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**Local Engagement in International Arts Festivals:  
Implications for Sustainable Tourism Practices**

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# Local Engagement in International Arts Festivals: Implications for Sustainable Tourism Practices

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Despite the growing prominence of international arts festivals, local visitor engagement often remains suboptimal. In the case of the Hong Kong Arts Festival (HKAF), there is a limited understanding of the key factors that drive local attendance and interest. Without targeted insights into the demographic and attitudinal determinants influencing participation, festival organizers face challenges in developing effective strategies to attract and retain local audiences. This study identifies and analyze the demographic and attitudinal factors that significantly influence local visitors' attendance at the Hong Kong International Arts Festival. Using a quantitative research design data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire administered to a representative sample of 1,034 local festival attendees. The survey captured demographic, attitudinal, and behavioural variables relevant to festival participation. To identify significant predictors of attendance, the study employed logistic regression analysis while paired samples t-tests were conducted to assess the relationship between local visitors' interest in specific performances and their overall interest in the festival. The research identifies four key determinants that impact local attendance. These factors include the education level of attendees, the number of adults accompanying them, the presence of children in the group, and the frequency of previous visits to the festival. The paired samples t-test results indicate that visitors' interest in ten particular performances is significantly correlated with the broader interest in the event. Understanding these influential factors is crucial for

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the authority of HKAF as well as the local Hong Kong government in developing targeted initiatives that can enhance the sociocultural appeal to local visitors and economic impact of the Hong Kong Arts Festival. These empirical insights and some specific policy recommendations including examples provided in the paper are applicable to other large-scale arts festivals, offering a framework for improving local visitor engagement and maximising the festival's sociocultural and economic benefits.

**keywords:** Arts festivals; local visitors; demographic, attitudinal and behavioral factors; Hong Kong.

## 1 Introduction

Arts festivals are recognized as key economic drivers, particularly in economically and culturally rich countries Olsen (2013). They play a crucial role in both tourism and leisure activities, significantly impacting the economic and socio-cultural landscape of the host region (Ramesh (2024); Foster (2022); Gamble (2022); Amorim et al. (2020); Georgoula and Terkenli (2017) and Arcodia and Whitford (2006)). Increasingly, cultural festivals are being seen as economic engines and tools to enhance the appeal of their locations (Garcia (2004); Kong (2000) and Miles and Paddison (2005)). This perception has led to increased promotion and global awareness of such events (Yeoman (2013)). Since the late 1980s, the number of arts festivals has been growing, becoming integral to many tourism strategies (Gotham (2005); Prentice and Andersen (2003) and Quinn (2010)), especially in economically and culturally rich countries.

Arts festivals play a crucial role in achieving both social and economic objectives for nations, states, and communities. Numerous studies highlight how cities leverage arts and cultural events to advance a variety of societal goals (Griffiths (2006) and Griffiths et al. (2003)). Consequently, urban arts festivals have proliferated more rapidly than those in rural or suburban areas Pejovic (2009). The Hong Kong Arts Festival (HKAF) exemplifies how such events can help a city reposition itself and actively engage in cultural activities, thereby promoting a creative economy. Establishing arts festivals is a strategy for enhancing a city's cultural status and generating additional economic activity Scott (2004). These events also attract more consumers and potential investors, fostering a sense of communal pride (Evans (2005); Quinn (2005)).

From a travel and tourism perspective, international arts festivals are cohesive events designed to appeal to local audiences while also attracting visitors and investors from beyond the immediate area Quinn (2010). These festivals are valuable not only to the host communities but also to the visitors they draw (Kim et al. (2010)). Arts festivals offer a comprehensive package that showcases the location and its cultural credentials to a wider audience. As Getz (1991), p. 11) noted, "...arts festivals and public celebrations are found in all societies. Alongside other special events, they are increasingly viewed as unique tourist attractions and destination image makers." Beyond attracting tourists, arts festivals promote a specific discourse that frames cultural heritage and tradition

in a way that aligns with community needs MacCannell (1992). In this manner, arts festivals shape a destination's socio-cultural positioning within a broader geographical and political context Lee et al. (2011).

Arts festivals, whether local or international, have been extensively studied for their socioeconomic impacts on nations and communities. Quinn (2010) and Arcodia and Whitford (2006) noted that there is a substantial body of international literature exploring both the positive and negative effects of arts festivals across various social domains. Many studies highlight the benefits of arts festivals, such as generating tax revenue (Crompton and McKay (1997); Lee et al. (2008)), enhancing community pride and cohesion (Long and Perdue (1990); Rao (2001)), and promoting economic development (McKercher et al. (2006)). Local arts festivals also significantly contribute to the local economy and tourism. The recognition of major festivals as tourism promoters has led to their rapid proliferation worldwide, integrating them into broader cultural strategies (Gotham (2005); Shin (2004)). However, this paper does not aim to critique specific strategies or analyze the strengths and weaknesses of particular approaches. Instead, it seeks to understand the factors influencing local visitors to an international arts festival held in Hong Kong.

