

Challenges of Event Tourism in Local Economic Development: The Case of Bethlehem, South Africa

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ABSTRACT In the developing world, event tourism is increasingly becoming an important tool for economic development. This paper investigates the potential of event tourism in stimulating Local Economic Development (LED) in a South African urban community where poverty is deeply rooted. Semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire survey and observations were conducted on systematically selected households in three distinct residential areas of Bethlehem, including high income, middle income and low income residential areas. The study finds that though event tourism has immense potential to generate opportunities for LED only the more affluent members of the community benefit meaningfully from the process due to differential levels of participation. The study suggests that in order to enhance the role of event tourism in LED a pro-poor management approach is needed. Such an approach entails the broadening of participation in tourism events and the integration of these events. This approach can only succeed if the goals of tourism events are synchronized with those of LED.