

**PYROTECHNICS AS AN IDENTITY
IN DESTINATION BRANDING AND SUSTAINABILITY.
THE CASE OF MALTA.**

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by

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DEGREE OF MASTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Declaration

I, Alan Picco, declare that this is an original piece of work produced entirely by me and that all source material has been appropriately referenced. In addition, I attest that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of any other course, degree, or qualification at this or any other university or institute of learning.

Student's signature

Abstract

The tourism industry in Malta is a strong, vital economic pillar and generates employment, wealth, and prosperity. Nonetheless, the effects of mass tourism were stressing the country's infrastructure and mobility. Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) had already reformed its approach in the marketing strategy to attract tourism; Quality against quantity. Niche or event tourism segments were identified; Culture was one of them. 43% of inbound tourism already chose culture as their motivation for choosing Malta, according to MTA's statistics in 2019.

Fireworks are an intrinsic part of the Maltese culture. It is considered an excellence in the global pyrotechnical scene, and the quality of traditional Maltese pyro shows is internationally acclaimed. The techniques mastered by the Maltese are unique. Profs Lino Bianco suggested including it in UNESCO's list of Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Countries and regions organise ad-hoc fireworks displays to attract and boost their tourism intake. Malta has these shows weekly for six months every year for free and of world-class quality. Should Maltese fireworks be treated as an individual tourism niche? How do tourists perceive the *festa's* pyro show experience? Do they consider it as an added value to their stay? What is the direct and indirect contribution of the Maltese fireworks in the Maltese Touristic package? Should pyrotechnics be used in a cluster of events to create an experience that brands Maltese Culture? Should such clusters be organised in the shoulder months to mitigate seasonality in the Hospitality sector?

KEYWORDS: Fireworks, Tourism, Destinations, Malta, Experience

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Glossary

~ <i>Barka</i>	End of the function after the procession
~ <i>Beraq tal-ħoss</i>	Daylight fireworks
~ <i>Dilettanti tan-nar</i>	Firework enthusiasts
~ <i>Festa</i>	Feast
~ <i>Festa Maltija</i>	Typical Maltese village feast
~ <i>Festi</i>	Plural of <i>festi</i>
~ <i>Festa Interna</i>	The liturgical part of the feast
~ <i>Festa esterna</i>	The external part of the feast
~ <i>Ġigġifogu</i>	Ground fireworks
~ <i>Ħrug minn niċċa</i>	Removal of the statue from its niche
~ <i>Il-logħob tan-nar tradizzjonali Malti</i>	Typical Maltese fireworks
~ <i>Il-festa tar-raħal</i>	Village feast
~ <i>In-Nar Malti</i>	Maltese fireworks
~ <i>Kamra tan-nar</i>	Firework factory
~ <i>Murtali</i>	Petards
~ <i>Murtali tal-beraq</i>	Daylight Maltese petards
~ <i>Murtali tal-kulur</i>	Coloured night petards
~ <i>Murtali tal-logħob</i>	Daylight petards with various sounds
~ <i>Qsim</i>	The compartments making up the petards
~ <i>Quddiesa tal-Panigierku</i>	<i>Festa</i> day morning mass sermon
~ <i>Translazzjoni</i>	Evening service on the eve of the <i>festa</i>
~ <i>Tridu</i>	Triduum – veneration of the Saint

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to the Study

'There is no feast without fireworks' (Falzon & Cassar, 2011) is the widespread Maltese saying. The *festa* is a popular summer tradition in Malta that attracts locals and tourists with weekly pyrotechnical shows of the highest standard. Fireworks have progressively developed as the core of the emblematic Maltese religious *festa*, and their let-offs highlight a week-long celebration in the devotedness of the community's patron saint.

The innate tradition of the fireworks culture in Malta is centuries old. Fireworks constitutes an inherent intangible Maltese heritage and a manifestation of artistic creativity and innovation. *In-nar Malti* evolved into authentic and inimitable artistry that is unmistakably associated with the Maltese Islands. The offered spectacle intrigues and mesmerises the audience.

Why are fireworks so attractive and loved? They captivate their audiences, whether their level of education, status in society, and content of their bank account. Their application reflects the grandeur and set the importance of the event. Pyrotechnics inspire surprise and amusement with startling and dangerous explosions. Like lightning, the bright flash that is immediately followed by a loud pop activates the amygdala, a minute nerve ball in the brain that detects fear, compensated by dopamine release, resulting in instant emotion, pleasure and satisfaction. The pungent colours scramble up our brain, like an artist mixing paint on a palette. The rapid-fire pops and bright pigments force us to freeze as the brain investigates the sudden influx of sound and colour (Brooks, 2020)

This Masters thesis will conduct impartial research and analysis on the impact of pyrotechnic let-offs in Malta on tourists, post-experiencing the firework shows, and assess the significance of this experience in their holistic evaluation vacation in Malta. In this respect, a deeper analysis will be directed in evaluating whether fireworks have enough potentiality to be elevated as one

of the elements to be considered to create a distinctive, indelible brand in marketing strategies to attract tourism to Malta.

The author of this study hails from Hal Ghaxaq, a village in the southern part of Malta. It is a region where one inevitably experiences the fervour for fireworks as throughout the *festa* season, week-in week-out, *festi* is celebrated in grandeur.

Hal Ghaxaq has a reputable history in pyrotechnics, and as one involves himself in village politics, it is natural that one becomes more acquainted with different segments of the society, particularly those held in high regard. Amongst them are pyrotechnicians. These social encounters undoubtedly make one more inquisitive about pyrotechnics and what goes on beyond the fireworks spectacles.

For over 25 years, the author has worked in the hospitality industry as an Executive Chef. This profession, coupled with the keen interest in pyrotechnics, and decennial observations of astounded spectators of Maltese pyro-shows, has instigated him to research this study that inter-relates *il-logħob tan-nar tradizzjonali Malti* and tourism.

1.2. Contextual Setting of the Study

1.2.1. *Il-Festa tar-Raħal*, Fireworks and Malta

The Maltese inhabitants are affected directly or indirectly by the *festi* and their distinctive sounds (Archdiocese of Malta, 2020). A typical Maltese village *festa* is a blend of religious and secular celebrations of the communities and are an interweave of cult, culture, spirituality, art, and identity (Azzopardi, 2015). It combines the solemn and lengthy panegyric in the *festa interna* and the ludic celebrations of the *festa esterna* with noisy band marches and fireworks displays (Mitchel, 2004).

As Bishop (2019) pronounced, Maltese fireworks are "probably the closest you will get to defining the Maltese character - a loud burst of colour and passion". Fireworks are an intrinsic characteristic in the rich Maltese cultural baggage that closely denotes the particularity of Malta's Mediterranean character. (Bishop, 2019) The Maltese pyrotechnics progressed into the complex artform notorious worldwide, considered masterpieces and inimitable by global experts (Sant, 2019).

Fireworks are universally employed as a medium to attract and intrigue the masses. They are explosives that, when ignited, manifest art, which is expressed in motion by flames, colour, sparks, whistles, crackling and bangs. Internationally acclaimed artist Takeo Shimizu states that "art is the soul of fireworks" (Shimizu, 1996), and like all other works of art, creativity and skill are distinguishable features that denote the identity of a piece of art. When applied to fireworks, these abilities are invaluable assets as they express originality. Pyrotechny assimilates chemistry, physics, mechanical engineering, mathematical calculations, and recently digital technology. Like all artistic expressions, fireworks are regularly criticised, and some citizens reckon fireworks with negative attributes and desist from acknowledging and respecting the fireworks' artistry and artisanship. Art criticism calls for judgements that understand its history and interprets the meaning of the specific artworks. The same holds for pyrotechnical art and is also one of this study's scopes to challenge these insights.

A pyrotechnician, like most artists, brings to life his creative vision to public appraisal. Each firework display in Malta within the *festa* celebration is an artisan festival within a community. Each *murtal* is a unique artefact. The stars or timed bomblets are meticulously positioned in the layered compartments, which, when launched, ignite at different intervals, composing the desired visual and sound effect. All pyrotechnical artefacts are loaded with different energy mixes, charged and ignited at various rates and heights to produce countless pyrotechnical outcomes.

Furthermore, state-of-the-art digital technology has efficaciously metamorphosed aerial and mechanised ground fireworks displays to exhibit more detailed and elaborated spectacular designs synchronised with music. Most displays are designed to be accompanied by music, laser lights or even by fountains of dancing water so that the choreography of the fireworks displays matches the rhythm and the tempo of the accompanying music. In such displays, the sky is concurred by bouquets of thousands of rainbow-coloured and silver sparks that seem to appear out of nowhere, shrouding the landscape with floating glitter and a spectacle of firing shots that spin and zoom in the sky accompanied by a trail of crackling, whistling, and humming sounds. In a sense, this relatively new technological mode of applying pyrotechny presents the typical Maltese *murtali* and *qsim* into a modernised technique of displaying them, making them more accessible and appreciated by the general public.

The typical *Nar Malti* has developed through the years into a single knowledge, with a set of exclusive skills to the Maltese Islands, mainly attributed to its geographic segregation and the intrinsic sense of competitive pique in the society. For generations, the traditional practice was proudly passed on from one generation to another, entrenching this art in Malta's culture. Maltese pyro-artisans gradually elevated themselves from labelled as low-educated machos to acclaimed fireworks masters. They managed to develop skills that surpassed those of fellow foreign pyrotechnicians to the extent that Maltese *murtali* are considered inimitable. Through the years, the Maltese pyrotechnicians gained the stature of pioneers in pyrotechnical innovation, primarily derived from the continued participation of young peers who introduce enthusiasm and novel practices while preserving the authenticity of their predecessors. These novelties were also exhibited in the *giggifogu* (derived from *Gioco di Fuoco*), the ground, mechanised fireworks and rooftop fireworks. The *Giggifogu* are true masterpieces of engineering configurations, elevated on a pole, and powered by burning gas tubes. They evolved from simple rotating wheels emitting coloured sparkles into three-dimensional moving shapes initiating from a two-dimensional stage.

The fireworks sounds are scary for some, describing the reports of salutes as a rowdy noise. For others, these sound effects provoke another let-off, the one that ignites their enthusiasm. They actively listen in delight to the different sounds of the *murtali tal-beraq* and the reports of the *murtali tal-kulur*. Their sounds of alternating altitudes are a symphonic, rhythmic sound to the enthusiasts, whereas noisy nuisance to the anti-fireworks lobby.

Nevertheless, fireworks are stimulation of the senses. The *sight* of the pyro-creation is fascinating. The *smell* is an experience in itself. The *hearing* is inevitable and sometimes subject to harsh criticism. Additionally, these popular shows are magnetic to local enthusiasts, interested viewers and thousands of inquisitive tourists, keen for new experiences who remain captivated with such exclusive spectacles and craftsmanship.

1.2.2. Tourism in Malta

Tourism is a critical player in the socio-economic development of a small island state like Malta. The benefits correlated to the industry are indispensable. The wealth created by tourism in Maltese society and its corresponding impact on employment, businesses, better services, and the well-being of a large cross-section of its inhabitants is unmeasurable. Tourism generates countless direct and indirect job opportunities, which boost personal incomes, and the quality of life among locals. Additionally, higher tax revenues, foreign exchange earnings, and related economic transactions positively impact the country's general economic development and living standards.

Since the introduction of the tourism sector in the 1950s, the number of inbound tourists increased exponentially. In 2019, nearly 2.8 million tourists visited Malta, increasing 5.9% of tourists over 2018 (NSO, 2020).

Nevertheless, such achievement is disproportionately high when considering Malta's carrying capacity, and consequently, the natural question arises: Are such figures still sustainable, or an added burden on Malta's environment, infrastructure, and mobility?

Small islands, which are tourist service-oriented, face constant mass tourism-related problems (Stylidis, et al., 2007) (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). Pursuing economic prosperity in the tourism industry has distressed the Maltese environmental and socio-cultural well-being and led to over-development and destruction of urban and rural environments. Such a strategic approach strains the island's infrastructure capacity, induces negative consequences on living costs, and makes tax base, goods, services, land, and housing inaccessible for local consumers (Uysal, et al., 2012).

The Maltese people are celebrated for their welcoming character and hospitality, but this attitude may change to a resentful one under stress. It is the first symptom of tourism fatigue. If not tackled diligently and strategically, it will inevitably lead to tourism phobia that would spread like wildfire, more so if our infrastructure is over-utilised and the environment continues to deteriorate further.

The urge to change the Maltese tourism strategy from mass to niche tourism has been on the authorities' table since 1994, but the difficult challenge is implementing the conversion of the theory to practice. The interests, influences, and pressures of the various stakeholders had halted this direction. It is comprehensible to a certain extent, but ultimately, Malta is just postponing the inevitable, and further deferring may prove to be too late and irreversible.

In this context, in 2018, Maltatoday reported anti-tourism protests held in Barcelona, Venice and San Sebastian on the adverse effect of tourism on citizens' livelihoods, primarily due to property prices inflation. 'And Malta is facing its own pressures as well' (Cocks, 2018). The Malta Independent reported a National Statistics Office (NSO) circular, which indicated that the Property Price Index (PPI) has inflated by 6.5% in 2019 compared to the corresponding period of the precedent year (The Malta Independent, 2019).

The National Tourism Policy 2015-2020 acknowledged that finding the right balance between sustainability and competitiveness is paramount for Malta.

This policy aims to minimise the dependency on the 'sun and sea' type of tourist and entice better quality tourism, specifically in the shoulder months' market share (Ministry of Tourism, 2015). Malta prides itself on a 7,000 years old history and offers a unique cultural heritage. Authenticity highlights identity, and in general, tourists seek more evocative and memorable experiences when choosing a destination. In this respect, Silvio Attard noted that 42.9% of the total inbound tourist already choose Malta for its culture and heritage (Attard, 2018).

Fireworks displays are one of the most utilised, spectacular tools to attract and consolidate tourism in many countries, but in Malta's perspective, fireworks are also an intrinsic part of Malta's rich cultural heritage. There is no statistical data that measure the number of inbound tourism associated with fireworks, but Victor Paul Borg declared that foreign pyrotechnicians' pilgrim to Malta' to experience the pyrotechnic effects of Maltese displays (Borg, 2017).

In these terms, this study will gratify the gap of the unexplainable lack of studies concerning the touristic value of traditional Maltese fireworks, given their global appraisal, their local cultural weight, and communal importance for the Maltese society. Maltese authorities like MTA and Air Malta continuously and prominently utilise pictures and illustrations of beautiful, artistic fireworks shots in their magazines and brochures as promotional content. Consequently, why are *in-nar Malti* only valued for enriching the magazine's visuals rather than exploring its definite significance that can potentially develop into an exclusive attraction for tourists, inducing them to choose Malta from its competition? Above all, do the tourists assess Maltese fireworks as a positive experience that elevates it to a branding memory immediately associated with their vacation in Malta?

As determined in this chapter, the objective of this Masters thesis was to investigate the proposed Hypothesis by answering, through research of respective Literature and surveys' interpretation, the following two critical questions:

1. What is the perception of visiting tourists concerning the authenticity of typical '*logħob tan-nar*' as a globally acclaimed cultural tradition in Malta?
2. Can pyrotechnics be considered a plausible brand that distinguishes Malta from its competitors in the Tourism industry, particularly in its tourism strategy, leading to a more sustainable industry?

(2172words)

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainability of Maltese Tourism

Like other small island states, Malta depends on wealth generation by tourism and creates commerce and employment in the hosting destination (Walton, 2018). Hunt and Layne (1991) defined tourism as the impermanent movement of travellers to destinations 'outside their normal workplaces and residence' with activities and services created to meet the travellers' needs (Hunt & Layne, 1991).

According to the World Trade and Tourism Council (WTTC), the tourism industry indirectly contributed 27% of Malta's GDP in 2017, while the direct contribution was equivalent to 14.2%. It was the highest GDP input in the Mediterranean region, resulting in 28.3% tourism-related jobs (Attard, 2018). Swarbrooke (2002) affirmed that the economic benefits of the tourism industry trickle down all the layers of the society (Swarbrooke, 1999), substantiating George Micallef definition of tourism as the product which is part of a widespread, interlaced, and dynamic socio-economic structure of a destination (Micallef, 2014).

When the economic influence of the British Military in Malta contracted significantly in the mid-'50s, the Maltese authorities instituted the Tourism sector as an alternative source of income. The government invested in the country's infrastructure, which included a temporary civilian air terminal in 1956. Eventually, in 1958, the 1st passenger terminal was unveiled, complementing the first Malta Government Tourist board (Attard, 2018). In 1964 the total inbound tourism reached 38,400 (Lockhart, 1997). Dr Giovanni Felice was the first Maltese minister responsible for Tourism in the cabinet between 1962 and 1966 (Vassallohistory, 2016). During this legislature, the government incentivised businesses to invest in hotels. This state aiding successfully persisted through the 1970s until the 1980s. The United Kingdom was the main tourist supply in that period. As Figure 1 discloses, there was a

steady increase in inbound tourism, except in the second oil crisis in the dawn of the 1980s, which caused a global recession (Attard, 2018).

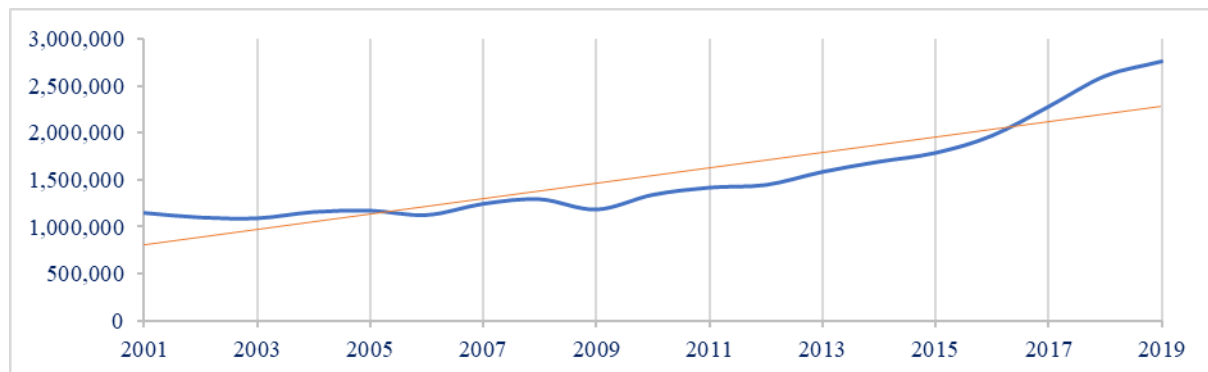


Figure 1 - Inbound Tourism 2001-2019 (NSO)

The tourism industry consolidated itself in 1992 when the total inbound tourism exceeded one million. The country started marketing for mass tourism, but the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) was set up in 1999 to strategically transform the 'sun and sea' destination into a more differentiated and segmented industry of niche markets. The strategy was repeated in three consecutive National Policies (Ministry for Tourism, Culture and the Environment, 2012), (Ministry of Tourism, 2015), (Malta Tourism Strategy 2021 - 2030 , 2021), but failed in its implementation. Dodds (2007) attributed the failure of these changes to the 'absence of a political will, lack of awareness of sustainable tourism, lack of stakeholder participation, policy ambiguity, partisan tensions, poor coordination and communication within the MTA and among Authorities and Ministries, and short-term economic prioritisation' (Dodds, 2007). Factually, in 2017 the number of inbound tourists in Malta reached 2.3 million (Attard, 2018). The best interpretation of mass tourism in the author's judgement is of Theng et al. (2015), which describes mass tourism as 'the volume of tourists compared to the concerned territory and the local population density' as a result of 'aggressive, large-scale sold standardised packages in stark opposition to elite or luxury tourism' (Theng, et al., 2015).

