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# Swing Dance Festivals: The positive effects of a different type of tourism

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## **Abstract**

Swing Dance Festivals have become a big phenomenon in Europe. Hundreds of swing dancers travel every year around Europe to attend these locally held cultural events. Nevertheless, there is little information involving the main features of its organization, nor regarding the motivation factors driving dancers to travel to attend them. The purpose of this research is to raise awareness on the dimensions of this niche market in Europe and provide future Swing Festival organizers the key knowledge to create a product able to attract both local and foreign participants and meet their expectations by taking into account their specific travel motivations. Using both statistical data analysis and a bibliographic review, this study has introduced the main aspects of Swing Dance Festivals in Europe to set some basic knowledge and has gauged its positive impacts on the host cities. The use of Social Media and swing event listing sites for its promotion, together with the integration of distinctive cultural aspects of the destination in the event configuration, was found to be key to attract tourists. This is derived specifically from the high socialization purpose, diversity embracement, and inclusiveness as basic values present in Swing as a culture and therefore part of its dancers' identity and service consumption patterns.

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## **1. Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1. The rationale for the choice**

Every year hundreds of Swing Dance Festivals take place around Europe. Since the rebirth of Swing as a dance and culture, the number of adepts has increased and so has the number of festivals together with its effects on tourism.

Thousands of swing dancers have integrated traveling within Europe to participate in festivals as part of their lifestyles, generating a very specific niche segment. Nevertheless, there is little updated information on how these types of festivals are organized as well as on the already existing effects on tourism in host cities.

This paper was elaborated to fill that gap while raising awareness on this specific dance event market and provide insights to future dance event organizers and hosts.

As a fan of swing dancing, that has attended and after attending multiple festivals in different cities of Europe and Spain, I had great motivation to delve deeper into this interesting topic with aim of exploring the relationship between the cultural and economic aspects of Swing Dance Festivals and the motivations driving its adepts to attend them.

### **1.2. Objectives**

The objectives of this paper are the following:

1. Provide some insights on the Swing dance event market dimensions in Europe and Spain by analyzing data sets
  - a. Analyze their seasonality according to the past years
  - b. Review the geographical distribution of Swing Festivals in Spain
  - c. To assess the positive impacts of Swing Festivals in the host communities.
2. Review the key aspects of its configuration and promotion strategies
3. Analyze the motivation factors influencing swing festival tourists
  - a. Establish a connection between the tourist profile and sharing economy practices

### **1.3. Description of the methodology employed**

To achieve the aim of this paper, I conducted 4 lines of research mixing bibliographic review, data analysis, and observation. Additionally, as a swing festival tourist, I also served as an auto-ethnographic source of data for this study.

Firstly, I collected basic data from the past three years (2017-2019) from the two most important swing festival listing sites (swinghopping.com and Swingplanit.com) to analyze and portray the scope of Swing Festivals in Europe

and Spain. The access to the listing of Festivals was requested to the sources and the data was manually collected from the websites in an excel datasheet. The main measurements were: Number of festivals listed in total in Europe taking place in 2017, 2018 and 2019 per month (Table 3), the number of festivals held in Spain per province in 2018 and 2019 (Table 4) and the length of each festival held in Spain during 2018 (Tables 1 and 2). The results obtained were analyzed and represented in a graph (Figure 1) and a map (Figure 2).

Secondly, through observation, the main aspects of Swing Festivals concerning activities, pricing, and promotion strategies were compiled and reviewed.

Thirdly, a previous empirical study in the field of dance event tourism that determined 5 main dimensions of motivation was used as a guide to analyze the motivations of swing festival tourists.

Finally, the key practices for future swing festival organizers were recommended and positive impacts on host communities were discussed to form the conclusions.

## **2. Chapter 2. Contextualization and Theoretical Framework**

Nowadays, the 'swing festival phenomenon' is at its peak. After its resurgence in the 1990s, several aspects of this dance culture have been recovered, thus making Swing is now part of the lives and identities of thousands of people all around the world and especially in Europe.

Swing dancers have made attending dance events an integral part of their lifestyle, by not only learning the steps and listening to swing music, but also by learning the history of the dance and integrating the retro-vintage dress style, haircut, or inclusive behavior, as a part of their identity. (Kravanja, 2019)

Over 1400 swing dance festivals were held in Europe in recent years (2017-2019). In Spain, more than 50 swing dance Festivals are organized every year by the local Swing dance scenes going from very locally focused festivals with barely 40 to 60 participants to hundreds, attracting both local and foreign dancers and musicians.

### **2.1. The Swing Dance Culture**

In this section, the history and cultural aspects of Swing will be reviewed from its origins to provide a better understanding of how Swing can still be alive and equally be a part of the lifestyle and identity of thousands in our time (generation). More light is additionally shed on its influence on tourist behavior.

