


Understanding the Sustainable Development of Tourism

9

Managing Sustainable Festivals, Meetings and Events

Contents

The role and nature of FMEs in society	4
Impacts of FMEs	6
Principles that underpin sustainable FMEs	7
Criteria for sustainable FMEs	10
Planning for sustainable FMEs	12
Connecting communities with FME visitors	16
Creating educational opportunities and engagement for visitors at every stage of the trip	18
A flexible approach to FME implementation	19
Monitoring and evaluation	21
Future challenges and issues	24

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9

Managing Sustainable Festivals, Meetings and Events

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Rationale

Festivals, meetings and events (FMEs) are an important component of the tourism industry. FMEs provide opportunities for social and cultural exchange, exchange of new and innovative ideas, business contacts, and learning. They play a key role in many destinations in attracting tourists, providing recreational activities for the community and developing and strengthening a destination's image. Each FME provides a specific kind of appeal and experience, which in most cases cannot be repeated. As the appreciation of the benefits of holding festivals, meetings and events grows, governments and operators are continuing to invest in developing the necessary facilities and infrastructure to accommodate this tourism activity.

While FMEs are often a representation of a community's culture and way of life, the host community bears the burden of the FMEs. They are required to accept its activities, open their doors to welcome the gaze of the visitor, and pay for the costs of the additional infrastructure and pressure on essential resources that may be required to host them. Thus FMEs affect the quality of life of local residents. Therefore, if not planned well, this kind of development puts at risk the quality of the economic, social and natural environments in which such activity takes place. For long-term sustainability it is essential for all stakeholders to take responsibility and clearly evidence accountability when organising and managing FMEs.

This chapter defines a sustainable FME as one that adopts a best practice approach to the management and operation of an FME that is underpinned by the principles of sustainable development, sustainable tourism ethics and the guiding values of sustainable tourism education. These principles form the basis for establishing sustainability criteria in FMEs.

Learning objectives

On completion of this chapter the student should be able to:

- ◆ Discuss the role and nature of FMEs in society
- ◆ Identify and assess the impacts of FMEs to promote and enhance the quality of life and social wellbeing for local and regional development
- ◆ Explain the principles that underpin sustainable FMEs
- ◆ Plan for sustainable FMEs
- ◆ Design and implement a flexible FMEs process, which offers products and services that incorporate principles and practices of sustainability; and
- ◆ Evaluate the implementation of an FME to ensure sustainable outcomes are achieved.

The role and nature of FMEs in society

FMEs represent different themes of the same phenomenon. Each theme is described below.

- ◆ **Festivals** are an important expression of human activity that contribute to a community's cultural and social life (Allen *et al.*, 2008). Festivals are commonly referred to as public, themed celebrations designed to occur for a limited duration that celebrate valued aspects of a community's way of life and can educate those engaged about the host culture and community (Getz, 1997; Small and Edwards, 2006). Festivals are generally cultural celebrations that may be displayed in carnivals, religious events, parades or heritage commemorations. Festivals are important components of community pride, cohesion, fun and relaxation. Opportunities exist for festivals to advance educational values, demonstrate arts and crafts, enhance community engagement and showcase endeavours in music, art, drama, sports and culture.
- ◆ **A meeting** is defined as 'an off-site gathering, including conventions, congress, conferences, seminars, workshops and symposiums, which bring together people for a common purpose – the sharing of information' (Allen *et al.*, 2008: 16). Meetings are part of the wider MICE industry (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions). The MICE industry encompasses related but diverse elements including conferences, congresses and trade shows which attract local, national and international visitors and enable business and individuals to receive benefits in the field of sales, marketing, education, communication, motivation and evaluation.
- ◆ **An event** is defined as a 'celebration or display of some theme to which the public is invited for a limited time only, annually or less frequently' (Getz, 1997: 28). Community events are 'themed public occasions designed to celebrate valued aspects of a community's way of life' (Douglas and Douglas, 2001: 358). There are many types of events including cultural celebrations, arts and entertainment; business and trade, sport competitions, educational and scientific seminars, and political events. For the event organiser (and sponsors), an event is an opportunity to communicate with the public outside their normal activities. For the public, it is an opportunity for social and cultural interaction during their leisure time.

All FMEs represent gatherings of people for some common purpose. Such activities require a concentrated and coordinated effort in their formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. FMEs can be generated by government, private or business groups at many different levels, including:

- ◆ Local – a local Rotary meeting, or a community market
- ◆ Regional – food and wine festivals showcasing the produce of the region
- ◆ State – sporting event or carnival
- ◆ National – Clean Up Australia Day, Republic Day of India, Chinese New Year;
- ◆ Global – the Olympics; Rugby World Cup; Earth Day.

Chapter extract

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