In this respect, the President of the Malta Business Bureau, Simon Decesare, concurred that quality tourism should supersede quantity. He stressed that the emphasis should change from congested tourist areas to upscale niche tourism to lessen the pressure on the local community. Decesare added that a balance should be found to have a sustainable tourism industry by making it feasible and value for money for businesses and tourists, respectively, while preserving the natural environment and the priceless heritage value (Malta Chamber, 2019).

Regrettably, sustainable tourism has become, as Fuchs et al. (2013) described, a 'political catch-phrase' which is used and abused depending on the settings around them (Fuchs, et al., 2013). Sustainability emphasises that the destinations should not only concentrate on increasing visitor numbers and maximising the short-run economic benefits because it inexorably compromises the future generation's quality of life. Sustainable tourism is associated with concepts like responsible tourism, alternative tourism, and ecotourism and is a countermove against mass tourism that harm the destination's natural, cultural, and economic resources (Apostolopoulos, et al., 2014). Sustainable tourism prevents the negative impacts of tourism on the host country. Nevertheless, as denoted previously, putting the necessary solutions into practice is usually the most challenging part when implementing sustainable tourism (World Trade Organisation, 2004).

A case study by Lundberg (1980) on the sustainability of mass tourism in the Caribbean Islands resulted in a six-phase model of the tourism evolution, summarised as follows: (a)rapid growth, (b)short-run success, (c)awareness of the problem, (d)tourism recession, (e)serious difficulties, and (d) reflection (Lundberg, 1980). This case study can be paralleled to the Maltese circumstances. Malta had a successful, rapid tourism growth, and the related induced problems are developing into a real problem, and as Dodds (2007) deducted, it is evident that Malta needs to change the direction of its tourism strategy (Dodds, 2007), not to proceed into more acute issues.

Seasonality affects sustainability. Butler (2001) defined seasonality as the momentary disproportion in the tourism influx regarding tourists, monetary profits and staff engagement (Butler, 2001). Malta has a consistent, net seasonality trend in its tourism industry (Figure 2), which tends in most coastal locations and islands in the Mediterranean. The 'sun, sand and seas' destinations in this region experience a massive influx in the summer season, exceeding the destination's carrying capacity (Corluka, 2019).

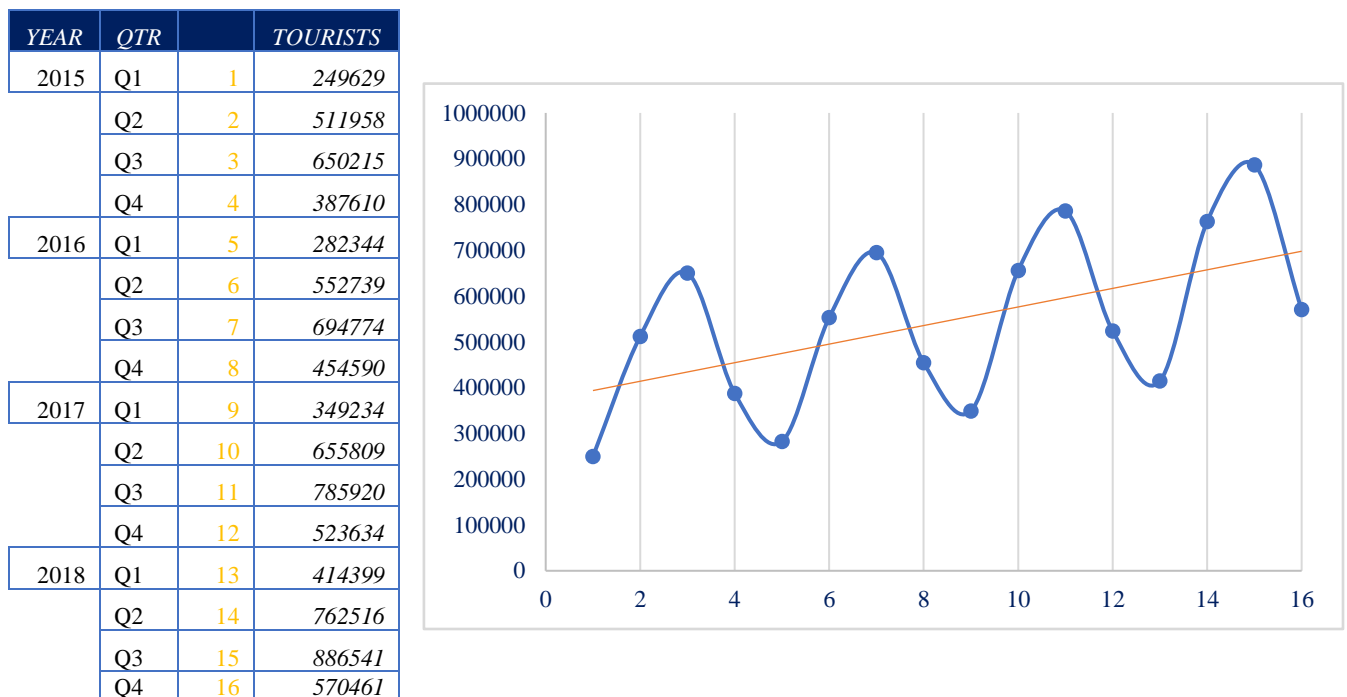


Figure 2 - Seasonality Pattern in Malta 2015-2018 (NSO, 2019)

Culture and heritage events are a strategical solution to tackle tourism seasonality (Jang, 2004). Cuccia & Rizzo (2011) investigated tourism seasonality in the Mediterranean island of Sicily. Their study revealed that it is challenging to reduce seasonality in destination by the sea and less present in heritage sites. The recommendations included long-term planning of cluster events in shoulder months, including heritage sites and cultural rituals to smooth seasonality (Cuccia & Rizzo, 2011). In an analogous study, Martin et al. (2014) analysed the seasonal fluctuation of inbound tourism in Andalusia. The study evidenced the seasonality in the coastal region's touristic trends mainly due to the intensification of tourism acquaintance during the summer

period (Martin, et al., 2014). Martinez & Morales (2015) conducted another study on the tourists' trends in the same Spanish region which identified the cultural tourist niche as the most effective to reduced seasonality congestion and the most favourable to initiate the smoothing of the tourist influx (Cisneros-Martinez & Fernandez-Moralez, 2015).

Seasonality was also a problem in Heraklion in Crete which, as a Mediterranean destination, its climate was the leading cause for its tourism seasonality. Kadkhoda & Jeleu (2017) explored the possibilities to turn Heraklion into a permanent tourism destination with strategies and actions. Their study observed that the prerequisites of summer tourists contrasted to the expectations of the visiting tourists in the low season. The latter segment of tourists expected to experience events that 'take advantage of the natural landscape, rich culture and history ', and their study concluded that it could extend the touristic season in the shoulder months (Kadkhoda & Jeleu, 2017).

Sun and sea attributes in a touristic destination are losing their relevance on which tourists base their travelling preferences (Malta Today, 2014), and Malta should develop 'new and exciting' market segments and organise activities to attract potential visitors (Ministry of Tourism, 2015). Apostolopoulos & Gayle (2002) recommended that the performance and creativity of the management in shifting from a policy that attracts the masses to targeting pockets of tourist or niche tourism is decisive (Apostolopoulos & Gayle, 2001). This shift depends on the destination's capability to manage its 'natural, cultural, human and economic resources ' (World Trade Organisation, 2004).

Niche or event tourism is described as a group of persons that visit or gather in a specific location for a particular event or events. National tourism authorities commonly use a strategy to combat mass tourism and develop a more sustainable tourism industry (Getz & Page, 2016). Bodwin (2006) explains the term event as 'specific rituals, presentations, performances or celebrations that are consciously planned and created to mark special occasions or achieve particular social, cultural or corporate goals and objectives ' (Bodwin, et al.,

2006). Getz & Page (2015) argued that events attract tourism to a destination that otherwise might not be considered. They create wealth and decrease seasonality by attracting high spending quality tourists. Fundamentally, tourism activities produce indelible memories to experience (Charoupa, 2017). Such events generate a positive image of the destination and brand places as more attractive. Events invigorate any location, making it more attractive 'to visit and re-visit '. A cluster of events is also an option to upsurge the stimulus to appeal to various tourist pockets (Getz & Page, 2016). Micallef (2014) specified that the 'challenge' now focuses on product development and experiences as the centre of a tourist destination. It is the key to success and balance (Micallef, 2014).

According to Boucher (2018), cultural events account for a fifth of the world tourism movement (Boucher, 2018). People select a cultural destination for its cultural attractions. These attractions include artistic and historical sites and cultural events that meet the intellectual needs and growth of the tourist. This type of tourism attracts up-market, knowledgeable tourism focusing on tangible or intangible cultural heritage (Aiello & Cacia, 2014). Apostolopoulos and Gayle (2002) concluded that modern tourists travelling habits are rapidly changing from the typical sun and sea to the 'uniqueness and distinctiveness ' of the destination (Apostolopoulos & Gayle, 2002).

2.2. Culture Creating Destinations

There is an inseparable link between culture and tourism. Malta boasts 7,000 years of 'unbroken line of human development and activity, rendering Malta a strong cultural destination. (Ministry of Tourism, 2015). Cultural heritage patrimony is transformed into products that attract the tourist as the end client. Such patrimony includes 'tangible heritage, such as buildings, archaeological sites, and museums, and intangible heritage such as cultural practices and representations that may appear, for example, in forms of music, dance, handicrafts, and rituals' (Pekkala, 2015). Religious traditions and village festivals constitute an essential part of the Maltese cultural patrimony (Ministry for Tourism, Culture and the Environment, 2012).

'Culture is a touristic resource with a long tradition, a vivid present and a promising future ' (Steinecke, 2010). Middleton (1989) asserted that attraction is the central stimulus for a traveller to select a destination (Middleton, 1989). The role of cultural attractions is to create an identity that distinguishes between one destination and another. The recognition that culture attracts 'good tourism' enticed many countries worldwide to adopt this strategy (Richards, 2010), resulting in that cultural tourism is predicted to experience the most significant growth in the hospitality industry (Europa Nostra, 2005) (ATLAS, 2008). However, the connection between the vacationer's choice of the destination and culture was not always a natural marriage, and the two were considered as 'separate sphere of social practice, undertaken by distinct social groups at specific times '. The relation of tourism with culture commenced by comprehending the commercial link between the two realities, abolishing boundaries of formerly dissimilar cultures leading to 'the culturisation of tourist practices ' (Urry, 1995).

The cultural heritage belongs to the people of the destination (Uysal, et al., 2012). The more significant the cultural difference between the traveller and the host country, the stronger is the mutual stimulus between the cultures. Cherishing and conserving the vitality of an exclusive cultural heritage strengthens the feeling of togetherness, makes habitat meaningful, and improves the quality of life among locals. Simultaneously, encountering and learning about cultural differences works as a motivator that is appealing to tourists. The attractiveness of Mediterranean destinations is particularly suitable to differentiate their tourism products because of their rich and varying cultural and natural environments (Apostolopoulos & Gayle, 2001).

Consequently, the root in the tourism industry lies in creating a destination with the 'construction of lasting memories through experiences, 'whether they are cognitive or emotional' (Charoupa, 2017). It is almost inevitable that tourism influences changing indigenous culture, especially if there is a distinct contrast between the receiving and visiting culture. Cassar (2015) argued that although commoditisation may not eradicate the meaningful rituals of a culture

accumulated through decades, it may alter them. This modification of authentic culture into a more affable 'reality' was inevitable when Malta became 'more tourist friendly' to attract more tourists. (Cassar, 2015). However, Boissevain (2013) rebutted Cassar's argument and stated that though Malta is marketing its 'colourful rituals' to entice tourists, the commoditisation did not change them much (Boissevain, 2013). Mitchel (2004) evaluated this phenomenon as the 'reassertion of localism in the face of the supralocal' (Mitchel, 2004). It is vital to preserve this patrimony from the harmful anthropocentric influence of tourism (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000).

The attractiveness of a touristic destination depends on the fulfilment of the visiting tourists' expectations and understandings. As Pine and Gilmore (1998) suggested, the travellers' attitudes have evolved into exploration and consumption of intense experiences.

The tourist is investing to receive a memorable experience which the seller wanted to 'engage him in an inherently personal way' (Pine & Gilmore, 2001). In terms of customer satisfaction, the process of convincing the customer to accept the offer is imperative since, as Kotler & Keller (2010) specified, to attract new customers' costs five times higher than the cost to maintain existing customers' (Kotler & Keller, 2010). As the receiving customer, the tourists' level of satisfaction depends on various vital factors – 'expectations, quality and price' (Anderson, et al., 1994). Therefore, the performance and value of the proposed experiences must reach and exceed the tourist expectation and shall remain in the customers' recollection (Pine & Gilmore, 2001) at a reasonable price.

Natural and cultural assets are metamorphosed into quality products to be marketed as an attraction for tourism. It is up to the country to maximise its assets to create memorable events that tourists are enthusiastic about paying to visit. The importance of creating these events relates to how the inbound tourists get engaged by the same events, both emotionally and intellectually (Schmitt, 2010).

According to Silvio Attard (2018), 42.9% of the total inbound tourist chose Malta for its culture and heritage. In his report, 'The Evolution of Malta's Tourism Product over Recent Years', niche tourism segments like health, scuba diving and wellness attracted 12.7% of the total tourists. Figure 3 illustrates the motivations that tourists acknowledged for choosing Malta. (Attard, 2018). Malta's rich cultural heritage cannot be an exclusive and immediate substitute for mass tourism (Markwick, 1999). However, as stated in the National Tourism Policy 2015-2020, the potential targeted niche segment to mitigate the problematic mass tourism are 'cultural enthusiasts' (Ministry of Tourism, 2015).

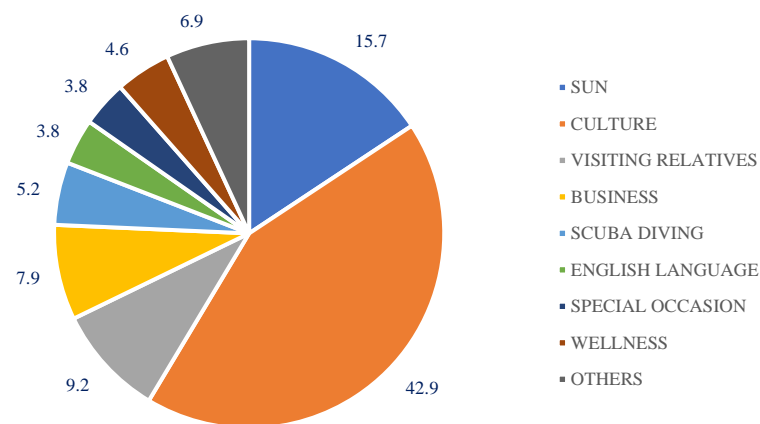


Figure 3: Tourist Motivation for choosing Malta (Attard, 2018)

2.3. The *Festa*: The Cradle of Maltese Fireworks

The *Festa Maltija* is the synopsis of the communal character of Malta: loud, rivalry, rituals, and togetherness. The *festa* evolved in a mix of 'liturgical, paraliturgical and non-liturgical' celebrations, merging solemn church rituals intermingled with ludic, organised street marches. Cassar (2015) described the *festa* as an 'arena for meeting religious and secular, traditional and contemporary, old and young, elite and popular' (Cassar, 2015). It is the main activity that unites various elements within a community, and as Briguglio and Sultana (2015) revealed, the *festi* leave a positive and significant effect on the well-being within the communities (Briguglio & Sultana, 2015). Nonetheless,

in some instances, the *festa* uncovers the division inside (Cassar, 2015). As Farrugia (2012) puts it, some fireworks are created to 'injure' while others to 'entertain' (Farrugia, 2012)

When old traditions are getting extinct and replaced by current habits, the *festa* is contrastingly flourishing. Pellegrini (1978) noticed a general attenuation in the participation and enthusiasm in the *festas* related to the past (Pellegrini, 1978). Correspondingly, Boissevain envisaged the demise of the *festa* in 1965 (Reljic, 2015). The relocation of *festa* enthusiasts to other villages may have affected villagers' involvement (Azzopardi, 2015). On the contrary, *festi* went through gradual developments and reinforced itself into a 'showcase' representing the community and its character. The preservation of the *festa* is attributed to the participation of the newer peers. They intermingled traditions and novelties and creating new enthusiasm and competitive trends. (Cassar, 2015).

Cassar (2015) perceived that the 'secular' manifestations were taking over the significance of the religious celebrations once exclusive to the local clergy; the 'ceremonials' went out of the church into the streets (Cassar, 2015). Debono Roberts (2010) challenged this theory and argued that rather than the ludic, popular manifestations are seen as a confrontation to the strict religious celebration; the external festivities are a new, peculiar form of religiosity referred to as 'festa Catholicism' (Debono-Roberts, 2010).

The *kamra tan-nar* prepares an annual program of aerial petards, rooftop displays, and ground fireworks, prevalently identified as *giggifoku*, coming from the Italian *Gioco di Fuoco*. Falzon and Cassar (2011) argued that fireworks do not add something to the *festa* but, they just cannot be separated from one another. They attract people to the celebrating village, and their sound of fireworks portrays the sense of a *festa* (Falzon & Cassar, 2011). Boissevain (2011) defined firework sound like a 'social stamp', and if, for some, fireworks are a *manifestazzjoni pagana* (pagan manifestation), the locals perceive them as an accustomed component of a village *festa*. Fireworks represent both the social and geographical identity of a community (Boissevain, 2011).

