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CHAPTER 5 GREENING EVENTS

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Events of all types have the potential to impact on the environment and on the host community both positively and negatively. Events are growing in number, both in terms of the absolute number of events, and in terms of numbers attending events. Whilst the negative impacts of events are commonly reported, and include excess waste, pollution and overcrowding, recent research has begun to examine the ways in which events can play a more positive role in terms of their environmental and social performance.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines a green economy as one that results in ‘improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities’ (UNEP 2010). This clearly links the green economy with both the natural and built

environment and with communities and societies all over the world. This chapter will examine the relationships between events and the environments and communities in which they take place, and will examine what steps are being taken to minimise any negative impacts, whilst at the same time maximising the potential positive impacts, thereby working towards the green economy. There are a number of environmental measures that events routinely include, such as waste management strategies, recycling and water conservation measures, but there is also a growing range of more innovative steps that events can take to be more environmentally friendly (Laing & Frost 2010). Whilst the positive social impacts of events are harder to measure, nonetheless, there are several schemes being undertaken by different events to make a positive difference to the community which hosts the event, including training and skills development for the local workforce, and measures designed to optimise the opportunities for social inclusion. There are even several accreditation and award schemes (for example A Greener Festival, and the Banskia Awards), which recognise and reward event organisers for their efforts in terms of pro-environmental and pro-social innovations (Jones 2010).

This chapter will also consider the reasons why organisers are choosing to incorporate such measures into their event planning and design, particularly in light of the lack of a regulatory framework which would make such measures mandatory. Research suggests that event organisers are motivated by a desire to stay ahead of their competition, to enhance their reputation and to respond to a

growing market segment which prioritises green products and services (Mair & Laing 2012; Mair & Jago 2010). However, significant barriers remain for some event organisers, including the costs of greening, their perceived lack of time, and a general lack of awareness of the options for greening (Mair & Jago 2010).

As noted, a frequently-cited driver of greening amongst festival organisers is perceived consumer demand. However, one of the key findings of recent research (Mair & Laing 2012) is that there is a desire amongst festival organisers to do what they believe to be ‘the right thing’, and moreover, to educate and encourage others to do likewise. It may be the case that events could offer a useful place for behaviour change messages and operate as a kind of learning space for attendees. This could prove to be a powerful tool for both the development of the green economy and for future behaviour change campaigns.

This chapter will conclude by identifying further areas where research could be directed in future.

INTRODUCTION

Events play a significant part in our lives – both private events such as weddings, birthday parties and funerals, as well as public themed events like festivals, sporting competitions or exhibitions (Allen, O’Toole, Harris & McDonnell 2011). Historically, events have traditionally been representative of cultures, communities and religions and were often a way to mark communal dates,

celebrations and anniversaries. Today, while many events still fulfil this cultural and traditional role, events are big business, often playing out on a global scale. A quick round-up of some of the best known international events gives an indication of their importance – the Olympics, the Soccer World Cup and the World Expos to name but a few. Such events are generally termed ‘mega events’, and they are of such a scale and importance that they have a substantial impact on their host destinations, particularly in terms of the sheer numbers of attendees, but also in terms of the global media coverage they generate, and the changes in transport and infrastructure that they precipitate in their host destinations.

However, such events are generally rare, and are not representative of the vast numbers of events that take place around the world annually. The term ‘mega event’ is just one of the types of events identified by Jago and Shaw (2000), who proposed a classification of events based on their size and impacts. The next level down in their event typology is the ‘major event’ – those events which are still of a significant scale, but not on the global scale of the mega events. There are many examples of this type of event, from the Edinburgh International Festival and the Rio de Janeiro Carnival to the Formula One Grand Prix series or the Open Tennis or Golf championships. The smallest type of event identified by Jago and Shaw (2000) is ‘minor event’ – often known as regional or community events. These form the majority of all events around the world, often unrecorded or unrecognised outside their immediate area, but nonetheless of great significance to local communities. Examples include the many urban and rural community

events and festivals that take place every year in most villages, towns and cities (Allen *et al.* 2011). If the key aim for a transition to a green economy is to enable economic growth and investment while increasing environmental quality and social inclusiveness (UNEP 2011), then events, large and small, can clearly play a role.

