The impact of events in boosting local economic development: A case study of Port St Johns, South Africa

Lwazi Apleni*
Department of Recreation and Tourism
University of Zululand
KwaDlangezwa, South Africa
Email: ApleniL@unizulu.ac.za

Unathi Henama
Department of Tourism Management
Tshwane University of Technology
Pretoria, South Africa
Email:HenamaUS@tut.ac.za

Corresponding author*

Abstract

This paper scrutinizes the impact of events in boosting local economic development (LED) in Port St Johns (PSJ) situated in the Eastern Cape (EC) Province, South Africa (SA). Globally, events are emerging as a significant and growing sector. Furthermore, over the years, many cultural festivals and major cultural events have grown, their impacts have increasingly come under the scrutiny from funders, policy-makers and planners. Additionally, events are seen as having significant socio-cultural impacts in the communities they are held. For instance, the EC Province has been hosting a number of events lately which have led to the change of the face of the communities they are held. Such events included but not limited to the popular annual Standard Bank National Art Festival (event held in Grahamstown) and the Isingqesethu Wild Coast cultural festival held in PSJ. However, such events do not receive sufficient support from government, more especially local government level. As such, this study is based on the social impacts theory. On the other hand, the study utilised a mixed methodology technique to explore and discuss the role local government could play in community development using events. In this study, qualitative data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews and quantitative data was collected by means of questionnaires. The study found that local people were fully cognizant of events that are taking place in the area of PSJ. This could be attributed to the fact that the PSJ has numerous annual events taking place. However, a concerted effort has to be undertaken by local authorities and other pertinent stakeholders in terms of management of such events. This is to ensure that these events do not have a negative impact in PSJ communities.

Keywords: Local economic development, events, impact, Port St Johns, Eastern Cape.

Introduction

Globally, events are emerging as a significant and growing sector. Events of all kinds are being increasingly utilized or promoted as a means of enhancing the identity of places, both 'externally' and 'internally'. Externally, events potentially serve to position or market places, to distinguish them in a world where places are becoming more similar and homogenous, and allow them to compete more effectively amongst a variety of stakeholders, including investors, tourists, policy-makers and so on (Richards & Wilson, 2004)

The purpose of events is typically economic, that is to generate or build the local economy through attracting inward investment, new businesses or increased tourist visitation and expenditure, through of course socio-cultural benefits may also accrue through, for example, improved infrastructure, amenities. Internally, the purpose of events is often primarily socio-

cultural, to celebrate or strengthen local culture and, as a consequence, to enhance a sense of identity amongst local communities (Tassiopoulos & Nicolaides, 2017; Sharpley, 2011). "As events are on the increase globally, and thousands of specialist events are happening, ethically driven CSR will enable events management companies to achieve new levels of reach and brand awareness and thus greater scope for sustainability while aligning them with community expectations" (Nicolaides, 2017).

Events play a significant role in the lives of the community. They are seen to provide important activities and spending outlets for locals and visitors they can enhance the image of the local community (Tassiopoulos, 2005). They can become the most common channel through which visitors satisfy their desire to sample local foods and traditions to participate in games just to be entertained. Whereas local and regional events have the advantage of keeping the domestic market active, smaller local events have the added advantage of events tourism belief that they are in an authentically indigenous activity (Tassiopoulos, 2005).

According to Getz (1997) events can become the most common method for visitors to satisfy their desire to sample local traditions, participate in games, or are entertained. Local and regional events can have added advantages of keeping the domestic tourism market active. Smaller local events have the advantage that they can make events tourist believe that they are participating in an authentically indigenous activity (Getz, 1997).

Events are playing a major role in communities by offering a space in which people can socialise and develop their identity. Many provinces such as EC have been hosting many cultural events lately which have led to the change of the face of the communities they are held. For example, towns such as Buffalo City, Port Elizabeth, PSJ and Grahamstown to mention a few have been centres of many cultural festivals in recent years.

