

## 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.

### INTRODUCTION

Event tourism is increasingly becoming an important field of study and an area of professional practice. The word 'event' encompasses anything attracting an audience by appealing to specific tastes, desires or needs, and has been used to define that which is extraordinary in popular culture (Swart and Smith-Christensen 2005). Tassiopoulos (2005: 16) defined event tourism as "the systematic development, planning, marketing and holding events as tourist attraction". Event tourists are people who visit a destination for the primary purpose of participating in or viewing an event (Turco et al. 2002). Event tourists can also be defined as those people who travel away from home for business, pleasure, personal affairs or any other purpose and who stay overnight at an event destination. A same-day event tourist does not stay overnight but may return home or visit another destination. The roles and impacts of planned tourism events are increasingly becoming important for competitiveness of destinations.

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We often associate events with festivals, cultural gatherings, celebrations, entertainment, recreation, sport and art events, and for those in the business domain and corporate affairs: meetings, conventions, fairs and exhibitions (Getz 2008), depending on one's perception and interests. Bowdin et al. (2006) notes that the principle applying to all events is that they are temporary and unique. Each event is unique because of the differences in the nature of interactions regarding the setting, people and management systems involved. Thus, event tourism has a spatio-temporal dimension because it is limited to that segment of the industry which is unique to a specific geographic location and time period. In some cases tourism events are seasonal. Tourism events are an important motivator of tourism and feature prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations (Getz 2008). Tourism events add to the experiences that a host tourist destination can offer and contribute to its capacity to attract and hold visitors for longer periods of time. Events are appealing because they are never the same and one has to be there to enjoy the experience while it lasts. If you miss it, it is a lost opportunity.

This research study is based on event tourism in Bethlehem, where the contributions of tourism events on the local community have not yet been widely researched. The study seeks to investigate how the community of Bethlehem has benefited from tourism events within the

context of LED, as well as how the opportunities generated by event tourism can be augmented. There is considerable amount of literature available on LED, concerning its organization, dynamics and implementation (Rogerson 2004). LED has been defined as a process in which partnerships are established between local governments, the private sector and community-based groups in order to manage existing resources for job creation and stimulate local economies (Rogerson 2004). Blakely and Bradshaw (2002: xvi) have defined LED as “the process in which local government or community-based organizations engage to stimulate or maintain business activity or employment. The principal goal of local economic development is to stimulate local employment opportunities in sectors that improve the community using the existing human, natural, and institutional resources”. Events are attractive to host communities because they help to develop local pride and an identity for the local people.

Rogerson (2004) argues that tourism spaces represent examples of localities in which local development is firmly anchored upon consumption rather than production-based growth and development. Tourism events have become important in boosting the economies of host communities because they help raise money, foster community development, provide leisure opportunities and make excellent communication tools, even though they can also generate negative economic impacts (Hu 2010). However, the popularity and specialness of tourism events is related to their ability to achieve multiple goals. Though the generic benefits of event tourism have already been established, researchers have only recently turned their attention from general motivational studies concerning travel and events to the issue of targeted benefits (Getz 2008). It has already been established that events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism (Raj and Vignali 2010). The need to determine the extent to which tourism events can benefit communities within the context of LED remains to be fully explored. Even though considerable research has been done on the subject, targeting the benefits from event tourism spaces and channelling them towards LED remains an elusive social developmental challenge. The research question addressed by this study is: What impact does event tourism have on LED? In this context the objective of this re-

search study is to determine how event tourism has created opportunities for LED and how the livelihoods of the local community have been transformed through this process.

### **Role of Event Tourism in LED**

Tourism events have a wide range of positive impacts (Bowdin et al. 2006). This is partly due to the fact that tourism events can relate to almost every aspect of our lives, including social, cultural, economic or environmental situations. This makes tourism events most relevant to LED, since they are applicable to local situations. Keyser (2002) has noted the major goals of event tourism, including the creation of a favourable image for a destination, expansion of the traditional tourist season, spreading of tourist demand more evenly through an area, and attracting foreign and domestic visitors. Rivett-Carnac (2009) contends that tourism events can help ‘brand’ an area and improve its attractiveness to tourists and investors. Effective tourism promotion can result in visitors to the event extending their length of stay and visiting other tourism destinations and attractions in the region. It has been shown that the tourism that is generated during an event may attract media coverage and promote the exposure that enhances the profile of the host town or city, thus resulting in improved long-term tourism image and visitation of the host place (Bowdin et al. 2006). At the same time, tourism may not necessarily translate into economic benefits if place branding is not successfully achieved.

