tourists have become increasingly dissatisfied with stand-alone products or attractions, they are more motivated by novel aspects that contribute collectively to the aggregate destination experience (Chang, Gibson, & Sisson, 2014; Yolal, Gursoy, Uysal, Kim, & Karacaoğlu, 2016). Confronted by a fiercely competitive marketplace, destinations are impelled to deliver distinctive “stand out” products (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Van Niekerk, 2017). Local festivals and events have played an important part in pursuing this ambition (Giovanardi, Lucarelli, & Decosta, 2014). There has been extensive documentation of growing visitor interest in local community festival experiences, as these allow immersion in local cultures within original settings, offering visitors something distinct from their home environments (McKercher, Mei, & Tse, 2006).

The tourist experience perspective cannot, however, fully explain the context within which activities occur (Chen, Suntikul, & King, 2019). Literature on the experience concept has mainly presented the perspectives of tourists and/or managers about the outcomes achieved (Eide, Fuglsang, & Sundbo, 2017; Frochot & Batat, 2013), with minimal focus on interconnections between the experience and the environment (the *-scape*) (Pechlaner, Pichler, & Herntrei, 2012). Though destination managers and marketers need to understand the perspectives of various stakeholders if they are to acquire a holistic picture of the destination experience (Frochot & Batat, 2013), few studies of the tourist experience have drawn upon the full spectrum of stakeholder opinions, including those of site managers, sponsors and government authorities.

Experiencescapes are considered as “spaces of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment, as well as the meeting grounds in which diverse groups (with potentially competing as well as overlapping interests and ideologies) move about and come in contact with one another” (O’Dell, 2005, p. 16). This perspective acknowledges the multi-dimensional character of experience, which is critical for understanding and analyzing the involvement of tourists and the diverse parties across the supply chain in the creation of tourist experiences. The experiencescape concept views experience as a holistic ensemble within an environment that combines production and consumption (O’Dell, 2005). The roles of various contributors in the construction of experiencescapes (e.g. organizers, managers, locals and tourists) should be considered when developing strategies (O’Dell, 2005; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

In this context, it is important to consider the intangible aspects of cultural heritage. According to UNESCO (2016), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is important as both a cultural manifestation and also to transmit the cultures and traditions of communities and/or particular social groups as a social and economic phenomenon. Despite the centrality of experiencescapes in the creation of memorable cultural experiences (Matteucci, 2015), a recent literature review identified a lack of applied research (Chen, Sontikul, & King, 2019). A few studies on the related area of festivalscapes have largely explored the relationship between festival components and visitor attitudes, perceptions and behaviors (e.g. Cole & Illum, 2006; Savinovic, Kim, & Long, 2012; Lee, 2016; Zhang, Fong, Li, & Ly, 2019). Characterizations of experiencescapes depict experiences as occurring in an “endless array of specific places... [and] do not need to be limited to any single place” (O’Dell, 2005, p. 15).

The term festivalscape has been previously used in examining the experience conveyed through a festival environment (Chen, King, & Sontikul, 2019). The related “sensescape” concept has expressed the various customer emotions that are evoked by on-site activities (Matteucci, 2015). Whereas these studies have been largely confined to the tourist perspective towards on-site experiences, the present investigation assesses the experiencescape as a broader construct entailing the pre- and post-visit components of the experience, as well as the on-site component. The researchers also consider the roles of multiple stakeholders in the construction of experiences. Since the term experiencescape has been applied to contexts that extend beyond the festival domain, the current study refers to festivalscapes and sensescapes as subcategories.

Macau is a diverse destination that incorporates a massive casino and gaming sector with renowned cultural resources. The relevant destination management organization (DMO) celebrates the latter category of resources in order to diversify market appeal (Macau SARG, 2016). This paper will first discuss the origins of the experiencescape concept, prior to applying this in the context of ICH, a concept increasingly acknowledged by DMOs. Using the case of the Feast of the Drunken Dragon in Macau, the paper investigates how ICH experiencescapes are constructed through the inputs and contributions of multiple stakeholders. A conceptual framework is proposed to guide future studies and inform the management and marketing of ICH in destination contexts.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 *From experience to experiencescape*

The concept of experience has been widely applied in tourism (Agapito, Mendes, & Valle, 2013; Eide et al., 2017). The notion of an “experience economy” has attracted particular attention (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009, p. 312; Chang, 2018, p. 84; Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 25). This concept emphasizes the creation of experience as the central motivation for consumption, and views experience in terms of co-construction of value, with roles attributed to both suppliers and customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). As an example of a multi-stakeholder investigation based on this concept, Jernsand, Kraff, and Mossberg (2015) conducted an empirical study of a guided tour of Kenya’s Dunga Beach, drawing on the interactive, collaborative efforts and suggestions of stakeholders to generate a prototype of experience innovation and design within experiencescapes. Extending beyond a single point of view, the proposed combination of perspectives offers a potentially stronger basis to formulate policies and strategic plans.

Experience is “anchored in space” (Čomić & Kalmić, 2015, p. 56) and occurs within a specific place and set of spaces, which define, present and frame the experience with mediation of social, economic and cultural impacts (Appadurai, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991). O’Dell (2005) first proposed the experiencescape concept as a vehicle to explore mechanisms for the production, packaging, consumption and staging of experiences. The suffix “-scape” refers to metaphorical landscapes or physical spaces within specific geographies. It was first applied in tourism by Gunn (1972), who proposed the concept of “vacationscape” to denote an integrated understanding of the various players and considerations in tourism systems to optimize destination development from the economic, social and environment perspective. Other “-scape” applications emphasize a specific context, notably smellscapes, soundscapes, and streetscapes. Relative to such alternatives, the broader experiencescape reinforces the multi-dimensional character of experience. O’Dell (2005) characterized experiencescapes as:

... not only organized by producers [ranging] from place marketers and city planners to local private enterprises... but... also actively sought out by consumers. They are spaces of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment, as well as the meeting grounds in which diverse groups (with potentially competing as well as overlapping interests and ideologies) move about and come in contact with one another (O’Dell, 2005, p. 16).