When considering the impacts of events, it has traditionally been the case that three individual constructs – economic, social (or socio-cultural) and environmental impacts – have been examined. This is sometimes known as the triple bottom line (TBL) approach (Hede 2008). The TBL approach is beginning to gain acceptance amongst event organisers, but others have criticised it as being too restrictive (Hede 2008). Some people consider that there should be four ‘pillars’ of sustainability – for example, climate change should be added to the traditional three pillars of economy, society and environment (e.g. Riedy 2005). In the specific context of event management, the fourth ‘pillar’ of the bottom line has been described variously as culture, governance and policy (e.g. Whitford 2009; Teriman, Yigitcanlar & Mayere 2009). Allen *et al.* (2011) noted that event impacts vary in their polarity (positive or negative) and in their duration (short term or long term). Many of the negative impacts associated with an event are of a short-term nature (for the duration of the event only), and may include increased noise, traffic congestion and waste. Conversely, some of the positive impacts of events appear to have longer lasting impacts – examples could include job creation or economic regeneration.

However, it is important to bear in mind that all impacts are interwoven and multi-dimensional in nature. In some ways it is arguably very difficult to compartmentalise impact research into one or other type of impact, be it economic, social or environmental. Given this conceptual difficulty, a more holistic concept, such as the green economy, or 'greening' may be useful. Greening has been defined as the investment in sustainable practices and facilities (Mair & Jago 2010), and in this sense it refers to more than simply environmentally-friendly matters, despite the name, but rather extends to include socio-cultural sustainability too. The notion of greening is closely linked with the key tenets of the green economy, both environmental and social.

The substantial economic importance of the events sector has been recognised, and not just during an event itself, but in the months and years following an event, where an event can be demonstrated as encouraging tourist visitation (Kim & Uysal 2003). A growing body of evidence shows that greening tourism can lead to broad economic, social and environmental benefits for host countries and their communities (UNEP 2011), and arguably the contribution of events to tourism, particularly through mega events, is huge. However, less attention has been paid to the way in which large events affect communities and society, and also the environment (Mair & Whitford 2013). Research into these areas is beginning to gain traction, but nonetheless it is clear that historically, economic impact research has predominated (Mair & Whitford 2013). We still have a limited

understanding of the complex relationships between events, society and the environment, and in particular, how the green economy is affecting events and vice versa. This chapter aims to consider greening in the events sector.

EVENTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

As noted by Gibson and Wong (2011: 103), events and festivals cannot help but impact on the environment. They bring people, cars, noise and generate waste. Further, as Lipman *et al.* (2012) pointed out, cities will become the major centres of green travelism growth and as such, there is likely to be an increase in sporting, entertainment and cultural events, as well as in green meetings. Although the impacts are probably felt more acutely in rural areas, nonetheless all festivals and events are likely to affect the environment negatively. Jones (2010) suggested that the major areas of impact from events are in terms of energy/power use; transport; waste management; waste reduction and resource recovery; and materials purchasing and procurement. The most serious results of these impacts are pollution, the over-use or wastage of water and energy, waste disposal issues and increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Allen *et al.* 2011).

However, it is worth pointing out that in spite of the negative impacts of events on the environment, there is potential for positive outcomes too – events offer the opportunity to showcase best environmental practice, and to promote behaviour change, and further, can be a catalyst for communities to take pride in their local environment (Allen *et al.* 2011). Jones (2010) suggested that organisers have the

ability to influence their audience, contractors, suppliers and the rest of the events industry. She highlighted the example of the Boom Festival, which attracts thousands of people, and noted that the organisers feel that having this gathering in a specific place for a limited amount of time gives ‘an opportunity for reflection on the communitarian nature of our species’ (Jones 2010: 229). Therefore, events may be an opportunity for education and behaviour change.

Measures being taken by events to minimise negative impacts

In transitioning to the green economy, events, like tourism, are faced with a number of challenges including energy and GHG emissions; water consumption; waste management; loss of biological diversity; and effective management of cultural heritage (UNEP 2011). Many events are taking innovative steps to minimise their negative impacts on the environment. There is a growing range of more innovative steps that events can take to be more environmentally friendly (Laing & Frost 2010). These include the use of solar and wind power, the introduction of compostable toilets, and the range of carbon offsetting options available to organisers and attendees. Jones (2010) highlighted a number of examples of effective environmental management by events and festivals, as shown in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1 NEAR HERE

It is encouraging to see so much activity being undertaken, and clearly shows that many event organisers understand the magnitude of the negative effects that events may have on the environment of their host destination, as well as the wider environmental impact that events create. This form of greening has been relatively successful within the events industry, and it is now common to see greening or sustainability policy on event websites. This shows the contribution that events can make towards developing the green economy. However, it must be noted that not all events are organised and managed with such goals in mind, and some large events continue to fail to take greening into account in any substantive way.

