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How to Evaluate Cultural Impacts of Events? A Model and Methodology Proposal

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ABSTRACT: *The increasing number of events has generated a growing research interest in assessing impacts of the events. So far, most empirical studies have analysed economic impacts, whereas social, political or cultural impacts have been taken into consideration only to a limited extent. The aim of this paper is to propose a conceptual and methodological model to measure and analyse cultural effects of events.*

This article first examines how social and cultural impacts are conceptualised and analysed by different disciplines, and then proposes a new model to assess cultural impacts of events, named Cultural Impact Perception (CIP). The model has been designed using two steps, namely: (1) defining cultural impacts and (2) proposing a new methodological model for the assessment and analysis of these types of impact. The paper concludes with reflections around the future implementation of the model, and underlines CIP's contribution to the scientific debate in this field.

KEY WORDS: Cultural Impact Perception, cultural impacts, assessment, methodology, events, cultural events.

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Introduction

Events are considered challenges and strategic tools for developing specific effects for governments or private institutions (Evans, 2001; Hannigan, 2003; Gibson & Stevenson, 2004; Richards & Wilson, 2004). Therefore, during the last decades, there has been increased interest in analysing the economic impact of events (Crompton & McKay, 1994; Devesa, 2006; Dwyer, Forsyth & Spurr, 2006). According to Douglas and Derrett (2001), "…the success of a festival or event is commonly measured in terms of its economic contribution to event stakeholders, community and region"; in other words, events "…are increasingly being regarded primarily as generators of financial benefits" (Snowball, 2008).

However, in this article I argue that the effect generated to the community or the region could be observed not only by economic aspects, but also by taking into consideration social and cultural impacts that benefit or hinder the event-hosting society.

In relation to this idea, different researchers have put forward the need to analyse and measure other types of impacts generated by events, such as environmental impacts (Tyler Miller, 2002) and social impacts (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Small, 2007; Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005; Becker & Vanclay, 2003). In addition, other authors have considered different types of event impacts, such as cultural, political or impacts on tourism, to mention a few (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2011; Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2008).

Other researchers have attempted to measure and assess cultural impacts of events, but most of the research proposes neither a clear epistemological definition nor methodological proposals specifically for cultural impacts (Delamere, Wankel & Hinch, 2001; Fredeline, Jago & Deery, 2003; Johnson, 1999; Garcia, Melville & Cox, 2010; Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005; Waitt, 2003). Therefore, this paper presents a model that enables measuring and analysing cultural impacts of events.

Model Trends and Definitions of Event Impact Assessment

Several disciplines have different trends for effect evaluation, and some of them adapt the definition of impacts according to their goals (Colombo, 2013). Some disciplines

consider impacts and outcomes to be synonyms, while others consider it important to assess different typologies of effects generated by events, actions or activities. Consequently, each discipline proposes a different methodology to measure and evaluate the impact of events.

For instance, economic impact studies are not complex from a methodological point of view, although they present numerous technical difficulties, which require the use of different sources of information. Traditional models used for forecasting and evaluating the economic impacts of tourism, can be applied to events, including computable general equilibrium models, input-output analysis, and cost-benefit analysis (Andersson, Armbercht & Lundberg, 2012; Colombo, 2009). Generally, these studies consider three types of measurable impacts: direct, indirect and induced.

Some examples of economic impact assessment for cultural events have shown that, in general, economic impact studies (known as the effect method) estimate the economic relevance of culture and also analyse the activities and earning flows related to the existence of a particular cultural activity (Çela, Knowles-Landkford & Landkford 2009;Seaman, 2003; Snowball & Antrobus 2002; Martinello & Minnon, 1990).

Furthermore, recent publications focus on the definition and measurement of social and cultural impacts (Richards, Brito & Wilks, 2013), but when analysing cultural impacts, authors generally relate them to other impacts, such as social, educational or political (Small, Edwards, & Sheridan, 2005; Fredline, Jago, & Deery, 2003; Delamere, Wankel, & Hinch, 2001).