Getz (2008) posits that event tourism should be viewed from both demand and supply sides. On the demand side, is the assessment of the value of events in promoting a positive destination image, place marketing and branding of destinations, while on the supply side, the destination develops, facilitates and promotes events of all kinds to meet multiple goals. Due to the opportunity it offers event tourism has the advantage of keeping the domestic market active.

The most studied benefits of event tourism stem from the role that tourism events play in attracting visitors to an area to which the visitors would not otherwise travel. There is no doubt that tourism events are tourist motivators, or that the events increase the destination’s appeal. Events attract people because of the generic benefits they offer, for instance entertain-

ment and socialization (Getz 2007). In this context, the most beneficial events are those that attract people who are already seeking specific benefits. While this may be the case, Sharpley and Telfer (2002) noted that tourism is an effective way of redistributing wealth because it moves money into local economies from other parts of the country.

The link between event tourism and LED is that tourism events play an important role in creating development opportunities in an area, using locally available resources and skills, which can only be effectively harnessed through the active participation of local communities. LED often relies on small-scale community-based initiatives, and indigenous skills (Nel 2001). Thus, LED depends on local resources and skills to improve the livelihoods of the people in a locality. As argued by Nel (2001), LED is a cost-effective and community empowering process which has a defined role to play by yielding tangible benefits for the participating communities. One of the most important economic benefits of event tourism based LED is the revenue generated for the local area by tourism events.

When tourists visit a destination, they spend money on accommodation and food. They also spend money in shops and petrol stations and other service industries, such as banks and transport services. As the local rates base increases due to increasing investment, demands are increasingly placed on local government to enhance service delivery in the local area. Tourists attending tourism events are likely to spend money on transport, accommodation, goods and services in the host destination. This expenditure has an economic impact on the destination since money circulates through the local economy. Bowdin et al. (2006) have observed that local business operators profit directly from tourists' spending. As tourism operators and their employees spend profits, salaries and wages in the community, money circulates through the local economy. Through these expenditures money is left in the host destination and members of the community, reap the benefits. The host economy gains from the direct and indirect visitor expenditures, depending on the functionality of the destination.

In order to determine the economic impacts of event tourism, it is necessary to identify all the expenditures involved in staging events and determine their effects on the wider economy. In

this respect, tourism development is seen as the rationale for staging events and may be considered as a strategy for balancing the seasonal demand of a tourist destination, since "events serve as tools to enhance or extend the destination life cycle and to offset seasonality" (Kruger 2011:103). The potential economic gain resulting from event tourism is widely recognized as the key rationale underlying economic growth strategies in many countries, regardless of their stage of development (Mathieson and Wall 2006). Governments are increasingly turning to tourism due to its rapid growth and capacity to deliver economic benefits and create jobs. Event tourism offers renewed opportunities for work, as well as income and prospects for revenue generation for the local economy. Tourism events are seen as image-makers, which can create a profile for destinations and position them in the market (Bodwin et al. 2006). There is always a concern for an event tourism entrepreneur or host organization whether or not an event is within the set budget and whether it will generate the expected profits. Usually, it is simply a matter of checking whether the income from sponsorship, merchandising and ticket sales exceeds the cost of conducting and marketing the event. Events may create losses and not serve their intended purpose. Consequently, hosting events is a very big risk since it always involves a win or lose situation (Page 2009).

Page (2009) has identified three interrelated economic impacts that can be used to estimate tourist spending. The first is direct expenditures such as expenditure by tourists on consumer goods and services (hotels, restaurants and tourists transport services). For example, an increase in the number of tourists staying overnight in hotels, guesthouses, as well as bed and breakfast outlets (B&Bs) would directly increase sales in the accommodation sector. Similarly, an increase in accommodation for visitors may require an increase in accommodation facilities and an increase in demand for food and beverages.