In the business events context, many conferences and conventions have also made great strides in terms of improving their environmental performance. Tinnish and Mangal (2012) cited the 2009 State of the Sustainable Meetings Industry report from Meeting Strategies, which found that over half of all professional meeting planners are focusing on sustainability in their event planning. Kotowski (2012) noted that two thirds of meeting planners consider a venue's green initiatives to be important when selecting a meeting venue. Such things as using recycled paper, creating online programmes and agendas, producing downloadable speaker presentations and handouts, electronic event evaluations and re-using and recycling name badges are all fairly commonplace at meetings and conferences now (Tinnish & Mangal 2012). However, by far the most serious environmental consequence of the business events industry is the large amount of GHG emissions, mostly as a result of air travel. In recent years, carbon offsetting has

been increasingly publicised by airlines and other transport providers as a means to mitigate the carbon emissions from air travel (Mair 2011). As early as 2007, the Plastics and Chemicals Industry Association (PACIA) announced that their annual conference would be carbon neutral, and that this would mean that the carbon emissions generated by activities associated with the conference, including air and land travel, flights, meals and accommodation, would be off-set as part of a sponsorship deal with one of its suppliers (PACIA 2007). Mercure Hotels for example (part of the Accor Group) introduced a Carbon Neutral Conferencing scheme, which includes carbon offsetting for all carbon emissions generated during a meeting, with the offsetting paid for by Mercure. Hilton Worldwide has launched a carbon offset programme for meetings and events at eleven selected properties in South East Asia (Kot 2013). The beneficiaries of the offset programme are the Borneo Rainforest Rehabilitation Project, and the Cambodia Cookstove Project (which produces and distributes an energy-efficient cooking stove that uses less wood and charcoal than traditional cooking methods. These initiatives are certainly positive steps towards addressing the issue. Again, this is illustrative of the contribution that events can make to the green economy. However, it should be stressed that simple offsetting will not solve all the GHG emissions problems associated with business travel, and changes in behavioural norms relating to travel as a necessary part of business may be required before significant progress towards the green economy is achieved.

EVENTS AND COMMUNITY

Socio-cultural impacts of events have been defined as ‘any impacts that potentially have an impact on the quality of life for local residents’ (Fredline, Jago & Deery 2003: 6) – examples may include increased crime rates, or increased noise, but equally may include opportunities for social interaction, and a more vibrant atmosphere for residents (Delamere 2001; Small, Carlsen, Robertson & Ali-Knight 2007). According to Getz (2013), only very recently has there been a systematic and theoretically grounded line of research on social impacts of events. Some of the key articles in this area include work by Delamere (2001), Fredline and Faulkner (1998), Fredline *et al.* (2003) and Small *et al.* (2007). Allen *et al.* (2011: 61) included the following as examples of positive socio-cultural impacts of events:

- Taking part in a shared experience;
- Revitalising traditions;
- Building community pride;
- Validating community groups;
- Increasing community participation;
- Introducing new and challenging ideas; and
- Expanding cultural perspectives.

On the other hand, there are a range of negative socio-cultural impacts of events which must be considered (Allen *et al.* 2011). These include:

- Community alienation;

- Manipulation of community;
- Negative community image;
- Bad behaviour;
- Substance abuse;
- Social dislocation; and
- Loss of amenity for local people.

Clearly, some of these impacts are difficult to measure, but Getz (2013) suggested that satisfaction with attendance, changed perceptions of the host destination as a place; acquiring new skills or experiences through working at an event; positive impacts on children and young people; and engaging with an event to bring about a change in peoples' interest in participating in a particular activity may all be ways to measure the positive social impacts of events. Other possibilities for positive outcomes, although harder to measure, include the very fact that festivals and events facilitate meetings between people, which may help to build social networks and improve the social capital of a community. Additionally, in recent years, event organisers have become more cognisant of the fact that in many cases they are guardians of culture, tradition and heritage and by recognising this, they are more able and willing to maintain these traditions, thereby assisting in the transition to the green economy.

