

EVENT TOURISM: STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT ITS IMPACTS ON RURAL AREAS

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This paper focuses on event tourism sector and its affection on the economy and the society of the rural community. The significance of events for rural development is argued by various researchers. In the current paper several cases from the event tourism literature and their results are studied. A general conclusion is that rural events affect host communities mainly by building community commitment. Cash injection is significant but not at a level that can lead to rural development. So, impacts on local population should be at the centre of event management in order to achieve development of destination. Further research is needed to be done in order to support such a statement.

Keywords: Event Tourism, Events, Rural Areas, Rural Development

INTRODUCTION

The statement that tourism can lead to regional development has been well- documented by various researchers. Tourism has a multi-dimensional affection on the host destination. The direct and indirect benefits of tourism combine to create an extensive list of opportunities. In both developed and developing countries, tourism is a mean of raising the economic activity of regions (Mangion & McNabb, 2005). Also, it is widely perceived as a potential economic base, providing elements that may improve quality of life. (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, Vogt, 2005) and has various social and environmental impacts. Tourism is an economic sector able to offer a significant contribution to the economic growth of a region and to the labour market and produces occupation directly and indirectly through the supply of goods and the necessary services for tourist activities. Moreover, tourism produces social benefits



to the region (i.e. small and medium enterprises development, creation of new job, improvement of infrastructure etc.). On cultural plan, tourism is considered an element of community enrichment, thanks to the meeting of different cultures. Also, tourism can positively contribute to the maintenance of natural environment by protecting, creating or maintaining national parks or other protected areas. Especially, in less developed countries tourism afflicted by debilitating rural poverty, tourism is perceived to be one of the few feasible options for development.

The main subject of this paper is the examination of how a form of tourism – event tourism- can affect rural development. How much a rural event affects host communities? Can a small-scale event which takes place to a rural environment play significant role to the socio-economic development of the region?

EVENTS

Before starting the analysis of the event tourism sector it is essential to be cleared what is an event. The definition of the event is difficult to be accurate as tourism events and it can be flexible to suit different situations.

‘A Special Event is a one- off happening designed to meet specific needs at any given time. Local community events may be defined as an activity established to involve the local population in a shared experience to their mutual benefits’. (Wilkinson in Watt, 1998:1)

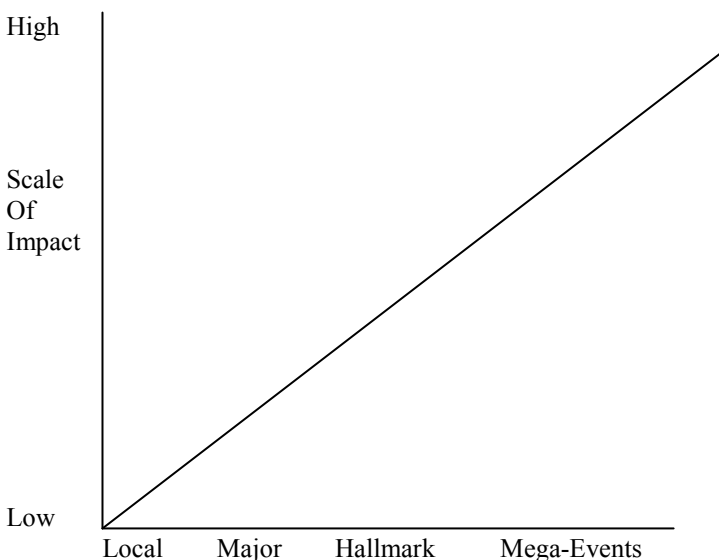
‘A Special Event recognizes a unique moment in time with ceremony and ritual to satisfy needs.’(Goldblatt in Watt, 1998:1)

Donald Getz (2008) determined: *‘Planned events are spatial-temporal phenomenon, and each is unique because of interactions among the setting, people, and management systems including design elements and the program. Much of the appeal of events is that they are never the same, and you have to ‘be there’ to enjoy the unique experience fully; if you miss it, it’s a lost opportunity.’*

‘A special event is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body. To the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for a leisure, social or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.’(Allen, O’Toole, McDonnell & Harris, 2002: 12) The fourth definition is the most appropriate from the tourism perspective and is the one that is used to the current paper.