Swing is a type of Jazz music that emerged in the 1920s in the USA, with the great Louis Armstrong, consolidating in the 30s with musicians such as Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington or Count Basie and singers such as Billie Holiday or Ella Fitzgerald.

At the same time, multiple dances associated with this style of music and sharing the same pattern as swing music (lots of energy, dynamism, and improvisation) arose. Some examples would be Shag, Balboa or Charleston, but the best known is Lindy Hop, which originated among the African American communities in the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, New York, and attracted a wide variety of people: African Americans and European Americans, the social and economic elite, the middle class, blue-collar workers, Harlemites, and tourists. The inclusiveness of this ballroom enticed people from different social classes, geographic and ethnocultural backgrounds to leave their differences behind and experience the Lindy hop and swing music together. (Spring, 1997, p.185)

After the Great Depression (1929), swing dancing helped to create an escape from economic realities. The swing phenomenon took on deeper meanings as well.

Swing was as important for its cultural resonance as it was for its musical achievement. In a time of brutal racism, Swing was a model of harmony and equality between white and black musicians. It was even seen as a model of the pluralistic democratic ideas of the decade (Pener, 2009, p.9)

After that period, a change in the social cycle was transferred to the music and after the 1960s Swing took a step back. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Swing music and dance reappeared to begin the second era of Swing. "Images of a happy, harmless, sexy, addictive, magical, surprising, life-changing and healthy social environment were promoted and publicly distributed in many promotion spots" (Kravanja, 2019, p.185)

One of the events that contributed to the rebirth of swing dancing was the creation of a company of swing dancers, the 'Rhythm Hot Shots' who were based in Stockholm and specialized in performing in films and shows. Some of the members of this dance company founded the oldest and hugest swing dance camp (Herrang Dance Camp), which takes place every summer since 1982 (Studio 88 Swing, n d.), so it could be considered the precedent of swing dance tourism.

In Spain, swing dances appeared towards the end of the 90s, beginning with Barcelona and Donosti thereafter arriving in Madrid a few years later. But it was in 2010 when these swing dances began to become more known in our country. In 2012 Swing began to spread, becoming popular with many appearances in the media and social networks. (Mad for Swing, n d.) Since then, local scenes have spread all around Spain holding every year more than 50 festivals from the BarSWINGona which in 2018 celebrated its 20th Anniversary to the Mallorca Lindy festival, a festival that has taken place since 2015 but gathers more than 350 dancers from all around the world.

Swing dancers usually describe swing dancing in a very passionate way.

The art of Swing dancing will not only give you a fun way to exercise, enjoy a social setting, and have you meet wonderful people, but also develop better consciousness of your body, stimulate your creativity

since it's an improvised dance. Swing dancing is also highly social, and the swing dance community is very welcoming and warm as a whole. (Studio 88 Swing, n.d.)

## **2.2. Dance festivals as cultural tourism**

It is important as well to understand the concept of 'Festival' in general terms and its function as a cultural tourist attraction.

There are endless types of festivals from focusing on celebrating religious traditions to food festivals. As a result, it seems difficult to give a concrete and widely-applicable definition.

Some dictionaries offer accurate definitions of the word 'festival' that apply to swing dance festivals: "A series of performances of films, plays, music, or dancing that is usually organized in the same place at the same time each year". (Macmillan Dictionary, 2020). "A festival is an event ordinarily staged by a community, centering on and celebrating some unique aspects of that community and its traditions" (Educalingo, 2020).

Other definitions reflect the cultural repercussion of festivals which can as well be outlined in the case of Swing Festivals. "Festivals are no longer merely periodic, cultural, religious, or historical events within communities, but rather a popular means through which citizens consume, produce, and experience Culture" (Bennett et al., 2014, p.818).

## **2.3. Dancing as a tourism activity**

People can enjoy multiple forms of dance. Some do not necessarily imply active participation, but enjoyment by performance-watching.

Ballroom dance and social dance are activities that generate substantial amounts of money. The health, social interaction, and joy benefits derived from dancing are constantly attracting more novices to start taking dance lessons, joining dance associations, attending dance events, and so on.

Active dancing participants may just practice it locally either often or occasionally or they may travel and spend money on dance as a recreational activity.

As noted by (Stevens and Stevens, 2011, p. 7) Dancing is also a big business. We can find schools, competitions, events and dance halls bringing in people and their money. People are willing to spend more money on something they love. We can conclude that bands, courses, dance equipment, and dance events have an impact on the economy. Although the travel and hospitality industry is not an exception, there has been little to no research done in this field, compared to other specific niche markets.

As the number of dancers is increasing, so is the dance market and therefore, the consumption of products and services related to the tourism and hospitality



sector. For example, an increase in the demand for social dance gatherings incurs the rise in the demand for related services such as hotel rooms, rented apartments, hotel ballroom spaces, or catered meals.