The second is indirect expenditure and relates to the payment of salaries and wages to local employees by tourist establishments. This enhances the purchasing power of the employees and creates demand for goods and services in the area while enhancing the livelihoods of the employees. The third category of economic impacts is that of induced impacts. These are changes in economic activity resulting from the

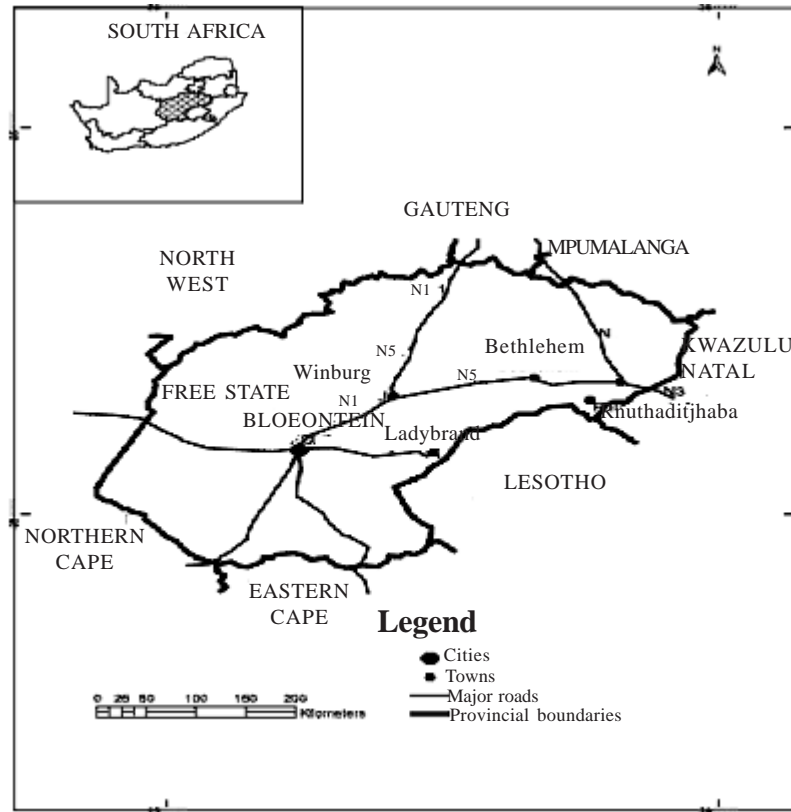


Fig.1. Location of the study area

spending of income earned directly or indirectly and are measured in terms of gross output, sales, income, employment or value addition. For example, hotel employees spend their income in the local region for housing, food and transport. The sales, income and jobs that result from household spending of added wages and salaries are also induced impacts.

Event tourism can bring about all the three categories of impacts. This is because tourists contribute to sales, profits, jobs, tax revenue and income in the destination area. The most direct effects result from income generated from lodgings, restaurants, transportation, amusements and retail trade. Mathieson and Wall (2006) proposed a more comprehensive classification of tourism expenditures, all of which are capable of generating economic benefits. The first category of expenditures are expenditures borne by visitors from outside of the region, either retained

by the event organizers or by the local community. The second includes capital expenditures required for setting up and operating the event. The third involves expenditures incurred by the event organizers associated with both the promotion and staging of the event, salaries and advertising costs. The fourth are, Switched expenditures, involving the expenditures made on the event as substitutes for other goods and services in other parts of the destination, which may include redirection of public expenditures by local, regional or national government away from public works or infrastructure towards the promotion and operation of the event.

These expenditures have the potential to stimulate LED in any area where tourism events are held, and it can be argued that they are a form of investment. However, what is important is to determine the circumstances under which event tourism contributes to LED and if it does

whether its benefits are shared equitably within the community.

## RESAERCH METHODOLOGY

### Study Area

Founded on the Pretoriuskloof farm in 1884, today Bethlehem is one of the principal towns of the eastern Free State region of South Africa (Fig.1). It is located approximately 28°14'0" South and 28°18'0" East, along the N5 highway. The Free State province shares borders with Lesotho. Within South Africa (as shown in Fig.1) the province borders the KwaZulu-Natal in the east, Eastern Cape in the south, Northern Cape in the south-west, Northwest in the north-west, Gauteng in the north and Mpumalanga in the north-east, making its location central and strategic as a tourist destination.

Due to its central location, Bethlehem is the gateway to these provinces. Bethlehem's strategic location makes it an important regional centre in South Africa. The local population comprises Afrikaans and Sotho speaking people, though English and Zulu are also widely spoken in the area.