Figure 1 depicts the basic typology of the events according to their size. This categorization of events is according to their demand, tourist value and impacts to the host destination. 'Mega events' are those that attract an enormous number of visitors such as Olympic Games, World Cup etc. and have long been related to image-making or developmental roles for the host community. 'Hallmark events' are 'Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination'(Ritchie, 1984). 'Local' events are small events and constitute the main subject of this paper. 'Some of them have tourism potential that can be developed, requiring investment, and some are not interested in tourism—perhaps even feeling threatened by it.'(Getz, 2008). Hence, the matter of capability of such events to contribute to rural community rises.

Figure 1. Typology of Events



Source: Allen J., O'Toole W., McDonnell I. & Harris R. (2002:12).

Events can be divided to eight main categories according to their purpose, form and program (Getz, 2008). Cultural celebrations, arts and entertainment, sporting events and recreational events are mainly pertain event tourism. Especially, performing arts and other festivals are now a

worldwide tourism phenomenon (Chacko and Schaffer, 1993). Also, educational and business events could appeal tourism but for special reasons. Political and private events are not included in the event tourism industry.

EVENT TOURISM

Before analyzing rural events it is of great importance to understand the role of events from a tourism perspective: *“Event Tourism is a systematic planning, development, and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, image-makers, catalysts for infrastructure and economic growth, and animators of built attraction”* (Getz & Wicks, 1993 :2).

Donald Getz (2008) placed event tourism between tourism management - tourism studies and event management - event studies. Tourism management deals with tourism development by analysing the behaviour and motivation of all kind of tourists. On the other hand, event management deals with event marketing, design and managing of an event. Also, tries to understand the event experiences and to manage them. Hence, event tourism is in the middle of the two sectors. In other words, event tourism aims at full exploitation of the capabilities of events in order to achieve tourism development of host communities. Event tourism planners must take into account all the details of the event management and make a sedulous research on managing event from the tourism perspective.

Now ‘event tourism’ is generally recognized as being inclusive of all planned events in an integrated approach to development and marketing. Event tourism has great similarities with other special forms of tourism. Because of that, in event tourism demand and supply sides must be analysed (Getz, 2008). A demand side analysis must go through who travel to events and which are the motives of those travellers. According to various researchers there are several domains of event tourism motivation: escape, novelty, family togetherness, socialization, excitement etc.(Uysal,Gahan & Martin, 1993; Mohr, Backman, Gahan & Backman, 1993; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Formica & Uysal, 1996;1998; Lee, 2000; Kim, Uysal & Chen, 2002; Lee, Lee & Wicks, 2004). Moreover, from the supply side perspective, events should be approached and managed effectively in order to achieve positive impacts and reduce negative impacts of hosting an event.

Events can have a positive affect to economy, tourism, society and culture of hosting area. First of all, events generate revenue for the area

and create employment (Yolal, Cetinel & Uysal, 2009). Also, they contribute to tourism as a tool for destination marketing and promotion by increasing awareness of the region and as a catalyst for creation of new accommodation and tourist infrastructure. Moreover, socio-cultural impacts appear by hosting an event such as: increase in standard of living, enhance of local pride and community spirit, increase of local interest, strengthening traditions and values of the hosting region (Hall, 1992; Arcodia & Witford, 2006). Environment may also be positively affected mainly by the improvement of area's accessibility and infrastructure. On the other hand, events may affect the hosting area negatively (Increased prices and crime during the event period, poor reputation of the area because of inadequate facilities etc.). The following table (table 1) summarizes impacts of event tourism to five main categories: economic, tourism/commercial, physical/ environmental, psychological and political/administrative.

Table 1. Impacts of Event tourism

<u>Type Of Impact</u>	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Economic	• Increased expenditures • Creation of employment • Increase in labour supply • Increase in standard of living	• Price increases during event • Real estate speculation • Failure to attract tourists • Better alternative investments • Inadequate capital • Inadequate estimation of costs of event
Tourism/ commercial	• Increased awareness of the region as a travel/tourism destination • Increased knowledge concerning the potential for investment and commercial activity in the region • Creation of new	• Acquisition of a poor reputation as a result of inadequate facilities, improper practices or inflated prices • Negative reactions from existing enterprises due to the possibility of new competition for local