Falzon and Cassar (2011) defined fireworks as a 'multi-sensory ' practise, provoking the human senses, creating an experience for its spectators. The sound of petards is an automatic sign of a *festa*. In truth, the sound of fireworks outside the *festa* season feels out of place. Every stage of the *festa* (Appendix 5) is associated with fireworks. From the *ħrug minn niċċa* to the *tridu*, *translazzjoni* to *barka* are accompanied by some specific sets of fireworks, and villagers identify the specific moment of the *festa* celebrations by the sound and size of the fireworks. Falzon and Cassar matched this aspect to the sound of church bells, which indicate what is exactly happening inside the church (Falzon & Cassar, 2011), while Cassar (2015) suggested that fireworks are an offering and an invitation of the community for locals, neighbouring villagers and tourist to participate in their celebrations (Cassar, 2015).

2.4. A Historical, Cultural Mastery

Zimmermann (2017) defined culture as the characteristics and knowledge of a congregation of people, including language, religion, cuisine, social habits, and arts (Zimmermann, 2017). Culture can be "anything from art exhibitions to the more popular, traditional *festa*" (Think Magazine, 2017)

The culture of pyrotechnics in Malta is centuries old. The first reference to fireworks in Malta reverts to the tenancy of the Knights of St John between 1530 and 1798. The Order of the Knights of St. John pursued the art of pyrotechnics during their lavish celebrations when welcoming distinct dignitaries or on the arrival of a newborn in a prominent family (Bishop, 2019). The consolidation of the pyrotechnical trade in Malta occurred in the 1930s. Italian pyrotechnical experts were commissioned to manufacture fireworks in Malta and disclosed their expertise with local pyrotechnical aficionados. Gradually, the Maltese pyro-masters reached the top of the village's social hierarchy and, the once perceived 'the rogue, illiterate village men' were revered for their acquired skills in 'controlling fire, colour and

sound' (Boissevain, 2011). Fireworks developed into an inherent tradition entrenched in the Maltese Culture (Bianco & Delicata, 2012), and the new pyrotechnical workforce includes a cross-section of the Maltese society, including politicians, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and ironically, firefighters (Farrugia, 2012).

Maltese pyrotechnicians managed to develop new fireworks that are exclusive to the island. The technique used in the *beraq tal-ħoss* developed from trying new mixtures and processes differed from what was comprehended in other countries. This practice was perfected in the *murtali tal-logħob*, which are exceptional masterpieces of precisely timed bomblets. Also, the *murtali tal-kulur* (colour night petards) have unique characteristics to the Maltese islands (Saliba, 2012), which Borg (2005) defined as 'exuberant blooms of variegated colour and sound patterns' (Borg, 2005). Similarly, ground fireworks developed into moving engineering creations, pestered with colourful burning stars, creating unimaginable abstract designs and shapes. Consequently, the pyrotechnical displays during the *festi*, entirely manufactured by volunteer masters, produce spectacular shows with a range of petards, mostly unique for the Maltese islands (Cassar, 2015). Siegmann (2016) recognised the 'deep-rooted firework culture in Malta ' and suggested that any firework enthusiast must visit Malta in summer, at least once in his lifetime (Siegmann, 2016).

The passion is the core driving force for the volunteering Maltese pyrotechnical masters, and their strong inclination for the "loved, valued and self-defining cause" comes from the ideological micro-political inclination to the *festa*'s success within the village community in which they devote lots of time and energy (Rip, et al., 2012). The President of the Malta Pyrotechnics Association, Joseph Camilleri, confessed that 'you love it (fireworks) and respect it. Part of it is down to the beauty of fireworks themselves. It is a beautiful thing to work with and create; it requires great craftsmanship '. Firework factories are the second home for pyrotechnicians, and they endure sacrifices, both personal and financial, to produce 'such artistry ' (Bishop, 2019).

Knowledge and skills are passed to younger generations through hands-on learnedness (Farrugia, 2012) (Bishop, 2019). Mannheim (2012) emphasised the importance of preserving traditions by transmitting the accumulated cultural heritage from generation to generation (Mannheim, 2012). Zhu and Zhang (2008) declared that the legacy of a culture is determined by the 'development and innovation' of the same culture through generations (Zhu & Zhang, 2008). In the Maltese context of fireworks, Farrugia (2012) demarcated that Maltese pyrotechnicians, through the participative, generational perfecting of their technique, managed to create art in their artefacts that fascinate foreign fireworks masters. Their tradesmanship developed into a unique local craft, and nowadays, Malta became renowned for excellence in the art of pyrotechnics worldwide (Bianco & Delicata, 2012).

Vella et al. (2010) described Maltese pyrotechnicians as musicians capable of producing beautiful and complicated symphonies but illiterate in music (Vella, et al., 2011). The flawlessness of the execution and the range of differentiation of these shells intrigued the visiting pyrotechnicians, who lacked the skill and knowledge to copy them (Farrugia, 2012). This line of thought led Bianco and Delicata (2012) to suggest to list Maltese Fireworks for the UNESCO's 'List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding', protecting it from the prejudice of the few (Bianco & Delicata, 2012). UNESCO's Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2003) lists intangible heritage and creativity for present and future generations. Entitled heritages include 'practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage' (UNESCO, 2003).

Cultural traditions are constantly at the centre of criticism, primarily due to the conflicting assessments and considerations of local traditions and rituals from the 'external' opinionated individuals and the direct stakeholders (Smith, 2006) (Graham, 2016). In Spain, a systematic debate endures about the recognition of bullfighting as a cultural acclimation, primarily between the Catalans and the Europeanist Spaniards and Animalists (Brandes, 2015). In 2013, the *Congreso de Los Diputados* (Spanish

Congress) regulated bullfighting as an 'indisputable' cultural heritage. The law text explicitly denotes that "Bullfighting is an artistic manifestation detached from ideologies in which deep human values such as intelligence, bravery, aesthetics or solidarity are highlighted". Contrariwise, the Spanish province of Mallorca banned any exhibitions involving animal mistreatment, which indirectly prohibited traditional bullfighting, but Spain's Constitutional Court overturned such a ban by declaring that the 'essence' of *corridos* gets lost without the animal death. The same debate related to bullfighting also happened in Portugal, but the pro-movement compromised the anti-bullfighting lobby to restrict the show to a 'non-lethal' contest (Valdivia, 2019).

Faroe Island's tradition of whale and dolphin hunting is described as 'barbaric' by eco-campaigners. The mammals are pursued to the shores, where they get slaughtered instantly. Nevertheless, the government defends this tradition and defines it as a definitive resource of food products that is part of the national dietary culture in the Faroe Islands (Roberts, 2019).

Fireworks in Malta are regularly critiqued, predominantly for their noise and environmental pollution. The World Health Organisation recommends that grown adults not bear more than 140dB peak sound (World Health Organization, 2015). In the European Court case 24202/10 Zammit Maempel vs Malta, in 2010, although the court acknowledged that the Maltese fireworks clatter level reaches 120dB, it had also noted that the 'inconvenience' is temporary and not continuous. They only last for 50 milliseconds (Times of Malta, 2016). The court declared in paragraph 52 that *'Village feasts and firework displays were a part of Maltese character and culture and were one of the major tourist attractions during the summer period. Moreover, the feasts created substantial economic activity, with a huge positive impact on the economy of the country.'* Moreover, it declared (Para 64) that *'it has no doubt that traditional village feasts can be considered as part of Maltese cultural and religious heritage'* (CASE OF ZAMMIT MAEMPEL v. MALTA 24202/10, 2012).

Tanaka et al. (2016) measured the sound levels of fireworks in Japan, both from the launching site and from 20-30m away. The sound level at the launching was 133dB, fading to 100dB at a remote distance of 20-30m (Tanaka, et al., 2016). This level of sound is comparable to other 'loud' past-times. Rose A.S. et al. (2008) studied noise levels during a National Association for Stock Car Racing (NASCAR). The measure of noise at 6m away from the track ranged from 99 to 109Db (Rose, et al., 2008).

Acknowledging that fireworks are loud, the debate remains: Are the traditional Maltese *murtali* considered a *ħoss* (sound) or a *storbju* (noise)? Grech (2011) argued that there are two diametrically opposite concepts about the *murtali tal-bomba*; to ban them or not ban them (Grech, 2011). Some people consider fireworks as a *storbju li jtarraxx* (deafening noise) (Falzon & Cassar, 2011) or just 'big bangs' nonsense (Grech, 2011). On the other hand, firework enthusiasts and experts describe the clatter emission of *murtali* as a 'harmony of sounds' (Cremona, 2011). Fireworks' sound conveys openness to nearby villages and is an act of divulging the *festa* experience with neighbour villages (Falzon & Cassar, 2011). The bigger the fireworks, the further the openness of the celebrations travel (Falzon & Cassar, 2011), representing the experience that a community wants to purvey during their *festa* time (Boissevain, 2011). Notwithstanding, as *storbju*, fireworks are perceived as the violent and low class (Boissevain, 2011). Goines and Hagler (2007) define noise as an 'unwanted' sound, pollution that is a hazard to well-being (Goines & Hagler, 2007).

While the community acknowledges the pyrotechnicians as 'heroic', others consider the same persons' uneducated, low-class, senseless person' (Boissevain, 2011). Mitchell (2004) associated fireworks with the violent hunting hysteria during pig hunting in Papua New Guinea (Mitchel, 2004). Interestingly, Boissevain (2011) implied that nearly all the criticism on fireworks was instigated from English language newspapers generally read by the middle class, the so-called 'elitists English speaking individuals' (Boissevain, 2011). Borg (2017) labelled the anti-fireworks lobbyist as the 'chattering' liberals and classists (Borg, 2017).

Critics attribute sound and air pollution of fireworks to trauma in children, elderly persons and even animals (UnravelMalta, 2019). Camilleri and Vella (2010) argued that the long summer *fešta* season with their fireworks displays correlates with the pollution in the air quality of Malta. Their weeks-long testing of collecting samples of PM₁₀ from two localities, one in the North and another one in the South, concluded that it 'leaves little doubt ' that fireworks directly contributed to the air pollution in Malta (Camilleri & Vella, 2010). Contrastingly, according to the Malta Environment Planning Authority's (Mepa) study in 2009 on PM₁₀ concentration through the year, it deducted that PM₁₀ peaked during the winter season, where fireworks are practically non-existent. The report concluded that besides the impact of natural PM₁₀ sources like 'Sahara sand dust and sea salt', the construction industry, power generation and traffic are the primary sources of PM₁₀ in Malta. Fireworks were not mentioned (MEPA, 2010). Furthermore, Spiteri (2013) challenged the findings by Vella and Camilleri by studying the fireworks' smoke trail according to the wind's direction. He concluded that the spectators' exposure to PM₁₀ during fireworks is for a 'short period', and the fumes travels so fast that, given the geographical nature of Malta as an island, they would reach the water in thirty minutes (Spiteri, 2013).

Moderation of fireworks confronts two moral aspects; the 'immorality ' of the noise of fireworks that creates a lack of quietness with the 'morality ' of the spiritual connection of fireworks to the community (Frey, 1999). Politicians talk about the balance between tradition and discipline. Even the church voiced its opinion on the '*eċċessi* ' (excesses) of fireworks and the obligation to respect others (Times of Malta, 2012). Firework enthusiasts themselves accredited the need for moderation; moderation minimises the inconvenience for the elderly and sick. They 'welcome' enforcement but are concerned that it may put everyone in the same boat. (Falzon & Cassar, 2011, p. 15). Nevertheless, there is general consent that fireworks must be conserved and protected, and despite his findings, Alfred Vella accredited that a Maltese summer without fireworks would lose its identity; 'For better or for worse, it is part of who we are' (Sant, 2019).

2.5. International Recognition

Michael Richards, the editor of Pyrotechnic Magazine, describes Malta as the "world capital of fireworks" (Richards, 2016). Progressively, *in-nar Malti* gained worldwide stature and is esteemed for its inimitable variety of fireworks among the global pyrotechnic scene. Considering its size, it hosts the most extensive number of fireworks displays, with the world's most extensive variety of petards (Saliba, 2012). Ettore Contestabile, the International Symposium of Fireworks chairperson, describes Malta as a reputable country with impressive fireworks. He evaluated Maltese shells as 'unobtainable', even from celebrated pyrotechnical leaders like Japan and Mexico; *'if one wants to see Maltese fireworks, one has to go to Malta'* (Contestabile, 2012). Factually, even if it is not a regular practice that Maltese pyrotechnicians export their unique artefacts, they do export to countries that are global forerunners in the art of fireworks (Saliba, 2012).

In the UK based UK Firework-Forum (2018), a contributor from Narberth nicknamed 'Celtic fireworks' stated, *'...we went to Malta, and I saw shells that were better than anything I had ever seen before... the shell demo went on for an hour'*. In another thread in the same forum, the contributors were amazed by the quality of the fireworks in Malta, describing them as *'one of the coolest shells ever seen'* (UK Fireworks Forum, 2018).

The reputation of Maltese pyrotechnicians was consolidated while competing in International competitions. In 1980, The St. Michael Firework factory of Ħal Lija prevailed in an international competition in Monaco, competing with prominent international masters in pyrotechnics. This accomplishment positioned the traditional Maltese fireworks on the international map of pyrotechnics (Girap, 2018).

In 2007 Mqabba Firework Club of Santa Marija partook in the world-famous firework festival, Caput Lucis, in Rome. They produced all their fireworks for the show while other competitors bought theirs from other factories. The

pyrotechnical display came first with the highest score ever recorded against participants from Japan, Italy, Britain, Slovenia, Spain and the Chinese (Fenech, 2007). Ghaxaq's St Joseph Firework Factory won the Bilbao XX International Firework Display in August 2010, competing against five international firework companies. The competitors came from Australia, Tenerife, Austria and Valencia. Worth noting that the Australian company, Foti International Fireworks, is celebrated for their Nye's displays on the Sydney harbour bridge. The eclectic range of atypical pyrotechnical effects, seemingly ordinary practise for the Maltese, thrilled the judges and the thousands attending alike. (Mercieca, 2010).

2.6. Marketing and Branding Destinations

Fireworks are strategically employed in tourism destinations, exploiting their positive effects on the spectators to attract tourism by offering memorable experiences. In 2018, Ajman Tourist Development Department (ATDD) in UAE announced its plan to organise several pyrotechnic displays on its beaches. The tactic was to enhance the Ajman experience and entice up to five million tourists in 2020 (HotelierMiddleEast, 2017).

Macao experiences a higher tourist activity during the week-long firework displays commemorating the National day. Thousands of tourists from all over China visit Macao to experience the pyro-spectacle on the ocean. Residents acknowledged the surge in tourism in the region, fireworks being the primary catalyst (Woodside, 2002).

Canada day's celebration in Kenora is characterised by a spectacular firework display on Lake of the Woods. The annual 1st July celebrations attract 'tens of thousands of wealthy Canadian and American tourists.' (CBC News, 2009).

The council of Stirling in the UK organised a firework display for their annual Hogmanay bash. The show was set above the Stirling castle and was watched by 'thousands of revellers gathered from all over the world '. The Stirling

District Tourism and Visit Scotland partially funded the events and brought 'an economic boost ' to the area (Anderson, 2019).

After the crash of a Russian plane in the Sinai Peninsula on 31st October 2015 (BBC News, 2015), Egypt experienced a blow in the already plunging tourism sector. This accident led some countries, like Britain and Russia, to suspend their flights to Egypt. One of the measures that the Egyptian government took in the aftermath of this crash was to organise a staggering pyrotechnical display with the historical pyramids as a backdrop. The event gave a push to 'ailing tourism', a fundamental source for the Egyptian economy (Shafiq, 2016).

New Year's Eve is synonymous with the grand fireworks display. Taipei 101, one of the tallest buildings globally, has been organising a firework spectacle on New Year's Eve since 2004. Although heavily criticised by environmental NGO's for increasing pollution to the already poor air quality in Taipei, the show was described as being a 'major tourism draw' (TechCrunch, 2018). Also, the world-acclaimed Sydney Harbour New Year's Eve pyro show impact on the city was described as becoming 'a critical tourism marketing tool for the economy'. A leading economist declared that the input in the Australian economy is 'immeasurable' (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2019), up to \$133 million (Financial Review, 2019)

From Malta's standpoint, fireworks shows are an intrinsic component of the island's culture and are available weekly, throughout the year, peaking between May and October (Appendix), for free (Archdiocese of Malta, 2020). There are no statistics in Malta that measure exclusively the number of inbound tourists related to fireworks, but Borg (2017) penned that foreign pyrotechnicians' pilgrimage to Malta' to experience the inimitable Maltese pyro-displays (Borg, 2017). 'Fireworks tourism' is yet to be explored, but it is an emerging niche of pyrotechnical enthusiasts who travel worldwide to attend pyrotechnical displays (Charoupa, 2017).

Nation branding is still a comparably new concept (Ruzzier, et al., 2014). Anholt (1998) defined nation branding as the most representative and convincing marketing strategy between a tourism destination and the rest of the world (Anholt, 1998). The goal of nation branding is purveying a verbal or visual symbol to differentiate it from other destinations. These symbols incorporate cultural activities, amongst others (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001) and have a unique and differential identity to a) be recognised, b) the qualities of the destinations are superior to its competitors, and c) are easily accessible to the end customers, hence the tourists. Ritchie & Ritchie (1998) proposed the following definition for destination branding: *'... a name, symbol, logo, wordmark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience'* (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998).

Nevertheless, as Kaperer put it, 'Before knowing how we are perceived, we must know who we are'. A destination, whether a country, a city or a region, already hold a recognised name, which is difficult to substitute. However, within each destination, particular elements within its political, economic, historical and cultural aspects distinguish the destination from the rest. People get attracted to a place because of the building up of perception of the marketed destinations, and it is crucial to present the precise information to stimulate mental cognition by mapping indelible illustrations of the destination (Kaperer, 2008).

(6094 words)

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Tierney (1988) referred to Methodology as the technique of how the theoretical analysis of a study should progress (Tierney, 1988). The Methodology used in this study sought to develop an argumentative analysis that supports and unambiguously corroborates the hypothesis questions. The study intended to seize the instant, emotional and intuitive experience, using self-conducted surveys of the tourists as the ultimate customer, during a pyrotechnical display held in Malta through a one-to-one questionnaire. However, for the reasons explicated in the Limitations section, the strategy had to be altered to gather an equally valuable and reliable data source that shall lead to a similar outcome to the original strategy. To date, no statistical or any other research ventured analogous research studied the correlation between Maltese pyrotechnics and tourism.

This chapter discusses the Methodology applied in this study through the following sections: Research Design, Data Collection, Analysing the Findings, Validity and Reliability, Ethics, and Limitations.