### 3. Chapter 3. Results of the study

#### 3.1. Data on Swing Dance Festivals in Europe and Spain

In this section, the results of the elaboration of some general statistics on swing festivals in Europe and Spain during the last years will be reviewed and commented, highlighting the most important findings. Data on number of Festivals, location, length, seasonality and promotion channels, was manually collected from multiple swing event websites and forums for the expatiation of the Figures and Tables included in this section.

The bar chart (Figure 3) illustrates the number of Swing Festivals held in Europe on average per month. The aggregate number of festivals per year was 493 in 2017, 534 in 2018, and 407 in 2019, which results in an average of 478 festivals held in Europe per year.

It can be noted that March, May, and September were the months during which the highest number of festivals were celebrated. As opposed to January, July, August, and December that represent the months with the least number of festivals.

We can establish that there are two 'high seasons' for swing events during the year. The first season goes from the beginning of March until the end of June and the second season from September until the end of November. Therefore, we can conclude that they are organized predominantly during spring and autumn.

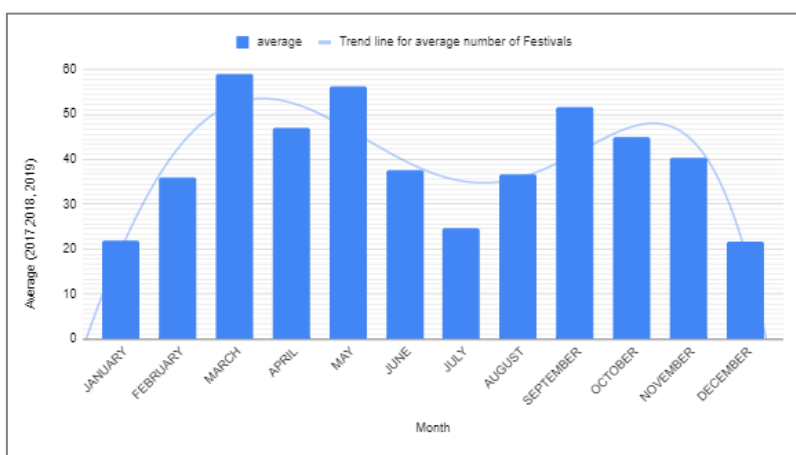
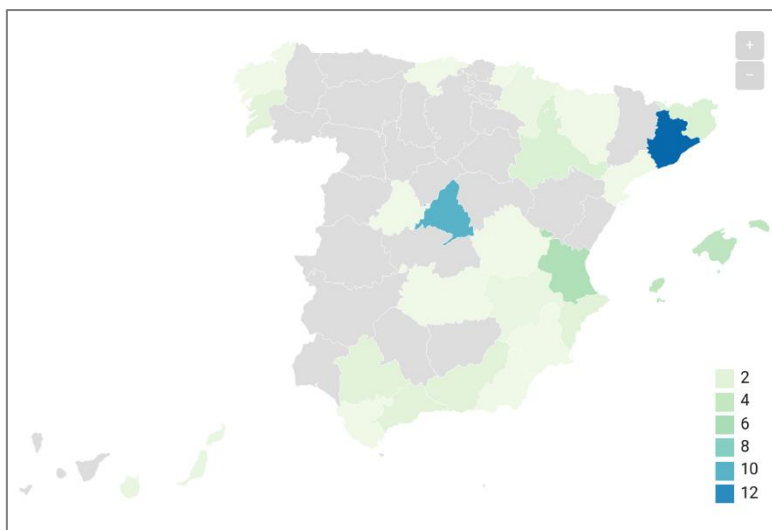


Figure 1. Seasonality. Number of Swing Festivals held in Europe per Month (On average)

Source: Self elaborated

If we move on to analyze the data on Swing Festivals in Spain per province, as shown in *Figure 2*, the provinces that hosted more festivals yearly were: Barcelona in the first place, with an average of 13 festivals, followed by Madrid with 10, Valencia with 5, and the Balearic Islands with 4. One of the possible reasons for this is that Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia are the Spanish provinces with the highest number of inhabitants, in that order. As an illustration, in Barcelona, we can find more than 10 different swing associations and most of them want to organize their own big event, which results in multiple events taking place during the year.

Another key point is that Barcelona and Madrid have the two main Spanish airports, which are among the five European terminals best connected to the city center. (Ramón, 2019) and with the cheapest prices. (Europa Press, 2018) Altogether, these factors contribute to facilitating the accessibility of the festivals to foreign visitors from other regions of Spain and from all around Europe.



