



Chapter 1

Evaluating the Impact of a Tourist Event on a Destination

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ABSTRACT

Events create different types of impact on the local economy and host communities. They can trigger a variety of short- or long-term, positive or negative impacts. Literature distinguishes the term ‘impact’ from ‘legacy.’ While impacts affect the economy of the host place in the short-term, legacy remains longer than the event itself. Thus, if residents perceive benefits from the event, they will be supportive of hosting in the future. This chapter focuses on events as entrepreneurial opportunities of tourism and hospitality for a hosting place. It is based on the perceptions expressed by the different categories of local stakeholders involved in an international literary festival hosted in Italy. The study shows that evaluating and understanding the legacy effects for a place hosting an event, as perceived by the different local stakeholders involved, can provide managerial insights for planning over time events in the same place.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered a substantial contributor to the development of different places. In recent years, an ever increasing number of destinations worldwide have invested in tourism, given the remarkable growth of the tourism phenomenon. Recent UNWTO reports based on current trends estimated that 1403 million international tourist arrivals were received by destinations around the world in 2018, with an increase of 6% compared to the previous year (UNWTO, 2019). While there is a general consensus regarding the social and economic benefits that tourism development potentially provides, it is recognized that these benefits can be realized only if tourism is managed in order to maximise positive impacts, while negative impacts are kept to a minimum. The issue of impacts, therefore, remains at the forefront of the sector and arises in different occasions, as in the case of the effects generated by a tourist event attracting a large number of participants, spectators and sponsorships to a destination.

Events are considered an important motivator of tourism as well as representing a key element in the development and marketing plans of many destinations. Many studies have found that events can have an influence on the level of economic activity of the host territory. Although the attraction of many tourists is usually at the centre of analysis, the attempt to measure the economic benefits provides some difficulties, most significantly because of the problems of isolating the impacts of one event within a complex economy. However, exploring social impacts may have an even more substantial influence on the community (Gibson, 2007). Hence, residents' perception of social impacts has become an important factor for obtaining community-wide event support: if residents perceive benefits from the event, they will be supportive of hosting for future events (Kim & Petrick, 2005). Furthermore, social impacts are increasingly used as one of the main justifications for staging and funding events (Richards, de Brito, & Wilks, 2013). Therefore, organizers are more and more focused on the promotion of positive attitudes among local residents of the place where the event is held.

Hosting special events has become a strategic element in the tourism development of destinations to attract visitors and encourage investment, improve the image and boost the local economy. Events may be a form of tourism offer of a destination in which the content of the events is associated with the resources of the place where it is held. They contain a number of activities, and are planned and organized by different public institutions and private organizations (Getz, 1997). In this perspective, the organization of an event is associated with the concept of tourism networks, which refers to a wide range of cooperative behaviours among organisations linked through economic and social relationships and provides benefits for the local community involved (Novelli, Schmitz, & Spencer, 2006). Therefore, cooperation among local

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