### Methodology

The study involved an inductive approach where observations, interviews and a questionnaire survey were undertaken in three residential areas, including Smutville (low income residential area), Bergsig (middle income residential area) and Panorama (high income residential area) which were randomly selected. In each residential area, households were systematically selected on randomly sampled streets. On each sampled street, every 10<sup>th</sup> household was included in the survey. In each residential area a total of 17 questionnaires were handed out and 12 interviews conducted. Thus, in the questionnaire survey a sample of 51 respondents was chosen. This was considered as adequate due to the qualitative nature of the study. All the questionnaires were completed and returned, yielding a 100% response rate. The respondents who were involved in the questionnaire survey were household heads, of which 56% were women. The respondents consisted of 33 indigenous Africans (65%), 6 people of mixed ethnic group (12%) and 12 Europeans (23%). The purpose of conducting the questionnaire survey and interviews was to determine the contributions of event

tourism to the livelihoods of the local community. Simple descriptive statistics, including frequency tables, were used in the analysis of the responses. The interviewees were tourism event organizers, municipal officials and ward councillors. Observations were also made in the selected residential areas in order to determine the level of participation and involvement of the local community in the tourism events that are hosted in Bethlehem. One of the researchers served as a "participant observer" by attending the Basha Festival, Hot Air Balloon and Tourism Expo tourism events.

The analysis of the collected data was done both quantitatively and qualitatively. The principal aim of the analysis was to determine the views of the Bethlehem community regarding the benefits and opportunities generated by tourism events, as well as the extent to which these events are viewed as contributing to LED.

## RESULTS

### Tourism Events Hosted in Bethlehem

There are four tourism events which are held annually in Bethlehem. These events include the Basha festival, Bethlehem Air show, Hot Air Balloon and ToGOTO Tourism Expo. These events, which attract people from all over South Africa, play an important role in the local economy of Bethlehem since tourists spend money in the town when paying for goods and services. With the exception of the Basha festival, these events are either held in the outskirts of the town or in areas that are close to high income residential areas. The Basha festival, which is held in the Bohlokong township, is the only event that is held in a low income residential area. Evidence from this study indicates clearly that the benefits of the events are not equitably shared. This is because the level of participation in these events differs according to the nature of support that the events receive from different socio-economic strata of the community. In Bethlehem, the majority of the people who benefit from tourism events are high income earners, who are mostly Europeans.

Among the four tourism events that are held in Bethlehem the ToGOTO Tourism Expo has been the most successful. The ToGOTO Tourism Expo is a product of ToGOTO Tourism Opts Pty (Ltd), a tourism company based in Bethlehem. This company is responsible for marketing and promoting tourism products and different



destinations throughout the Free State, KwaZulu Natal and Northern Cape provinces, as well as Lesotho. The company publishes a tourism magazine called ToGOTO, which contains information on issues such as adventure, travel, heritage, culture, arts, crafts and the environment for the benefit of tourists. The ToGOTO Tourism Expo is funded by a number of stakeholders, including government, municipalities and some private companies. The ToGOTO Tourism Expo is a local event whose aim is to promote tourism exhibitions. According to Keyser (2002), there are two forms of exhibitions, namely, a trade show and a consumer show. A trade show is a forum that brings together buyers and sellers in an industry. Trade shows attract both local and foreign exhibitors. On the other hand, though a consumer show is similar to a trade show, the sellers are brought together at one event to sell their goods to the local public. Consumer shows require intensive exhibition space and are typically produced by the host market. The ToGOTO Tourism Expo is both a trade show and consumer show. It brings together people who are involved in the tourism industry to showcase what they can offer to potential tourists, while at the same time offering people from other industries the opportunity to sell their own goods and services. The Expo is viewed by its organizers as a perfect platform for reaching out to an interested and expanding tourism market.

Interviews with ToGOTO Tourism Expo event organizers revealed that the tourism expo has shown potential growth in 2010, compared to the previous year. In 2009 there were only a few exhibition stalls. This was the first time an event of that nature was hosted in Bethlehem and some people had not got used to the idea of expos. In 2010 the ToGOTO Tourism Expo was better attended. It managed to attract exhibitors from the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Gauteng, Pretoria and KwaZulu Natal, though the number of people who participated could not be ascertained.

From the event organizers' viewpoint, the ToGOTO tourism event has played an important part in raising awareness on event tourism. However, some quarters of the local community still have to fully participate in the event. There are many challenges facing the ToGOTO Tourism Expo. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of sufficient participation by the local community, especially people from the low income residential areas, most of whom are not fully aware

of the benefits of tourism events. Ironically, though a number of local people have benefited directly from the event the majority of the beneficiaries are not from Bethlehem. This is because the ToGOTO events attract more participants from visitors from outside Bethlehem compared to the local community. This suggests that either the local community is not sufficiently interested in taking part in the event or it is being sidelined. Either way the potential contribution of event tourism towards LED is diminished.