*Figure 2.* Swing Festivals in Spain per province (2018-2019)

Source: Self elaborated

Another important point observed is that, as represented in Table 1 and Table 2, more than 80% of the festivals take place during the weekends and last either 3 or 4 days. This aspect allows working people with full-time jobs to make the weekend trip to attend the festivals, without having to wait for long holiday periods like Christmas or Summer. Moreover, by being organized mainly during regular weekends, airplane tickets can be much cheaper in many cases, reducing the costs of the trip and reaching a bigger audience.

Table 1. *Length of Swing Festivals held in Spain (2018)*

Length of the festival (days)	Frequency (2018)	%
2	2	2.94%
3	43	63.24%
4	19	27.94%
5	3	4.41%
7	1	1.47%
Total (N=68)	68	100.00%

Source: Self elaborated

Table 2. *Length of Swing Festivals held in Spain (2019)*

Length of the festival	Frequency (2018)	%
2	2	3.77%
3	27	50.94%
4	18	33.96%
5	3	5.66%
6	1	1.89%
7	2	3.77%
Total (N=54)	53	100.00%

Source: Self elaborated

### **3.2. Common features in Swing Festivals**

After studying in-depth the common aspects among Swing Festivals taking place around Europe through a sample of 30 different festivals, a significant number of common features in its configuration was observed and compiled. As the findings in the previous section have shown, the number of Swing Festivals celebrated yearly oscillated between 400 and 550 from 2017 to 2019. Therefore, the sample can be considered representative.

Next, the main aspects these cultural events have shown to have in common will be described.

#### **3.2.1. Pricing**

Concerning the fares, very different prices are offered according to different factors: length of the festival, number of parties, lessons, and extras included. In multiple cases, additional services can be purchased such as food tastings, pub

crawls, city tours, or merchandising items. Although these services and products are not meant to be the main attraction, they add value to the participant's cultural experience in the destination.

Moreover, additional experiences make swing festival tourism more appealing as a chance to not only enjoy the festival itself through the music, dancing and socializing, but also to be able to discover the city with its natural, gastronomic and cultural value as well.

Except for some festivals like the "IbizaSwingFunFest", which are completely open and free, festivals that require payment request such to be done in advance via bank transfer or payment gateway (when it is available).

### **3.2.2. Activities**

Paying attention to the schedule, as revealed in the previous section, most festivals take place during the weekend and last between 3 and 4 days. Bracelets are given to the participants at the check-in desks to identify them and grant them access to the facilities. Frequently, such bracelets have different colors either depending on the level of the participants or to differentiate the services contracted (as in all-inclusive hotels). For example, to differentiate between participants that have paid for a full-pass and participants that have only paid for a party-pass.

Performances and competitions entail an important part of Swing Festivals. Two types of performances appear in the vast majority of them: The "teachers' presentation" and the "Mix and Match or "Jack and Jill" competition. The teachers' presentation normally takes place during Fridays and its intended to present the instructors that will give the dance lessons during the festivals, throwing a short dance performance. On the other side, there is the "Mix and Match or "Jack and Jill" competition. "Jack and Jill contests are the standard form of competition. This category consists of randomly selected partners and randomly selected music. The emphasis is on spontaneous choreography with a potentially unknown partner." (Callahan, 2005, p. 8)

Tasters are another activity found often in the schedule. They consist of short workshops focused on practicing a very specific skill or trying a different dance style. There are infinite possibilities: from African dance to improvisation or connection-enhancing games.

THURSDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
9 pm	Registration	10am	Registration	11 am	CLASSES (Full Pass Lindy Hop)
10 pm	Taster with Victor & Aya	10:30am	AUDITION (mandatory)	3:30 pm	CLASSES (Solo Jazz & Tap Tracks)
11 pm	PARTY at La Protectora	11:15am	CLASSES (Full Pass Lindy Hop)	7 - 10pm	CLOSING PARTY
FRIDAY		3:30 pm	CLASSES (Solo Jazz & Tap Tracks)		
5 pm	Registration	7pm	Check inn competitions		
6 - 8pm	CLASSES (Full Pass Lindy Hop)	7:15pm	Strictly & Division Prelims		
8:15 pm	Check inn competitions	10pm	Taster Victor & Isa		
8:45 pm	M&M Prelims	11 pm	PARTY with The Hot Swing Sextet & Le Dancing Pepa Swing Band		
10 pm	TASTER Erol & Steph				
11 pm	PARTY with The Hot Swing Sextet				




Figure 3. Festival Schedule example. MoveyourBottom Valencia.

Source: [www.moveyourbottom.com](http://www.moveyourbottom.com)

Regarding the dress code, there are no written rules. Nevertheless, the vintage dressing code is inherent to the identity of the swing community, and participants are encouraged to dress-up fancy for the parties, especially on Saturday night for being usually the most important event night during the festivals. Frequently, it is also the night when the most important band is playing. The rest of the days we can see secondary bands or even DJs instead of live-played music.