	accommodation and tourist attractions • Increase in accessibility	manpower and government assistance
Physical/ environmental	• Increase in permanent level of local interest and participation in types of activity associated with event • Strengthening of regional values and traditions	• Commercialization of activities which may be of a personal or private nature • Modification of nature of event or activity to accommodate tourism • Potential increase in crime • Changes in community structure • Social dislocation
Psychological	• Increased local pride and community spirit • Increased awareness of non-local perceptions	• Tendency toward defensive attitudes concerning host region • Culture shock • Misunderstanding leading to varying degrees of host/visitor hostility
Political/ administrative	• Enhanced international recognition of region and values • Development of skills among planners	• Economic exploitation of local population to satisfy ambitions of political elite • Distortion of true nature of event to reflect elite values • Failure to cope • Inability to achieve aims • Increase in administrative costs • Use of event to legitimate unpopular decisions • Legitimation of ideology

		and socio-cultural reality
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Source: Hall (1992:8)

RURAL AREAS

Many rural communities host events on a yearly basis, to exploit the benefits that event tourism provides (Getz, 1991; 1997). However, to this point, it is of great importance to specify what is 'rural'. One of the difficulties with identifying a definition for rural areas lies with the fact that it is often defined by what it is not (non-urban) rather than by what it is' (Frochot, 2005). In other words 'rural areas' can be defined as those beyond major towns. So, it can be defined as the opposite of urban. Moreover rurality includes socio-economic activities outside of urban centers (OECD in Frochot, 2005). Notwithstanding, geographical orientation of rural areas by itself is not adequate. Population must be the second parameter but even this can not give a well- defined and general orientation of rural areas. Because of the great variety of density of population this parameter varies between different countries. Hence, defining rural tourism is not simple.

However, rural tourism has standard characteristics such as versatility and diversity which makes the above definition problem more complicated. There are many different forms of tourism that can be concluded in rural tourism. Ecotourism, nature tourism, farm tourism are some of them. Although, there are four criteria which can define rural tourism (Lane, 1994):

- tourism taking place in rural areas
- take advantage of rural heritage
- representing the rural world

As it is mentioned above, rural areas are defined by contrast to the urban areas. At the same time tourists are attracted to rural areas because is the contrast between overcrowded and stressful urban environment with the peaceful and low density areas (Lane, 1994). The antithesis with the ordinary urban life comes from the peaceful and 'authentic' environment of rural areas. By extent, this might affect event tourism. Rural events can be more authentic for the visitor and because of that more attractive. Talking about rural tourism it is essential to report that rural tourists tend to be the lower spenders of all kind of tourists, especially those of urban and seaside areas (Frochot, 2005). A more comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of rural tourists is not of interesting for this paper as the

main subject of the research is event tourism sector by implementing rural events. For this paper, the term event tourism refers to the events taking place in rural areas.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Because of its great benefits, many rural areas depend mainly on tourism for their economic and sociocultural development. Throughout Europe, in particular, tourism has been widely promoted and relied upon as a means of addressing the social and economic challenges facing rural areas (Sharpley, 2002). Especially, in less developed countries tourism afflicted by debilitating rural poverty, tourism is perceived to be one of the few feasible options for development. 'Worldwide, demand for products such as found in a rural setting are said to be on the increase. There are trends that indicate the demand for rural based tourism will continue to increase... New approaches to product development and marketing of rural tourism products should be considered' (Gartner, 2004). Economic reasons, mainly, are forcing rural destination to increase the supply of rural- based tourism products in order to attract available tourists.

Rural areas usually face problems such as limited sources of income and limited opportunities for employment. Declining economic activity, restructuring of the agricultural sector, dwindling rural industrialisation and out-migration of higher educated youth, has led to the adoption, in many western nations, of tourism as an alternative development strategy for the economic and social regeneration of rural areas (Hannigan, 1994; Dernoï, 1991). Tourism has been embraced by an increasing number of rural communities as a means to offset losses in traditional agricultural industries and to diversify their economic bases (Cai, 2002). However, a rural community generally is unable to take full advantage of the tourism industry, as it does not have sufficient infrastructure to support year round visitors (Mangion & McNabb, 2005). So it is essential to understand the importance of taking advantage of event tourism as a potential tool to overcome the problems of rural areas. Further down, researches that deal with the capability of rural event tourism to contribute to rural development are analysed.