A lack of expertise, especially technical capacity, within the local community is the main factor that limits community involvement. This is particularly the case with the Bethlehem Air Show and Hot Air Balloon events. Due to lack of expertise tourism event organizers bring their own participants to Bethlehem. For instance, although Bethlehem has established its own Balloon Club, it has no qualified hot air balloon pilots of its own. The club relies on pilots from Gauteng.

### **Participation in Tourism Events**

In this section of the paper the researchers examine the factors that influence participation in tourism events. These factors include gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

#### ***Role of Gender in Event Tourism Participation***

The analysis of data from both the questionnaire survey and the interviews that were held in all residential areas shows that gender has an influence on the level of participation in tourism events. More women participate in tourism events than men. As shown in Figure 2, this is because women are better informed about the events compared to men. Information about tourism events circulates better in places such as guesthouses, restaurants, hotels and supermarkets, where the majority of the employees are women. As a result more women take part in the events compared to men.

Of the 65% indigenous African respondents who were included in the survey, only 29% participated in the tourism events that are held in Bethlehem while none of the respondents from the category of the people of mixed ethnicity took part in the events. To the contrary, all European household heads who took part in the survey participated in the events. Europeans were

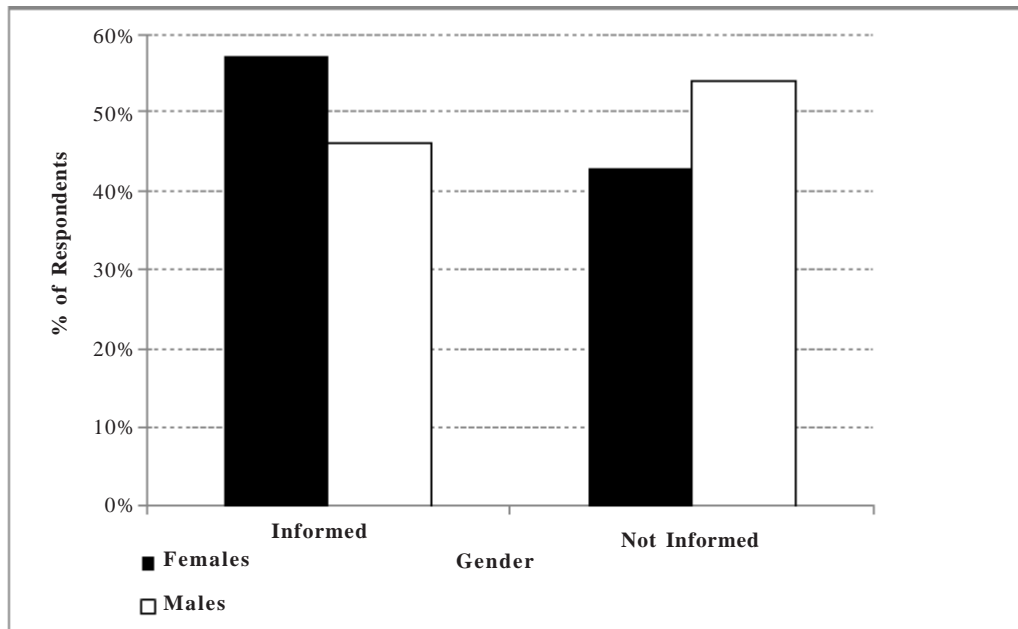


Fig. 2. Relationship between gender and access to information on event tourism

also better informed about the events than the other two ethnic groups. The most evident reason for this is that the events are mostly marketed in their residential areas, in addition to the places where they frequent for recreation and entertainment. Europeans live in high income residential areas. These areas are the ones that are mostly targeted for marketing by event organizers because most of the people who live there can afford to participate in tourism events. Posters and flyers are usually distributed around the Central Business District and high income residential areas, while low income residential areas are sidelined. There is also a communication barrier between event organizers and some sectors of the local community, especially residents of the low income residential areas. This is because some of the events are exclusively marketed in Afrikaans, which makes it difficult for non-Afrikaans speaking people to participate since they do not understand the language.

#### ***The Influence of Social Status on Event Tourism Participation***

When asked if they were aware of the tourism events that take place in Bethlehem, the respondents who took part in the questionnaire

survey gave variable responses. In the low income residential area (Smutville), only 13% of the respondents noted that they were aware of the events or knew people from their residential areas who participated in the events. In the middle income residential area (Bergsig), 76% were aware of the events, even though they were not well informed about the details of the events. In the high income residential area (Panorama), about 75% of the respondents were aware of these events and had participated in them in one way or another. Figure 3 shows the percentage of the respondents from different categories of residential areas who were aware of the tourism events that are held annually in Bethlehem.