### 3.2.3. Promotion strategies

In this section, the advertising and promotion strategies identified through direct observation in promotion forums, Social Media, and official websites of the festivals will be explained and analyzed.

There are multiple non-profit websites dedicated to advertising and promoting Swing Festivals taking place all around the World. These websites do so by putting all the information together in calendars, maps, and lists available to anyone that types “swing Festivals” on Google. *Swing Hopping.com* is an example. We can outline that it is well-positioned on Google as a search engine, for it appears in the second position when doing a quick search using the keywords “swing” and “festivals. Dancers from all around the world can browse which events are taking place when and where and sort them by month, dates, continent, country, or dance style (Lindy Hop, Balboa, Blues, etc.).

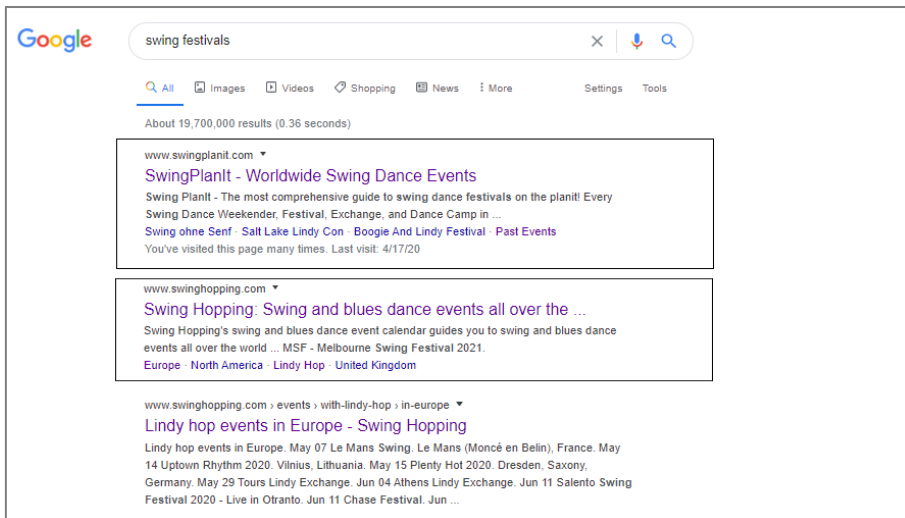


Figure 4. "Swing festivals" search on Google

Source: www.google.com

These websites have a significant relevance when it comes to foster Swing Dance Festival tourism, as they allow for example, for a dancer that lives in Dublin to notice and attend a local festival held in Mallorca that otherwise may have never even heard about. It would be highly expensive for the event organizers to reach such a specific niche market with the same effect by their own means. Hence, if they are interested in having people from around Spain, Europe or even from a different continent attend the festival, they just need to send all the information to these event registration websites and wait for the potential attendants to follow the link to their website or Facebook event, register and pay.

Most of the time the tourists are the ones who look up for events happening around Europe, for a specific weekend that they have free, or in a specific country or city which they want to visit.

We need to outline that this marketing action is completely free, yet highly effective and efficient.



Figure 5. Swing Hopping website

Source: [www.swinghopping.com](http://www.swinghopping.com)

In swing event websites, as shown in Figure 5, the basic information of the events taking place can be found: name, length, style, location, and usually the link to the main source of information, where the festival is advertised. Here we can always find a Facebook event or page, created by the organizers where the main information of the Festival is displayed and where participants can get in touch, ask questions, and updates about the festival are published such as what bands will be playing during the festivals or special offers. For the registration, there are different options available: The option of registering through the website of the event (provided that it has one) or a more rudimentary approach such as a Google Form link provided in the description of the Facebook event.

We can state that social media, and particularly Facebook, is a very important tool for the promotion of swing festivals as it enables not only the direct interaction between organizers and participants but among participants as well, generating a feeling of community and enhancing socialization even before the festival takes place.

Another promotion advantage of the use of social media that was observed is regarding post-event promotion. Generally, a gallery with the official pictures and videos taken during the Festival is uploaded (usually including the logotype) and people tag themselves in the pictures and share the videos in their profiles, resulting in massive publicity for the festival.

Another aspect observed concerning the promotion of the festival was that even for very locally focused festivals the information is mainly in English and if not (very few cases) at least available in the language. This shows the international approach and the overall focus of swing festivals on attracting foreign visitors.

### 3.2.4. Sharing economy practices in accommodation and transport

Derived from an in-depth observation of multiple Swing Festival websites and the interaction of the users in the discussion forums, some trends have been identified with relation to the consumption of accommodation and transport services strongly related to sharing economy practices and services by festival participants. Specifically peer-to-peer marketplace (e.g. Airbnb), collaborative consumption (e.g. BlaBlaCar), and Gift Economy (eg. Couchsurfing). As cited in (Koh et al., 2020) When talking about sharing economy, we are referring to “a wide array of activities in which consumers share privately owned goods with one another outside the boundaries of the traditional business model (Winterhalter et al., 2015).”