### 1.1 Key Research Questions and Objectives

As discussed earlier, numerous recent studies agree that arts festivals can provide long-term socioeconomic and cultural benefits (Ramesh (2024); Foster (2022); Gamble (2022); Amorim et al. (2020); Georgoula and Terkenli (2017); Arcodia and Whitford (2006); Garcia (2004); Jackson et al. (2005); Kim et al. (2010); Kong (2000); Lee et al. (2011); McKercher et al. (2004); Miles and Paddison (2005); Olsen (2013); Quinn (2010)). However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the factors that actually influence local visitors' interest in an international arts festival. Understanding why local visitors attend international arts festivals and what attracts them will provide festival organizers with crucial information to aid in future programming and potentially increase attendance. This study aims to empirically answer three research questions.

The present study seeks to advance the field of festival-related travel and tourism by drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991), a widely accepted psychological framework for understanding human behavior. TPB suggests that an individual's behavioral intentions—and ultimately their actions—are shaped by three key determinants: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. By applying this theory to the context of arts festival attendance, this study aims to explore how local visitors' attitudes, social influences, and perceived ease or difficulty in attending the event contribute to their interest in and engagement with the HKAF. In doing so, the study not only tests the applicability of TPB in a cultural tourism setting but also contributes to a deeper understanding of the motivational drivers behind festival participation, particularly in the case of international arts offerings within a local urban context. Therefore, grounded in the TPB, the following three research questions have been formulated:

1. *Do the demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors of local visitors influence*

*their interest in and attendance at the Hong Kong Arts Festival?*

2. *Which demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors of local visitors are associated with their interest in specific major arts festival performances, particularly those featuring international (non-local) acts, and what are the underlying reasons for this interest?*
3. *To what extent are local visitors' demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors correlated with their interest in international arts festival performances?*

To address the stated research questions, this study empirically identifies and critically examines the demographics of local visitors at the Hong Kong Arts Festival (HKAF), as well as the attitudinal and behavioral factors that may influence their interest in and attendance at various international acts on the program. Additionally, this study aims to explore correlations or associations between the demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors of local visitors and their attendance at specific performances. Achieving these objectives is expected to provide insights into the links between sustainable local tourism and socio-economic and cultural development, which could be valuable for authorities promoting these events and contribute to their policies and strategies.

## **1.2 A Brief Overview of the Hong Kong Arts Festival**

The Hong Kong Arts Festival (HKAF) was inaugurated in 1973 and has significantly enriched the cultural landscape of Hong Kong ever since (?). The festival's program features a diverse range of international and local artists and companies, presenting various art forms including performing arts, popular entertainment, film, and visual arts. With over 100 events spread across three to four weeks, the HKAF attracts approximately 100,000 ticket sales (? , p. 376). While about 10% of festival attendees come from outside Hong Kong, the vast majority (around 90%) are local visitors, indicating its importance as a tourist attraction. The HKAF is also recognized as a significant value-creating and truly multicultural event for the city-state of Hong Kong. According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), the HKAF offers a unique opportunity to experience the modern "East-Meets-West destination" (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2004). A study by McKercher et al. (2004) suggests that festivals not only serve as tourist attractions but also help to promote the distinctiveness of destinations such as Hong Kong. Therefore, it is evident that international arts festivals attract both local and international tourists to their events and contribute to the local economy and social fabric of the destination.

## **2 Data and Research Method**

### **2.1 Sources of Data**

This study utilized primary data collected from the Hong Kong Arts Festival (HKAF) through a field survey conducted during the festival's events. The surveys were administered randomly at 41 performances, encompassing a variety of art forms, times, and

venues. Patrons attending these events were randomly selected to complete the survey, either before the show or during the intermission. While no purposive sample selection criteria such as gender or age have been adopted, it was ensured that all randomly selected patrons had entry tickets allowing them to attend all 41 show performances. A total of 1,169 valid completed questionnaires were obtained from both local and international visitors, with an average of 28 surveys collected from each event. All the measurement items were newly adopted, and they included continuous, binary, open-ended, and closed-ended questions. The analysis presented in this study focused solely on the data obtained from questionnaires completed by local visitors. In total, 1,034 local visitors completed the interview questionnaire, accounting for 88.45% of the total visitor audience for the festival. Incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. The questionnaire was provided in both English and Chinese to accommodate the diverse population in attendance. Respondents were asked to indicate the performances they had attended or planned to attend, as well as the factors that attracted them to the festival. Additionally, respondents were required to select from the full list of available performances those events they found interesting, even if they did not plan to attend them.