Delamere, Wankel and Hinch (2001), for example, published research on the delimitation of the social impacts of an event, dividing them into costs and benefits, and identifying 47 social impacts. These authors put forward the idea of *beneficial* or *non-beneficial* social impacts, considering costs, not so much in economic terms, but related to services or resources in the community. In this proposal the cultural impacts are grouped with educational ones and are not considered to be costs but only benefits. The authors introduced the need to make a delimitation of cultural impacts, (even these authors grouped them with other ones), as well as to consider the impacts benefits or costs. Later, Delamere (2001) proposed the *Festival Social Impact Attitude Scale*

(FSIAS), a model that refers to the 47 items proposed by the previous study but cuts them down to 25 items. This research is relevant for the academic debate on the cultural impacts of events due to two special approaches: (1) the process proposed for identifying the impacts by using perceptions of residents; and (2) the consideration of cultural impacts as benefits for the host society.

Fredline, Jago & Deery, (2003) share the same definitions of impact as Hall (1992) and Ritchie (1984) but adapt the classifications and group impacts into six categories, as follows: economic, tourism and commercial, physical, socio-cultural, psychological and political impacts. These authors consider positive and negative impacts but do not identify costs and benefits. They consider positive, socio-cultural impacts, social opportunities for the residents, local interest and intercultural contact, among others. By contrast, dissatisfaction, commercialisation and intercultural misunderstanding are considered negative.

These authors (Fredline, Jago & Deery, 2003), propose a survey in the local community divided into three thematic blocks: 1) the impacts of the event; 2) the measurement of the impacts on a scale; and 3) the socio-demographic information of the respondents. The paper highlights three aspects. The first aspect is the consideration that the same survey could be used to analyse different events in the same community, making it possible to develop a comparative analysis. The second aspect is the proposal of analysing the cultural and social impacts of an event through the perception of members of the event-hosting community. The third is that these authors reopen the discussion about the need to collect information from independent variables, making it possible to identify smaller groups or profiles within the larger group of informants. Therefore the relevance of this paper lies in its underlining of the need to identify positive and negative impacts; as well as to propose a model introducing socio-demographic variables identifying profiles. However, it should also be noted that cultural impacts are also grouped with social ones.

Taking this one step further, other authors have proposed an analysis model called *Social Impact Evaluation* (SIE), made up of different analysis processes, one of which is *Social Impact Perception* (SIP), (Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005). In order to apply SIE and SIP, the authors identify items to be analysed as social impacts. These

impacts are grouped into five different categories: impacts in the community; leisure, infrastructure, health and safety, as well as cultural impacts. It is interesting to note that these authors consider different categories of impacts, specifying cultural impacts without grouping them with other kinds of impacts.

SIE is composed of a complex analysis system, which includes different aspects that need to be analysed in a series of stages. The first stage, *description*, is where the event is described in general terms; the second stage, *profile*, describes the profile of the hosting community; *identity* focuses on the identification of the potential social and cultural impacts of the event; *project* is where the projection of the impacts is analysed in an anticipatory way; *evaluate* focuses on the evaluation of the impacts; and the final stage, *feedback*, is where the researchers provide the organisers with information, thus making it possible to consider this information when making decisions in the future.

For some of these stages (*project* and *evaluate*) the authors (Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005), propose using *Social Impact Perception* (SIP), which examines the residents' perception of the impacts. SIP involves measuring social impacts by means of a scale adapted by Green, Hunter and Moore (1990), who analysed the environmental impacts of tourism in three stages: the first is based on the respondents' affirmation of the existence of the impacts; the second asks whether they believe the impact to be positive or negative; and, in the third stage, they are given a scale in order to rate the level of impact generated. This proposal is valuable for our research as it presents a model by perceptions of the community using a scale, about existence, rating and intensity of the impact.

According to Pasanen, Taskinen and Mikkonen (2009), "[…] there was a need for extensive research and the creation of a model that could be used for assessing various impacts of events […]". These authors proposed the *Finnish Event Evaluation Tool* (FEET), a tool that produces information about several impacts of events, thus allowing them to be compared. The FEET proposed a three-part analysis: research into the customer profile; the economic impacts; and the socio-cultural impacts. These were observed through surveys on five profile groups: event organizers, visitors, local entrepreneurs, residents and policymakers. This proposal considered some of the previous models such as SIP and FSIAS in terms of the scale definition for the socio-

cultural impact assessment. After testing FEET on 12 festivals, culture and sport events, the authors concluded that the innovative aspect of the FEET model was that it made it possible to investigate several stakeholder groups at the same time, highlighting the challenge of combining the evaluation of economic, social and cultural impacts in a single study.