In Figure 5, a specific section of the Festival official website is devoted to giving information on accommodation alternatives. We can observe that all the options given are quite budget-focused: Hostelworld, Airbnb, Booking, and free local hosting (peer-to-peer economy).

Checking out websites and event forums on Facebook, we can notice that hotels are hardly ever mentioned. In some cases, the organizers offer hotel rooms at discounted prices, which suggests that a reduced price has been previously negotiated between the hotel and the event organizers.

**Useful Information**

Accommodation

Emerald Swing Festival encourages all local dancers to host travelling hoppers! In order to facilitate communication between dancers we recommend that you use our Facebook event page. Alternatively, you can try to look into some budget options through any of the websites below:

- <https://www.hostelworld.com>
- <https://www.airbnb.ie>
- <https://www.booking.com>

*Figure 6: Emerald Swing Festival official website promoting Sharing Economy platforms and free local hosting*

Source: <http://www.emeraldsing.com/>

In multiple cases, we can find in websites and Facebook event descriptions that organizers encourage participants to connect with other attendants via Social Media and forums to share transport or accommodation. One of the possibilities is to get in touch with other participants attending the event through the Facebook event forum and rent an apartment among a group of people to reduce accommodation costs. In other cases, participants post messages in the public forums requesting to be hosted by locals or the other way around, as we can as well see local dancers offering a free room available at their own houses.



The same applies to transport. If we focus on festivals held in Spain, it is not rare to see people arranging shared transportation to the event location in the forums. We can assume that the main objectives may be reducing expenses and having a more authentic experience.

Derived from these observations we have seen that most festivals do not offer accommodation as such and in many cases, sharing-economy options are recommended. As a result, we can establish a relation between the profile of swing festival tourists and their tendency to choose collaborative practices. From the motivation point of view, we could argue that this tourist profile looks for a deeper connection and socialization experience when attending these festivals. Sharing economy practices offer a more authentic and meaningful service.

Moreover, the efficiency of the Internet, facilitating the connection of people globally, combined with the ability of the Swing community to create trust between strangers, due to its “community-belonging feeling” has set the perfect ground to enhance sharing economy practices.

### **3.3. Profile of the attendees and motivation factors**

When it comes to swing dancing, we can find a wide range of diversity. People from very different age groups, ethnicity, and backgrounds. But as reflected in the contextualization section of this paper, swing dancing has, since its origins, reflected a highly inclusive and diverse community. “In general, dancers range in age from teenagers to octogenarians. Some dancers are highly educated with advanced graduate degrees and others have a high school equivalency certificate.” (Callahan, 2005)

Next, the potential motivation factors influencing the tourists’ decision to travel to attend swing dance festivals, will be analyzed. Crompton and McKay (as cited in Oh, 2009.) argued that “Understanding tourist motivations would pave the way for creating better products and services.” and that “Satisfaction with tourism experiences is intrinsically related to initial motives of tourists”. Hence, the importance of analyzing these factors is due to its relevance from the supply side.

The wants and needs of tourists are often labeled as travel motivations. A motivation factor is something that causes interest or induces a person to act in a certain way. Measuring tourist motivations can be a challenging task, for being “a complex psychological construct and due to the lack of a widely-adopted theoretical approach” (Huang, 2009, p.154). Nevertheless, we can outline multiple ‘possible’ reasons for a dancer to attend a swing dance Festival, based on motivation factors already studied.

According to the results of a study on “dance as a tourism activity” (McCleary et al., 2005, pp.283-287), the main motivation factors that influence dancers to travel can be divided into 6 general factors. (1) Escape and Relaxation, (2)

Socialization, (3) Novelty, (4) Dance Learning, (5) (Dance) Event Enjoyment, and (6) Excitement. Given these points, each factor will be reviewed and described while being applied to the specific case of Swing Dance Festivals. The main factors influencing dancers to attend a festival and thereby, incentivizing their purchase process, expectations, and satisfaction will be examined in-depth.

**Escape and Relaxation (1).** Dance Festivals can have quite hectic schedules: late-ending parties, early lessons the day after, quick city tours, and multiple workshops are often offered. This can lead to fast meals and not much time to rest. Nevertheless, one of the main reasons why people attend them is to relax and get away from their daily routine. Thanks to the cozy environment and the positive energy that swing music is known to have, it is not difficult to understand, how participating in these festivals can help to relieve stress, tension, or anxiety. "In good times and bad, people have turned to dance to escape their troubles, go out and have a good time. From high school proms to weddings and other occasions, dance creates some of our most memorable personal moments" (Stevens and Stevens, 2011)

**Socialization (2).** Socialization is another main travel motivator. As already highlighted when reviewing the "Swing Dance Culture" section, Swing is more than a dance for its adepts. It is a warm and welcoming community of people, that socializes within a safe and healthy environment and shares values of open-mindedness, respect, and positivity."