## 2.2 Techniques of Analysis

To achieve the research objective, which is identifying socioeconomic, demographic and behavioural factors significantly influencing local visitors' attendance at HKAF, this study employed logistic regression as the main analytical technique. Prior to that a reliability test was conducted on survey responses related to all 41 show performances, yielding a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70. This result is generally considered acceptable, indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency reliability for the scale. Then, descriptive statistics, including the number of observations, means, and standard deviations for the demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors of local visitors have been computed. A brief description of the analytical technique of logistic regression is provided below. The study also utilized paired samples t-tests to assess potential significant correlations between local visitors' interest in international acts and their demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors. The correlation coefficient, obtained through a paired samples t-test, represents the numerical value from the correlation test on two variables. Descriptive statistics, including the number of observations, means, and standard deviations, were calculated for all variables. The analysis was conducted using the SPSS software package (V23) to estimate descriptive statistics, perform binary logistic regression, and conduct paired samples t-tests.

Logistic regression allows the modelling of dependence of a binary response variable on one or more explanatory variables, which includes both the continuous and categorical explanatory variables. The binary logistic regression model linking predictor variables to probabilities is depicted below:

$$P = f(\alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n) = \frac{\exp(\alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n)}{1 + \exp(\alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n)}.$$

The simple form of a binary logistic regression model is expressed as follows:

$$\log\left(\frac{P}{1-P}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n.$$

where the quantity  $\frac{P}{1-P}$  relates the probability of an event occurring,  $P$ , to the probability of failure,  $1 - P$ , referring to  $\frac{P}{1-P}$  as the odds of success.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Descriptive Statistics

In the initial stage of analysis, descriptive statistics were computed for all variables, including the number of responses, as well as their mean and standard deviation (see Table 1). These statistics offer quantitative summaries of the responses provided by local visitors to the questions asked and the observations made. The descriptive statistics used in this study form the foundation of the initial data description, which is integral to more comprehensive statistical analyses, including binary logistic regression and paired sample correlation through t-tests.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics (sample size, mean, and standard deviation) for a set of demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral variables collected from 1,034 local visitors who attended the HKAF. These statistics help provide a profile of the typical local visitor and their engagement with different performances. For example, with a mean of 0.36, the proportion of male visitors was approximately 36%, indicating that females made up the majority of the sample. The average age of visitors was 33.85 years (SD = 14.69), suggesting a wide age range among attendees. Visitors had an average of 14.73 years of education (SD = 3.47), indicating a relatively well-educated sample. Visitors were accompanied on average by 1.41 adults (SD = 1.25) and 1.68 children (SD = 7.71). The high standard deviation for children suggests that while many groups had few or no children, some had substantially more, indicating skewness in this variable. Average meal expenditure was HKD 97.11 (SD = 231.86), showing high variability in spending patterns. Visitors spent HKD 29.21 on transport on average (SD = 160.90), again showing large variation, likely due to distance travelled or transport type.

About 19.5% of the sample were first-time attendees. Among returning visitors, the average number of prior visits was 3.99 (SD = 5.68), with substantial variability, suggesting differing levels of engagement. Attendance at specific performances was generally low, with most shows attended by less than 25% of the sample. For example, the highest attendance was for *English National Ballet: Alice in Wonderland* (23.7%), followed by *Pygmalion* (16.7%) and *Metamorphosis* (15.9%). The lowest attendance was seen for performances such as *Asia Pacific Dance Platform* (2.0%) and *Circo Aereo: Un Cirque Plus Juste* (2.1%). Standard deviations for these binary attendance variables reflect the binary coding (1 = attended, 0 = not attended), with higher values indicating greater variability in attendance.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Local Visitors' Demographic, Attitudinal and Behavioural factors

<b>Local Visitors' Demographic, Attitudinal and Behavioural Factors</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Gender (1 if male; 0 if female)	1034	0.3617	0.48073
Age (in years)	1034	33.8520	14.68845
Education (in years)	1034	14.7292	3.46971
Number of adults in the visiting group	1032	1.4128	1.24659
Number of children in the visiting group	1033	1.6815	7.71188
Meal expenditure (in HKD)	1032	97.1105	231.86314
Transport expenditure (in HKD)	1032	29.2151	160.90269
First visitor status (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1954	0.39667
Number of prior visits	1032	3.989	5.6826
Attendance of Asia Pacific Dance Platform (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0203	0.14112
Attendance of Bernard Haitink and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1054	0.30724
Attendance of Chick Corea and John McLaughlin Five Peace Band (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1103	0.31335
Attendance of Circo Aereo: Un Cirque Plus Juste (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0213	0.14437
Attendance of Company Ea Sala: The White Body (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0774	0.26731
Attendance of Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1364	0.34334
Attendance of English National Ballet: Alice in Wonderland (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.2369	0.42541
Attendance of Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0609	0.23931
Attendance of Karbido – The Table (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0290	0.16793
Attendance of Latvian National Opera: Alcina (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1074	0.30971
Attendance of Latvian National Opera: Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1267	0.33279
Attendance of Lisa Ono: A Celebration of 50 Years of Bossa Nova (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0957	0.29438
Attendance of Metamorphosis (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1586	0.36549
Attendance of Northern Sinfonia and Chorus (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1054	0.30724
Attendance of Omar Sosa Afreecanos Quartet (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0532	0.22452
Attendance of Pygmalion (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.1673	0.37343
Attendance of Sergio Tiempo Piano Recital (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	1034	0.0561	0.23021