There has been extensive reference to the preceding definition (e.g. Hill, 2014; Jensen, 2015). The experiencescape perspective has been applied in destination marketing (Hall, 2008; Sekhon & Roy, 2015), and in contexts ranging from small restaurants and accommodation enterprises to large-scale urban plans (O'Dell, 2005). One study of an accommodation establishment concluded that its nostalgic setting and atmosphere was evocative for customers and generated a vivid emotional reaction (Mody, Suess, & Lehto, 2017). New visitor experiencescapes have also arisen from the transformation of old industrial sites into sensory, interpretative spaces (Frochot & Batat, 2013). The renovation of Singapore's Little India Historic District has been described as a re-imagining of the experiencescape of an entire district, with a unique cultural identity providing an experience with economic and cultural components (Chang, 2000). Hill's (2014) examination of a bookshop experiencescape concluded that all elements played a part in creating the atmosphere and in engaging with the senses when customers were making purchases. Each of these contexts incorporated a physical dimension that aims to revitalize spaces in order to arouse emotional connections. Experiencescapes are physical and mental spaces that connect people and enable individualized experiences, meanwhile creating value for the destination (Cederholm, 2012). Cooper and Hall (2008) described experiencescapes as an extension of servicescapes. The former focus on the merit of embracing the entire experience environment, rather than focusing exclusively on the physical. Key players are not confined to suppliers and customers, but extend to other parties engaged in experience spaces. Despite the urgency of providing a more holistic explanation, there have been few empirical studies of experiencescapes, with most being in the exploratory category with the concept presented as background.

Though the experiencescape concept has been applied previously to ICH by researchers, the tourism destination context has been neglected. An example is Matteucci's (2015) model, based on the factors influencing the experiences of participants in a flamenco course. Meanwhile, Ekerljung (2015) examined a festival experience in which participants and event producers were involved in the revitalization of a minority language. In the latter case, experiencescapes were shown to provide a basis for the production of experience, though the authors offered only a general definition and did not interrogate the experiencescape concept.

Samuelson and Norway (2010) identified some characteristics of a festival experiencescape, as a "limited area; short experience creation with high throughput; facilitation

for larger groups and flows of customers; sites built and used for a single type of core activities by different types of groups; easy access and low friction of distance; and elements and total experience space mostly publicly owned” (p. 19). Benckendorff and Pearce (2012) proposed some key considerations when studying experiencescapes in event settings. These were physical environment, multi-sensory elements, theme, programming, and personal interactions. Such findings can guide the further study of ICH experiencescapes, particularly in the case of those involving multidimensional components such as the performing arts. Campos, Mendes, Valle, and Scott (2018) proposed a framework outlining various factors of the experiencescape. However, though they defined the physical, social and organizational components of an experiencescape, their model has not yet been tested empirically. The various preceding studies indicate a general consensus about the experiencescape concept and its applicability to various different study contexts. However, real settings are required to understand the impact of experiencescapes in ICH contexts and filling this gap is a primary ambition of the current paper.

## ***2.2 Relationship between intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and experiencescapes***

ICH is becoming increasingly important for maintaining cultural diversity in the face of globalization and creeping uniformity (Engelhardt, 2008). UNESCO has also recognized that safeguarding ICH is critical for preserving significant cultural assets. Cultural space is viewed as an important component alongside the five ICH domains, namely: 1) oral traditions and expressions; 2) performing arts; 3) social practices, rituals and festive events; 4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and 5) traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2003). However, cultural space has not yet gained inclusion as a domain for prospective UNESCO listing (UNESCO, 2011). As destinations have been pursuing distinct market positioning, their marketing has increasingly switched from an exclusive focus on tangible assets to embracing a diverse ICH portfolio which engages tourists’ emotions and connects them with local cultures (Samuelsen & Norway, 2010). The growing concentration on intangible aspects of culture has stimulated scholars to examine the ICH experience (Lau, 2016). However, it can be challenging to transform ICH into tourism products, since intangible cultures are often unique to particular indigenous people and lack integration into commercial tourism markets (du Cros & McKercher, 2015). Additionally, the authenticity and integrity of various facets of ICH such as the performing arts can be undermined when they are delivered to tourists in a standardized way

(Smith, 2016). Thus, acknowledging that the ICH experience involves interactions between a range of stakeholders and values, the current paper solicits the perspectives of several key stakeholder groups towards the co-construction of experiencescapes.

Experience reflects subjective responses to products and services and reveals feelings that are associated with physical and social environments (Robinson & Clifford, 2012), whereas the term “-scape” acknowledges that the full spectrum of five senses should be considered for visitors and not confined to the visual, sightseeing and gaze aspects of destinations (Mossberg, 2007). An experiencescape encompasses a full depiction of the experience, taking account of all of the senses (Benckendorff & Pearce, 2012). In combining both festive and cultural components, festivals are a suitable context for examining the construction of ICH experiencescapes. Matteucci’s (2015) study of a flamenco dance performance which explored how consumers perceive this intangible heritage performance is an example of research on experiencescapes in the context of festivals. A cause-and-effect relationship was proposed to understand the influential factors and outcomes of this festival experience. However, the identification of influential factors focused on the marketing perspective, rather than considering the experiencescape angle.

ICH entails resources that offer tourism potential by evoking emotional experiences within destination spaces, thereby mobilizing visitation (Pechlaner et al., 2012). Substantive and communicative staging can play a role in transforming such experiences into an experiencescape (Mossberg, 2007). Festivals epitomize ICH experiencescapes, particularly those festivals that have a prominent performing arts aspect and which are ICH listed. They offer rich contexts for researching the relevant phenomenon. Unique local rituals such as the Feast of the Drunken Dragon in Macau have been transformed from community-initiated celebrations to events through participation by both locals and tourists. Tourism activities have been shown to play a transformational role in commercializing traditional performing arts (Imon, 2014). However, proactive government promotions of the performing arts for purposes of tourism development have been challenged because of their allegedly inadequate contribution to diversifying the destination experience (Sou, Vinnicombe, & Leung, 2016; Wong, 2014). By considering a festival as a medium for various ICH domains in the experiencescape context, the current study on the Feast of the Drunken Dragon provides an applied example that addresses a gap in the existing literature, and will inform strategies that develop and promote ICH generally, and

festivals in particular, thereby helping to establish the cultural tourism industry as a complement to Macau's dominant casino and gaming sector.