The tourists may travel on their own, in couples or with a group of friends, and therefore strengthen interpersonal relations. Furthermore, swing festivals offer a higher degree of socialization than other types of events, as swing as a social dance itself entails body contact and changing the dance partner after every song.

**Novelty (3).** Swing Festival Tourism can be driven as well by the motivation to visit a new city. Trying out the local gastronomy or doing a sightseeing tour during the event schedule gaps or attending only the parties and skipping the workshops, is another possibility for those to whom visiting the city is one of its main travel motivators.

**Dance Learning (4).** Swing festival tourism can be classified as cultural tourism, and therefore, one of the main motivation factors is directly related to learning, mainly dance learning in this case. As an illustration, learning new steps from the hand of a nationally or even internationally recognized professional is something that most Swing Festivals offer as part of the Festival schedule. Therefore, a specific expert giving workshops at a Festival may be the main reason for someone to attend that specific festival. In a similar fashion, by attending a Festival, participants can dance with new people, which is another way for dancers to improve their skills. This has to do with the fact that Swing is not a ballroom dance, but a social dance. In ballroom dancing, people learn choreographed routines and try to master them dancing with the same partner. On the contrary, social dance entails dancing with a different person

every song, spontaneity, and constant interplay between the music and the partner. (Stevens and Stevens, 2011). As a result, through practicing with different partners, dancers enrich their dance.

**Dance event enjoyment (5).** This factor is linked to the enjoyment of the Festival activities. Swing events also have a big spectacle component, from the “teachers’ presentation” where the instructors show their talent with a short performance to the “Mix and match” or “Jack and Jill” competitions. There are usually complementary activities like music jams, tastings, city tours, or local food tastings, depending on what the city has to offer.

**Excitement (6).** Dancing itself is one of the motivators for the tourist. Swing dancing is a very complete exercise: Studies have revealed that dancing is even positive for ensuring mental health, as it is a social activity that enhances creativity and self-expression, improves self-esteem, and lowers stress levels. Moreover, the neurochemicals released while dancing gives dancers a feeling of happiness and well-being, which makes it very addictive. (Swing Patrol, 2019)

### **3.4. Positive impacts of Swing festivals on the host cities**

After reviewing the findings of the analysis in the previous sections concerning trends, common aspects, and participants’ motivation factors, we can outline multiple positive impacts of swing festivals on the host cities.

Multiple authors have reviewed the positive effects of festivals in the host communities: As cited by Durieux et al. (2013), for Hoeller (2002) festivals are the activities that offer the most economic and social returns to the country and the host cities. According to (Pardo, 2001), festivals help energize and diversify the local economy, offer more and better services to tourists, and extend or encourage new visits. Gürsoy et al, (2002) asserted that festivals are a tourist attraction with unique features because of their interdependence of an event with its physical environment. Bahl (2003) highlights that events generate direct and indirect jobs, attract new investments, and mitigate the impacts caused by seasonality.

#### **3.4.1. Seasonality reduction factor**

Having its peak season during March, May, and September, Swing Festivals contribute to the extension of the tourist season for European destinations with high seasonality and whose tourism has a strong relation with climate conditions, as it is the case of sun and beach destinations and winter destinations. (Cardona, 2014) Another effect derived from it, is that the festival not being held during the peak of the season, means that destinations are less congested or massified. This for the tourists can be translated into a better image of the destination and higher ability for local service providers to offer a higher quality experience for the visitors.

### **3.4.2. Impact on residents**

Gursoy et al. (2004) noted that “Festivals and special events generate costs such as increases in prices of goods and services, an increased level of crowding in shops and streets, traffic congestion, and parking problems (Jeong& Faulkner, 1996).” However, in the case of regular swing festivals with several participants ranging from 80 to 400 hundred, such impacts are not very significant. Nevertheless a ‘manageable’ number of participants makes it possible for both big and small cities to host a swing festival without having a significant negative impact on residents, as can be the case of multitudinous music festivals.

Another benefit is related to local partnerships. Swing Festivals usually engage local collaborators like academies, bars, hotels, or vintage-clothing stores to sponsor the festival or give discounts to the participants. As a result, these partnerships have a positive impact on local businesses, generating economic activity, and dynamizing the destination.

Focusing on the consumption of accommodation and transport services, we could argue that the frequent practices of swing festival participants related to the peer-to-peer and sharing economy, can lead to a smaller economic impact in the local areas. In this scenario this frequent practices help lower the primary costs of accommodation and transport for the tourists, but in return entails a smaller revenue for that market. Nevertheless, it can motivate dancers to spend a bigger part of their budget on other services and products in the destination such as bars and restaurants or festival merchandising items.