Unequal participation among different socio-economic groups shows that event tourism organizers are not giving equal attention to all socio-economic groups. This also explains why some of the events are not as well received as they should be.

#### **Perceptions Associated with the Role of Tourism Events on LED**

Data gathered from the interviews that were held with event organizers, municipal officials

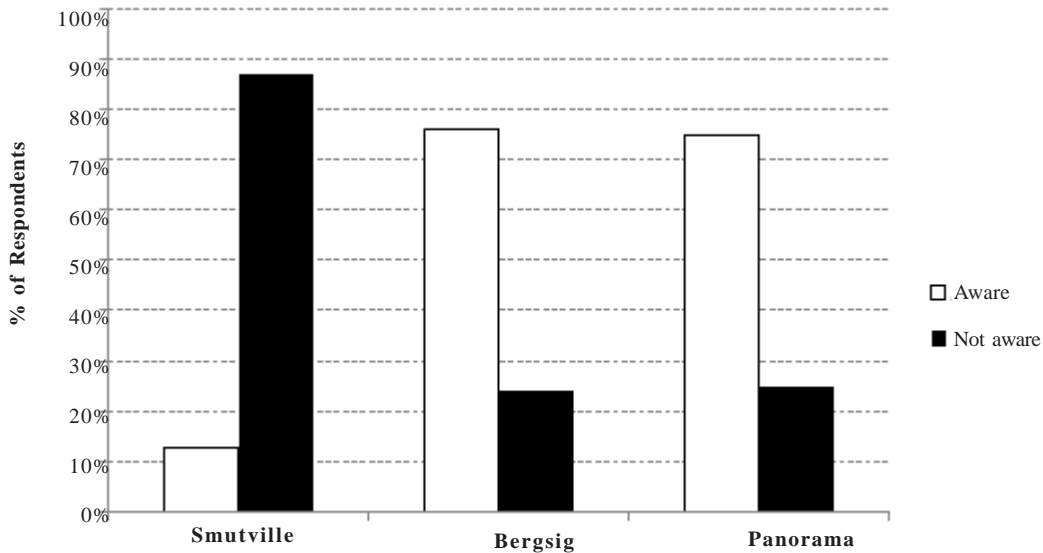


Fig. 3. Percentage of respondents who were aware of the events

and members of the community indicates that the tourism events that are held in Bethlehem provide a wide range of economic opportunities, though the benefits of these opportunities have not been fully realized in the same way by all segments of the local community.

When asked whether they thought tourism events are bringing economic benefits to their community or improving their livelihoods, the majority of the respondents indicated that they did not think that these events were bringing any benefits to their households or improving their livelihoods. Overall, only 43% of the people who participated in the survey thought that tourism events were beneficial to their communities. In the low income residential areas only 18% acknowledged the benefits of tourism events, compared to 35% and 77% in the middle income and high income areas, respectively. These percentages reveal that perceptions about the role of tourism events in LED vary according to social status and, accordingly, not all members of the community view the benefits of the events in the same way. The major benefits that were cited by those who had participated in the events include employment, artists' and crafters' exposure, enhancement of community pride, culture identity, local business opportunity enhancement, even though some benefits have tended to be seasonal or temporary. While most residents from Smutville are sceptical about the

role of tourism events towards LED and livelihood improvement most residents from middle and high income residential areas believe that the events are beneficial, both socially and economically.

## DISCUSSION

Event tourism is a relatively new phenomenon in Bethlehem. This study unearthed social inequalities regarding the level of participation in event tourism. In Bethlehem, there are glaring inequalities regarding participation in event tourism and access to the benefits that are reaped from it. Ethnicity, gender and social status are the main determinants of level of participation in tourism events and the benefits that are reaped from them. These factors have a crucial influence on the level of awareness of tourism events. For instance, while indigenous Africans are the majority among the people who live in Bethlehem, only a few of them have indicated that they participated or were aware of the tourism events that are held in the town. This can partly be explained by the fact that only the Basha festival is held in the areas where most of them live. To the contrary all the Europeans who were interviewed in this study attended most of the events, especially the ToGOTO Tourism Expo, Bethlehem Air Show and the Hot Air Balloon tourism events. This shows that in Bethlehem



the event tourism market is segmented along social and ethnic lines. The media could play a more central role in changing this situation. Shaw and Williams (2004) have argued that the influences that help shape the beliefs and attitudes of residents towards tourism include those from the media, discourses and social interactions that occur at different levels within the community, as well as those that emanate directly from the experiences of the tourists.