CONTRIBUTION OF RURAL EVENTS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOST DESTINATIONS

Firstly, it is important to understand and to measure the spending patterns of event tourists or goers in order to measure the cash injection to host community. A useful study for understanding the categories of event tourists' spending is of the Chhabra, Sills & Cubbage (2003) which provides estimates of the total economic impact of two short-term events in rural North Carolina, using an input-output (I-O) model. This research found that visitors spent the most on lodging, food and beverage and this varies according to the length of stay for attending the event and the number of activities offered. The business that are the most benefited from events are the tourism enterprises such as restaurant, other food and beverage, lodging, entertainment, shopping, admission fees, and auto-related expenses have been identified as the main categories of spending (Table 1) (Chhabra, Sills Cubbage, 2003:423). The total spending figures from the current case study for North Carolina (Tables 1), are also consistent with findings on other events such as the case studies of Ryan (1998) for New Zealand and the 9-day tourism exposition in Michigan (Gartner and Holecek, 1983). As regards with the festivals' attendance approximately the half of the visitors where repeat visitors. Of course this is fact reduces the risk of event failure in the future. 'For a nonlocal visitor, a visit to a once-only event in an unknown destination is a high-risk travel decision, whereas the decision to visit an annual event that has been enjoyable in the past is much easier(Chhabra, Sills & Cubbage, 2003: 426).

Table 1. The Results of the North Carolina Case Study

Item	<u>Grandfather Mountain Highland Games</u>		<u>Flora Macdonald Highland Games</u>	
	Expenditure \$	Percent tage	Expenditu re \$	Percentag e
Food and beverage	386.937	17.1	28.249	26.6
Groceries	104.517	4.6	82	0.1
Lodging	964.744	42.5	21.494	20.3
Scottish goods	280.196	12.5	26.652	25.1
Miscellaneous retail	97.846	4.3	818	0.8
Gasoline	174.310	7.7	12.323	11.6
Vehicle repair	3.592	0.2		
Vehicle rental	3.079	0.1		
Admission and registration	251.287	11	16.458	15.5
Total	2.266.511	100	106.076	100

The general conclusion of the research of North Carolina is that the two events are significant contributors for rural economies mainly for lodging and restaurant sectors. Notwithstanding, labor income and total output are quite a little affected. The main reason for that is that rural economies have low value-added and labor income multipliers. But the fact that the events can attract new visitors and the half of them are repeat visitors already ensure that in the future the two events can keep up the small but significant contribution to the tourism development of the host communities (Chhabra, Sills & Cabbage, 2003).

Another interesting research is the one of D. O'Sullivan & M. Jackson (2002) which deliberates events as a tool for sustainable local economic development. The case study analyzes three types of festivals in order to comb their contribution to sustainable development of the host community. The three typologies are depicted to table 2. They are categorized mainly by their amplitude. Also, references about their initial goals, the type of sponsorship and the spatial geography are of great importance. 'A 'home-grown' festival is essentially small scale, bottom-up and run by one or more volunteers for the benefit of the locality. A 'tourist-tempter' festival is one that is aimed specifically at attracting visitors to stimulate local economic development. A 'big-bang' festival is essentially a marketing tool that promotes a myriad of related activities over a defined geographical area (D. O'Sullivan & M. Jackson, 2002:331).' The different festivals were analyzed and tested according to a model of sustainable local economic development in order to examine the compatibility with the agenda of the model.

Table 2. Typology of the examined festivals

	'Home Grown' Festival	'Tourist-tempter' Festival	'Big-bang' Festival
Size by population	Small	Medium	Large
Spatial geography	Rural/Semi-rural	Urban/Urban fringe	Urban
Major theme	Arts/culture/Entertainment	Arts/culture/Entertainment	Arts/culture/Entertainment
Organizing drivers	Community led/ Public and private sector support	Local authority driven	Partnership driven
Key management group	Voluntary sector driven	Local authority driven	Partnership driven

Primary purpose for holding a festival	Cultural and/or entertainment benefits for locals and visitors	Economic development via tourism	Economic development for partners/ cultural and entertainment benefit for locals and visitors
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Table 3. Results according to the principles of sustainable development (Forum for the Future Model)

Principles	‘Home grown’ festival	‘Tourist-tempter’ festival	‘Big-bang’ festival
Capacity building and training	No	Yes	No
Access to credit and capital	No	No	No
Community enterprise	No	Some	No
Local Business development	Some	Some	Some
Sustainable approaches to inward investment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Responsible business practice	No	Yes	No
Access and Distribution of Work	No	Some	No
Trading locally	No	Some	No