Events such as the Standard Bank National Art Festival (previously known as the National Arts Festival), are one of the largest events in the Southern Hemisphere features (De Bruyn, 2009). The Standard Bank National Arts Festival has proved its sustainability and has grown to be one of the leading events in Southern Africa. Its objectives are to deliver excellence, encourage innovation and development and emerging South African arts, create opportunities. In the same token, events such as Isingqesethu Wild Coast which takes place in PSJ one of the events that are putting the small coastal on the map. The aim of the festival is to bring back the focus on tradition and heritage of the EC Province. However, such events have major impacts in the community in both positive and negative way and require ethical handling (Nicolaides, 2017).

According to Hall (1997) all events have impacts. For instance, events such as the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, the annual iron man triathlon in East London just mention a few have an immense impact in communities where they are held. More specifically, all events or, at least, planned events have a purpose or objective and, hence, intended, desired and predicted (and, on occasion, unanticipated) outcomes. These, in turn, have impacts on host communities, participants and other stakeholders who, as Getz (2007) puts it, are "impacted" by the outcomes of events. Such impacts may be positive or beneficial. Indeed, it is the expected benefits of events, whether economic, social, cultural, political or environmental, that is the principal driver underpinning the support for and increasing popularity of them at the local, national and international scale. Of course, the impacts of events may also be negative (Tassiopoulos & Nicolaides, 2017; Nicolaides, 2008). It is important to both justify and to measure the returns on often significant financial investment in events as agents of development. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate the impacts of such events in the communities they held in Port St John's.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To analyze the social impacts of event and their role within the community
- To analyze events as a tourism product.
- To determine the perceptions of the community towards Port St. Johns cultural events.
- To investigate the impacts of events on the development of communities in Port St. Johns.

Research questions
The study poses such as the following:

- What role do events play in the communities?
- Can events be a tool of tourism?
- What are the perceptions of people on events in PSJ?

Research Methodology

Research Design
The researcher employed mixed methods research design, the reason for utilizing mixed methods research design is that it combines qualitative and quantitative methods to observe and measure social phenomena from several perspectives in order to acquire multiple measures of the phenomena (Trochim, 2000). Triangulating across the multiple measures creates a holistic picture of social reality.

Research type
An instrumental case study approach to social investigation was utilized because it permits an in-depth study of socio-cultural phenomena over a defined period of time. The use of instrumental case study enabled the researcher to gain a clear understanding and acquire knowledge regarding the impact of festivals and events Port St John's (Fouche, 2002). The case study approach provided an ideal means for observing social phenomena and collecting qualitative data in the natural setting. As a cross-sectional study, the required data was collected from the study area, Port St John's, at as specific period in time as discussed in Section 3.5 of Chapter 3.

Sampling method
The researcher utilized the population of Port St Johns and the surrounding communities, which is a large collection of individuals and groups, as the focus of the investigation. Due to the large size of the population, the researcher could not solicit data from every individual and group in the population; besides it would have been too expensive and time consuming. The researchers relied on sampling techniques to select participants. A sample of 150 participants was chosen. The number was considered adequate to generate credible data to answer the research questions. The sample size was convenient, taking cognizance of the available resources and time and the difficulty with which the respondents could be reached. The thirty-five respondents were chosen according to the following stratification criteria, urban areas, rural areas/ villages through random sampling.

The random sampling method was chosen because it gives every member of the population under study an equal chance of being selected to participate in the research. With the help of ward councilors, the researcher was able to get in touch with the randomly selected respondents.

Methods of Data Collection

Semi- structured interviews

The study utilized semi-structured interviews because they enabled the interviewees to provide insights by focusing on their perceptions of the phenomena under investigation. Interviews were held at Port St John's. As discussed in Section 3.4 of Chapter 3, the interviewees were selected by means of random sampling. Before conducting the interviews the researcher prepared guides (Appendix A) for the interview which ensured that the same line of inquiry was followed for all the participants. This helped the researcher to reduce the probability of bias and culpable errors in the interview process (Babbie, 2001).

Structured Questionnaires

Questionnaires (Appendix B) were administered participants in Port St John's area. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher telephoned the authorities in Port St John's and asked from permission to conduct research. Closed ended questionnaires were used to solicit quantitative data. Structured questionnaire was also used in Port St John's to solicit quantitative data.