The findings of this study confirm the long established fact that the involvement of the local community from the grass-roots level creates opportunities for participation and economic development. Participation is a crucial aspect of empowerment as means to allow the poor control over decisions (Mansuri and Rao 2003). The situation prevailing in Bethlehem suggests that the majority of the people, especially those in the lower income social strata (indigenous Africans ) are not gainfully involved in event tourism. This is because they are excluded from the management of tourism events. Neither are they involved in decision making and control of the activities that could transform their livelihoods and enhance opportunities for LED. Similarly, their contribution to event tourism is negligible and peripheral. Indigenous Africans, who are arguably sidelined, could be encouraged to participate by involving them in information gathering, consultation, decision-making, initiating, planning and implementing event tourism projects, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the projects. In a more cohesive society where the sense of community has taken root people of all ethnic origins will be able to raise their concerns and offer suggestions that will enhance the success of the events and the contribution of the events to their social and economic needs. While the ethnic dichotomy in event tourism appears to be a simple and straightforward matter, in reality it is a reflection of complex subtle underlying deeply rooted social divisions that were inherited from South Africa's apartheid past. During the apartheid era means of livelihood were appropriated according to one's ethnic group. Due to the conservatism that was ethnically entrenched in the past, this legacy has been perpetuated in the post-apartheid period, where the indigenous African majority continue to be excluded and marginalized from economic space and means of liveli-

hood, ironically, despite the fact that South Africa attained democratic rule in 1994.

Another critical point is that the level of participation in tourism events is influenced by the location of the venues of the events, as well as one's social status. Some events are held on the outskirts of Bethlehem, in places which are not accessible to public transport and where only those who own personal vehicles have access. Events like the Bethlehem Air Show, Hot Air Balloon and ToGOTO, are all held in places that are located far away from low income residential areas. It is *fait accompli* that some members of the Bethlehem community are sceptical about the economic importance of tourism events to the point of expressing resentment towards the events because they feel excluded. The negative perceptions held by those who are excluded explain the apathy they have towards event tourism and the scepticism they express about its role in LED.

An important issue emerging from this research study is that in Bethlehem event tourism is capital driven and accordingly it benefits those who are already rich. As noted by Bowdin et al. (2006) it is local business operators who profit directly from tourists' spending, since the tourists who attend the tourism events spend money on travel, accommodation, as well as goods and services in the host city or region (Page 2009). In the case of Bethlehem, in order to reap the highest returns, tourism event organizers target their advertisements on higher income residential areas, as this would make economic sense. As a result there is limited interaction between the organizers of tourism events and low income communities. However, this situation constitutes a key constraint because it generates negative perceptions among the poor majority who are dissuaded from participating, thus limiting the market size for the events.

In order to transform event tourism into an effective tool for LED a pro-poor approach that is centred on broad participation needs to be adopted. The goals of event tourism, which include greater dependence on local ideas, skills, cultures and resources as well as more equitable grassroots participation, must intersect those of LED. In Bethlehem, the challenge is to harmonize event tourism, a purely capital-driven business service and mass participation for purposes of redressing social inequalities. Since the

business sector's primary concern is to make profit, greater participation is only meaningful to the sector if it translates to higher sales per event. Inevitably, this creates a contradiction between the objectives of the pro-poor LED and the harsh realities of modern business. Development authorities in Bethlehem need to find a mechanism for harnessing locally available ideas, skills and resources, including labour, and innovatively channel them towards tourism events that have capacity to enhance LED initiatives. If successfully implemented, the multiplier effects resulting from these "ingredients" will complement the benefits reaped from the money spent by tourists on accommodation, food, arts, crafts, travel, entertainment, and the money spent in local supermarkets, pubs and retail stores, thus boosting opportunities for economic growth and development. It is this ability of tourism events to achieve multiple goals at the local level that makes them important drivers of LED.