### 3.2 Factors that Influence Local Visitors' Interest in International Shows

The estimated results of the logistic regression model predicting the local visitors' demographic, attitudinal and behavioral factors that influence their interest in attending international festival shows for the whole sample are shown in Table 2. The estimated model can be expressed in the following equation form:

$$\begin{aligned} \log\left(\frac{P}{1-P}\right) = & 349.340 (0.02) - 0.307 \text{ GEN} (-0.69) - 0.004 \text{ AGE} (-0.27) + 0.178 \text{ EDU} (2.04) \\ & - 0.788 \text{ ADULT} (-2.70) + 0.593 \text{ CHILD} (2.24) \\ & - 0.003 \text{ MEAL} (-1.50) + 0.003 \text{ TRANSPORT} (1.00) \\ & - 0.188 \text{ FIRSTVISIT} (-0.35) + 0.137 \text{ NOOFVISIT} (2.44) \\ & - 22.019 \text{ APDP} (-0.01) - 18.971 \text{ BHCSO} (-0.01) \\ & - 20.959 \text{ CCJM} (-0.91) - 19.458 \text{ CAUCPJ} (-0.01) \\ & - 20.349 \text{ CLSWB} (-0.01) - 21.046 \text{ DSOB} (-0.01) \\ & - 21.550 \text{ ENBAW} (-0.01) - 17.685 \text{ EPCC} (-0.01) \\ & - 17.952 \text{ KARBIDO} (-0.01) - 23.683 \text{ LNOA} (-0.001) \\ & - 20.628 \text{ LNOLMM} (-0.01) - 21.603 \text{ LOBN} (-0.01) \\ & - 22.829 \text{ META} (-0.01) - 20.482 \text{ NSC} (-0.01) \\ & - 20.701 \text{ OSAQ} (-0.01) - 21.126 \text{ PYGMALION} (-0.01) \\ & - 21.446 \text{ STPR} (-0.01). \end{aligned}$$

Table 2: Logistic regression results for local visitors' demographic, attitudinal and behavioural factors

Variable (X): Local Visitors' Demographic, Attitudinal and Behavioural Factors	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )
Constant	349.340(0.02) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_1$ = Gender (1 if male; 0 if female)	-0.307(-0.69) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_2$ = Age (in years)	-0.004(-0.27) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_3$ = Education (in years)	0.178(2.04)**
$X_4$ = Number of adults in the visiting group	-0.788(-2.70)***
$X_5$ = Number of children in the visiting group	0.593(2.24)**
$X_6$ = Meal expenditure (in HKD)	-0.003(-1.50) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_7$ = Transport expenditure (in HKD)	0.003(1.00) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_8$ = First visitor status (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	-0.188(-0.35) <sup>NS</sup>

*Continued on next page*

(Continued) Variable (X)	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )
$X_9$ = Number of prior visits	0.137(2.44)**
$X_{10}$ = Attendance of Asia Pacific Dance Platform (APDP)	-22.019(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{11}$ = Attendance of Bernard Haitink and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (BHCSO)	-18.971(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{12}$ = Attendance of Chick Corea and John McLaughlin Five Peace Band (CCJM)	-20.959(-0.91) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{13}$ = Attendance of Circo Aereo: Un cirque plus juste (CAUCPJ)	-19.458(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{14}$ = Attendance of Company Ea Sala: The White Body (CLSWB)	-20.349(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{15}$ = Attendance of Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin (DSOB)	-21.046(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{16}$ = Attendance of English National Ballet: Alice in Wonderland (ENBAW)	-21.550(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{17}$ = Attendance of Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (EPCC)	-17.685(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{18}$ = Attendance of Karbido – The Table (KARBIDO)	-17.952(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{19}$ = Attendance of Latvian National Opera: Alcina (LNOA)	-23.683(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{20}$ = Attendance of Latvian National Opera: Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk (LNOLMM)	-20.628(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{21}$ = Attendance of Lisa Ono: A celebration of 50 years of Bossa Nova (LOBN)	-21.603(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{22}$ = Attendance of Metamorphosis (META)	-22.829(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{23}$ = Attendance of Northern Sinfonia and Chorus (NSC)	-20.482(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{24}$ = Attendance of Omar Sosa Afreecanos Quartet (OSAQ)	-20.701(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{25}$ = Attendance of Pygmalion (PYGMALION)	-21.126(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>
$X_{26}$ = Attendance of Sergio Tiempo Piano Recital (STPR)	-21.446(-0.01) <sup>NS</sup>