After observing all those proposals, it could be considered that cultural impacts are generally grouped with other impacts, they are also sub-divided into different items and they are identified as beneficial or cots for the hosting society. In terms of the methodology used, as it has been seen most of the models use community perceptions, and generally observe the existence, the rating, the perception of the effect, and the intensity of the impact on a scale.

Therefore, as has already been pointed out, even though there is increasing interest in analysing impacts generated by events, there is not a consensus proposal for impact definition as well as for methodological approaches to observe impacts of event, as well to observe cultural impacts in his own right.

The Complexity of the Cultural Impacts of Events

Events have become increasingly popular and greater in number in Europe over the last few decades; however, not all events are similar. Different types of events can be categorised based on their size, theme and the type of participation they generate. Getz (2010) proposes a classification of events into different types, such as cultural celebrations, religious, political and state, arts and entertainment, business and trade, education and scientific and sports events, among others. Consequently, it can be assumed that each kind of event will generate different type of impacts, and probably not only those effects related to the theme or type of event. For example, a business event may generate not only economic impacts, but also social and cultural ones.

Focusing on cultural events Snowball (2008) stresses that there is a seemingly endless list of different types of cultural celebrations, festivals and events. Thus, it could be said that at this type of event the representation of culture also takes place differently. In that

sense, as Delanty (2011) claims, cultural celebrations, carnivals or festivals provide examples for debate on issues of representativeness, inclusion, access to resources, ownership and citizenship. Therefore, it should also be understood that distinct cultural events also generate different kinds of impacts, related to culture, to the region or to the host society.

Following the idea that different kinds of events may generate several impacts, in a previous study (Colombo 2008) I proposed the thesis that each event generates an action, which stimulates social changes and effects, including political, economic and cultural impacts. The cultural ones may differ from the political and economic ones, basically in terms of their content, as they are related to culture, such as knowledge of culture, interest in culture, respect, and cultural acceptance, among others.

Figure 1. Action-generated social impacts
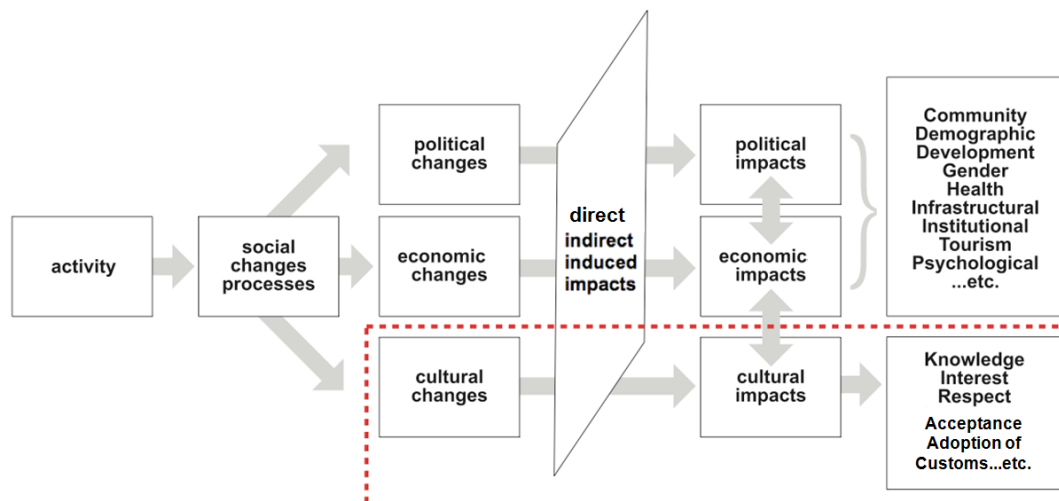
Source: Colombo (2008), modified based on Slootweg, Van Schooten and Vanclay, *Interconnection of biophysical and social impact* model proposed in Vanclay (1999).