Data Analysis

The study used mixed method approach. The responses from the interviews and questionnaires were edited and sorted. The qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews and observation was subjected to non-numerical analysis with simple descriptive statistics and percentages (Babbie, 2011, p. 390). The data from the questionnaire survey was coded in a spreadsheet to make it possible to collate and analyse with SPSS computer packaged programme. The data was finally presented visually in tables and charts. The data from primary and secondary sources was analysed in a complementary fashion to give meaning to the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are acceptable professional practices which the researcher observed in the course of the study (Bless and Highson-Smith, 2001). The major ethical requirements that the study observed are discussed in the subsections that follow.

Informed and voluntary participation

In any research, Neuman (2006, p.135) states, "it is unethical to force people to participate." The participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study, how it would affect them, the risks and benefits of participation, and the fact that they have the right to decline to participate if they choose to do so (Kagee, 2006).

Findings of the study

Duration of stay in PSJ's

This question seeks to know the duration of years that the people have been staying in Port St Johns. The number of years a person lives in a particular area enables him/her to acquire factual information about long term trend of events in that particular area. It also improves one's understanding of events taking place in their area. Table 4.1 indicates that over 58% of the respondents have lived in PSJ's for over five years. The number of years the respondents have lived in PSJ's is enough for them to understand the social-cultural impacts of the area and provide accurate and credible information about the impacts of events on the socio-cultural development of the area.

Table 4.1 Respondents duration of stay in PSJ.

Duration of stay in Port St John's (in years)	Respondents (%)
Less than a year	10.8

1-5 years	30.8
5-10years	9.2
10-15years	30.8
15-20 years and above	18.4
Total	**100**

Awareness of Events

According to the interviews held it is evident that most people were quite aware of the events which were being held in PSJ. This can attribute to the fact that the area is always having some activities taking place and the fact that it has a lot of attractions such as the cultural heritage sites. In a follow up survey held it is also evident that people were quite aware of events taking place in their area. Activities such as horse and hiking trails, cultural heritage sites, whale watching and sardine run and fishing spots has made the area be favorable for events to be held there and also be a tourism destination area.
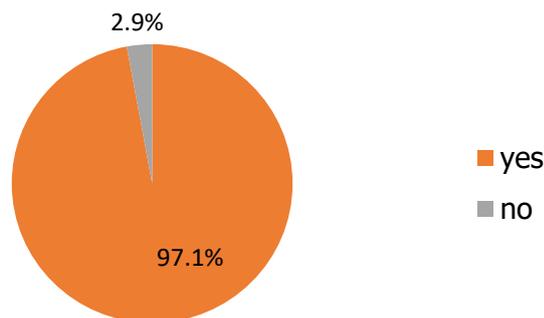

Figure 1.1: Events awareness

Events held in the Port St John's

From the interviews held, the respondents were able to mention various events which have been held in the area. These events have been able to put Port St John's on the map. They have also improved the image of Port St John's. Some of the events mentions are Wild Coast Ultra which is held in mid-February every year, it is for backpackers. The other events are the Cultural Festival which was held in September in 2013 and this led to the hosting of Isingqethu Wild Coast Cultural Festivals held in 2015 in November. The municipality of PSJ in conduction with Eastern Cape parks and Tourism Agency and the Department of Arts and Culture have pledged to make the Isingqesethu Wild Coast Cultural Festivals an annual event in Isingqesethu Wild Coast Cultural Festivals. Apart from this there are other events that were held in PSJ that has improved the image of the area such as 2005 Mahala festival and the 2004 Port St John's jazz festival.

The contribution of events in communities.