Finally, another positive impact of swing festivals in the host areas is related to the image of the city. The image generated by Swing dance festivals can be highly positive. A newspaper article was published in 2019 during the celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Mallorca Lindy Festival regarding the positive image generated. In the article, the author and witness explained that during one of the social dances that took place in the city center, the social dance and music attracted many tourists and pedestrians who started watching and some even ended up joining the dancers. The contagious and happy environment that was spread on that Friday in ‘El Born’ invited tourists and pedestrians to join the dance, who, without even knowing the basic steps, could not help but join the dancers when the rhythm of the swing music caught them. (Aguirre, 2019)

## **4. Conclusions:**

By writing this paper I have tried to raise awareness on the swing dance festival phenomenon in Europe, its positive effects on the host areas and enlighten future dance event organizers and hosts with the necessary knowledge to create a product (a Swing Dance Festival) able to attract tourists from different countries and meet its participants' expectations.

After collecting and analyzing the data, it seems clear that there are two peak-seasons for Swing Festivals during the year: From the beginning of March until the end of June and from September until the end of November. This can make Swing festivals a contributor to extending the season in those destinations that have high seasonality, and by being less congested the destinations can provide higher quality service and show a more attractive image to the tourists.

I have observed common aspects in the setup of Swing Festivals that I consider should be taken into account when organizing a festival. Holding them during the weekends, ensures the attendance of most people. Posting the festival information in Swing event forums like *Swingplanit.com* or *Swinghopping.com* is the most efficient and effective way to promote the event and attract tourists, for these websites are already well-positioned (in terms of SEO), and allow reaching a global audience without costs.

The bibliographic review conducted in this paper has revealed that connecting in a deeper way through dance, inclusiveness, and socialization among diverse people is a distinctive aspect present in the swing dance culture and a clear motivation factor for swing event tourists. Social media provides the perfect environment to enable the connection among festival participants as well as the post-event promotion through sharing pictures and videos of the event. Therefore, the use of social media deems essential.

A festival should aim to be unique and seek differentiation and to do so, it is vital to integrate the distinctive aspects of local culture in the Festival to enrich the participants' experience: A historical location for the event or typical gastronomic activities would be some examples, but the possibilities are of course endless.

Focusing on the demand side, to cover the main motivators of potential Swing festival tourists, a festival has to ensure its participants: (1)Relaxation, as a way to escape and relieve stress, (2)Socialization, by promoting and fostering the formation of connection among its participants, (3)Novelty, by offering additional experiences related to the unique features of the host city, (4) Dance learning, by providing either dance lessons or tasters, (5) Dance event enjoyment, including performances and competitions to dynamize the event, and finally (6) Excitement, by providing an overall unique experience.

Additionally, after conducting this research, I believe that Swing Festivals can not only benefit its organizers, but have a positive impact on the host areas as well. From the perspective of tourists, festivals can give more visibility to the local culture, energize its tourism or even increase the consumption of transport and accommodation services, bearing in mind that those services can be often related to sharing economy and altruism.

To conclude, I consider that it would be interesting to conduct further investigation on the relation between the Swing Festival tourist profile and their tendency to demand Sharing Economy services, due to their high component as authenticity and socialization-seeker tourists.

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## 6. Annexes

Table 3. Number of Swing Festivals held in Europe per month

Month	2017	2018	2019	Average (rounded)
January	17	32	17	22
February	26	49	33	36
March	57	70	50	59
April	50	54	37	47
May	47	63	59	56
June	42	40	31	38
July	31	21	22	25
August	36	31	43	37
September	64	53	38	52
October	50	49	36	45
November	49	47	25	40
December	24	25	16	22

Source: Self elaborated



Table 4. Number of Swing Festivals per Province in Spain

Province	nº of Festivals (2018)	nº of Festivals (2019)	Average
Barcelona	15	12	13.5
Madrid	12	8	10
Valencia	6	5	5.5
Baleares	4	5	4.5
Gerona	2	3	2.5
Zaragoza	3	2	2.5
Alicante	2	2	2
Granada	3	1	2
Málaga	3	1	2
Pontevedra	2	2	2
Sevilla	2	2	2
Albacete	1	2	1.5
Las Palmas	1	2	1.5
Navarra	2	1	1.5
Ávila	1	1	1
Santa Cruz	2	0	1
Vizcaya	2	0	1
Cantabria	0	1	0.5
Cádiz	0	1	0.5
Ciudad Real	1	0	0.5
Cuenca	1	0	0.5
Guipúzcoa	1	0	0.5
Huesca	1	0	0.5
La Coruña	0	1	0.5
Múrcia	0	1	0.5
Tarragona	0	1	0.5
Almería	1	0	0.5

Source: Self elaborated