Measures being taken by events to minimise negative impacts, and more importantly maximise community benefits

There are many schemes being undertaken by different events to make a positive difference to the community which hosts the event, including training and skills development for the local workforce, and measures designed to optimise the opportunities for social inclusion. Some events have gone to extraordinary lengths to maximise the benefits that they bring to their local communities. For example, Falls Festival, a music festival held in Victoria and Tasmania, Australia, has set up a community fund. One dollar from every ticket sold goes to the fund, which then provides resources to a range of community projects (Falls Festival 2012). The Manchester International Festival in the UK has set up ‘MIF Creative’, which is a community engagement programme, and Womadelaide (the WOMAD festival held in Adelaide, South Australia) has created a foundation to develop arts and cultural projects with Australian indigenous artists. Many other events have taken a range of innovative steps in terms of how they are supporting the local and global communities – see Table 5.2. Note that in many cases, more than one festival is involved in particular activities.

TABLE 5.2 NEAR HERE

The UNEP (2011) report, *Towards a Green Economy*, highlights several areas where tourism can contribute towards local communities, including purchasing directly from local businesses, recruiting and training local unskilled and semi-

skilled staff, and entering into partnerships to make the local social environment a better place to live, work and visit for all. The examples of measures taken by the events in Table 5.2 are clear illustrations of how such policies can and should be undertaken by event organisers in order to contribute more positively to the local area. However, despite the positive examples identified, many event organisers are not seriously considering how their event can work with, and for, the local community, and the negative socio-cultural effects of large events are still manifest.

DRIVERS OF GREENING IN EVENTS

Having considered the steps that events are taking to be greener and more socially responsible and responsive to their host destinations and communities, it is interesting to look in more detail as to why organisers feel that they should take any of these steps. As highlighted by UNEP (2011), it is crucial to understand the barriers to greening, in order to understand how to overcome them. There are very few regulatory requirements around either environmental or socio-cultural impacts of events, beyond the obvious waste hygiene, occupational health and safety, and food safety issues. Therefore, event organisers are taking these steps voluntarily. The obvious question is: Why?

Many studies have considered greening in tourism, particularly hospitality (inter alia Bohdanowicz 2005; Claver-Cortes, Molina-Azorin, Pereira-Moliner & Lopez-Gamero 2007; Kirk 1998; Tzschentke, Kirk & Lynch 2004). The results of

this research suggest that the drivers and barriers of greening vary depending on the size of the organisation involved, with larger companies having more resources to devote to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and greening. However, very little work has been undertaken in the events context. Mair and Jago (2010) undertook a preliminary study of greening, using business events as their context. Their study identified a number of different factors that appear to be important drivers of greening in the events context, including gaining a competitive advantage; enhancing the image of the event; responding to supply chain and customer CSR policies; and importantly, meeting consumer demand for more responsible events (Mair & Jago 2010). Further, the Mair and Jago (2010) study highlighted the key role played by personal and/or managerial values in terms of how green or responsible an event becomes. Those event organisers who felt that the environment and CSR were important issues to them personally were significantly more likely to introduce greening measures into their event management and planning.

In addition to assessing the drivers of greening, Mair and Jago (2010) also identified a range of factors which appear to be preventing, or hindering the uptake of green or sustainable practices. These include a perceived lack of time; lack of resources; and lack of knowledge, awareness or skills amongst event organisers. Finally, their model suggests that levels of greening will vary in an event depending on the context of the event (in terms of the economic situation, consumer trends, available technology and political leadership) and the

organisational context (business type and size, industry sector and organisational values). As discussed, there is very little literature in the area of greening and events, and therefore this study represents a foundation for future research in this field. Mair and Laing (2012) used the Mair and Jago (2010) model as a basis for research carried out in the context of music festivals, and demonstrated that many of the drivers and barriers identified in the original study were also relevant for festival organisers too. Examining music festivals which had all won awards for their sustainable practices, their study found that many of the issues that had been raised as being important in the business events context (particularly consumer demand) were also significant for festivals (Mair & Laing 2012). Interestingly, image and reputation enhancement and competitive advantage were considered to be less significant drivers of greening in the festival context. The barriers faced by festival organisers when trying to green their events too appeared to be similar to those faced by business events organisers, namely a lack of financial resources and lack of time. Festival organisers also raised the issue of using multiple venues, where the sustainability policies of different venue owners varied, making it difficult to ensure a common level of green practices throughout the festival (Mair & Laing 2012).