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1 The Macau setting***

Macau has a dominant tourism industry, with arrivals of 39.4 million in 2019, half of whom (20.8 million) were same-day visitors (Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), 2020). The Macau government is seeking to eliminate the territory's economic dependency on the gaming industry and achieve a more sustainable economy, partly by developing tourism that is based on cultural heritage. Most visits to Macau are not solely for gaming, but include activities such as leisure, shopping and/or sightseeing (Zeng, Prentice, & King, 2014). This is indicative of opportunities for Macau to diversify its tourism. In this context, ICH is a potentially valuable resource for the development of cultural tourism.

The focus of this study - the Feast of the Drunken Dragon - has particular significance among Macau's listed ICH items (Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), 2017) (Figure 1). It is included in both the official local- and national-level ICH listings, and contains an element of Cantonese Opera, another ICH-listed item at local, regional and international (UNESCO) levels. The Festival incorporates several ICH domains, including performing arts and social practices. Moreover, the Feast of the Drunken Dragon is promoted annually by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) as one of the city's larger-scale cultural tourism events. The performing team is invited to join other major local cultural occasions, indicative of its pivotal role in Macau's culture and tourism. The staging of the festival also draws on a strong community base. Since the festival is substantial in scale and is held in the open, there are many non-local and local spectators (Figure 2). It provides an ideal case for a multi-faceted exploration of the formation of an ICH experiencescape.

[Figures 1, 2 near here]

#### ***3.2 Research approach***

Seeking to identify how different stakeholders co-construct ICH experiencescapes, this study adopts a qualitative method, consistent with the approach adopted in most of the prior



investigations (e.g. Agapito et al., 2013; Benckendorff & Pearce, 2012; Hall, 2008). By conforming with the so-called constructivist paradigm which is commonplace in cultural studies, researchers can explore the full scope of each actor's thoughts and behaviors (Fosnot, 1996). There has been a lack of comprehensive research on the construction of experiencescapes, especially for ICH. The interview structure and framing of questions that has been adopted in the present investigation draws from previous studies on experiencescapes in terms of key features (e.g. a continuous stage of experience) and possible influential factors (e.g. physical, social and emotional engagements). It is noted, however, that no previous studies have presented any detail about the interview questions that were used.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders from the perspectives of both supply and demand and included government officials, festival organizers, performers, local shop owners and tourists. The interview questions with supply-side stakeholders concerned their construction of the ICH experiencescapes (Appendix 1). The questions for tourists addressed three stages of their ICH experience – before, during and after the festival – to investigate the continuous construction of their festival experience over time. Questions about their pre-event experiences addressed tourists' expectations of the event (Benckendorff & Pearce, 2012) and their motivations to attend (Jensen, 2015). On-site experience questions concerned their experience of the physical and social environment of the festival (La Salle & Britton, 2003; Mossberg, 2007) and the post-event experience questions focused on tourists' post hoc evaluations and recollections of the festival, their overall satisfaction with the event (Cole & Illum, 2006) and their behavioral intentions (Kim, Duncan, & Chung, 2015; Yoon & Uysal, 2005) (Appendix 2). In order to avoid interrupting their festival experience, tourist interviewees were approached towards the end of their participation, at a time when the festival experience would still be present in their minds and when they could reflect retrospectively about their participation. Interviewers identified potential interview targets during the festival and approached them to determine their willingness for interview. Shop owners were approached on a walk-in basis. The research instrument of approaching the informants was elaborated in Appendix 3.

The tourist and shop owner interviews were conducted over two consecutive years of the festival, 2-4 May 2017 and 21-22 May 2018, to ensure the collection of sufficient responses and rich data for analysis, though it should be noted that numbers alone do not determine the

adequacy of qualitative data (Morrow, 2005). Other stakeholders were interviewed by appointment. The informants included 22 tourists (Table 1), a Vice President of the organizing body, two performers, three local shop owners and three government officials (Table 2). All respondents were interviewed on a single occasion. Noting that each category of respondent represents a key stakeholder perspective, non-tourist informants were chosen on account of their relevance and closeness (both physically and managerially) to the research context. The pool of potential shop owner interviewees was limited. The main set-up stage for the dance component of the Feast of Drunken Dragon is at R. Sul do Mercado de São Domingos in front of Kuan Tai Temple. There are only a small number of shops in this short and narrow alleyway. However, although the shop owner respondents were modest in number, they were able to provide meaningful insights generating rich data based on their positions, organizations and work experience. While the data collection was also constrained by the willingness of informants to be interviewed, the researchers persisted in seeking interviewees until they had obtained detailed responses from respondents representing each of the targeted stakeholder groups. The interview questions for non-tourist stakeholders mainly sought to ascertain how they were involved in the construction of experiencescapes from the beginning stage to the end.

[Tables 1, 2 near here]

Interviews were conducted in either Chinese or English, depending on each informant's linguistic background. Questions were composed in Chinese, then translated from Chinese to English and checked by two tourism experts working in educational institutions to ensure that the intended meanings were maintained and to check consistency between the Chinese and English versions. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Chinese transcripts were translated into English for purposes of analysis. All transcripts were analyzed using NVivo 11 software. Themes were developed to consolidate the results (mainly in three experience stages) and to create sub-themes with a view to highlighting the various topics emphasized by the informants, with reference to the literature of the appropriate terms (e.g. motivation and satisfaction). The details of data analysis were elaborated in Appendix 3.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### ***4.1 Tourist perspectives***

The tourist interview findings can be summarized into three stages (pre-event, on-site and post-event perceptions) to indicate the development of attitudes towards their festival experience over time. The themes are elaborated in the defining framework and discussion.

#### *4.1.1 Pre-event perceptions*

Most tourist informants (17 out of 22) indicated that they came across the festival by chance, not as part of a pre-planned itinerary. Because the festival was held in a famous tourist spot, Senado Square in the Historic Centre of Macau, thousands of tourists per day participated, despite having no premeditation. They were attracted by the lively atmosphere, as attested by several informants: “Because we just came across it and found it quite lively, we wanted to have a look” (Informant 6). Since they happened upon the festival without any prior knowledge, they did not approach it with particular expectations. When asked why they stopped to enjoy the festival, informants mentioned two main reasons: curiosity and a desire to experience local culture. Those motivated by curiosity expressed opinions such as: “I wondered what a local event was like” (Informant 16). Some informants indicated a desire to experience the local culture: “I wanted to see this kind of festival culture. [You see] so many symbols with the dragons, the celebration and the colors, the costumes... quite attractive” (Informant 14).