3.2. Design and Population

The research design applied to this thesis consisted of two semi-structured surveys, using both qualitative and quantitative investigative questions to test the theoretical question in the Hypothesis. Barriball and While defined semi-structured surveys as the appropriate tool to send a standardised survey to a targeted, specific group of participants to explore their 'perceptions and opinions regarding complex, and sometimes, sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers ' (Barriball & While, 1994). The Hypothesis of this research proposed to test the potentiality of Maltese fireworks' culture to be considered a brand in the strategy to create sustainable tourism and contest the issues related to mass tourism. Therefore, the principal aim of the applied research was intended to capture the instant reaction of the tourists that were physically and emotionally present in a pyro

show, principally a fireworks festival or a traditional village feast. Emotions influence human behaviour, including rationality and decision-making (Izard, 1971). As previously referred, the research methodology had to be adjusted.

The hypothesis testing was done by assembling relevant data from both primary and secondary sources. The gathering of information originated from a series of questions in two separate surveys to two distinctive population segments which collected data on the respondents' experience vis-à-vis Maltese pyrotechnical displays, and, also, through an accumulation of relevant secondary data, which, as Fink (2003) explained, is the synopsis of relevant literature to the researched subject that contributes to the study's importance and rationality (Fink, 2003).

Zikmung (2003) stated that primary data is collected from the feedback of the chosen relevant population (Zikmund, 2003). The accurate selection of the population ensures that the outcome in the findings corresponds to the hypothesis question's relevance. As later described in the Limitations section, it was impossible to gather the data directly from the visiting tourists at the source due to cited issues. The best possible categorical alternative was to do two distinctive surveys, Experiment A and Experiment B, to extrapolate a stratified sample from specific targeted groups that can theoretically produce almost comparable results as initially planned. Experiment A's population are non-Maltese workers residing and working in Malta that hypothetically have had their first direct experience of a fireworks display. This experiment was expected to produce a very comparable result to the original experiment with tourists. The second survey, Experiment B, targeted tour guides practising in the Maltese Islands that have invaluable, direct interaction with tourists through their work. The scope of Experiment B was to ask the tour guides to account for the experiences and reactions expressed by the tourists when accompanying them on firework-related excursions. The two parallel surveys were launched simultaneously using Microsoft Forms.

Both experiments' surveys included open-ended questions and structured, multiple-choice probing questions to invite the responders to describe their

experience related to pyrotechnics in Malta. A twenty-six (26) question survey (Appendix 1) was posted on a Facebook page titled 'Expats Malta'. This page is a community of expatriates relocated to the Maltese Islands, mainly for work purposes, with 41,237 members. The range of countries of origin of the members spreads from all the continents. The survey link was dispatched on the page, and the responses were anonymously and automatically resent in the provided software that gathered all the replies; eighty-five ($n=$) participated in this survey creating a data experiment named 'Experiment A'.

Another parallel experiment was launched through a twenty-question (20) survey (Appendix 2) that targeted tour leaders practising in the Maltese islands. A list of 520 emails was extracted from Visitmalta.com, and the survey link was indiscriminatory sent to all recipients. Equally to the other survey, the link redirected the anonymous responses to Microsoft Forms. Seventy-three ($n=$) persons contributed to this research, labelled as 'Experiment B'.

The gathered information was processed by using the inductive approach without assumptions. Sekeran (2003) described the induction approach as primarily collecting data, and a theoretical conclusion is established upon the analysis of that data (Sekeran, 2003).

3.2.1. Experiment A

Experiment A was divided into three (3) parts. Part A contained eight (8) questions to gather relevant information about the respondents' demographics, including age, gender, education level, marital statuses and occupation in Malta. Furthermore, the survey asked for the country of origin of the participants. The significance of this information will be used in critically analysing the contrasting behaviours of the different categories in this section vis-a-vis responses in other sections.

Part B was the pivot of this survey which asked direct questions about the respondents' first, instant reaction to their first-hand experiences when

attending a pyrotechnical display in the Maltese islands. This section contained thirteen (13) questions. The population of this experiment are non-Maltese residents in Malta that almost inevitably had to have the first visit to a firework show. The survey was designed to lead the respondents to express their instantaneous emotions, positive and negative, when viewing them. They were asked to rate both the pyrotechnics' quantity and quality and express their perspective and subjective views on the subject. Correspondingly, the respondents were enquired about their viewpoint and described their opinion on the Maltese fireworks as an intrinsic cultural attraction. Ultimately, whether they find fireworks in Malta so representative of the island, they would mention it to their relatives and friends abroad.

The third section enquired the participants about their opinion on their living experience in Malta. The five (5) survey questions covered their general experience of Malta and sustainability as a touristic destination. They were required to rate and justify their given rate about Malta as their current residential or working state. The last question was an open-ending question to allow the respondents to feel free to convey other opinions in general.

3.2.2. Experiment B

Experiment B comprised of four (4) parts. Tour guides are front liners in the elucidation of the culture and tradition in the host country to tourists. Part 1 consisted of six (6) questions, including the demographics of the tour guides and their knowledge and specialisation in tour guiding. Part 2 enquired tour guides about tourists' reactions when viewing a pyrotechnical display during guided tours. The frequency of firework displays around the Maltese Islands makes them a popular tour amongst tourists. Question 7 specifically asked whether the respondents had ever operated in these kinds of tours and, subsequently, explain the recollected instantaneous feedback of the tourists after the firework displays.

Part 3 queried the guides' perception and knowledge about the subject of pyrotechnics. The following questions addressed personal opinions regarding

protecting Maltese fireworks as cultural heritage and an open question on their personal views on Maltese fireworks as globally recognised mastery.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection for each experiment guaranteed randomness and, respondents were guaranteed to remain anonymous. The survey aimed to gather the pertinent data to provide the conceptual base to acknowledge the thesis's hypothetical statement or rebut it. This research followed procedures suggested by Berg (1988) on how to collect data: (a) collected and put into text, (b) transform data into categories, (c) sort the collected data to classify similarities, congruencies, relating common responses or discrepancies, (d) examine the sorted data to identify patterns and (e) the examined patterns are critically analysed in the context of the Hypothesis (Berg, 1989).

A pilot questionnaire was tested, and the participants did not demonstrate signs of difficulty in compiling. Slight changes were applied to some questions after the pilot test analyses to make them easier to be responded. Fundamentally, the pilot exercise was a preliminary process to understand better and anticipate potential challenges in the actual data collection phase. The author administered the entire process of distributing the questionnaire, and no other sort of communication was held between the author and the participants to guarantee complete anonymity.

3.4. Data Analyses

The questionnaire's data analysis was completed with the help of Microsoft Forms and the automatically generated Microsoft Excel datasheet within Forms. Descriptive data in the survey analysis were presented with mixed methodologies, graphs and tables, and descriptive script. The emphasis will be on observations of data distribution, exciting trends, and value interpretation (Saunders, et al., 2007)

3.5. Validation and Reliability

The validity of the sample size that responded to the surveys was tested. The term 'sample' is a segment of the population that reflects the general opinion and trends of the entire population (Denscombe, 2010).

The recommended sample to be collected from Experiment A was 381, but the population in the group fluctuates, and not necessarily all members are residing in the Maltese Islands.

3.6. Ethical Consideration

The risk of any uncomfortable situation to any of the participants of this study was avoided. No pressure or obligation was incurred on the partakers of both proposed surveys, and the participation was exclusively voluntary. No consent form was required in this respect. Anonymity and confidentiality will also be guaranteed. In this respect, the participants shall participate in this survey of their free will without being coerced or deceived.

Introductory information about the study's nature and purpose was sent with the hyperlink and included a promise of anonymity and confidentiality.

3.7. Limitations

The author certified that all the pertinent questions to retrieve the targeted information from the participants are present to avoid returning to ask further questions since the method used in distributing the surveys.

A calculated limitation of the Experiments was that the surveys were distributed in the English language, assuming that the vast majority of the respondents are fluent in the language since it is the second language for Malta. The risk was that the Experiments, especially in Experiment A, would be discriminatory, and some potential respondents might be automatically excluded due to this linguistic barrier.

Both chosen populations presented particular limitations. Tour guides, mostly Maltese, might have their innate bias on the subject, but such an issue was mitigated by questioning the tour guides, as a secondary source, about tourists' reactions on the subject. Also, there might be some participant who is no longer using the listed emails. The population in experiment A is continuously fluctuating. The population on the Facebook page keeps changing, and members of the page could have left Malta or just joined the group to inquire about Malta.

Concluding, Covid 19 pandemic was a persistent limitation throughout the study. This research was planned to gather instantaneous reactions and capture the emotional state of the tourists during and after experiencing a Maltese pyrotechnical show. The aim was to analyse if Maltese fireworks constitute a significant event for a visiting tourist, especially in the summer, and study their reactions and comments after the show. The tourism industry suffered distinctively through the Covid 19 pandemic, and the festa season was cancelled altogether. Consequently, the gathering of the required information was relatively impossible and altered to the proposed methodology.

4. Findings

4.1. Introduction

The two experiments were statistically analysed with Microsoft Excel, and the results derived are presented separately in this chapter. Both surveys were active for twenty days on Teams, starting on 7th July 2020 until the 27th of the same month. The two surveys are in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively.

4.2. Experiment A

4.2.1. Demographics

The respondents of this experiment were predominantly female (83.53%), while 76.47% fell in the 21 to 50 years bracket. Interestingly, most of the experiment's population (78.82%) had higher education which correspondingly increases critically analysed responses. Figure 4 illustrates the reasons why the respondents chose to reside in Malta over other countries.

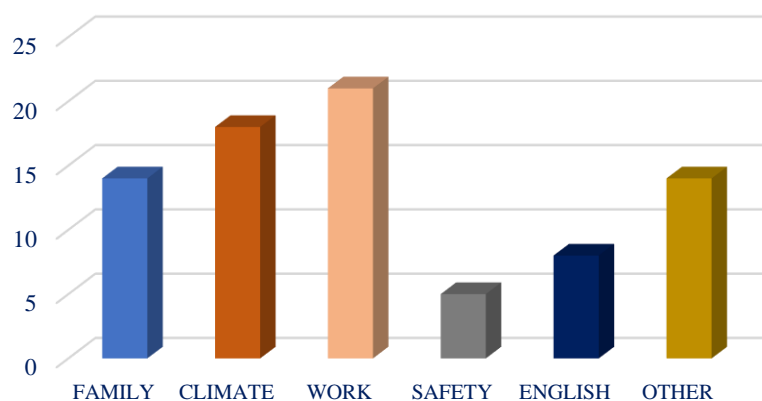


Figure 4 - Reason for chose to reside in Malta

The participants came from 30 different countries, with 23.52% of the population from the United Kingdom. Twenty-six originated from a European country, of which 46.15% have borders in the Mediterranean Sea. 78.82% of the experiment have lived in Malta for less than ten years and, only 8.24% have lived for more than 20 years. 73 out of 85 are gainfully occupied, while 11 are retired. Only one respondent was a student.

51.76% of the participant's civil statuses include children. Interestingly, 86.36% of this bracket of respondents had attended a firework display confirming the findings in the Literature Review that fireworks are an agreeable attraction for a broad spectrum of civil status, especially those that include children.

4.2.2 Relevant findings to Hypothesis

This segment of this experiment investigated the popularity of fireworks in Malta amongst the respondents. It was confirmed that fireworks are a popular event in Malta, with 82.34% of the respondents attended a firework display, with 85.71% of them rating the show with 3, 4, or 5*. Of the 15 respondents who did not attend a firework display, *eight* still replied *yes* or *maybe* when asked whether they would mention fireworks to their relatives or friends abroad.

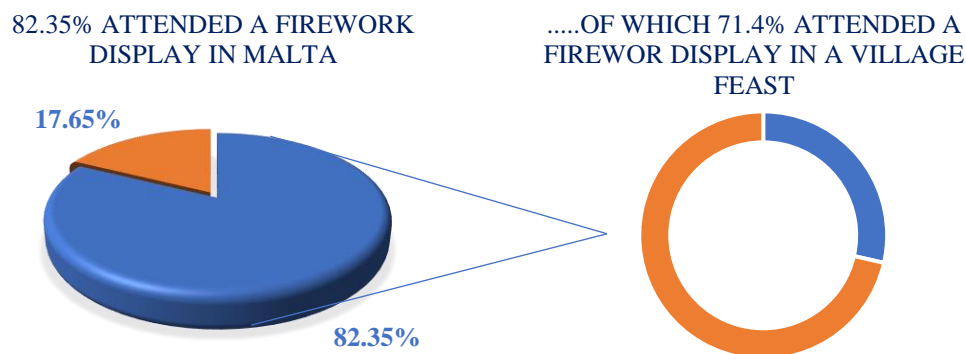


Figure 5 - % Attendances of Pyro displays in Village feasts or Festivals

Another relevant piece of data related to the attendance of a firework display in Malta, as Figure 5 shows, is that firework displays during a typical village feast are more popular than an organised fireworks festival like the Malta International Fireworks Festival.

85.71% rated the show 3, 4 and 5* while only 5.71% gave 1* rating. The mean rate was 3.8*. The survey probed the respondents to express the immediate reaction that came to their minds after the show. A choice of 5 answers was

available, and more than one choice could be selected. *Impressive* was the preferred response. Only 11.76% selected *Annoying*. Out of 85, 11 respondents included *noisy* in their replies. One of the four comments, respondent 86, in the *open question* which stood out was: ‘*There are impressive fireworks; it’s a competition among villages.*’

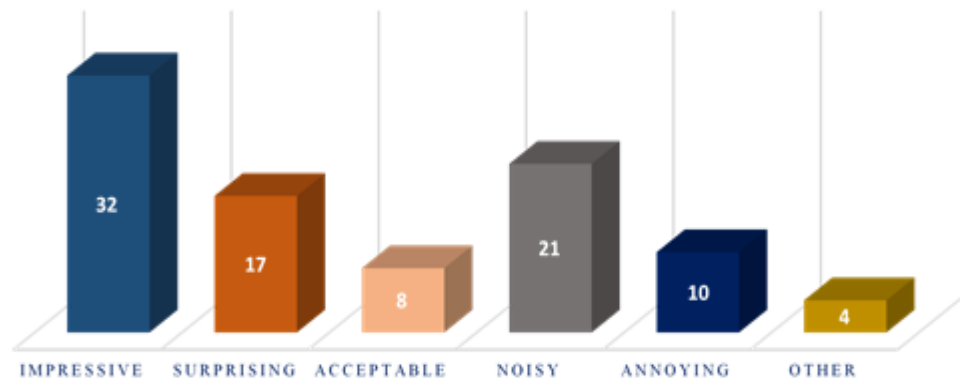


Figure 6 - First Immediate Reaction after the Display

The next question delved into how the respondents compare the visited fireworks display to similar shows in their country. A relatively strong 47.71% of the experiment responded that the show provided from Maltese fireworks was ‘*much better*’, while only 25.71% believed it was ‘*inferior*’. The rest, 28.57%, evaluated the pyro show ‘*on the same level*’ of similar displays in their country. Interestingly, seven of 18 respondents that rated Maltese fireworks as ‘*inferior*’ would still value it as an attraction and a cultural added value to foreigners in Malta.

When describing the quantity of pyrotechnics in the visited display, the most preferred response from the seven choices was ‘*impressive quantity but of an enjoyable high-level*’. According to the author's evaluation, the answers to this open question were divided into positive and negative responses. The positive responses add up to 62.86% of the 84 different choices. The author's evaluation transpires that the quantity exceeded the respondent's expectations since ‘*the expected quantity*’ was only chosen by seven from the 84 choices. A deeper analysis shows that 25 of 28 (89.29%) respondents that chose

‘*annoyedly lengthy*’ and ‘*by far too much*’ are female, but it could be due to the prevalence of female respondents in this experiment. Remarkably as well, 78.37% that gave positive feedback possess higher-level education.

The survey proceeded to probe into the particularities and uniqueness of the Maltese fireworks. 57.14% responded in the affirmative, and 10% said they are not sure. This feedback corroborates the argument that Maltese fireworks have an exclusive and innovative element that surprises and amazes spectators. The consequent evident question inquired which aspect of the pyrotechnical show did the respondents enjoy the most. Forty-two respondents chose ‘*shapes and designs created by fireworks*’, which relates and substantiate the previous question’s response. The second preference is the ‘*musical synchronisation*’ with 37.14%, followed by ‘*colour variation of the petards*’. Only five participants selected traditional petards, validating the perception that the noise emulated by these artefacts are less appreciated by non-Maltese than the spectacular, eye-catching, coloured pyrotechnics.

Two-way table Conditional probability Rate of Statement ‘ <i>Firework is an art</i> ’ vs Level of Education								
RATINGS	LEVEL OF EDUCATION							TOTAL
	DEGREE	MASTERS	HIGHER EDUCATION	POST SECONDARY	POST UNIVERSITY	SECONDARY SCHOOL	TECHNICAL SCHOOL	
	1	3	2		2			8
	2	4	1	1	3	1	1	11
	3	7	7	5		1	1	21
	4	12	8	2		3	1	26
	5	7	4	4	3		1	19
	33	22	12	8	4	2	4	85

Table 1 - Rate of Statement ‘*Firework is an art*’ vs Level of Education

This fragment of the survey explored the general, subjective opinion about fireworks of the participants. Question 17 asked the respondents to rate the statement ‘*firework is an art*’. The mean rate is 3.44*. Table 1 shows an interesting relationship between the rate given to the statement ‘*Firework is an art*’ and the respondents’ level of education. 78.95% have a *Higher Education*, *Degree level* or a *Master* level of education, meaning that well-educated persons appreciate the spectacle offered by Maltese pyrotechnics. Another

exciting observation worth noting is that only 9.41% rated the mentioned statement with one star.

The following question asked the respondents to express how they perceive Maltese fireworks as an attraction and a value-added cultural tradition. As Figure 7 illustrates, the respondents that answered *Definitely* or *Yes* amounted to 58.24%. When the 33 respondents who responded *no* were analysed, the first result that stood out was that nine did not even attend any firework display in Malta. A contradictory observation revealed that 14 respondents, out of the remaining 24, did watch a firework show but still rated it with a 3, 4 or 5*. This data confirmed that foreigner appreciates Maltese fireworks regardless of not considering them as a tourist attraction.