Source: O’Sullivan D., Jackson M.(2002 :331:334)

Table 3 depicts the results of the case study. Home grown festivals which are the main subject of this paper (because they take place to rural areas) demonstrated less evidence of the activities which contribute to the initial principles of sustainable tourism development. Its voluntary nature led, unsurprisingly, to low abundance with the principles. Although, this results can not be transferred to other cases there are some conclusions: ‘It is clear that that although strong synergies between festival tourism and sustainable local economic development are feasible, they are often fairly weak in practice. The results of this study suggest that while festival tourism may have the potential to make a valuable contribution to a locality, it does not automatically make a significant contribution to sustainable local economic development.’ (D. O’Sullivan & M. Jackson,

2002:337-338). Moreover this case study indicates the fact that rural events can only play an auxiliary role to the local development.

Besides the above researches Donna Mangion & Yvonne McNabb examined the impacts of a rural event to the host community. 'The findings suggest that the benefits attributed to tourism events are not apparent when applied to a rural setting over a prolonged period.' (D. Mangion & Y. McNabb, 2005:57) The interviewers revealed that positive impacts far outweighed the negative impacts of the festival. Positive impacts were: providing a unique image to the destination, international exposure, community involvement ('the festival gives the community a focus to all work towards'), cultural exchange between visitors and locals, economic benefit from tourist spending.

Table 4. Results of Moscardo's (2007:27) analysis of Case Studies

Themes of contribution to regional development	Number of Cases in which theme was identified
Level of community involvement in the event	15
Building of networks in planning the event	10
Support for non-tourism-related regional products and services	8
Fun and entertainment for residents/participants	8
Opportunities for residents/families to socialize	8
Celebration of achievements	8
Event connections to a specific place	7
Contributes to stronger shared local identity	7
Can use tourism to maintain traditional culture/heritage sites	6
Coordination/partnerships needed to run the event	6
Leadership	5
Opportunities for locals to develop skills	4
Relevance to the local community	4

However interviewers stated some negative impacts such as: pricing of festival tickets, no benefit to non-tourism related business, non-local

businesses during the festival which take away the profits, consumption of alcohol and inappropriate behavior. A notable point is that the findings show little evidence to support optimism to long term economic benefits, mainly because of the fact that the increase in level of employment as a result to the festival. Community members have no appreciation of the level of festival income nor do that profits remain to the host community. As a conclusion for the study of Mangion & McNabb is that the great benefit for the destination is community commitment and the creation of a destination image. Economic benefits are significant but their role is not of great importance in order to achieve regional development.

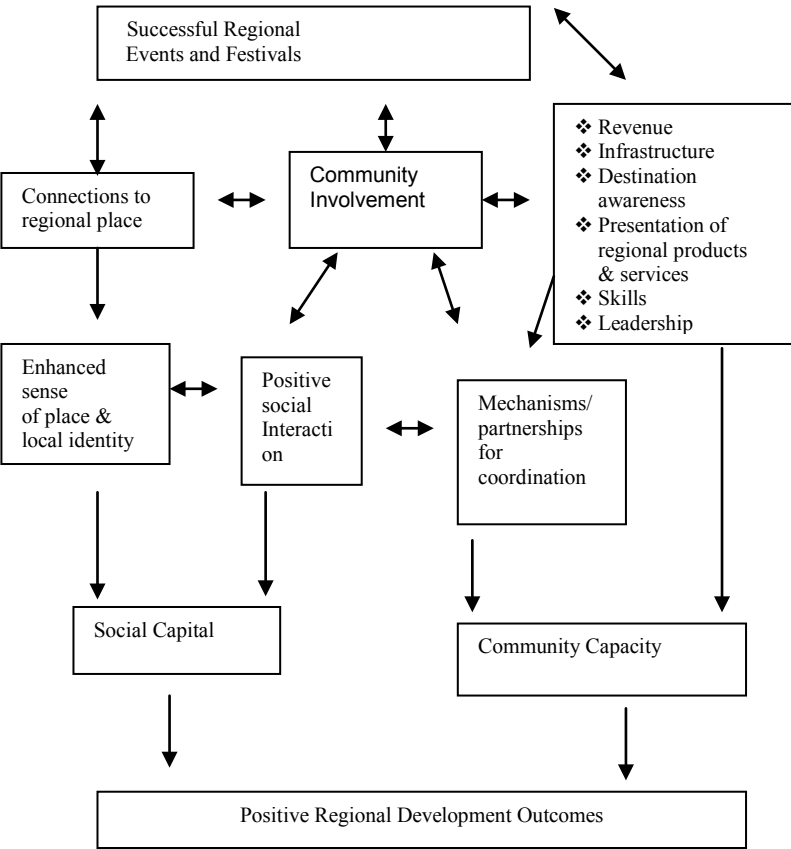
Another interesting study is the one of Gianna Moscardo(2007) which explored events from the view of contribution to regional development, by analyzing a sample of 36 case studies of festivals and events in regional destinations. At first place, the contribution of the examined festivals/events was divided to three main categories: building social capital (socializing, build family bonds, sense of place, sharing local identity etc.), increasing community capacity (by participating, leadership etc.), and support of other activities (tourism or non-tourism activities). Although, the results (Table 4) pertain to not only rural festivals, the study concluded with an interesting 'preliminary conceptual framework' (Figure 5), aiming to understand the role of events in regional tourism development. Obviously, community involvement is the main element. 'The framework proposes that an event may attract substantial numbers of visitors and generate revenue, but if it does not create community involvement it is unlikely to contribute to regional development.'(Moscardo, 2007: 29)