A few mentioned that they came to the festival purposefully, explaining their use of an online event calendar after arriving in Macau, not during their pre-trip planning: “I found out about this event from Facebook yesterday when I arrived, so I wanted to have a look at it” (Informant 17). Such responses indicate that these tourists have the practice of using social media to seek information and of making plans during their travels.

#### *4.1.2 On-site experience*

When asked about the nature of their festival participation, most informants mentioned taking photos and videos, which entailed a limited, voyeuristic type of engagement (Kahn, 1990). A small subgroup reported more emotional engagements. Informants referred to their previous

festival experiences, remarking on the lively atmosphere, performers, involvement of local people and the importance of ICH.

Tourists made frequent use of the term “lively” to describe their on-site experiences when referring to a characteristic that drew them to the festival upon their initial encounter. This feeling further contributed to an experience of “local involvement” and “performer engagement”, since tourists were able to sense the dedication of local people as both audience members and performers: “The dedicated attitude of the performers shows that they attach great importance to the event. I even saw that many stalls had been closed to clear the way for the parade” (Informant 20).

It is unsurprising that tourists described their experiences based on observations of the physical environment and performance. Those who spoke in greater detail referred to elements such as the Drunken Dragon Dance, the sound and form of celebration: “The fish and little dragon are quite cute... I have never seen them before” (Informant 9). The performers were particularly praised because of their professional demeanor and skills: “They perform with their heart and must practice for a long time. They try their best to perform, which indicates their sincere attitude to respect the tradition” (Informant 13).

In some cases, components of the Feast of the Drunken Dragon reminded tourists of festivals that they had experienced previously, causing them to reflect on cultural similarities and differences, particularly for tourists from other places within the Chinese cultural sphere: “[The festival] seems like the one we have in Taiwan, when the Chinese New Year approaches or other festivals. There are temple activities organized in Taiwan. Each temple has its own celebration with components like these dragon and lion dances” (Informant 5), “The sounds are not that unfamiliar to me, as in Hong Kong we also have such lion dances in festivals” (Informant 9).

As the Feast of the Drunken Dragon is a typical ICH listed item in Macau, tourists expressed their feelings about the importance of ICH, as indicated in the themes of “preservation”, “cultural significance”, “cultural inheritance” and “authenticity”. Such feelings were commonly expressed by Chinese tourists in this study.

I think this festival showcases the local traditional culture as you may see it attracts a lot of young people to come and shoot photos. It may raise their interest in learning about the history and evolution of this festival, and even strengthen their sense of belonging to the place (Informant 19).

When tourists reflected on their festival experiences, they described various psychological states, using terms such as “curiosity”, “enjoyable”, “lucky”, “surprised”, “fresh”, “holy”, “nostalgia”, “respectful” and “home away from home”, to indicate rich psychological reactions, particularly reflecting on their previous festival experiences and exposure to broader cultural traditions.

#### *4.1.3 Post-event perceptions*

The researchers gained an understanding of the association between memorable experiences and particular touchpoints or components that contribute to the overall festival experience.

Memorability was the most commonly mentioned overall theme. This has wide-ranging implications for tourist satisfaction, for their image of destination Macau and their future travel intentions. Informants were particularly impressed by the extent of local involvement: “... the involvement of the people is quite strong. Whether the older people or the younger performers, they all [participate in] it” (Informant 1). The involvement of locals as participants and performers evidently stimulated and enriched the festival experience:

The atmosphere is quite different from at home. The performers are quite lost in the dance, which indicates that they purely aim to organize the event well, to share their own traditions with others and to transfer the message to both the locals and tourists that Macau has such traditions. I feel so touched. (Informant 19)

In their overall evaluation of the experience, most informants found that the festival added value to a satisfying trip: “The festival can be regarded as a wonderful memory. Especially coming for the first time” (Informant 5). Even repeat visitors found their perspectives on Macau refreshed by their festival experience.

The traditional features of the local culture contribute to the construction of a rich destination image among tourists. Some formed the impression of Macau as a multi-faceted place, citing the co-existence of a modern city with traditional aspects of the local culture encountered in the festival, expressing respect for the continued practice of this ICH: “It is rare to see that Macau also pays attention to their traditions and keeps preserving them” (Informant 19).

Because of their positive impressions of the event, tourists expressed intentions to return to Macau, to recommend the destination to others, and to join other similar events when and where possible. The most commonly reported reasons for planning a return visit were the limited time of their current visit and a desire to visit more sites next time. The convenience of travelling to Macau for tourists from mainland China and other places in East Asia also encouraged them to express intentions for a repeat visit. Macau is a popular destination for short-haul travel. Most tourist interviewees share their travel experiences through online social platforms or applications like Instagram, Facebook or WeChat. These informants were receptive to joining other similar festivals, because of their curiosity to learn more about different types of such events: “If you visit a place, you may want to experience some local culture, and to learn about local people’s lives” (Informant 12). Such statements also reflected the attraction of the cultural differences between the destination and the tourists’ places of residence.

#### ***4.2 Organizer perspectives***

One of the festival organizer respondents noted that the Feast of the Drunken Dragon is more than a century old. The organizers begin preparations six months in advance, starting by drafting a program and submitting a proposal to the government. They seek to maintain traditional practices handed down from previous generations. During the pre-event stage, the preparation mainly focuses on fundraising through governmental channels and community donations. Organizers see their efforts as catering to both tourists and to the local community. They seek to provide visitors with the best festival environment and performance. For those who join the traditional distribution of so-called “longevity rice” to participants as a token of well-wishing, goodwill can be spread among locals during the celebration and relationships within the community can be strengthened.