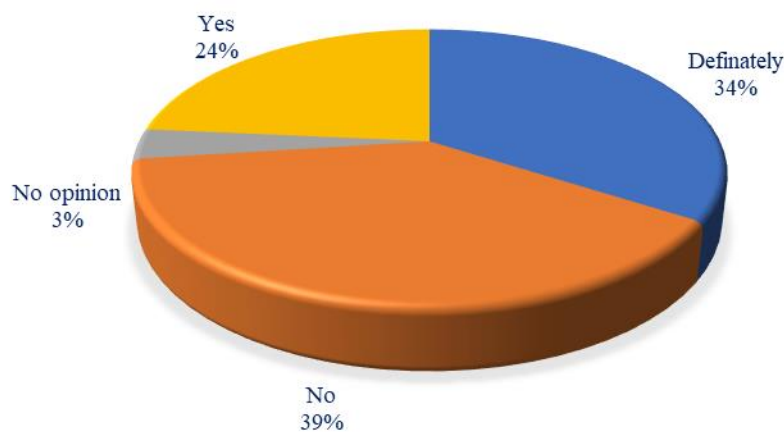


Figure 7 - Response - Maltese Fireworks as an Attraction and Culture

The following two crucial questions delved into the personal feelings of the respondents on Maltese fireworks. In Question 19, the survey asked for the respondents' perspective on Maltese fireworks as a temporary resident in Malta and provided nine different choices. The respondents' most popular answer was '*Part and parcel of the Maltese culture*' with 48.24% preferences. 51.46% of the participants (88/171 of chosen answers) gave a positive answer, and, remarkably, 28.65% (49/171) related their responses to the sound emulated by the petards. Respondent 86, in the open-ended question, described Maltese fireworks as '*The soundtrack to the Maltese summer*'. However, 28 respondents chose '*a noisy inconvenient*' and 21 chose '*an environmental and*

sound polluter that should be banned completely '. The 8 am traditional firing of *beraq* are the most criticised. Participant 19 described the daylight and morning firing as '*often without sense*' while participant 44 depicts them as '*useless bangs in every locality that are horrible* '. Respondent 61 relates fireworks to '*very high sound pollution* ' before stating that he finds daylight petards '*totally useless and annoying* '. Respondent 80 unswervingly suggests that '*petards need to be abolished... extremely loud noise without nothing to see* '. Ironically, in contradiction of their negative comments, these respondents gave a 3 or 4* rate to the quality of the Maltese fireworks show.

Question 20 tackled Maltese pyrotechnics that irritates the respondents, and the response confirms that most annoy the participants are the '*noise pollution* ' (58.82%) and '*the early and late firing of petards*' (65.88%). The third selected response, 37/85, referred to the '*environmental pollution* '. A minor concern for the respondents was the cost to produce the fireworks, with 18.82%. There were contrasting reactions in the open question. While participant 62 said '*none, they are fine*', and 63 wrote '*Na*', number 76 wrote '*just too many*' while respondent 74 was more categorical by stating '*all the above* ' (referring to all answers in the question). Again, participant 83 referred to the daytime fireworks that '*you cannot see them actually*'. However, the critical point that resulted from this open question was the preoccupation of the noise on animal safety. Participants 41, 61 and 88 express their concern about their animal welfare during the pyrotechnical shows, with participant number 41, a female from Russia, affirmed that her '*dogs get scared*'.

The subsequent questions probed directly into the core of this study. Question 21 asked how important they consider the culture of fireworks in Malta to include it in their description of Malta and the Maltese to their relatives and friends back in their country. 57.65% responded in the affirmative, and 14.12% answered *maybe*. Interestingly, this outcome is comparable to the rate given to the statement '*Firework is an art* '. Of the 24 respondents that answered *no*, only five never attended a firework display in Malta. Worth

mentioning is that 82.35% of them still enjoyed it and gave a 3, 4 or 5* rate to the show.

62.35% agreed with Question 22, which queried ‘*Do you agree that Mass tourism in Malta is not sustainable anymore, and immediate change in the tourism strategy should take place?*’. Figure 8 analyses the correlation between the favourable responses to this question and the respondents' length of stay in the Maltese Islands. The exciting outcome showed a clear negative correlation between the length of the non-Maltese and the response given on the sustainability of mass tourism. Factually, 58.49% of the ‘yes’ respondents lived for less than five years in the Maltese Islands, 18.87% from six to ten years, 15.09% from eleven to twenty years and 7.55% for over twenty years. Furthermore, 54.72% who responded *yes* agree that fireworks are an attraction and a cultural added value to foreign visitors in Malta.

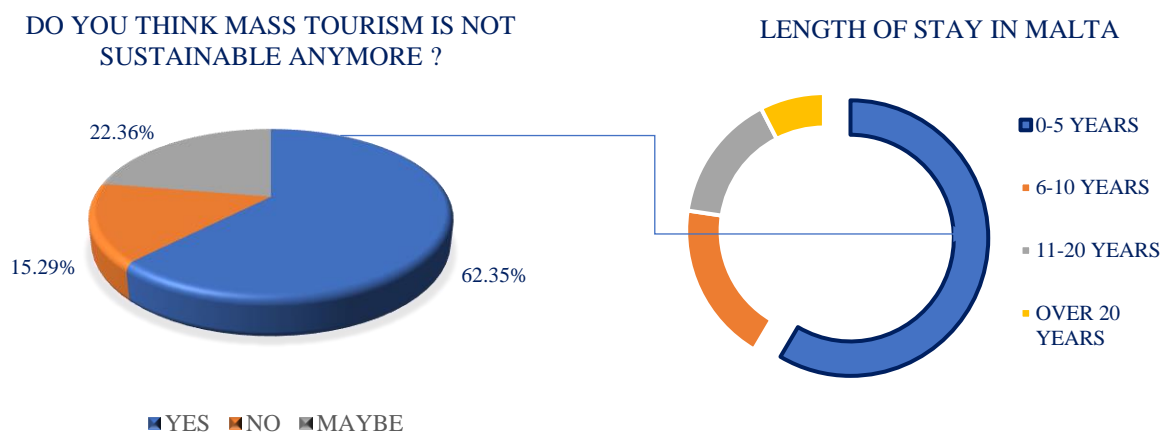


Figure 8 - Response - Sustainability of Tourism VS Length of Stay

Malta remains very popular and recommendable by the expatriates that are residing and working on the island. 65.88% answered positively to Question 23, which asked if the respondents would suggest Malta as a touristic destination to their relatives and friends. Only 11.76% responded *no*. This question is strongly associated with and conditioned by the outcome of the preceding one. The fact that 84.21% that responded *maybe* to this question responded *yes* to the previous question confirms that the need to change

tourism policy, from mass to niche tourism, is equally perceived by non-Maltese residents.

The pressures and challenges created by mass tourism on day-to-day living in Malta need to be addressed with a dynamic and ambitious policy that pursue quality rather than quantity. Nonetheless, Malta is still recognised as an attractive destination in the eye of an expatriate. The overall mean rating of Malta stood at 3.47*. The most given rate was 3* with 40% of preferences. However, the respondents who rated Malta with 3, 4 or 5* amounts to 88.24%. Only respondent number 11 gave 1* to rate Malta because “*corruption is found everywhere, from the smallest part of the country to the highest - government*”. The subject in the comments in this open question varied. There were negative opinions involving rent, xenophobia, overcrowding, over-development and low wages, amongst others. Contrastingly, participants gave very positive replies, mainly on the hospitality of the Maltese, the rich culture, job opportunities and the general lifestyle. The comments that summarize this question were written by participant 40, who wrote, “*the problem is that it is so small. Tourists/foreigners are made to feel an intrusion*”, followed by number 47, who stated that Malta “*has become too commercial and too many workers needed to serve the tourist sector leading to infrastructure, not in place... has become unpleasant in main (touristic) season*”. Participant number 71 also stated that “*after 7 years we still love Malta, but a lot of changes and some not for the better*”.

4.3.2 Relevant findings to Hypothesis

From the 54.79% of the Experiment participants with *more than 20 years' experience*, 77.5% considered fireworks an important Maltese cultural heritage to be preserved. Moreover, 83.53% of the survey partakers specialised in Cultural excursions, including *festa* tours (Figure 10). Respondent number 75 expressly indicated that he did a “*festa tour every Saturday annually from summer 1981-2012*”.

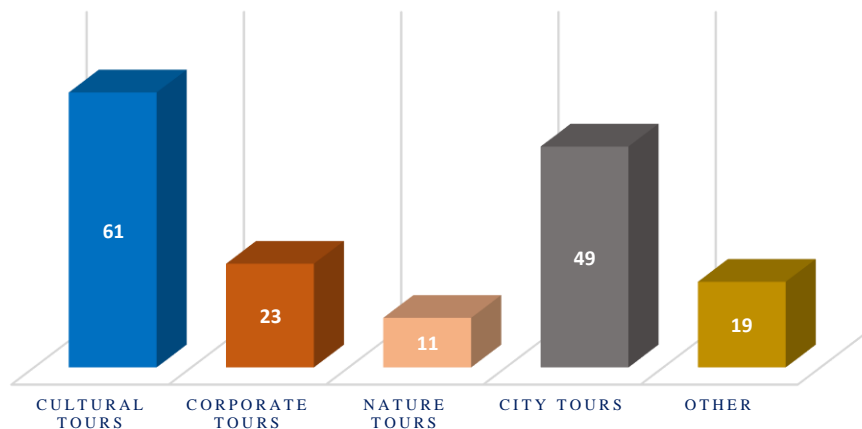


Figure 10 - Response - Excursion Speciality

Question 8 demanded the respondent describe the tourists' expressed or perceived reaction during the pyrotechnical display. In the author's evaluation, 89.95% chose a positive answer from the nine available choices, *impressed, an experience, unexpected quality, exceeded expectations and a memorable event*. Worth observing is that no one included *unimpressed*, and only three respondents chose *Annoying* in their choice of answers. Respondent number 46 added that she ‘*did guide foreign delegations coming from MTA and Koreans were impressed at performance*’ in the open tab.’ Another interesting fact was brought up by respondent 30, who wrote, related to the noise was that ‘*For a few fireworks brought back bad memories of WW2 bombings.*’

The next question deeper investigated the requisites of Question 8 and asked the participants to inscribe any remarks worth of note expressed by the tourists after the pyro show. Forty respondents took part in this question, and the

answers were categorised into four segments; *Negative, Positive, Noise Related* and *Others*, as epitomised in Figure 11.

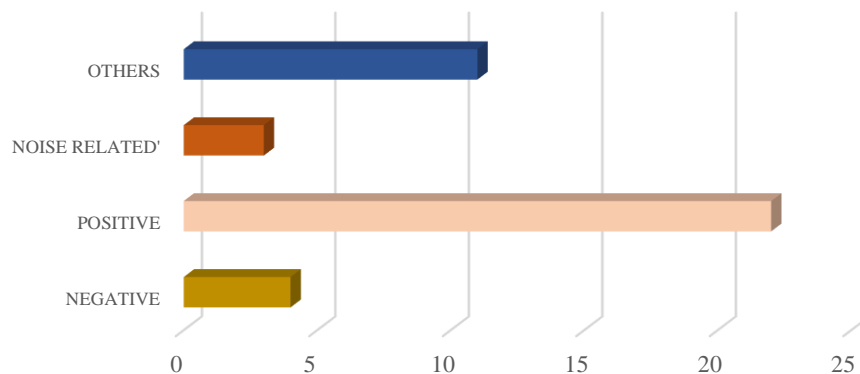


Figure 11 - Response - Particular comments expressed by the Tourists

The comments in the *others* category comprised varied topics. The financing of the fireworks was brought up by respondent 55 and respondent 54, who was surprised to discover that the work of the pyrotechnical display is primarily voluntary. Other comments identified the lack of safety and crowdedness during the show. The *noise* was an expected subject to be brought up. Respondent 7 reported that the tourist remarked about the ‘*noise and pollution level*’; nonetheless, number 47 reported that tourists related fireworks noise to ‘... *authenticity*’. Overall, the comments were outright positive compared to the few negative, with diametrically opposite contents in some cases. While respondent 41 stressed the *smoke and smell* from colourless petards and ground fireworks, number 35 emphasised that ‘*tourists specifically choose to see the village fireworks...*’ to experience the wholesomeness of the Maltese *festa*, including the ‘*noisy merrymaking*’.

In contrast to the comment by a German tourist ‘*waste of money*’, reported by respondent 66, respondents 49 and 75 stated that a consistent comment of the tourist was that they ‘*never seen anything like it*’. Other comments, like *Spectacular, like a fairy tale*, and *Fantastic*, substantiate such a statement. Two particular comments stood out and were reported by respondent 64, ‘*Maltese know how to do fireworks*’ and by number 42, who stated that ‘*they (the tourists) always want more time*’. Two particularities of these respondents

are that Respondent 64 is a female from Peru' and number 42 has more than 20 years of experience as a tour guide.

Question 10 continued to gather information about tourists' perceptions during a traditional Maltese festa fireworks display. When asked *what aspect of the firework show they (tourists) enjoy most*, *traditional petards* were the least popular choice (3.45%) concerning their noise. *Shapes and designs created with fireworks* had 60.34% preferences, followed by *Musical synchronisation* with 56.9%. In the open choice of this question, two participants indicated that they would choose all the presented choices but, participant 63 continued to express his non-understanding of traditional 'murtali tal-beraq' that, in his words, makes tourists '*...scared that war is breaking out*'.

The connotations of Question 11 were to explore the level of knowledge of the tour guides to tackle basic, technical queries, and also, historical background on the tradition of fireworks in the Maltese Islands. Figure 12 summarises this experiment's responses and shows that 80.82% of the front liners directly contact the tourist have *basic* or *negligible* knowledge of Maltese Pyrotechnics. Only two of the 73 respondents responded that they are *very knowledgeable*; one is respondent 75, referred to in section 4.1.3.

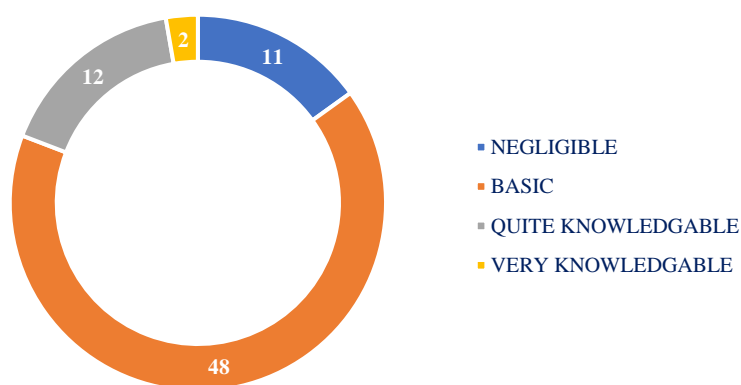


Figure 12 - Response - Level of Knowledge on Maltese Fireworks

The next open question enquired the subjective opinion on Maltese fireworks as *globally recognised mastery in the field*. The answers for this question were interpreted and, consequently, categorised in five segments; *Positive*, *Negative*, *Noise*, *Excessiveness* and *Others*. 67.12% responded very positively. Respondents 13, 24, 30, 36 and 66 acknowledged Maltese high pyrotechnical abilities worldwide. Respondent 25 stated, '*I know that Maltese fireworks are some of the finest and most spectacular worldwide as evidenced by other fireworks shows I have seen in other countries and by tourists' comments to me.*' Interestingly, number 13's response, '*We are reputed worldwide for this niche* ', acknowledged the fireworks in Malta as a niche. Both village festa and festivals were praised with comments like *Spectacular*, *Work of art*, *Impressive* and *International standard*. However, number 19 specifically stated that '*without fireworks, there is no festa. They (fireworks) are an intrinsic part of the local festa season.*' Respondent 21 continued saying that '*they should be preserved as part of our national culture*' because, as respondent 23 stated, '*it needs to be developed because it has the potential.*' As anticipated, arguments against excessiveness and loudness were expressed, and 17.81% of the respondents led in that direction. Only 8.22% of the participant's comments were interpreted as *Negative*.

To the question '*do you consider Maltese fireworks an important cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and protected?*', 78.08% responded *Yes*, and only 8.22% responded *no*. Worth noting that the participants who responded *no* chose pollution-related answers and, *early and late firing of petards* in the succeeding Question 14, which asked *What aspect of Fireworks annoys you the most?* 51 and 40 participants selected *Noise pollution* and *Environmental pollution*, respectively, while 46.58% chose *Early and late firing of petards*.

Question 15 explored the personal opinion of the participants on the use of fireworks in advertising campaigns related to the Maltese Islands. The result was very similar to the outcome of Question 13, with 76.71% responding *yes*. On the other hand, the *negative* respondents decreased from 6 to 4 while the undecided that responded *maybe*, increased by 3.

The next question queried to rate the statement *Pyro Tourism' is a niche market that should be explored and developed*. The average rate given was 3.15*. However, the most chosen rate was 3*. 72.60% gave 3, 4 or 5* ratings, mainly included Cultural Tours as their specialisation, with only 10.96% rated the given statement 1*.

A thought-provoking and revealing reply were attributed to Question 17. The question motivated the respondents to commit themselves to whether they think fireworks can be a potential tourist attraction as a niche on its own or in a cluster of events. 78.08% responded that fireworks, as a potential touristic attraction, should be in a cluster and not independently. Interestingly, 75% of the 16 participants who answered that fireworks are an important cultural heritage to be protected in Question 13, also responded that fireworks could be a niche market on its own.

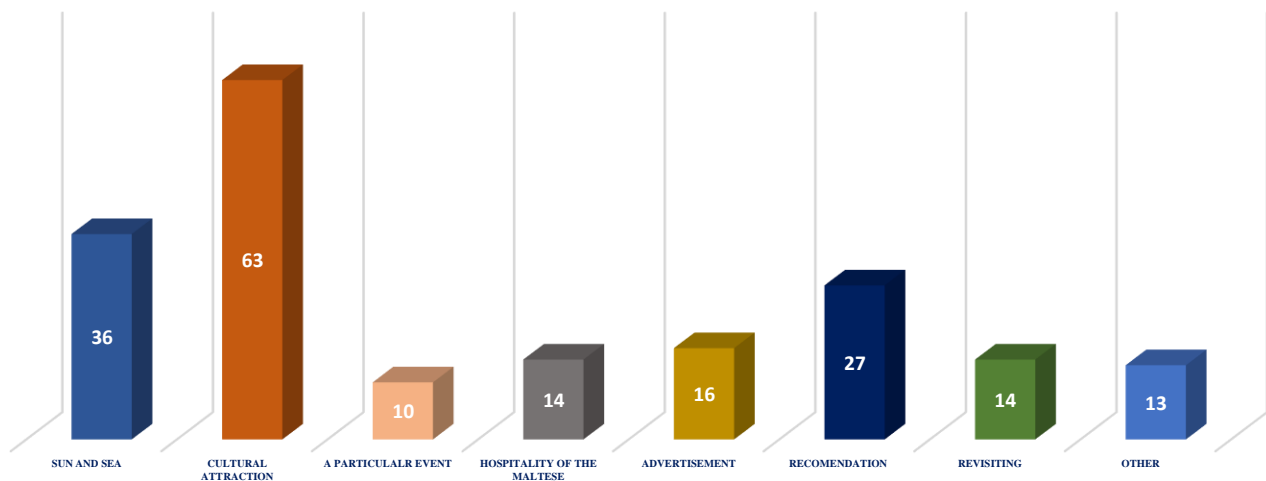


Figure 13 - Main Purpose that Attracts Tourism to Malta

Figure 13 show the distribution of the answers related to Question 18, which asked, *‘From your feedback from working directly with tourists, what is the main purpose that makes them choose Malta over other countries for their vacation?’* Cultural attraction choice stood out and superseded the second choice, *Sun and Sea*, the once primary marketing subject to attract tourism to Malta, by 42.86%. Respondent 22 combined both factors by stating, *‘It is the combination of good weather and culture that attracts’*. Understandably, the

least chosen reply was *A particular event*, a strategy still in its embryonic stage in Malta.