From the follow up survey it is evident that events contribute a lot to the community as noted by the 48% of the respondents who said that events contributed to social cohesion. This view is also shared by Arcodia and Whitfield (2006) events provide the opportunity for community members to unite, for diverse ethnic groups to share experiences and world views, and to give voice to a common social purpose. According to 28% of the respondents events enhance the image of the community and this view is also shared by Tassiopoulos (2005) who purports that events play a significant role in the lives of communities; they are seen to provide important activities and they can also enhance the image of the local community. And lastly, 24% argued that they build community resources.
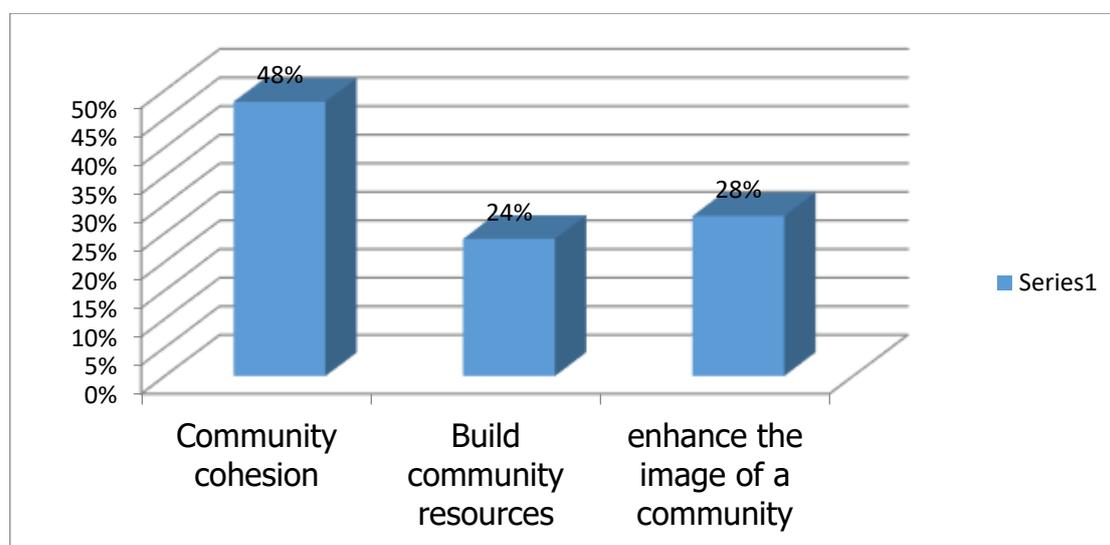

Figure 1.2: Events contributions

Events as a tool for tourism

As noted form the interview and survey held in Port St John's 74.3% of the respondents agreed that they were quite aware of tourism taking place in their respective communities. This awareness is not surprising as Port St John's has many tourist attraction centre such as the cultural heritage sites, also the hiking areas and beaches. Natural vegetation plays a vital role in the economic performance of the area as it is one of the main attractions for tourists. Unlike most regions in the country, much of the natural vegetation in the PSJ has not been touched. Port St. John's has a few historical and heritage sites. All these have prompted many people from all walks of life to visit to PSJ hence it's not surprising to see that people in the area are quite versed with activities taking place.
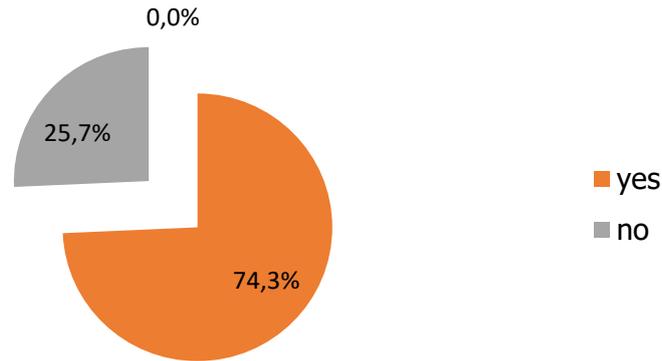
Figure 1.3: Awareness of tourism in Port St Johns

