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Measuring Constantine Traders' Knowledge about '2015 Event'

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ABSTRACT

In perspective of the event "Constantine, Capital of the Arab Culture 2015", we undertook a modest research project largely inspired by the fieldwork achieved in Assisi in July 2013 and which aimed at gauging the state of mind of the population regarding their city as a tourist destination. For time constraints, we limited the research methodology to a questionnaire consisting of five questions that were distributed to 10 traders located in Constantine center and expected to be storefront for the tourists in 2015. These include hotel managers, restaurants, crafts, souvenir shops and cafes. The questionnaire revealed that Constantine civil authorities have not yet engaged the process of sensitization toward neither the population nor the traders; and this situation may lead to an unexpected effect on the coming great event. The success or failure of 2015 episode in Constantine is largely dependent on the quality of the information and the promotion that must accompany it.

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In perspective of 2015 event « Constantine Capital of the Arab Culture », and largely inspired by the students' fieldwork in Assisi in July 2013, we undertook a similar investigative modest research in Constantine with the aim of measuring the traders awareness of the event in question. Because of time constraints, we limited the research methodology to a questionnaire comprising five questions that we distributed to 10 shopkeepers of different products. We selected traders located in the city centre near four important hotels and who are often in contact with tourists. These are managers of hotels, restaurants, handicraft, souvenirs and cafés.

The questions they were asked were:

- 1- How much do you know about "Constantine, capital of the Arab culture in 2015"?
- 2- By what means have you been informed?
- 3- Have you started any preparation for this event?
- 4- Do you expect any additional income in 2015?
- 5- What is your strongest wish in relation to the event?

The Sample: Purposefully, we chose 10 traders located in Constantine city centre, who are often visited by tourists. They are supposed to be mostly concerned by the event in preparation. These are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Café manager | |
| 2.: Public Hotel manager | 7.: Handicraft shop owner |
| 3.: Restaurant manager | 8.: Handicraft shop owner |
| 4.: Souvenir shopkeeper | 9.: Dress designer |
| 5.: Café manager | 10.: Brassware seller |

The informants' answers to our questions have been compressed in the table below:

Informants	Q.1: How much do you know about "Constantine, capital of the Arab culture in 2015"?				Q.2: By what means have you been informed?	Q.3: Have you started any preparation for this event?		Q.4: Do you expect any additional income in 2015?		Q.5: What is your strongest wish in relation to the event?
	A Lot	Some how	A Few	Nothing		Yes	No	Yes	No	
1	X				Media	X		X		More dividends
2		X			Newspapers		X	X		Promoting the city
3			X		Informal friends' discussion		X		X	A bank loan to develop my restaurant
4			X		Free discussion		X	X		To greet more visitors
5		X			Free discussion		X		X	Security and night activities
6			X		Newspapers		X		X	Better life in the city
7	X				Media	X		X		Bank facilities to import more products
8		X			Media		X	X		More tourists in the city
9	X				Media	X		X		More women delegations
10			X		Newspapers and discussions		X	X		More visitors in my boutique
%	30%	30%	40%	00%		30%	70%	70%	30%	

Analysis of the Results:

- 1- **Question 1:** How much do you know about "Constantine, capital of the Arab culture in 2015"?

This question aimed at measuring the traders knowledge about the event scheduled for 2015 in Constantine. Among the 30% who declared they knew "a lot" about the event, we count a hotel manager, a handicraft seller and a dress designer. All three have in common a noticeable high educational level. Those who know just a few (40%), located in the city centre, do not read regularly daily newspapers and have an intermediate educational level. The immediate interpretation of these rates allows us to state that the city authorities have failed to inform the closest actors of 2015 event.

- 2- **Question 2:** By what means have you been informed?

This question attempts to highlight the source of information of the informants. Who informed them? All answers dangle between newspapers, media and free discussions. This leads us to deduce that no effort has been made by the local authorities to gather the businessmen and traders with the purpose of involving them in the process of preparation of the event.

- 3- **Question 3:** Have you started any preparation for this event?

To say that preparation is dynamically on means that the whole process is fully engaged; however, 17 months before the opening ceremonies of the event, 70% of the respondents have not engaged any preparation in perspective of the 2015. This situation is quite worrying because the main actors of the event are these people not the administrative local authorities who are the only ones who act dynamically through meetings and theoretical decisions since few months.

- 4- **Question 4:** Do you expect any additional income in 2015?

To expect an additional income in 2015 means that the traders are aware of the added value they can get by the end of 2015. They are 70% who expressed their optimism for better benefits. In spite of this confidence, most of them (70%) have not made specific investments.

- 5- **Question 5:** What is your strongest wish in relation to the event?

The informants' strongest wish varies from one trader to another. The most persistent answer is that related to more visitors in the city. The second answer is bank facilities for better development of the commerce. Security and better life in the city are other wishes expressed by the informants.

Overall Discussion

The first and most striking observation we make from the respondents' answers is that the local authorities failed to promote the event adequately. If the most concerned actors of 'Constantine in 2015' are not sufficiently impregnated by the event, what to say about the city citizens? To prepare an occasion of this magnitude is first and foremost to inform and to promote it. When discussing with Constantine traders, we felt particularly surprised by the break between the organisers and the actors who will face the visitors and who have the most important role to play in the whole process. When comparing between the organisers' plans and the implementation of the project in the field, we notice that there is a wide gap to be bridged. The immediate recommendation one is tempted to formulate is create a coordinating structure that would operate between the administration of the city and the traders and citizens. This structure would transmit decisions taken by the local hierarchy to all actors planned to play a role in '2015 event', and also evaluate their effectiveness in the field.

Another aspect of the Event which has been neglected is the anticipation of the dividends on the city and its inhabitants in the long run. '2015' is to be seen as the starting point for the city to play a primary role in the development of tourism in Algeria. The investments introduced by both the administration and the inhabitants will inevitably produce dividends in the future if a new approach to tourism industry is engaged.

Conclusion

To organise an event of this dimension pre-supposes to identify the actors who will play the leading role and to get them involved with decision makers of the city.

In conclusion, one is tempted to think and assert that the secret of success in this type of occasion is **information and promotion**. 'Constantine 2015 Event' is being managed by the local authorities as a local humdrum episode with no anticipation of its potential effects on the city and its inhabitants. It would be more productive to engage an informational policy toward the residents with the aim of raising their awareness of the importance of the event. It is true that the event will end after one year, but its effects may remain profitable to the entire region for decades.