Even fishermen, who sell fresh seafood in the market and are business competitors in daily life, come to help with the event without any conflicts and they work together to make the event successful. (Representative from the Organizers)

The will that was evident among the organizers revealed active community engagement to preserve local culture and share it with outsiders through celebration. In practice, such engagement influences the nature of the festival experiencescape, particularly when the festival

organizers are key stakeholders in delivering the experience. The organizers work as coordinators to develop and implement the program and communicate with different performers to ensure smooth running. Local volunteers provide the manpower. Tourist festival attendees are viewed as providing an effective channel to promote traditional culture to outsiders, on the premise that modern audiences will respect and value the traditional practices as a vehicle for preserving and disseminating cultural values.

### *4.3 Performer perspectives*

The researchers interviewed two professional performers from the Drunken Dragon Dance Team. One was the Drunken Dragon Dance Team Leader (Mr. Yuen) who has been practicing the dance since the 1980s. With years of practice, he feels a strong attachment to this ritual practice and views the annual performance as meaningful:

We are lucky because when past generations tried to practice the tradition, there was no recognition of its status. Now, we get benefits from the inscription. It is a great honor for us and encourages us to keep preserving the culture. (Mr. Yuen)

Prior to the staging of the festival, performers engage in preparatory activities including program arrangement and dance practice. They are part-time dance practitioners. Though all have primary jobs elsewhere, they dedicate themselves to regular practice and their training schedule intensifies as the festival approaches. Another performer informant expressed great pride in their skills and regimen, instilled through rigorous training since a young age: “I feel proud to participate in this meaningful work as I am one of the members who transmit this practice from the elders. I do hope I can keep up the tradition to pass it down to the next generation” (Mr. Lee). Besides their training and practice, performers prepare the program to entertain the audience, sometimes involving adaptations to long-held practices. As informed by the team leader,

In the past, there was no wine spraying (when performers spray wine from their mouths to simulate a condition of drunkenness) when performing (Figure 3), because in the old times, wine was expensive and only consumed on special occasions. However, in the current form of the performance, for aesthetic effect and to keep the dancers’ minds clear, they spray the wine rather than drinking it. (Mr. Yuen)

[Figure 3 near here]

Both performer informants emphasized the importance of engagement. As one stated, “The performers need to pay high attention to their own performance when dancing and imagine themselves as part of the dragon and vividly mimic the drunken mode of a dragon” (Mr. Lee). Cooperation and coordination among the performers were also emphasized. At the conclusion of the dance, performers shed their roles and interact with audience members. They talk to audience members and invite them to hold the props used in the performance. Each individual from the public can act as a channel of promotion for the culture.

We win a lot of applause when the performance is vivid and exciting. When our performers receive such applause, we feel satisfied. I do hope that people can understand the spirit of traditional Chinese folk art and Drunken Dragon culture through our performance. (Mr. Yuen)

Such statements demonstrate that the performers concentrate on their performance during the festival with the intention of promoting traditional culture by impressing the attendees.

#### ***4.4 Government perspectives***

Two main government departments are engaged in the festival preparations: the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), an independent unit in charge of tourism development and cultural preservation. Three representatives from the two departments were interviewed about their views of local festivals and how they facilitate them.

The departments leave the details to the festival organizers: “We do not intend to interfere in their culture. Only when they raise any difficulties for our support, we try our best to help” (IC representative). This indicates that government authorities play a minimal role in formulating the experiencescape. The main government assistance is in the form of financial support through subsidy programs like the “Request for Subsidy for Association Activities Plan” and the “Cultural Event Subsidy Scheme,” and conducting local and international promotional efforts through social media networks. The MGTO supports the festival because:

We hope tourists can “experience” different cultural aspects of Macau, like its intangible culture, and realize that Macau is more than gambling and the Ruins of St. Paul’s, and that it also has rich cultural resources to appreciate. (MGTO representative)



From the IC perspective, such support is driven by the preservation of local culture, particularly as the festival is included in the ICH list.

Through supporting cultural events, we'd like to express the government's special attention to the local culture and generate respect for this culture, which can further encourage more locals to join the ICH event and understand its value. (IC representative)

Government authorities act primarily as observers during the festival: "We assign staff on-site, but not to join in running the event. Our role is more to ensure that the event is adequately monitored and that it is run according to the submitted proposal" (IC Representative). After the festival, the organizers report on the outcomes of the festival, which allows the government to review the effectiveness of the organization. Such information is also useful for reviewing the next year's subsidy programs.

#### ***4.5 Local shop owner perspectives***

Three local shop owners who run businesses at festival venues were interviewed, to represent local community perspectives. They have been operating businesses for many years and have witnessed the development of the ritual practices over time. The owner of a fruit stall with a 50-year history revealed that the area "has changed a lot in these years. There is a continuously growing number of tourists ... I find it good as it brings a lot of business to me" (Fruit stall owner). Though his business closes for half a day during the festival, he understands the situation. A similar feeling was shared by the other two interviewed business owners (Pharmacy shop owner and Snack stall owner). They appreciate the ongoing practices of the local culture:

We find the neighbors are very happy to join the festival. It is once a year, which is rather seldom... Therefore, if holding the festival can benefit tourism development of the city and bring more people to the area, why not support it? (Snack stall owner)

The local shop owners are spectators and not active participants in the festival, since they must tend to the operation of their own businesses. Though their contribution is limited, this should not imply that their role is unimportant, as their perspectives on the event reflect the significance of the event among locals, and their overall appreciation of how the event contributes to the local economy.

#### ***4.6 The festival as an ICH experiencescape***

The authors have constructed an ICH experiencescape framework (Figure 4) that consolidates the roles of various stakeholders. It depicts the interrelationships between these stakeholders and their respective roles through various stages of the visitor experience.

[Figure 4 near here]

As depicted in the framework, festival organizers were involved through all stages of the process, from preparation to on-site operations and finally to the post-event stage. This involves consolidating the festival outcomes and reporting to relevant government departments. The post-event activities of the festival organizers have no direct effect on the post-event experiences of tourists. The relationship between festival organizers and performers is close before the festival and during the performances, since tight coordination is needed to ensure the quality of the on-site experience for tourists. The government authorities and local shop owners are relatively less engaged during these stages. Government departments (MGTO and IC) are mainly engaged in the pre-event stage with a supporting role of providing financial subsidy and promotion. Local shop owners mainly act as observers of the festival but their attitudes are generally supportive. Their interaction with other stakeholders is quite limited. They are not involved directly in the planning of the event, and during the event they either close their businesses temporarily to make way for the festival or, for those whose businesses remain open, may interact only fleetingly with tourists in economic transactions. Compared to these stakeholders, tourists' engagement in the construction of their own experiences is naturally high throughout all three stages.