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

According to literature review, it is obvious that rural and small festivals can not have a significant contribution to the overall development of the hosting area. Various researchers stated that there was some economic contribution according to the spending patterns of the visitors (Ryan, 1998; Chhabra, Sills & Cabbage, 2003), but it was inadequate to lead to regional development because it focused mainly on tourism enterprises. From the view of sustainability, rural festivals can only play an auxiliary role. Although they have the potential for an important contribution to the locality, managerial and practical problems (e.g. voluntary nature, small size etc.) obstruct the possibility for sustainable development of the area (D. O'Sullivan & M. Jackson 2002). These findings are reinforced by the study of Mangion & McNabb (2005) who reported several benefits from

the implementation of a rural festival (destination marketing, community involvement etc.), although not enough to achieve development of the region. Finally, Moscardo (2007) stated that community involvement should be the main element of any festival and proposes a framework in order to reach regional development.

Figure 5. The Role of Events To Regional Development



Source: Moscardo G. (2007: 29)

The above results corroborate the statement that a successful implementation of event tourism should focus on the community. The

majority of the studies examine effective ways of event management to increase revenue, and as a result community is being ignored. Event managers should take into account that minimizing negative social impacts can lead to the success of a festival. The study of Arcodia & Whitford (2006) reinforces the above statement. They examined ways of developing social capital by building community resources, through social cohesiveness and through celebration. They concluded, that is a necessity to include community resources to the implementation of a festival as it encourages co-operations between different groups within the society. Also, common goals and celebration provided from the festival contribute to social cohesiveness and to enhance community spirit. Especially at rural areas, where hosting an event affects vitally the everyday life of local population, positive social impacts should be the initial goal for event managers.

CONCLUSIONS

The statement that tourism is an effective tool to achieve regional economic and social development has been well documented. Rural economies have been concentrated on the benefits of tourism industry to attain cash injection on their economies. Especially, by implementing event tourism they have tried to achieve such goals. In particular, rural destinations host events as part of the economic development strategy because the possible sources of gross regional product are more limited than in urban areas. So, events are often seen as crowding points on the annual calendar for many communities. This fact has various positive and negative economic, social, environmental impacts on host community.

In regard of rural events, it is unclear whether the identified impacts of tourism events are experienced to the host communities. The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the impacts of event tourism as perceived by a rural economy. Researches to the current theme of study pointed out that most important benefit of rural events are the building of destination image and community commitment. The cash injection is significant but not enough to achieve rural economic development. The role of their economic impact is to assist the tourism businesses of the region but not the entire economy of the host community. As a general conclusion, researchers should aim to understand the role of events to rural development, mainly by putting social impacts and community in the centre of event management. As it shown to the conceptual framework (figure 5) community involvement should be the main element of a successful festival.

However, further research is needed in order to deliberate effective ways of managing events, concentrated on reducing negative social impacts and achieving rural development.

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