Cox and Snell  $R^2 = 0.53$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.89$ , Prediction Success Rate = 96.9%, Chi-square value = 781.30; Degrees of Freedom = 26 at  $P \leq 0.01$

#### Notes:

Values in parentheses are *t*-values of the logistic regression coefficients.

\*\*\* indicates significance at  $P \leq 0.01$  level.

\*\* indicates significance at  $P \leq 0.05$  level.

NS indicates not significant.

Given the strong model characteristics, demonstrated by the high  $R^2$  values and the exceptionally high prediction success rate (Classification Table), as well as the Hosmer and

Lemeshow statistic indicating a good fit of the logistic regression, the model appears to be highly suitable for predicting the likelihood and significance level of how independent variables influence the dependent variable. As shown in Table 2, only four independent variables—educational attainment (X3), the number of adults in the party (X4), the number of children in the party (X5), and the level of prior visits (X9)—significantly influence the interest of local visitors in various international art festival shows. This significant finding is illustrated in Figure 1.

For instance, the educational attainment of local visitors is found to positively and significantly ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) influence their interest in international performances (Table 2). This suggests that local visitors with higher levels of education, such as bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, are more attracted to international acts, while those with lower levels of education, such as primary and high school education, show less interest. Suarez-Fernandez, Prieto-Rodriguez, and Perez-Villadoniga (2020) found similar results in the case of Spain, where higher levels of education were positively associated with a greater likelihood of participating in cultural activities. Their findings suggest that individuals with higher educational attainment are not only more likely to attend such events, but also tend to do so more frequently.

However, for highly educated local visitors attending art festivals and cultural events, their interest may stem from the integration of art festivals and cultural topics into their higher education curricula. Having studied art festivals and cultures, these highly educated local visitors are drawn to and demonstrate a strong interest in international art festival shows in their home country. For highly educated local visitors, the appeal of international acts and artists reflects their connection to international arts and cultural heritage, rather than just imported international offerings. This finding may also indicate that highly educated local visitors are well-informed about international art festivals and cultures, seeking out international arts and cultural experiences available through domestic travel.

To further validate this finding, a paired samples t-test was conducted on two variables: local visitors' interest in international art festival shows and their education. The t-test revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation ( $P \leq 0.5$ ) with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.068$  (see Table 3). Since the logistic regression model produced a positive coefficient value for educational attainment, which aligns with the positive correlation value generated by the t-test for both variables, it is reasonable to suggest that local visitors with higher levels of education are indeed more attracted to major international acts and performances.

As previously mentioned, both the number of adults in the party (X4) and the number of children in the party (X5) were found to significantly influence local visitors' interest in international art festival shows, although the directions and magnitudes of influence differ. Specifically, the number of adults in the group of local visitors was statistically highly significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ) and negatively influenced their interest in international shows. Conversely, the number of children in the group of local visitors was statistically significant ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) and positively influenced their interest in the international shows (see Table 2). A Hungarian study by Váradi and Józsa (2023) concluded that larger family groups—particularly those including adults actively engaged in cultural

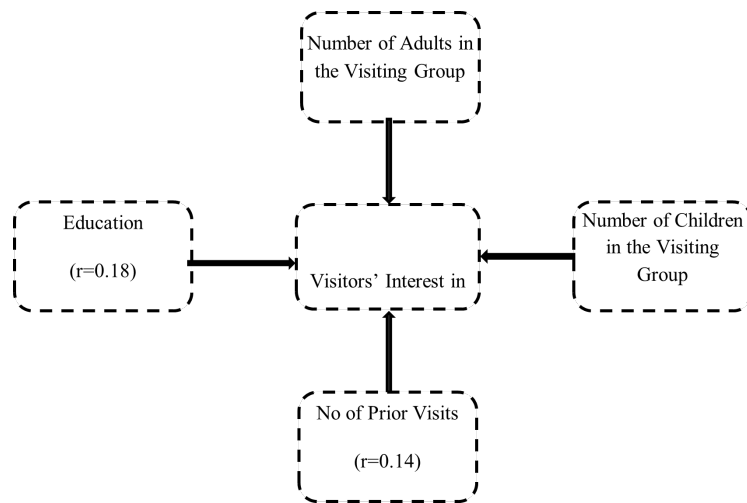


Figure 1: Key factors influencing local visitors’ interest in HKAF

activities—are more likely to attend arts festivals.