Local festivals bring educational benefits through the co-creation of various cultural experiences (Yolal et al., 2016). Tourists' interest in the festival is growing and they reported on different impressions that were evoked by the event, including recalling their own past festival experiences, their perceptions of the performance and its environment, their appreciation of local people's involvement, and a realization of the importance of ICH. Their evaluations of the festival experience are mostly positive. This affirms previous findings that both experience quality and performance quality shape tourists' overall satisfaction with a festival (Lee & Beeler, 2007) and festivals have a positive influence on tourist satisfaction with the destination (Cole & Illum, 2006; Yan, Zhang, & Li, 2012). Positive tourist reflections on the festival experience and

atmosphere enhance their satisfaction (Gursoy, Bonn, & Chi, 2010; Yolal et al., 2016). The high incidence of spontaneous participation by tourists is noteworthy and has not been observed in other experiencescapes. This may be attributable to the prominent ICH component. Tourist respondents who had spontaneous festival encounters altered their original perceptions of the city and contributed to the mental construction of a diverse destination image, making them more likely to revisit and to join other similar events in the future (16 out of 22 informants). They reported a high likelihood to recommend the experience to others, both face-to-face and via social platforms.

## **5. Conclusions and implications**

By taking account of all relevant stakeholders, the experiencescape concept potentially provides a framework for a consolidated understanding of how cultural experiences are co-constructed. In light of the scant research on ICH experiencescapes, this study has explored the construction of ICH experiencescapes using the case of the Feast of the Drunken Dragon. The researchers have collected various stakeholder inputs about the Festival, an officially recognized ICH item at both the local and the national level in Macau.

From a macro perspective, this research has entailed a novel and explicit exploration of an ICH experiencescape. In contrast to most previous investigations, it has combined the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in a tourism experiencescape within a single study. The research findings and methodology provide a reference for future explorations of analogous events in Macau and elsewhere. The conceptual framework sheds light on stakeholder responses as a basis for developing ICH experiencescapes, providing a potential approach for future researchers. The study has examined the roles and perspectives of various stakeholders in a dynamic environment and has considered the full continuum of three experience stages within the application of experiencescapes. The approach adopted by this research acknowledges that the exploration of experience under the experiencescape paradigm cannot be confined to studying tourist or management perspectives alone, but must inquire into the interrelations between the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. The study considered a festival as a representative item of ICH, and as a cogent research context, because this category touches multiple ICH domains including performing arts and social practices.

Consistent with the essence of experiencescapes, the proposed framework provides an

expansive exploration of cultural experience at the scale of the place rather than the individual, as has been characteristic of previous studies. The perspectives of those who manage, organize and perform the festival are juxtaposed with tourist experiences to present the formation of the experiencescape through processes of co-construction that involve interactions between event producers and consumers. The researchers queried key and difficult-to-access informants, such as representatives from government, organizing bodies and core performers. In addition to investigating diverse stakeholder perspectives on the festival, this research has also analyzed and discussed the interconnections between them. This has supplemented aspects that were absent in previous studies. The present study has demonstrated that the quality of the tourist experience is shaped by the quality of the organizer experience, thereby raising the theoretical prospect of integrating these two perspectives. It has synthesized and visualized these insights in the form of a framework of the ICH experiencescape, as a basis for conducting future studies.

The responses from tourist informants indicate that locals become part of the tourism experiencescape, with the dedication and enthusiasm of both local attendees and performers imbuing the on-site experience with meaning and emotional impact for tourists. This finding calls for a more explicit and nuanced integration of local host behaviors into the understanding of experiencescapes. Tourists express delight at stumbling upon the festival organically as they explore the city, rather than as a station on a planned itinerary. It is fortuitous that the festival staging points coincide with popular tourism spots, as an intersection of the mental and physical spaces of tourism and of everyday local life. The feeling of sharing an ICH experiencescape with the local community makes the festival a memorable and meaningful tourism event.

At the local level, one managerial implication is that destination marketers would be well-advised to utilize the experiencescape perspective in undertaking methodical and insightful promotions of high-value destination experiences. However, the research findings indicate that, in the present case, there is limited interaction between festival organizers, performers and tourists. It should not be immediately assumed that optimizing interaction between tourists and local people necessarily entails maximizing these interactions. Forced interaction could lead to a decrease in perceived value for both stakeholder groups, if it places them in social situations that they perceive as uncomfortable or evokes a local perception of becoming conscripted into a spectacle staged for the benefit of tourists. Festival organizers would be well-advised to work with representatives of both of these stakeholder groups in identifying and expanding

opportunities for appropriate and mutually enriching types of interaction between tourists and locals. This can add meaning to the event for both, without compromising the values that these two groups currently derive from the experience.

Tourist interviewees expressed their appreciation of cultural benefits that they associated with participation in the festival, and attributed both the physical environment and the performances as channels that convey cultural meanings. This reaffirms the interplay between tangible and intangible cultural heritage components in the construction of experiencescapes, as more and more people seek interactive and co-created experiences through participation (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Tourists expressed appreciation for the festival largely because it is not staged expressly for them, but rather manifests a welcoming local culture. Immersion in the ICH experiencescape counters impressions of Macau as a commercialized and gaming-dominated destination, and builds emotional connections through feelings of meaningful contact with the local society and culture. It is probable that such feelings cannot be readily instilled by casino and gaming experiences. This suggests that festivals and other ICH elements can play pivotal roles in marketing Macau as a diversified destination, thereby countering over-reliance by the city on gaming related activities.