Figure 1 maps out the framework of the different changes generated by an activity, assuming that this activity provokes social changes (including political, economic and cultural), and affects the region or the society in different ways (direct, indirect or induced). But this proposal, does not specifically define the impacts, but instead gives some indications. Therefore, as a result, some components of cultural impacts such as

cultural representation, cultural transmission, creation of cultural identity, or preservation of culture, may not be included in this proposal.

However this proposal, illustrates the idea that each event may generate different kind of impacts, affecting in different ways. Therefore it may be important to observe each impact in its own way, describing and delimiting the impacts and also using the correct methodology for each type.

Focusing on cultural impacts, as has been pointed out, the actual academic debate does not find a consensus about the definition and the methodology to analyse them. Generally they are not delimited and defined as a category in their own right, and there are different models proposals to measure them (Delamere, Wankel & Hinch, 2001; Fredline, Jago & Deery, 2003; Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005). Thus, different authors, using the insights from diverse disciplines, put forward research to find a definition and methodology. Thus, it can be claimed that the assessment and measurement of the cultural impacts of events is still a challenge for scholars.

The Need for a New Proposal

Having established an overview of the different definitions of cultural impacts as well as the methodological proposals made so far, it becomes apparent that there are no specific definition and methodology focused only on cultural impacts. The complexity of these impacts has most likely generated the tendency to lump them in with other impacts instead of isolating them when implementing an evaluation process.

As has been seen, different types of events and impacts may affect the host society in different ways. Therefore, aspects such as the intensity of the impact, rating, existence and intentionality will be different for each type of impact and probably for each kind of event. Even though there is a tendency to measure all types of impacts generated by an event, the isolation of each type would allow the assessment to be more focused and efficient, relying on a specific definition and methodology.

Furthermore, as different authors consider events as strategic tools to implement specific goals (Evans, 2001; Hannigan, 2003; Gibson & Stevenson, 2004; Richards & Wilson, 2004), I understand that the analysis of the cultural impacts of an event might be as important to stakeholders as the economic effects analysis. Therefore, event organizers, policymakers or sponsors could be interested in observing cultural effects when evaluating their participation in the event, viewing the event capacity as a strategic tool for implementing their goals.

Consequently, cultural impacts may be as relevant and significant as economic and social ones. Thus, recommending a definition and a methodological proposal for assessing the cultural impacts of events is considered of great importance. Therefore, an evaluation tool has been configured with concrete variables, profiles and definitions.

A new model proposal: the Cultural Impact Perception

In this article, I propose a new methodological tool named *Cultural Impact Perception* (CIP), which has the goal to allow measure and analyse cultural impacts generated by events. This adapts a delimitation of cultural impacts, selecting some items and proposals from existent literature. Moreover, it proposes a methodology for collecting information about the following aspects of a specific impact: existence, rating, intensity, and intentionality, as well as generating enough information about the informants to be able to create profiles. Therefore, CIP proposes a model by creating a definition of cultural impact as well by delimitating a methodological process.

Defining Cultural Impacts of CIP

To define a list of impacts and items for CIP, my starting point was to select items suggested in previous studies (Hall, 1992; Allen et al., 2008; Getz, 2010; Delamere, Wankel & Hinch, 2001; Fredeline, Jago & Deery, 2003; Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005). The impacts are selected according to two different criteria, those grouped with other kinds of impacts, and those impacts clearly related to culture. After this selection I have grouped the items under an impact name, as well as if is considered a cost or benefit.

Table 1 presents the five impacts, proposed by CIP, with their descriptors and items and also classified as benefits and costs.

Table 1. The cultural impacts proposed by Cultural Impact Perception

Benefits		Costs	
Impact	*Items*	*Impact*	*Items*
Information about culture	Exposure to a variety of cultural experiences through the community festival Shared experience	**Disinformation about culture**	Negative community image
Preservation of cultural traditions	Revitalisation of traditions Traditions preserved	**Loss of cultural traditions**	Loss of language Loss of heritage Traditions altered
Construction of cultural identity	Validation of community groups Impacts on the region's cultural identity Building of community pride Opportunity to develop new cultural skills and talents Celebration of community Impacts on the local character of the community Increased local interest in the region's culture and history	**Loss of cultural identity**	Cultural profanation Loss of cultural amenities
Integration by cultural effects	Community pride and integration Cultural integration	**Creation of ghettos by cultural effects**	The experience of being culturally marginalised Community alienation
Social cohesion by means of culture	Opportunity for intercultural contact Community groups work together to achieve common goals through the festival Variety of cultural experiences	**Social exclusion by means of culture**	Cultural offence Community pride in divisiveness Social dislocation Potential for intercultural misunderstanding

