

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# THE HALLMARK EVENTS IN GREAT CULTURAL TOURISTIC DESTINATIONS. THE CASE OF GRECO'S YEAR IN TOLEDO, SPAIN

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“The year in which El Greco broke all records”  
García (2014)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has gained a great importance, going from being an activity of the minority elite to something frequent and common (Bedate, Herrero y Sanz, 2004: 102). Their development takes place mainly in the historical centers of the cities (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000). There is a symbiosis between culture, heritage and tourism (Jansen-Verbeke and Lievois, 1999: 87). In this way, cultural tourism is seen as the fastest growing segment in the European tourist market (Richards, 1996: 87) or anywhere (Zeppel and Hall, 1992). In Spain, the historic cities begin to develop their own tourist policy throughout the 1990s of the 20th century, a period that coincides with its rediscovery as tourist destinations (De la Calle y García, 2016: 692). The cities or historical sites declared Heritage of Humanity by the Unesco, as the case study of Toledo, constitute an added value to ensure the existence of a rich historical and cultural heritage that meets the demands of cultural tourists (Cordente et al., 2011: 84).

Events tourism represents a development of the destinations. It has capacity to generate local growth and attract tourists (González and Morales, 2017: 340). Events are an important motivator for tourism and a prominent figure in the plans of development and marketing for many destinations (Getz, 2008: 404). You can generate new products in a relative short period of time, giving place to repeated visits and higher costs (Richards 2005: 69). They serve to distinguish a city or a region of your competitors and you can renew or encourage a tourist destination (Richards, 1993). Cities are increasingly using the cultural events to improve their image, stimulate urban development and attract visitors and investment (Richard and Wilson, 2004: 1931). There is a growing increase of cultural and tourist events in recent years (González and Morales, 2017: 340). The calendar of cul-

tural events is in explosion, within a process of cultural revival and search for new tourism niche markets (Jansen-Verbeke and Lievois, 1999: 88). Each year a large number of events of a different nature encourage tourists to visit the cities that host them (Piva et al., 2017: 100), events where the main force is clearly tourism (Getz, 2008: 422). Therefore, there are more and more destinations that try to take advantage of the potential of these events in the implementation of various economic and tourism objectives (Oklobdzija, 2015).

The important advantage that the heritage sites have is the presence of a settled real cultural capital (Zukin, 1991). This heritage may result in the creation of new products such as cultural events. Those with distinctive character are of special interest, brand or label (hallmark). Richards (2017:12) points out that further analysis and research is needed to examine the different types of events, the visitor profile and behavior. In this article we intend to provide a study on the hallmark events held in consolidated cultural destinations. The academic trend today is to continue researching case studies, perhaps because each territory has its own characteristics and the same methodologies (polished and Ruiz, 2017: 403) cannot always be replicated. Su and Wall (2013) conclude that it is necessary to articulate more case studies, in greater detail, with clear concepts and theoretical frameworks, in a variety of sites to lead to the understanding of the relationship tourism and heritage. Getz (1989 and 1991) argues that there is a need for reports of case studies of events and their impacts. In the research on tourism of events, this same author (Getz, 2008: 417) points out the importance of assessments subsequent to their celebration. We choose this option in this article, analyzing a distinctive tourism event into a cultural destination consolidated after its completion. It is considered that the approach to the case study is a methodology qualified for a deep understanding about the hallmark events in cultural tourist destinations.

The core studied in this article is a valuable example. Toledo, heritage city, is one of the main destinations of cultural tourism in Spain, along with Granada and the Alhambra, and Santiago de Compostela and its Road (Squire, 2018). However, the tourism model of Toledo is mature type with symptoms of certain exhaustion at the beginning of the current century (Troitino, 2005: 417). For this reason, this city is celebrating events with cultural orientation, taking advantage of commemorations with historical meaning as the V centenary of the birth of Carlos V in 2000 or the IV centenary of the publication of *El Quijote* in 2005. It is intended to encourage tourism in Toledo and create new products. In the year 2014, on the occasion of the commemoration of the IV centenary of the death of El Greco, a big investment was made in its celebration. It was a clear commitment to promote and develop tourism in the city through the so-called Year of El Greco.

In the year 2014 took place the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Cretan painter. As a result of this event, the IV centenary of the death of el Greco was organized in Toledo city, where the painter died after having carried out the main thickness of his work there. It was, therefore, a kind of cultural celebration, a commemoration, following the typology of planned events of Getz (2008: 404); Although also related to events of art, since the painting is a fundamental element. In addition, it would fit within the definition of Ritchie (1984:2) of the *hallmark events*, since it is an important event once clearly developed to improve the profitability of Toledo as a tourist destination. It also responds to the definition given by Jago and Shaw (1998: 28-29) to define special events (special events) to meet the

main attributes that these events must have: be unique and special, have a great economic impact, attract the media attention, raise the image or the profile of the local region, being rare or exceptional occurrences, have limited duration, provide a social experience and contribute to the development of tourism. In fact, it's an event that declares having as main objective the promotion of tourism and tourist attraction. Among its objectives we can find the boosting and dynamization of cultural, tourist, economic and business activities (El Greco Foundation 2014, 2015: 10). Following the classification of González y Morales (2017: 342), it would be a cultural event oriented towards tourism based on the values of the local heritage (the legacy of el Greco).