At the governmental level, enhanced cooperation will be needed between event-oriented administration (as represented by MGTO and IC in the case of Macau) and bodies concerned with the maintenance and preservation of tangible heritage and monuments, guided by the vision of an integrated ICH experiencescape. Moreover, the facilitation roles that have been assumed by the two governmental departments, with the running of the festival left to the local community, likely contributes to the authentic heritage atmosphere rather than the sense of an event that has been purposefully staged for tourists in the pursuit of economic gain. This stance may ultimately contribute to the economic benefits, by engendering emotional and intellectual engagement with the festival among tourists, inspiring them to revisit the city and recommend to others. The study findings affirm that tourist festival experiences have a holistic effect in transforming the image of Macau more broadly, cementing an appreciation of this city as a diverse and unique destination that merits revisiting. These lessons provide an example for managing ICH in other destinations.

## **6. Limitations**

The scoping of interviewees is acknowledged as a potential limitation of the present research. Because the investigation was focused on the tourist experience as one facet of the experiencescape of traditional festivals, shop owners were the only informants that represent the local community perspective. Future studies could expand the research target to include the experiences of local residents who participate in the festival. Although this study covers tourists from a variety of regions and representing commensurate demographic characteristics, the perceptions of tourists from different origins or with distinct characteristics were considered as beyond the scope of the study and hence were not considered. Future researchers may investigate potential distinctions between the experiences of different tourists, particularly between those from areas within the greater Chinese cultural sphere and those from other source markets. The authors also acknowledge that the interviewees may have shown some bias when choosing target tourists and that respondents may have varied in their desire to help and to provide full and frank answers. In light of this potential limitation, future researchers may opt to conduct longitudinal studies of repeat visitors with a view to exploring the evolution of their perceptions and practices over consecutive visits.

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**Appendix 1.** Main interview questions to other key stakeholder informants\*

1. What do you think about the festival?
2. Why and how does your organization participate in the work of organizing/supporting the festival?
3. How do you realize the cooperation with other organizations to deliver the experience?
4. What kind of experience do you expect to bring to the audience?
5. Does your organization have any chance to contact with the audience? If so, how does your organization get them involved?
6. In the case of performing ICH on a tourism occasion, how do you deliver the key message of ICH to the audience (include both locals and tourists)?
7. What kind of efforts does your authority currently apply in conserving/promoting the local ICH?

Note: the above interview questions are not suitable for all kind of stakeholders. They are adjusted according to the different roles of informants as appropriated.

## **Appendix 2.** Main interview questions to tourist participants

### Pre-event experience

1. What are the reason(s) to join this festival?
2. Do you have any expectations when joining this festival? If yes, what are they?
3. How much do you know about this festival?
4. How will you participate in this festival?
5. Have you had any previous experience of local cultural festival?

### On-site experience

1. How is your experience of the festival so far?
2. How is the festival environment?
3. How has the festival environment impacted on you?

### Post-event experience

1. What is your enjoyment of Macau?
2. Compared to your pre-event expectations, how is your attitude of the festival evolved (if any)?
3. How does your festival experience influence your overall experience in Macau?
4. Will you come back to Macau again?
5. Will you consider staying longer the next time you visit Macau?
6. Will you consider joining any other cultural festival in future?
7. Will you consider recommending this festival to others?

### **Appendix 3. Method details**

#### *Detailed steps in approaching interviewees:*

1. Identify the key stakeholders in the target festival, also taking references from the literature review into consideration. Identified stakeholders include government officials (i.e. Macau Government Tourism Office, Cultural Affairs Bureau), festival organizers (Feast of Drunken Dragon Organizer), performers, owners of shops surrounding the event venue, and tourists at the event. The corresponding organizations and persons were found through desktop research and field survey.
2. Apply multiple measures to approach representatives of the above key stakeholder groups for interview appointments. Measures for establishing connections with stakeholders, in order to get their permission for semi-structured interviews, include personal connections, email contact, friends' recommendations and walk-in requests. A protocol is to be followed when contacting interviewees, including introduction of the researchers, the project and its purpose, the intended format of interview, predicted length of interview, the use of data, the confidential protection and the compensation if available. Target interviewees are key informants who are knowledgeable and likely to be informative, especially for the information that is not accessible via publicly available media, or for which the researchers wished to seek further clarification. Priority is given to top decision makers, such as directors of appropriate government bodies and the president of the event organization. If they are not available, they will be asked for recommendations for other alternative interviewees who are also key relevant persons who can provide rich information. During this stage, targeted key informants may request interview questions in advance as to prepare the necessary materials and responses. For this purpose, it is suggested to prepare a core set of interview questions, with flexibility to be supplemented during the interview depending on the flow of the conversation.
3. Shop owners and tourists should best be approached on the event days when their immediate experiences, feelings and perceptions of the festival can be recorded. Before the event starts, the researchers should be ready on site and begin identifying potential tourists for interviews. During the event, the researchers should observe those potential tourists and approach them toward the end of the event when they are about to leave. Before they leave, the researchers should ask the tourists for their willingness to be interviewed. If the request is rejected,

researchers should immediately identify another candidate and repeat the preceding steps. This procedure will be repeated until a sufficient number of interviews have been attained. In order to collect enough responses within the limited time period of the festival, researchers may consider recruiting helpers to conduct interviews. These helpers should be capable in research procedures and trained for the relevant interview methods. They should know the interview questions and procedures quite well prior to the event. At this stage, researchers and helpers should utilize multiple strategies to get successful and complete interviews, including offering incentives such as souvenirs (Holloway, 1997). Since the event and its associated lively performances are time-constrained and dynamic, interviews will be conducted over two consecutive years in order to have enough data for analysis. If sufficient manpower, time and money are available, the future research can consider extending the data collection over subsequent years, which would allow extended comparative studies to be conducted.

Shop owners are to be approached during the break time of the event when the performance is finished and the interviews with tourists are complete. Since the shop owners may be busy operating their business, the researchers should take care to observe their operation and find the most proper time to approach the owners for interviews, even if several visits to a given shop are needed. As there is no guarantee on the willingness or availability of shop owners for interviews, the researchers should visit all shops surrounding the event venues in order to obtain the maximum feasible number of responses.

*Detailed steps for analyzing the interview responses:*

All interviews are audio- recorded with the agreement of interviewees. All interview transcripts are typed for later analysis. Transcripts in Chinese are to English and checked by two bilingual tourism experts to ensure that the intended meanings are accurately expressed. Transcripts are analyzed with the assistance of NVivo 11 software and following the suggested coding system and strategies by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), Ryan and Bernard (2003), and Saldana (2013).

