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Beer festivals are significant for UK local economies, according to Northumbria University research

A Northumbria University study has highlighted the positive impact of beer festivals on the UK economy.

Research led by Ignazio Cabras, a Professor in Entrepreneurship and Regional Economic Development at Northumbria, is the first of its kind in the UK and investigates the multimillion-pound contribution of the Knavesmire Beer Festival (KBF) in the city of York.

The four-day festival attracts visitors from around the world and Professor Cabras' study has revealed that during their stay, visitors spend around £720,000 at the festival alone and £1.2 million across the wider city.

The KBF also contributes approximately £560,000 towards the wider beer and brewing sector as well as generating around 18 full-time jobs.

Professor Cabras says the study shows that these festivals can be of huge benefit to the local economy, with very little investment from outside parties.

“These events take place across the UK and are run entirely by volunteers, mostly from the local Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) branch,” he said. “There is zero cost to the taxpayer and basically zero evidence of negative externalities such as antisocial behaviour; in most cases all local authorities need to do is give organisers the permission to run them.

“The KBF is not held in the city centre, so we were able to assess the amount of money spent in York during those four days as a direct result of the festival. A third of visitors attending the festival were from outside the city, so it is clearly a major tourist attraction.”

Results from the study suggest that non-local visitors spend the most money during their four-day stay, primarily due to the cost of accommodation and dining out. However, local visitors spent more within festival premises, creating more custom for beer and brewery businesses operating on site during the event.

“The UK is rapidly becoming a craft-beer hotspot,” added Professor Cabras. “Beer festivals tend to promote the kind of association between beer and the UK that France and Italy have with wine, provide significant opportunities to stimulate beer tourism in Britain. This study shows that without a lot of investment, festivals can achieve economic benefit for not only the city, but also the beer and brewery businesses that sell and showcase their produce there.”

As more beer festivals take place across Europe, Professor Cabras has recognised the potential of creating new venues for future research, particularly about measuring the impact generated by festivals and events on local economies in the UK and worldwide.

The full study is entitled [Measuring the economic contribution of beer festivals on local economies: The case of York, United Kingdom](#) and has been published in the International Journal of Tourism Research.

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