Instead of watching passively "from the other side of the fence", development authorities and council officials should play a more active role in mobilizing all segments of the Bethlehem community, including those for whom event tourism is still a "missed opportunity". Some of these people will get jobs as handymen, dancers and security guards, even though these occupations may be seasonal or temporary. A possible way of mobilizing the community is tourism event integration, where complementary and compatible tourism events can be hosted jointly to broaden the event tourism market and enable event tourists to sample a greater diversity of experiences. The coupling of events will broaden the range of products and make tourism events more appealing. Event integration could generate new tourism brands. For example, the twinning of the Basha festival with the Hot Air Balloon Show or Bethlehem Air Show would showcase cultural heritage and township tourism alongside high-tech entertainment products. The cultural heritage products offered must reflect the full diversity of the cultures that thrive in Bethlehem, that is the Sotho, Zulu, English and Afrikaner cultures, in order for the events to garner sufficient support from the whole community. To support these brands, museums could be built along defined routes along which guided tours are organized within the town.

However, Waitt (2003) states that positive perceptions only occur when both the commu-

nity and event organizers have a high level of social power within the exchange relationship. In Bethlehem, the low level of social power between event organizers and the low income earners is compounded by the marketing strategies that are adopted by event organizers, which tend to alienate the poor. A typical example is the Bethlehem Air Show which is marketed in Afrikaans only. This means that if one does not understand Afrikaans then one is unlikely to play a principal role in the event. Mathieson and Wall (2006) stated that language is a vehicle of communication and is part of the social and cultural attribute of any population. This suggests that tourism event organizers need to pay attention to their marketing strategies and consider adopting a multilingual approach to ensure that all interested potential participants have access to information about the events. Posters, flyers and information brochures could be designed in all languages that are spoken in Bethlehem, including Afrikaans, English, Zulu and Sotho.

However, one very important issue that undermines the participation of the local community as a whole is lack of technical skills. The problem of the skills gap in technical fields is strongly manifested in hot air balloon aviation. The Hot Air Balloon Show organizers must consider funding the training of locals. Such training would not only enhance the contribution of hot air ballooning through skills development within the local community but would also enhance the participation of locals in the event. This would be a cost-saving strategy since the income that is earned by the pilots will be retained and invested locally. This broader participation and better organization of tourism events could also be used as a mechanism for improving guest-host relationships. Broader participation and better organization of tourism events create more favourable perceptions amongst tourists. This would be an effective way of branding Bethlehem as a tourist destination. Currently, in Bethlehem, the rift that exists between tourism organizers and the low income segments of the community undermines guest-host relationships and the role that tourism could play in LED.

Tourism events rely on enthusiastic participation (Jamieson 2006). This too is the case with LED, where local resources, ideas and skills have to be harnessed. Like LED, event planning works best from a bottom-up management approach that considers individual and community needs

first and use the needs as a stimulant for achieving intended goals. In this regard, considering the needs of the host population first when marketing an event in a destination is an example of responsible tourism. It is difficult to justify the organization of tourism events in which the local community does not fully participate.

Furthermore, participation in tourism events depends on the extent to which members of the community are aware of the benefits of participating in the events. In Bethlehem, this awareness is low and much still needs to be done to develop full awareness about the importance of event tourism. Broader participation will not only enhance awareness about the benefits of event tourism but is also a sure way of creating job opportunities within the local community. In order to benefit the local community fully there is a need for adequate community involvement (Ntloko and Swart 2008).

### CONCLUSION

It has been argued in this paper that events are an important motivator of tourism because of their role in bringing people from different geographic origins together with the likelihood to return and spend more money wherever good guest-host relations are established. Despite being short-lived tourism events serve as a platform for the local community to showcase what they have to offer to event tourists from different places while simultaneously promoting opportunities for LED. The sudden injection of money in the local economy and the multiplier effects generated are important for LED. However, this study has established that though event tourism has immense potential for generating economic opportunities for local communities in Bethlehem so far it has contributed little to LED. This is largely because event tourism is capital driven and tends to target the affluent and alienate the poor, for whom event tourism is still a “missed opportunity”. Participation in event tourism is uneven and varies according to ethnicity, gender and social status. From the foregoing discussion it can be concluded that a pro-poor approach that is centred on broad participation could create better opportunities for LED. Community mobilization and tourism event integration should be considered as an integral part of that approach. Such an approach can only work if the goals of tourism events are synchro-

nized with those of LED. This is because the principles underlying grassroots involvement, event tourism and LED are the same: broad participation and reliance on locally available ideas, skills and resources. However, in order to fully understand the dynamics of tourism event integration and the challenges involved, more research needs to be done on the subject.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidence from this research indicates that there are still gaps in knowledge regarding the harmonization of the objectives of event tourism and those of LED. This therefore implies that more research needs to be done on the options of tourism events that should be pursued to meet the objectives of LED while simultaneously providing adequate scope for the participation of the marginalized.

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