In short, we are in front of a cultural event, a historical and artistic commemoration with a distinctive and unique character. An event featuring four experiential dimensions that consumers wished, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999); education, through learning about el Greco and its historical context; escapism, through evasion of the usual routine with the participation in a single event and within the framework of the heritage city of Toledo; aesthetics, provided by the paintings of El Greco, and entertainment, through a leisure activity through cultural tourism.

This article is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the impacts of the hallmark events in cultural tourist destinations. That is its goal. The structure of the article begins with an introduction. Then it sets out the theoretical framework with a brief literature review and analysing the cultural events and tourism value. Later, the methodology used is detailed. Subsequently, we present the results with the analysis of the post case study event. Finally, the work is closed with some conclusions. This summary in English includes the introduction, the methodology and the conclusions of the article. The findings of this study are located in the context of other analyses of events in heritage sites. The results can help to shape the evaluation, planning and policy for events.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study of qualitative cases is a research approach that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within a specific context using a variety of data sources (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This research adopts the unique explanatory case study type (Yin, 2003). This method makes it possible to answer the research questions made (Piva et al., 2017: 100). In this article, the object of study chosen is the hallmark event of the IV Centenary of the death of El Greco, held in Toledo in 2014. Thus, the chosen study area is a Spanish consolidated cultural tourist destination (Escudero, 2018). There is a strong link of the event concluded with a place, Toledo, where tourism is central to the urban economy. The article is based on a post event analysis following the recommendation of the specialist in this field of study Getz (2008: 417). Within the possible methods of research on tourism, from the events targeted by Getz (2008), he opts for a literature review; observing directly; by the study of sources, the survey of hotel occupancy of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE, online) and using the memory of the event (El Greco Foundation 2014, 2015); and, mainly, by a phenomenological method through a survey. It is a research based on conceptual and empirical scrutiny.

They have used questionnaires, structured as a main methodology to carry out the investigation, just as Piva et al. (2017) do. The survey is face to face with these questionnaires made in the street and chosen at random in the historic center and made to residents randomly selected throughout the city of Toledo. While in previous research surveys were conducted in specific places of the event (Ruiz, 2017: 36), and the Foundation El Greco also made its study in this way in 2014 (2015:187), the questionnaires were delivered through the old town to visitors and residents of the city. The most visited places were chosen in the city (Troitino, 2005) for the first ones, but fleeing from places with references to the Year of El Greco. The goal was to really know if visitors had knowledge or not of the event. They preferred to capture the host community in different neighborhoods of Toledo, not just in the historical centre. This avoided the bias that might arise if only we asked residents near the physical places of the event.

The survey took place throughout the month of November until December 9th, 2014. It was chosen to make the questionnaire at the end dates of the event in order to have a broader perspective. Visitors coming to Toledo had the sufficient opportunity to receive information about the Centenary and the residents could go and meet some acts. There were 546 surveys, from which 543, 270 were valid and 273 made among residents and visitors.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The development of cultural tourism in recent years has increased competition between destinations. The hallmark events have a high tourist value. Cities and territories opt for the holding of these events to increase the number of visitors and revenues through tourism, as well as the image of the destination and the sense of community. In this article there has been a post analysis event of the IV centenary of the death of El Greco in 2014 in Toledo. It's a distinctive event in a consolidated cultural tourist destination.

The first question made was whether the Year of El Greco was a real boost for tourism activity in Toledo. The answer obtained is affirmative. It was a turning point in the tourism of the destination. He also wondered whether the number of visitors actually increased. The evidence obtained shows they did, the influx into the city was significantly increased by the event. So, did it generate revenue? Again the answer is affirmative, as demonstrated by the memory of activities of the event. We are facing an example of successful event tourism in a cultural tourist destination. In fact, the model has been followed later in other Spanish cities, such as the celebration of the year of Murillo in Sevilla. It also sought to examine the results of the event at the sociocultural level. It arose the question if visitors came to Toledo for cultural reasons. This mostly happens. Thus the question whether the event was the reason why he had opted for the destination arose. And if, in fact, they knew it was? The survey shows that the degree of prior knowledge of the existence of the year of El Greco was wide between visitors, and almost total in the case of the locals. However, tourists and hikers respondents relate the main reason for his visit with the culture, heritage and history of the destination. The event would not be the sole cause or the primary arrival at Toledo. The commemoration acts as an extraordinary boost, if for a destination with a very definite prior patrimonial image that is the main reason for the

visit. The year of El Greco complements that image and managed to increase the regular influx of visitors to the city. But do travelers participate in cultural activities scheduled for the event? Yes, they do so in a 70% approximately. Even so, there are ten points more of visitors who know the year of El Greco (almost 80%) than those who participate.

A main issue that arose was: do cultural events transcend the host community? In the survey, more than 95% of the residents were aware of the celebration of the year of El Greco in Toledo. There is an identification of the city with the event. But, is there active participation by locals in the programmed events? Are cultural events a motivation for the host community to visit its heritage places? The result is that almost 60% of surveyed residents visited the temporary exhibitions of El Greco. 40%, did not. It is evident that the difference within the local society between those who know the event and those who actually participate in it is very high in the case studied.

The findings of this study are located in the context of other investigations of events in heritage areas. This article provides points for discussion on the analysis of historic cities that increasingly use more hallmark events to improve their image, attract visitors and investors and spur economic growth through tourism. We must consider if the cultural hallmark events have to actively involve the host community. Its organizers should consider if the results stop in tourism and local identity, or if they have also been cultural, educational and social goals of heritage through the active participation of a substantial majority of residents.