We interpret these results as follows: children can influence their parents to attend international art festivals and cultural events, hence a higher number of children in the family may have encouraged local visitors to attend. In contrast, a higher number of adults in the family may have discouraged local visitors from attending international art festivals and cultural events. This could be due to the fact that adult visitors are primarily part of the working population, and their busy schedules (which often include weekends) may negatively affect their intention to attend such events, as well as their interest in international art festivals and cultural events in general. In fact, busy schedules tend to deter people from participating in outdoor recreations, arts festivals, and cultural events, whether local or international.

Interestingly and importantly, both of these variables produced the same correlation signs as coefficients in the logistic regression model, and both are now correlated with local visitors’ interest with the same significance results ( $P \leq 0.01$ ) (see Table 3). This finding, obtained through paired samples t-test, supports the results obtained earlier through the logistic regression model.

Table 3: Correlation between local visitors’ demographic, attitudinal and behavioural factors and attendance variables

Local Visitors’ Demographic, Attitudinal and Behavioural Factors	Correlation ( <i>r</i> )	Significance ( <i>p</i> -value)
Gender (1 if male; 0 if female)	0.037	0.231NS
Age (in years)	-0.126	0.000***

*Continued on next page*

(Continued) Local Visitors' Demographic, Attitudinal and Behavioural Factors	Correlation ( <i>r</i> )	Significance ( <i>p</i> -value)
Education (in years)	0.068	0.029**
Number of adults in the visiting group	-0.170	0.000***
Number of children in the visiting group	0.087	0.005***
Meals expenditure (in HKD)	-0.025	0.431NS
Transport expenditure (in HKD)	-0.066	0.034**
First visitor status (1 if yes; 0 if otherwise)	-0.091	0.003***
Number of prior visits	0.150	0.000***
Attendance of Asia Pacific Dance Platform	0.065	0.037**
Attendance of Bernard Haitink and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra	0.154	0.000**
Attendance of Chick Corea and John McLaughlin Five Peace Band	0.158	0.000**
Attendance of Circo Aereo: Un cirque plus juste	0.066	0.033**
Attendance of Company Ea Sala: The White Body	0.130	0.000***
Attendance of Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin	0.179	0.000***
Attendance of English National Ballet: Alice in Wonderland	0.251	0.000***
Attendance of Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir	0.115	0.000***
Attendance of ExxonMobil Vision: Teresa Suen Harp Recital	0.042	0.176NS
Attendance of Karbido – The Table	0.078	0.012***
Attendance of Latvian National Opera: Alcina	0.156	0.000***
Attendance of Latvian National Opera: Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk	0.171	0.000***
Attendance of Lisa Ono: A celebration of 50 years of Bossa Nova	0.146	0.000***
Attendance of Metamorphosis	0.195	0.000***
Attendance of Northern Sinfonia Chamber Concert	0.100	0.001***
Attendance of Northern Sinfonia and Chorus	0.154	0.000***
Attendance of Omar Sosa Afreecanos Quartet	0.107	0.001***
Attendance of Pygmalion	0.202	0.000***

*Continued on next page*

(Continued) Local Visitors' Demographic, Attitudinal and Behavioural Factors	Correlation ( <i>r</i> )	Significance ( <i>p</i> -value)
Attendance of Sergio Tiempo Piano Recital	0.110	0.000***
Attendance of Shen Yang Lieder Recital	0.114	0.000***
Attendance of The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass	0.111	0.000***
Attendance of The Wooster Group: The Em- peror Jones	0.095	0.002***
Attendance of Tim Crouch	0.095	0.002***
Attendance of Ton Koopman Organ Recital	0.125	0.000***
Attendance of Zehetmair Quartet	0.091	0.003***

*Notes:*

\*\*\* indicates significance at the  $P \leq 0.01$  level.

\*\* indicates significance at the  $P \leq 0.05$  level.

\* indicates significance at the  $P \leq 0.10$  level.

*NS* indicates not significant at the  $P > 0.10$  level.

When regressed against interest in international art festivals and cultural events, the logistic regression results yielded a positive and statistically significant coefficient value for the number of prior visits by local visitors (X9) (see Table 2). We interpret this finding straightforwardly: prior visits by local visitors to the same international art festivals and cultural events were highly enjoyable and valuable, significantly influencing them to revisit the events or attend them more frequently. Specifically, the more visits made by local visitors, the more likely they are to be significantly interested in the international acts and performers featured in the program. This finding aligns with an earlier study by Wooten and Norman (2007), which found that socialization was more important to local visitors who had previously attended the Kentuck Festival of the Arts.