Ways events can be viewed as a tool

They are various ways in which events can be used as tourism tool as noted by the interviews conducted. According to Bowdin et al., (2001) events can provide newness, freshness and change, which sustain interest in the destination for locals and enhance its attraction for visitors. According to the study 68.8% of the respondents agreed that the events can be used to create awareness of a particular area. Event organisers can create a variety of tourism attraction to animate and interpret their products such as resorts, museum, historical districts, heritage sites, archaeological sites, markets and shopping centres, sports, convention centres and theme parks (Bowdin et al., 2001). As noted from figure 4.7 22% agreed that events can lengthen tourism seasons and also 20.2% agreed that events can enhance its attraction for visitors. From the information above it is evident that events play a crucial role as a tool for tourism development.
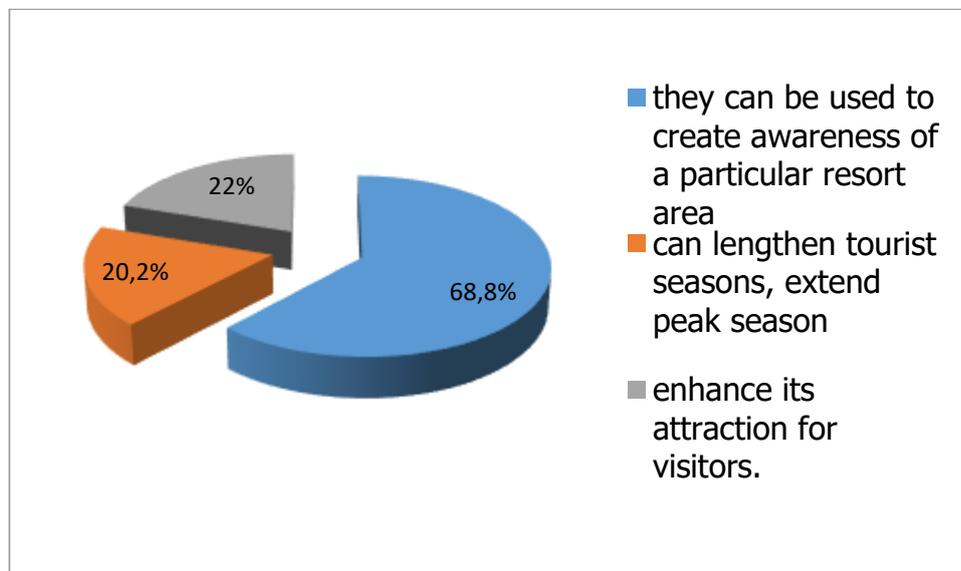

Figure 1.4: Ways events can used as a tool for tourism

Types of tourism activities taking place in communities

Port St John's is mainly characterized by mountainous terrain with hills, cliffs, beaches and sandy dunes. As noted from figure 4.8, 35% mention horse and hiking trails as one of the types of tourism taking place. Hiking has also led to the creation of the Wild Coast Ultra which is held around mid-February. According to the study 26% mention fishing spots as another tourism activity. This view is also shared by Port St John's Municipal Review 2010/2011 which purported that Port St John's is known also as a tourism destination famous for deep sea fishing and shore angling. 25% mentioned whale watching and sardine run and 14% mentioned cultural heritage sites. Port St. John's has a few historical and heritage sites which also make it so attractive as a tourism destination. These sites include but are not limited to Silaka Nature Reserve, Mkambati Nature Reserve, Isinuka Springs etc.
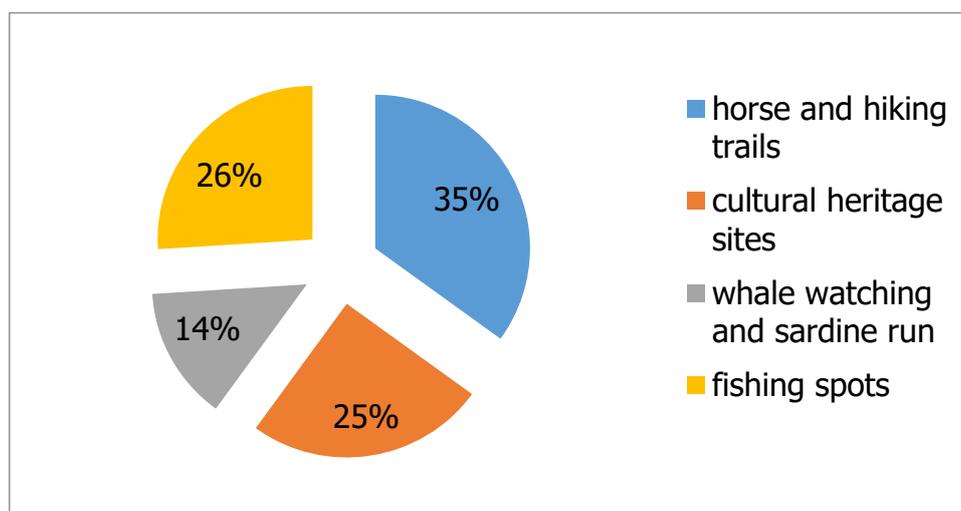