1. NVivo, as the most commonly used software in analyzing text information for qualitative research, is employed to analyze the interview content. This software has no analytical



functions, and is used solely for help with visual representations of the data. Codes are developed manually by the researchers using their own judgment.

2. During the manipulative stages in analyzing the transcript contents, the themes are first divided into several stages (pre-event, on-site and post-event perceptions) and then sub-themes are developed based on the main referred ideas of expressions. When there are repeat sub-themes from different informants, their quotes are merged under the same code using NVivo 11. When there is a new sub-theme, a new code is established. Such procedures are conducted for several iterations, and the transcripts are subsequently reviewed to check the accuracy of the coding. During this stage, the researchers should cross-check the interview contents, analyzed themes and coding hierarchy with each other and discuss the results until there is an agreement.
3. After confirming the themes, the researchers consolidate the texts into written results. Procedures include but are not limited to selecting the most representative quotes for interpretation and interpolating possible explanations for the identified themes.
4. Following the same procedures, contents of interviews from the other stakeholders are analyzed separately. The same logic of organization is also followed as to understand the roles of other stakeholders in constructing the experiencescape before, during and after the event.

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**Table 1.** Demographics of the tourist informants

<b>Tourist informants - Feast of the Drunken Dragon</b>						
<b>Informant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Frequency of visiting Macau</b>
1	Male	China (Hangzhou)	34	Businessman	Bachelor	Once a year
2	Female	Hong Kong	50	Accountant	High School	Twice a year
3	Male	China (Guangdong)	60	Lecturer	Doctorate	Third time
4	Female	Hong Kong	26	Nurse	Bachelor	Second time
5	Female	Taiwan	54	Government officer	Bachelor	First time
6	Female	Hong Kong	22	Student	Bachelor	First time
7	Male	The Netherlands	30	Student	Bachelor	First time
8	Male	Italy	24	Engineer	Master	First time
9	Female	Hong Kong	28	Property Management	Bachelor	Once a year
10	Female	Taiwan	48	Engineer	Master	Twice a year
11	Female	China (Guangzhou)	65	Retired	Bachelor	Fourth time
12	Female	Korea	33	Bank worker	Master	First time
13	Male	Hong Kong	25	IT	Master	Once a month
14	Female	USA (Los Angeles)	51	Paralegal	Bachelor	First time
15	Male	USA	46	Teacher	Master	Third time
16	Female	China (Nanjing)	34	Electronics producer	Bachelor	First time
17	Female	Taiwan	30	Service sector	Bachelor	First time
18	Male	China (Guangxi)	31	Businessman	High School	First time
19	Female	China (Zhuhai)	25	Administrator	Bachelor	Four times a year
20	Female	China (Liaoning)	33	Civil servant	Bachelor	Third time
21	Female	China (Hunan)	29	Architect	Bachelor	Third time
22	Female	Malaysia	27	R&D	Bachelor	Second time

**Table 2.** Other informants

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Position or affiliation</b>
<b>Organizer</b>	Vice President of organizing body
<b>Performer</b>	Drunken Dragon Dance Performer
	Drunken Dragon Dance Team Leader
<b>Government officer</b>	Tourism Product and Events Department from MGTO
	Organizational Planning and Development Department of IC
	Department of Cultural Heritage of IC
<b>Local shop owner</b>	Local Shop - Pharmacy
	Local Shop - Snack stall
	Local Shop - Fruit stall



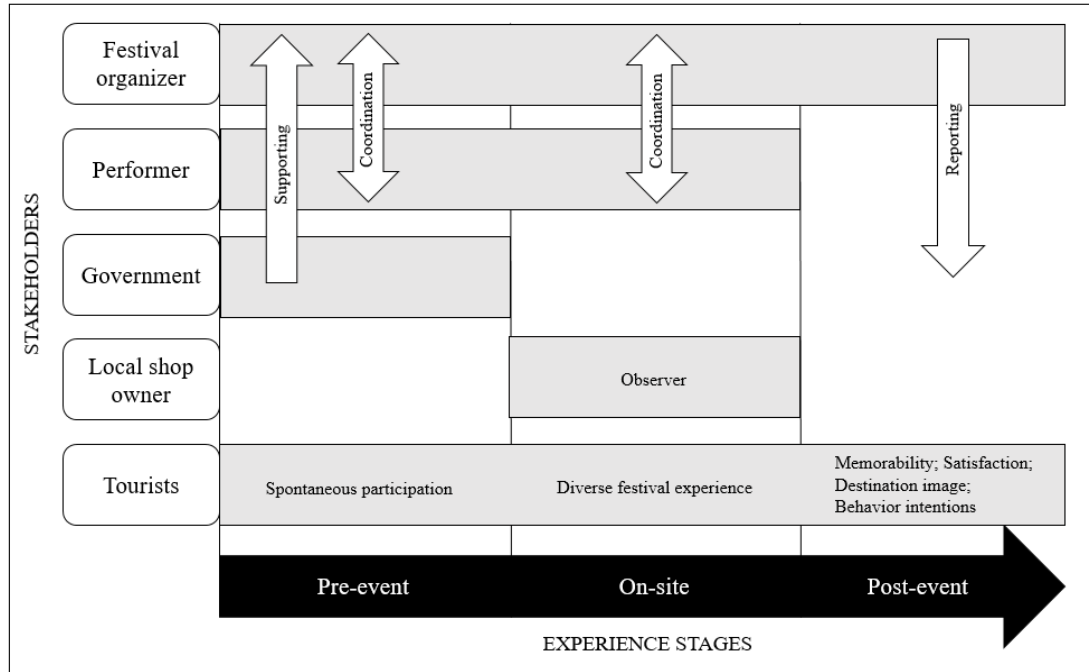
**Figure 1.** Performing teams await the performance. The Japanese team is at the center. The Malaccan team (wearing yellow) is on the right (Source: authors)



**Figure 2.** Photo of the crowded festival conditions (Source: authors)



**Figure 3.** Wine ‘spraying’ by the performers. (Source: authors)



**Figure 4.** Actor inputs and contribution of ICH experiencescape