Interestingly, the paired samples t-test also produced a positive and highly significant correlation value ( $P \leq 0.01$ ) ( $r = 0.150$ ) for the number of prior visits by local visitors. This finding indicates that local visitors' prior visits to international art festivals and cultural events are highly significantly correlated with their interest in them. Moreover, the result obtained earlier through the logistic regression model is strongly supported by this correlation test result. While no other variables were found to significantly influence local visitors' interest in the international shows at HKAF, all the variables except three were found to significantly correlate with their interest in them (see Table 3). The paired samples t-test indicates that local visitors' gender status, meals expenditure, and attendance of the show event, namely the "ExxonMobil Vision: Teresa Suen Harp Recital", were not significantly correlated ( $P \geq 0.1$ ) with their interest in attending international shows at HKAF.

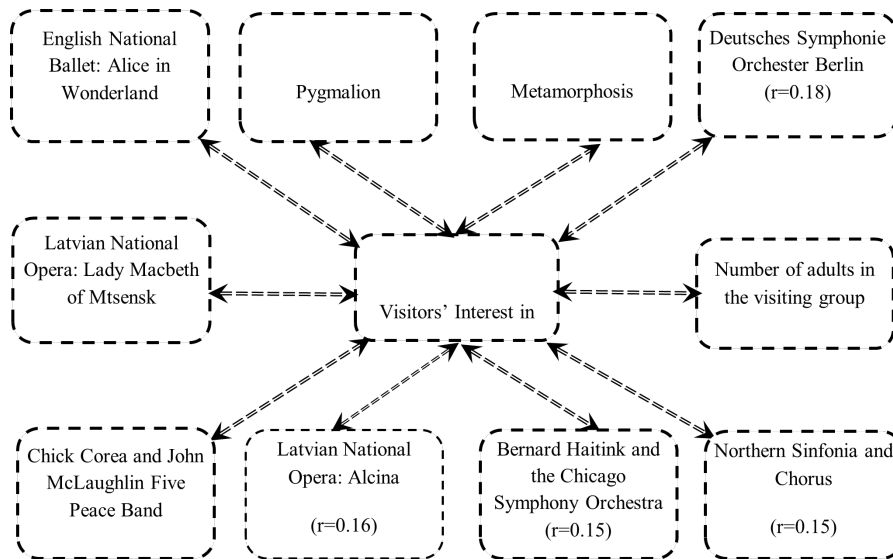


Figure 2: Key factors correlated with local visitors' interest in HKAF

## Contributions of the Research

While previous literature (e.g., McKercher et al. (2004); Kim et al. (2010)) has discussed general audience trends, this research identifies specific demographic predictors (education, group size, prior attendance) influencing local participation, offering a more data-driven foundation for targeted policy. This provides granular demographic insights of the local attendees of HKAF, which are paramount for policy analysis and implementation. Aligning with Quinn (2006) and O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002), the study strengthens the argument that cultural festivals can be leveraged not only for tourism but as strategic local economic assets when managed through demographic-aware and interest-driven policies. This bridges cultural tourism with sustainable local economic development. Also, this research's framework can be adapted by other festivals globally, especially those in culturally dense but demographically diverse urban areas. It offers a transferable model for linking local audience development to broader goals of sustainable tourism and economic growth.

This study also contributes to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by empirically identifying key attitudinal and behavioural determinants that shape local festival attendance. By highlighting how factors such as interest in specific performances, past attendance frequency, and group composition (e.g., presence of children or accompanying adults) influence local participation, the study provides evidence on the attitudinal beliefs, social influences, and perceived behavioural control components central to TPB. These insights deepen the understanding of how intention to attend arts festivals is formed and translated into actual behaviour, offering a valuable extension of TPB within the context of cultural event participation.

## 4 Conclusion and Implications

The potential influences affecting local visitors to an international arts festival primarily revolve around demographic factors, including education, the number of adults and children in the party, and the number of prior visits. This study corroborates several others regarding the significant demographic characteristics of performing arts attendance, providing robust empirical evidence to support this. Consequently, policies formulated by the HKAF authority should focus particularly on these four demographic factors of local visitors. Promotional strategies and incentives targeting these demographic factors are expected to attract more local visitors to the HKAF in the future. Furthermore, other arts festivals, organizations, and government departments should review demographics in their respective regions and develop policies and strategies that not only target specific interest groups but also maximize interest and attendance at such events. In doing so, the findings from the HKAF can be replicated in other locations and for other events that are similar in size and scale to Hong Kong.