Figure 1.5: Types of tourism activities

Community involved in the tourism development

According to Mensah (2012) host communities and local residents in particular, play a crucial role in tourism development, with their contribution being less emphasized in its practical essences. As noted from figure 4.9, 30% of the respondents said many people were involved in tourism enterprise. Community involvement can be expressed in various ways, which includes through the local employment policy, the promotion of business, decentralized decision making, local control, in relation to some aspects of development and other initiatives that promote residents' interest (Akama, 2011). Some 27% said that locals were employed in the tourism sector. This viewed is shared by Jackson (2010) who purports that providing employment to the locals is one of the best ways of involving the local residents in tourism development. As noted from figure 4.9, 28 % of the respondent said they are involved in community based tourism. According to Akama (2011) local groups must take control of local decision making and determine how resources are to be located, which will give them a stake in maintaining structures or practices. Lastly, 15% said they are involved in the preservation of tourism attractions centers.
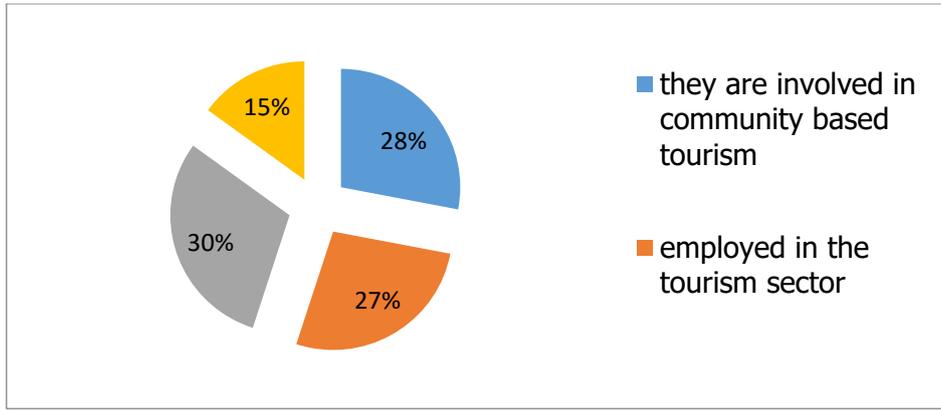
Figure 1.6: Community involvement of community in tourism

Community perceptions of events in Port St John's

From the study conducted residence in PSJ's had different perception on events taking place in their communities. This section will discuss and present the findings on this perception in the following subsections: community view of events in Port St John's, views on the contribution of events in host communities and role of events in Port St John's.