Question 19 asked *how tourists perceive the Maltese Cultural Heritage*. 52 out of the 73 participants chose *Impressively rich* for their answer, followed by *‘Malta is a walking museum’* with 41.09% of the preferences and *‘Hotspot of different cultures in one place’* with 35.62%. The outcome of this question is a validation of the previous question’s response. No tour guide did choose the answer *‘Unimpressive and over-rated’*, which show the acquired consciousness of the potentially rich and unparalleled portfolio of the Maltese cultural heritage.

The experiment concluded by asking the participants to convey their thoughts on the question *‘Do you agree that Mass tourism in Malta is not sustainable anymore, and immediate change in the tourism strategy should take place?’* A strong 65.75% agreed that a change in the tourism strategy to tackle mass tourism should be immediately initiated. 30.14% responded *maybe*, and only three respondents disagreed with a change in the strategy to transform the tourism strategy from one that attracted mass tourism to a more sustainable niche tourism strategy.

4.4 Congruencies of the Two Experiments

The two experiments revealed interesting congruencies in the general opinions and perceptions of the two sets of population.

Both experiments undoubtedly exposed the appreciation, singularities and positive evaluation of experiencing pyrotechnics in Malta. Both populations denoted the fireworks, in the Maltese context, constitute an inherent tradition, a high-level free spectacle and an entrenched cultural ritual. It was also deducted that this culture is a popular summer activity that attracts and entertains non-discriminatory locals and tourists in the same manner.

Tourists are impressed by the offered pyrotechnical spectacle. The experience offered was evaluated as entertaining and an essential culture that individualises Malta from its tourism competitors.

A standard, predictable fact established by both surveys was that the less popular daylight murtali are less appreciated than the coloured, more spectacular night petards. Nevertheless, the holistic experience of a firework was an added-value experience during their stay in the Maltese Islands, to the extent that Experiment A revealed that its respondents would mention Maltese fireworks to their relatives and friends abroad.

Concluding, both experiments indicated that a change in Malta's tourism strategy is urgent and inevitable. Above all, the respondents of both surveys disclosed the necessity that the consequences of mass tourism should be urgently addressed. Despite Experiment A are in majority Maltese, and Experiment B are non-Maltese, the outcome is analogous. Both populations acknowledged the urgency to tackle the current unsustainable tourism strategy that, besides directly impacting the living standards of the person residing in Malta, is unsustainable, ultimately negatively affecting Malta's attractiveness as a touristic destination.

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This thesis's primary objective was (i) to investigate and measure the level of appreciation of the traditional Maltese fireworks by foreigners, and (ii) to be position *in-nar Malti* as a brand for promoting Malta's tourism industry.

This chapter delves into a descriptive analysis of the findings of two parallel, semi-structured surveys outlined in Chapter 4, complemented by research on the literature of fireworks and the author's knowledge, experience, and appreciation of fireworks and the tourist sector.

As the subject content and the approach to this research are unprecedented, a comparative analysis cannot be made. The discussion is based on analysis and evaluation of relevant literature and the survey findings concerning the following research questions to challenge the Hypothesis of this thesis.

Question 1: What is the perception of visiting tourists about the authenticity of typical '*logħob tan-nar*' as a globally acclaimed cultural tradition in Malta?

Question 2: Can pyrotechnics, in Malta's context, be considered one of the potential brands that distinguish Malta from its competitors in the Tourism industry?

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 Popular Cultural Mastery

The analysis of both Experiment's questions established and reaffirmed that Maltese fireworks are predominantly celebrated and appreciated. Moreover, it acknowledged that this festive activity is entrenched in Malta's culture and is appreciated by the different strata of society, including foreigners. This fact conforms with the literature that stipulated that people are entertained and appreciative of fireworks displays.

The responses to both surveys established that irrespective of gender, age, occupation, or level of education of the respondents, the *logħob tan-nar Malti* is applauded as a pleasurable spectacle. Experiment A demonstrated that foreigners, including family units with children, highly enjoy Maltese fireworks in both their quantity and quality. Interestingly, this fact contradicts the argument in Chapter 2.4, attributing fright on younger people due to its noise and challenges the critics that depict fireworks, specifically the loud, *murtali-tal-beraq*, as vicious.

The Experiments accredited that they observed specific types of fireworks that differed from what they experienced before. The results also clearly showed that coloured petards and single shots are more popular and enjoyed than the traditional *murtali tal-beraq* because some perceive their firing sounds as noisy, violent and scary.

The study compellingly indicated a robust and positive correlation between the respondents' level of education and the appraisal of Maltese fireworks displays. The author attributed this interesting finding to two conceivable reasons: a) a well-read and open-minded section of society that embraces other ways of life and appreciates other cultures, and b) a holistic sensory experience of the diversities of culture which, as literature highlights, the more different culture is, the more attractive it is to the foreigner. Correspondingly, the research indicated an association between the level of appreciation of the

respondents in proportion to the duration of their residence in Malta. In time, one gets accustomed to the frequency of let-offs, and the interest diminishes, but a newcomer to Malta will be taken aback and intrigued by the frequency of festive fireworks displays. When foreigners attend high-quality pyro-musical shows, they leave an indelible, positive impression and experience. Such fact induced the author to assume and relate this behaviour to the visiting tourists that would be similarly affected by the frequency, quality and quantity of fireworks in Malta.

Consistent with what was accounted for in the Literature review, this study reaffirms that fireworks displays are an intangible cultural heritage. Experiment A revealed that its respondents experienced fireworks in the setting of village feasts, which, as the author describes, is the culmination of Maltese culture symbolised by customs, traditions, and popular devotion. Furthermore, this research reasserted the authenticity of Malta's ground and aerial fireworks displays. Outstandingly, the pyrotechnic effects and choreography of fireworks differed from foreign exhibits. This detail was noted in several instances throughout the study. The author established that the fundamental characteristic that denotes the singularity of Maltese '*logħob tan-nar*' is attributed to the wealth of knowledge and skill of local pyrotechny. Godfrey Farrugia had stated that each Maltese shell is a unique and dissimilar artefact (Farrugia, 2012). This detail presents a sharp contrast to the mass production of fireworks in most countries. The craftsmanship (a tangible heritage) of locally manufactured fireworks has further attributed to this authenticity.

The manufacture of fireworks is a craft with a historical legacy and has been transmitted from one generation to the next and perfected by trial and error to produce the pyrotechnic effects we enjoy today. Malta's geographic physiognomies have moulded traditional village feasts into deep-rooted communal and religious celebrations, where each locality tries to outdo the other in its festivities. This competitive element has favoured the evolution of fireworks production to be exclusively and distinctively Maltese. Unlike foreign pyrotechnic articles, Maltese fireworks do not conform to standard

prototypes, and the displays are characterised by the unpredictable creation of colours, sounds, smoke and motion.

Jeremy Boissevain had stated that Maltese fireworks had resisted the pressure of modernisation. The walls of each shell are made from recycled paper from discarded empty animal feeding sacks. These are cut to size and individually rolled and glued to form reinforced cylindrical shells loaded with the pyrotechnic mix, bomblets, or stars in a circular form. Once one layer of bomblets or stars is loaded, another is laid so that several concentric rings, typically three, are built lining the shell's interior. The Malta Independent reported that 3,500 *beraq* are usually used to build twelve daytime petards (The Malta Independent, 2016). The same holds for stars. The remaining inner space of the shell is filled with a burst charge and is usually made of black powder granules, which consist of sweltered loose tree sprigs mainly derived from a grape cutting from the pruning throughout Spring. Once the shells are loaded, they are closed and spiked to form single shotshells, which may be further elaborated by assembling them to produce an endless variety of cylindrical multi-break shells. The creation of these artefacts involves a meticulous calculation and calibration of the igniting fuses that result in the flawless rhythm of various but distinctive sounds. Similarly, various maroons, spherical coloured shells, crackers, and whistles can be manufactured with different applied skills.

There is a general misconception that Malta's fireworks makers are uneducated, chauvinist, low-class villagers, predominantly from the Southern part of the Maltese Islands, who are ready to play with fire and risk their lives literally. Contrastingly, the study indicates that many licenced pyrotechnicians are university graduates and serving professionals. The author observes that Malta's licenced pyrotechnicians are referred to as *dilettanti tan-nar* (hobbyists) as they are volunteers who do not earn a living from pyrotechny. It is a demeaning title status that does not attribute due merit. The licencing regime (Malta Subsidiary Legislation 33.03, 2014) to manufacture fireworks is very rigorous and is obtained over several years after attending a range of courses followed by written and viva examinations.

Moreover, the license has to be maintained by Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and a five-yearly assessment. The content of its curriculum and hands-on experience is very similar to that of foreign licenses. However, there is one striking difference between the two. Foreign pyrotechnicians are gainfully employed and are described as professionals. Locally few are the pyrotechnicians who earn a living from pyrotechny, and the term 'professionals' is out of place. The author thus advocates that a more deserving term that addresses these artisans is Fireworks Masters.

Malta's traditional and singular cylindrical multi-break coloured or cracker shells and mechanised ground fireworks displays have notoriously branded Malta within the international pyrotechnic circles. So much so that Malta's International Fireworks Festival is considered among the world's best ten exhibits (iExplore.com, n.d.). It is often stated among leading international pyrotechnicians that Malta is a must-visit during the festive season to experience the 'deep-rooted firework culture in Malta' (Siegmann, 2016) (Farrugia, 2012). With around 100 feasts (Appendix 1) celebrated during this period, aerial fireworks can also be simultaneously enjoyed across the Island. In that matter, respondents in Experiment A have strongly acknowledged that the experience of fireworks displays was exclusive and memorable.

5.2.2 Culture Diversity

Culture is a way of life. It encompasses monuments and a collection of objects, including customs, performing arts, social practices, festive events, crafts rituals, and more. Each country has its own identity shaped in part by its cultural heritage.

This study has established that culture creates a destination, and distinct cultures create an identity that classifies these destinations. Such singularity is the determining factor that induces tourists to prefer a destination from another. In this context, both Experiments sturdily concurred that Maltese

fireworks offer a significant and different cultural dimension. This outcome endorses the verity that cultural diversity correlates with the promotion of a country, which in return attracts tourism. Consequently, the host countries are obliged to explain to their guest visitors the specifics, the peculiarities and even the eccentricities of their engrained cultural attraction.

Traditional *festi* evolved through centuries of collective experiences. This study reaffirms that village feasts are a communal celebration dedicated to their patron Saint and have a religious, social, and cultural dimension.

Jeremy Boissevain describes the village festa as 'the event upon which village prestige depends' (Boissevain, 2011). It unites people across all social strata as a community, which also celebrates its own identity within the feast.

Cultures are shaped by change. Each generation leaves its hallmarks and feasts metamorphosis according to the character and trends of the epoch. Moreover, different cultures interact with one another. Globalisation and commoditisation are the biggest threat to cultural diversity as they may easily forge culture into a homogenous and undifferentiated entity. However, the dynamics of cultural identity are kept alive if it is incessantly sustained and manifested by its people. In the face of modernisation, the significance of this community manifestation has marginally decreased in some localities, whilst in others, it has progressed into a more overt and grand feast. The festa week is a focal communal event in every village's annual calendar and is aided by social mobility and tourism.

5.2.3 The Sounds of *Festa*

The Explosive Ordinance prescribes that fireworks let-offs are scheduled to coincide with the liturgical celebrations of the village feast. These are standardised into a timetable that denotes a week of events. As explained in the literature section 2.3, the amount, type, and size of fireworks let-offs interlink the secular external and the internal church celebrations and announce to the community, and beyond that, a specific event related to a particular *festa* is taking place. The older generation is particularly more

affluent in associating the sounds emitted by fireworks to the liturgical ceremonies occurring in the *festa* week. Such argument led the author to consider that the fireworks sound, and to an extent, the peeling of bells, are a primary link between the housebound aged and the celebrated activities.

For *festa* goers and enthusiasts, including tourists, the sound of fireworks is the sound of a *festa*. This fact is reaffirmed by Cassar (2015) that the sound of fireworks is the elementary source that connects the celebrative commuters with the 'outsiders' beyond the village boundaries. The louder the reports, the further the invitation to the *festa* echoes. The study exposed that the most irritating aspect of pyrotechnics in the Maltese scenario is the early (08.00) and the late igniting of fireworks (23.30), mostly tagged as useless and horrible by the respondents in both Experiments. This factor supports the previously contended argument that Malta's narrative of our rituals and customs must be explained to the tourists.

In this respect, Experiment B revealed that Tour Leaders, the crucial front liners in any tourism industry, lack the necessary knowledge about pyrotechnics to explain customaries. They should explain the meaning behind the early morning and mid-day Angelus prayers, the *Tridijiet*, the *Translazzjoni*, the *Quddiesa tal-Panigierku*, and *il-Barka* , all highlighted and correlated by the firing sounds of fireworks. They should also be competent to explain in straightforward terms the craftsmanship that personifies the spectacle.

As predicted, the sound of fireworks featured throughout this research. It is factually accepted that fireworks are loud; however, the appraisal of whether fireworks are sensed as a *storbu* or a *ħoss* depends exclusively on the receiver's perception. The difference between evaluating fireworks as sound or noise was critically analysed in Chapter 2 and, understandably, resulted in conflicting opinions on how it should be assessed. Nevertheless, irrespective of how fireworks are subjectively perceived, they are a hallmark of a traditional village *festa*.

The firing of a petard consists of various explosions, namely the lift-off, to shoot the petard at the desired height, the '*qasma*' (the blast) that spreads the bomblets/stars and the end pyrotechnic effect that creates the visual and sound effects. Factually, one limitation in this study was that it did not query which stage of the petard was the 'noise' found most irritating and is an enthralling subject for further research.

Fireworks sounds are analogous to other human-controlled civil explosions. The military utilisation of timed explosives and the civil use in demolitions are comparable to fireworks since they are all man controlled and loud in all instances. While military blows, in the forms of bombs, are used during combats, and explosives like dynamite, are utilised to cut through rocks for building purposes, fireworks are applied to entertain. In all instances, the emitted clatter is impossible to reduce, and whoever argues that noise related to fireworks should be reduced is only advocating to abolish them.

5.2.4 The Knowledge Gap

As referred to in the previous section, Tour Leaders practising in Malta lack basic knowledge on fireworks in the particularities of Malta's case. There is a discrepancy between what is known and what should be known. It constitutes an evident gap in the formative training of tour leaders practising in the Maltese Islands regarding understanding a cultural staple in Malta like pyrotechnics. The author argues that such a knowledge gap may stem from the prejudice on fireworks in Malta, as discussed in the literature chapter.

The syllabus for Higher National Diploma in Tour Guiding (Appendix 1) at the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) does not mention, in any instance, the cultural relevance of *in-Nar Malti*. In the author's opinion, this does not reflect what this research has reaffirmed, that fireworks are an intrinsic part of the Maltese way of life and culture. Most tour guides in Experiment B, 78.08%, contrastingly affirmed that fireworks are an intrinsic part of Maltese Culture.

Also, Experiment B established that Malta is a walking architectural museum and impressively rich in culture. Even so, the author believes that certain Maltese cultures are given less prominence than others. This disregard is illogical for Maltese fireworks. The author speculates that this might be due to two reasons:

- a) fireworks displays are free and are not money-making events for the business entrepreneurs whose primary focus is to promote more enterprising activities.
- b) the elitist mindset of a minority, referred to as the anti-fireworks lobby, who do not consider fireworks a historical and social-cultural legacy.

Furthermore, the author has concluded that cultural traditions are seldomly criticised because of misunderstanding the cross-cultural rituals and meaning and the varying cultural background and general knowledge.

At this point, the author proposes that Tour Guides' tutoring must be equally shared between Malta's tangible heritage, like the Neolithic temples, museums, monuments and fortifications and Malta's vast intangible cultural heritage.

UNESCO identifies the following intangible domains:

- ~ Oral traditions and expressions, including language.
 - ~ Performing arts.
 - ~ Social practices, rituals and festive events.
 - ~ Traditional craftsmanship, including rituals.
 - ~ Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- (UNESCO, 2003).

Fireworks is both a tangible heritage, as the finished *murtali* and intangible heritage in the form of the spectacle offered, and as Lino Bianco implied, fireworks fit in the first four domains of UNESCO's definition (Bianco & Delicata, 2012).

5.2.5 The Added Value

The primary factor distinguishing the production of mainstream fireworks in Malta is rooted in volunteering. Fireworks masters strive to manufacture high-level pyrotechnic spectacles for free. In comparison, pyrotechnical shows held in foreign countries are offered at a cost to the spectators as they have to buy entry tickets. Sydney Harbour's iconic New Year's Eve fireworks celebration had cost \$5.8 million in 2019 (Financial Review, 2019), and tickets are sold to access the best viewing points. Similarly, London's famous New Year's firework display cost £2.3 million in that same year. However, £800,000 were raised from selling tickets for this event (HITC.com, 2020).

Nevertheless, the Mayor of London office (Mayor of London, 2020) revealed the 'considerable economic benefits for London'. Besides the direct 'multi-million' injection to the city's economy, this event creates an immeasurable exposure to London through television coverage. Sydney's New Year's economic effect on the city was previously cited in the Literature Review. This fact corroborates the literature findings that fireworks are an intense attraction that creates destinations, generating positive economic activity. In Malta, pyrospectacle are taken for granted. Anyone can attend a fireworks display, whenever he yearns, for free; an annual, seven-month festa season that offers weekly pyrotechnical shows of international standards.

The previous annotation presents a decisive aspect in the entire argumentation: that besides the firework displays in Malta are free, the spectators experience a genuine Maltese authenticity, and as Adriana Bishop (Introduction Chapter) put it, the fireworks are the closest thing that labels the fireworks Maltese character. Congruently, Experiment A corroborated the discussed attributes of Maltese fireworks by acknowledging that they would recommend a visit to a fireworks display to their relatives and friends back home. Experiment B showed the same understanding. The author considers that the biggest challenge is that some influential Maltese are still far from conceding that the manufacture and discharge of fireworks are a traditional Maltese culture. Once this hurdle is surmounted, then Malta's internationally famed fireworks

displays will become a touristic product that brands another cultural identity of our Islands.