Moreover, the correlations estimated through paired samples t-tests also offer insights into which factors, if any, are associated with local visitors' interest in the art performances by international actors. Empirical evidence from the HKAF suggests that certain international shows/performances are highly correlated with local visitors' interest, predominantly related to their attitudinal factors. The only demographic factor highly correlated with local visitors' interest is the number of adults in the party. However, it's important to note that correlation does not imply causation. Nevertheless, it underscores the significance of these particular shows or performances to local visitors. Therefore, policies should be developed to enhance the attractiveness of these correlated show performances. One possible explanation for these findings is that local visitors base their attendance decisions on their attraction to certain well-known and identifiable performers and companies. These decisions are typically influenced by qualitative aspects of aesthetics and personal tastes but may also be affected by reputation and word of mouth.

We also suggest for relevant policies and strategies to consider why, to what extent, and how the demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors of local visitors are vital in attracting them to and increasing their interest in arts festivals of this nature. As emphasized by Brownett and Evans (2020) as well as McKercher et al. (2004), factors related to the program, audience experience, and the festival's marketing heavily influence the popularity of arts festivals. To be successful, cultural events must be perceived as a spectacle that draws people to the location. Therefore, formulating and implementing related policies and strategies are crucial from the perspective of sustainable tourism and product development through international arts festivals.

**Practical Recommendations and Specific Examples for Festival Organizers to Attract More Local Visitors** We believe the following specific recommendations could assist the HKAF authority, as well as festival organizers, in their efforts to attract more local visitors to the events. Examples of how these recommendations might be implemented are also provided, and they are expected to support the HKAF authority in executing these strategies at a practical level.

1. **Tailor Marketing to Key Demographics:** The authority of HKAF should focus on the education level of potential attendees. They can develop targeted communication with educated audiences, such as university students, alumni groups, and professionals. For example, they may form partnerships with local universities to offer discounted tickets or curated “arts nights” with pre-show talks on the cultural relevance of the performance.
2. **Consider Number of Adults/Children in the Family/Group:** The HKAF authority should include family-friendly shows or provide parallel activities (e.g., children’s art workshops) during adult performances. For example, they may offer a “Family Arts Pass” that includes entry to a performance, childcare services, and access to interactive children’s art zones. For adult groups, they may provide group discounts or loyalty rewards for multiple bookings. For instance, an “Arts Circle” program could offer discounted packages for groups of three or more adults.
3. **Leverage Repeat Visitors:** Targeting previous attendees with personalized incentives (e.g., early-bird offers, VIP previews) may help attract more local visitors. For example, exclusive invitations or “Bring-a-Friend” promotions could be sent to those who attended the HKAF in the past three years.
4. **Enhance Promotion of International Acts with Local Appeal:** Since attitudinal factors (such as familiarity or prestige of performers) drive attendance, highlighting international performers’ reputations and achievements may help attract more local visitors. The HKAF authority may use testimonials, awards, or critical acclaim in promotional materials. Localizing content to help audiences connect with foreign acts may also be effective. For example, offering short “Meet the Artist” videos with subtitles or behind-the-scenes stories could help bridge cultural gaps.
5. **Capitalize on Word of Mouth and Social Influence:** Encouraging selected attendees to become festival ambassadors may increase local engagement. For example, a “Share Your Festival” campaign with incentives for social media posts or referrals could be launched. Collaborating with local influencers in arts, education, and parenting communities may also be beneficial.
6. **Develop Locally Grounded Themes and Stories:** Including performances that reflect local culture or issues alongside international acts may reinforce local relevance and attract more local visitors. For example, commissioning new works by local artists that respond to international performances or themes could strengthen community engagement.

Arts festivals have continued to solidify their position in the tourism domain, particularly in regional tourism (Kim et al. (2010)). Thus, any relevant policies and strategies are expected to have significant implications for festival authorities, tourism authorities, and the province as a whole. Depending on similarities in residents’ demographic, attitudinal, and behavioural characteristics, arts festival attendance patterns, and the

socioeconomic and geographic characteristics of the arts festival location, these results are expected to have broader applicability.

In conclusion, the substantial presence of local visitors at the HKAF indicates a positive correlation between arts festivals and local tourism, thereby fostering local economic growth. This aligns with Quinn (2006), who observed that tourism linked to enhanced arts festival activities throughout the year not only boosts revenue but also promotes the development of venue infrastructure. Viewed from a broader perspective, this finding resonates with O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002), who argued that arts festivals have the potential to support sustainable local economic development but are frequently underutilized.

### Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

Despite offering valuable insights, this study has several limitations. It is confined to a single festival context—the Hong Kong Arts Festival—which may limit the generalizability of its findings to other cultural events or locations. The exclusive use of a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design also restricts a deeper understanding of visitors' underlying motivations and limits observations of behavioral changes over time. Moreover, reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases. Future research should consider applying a mixed-methods approach, expanding the analysis to multiple festivals and settings, incorporating longitudinal designs, and exploring additional variables such as marketing exposure and cultural background. Such efforts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of local visitor engagement and support more targeted festival strategies.

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