THE ROLE OF EVENTS IN ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

Lipman *et al.* (2012) highlighted the importance of environmental stewardship, suggesting that travelism can encourage more interest in the environment, and more recognition of the importance of protecting it. In their work, Mair and Laing

(2012) found evidence that festival organisers have taken this to heart, and that the desire to educate festival attendees and indeed to play an advocacy role (Mair & Laing 2012) is a very important part of greening in the festivals context. The idea of the importance of personal and/or managerial values in the business decision to be more sustainable is not new – it equates to the environmental champion identified by Andersson and Bateman as early as 2000. However, it is interesting to note that of the six award-winning festivals studied by Mair and Laing (2012), all identified that there was a highly motivated individual (often the festival founder or director) who was the driving force behind the greening of the festival. Interviewees in the Mair and Laing (2012: 693) study spoke about patron education and empowerment as being key parts of their festivals, and that one of the aims of these festivals was to try to find ways to change or modify the behaviour of those attending. In fact, this seems to go beyond a desire to ‘do the right thing’, and in fact some of the organisers interviewed felt that they had an opportunity (and in some cases a ‘moral duty’) to educate festival-goers about sustainable practices and indeed about other issues including social justice and ethics.

It is not exactly clear why events and festivals should offer a good opportunity to change behaviour, and research in this area is badly needed. However, it seems that during an event or festival, like-minded people are brought together and providing information and showcasing environmental and sustainable best practice may have an effect on their future behaviour. The Mair and Laing (2012)

study proposed that the fact that an event or festival has a ‘captive audience’ and the fact that such events and festivals can arouse emotional responses to particular causes or messages may both contribute to the notion that events may offer a useful place and time for communicating with large numbers of people. The two quotes below from their interviews seem to illustrate the importance of the emotional dimension:

Festivals are a place of fun and I find that people are most receptive to information when they are having a good time ... facts are not a good way to convince people ... I think an event is a really good space to be talking about these issues and getting people on board.

(Mair & Laing 2012: 693)

That’s something that arts and music does in a really special way – it kind of cuts through the facts level, not that facts are unimportant, but it kind of talks to the heart a little bit and that’s the way that community advocacy works best a lot of the time.

(Mair & Laing 2012: 693)

Sharpe (2008) also argued that festivals might prove useful when delivering messages to the audience, whether that is informational messaging, or behaviour change messaging, or other types of communication. Laing and Frost (2010) also suggested that the liminal space of a festival and its nexus with social protest

might provide opportunities to deliver messages to attendees and thus influence behaviour. However, Sharpe (2008) also noted that it is important that any efforts to use festivals or events to promote social change should not take away from the fun or enjoyable nature of an event – there is a fine line between encouraging and preaching.

In the business events context too, it seems that organising and managing events may offer opportunities for influencing behaviour. One professional conference organiser (PCO), cited in a report on business events and climate change, noted that ‘organisers don’t always ask for green meetings – we are pressuring them. That is our role as a PCO – to improve practice and put things on the table for our clients’ (Mair & Jago 2010). This suggests that the sphere of influence may not simply be from organiser to attendee, but may also be from organiser to supply chain.

This is an interesting notion – events (and possibly tourism) can act as a change agent – and one which was not identified as a potential role for tourism in the UNEP (2011) report on the green economy. However, a lack of research precludes any firm conclusions being drawn here, and highlights the importance of further study in this area.

CONCLUSION

Events are, and will continue to be, an important part of our lives. Further, with the forecast growth in the urban population, as well as the predicted increase in tourists and travellers in the years to come, events of all kinds are likely to remain highly popular, and attendance numbers may even increase. With this in mind, it is important to assess and understand how events can contribute to the green economy. This is perhaps most easily demonstrated by examining how to make our events more sustainable in terms of the environment, community and society. There are many steps that event organisers can take in order to be more environmentally friendly, and although there is little in the way of regulation to force such actions, many event organisers are working hard to improve the environmental performance of their events. This appears to be the case for many different types of events, from large to small and including festivals, meetings and sports events. Further, events and their organisers appear to be growing more responsive to the needs of the local communities that host such events, with events offering volunteer opportunities, and employment as well as engaging communities with the arts and music. It may even be the case that events (and perhaps more specifically music and arts festivals) may represent an excellent opportunity to encourage and influence pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour among attendees. However, there are large gaps in our knowledge in this area, particularly with regard to whether such attempts to communicate behaviour change messages would be welcomed, or even noticed by attendees. As for whether such behaviour change messages would be successful, our knowledge

is currently in its infancy and future studies are badly needed. Events offer us more than simply entertainment – we are emotionally engaged, and in a liminal state during attendance. Can we as academics work out a way to capitalise on this emotional engagement and use it to relay crucial messages about the future of the environment and society to move towards the green economy?

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