5.2.6 Applying Sustainable Tourism Strategies

The study unambiguously stabilised the critical importance of Tourism for Malta, particularly for a small island. Local governments, through the years, invested in this industry, which eventually peaked in 2019 with 2.3 million visiting tourists. However, such an unsustainable increase came at a toll. As Swarbrooke (1999) stated, islands are more prospective to be negatively impacted by 'large-scale' tourism. Malta was not an exception, and Attard (2018) argued that 'more needs to be done to ensure that recent growth rates of inbound tourism are sustainable'.

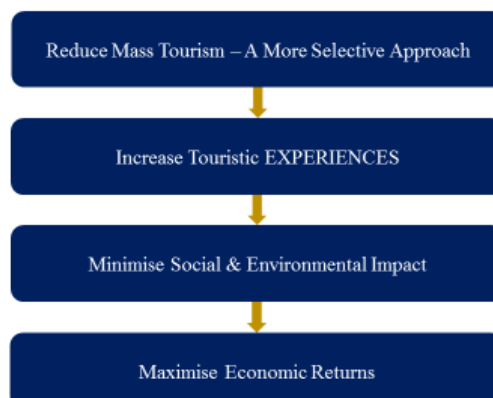
The tourism-related development, amongst others, radically changed the Island's landscape to accommodate the cumulative demand for accommodation, transport and infrastructure. This study distinctively confirmed that mass tourism's adverse socio-cultural effects stress the country's infrastructure, mobility, and congestion, developing a destructive, negative feeling that can prompt a general indifference towards this critical industry. Terms like 'over-tourism' and 'tourism phobia' would easily and rapidly spread. Maltese are known for their welcoming characters, but the general attitude could change if mass tourism pressures the infrastructure and deteriorating environment. The possibility of change of attitude was also referred to in the Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030, page 47, stating: *'To ensure that pressures generated by the increased number of visitors do not weigh on the host community to the extent that manifests a negative sentiment towards tourism.'*

The argument of changing tourism policies was prominent in the Malta Tourism Strategy 2015-2020. Still, it was not implemented, and as stated by WTO (2004), the difficulty in such strategies is its implementation. The research findings similarly concurred that Malta needs a change in the Tourism approach. Both Experiments exhibited and confirmed this understanding.

Question 22 of Experiment A revealed that two-thirds of foreigners residing in Malta agree with a strategy change. A reflective analysis of this outcome discovered that there is also a correlation between the respondent's length of stay in Malta and their corresponding responses. This outcome indicates that foreigners residing in Malta for more than five years become accustomed to the conditions, both positive and negative viewpoints of living in Malta. Experiment B outcomes confirmed the change in policy in Malta tourism policy.

The unprecedented impact of Covid 19 on the Tourism Industry was devastating and an opportunity to re-evaluate and gauge the dimension, significance, and consequence of mass tourism in Malta. The pandemic gave the chance to re-live and re-experience the way of living in Malta with much lesser density and congestion. The development was geared up in parallel to the constant growth of tourism. Eventually, this growth had to be capped due to becoming unsustainable and creating distress among the population and less attractive from the tourist perspective. *Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030* (Pg 22) argued that the quantity of inbound tourism had to be replaced by several targeted interest tourism pockets or niches enticed by Malta's propositions.

The strategy acknowledged that the new, adopted approach should rethink, incentivise and generate innovative products that enhance the value-added product, 'Malta'. This study's overall findings align with the proposed Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030, as explicated in the following Matrix.



The literature corroborated that culture is a solid attraction for tourism. Both Experiments endorsed Malta's cultural baggage as impressive, with various cultural influences compressed on a comparatively small area, validating Attard (2018) study that exhibited that culture already attracts a considerable segment of tourists to the Islands. Fan (2010) affirmed that culture is any, or the sum of, the foundations of a nation that includes its people, place, and history, constituting the international understanding of a nation as interpreted by foreigners (Fan, 2010). Correspondingly, Anholt (1998) concluded that a nation must utilise the 'most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision' and consistently purvey it in all possible promotional messages between the host country and 'the rest of the world' (Anholt, 1998). The comprehensive approach in the selling of Malta as a touristic destination must include all stakeholders, as argued in Section 2.1. The arduous task of any country that wants to create uniqueness and competitiveness to attract tourism is to select those tangible and intangible aspects in the country that makes it distinct from its competitors.

5.2.7 Fireworks as a Brand

In this respect, throughout the research, it was asserted that fireworks are an affirmed cultural tradition in Malta. The study sustained that traditional Maltese fireworks are a) an authentic traditional exclusive to Malta, b) a high-level, globally acclaimed artefact, c) a solid attraction to locals and tourists alike and finally d) a strong connotation of fireworks with the Maltese Islands. In the author's assessment, based on the investigation and evaluation of the accumulated, although limited, literature and the interpretation and analysis of the two surveys, fireworks in Malta are among the key cultural events that can easily be associated with the Island. In the author's valuation, based on this research, traditional Maltese '*logħob tan-nar*' has all the prerequisites to create a solid brand association with Malta.

However, as cited in Chapter 2.6, a destination must endorse its most favourable attractions before purveying them as an enticement to appeal to tourism (Kaperer, 2008). On the contrary, this study revealed a negative,

somehow classist prejudice against the tradition of fireworks in Malta. Jeremy Boissevain noted that this fact personified as the English-speaking elitist, fueled by constant anti-fireworks articles in the Times of Malta (Boissevain, 2011). Such subjective, anti-fireworks sentiment is still very present and, as the researcher concluded, might be one reason why fireworks are acknowledged with their real relevance as a product that distinguishes Malta's destination profile.

Fireworks, as a product, can be presented both on their own and as part of a cluster of events. Experiment A revealed that non-Maltese preferred attending a fireworks display in a feast rather than in a firework festival by an overwhelming majority (71.4%). The study stated that a traditional *fešta* is a cluster of experiences and showcases indigenous rituals, cultural ludic traditions, and exceptional skills exclusive to the Maltese Islands.

Nevertheless, whether individually or in clusters, fireworks must be transformed and presented as a commodity to entice tourists to opt for Malta as their destination. The transformation of the firework display in a commodity is the first stage in its Progression of Economic Value (PEV). In the second stage, *in-nar tradizzjonali Malti* is wrapped into a product, complemented by the third stage, proposing an 'authenticity and excellence' that ultimately offers an experience (Sundbo & Sorensen, 2013).

The document *Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030* vision statement acknowledges that the change in the tourism strategies should develop Malta's 'natural and cultural attractions' in maximising the tourist's value-for-money and gratification. The same document, on page ten, specifically asserts, verbatim: '*Contemporary tourism is Experiential in nature. It is not two-dimensional but requires that visitors feast all their senses*' and '*Focus on promoting what is indigenous to our islands*'.

However, the ultimate decision of which experiences qualify in creating distinctiveness in a destination is exclusively in the local authorities' responsibility on the supply side (Kaperer, 2008). The researcher concluded

that the significant dilemma with fireworks in Malta is comprehending the actual holistic value of the authentic tradition of pyrotechny as a memorable experience to the spectators, both local and tourists. *In-nar Malti* needs to be evaluated and respected within the unique context of Malta, modelled in its geographical isolationism. In Malta, fireworks' precise positioning is not just a free spectacle that is proposedly organised to attract and entertain the crowds but also an inherent cultural tradition. These elements, in sum, rank Maltese fireworks as the high-level product, a local authenticity, an entrenched culture, and a spectacular, memorable experience that is globally esteemed.

(3888 words)

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Overview of the Study Outcome

This chapter presents the conclusion of this study which investigated the Hypothesis, which stated that fireworks, in the Maltese context, are an inherent cultural activity and a perceived branding component in the tourism industry for Malta. The research, summarised in Figure 14, aimed to evaluate the cultural and traditional value of fireworks within the community and the level of perception and appreciation of foreign visitors of the typical *logħob tan-nar Malti* to be elevated as a brand that adds value during their stay in the Maltese Islands.

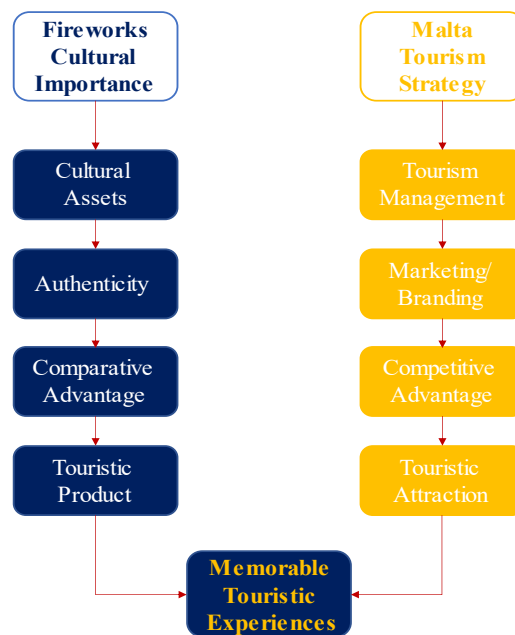


Figure 14 - Study Investigation Model

The study unequivocally confirmed that fireworks are a predominantly popular attraction, which is consonant with the findings of other studies. Pyrotechnical shows are universally and regularly applied as an attraction to enhance or revitalise touristic destinations; nonetheless, the difference that stood out was that fireworks in Malta are not an organised, ad hoc, one-off festival to attract the masses to a destination, but a cultural ritual and way of living, available almost all year round.

Both surveys in this research also established, corroborated by the literature, that Maltese pyrotechnics are of an international level, distinctively different, and an entrenched cultural and social activity for the Maltese Islands. The participants in Experiment A confirmed the appreciation of the constant presence of elements of innovation in pyrotechnical effects, which made it important enough to be mentioned to their relatives and friends in their native countries. It was also confirmed that Maltese fireworks' cultural and anthropological dimension is not comparable with other nations. They represent '*the soundtrack to the Maltese summer*', and its sounds travel throughout the geographical boundaries of the island, making it unavoidable. Fireworks, in a way, are self-publicised. Their loud clatter is comprehended as an invitation to the locals and parallelly instils instant curiosity and intrigue in tourists.

This study's outcome indelibly showed that Malta is dependable on the tourism industry for creating direct or indirect wealth and employment, and in this respect, Malta needs to be presented as a destination that outstands its touristic competitors. Nevertheless, it also showed a consensual understanding that a change in Malta's tourism approach is urgent and inevitable. The sustainability of the tourism industry in Malta was mentioned in consecutive national Tourism Strategy plans but was never implemented due to the lack of agreement between the business's principal stakeholders. The tourism industry in Malta is vital to the island's economy, and the authorities must act to prevent irreversible consequences in the absence of a clear decisive action plan.

In conclusion, it was accredited that Malta is a walking museum and is blessed by centurial baggage of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including historic sites, indelible rituals, and colourful traditions that the visiting tourist appreciates. Culture constitutes Malta's main attraction, surpassing the 'sun and sea' aspect of the vacation, and in this respect, this study convincingly confirmed that *In-nar Malti* is one popular culture and a potential associating brand with the Maltese Island

6.2. Limitations

Covid 19 pandemic was a constant limitation in this study. As explained in Chapter 3.7, there was a forced change in this thesis' methodology. The sudden cancellation of the *festi* and the interruption of the tourism movement completely altered the methodology of this thesis. The qualitative, one-to-one interviews with tourists assisting a firework show had to be modified to the methodology applied in this research to finalise this study in the stipulated time. Furthermore, the author suggests an analysis using the original methodology to analyse and compare the results with this study's conclusions.

More to the direct limitation mentioned, the author concluded that Covid 19 might be an element to delay further the transformation of the tourism policy strategy from reducing the dependency on mass tourism to more sustainable pockets of specialised niche tourism. The 2020 global pandemic disrupted the global movement of persons, affecting directly and severely the general tourism industry. It might be argued that this is the optimum time to change the strategy, but, in the author's deduction, the ailing tourism-related business has to be sustained to regenerate and recuperate from the disastrous year, which was lacking any income generation. For this reason, the author predicts that the Maltese tourism strategy would remain as is, with a further postponement of the required changes in Malta's tourism strategies for the next foreseen period.

6.3. Recommendations

The researcher concluded that despite the overall positive outcome previously referred to in this section, three critical impediments must be addressed before fireworks can be transformed into a branding product for Malta.

- a) The gap in the way that fireworks are presented and explained to tourists.
- b) The prejudices against the fireworks.

- c) The recognition, or the lack of, of fireworks as an authentic, exclusive, and engaging experience that adds value to the Maltese tourism package.

The study exposed an unexplainable gap in knowledge of tour leaders on fireworks which, as confirmed in this research, constitute an entrenched, popular culture in Malta. The author partially attributes this fact to the prejudices and lack of recognition of the relevance of firework in Malta, which affects the formation of Maltese tourism front liners like Tour Guides. It is up to the hosting destination to explain the authentic particularities to the visiting foreigners and the controversial aspects of its traditions and cultures. The author recommends that this knowledge gap is tackled by a revision of the formational content of tour guiding courses, including a more comprehensive range of both the tangible and intangible cultures of Malta, which is outstandingly rich. The findings' outcome in this thesis, as discussed in Chapter 5, corroborates the *Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030*, which stated: *"Support for continuous training, innovation and the introduction of new products that can ultimately deliver a qualitative and varied tourism experience"*.

Kaperer (2008) suggested that the receiving destination has to choose which national assets are selected, but the asset has to be recognised as such in the first place. In the author's judgment, the prejudice and lack of recognition is the main reason for not giving the due potential of the cultural value and appreciation for *In-nar Malti*. Throughout the study, it became clear that a minority of anti-fireworks lobbyists is prejudiced against Maltese fireworks. Jeremy Boisevains labelled them as the 'English speaking elitists', and in the author subjective opinion, they represent the influential segment of the population that keeps aback the apposite recognition of Maltese fireworks.

In this respect, the authorities should rethink which 'positioning' should be attributed to *Il-logħob tan-nar Malti*. Transforming an indigenous product into a touristic attraction in a PEV process may lead to its commoditisation;

however, as this study exhibited, even though fireworks in Malta evolved through the years into an exclusive high-end artistic expression with innovation and modernisation but treasured the past's authenticity and tradition. Maltese fireworks resisted these changes and enhanced and perfectionated the old decennial processes, recipes, and skills to create exciting variations of traditional Maltese *murtali*.

The transformation of Maltese pyrotechnics into a touristic product would benefit both the promoter and the receiving client. The tourist will be presented with an authentic cultural tradition, exclusive and unique product to the Maltese islands. The exclusivity of this product represents one of the reasons for choosing Malta from tens of other similar destinations, particularly in the Mediterranean region. The product must be adequately wrapped into a fascinating artefact that meets the tourist's ever-increasing exigencies and expectations.

The target market in this conceptualisation process of *In-nar Malti* is Experiential tourism. This contemporary travel trend would prefer to 'invest' their vacation money not just for relaxation but also to seek new, self-actualising experiences that engage their compassion and intellect. This strategy was mentioned in *the Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030 vision statement* in Chapter 5.2.7.

This line of thought, strengthened by the outcome of this research, steered the author to put forward two recommendations that would endorse *in-nar tradizzjonali Malti* as a credible authenticity for a tourism marketing tool.

1. A permanent Maltese Pyrotechnical Museum

This museum's primary purpose would serve to preserve, document and exhibit the authenticity of *in-nar Malti*, exhibiting the traditional methods, terminologies and ancillary tools utilised in manufacturing fireworks by the acclaimed Maltese pyrotechnical masters. This tourist attraction would illustrate the exciting peculiarities of firework culture in Malta to the

inquisitive tourists. The museum would be an exhibition of the historical, cultural, sociological and anthropological importance of pyrotechnics for Maltese society. It would also document the exclusive centennial skills and processes in the manufacture of Maltese, not to get lost during the unofficial, verbal generational teaching of the trade. Maltese authorities should incentivise the preservation of fireworks of the generational old methods and practices that, as the author fears, can be lost in the next generations. The museum shall also include conference facilities to accommodate conferences, master classes and CPD's for the interested stakeholders. The opening of this museum would be the consolidation and acceptance of *in-nar Malti* as an exclusive indigenous tradition to Malta.

2. NYE Grand Celebration Display

Sydney and London are two famous examples that bank on staging yearly New Year's Eve pyro-displays, both as a tourism attraction and an economic boost for the region. These destinations invest considerable money in contracting leading firework factories to present such grand pyrotechnical displays reported worldwide. Considering the popularity, stature, and accredited talent in fireworks, Malta can effortlessly present a comparable pyro display that would attract tourism, and more importantly, it will be a platform on which the Maltese Authorities benefit from the global media coverage.

6.4. Conclusion

This study's conclusion corroborates what Ritchie and Ritchie described as a destination brand in Chapter 2.6; hence, undoubtedly, *In-nar tradizzjonali Malti* qualifies hands down. It represents a graphic that offers a memorable experience that associates, consolidate and reinforce the pleasurable recollection in a destination.

The entire investigation development exhibited that the distinct Maltese context of fireworks is valued in both their local and international dimensions.

Maltese fireworks impact both the Maltese enthusiast who is offered weekly free entertainment almost all year round and the visiting tourists eager to experience bespoke Maltese fireworks shows.

In this respect, the rational argumentation throughout this research substantiated the hypothesis that Maltese fireworks have all the attributes to qualify as an indelible experience that immediately connotes with Malta. They differentiate Malta from its tourism competitors.

An experience remains memorable when what offered surpasses any experience, anywhere, anytime in the past. *In-nar Malti* is an indigenous trade and craft with unmatched characteristics that cannot be experienced in any other place globally. One has to visit Malta to experience *in-nar tradizzjonali Malti*.

However, before conceptualising the culture of Maltese pyrotechnics as an authentic Maltese commodity to attract tourism, the trying barrier is to preserve and protect this cultural tradition and accept the potential attracting value in the tourism strategy. Empirical research like this can support the authorities to take objective decisions for their tourism strategies without being affected by biased, opinionated elitists that might alter this process.

In-nar tradizzjonali Malti cannot be identified as the singular characteristic that solves the sustainability dilemma of the tourism industry on a small island like Malta, but it can unquestionably be a prominent contributor to the cause. This fact is crucial for the island's socio-cultural well-being in the foreseeing future and represents part of the solution in the necessary conversion from Mass tourism to a targeted group of more sustainable niche tourist pockets.

Firework tourism or Pyro tourism is still an explored niche in its embryonic stage. As one can deduct from the presented research, Maltese fireworks create a direct association with Malta, but unfortunately, it is still an unpolished piece of coal that can be easily turned into a valuable, exclusive diamond if expertly treated. The research outcome is obvious and unambiguous. Malta possesses

the right setting to pioneer tourism related to Fireworks, both individually or incorporated in an event cluster. The author questions - What are the authorities waiting for?