As shown in Table 1, the five impacts proposed by CIP, their benefit and cost, are related to different aspects; cultural information; cultural traditions; cultural identity; to

the capacity to acquire rights and responsibilities; as well as related to the communal activities aiding cohesion or exclusion.

All these impacts are considered to be cultural, although they can be classified on two levels. The first three impacts are related specifically with culture, while the last two, "integration" and "social cohesion", are understood as the contribution of culture to a wider impact in which other dimensions are involved, such as social, economic and political ones.

Cultural Impact Assessment and Measurement of CIP

CIP proposes a method including different variables. As can be observed in Table 2, this model has been designed using three groups of variables: the dependent variables, considering the proposed impacts, described above; the independent variables relative to the different types of perception*;* and, finally, the independent variables relative to the profiles of the respondents, which are divided into the *socio-demographic*, the *socio-cultural* and *involvement*.

Table 2. The model of analysis for Cultural Impact Perception

Dependent variables	Independent variables		
Impact *(description of impact)*	**Perception**	Existence	Perceived or not
		Rating	Considered positive or negative
		Intensity	The intensity of the impact on individuals and on the community is evaluated
		Intentionality	Considered intentional or not
	Profile	Socio-demographic	Age, gender, place of birth
		Socio-cultural	Level of studies, native language, nationality
		Involvement	Participation, place of residence

.

Perception considers three aspects from several methodological models (Green, Hunter & Moore, 1990; Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005), such as: *existence* (observing whether the impact is perceived or not); *rating* (identifying whether the impact is considered negative or positive); and the *intensity* of the impacts. In addition, this proposal adds a new perception category, *intentionality*, observing whether the impact is considered intentional or not by the organisers or supporters of the event.

The profile includes a further *socio-demographic profile*, based on the respondents' characteristics of gender, age, place of birth and level of education, and a *socio-cultural profile*, based on the cultural background of the individual, the inheritance received, and the cultural heritage that the person has acquired throughout his/her lifetime. The latter one is built around two indicators: the *native language* and *nationality*, discarding the inclusion of the level of education in this profile to avoid an elitist deviation. The profile includes a third *involvement profile*, which indicates whether the individual is in any way involved in the act or event. Both voluntary and involuntary participation are considered for this effect. The involuntary part is identified using the *place of residence* indicator, understanding that respondents who live where the act takes place are involved involuntarily. Voluntary involvement is measured by means of *participation*.

The distribution of variables between the *socio-demographic* and the *socio-cultural profile* (rather than cultural identity) also adopts an open, complex and dynamic concept of individuals and stems from the wish to avoid a model in which culture is understood in a deterministic way[2]. Hence I contemplate the need to justify these options by examining them from a slightly broader perspective.

Thus, I considered that CIP contributes to the definition of a detailed people profile, allowing not only the empirical analysis of different profiles, but also the observation of differences in each profile's perception of several impacts.

Discussion and Challenges when Implementing CIP

The construction of CIP is inspired by the models used in previous research, especially by Green, Hunter and Moore (1990), and the *Social Impact Perception* of Small, Edwards and Sheridan (2005). The latter work, although forming part of a more complex analysis (SIE), is considered to be the methodological basis, as it permits sufficient information to be gathered on each impact.

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[2] Are considered proposals from authors such as Amin Maalouf (1999), who claim an identity is formed by belonging to multiple communities, as well as from Alain Touraine (1997), who positions cultural identity in modern times as a complex analysis, among others.

However, Cultural Impact Perception differentiates itself from *Social Impact Perception* (Small, Edwards & Sheridan, 2005) through three aspects. Firstly, the definition of the impacts to be analysed is different, since CIP is only based on cultural impacts, while SIP is based on a broader concept of social impacts. Secondly, CIP adds an element, namely *intentionality*, giving this methodological proposal a new functional perspective relating to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the event. Thirdly, CIP contributes to the definition of the socio-demographic profile of the people, which allows the empirical analysis of the different profiles of respondents, thus making it possible to observe the differences in perception of different audiences.