From the study it is evident that they shared different sentiments on the issue of events. As indicated by figure 4.10 the majority (56%) of the people of the people viewed events as helping create employment for the local people. Events have led to the tourism flourishing in Port St John's thereby providing the ground for creation of jobs. 12% mentioned that events have improved the image of PSJ's. An event such as the Isingqesethu Wild Coast Cultural Festival has put PSJ on the map. Although other respondents had positive views of events others did not share the same sentiments as noted by 16% of the respondents said that increases crimes. This sentiments is also shared by Mathieson and Wall (1982) have suggested that large numbers of visitors to an event carrying relatively large amounts of money and valuables with them will provide a source for illegal activities including drug trafficking, robbery, vandalism and violence. 12% of the respondents mention that they pollute the wild life. And lastly 4% mentioned that they increases cost of living. An event occasionally increases the prices of commodities in response to an increase in demand.
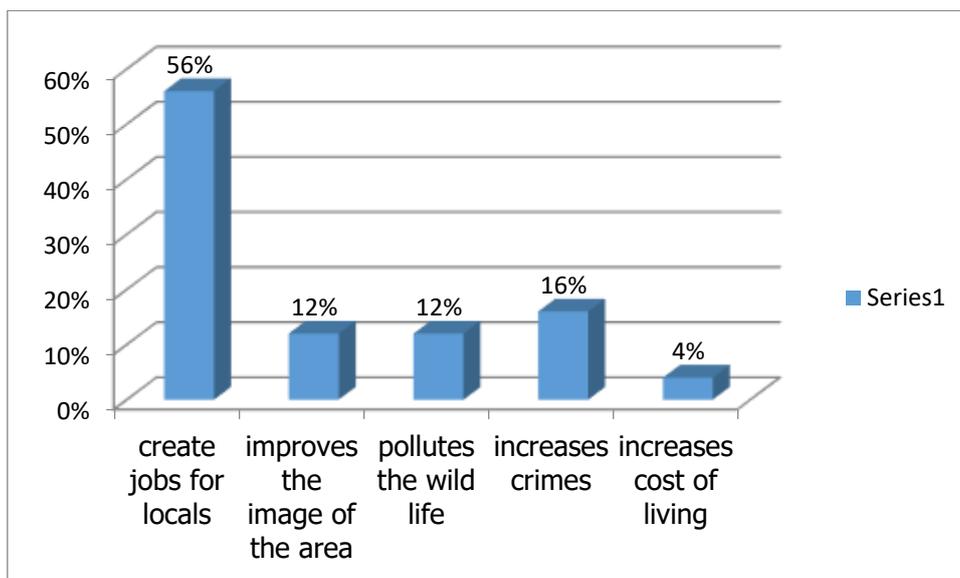

Figure 1.6: Community's perception of events.

Role of events in Port St John's

As noted from the study majority (86%) of the respondents agreed that an important role in the development of PSJ. events brings visitors as well as different stakeholders who have the potential to develop an area. The implication of this for the host community were the event taking place is that not only will the community be subject to the changes created by the stimulation but they will be change in direction of the local economy as well. As noted from figure 4.12 14% said that events were not playing a significantly role.
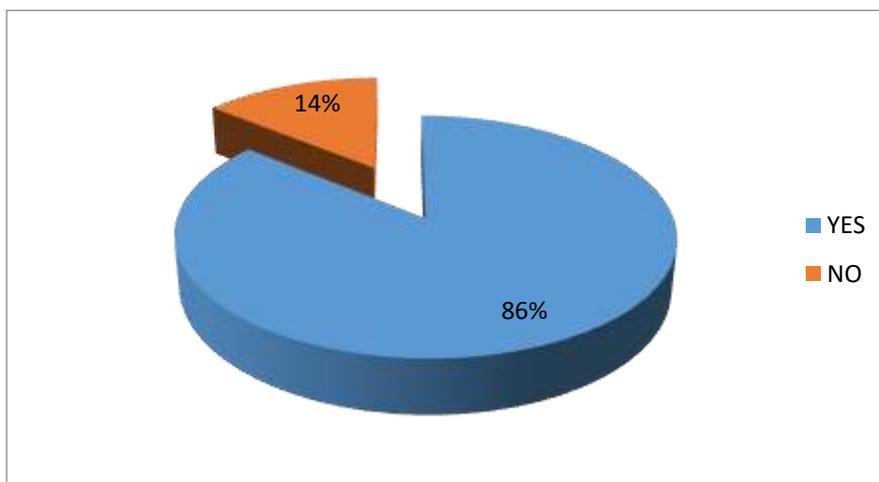