(1979)

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Appendix 1 - List of Village Feasts

List of village feasts for 2020 as published by the Archdiocese of Malta (Archdiocese of Malta, 2020).

DATE	FESTA	LOCATION
25 th January	Familja Mqaddsa	L-Iklin
26 th January	Il-Konverżjoni ta' San Pawl	Mdina
10 th February	San Pawl Nawfragu	Valletta
8 th March	San Girgor	Kercem (Gozo)
13 th March	Ġesu Nazzarenu	Sliema
19 th March	San Ġużepp	Rabat
26 th April	San Publiju	Floriana
1 st May	San Ġużepp haddiem	Birkirkara
9 th May	San Ġorg Preca	Swatar
24 th May	San Pawl Nawfragu	Munxar (Gozo)
24 th May	Marija Annunzjata	Ħat Tarxien
7 th June	Madonna ta' Fatima	Gwardamangia
7 th June	San Ġużepp	Ħal Ghaxaq
7 th June	Corpus Christi	Ghasri (Gozo)
7 th June	Trinita' Mqaddsa	Marsa
14 th June	San Filippu ta' Aġira	Ħaz Żebbuġ
14 th June	Qalb ta' Ġesu	Fontana
21 st June	Madonna tal-Ġilju	Mqabba
21 st June	Santa Katarina	Zejtun
21 st June	Corpus Cristi	Rabat
21 st June	San Ġwann Battista	Xewkija (Gozo)
28 th June	Qalb bla tebgħa ta' Marija	Burmarrad
28 th June	San Ġorg	Ħal Qormi
28 th June	San Nikola	Siggiewi
28 th June	Madonna ta' Lourdes	Qrendi
29 th June	San Pietru u San Pawl	Mdina
29 th June	San Pietru u San Pawl	Nadur (Gozo)

5 th July	Madonna tal-Karmnu	Fleur-de-Lys
5 th July	Immakulata Kunċizzjoni	Hamrun
5 th July	Sant' Andrija	Ħal Luqa
5 th July	San Pawl	Rabat
5 th July	Madonna tas-Sacro Cuor	Sliema
5 th July	Vizitazzjoni tal-vergini Marija	Għarb (Gozo)
12 th July	Marija Annunzjata	Ħal Balzan
12 th July	Madonna tal-Karmnu	Fgura
12 th July	Madonna tal-Karmnu	Gżira
12 th July	Madonna tas-Sokkors	Kerċem (Gozo)
12 th July	San Ġuzepp	Ħal Kirkop
16 th July	Madonna tal-Karmnu	Valletta
18 th July	Madonna tad-Duttrina	Ħat Tarxien
19 th July	San Sebastjan	Ħal Qormi
19 th July	San Ġorġ	Victoria (Gozo)
19 th July	San Ġuzepp	Msida
19 th July	San Ġuzepp	Kalkara
26 th July	Madonna tal-Karmnu	Żurrieq
26 th July	Santa Margerita	Sannat (Gozo)
26 th July	Madonna tal-Karmnu	Balluta
26 th July	Sant' Anna	Marsaskala
26 th July	Kristu Re	Paola
26 th July	Santa Venera	Santa Venera
26 th July	Marija Addolorata	San Pawl 'l Bahar
26 th July	San Ġuzepp	Ħaz Żebbug
2 nd August	Madonna ta' Pompei	Marsaxlokk
2 nd August	San Pietru fil-Ktajjen	B' Buġia
2 nd August	San Guzepp	Qala (Gozo)
2 nd August	Madonna ta' Lourdes	San Gwann
2 nd August	San Duminku	Valletta
6 th August	Is-Salvatur	Ħal Lija
9 th August	San Lawrenz	St Lawrenz (Gozo)

9 th August	San Gejtanu	Hamrun
10 th August	San Lawrenz	Birgu
15 th August	Santa Marija	Ħat Attard
15 th August	Santa Marija	Birkirkara
15 th August	Santa Marija	Hal Għaxaq
15 th August	Santa Marija	Gudja
15 th August	Santa Marija	Mosta
15 th August	Santa Marija	Mqabba
15 th August	Santa Marija	Qrendi
15 th August	Santa Marija	Victoria (Gozo)
21 st August	San Piju	Santa Luċija (Gozo)
23 rd August	Santa Marija	Ħad Dingli
23 rd August	Santa Marija	Mġarr
23 rd August	Sant'Elena	Birkirkara
23 rd August	Madonna ta' Lourdes	Paola
23 rd August	Stella Maris	Sliema
23 rd August	Marija Assunta	Ħaż Żebbuġ
23 rd August	San Leonardu	Hal Kirkop
30 th August	San Duminku	Birgu
30 th August	San Bartilmew	Hal Għarghur
30 th August	Marija Regina	Marsa
30 th August	San Ġuzepp	Manikata
30 th August	Konverżjoni ta' San Pawl	Hal Safi
30 th August	San Ġiljan	San Ġiljan
30 th August	Madonna ta' Loreto	Għajnsielem (Gozo)
6 th September	San Frangisk t'Assisi	Qawra
6 th September	San Girgor	Sliema
6 th September	Santa Katarina	Żurrieq
8 th September	Marija Bambina	L-Isla
8 th September	Marija Bambina	Mellieha
8 th September	Marija Bambina	Naxxar
8 th September	Marija Bambina	Xagħra (Gozo)

13 th September	Madonna tal-Grazzja	Haż Żabbar
20 th September	Santu Wistin	Valletta
3 rd October	Madonna tac-Ċintura	Valletta
4 th October	Madonna tar-Rużarju	Gudja
25 th October	Madonna tac-Ċintura	Gudja
17 th November	San Gwann tas-Salib	Ta'Xbiex
8 th December	Immakulata Kunċizzjoni	Bormla
13 th December	Santa Luċija	Mtarfa

Appendix 2 - Experiment A - Expats (Facebook Page)

Maltese Traditional Fireworks as an added-value attraction for Tourism

My name is Alan Picco. I am pursuing a Masters in Business Administration in Hospitality Management at the Institute of Tourism Studies, in affiliation with the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management. I am doing research for my thesis on the perception of tourists and expats residing in Malta on the Maltese fireworks as an accepted, and an intrinsic part of the country's cultural heritage.

I am gratefully asking your kind self to participate in the following survey on your perception and perspectives on the typical Maltese fireworks as a non-native Maltese resident. Your feedback is a piece of invaluable information in my work's progress.

This survey is an entirely anonymous questionnaire. You may stop any time before submitting. Once the survey is submitted, it cannot be revoked. Nevertheless, since it is entirely anonymous, the researcher shall not be able to identify any particular responses.

I would like to thank you in advance for your participation.

Personal Information

1. Age

- ☐ Between 20 and 30
- ☐ Between 31 and 40
- ☐ Between 41 and 50
- ☐ Over 50

2. Gender

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Prefer not to say

3. Please identify your country of origin

Enter your answer

4. For how long have you've been residing in Malta?

- ☐ 0 - 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 20 years
- ☐ Over 20 years

5. Please identify your occupation

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employee
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Manager / Executive
- ☐ Retired

6. What is your level of education?

- ☐ Secondary school leaver
- ☐ Post-secondary college
- ☐ Higher education Institute
- ☐ Technical / Trade Institute
- ☐ Degree graduate
- ☐ Masters graduate
- ☐ Post-university graduate

7. Why did you choose to reside in Malta over other countries?

Enter your answer

8. What is your status?

- ☐ Married
 - ☐ Married with children
 - ☐ Single
 - ☐ Single with children
 - ☐ Divorced
 - ☐ Separated
 - ☐ Widowed
-

Section 2

Your View on Fireworks

9. Did you ever attend a fireworks display in Malta?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. How did you rate the quality of fireworks during this show?

'1' means the lowest rate and '5' means the highest

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

11. What was your first immediate reaction that came to your mind after the show?

- ☐ Impressive
- ☐ Surprising
- ☐ Acceptable
- ☐ Noisy
- ☐ Annoying
- ☐ Other

12. Was the show held during a typical Maltese summer village feast or in a fireworks festival?

- ☐ Village feast
- ☐ Firework festival

13. How do you compare the firework display with any similar shows displayed in your country?

- ☐ Much better
- ☐ On the same level
- ☐ Inferior

14. How would you describe the quantity of the pyrotechnical display?

More than one answer can be chosen

- ☐ Abundant but very pleasurable
- ☐ Impressive quantity but of an enjoyable
- ☐ Loads of fireworks but very varied
- ☐ The expected quantity
- ☐ By far too much
- ☐ Annoyedly lengthy

☐ Other

15. Did you notice any particular type of fireworks that you never experienced anywhere before?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

16. What aspect of the firework show did you enjoy the most?

More than one answer can be chosen

- ☐ Traditional petards
- ☐ Shapes and designs created by fireworks
- ☐ Colour variation of the petards
- ☐ Musical synchronization
- ☐ Ground fireworks
- ☐ Other

17. How do you rate the statement 'fireworks is an art'?

'1' means the lowest rate and '5' means the highest

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

18. Do you think that Maltese fireworks are an attraction and a cultural added-value to foreign visitors in Malta?

- ☐ Definitely
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No opinion

19. Now that you have been living in Malta for quite some time, and maybe, you got more used to the Maltese lifestyle and culture in general, what is your perspective the Maltese pyrotechnics?

More than one answer can be chosen

- ☐ Part and parcel of the Maltese culture
- ☐ A free summer firework entertainment
- ☐ A noisy inconvenient
- ☐ A show of innovative creations that is a pleasure to watch
- ☐ Waste of money
- ☐ A dangerous but beautiful cultural tradition that needs to be more regularised

- ☐ An environmental and sound polluter that should be banned completely
- ☐ Other

20. Would you mention and include fireworks as an important aspect of Maltese culture, to describe Malta and the Maltese to your friends and relative abroad?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Section 3

General Question

22. Do you agree that Mass tourism in Malta is not sustainable anymore, and immediate change in the tourism strategy should take place?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

23. Would you suggest Malta as a touristic destination to your friends and relatives?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

24. What is your overall rate of Malta as your residential and/or working place?

'1' means the lowest rate and '5' means the highest

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

25. Please explain and justify why you gave the above rate?

Enter your answer

26. Feel free to add any comment you would like to express in general

Enter your answer

Appendix 3 - Experiment B - Tour Guides

Maltese Traditional Fireworks as an added-value attraction for Tourism

My name is Alan Picco. I am pursuing a Master in Business Administration (MBA) in Hospitality Management at the Institute of Tourism Studies, in affiliation with the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management. I am researching my thesis on how tourists perceive and react when experiencing Maltese fireworks. Fireworks are an intrinsic part of the country's cultural heritage.

I am gratefully asking your kind self, based on your valuable expertise, to participate in the following survey on how tourists perceive Maltese Fireworks, specifically on their first-hand experience when attending some sort of pyrotechnical show in the Maltese Islands.

Your feedback is a piece of invaluable information in my work's progress.

This survey is an entirely anonymous questionnaire. You may stop any time before submitting. Once the survey is submitted, it cannot be revoked. Nevertheless, since it is entirely anonymous, the researcher shall not be able to identify any particular responses.

I would like to thank you in advance for your participation.

Personal Information

1. Age

- ☐ Between 20 and 30
- ☐ Between 31 and 40
- ☐ Between 41 and 50
- ☐ Over 50

2. Gender

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Prefer not to say

3. Nationality

- ☐ Maltese
- ☐ English
- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Other

4. Where do you live?

Enter your answer

5. Years of experience as a Tour Guide

- ☐ 0 - 10 years
- ☐ 10 - 20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

6. What excursions do you specialise in?

More than one answer can be chosen

- ☐ Cultural tours
- ☐ Corporate tours
- ☐ Nature tours (including sea)
- ☐ City tours
- ☐ Other

Section 2

7. Did you ever guide tours in a firework festival or, in a Maltese village feast that included fireworks?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. What was the expressed and/or perceived tourists' reaction during the pyrotechnical display?

More than one answer can be chosen

- ☐ Impressed
- ☐ An experience
- ☐ Did not expect such a high-quality show
- ☐ Exceeded their expectations
- ☐ A memorable event
- ☐ Unimpressed
- ☐ Noisy
- ☐ Annoying
- ☐ Other

9. Was there any particular comment that you remember from a tourist after the show?

Enter your answer

10. What aspect of the firework show did they enjoy the most?

More than one answer can be chosen

- ☐ Shapes and design created with fireworks
- ☐ Colour variation of the petards
- ☐ Traditional petards
- ☐ Musical synchronization
- ☐ Ground fireworks
- ☐ Other

11. What is your level of knowledge on the Maltese Pyrotechny?

- ☐ Negligible
- ☐ Basic
- ☐ Quite knowledgeable
- ☐ Very knowledgeable

12. What is your personal view on Maltese fireworks as a globally recognised mastery in the field?

Enter your answer

13. Do you consider Maltese fireworks an important cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and protected?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

14. What aspect of Fireworks annoys you the most?

More than one answer can be chosen

- ☐ Noise pollution
- ☐ Early and late firing of petards
- ☐ Environmental pollution
- ☐ Health and safety issues
- ☐ They cost too much money

15. Maltese fireworks feature in many advertisement campaigns related to the Maltese Islands. Do you think that using Traditional Maltese Fireworks in these campaigns confirms them as an intrinsic part of the Maltese culture?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

16. 'Pyro Tourism' is a niche market that should be explored and developed. How do you rate this statement?

'1' means the lowest rate and '5' means the highest

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

17. Do you think that Maltese fireworks can potentially be a tourist attraction if marketed as a niche market on its own, or included in a cluster with other niches, creating events?

- ☐ Niche market on its own
- ☐ Cluster with other niches

Section 3

18. From your feedback from working directly with tourists, what is the main purpose that makes them choose Malta over other countries for their vacation?

- ☐ Sun and sea
- ☐ Cultural attractions
- ☐ A particular event
- ☐ Hospitality of the Maltese
- ☐ Advertisement
- ☐ Recommendation from a friend or relative
- ☐ Revisiting the country
- ☐ Other

19. In general, how do tourists perceive the Maltese Cultural Heritage?

- ☐ Impressively rich
- ☐ Religion is omnipresent
- ☐ 'Malta is a walking tourism'
- ☐ Hotspot of different culture in one place
- ☐ Unimpressive and over-rated
- ☐ Other

20. Do you agree that Mass tourism in Malta is not sustainable anymore, and immediate change in the tourism strategy should take place?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Appendix 4 - ITS Tour Guides Syllabus

HND IN TOURIST GUIDING F/T YEAR 1								
SEMESTER 1								
CODE	MODULE TITLE	KEY	CHOICE	P/W	CH	SS	TOTAL	ECTS
0	Language 1		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
0	Language 2		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
HND5120	Field Visits Part 1		CORE	4	56	44	100	4
HND5114	Principles and Practices of Tourist Guiding		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5060	History and Development of Art and Architecture		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
HND5061	Prehistoric Sites		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5115	Classical - Medieval		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5116	Digital Technologies for Tourist Guiding and Heritage Interpretation		CORE	2	28	22	50	2
HND5081	Sustainable Tourism		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5108	Mediterranean Studies		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5117	Interpreting Sites and Artefacts		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
				18	252	498	750	30
SEMESTER 2								
CODE	MODULE TITLE	KEY	CHOICE	P/W	CH	SS	TOTAL	ECTS
0	Language 1		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
0	Language 2		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
HND5121	Field Visits Part 2		CORE	4	56	44	100	4
HND5076	Modern European History		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5074	Natural Environment of Malta		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
HND5109	Knights' Period		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5064	British Period		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5125	Maltese Commerce for Tourist Guides		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5008	Research Methodology		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5079	Trekking and Countryside Walks		CORE	4	56	44	100	4
				19	266	484	750	30
SEMESTER 3 - Summer								
HND5067	Work Placement		CORE	20	280	470	750	30
				20	280	470	750	30
								90
HND IN TOURIST GUIDING F/T YEAR 2								
SEMESTER 1								
CODE	MODULE TITLE	KEY	CHOICE	P/W	CH	SS	TOTAL	ECTS
HND5068	Maltese Culture		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
HND5071	Field Visits - Foreign Language		CORE	4	56	44	100	4
HND5071	Field Visits - Foreign Language		CORE	4	56	44	100	4
HND5122	Field Visits Part 3		CORE	4	56	44	100	4
HND5110	Niche Tourism		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5077	First Aid		CORE	1	16	34	50	2
HND5082	Contemporary Malta		CORE	1	14	36	50	2
HND5021	Project		CORE	1	14	111	125	5
HND5119	Digital Communication and Marketing		CORE	2	28	72	100	4
				20	282	493	775	31
								31

Appendix 5 - Letting off time and sizes of fireworks:

<i>Hruġ minn Niċċa</i> (removal of the statue from its niche)	
1.	20 minutes in daylight and another 20 minutes in the evening. Ground firework (<i>giggifogu</i>) are permitted until midnight.
<i>L-ewwel u t-tieni Jum tat-Tridu</i> (1 st and 2 nd day of Triduum)	
1.	8am or 9am and 12 noon: Not more than 6 petards (<i>murtali tal-bomba</i>) in 10 minutes. The size of the murtali must be less than 10cm in diameter and 10cm in length.
2.	End of a religious function (<i>barka</i>): 20 minutes of letting off various petards (<i>murtali u murtaletti</i>).
3.	Evening display: 20 minutes of <i>murtali</i> and <i>murtaletti</i> , including coloured petards (<i>murtali tal-kulur</i>) not later than 10pm.
4.	Ground firework (<i>giggifogu</i>) are permitted until midnight.
<i>It-tielet Jum tat-Tridu</i> (3 rd day of Triduum)	
1.	As per the 1st and 2nd day of Triduum, the evening display is 45 minutes and the <i>giggifogu</i> permitted until 1am.
<i>Lejliet il-festa</i> (Eve of the feast)	
1.	The morning letting off-of fireworks (<i>Te Deum</i>) lengthens to 30 minutes with the same criteria.
2.	The same applies to the noon firing.
3.	After the evening religious service (<i>Translazzjoni</i>), an hour of display of traditional daylight is permitted.
4.	The evening display must start not later than 10pm and finishes not later than 11.30pm. The whole display must not exceed 2 hours.
<i>Nhar il-festa</i> (Day of the feast)	
1.	The 8am or 9am, together with the noon letting offs' criteria same as above.
2.	During the procession (<i>Purcissjoni</i>) from 7pm until 11pm the latest. A 30-minute break should be allowed.
3.	If the feast occurs in the morning, the same criteria applies between 8am and noon.
4.	In a feast comes between November and March, the regulations are taken on a case-by-case basis.