With regards to the implementation and the operationalization of the CIP to a specific event, I consider different suggestions. First of all it should be understood that CIP proposes an impact definition and delimitation, but it also constitutes a generic proposal to guide researchers and analysts in their work. Similarly, as Vancaly (1999) has proposed, it is recommended that these impacts should be adapted and selected depending on each study or event, since there will have different characteristics and specific items on each case. Adapting the CIP model to the case should be done using a methodological process that permits an objective adaptation and a selection of a correct list of impacts to be analysed.

The profiles have been created using variables considered to influence significantly the perceptions of the respondents. In other words, the profiles identify not only the *involvement* of the respondents in the event, but also whether they are *locals* or *foreigners* with regard to the place where the act takes place. Therefore, I recommend that also some other aspects should be taken into account when implementing CIP in a certain study. For example, the degrees of perception should be carried out using a numerical index that permits the greater and lesser degrees of perception to be seen. Also this numerical index, for those impacts considered to be beneficial, should be drawn up in the same way as for those considered to be a cost.

In general terms, CIP could be considered well-suited for use as an element for analysing and measuring the cultural impacts generated by an event. However, it is important to emphasize that the adaptation of the CIP model is a process that will affect

posterior analysis. Therefore, this process needs to be carried out in a careful and suitable way in order to ensure that posterior analysis can still be useful.

Concluding Remarks

The objective of this study was to propose a model to facilitate researchers to be able to asses and analyse cultural impacts of events. The paper suggests a proposal called Cultural Impact Perception designed by two steps; the definition of cultural impacts by considering some proposals from the existing literature; and proposing a methodological model to asses explicitly cultural impacts of events.

It is important to underline that this proposal was originally designed to evaluate effects from cultural events such as festivals, carnivals, etc. However, after drawing up this proposal, and as CIP provides a definition of cultural impacts as well as a methodological proposal for their evaluation, I consider that CIP could also be used to evaluate cultural impacts generated by other kind of events, such as sports, business or political events, among others.

Several aspects of the model proposed should be taken into consideration. For example, regarding the definition of cultural impacts, it is important to identify a rating for benefits and costs in order to compare it with the ratings of the informants. CIP proposes that the rating of impacts should be defined as either a benefit or cost during the delimitation of the impacts, although the informants should be asked whether they considered the impact to be negative or positive. This will allow to compare what has been proposed beforehand and the rating perceptions of the individuals.

The analysis of intentionality provides information about the perception of the intentions of the organisers and administration conducting the event, aspects that could also be used in other kinds of analysis, such as the analysis of the effectiveness of an event in relation to a strategic policy. This aspect could open up the possibility of observing certain relationships between the event and the stakeholders' intentions and goals. Thus, the analysis of intentions could examine correlations between the perception of the impacts considered by the hosting society and the initial goals of the actors.

Also, it must be highlighted that CIP proposes a methodology based on the perceptions of individuals from a host society, and therefore the results are based on subjective and personal perceptions. Thus individual perceptions is the most appropriate indicator by which to measure cultural impacts, since these impacts, due to their specific characteristics, are more subjective than other impacts such as the economic ones.

The model proposed in this article aspires to contribute to scientific debate in the field by addressing the following aspects: (1) defining cultural impacts in a specific and isolated way; (2) proposing to assess the cultural impacts based on the perceptions of residents; (3) validating the existence, or not, of cultural impacts in the eyes of the host society; (4) identifying the rating of cultural impacts; (5) developing a methodology that permits the intensity of cultural impacts to be measured; (6) observing the perception of the intentionality of these impacts; and (7) proposing profiles of respondents by defining social groups that allow different degrees of perception to be defined.

Taking into account these considerations, the Cultural Impact Perception model represents a proposal that aims to contribute to the complex methodological processes involved in evaluating the cultural impacts of an event. Nevertheless, it is a proposal and should be reviewed, tested empirically, and evaluated against future research in order to ensure its reliability and functionality.

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