Figure 1.6: Importance of the role of events in community development

Events' role in the development of PSJ

According to the study conducted 35% of the respondents said that events helps create employment for local people. An event such as the Isingqesethu Wild Coast Cultural Festivals provides the floor for employment creation. According to figure 4.13 below, 25% of the respondents, events led to improved livelihood of communities. According to Cooper et al (2005) events can be used to put new life into ceremonies and rituals, making them come alive, combining them with skills and craft thereby changing the livelihoods of local residence in the process. Another 25% said that they promotes wildlife conservation in the areas they are held. And lastly 25% said that it leads to infrastructural development. When events take place for example the Isingqesethu Wild Coast Cultural Festivals the local infrastructure is often enhanced to meet the needs of the developments. The host community can find that the quality of their life is enhanced through being able to enjoy this improved infrastructure.
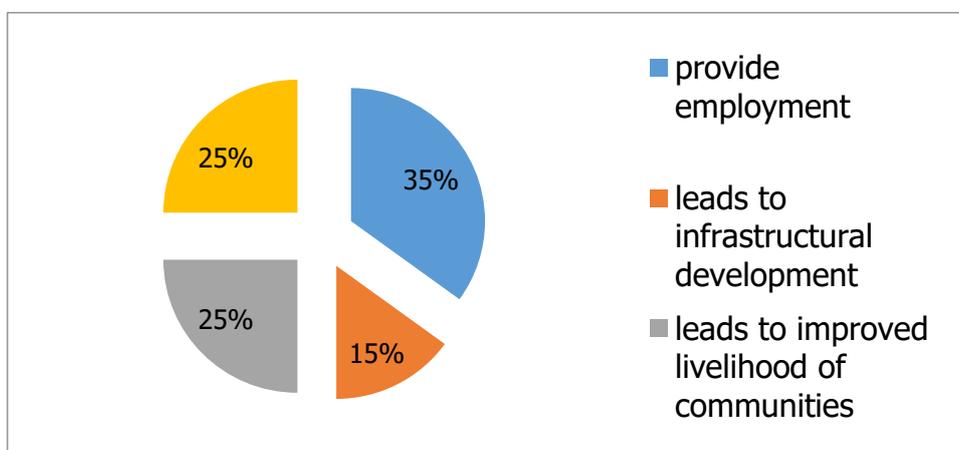

Figure 1.7: The role of events in communities

Recommendations on Events

Various recommendations come from the respondents as indicated from table 4.2, the majority of the respondents said that there was need for different stakeholders to take part in the planning of the event. According to Grames et al (2012) planning and conducting events involves many member of the community and this yields a number of social benefits. As noted from Table 4.2 below 23% said that events should promote the pride of the community. The involvement of people in the planning of an event should help build a community, foster a sense of pride within the community and engage a community (Grames et al, 2012). The other respondents (20%) mentioned that events need to be managed so that risk such as crimes and vandalism. When planning an event there is need for site management so that such issues can be tackled. Some of the respondents mentioned that there is need for the municipality to take part in the events. The municipality's involvement in the planning of events will boost the image of the area at the same time help in the management of the events. And lastly 8% said that events build strong relationships. According to Grames et al (2012) most of the relationships building occurs in the festival planning phase, this is where the bonds among public and private organization, government are forged and where connections among elected officials, staff, volunteers and interested residents are made.

Table 1.1 Recommendations on events

Recommendations	Respondents (%)
All Stakeholders should take part in events planning	40%
Events should promote community pride in events held in their areas	23%
Events should create strong relationships in the community	8%
Events should be managed to reduce challenges such as crime	20%
Municipality should be involved in the promotion of events	9%
Total	100%

Limitations of the study

The study had quite a number of limitations and prominent amongst them was lack of co-operation from the management as they were not willing to divulge information during interviews. Limited funds and time constraints forced the researcher to draw a smaller sample. Distance was another challenge for the researcher since the researcher is based in Mthatha and the case study was in Port St John's and this was exacerbated by the different dates the researcher set with the participants.

Recommendations

The community has to be aware of what is taking place in their area. This helps in creating awareness and increase knowledge and exposure of the event. Events should be advertised in all forms of media so as to attract a huge crowd. Furthermore, PSJ Municipality should endeavor in ensuring that the events receive maximum exposure they deserve. Tourism promotion should flourish by means of events which attracts a lot of people from different

walks of life. It should be borne in mind that tourism has a multiplier effect. As such, events should be promoted together with tourism attraction centers so that apart from attending the events visitors will be wary of what is taking place in the area.

In hosting events such as festivals challenges are likely going to arise. These include but are not limited to crime, vandalism, prostitution, and pollution just to mention a few. Therefore, the local authorities must ensure that the security cluster in the form of police and community members is there to be a vanguard of the event. Most importantly, events should be handled in such a way that the risks associated with it are minimized. Such mechanisms would play a great role in ensuring that events in PSJ succeed.

Lastly, events should foster community pride. The involvement of people in the planning of an event should help build a community, foster a sense of pride within the community and engage a community.

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