Developing Social Cohesion through Events

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Introduction – this is me

- Lecturer in Tourism Management at Lincoln University, NZ

- Programme Leader – Bachelor of Tourism Management

- Research interests/activity:
  - Tourism and regional development
  - Public policy and rural change
  - Destination management

- My background is not in event-based research, but my current project has drawn me into this space...

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What will I be talking about?

“Developing social cohesion through events”

- Draws from research undertaken in **Geraldine** (South Canterbury) with Dr Michael Mackay (also Lincoln University)

- Location selected as because of ‘rich’ tourism–rural community nexus (it’s an interesting place, and close to Lincoln...)

- Project started life as: ‘**Tourism and rural change in Geraldine**’

- The role of events (and festivals) has become an emerging focus of this project

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What will I be talking about?

What is ‘social cohesion’?
“the willingness of members of a society to co-operate with each other in order to survive and prosper”

(infers community connectedness; social capital; quality of life etc.)

- Linking events with social cohesion(?)
  (why should non-market outcomes be important for Geraldine event organisers?)
What do events add to a destination?

• Used as a tool for economic development

• Generate additional tourism visitation

• Enhance destination image through media exposure

• Foster trade and commercial development

➢ Provide recreational and social opportunities for locals (also require support and buy-in from locals)
Conceptual framework for events...

One-off large scale events

‘Special’ events
singular; targeted; high risk(?)

Recurring small scale events

Event portfolio
multiple; broad appeal; low risk(?)

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The research setting – Geraldine

• Population (2013) = 2,301
  – growth = +2.7% on 2006 census
  – median age = 50.2 years
  – over 65 years = 28.6%

• Location: South Canterbury
  – within Timaru District Council
  – on tourism transit corridor
  – rural community
  – high tourism amenity
    ➢ scenic environs
    ➢ convenient location
    ➢ complementary industries
The research setting – Geraldine

Geographic location: a town on the way to somewhere else

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The research setting – Geraldine

**Functional role:** a rural service centre and retirement town
The research setting – Geraldine

Destination identity: scenic landscapes at the foot of the Southern Alps
The research setting – Geraldine

Community activities: a growing range of festivals and events
Research methods

• In-depth interviews with key community stakeholders:
  – Business representatives
  – Community representatives (elected and appointed)
  – Tourism and Events co-ordinators
  – Volunteer organisations
  – District-level politicians
  – Community historians

• Document analysis, including:
  – policy and strategy documents
  – popular press (newspapers etc.)

• Field work (we attended some of the key events)
What did we find? Geraldine has:

1. **High community capacity (and interest)**
   - a ‘self-organised’ community
   - strong community advocacy

• An active **business community**
  - GoGeraldine (business association)
  - key anchor businesses involved (tourism and non-tourism)

• An engaged **community sector**
  - Geraldine Community Resource Centre (community info/help)
  - Geraldine Lions Club (prominent)
  - high volunteerism in the community (retirees and ‘newcomers’)
What did we find? Geraldine has:

2. **Destination self-awareness**
   - Geraldine primary role as a visitor-stop locations (ChCh – Tekapo/Q’town corridor)
   - Branding to reflect this tourism role

   - Awareness of community capacity
     - Utilisation of existing events stock
     - Utilisation of existing social capital (expertise, social networks)

   - Recognition of tourism capacity
     - What type/style of tourism is best for Geraldine?
What did we find? Geraldine has:

3. **A strategic approach to destination development**
   - tourism promotion and development
   - festivals and events

- Driven by economic localism
  - rural community autonomy
  - local government retreat to core

- Enabled via social entrepreneurialism
  - prominent (local) leaders and actors
What did we find? Geraldine has:

4. **A deliberative focus on events**
   - grow existing festivals and events
   - leverage new events to build on existing ‘stock’

   • Appointment of Events Co-ordinator
     - dedicated funding over 2½ years (now defunct)
     - creation of an events governance structure
       (‘Events Geraldine’)

   • Key outcomes include:
     - broadened suite of event types and times
     - raise market awareness of Geraldine
     - improve Geraldine ‘liveability’ for locals
What did we find? Geraldine has:

5. **An event portfolio approach**
   - recurring small scale events (annual)
   - events that become synonymous (hallmark)

- ‘Family of five’ in the portfolio
  - five events with broad/diverse foci and appeal
  - anchor events which create collective critical mass

- The objective is **community development** (first), then economic development (second)
  - community focus, not visitor centric
  - community events with visitor appeal
What did we find? Geraldine has:

5. **An event portfolio approach**

Geraldine’s ‘Family of Five’ event portfolio:

1. Geraldine Bike/Multi Challenge (mid March)
2. Geraldine Summer Fête (early Nov.)
3. Geraldine Arts and Plants Festival (mid Nov.)
4. Geraldine Trotting Club Races (late Nov./early Dec.)
5. GoGeraldine Christmas Parade (early Dec.)

(These are all annual events; a mix of type, focus, and stakeholders)

“We decided to focus our efforts on these five key events and try to grow Geraldine’s brand that way”

(Interviewee, Geraldine business community representative)
An event portfolio approach

• A strategic tool; not haphazard or coincidental

• A strategic patterning of events and their interrelationships

• Fostered by the cultivation of operational and thematic relatedness (events complementary and in line with broader destination branding)

The Result:

➢ enrich a destination’s tourism product, enhance its image, redress seasonality, and provide broad market appeal

Recurring small scale events

Event portfolio
multiple; broad appeal; low risk(?)
So what? Practical implications of Geraldine’s event portfolio (after Ziakas, 2013)

Key portfolio decisions for Geraldine include:

1. **Reach:**
   What is the target market the host community wants to attract or engage with?
   (audience)

   *The selection of target markets can be as diverse as the variety of events included in the portfolio*
So what? Practical implications of Geraldine’s event portfolio (after Ziakas, 2013)

Key portfolio decisions for Geraldine include:

**2. Frequency:**

How often should the events be scheduled?

*(recurrence)*

*The rate of recurrence should respond to market demand and sufficiency of local resources. Influenced also by event type and occasion (e.g., Christmas Parade; Farmers’ Market etc.)*
Key portfolio decisions for Geraldine include:

3. **Size:**
What is the optimal number of events in the portfolio? (quantity)

*Equilibrium in the number of events is required to ensure that a host community does not exceed its capacity to host events and that there is not an oversupply of events*
So what? Practical implications of Geraldine’s event portfolio (after Ziakas, 2013)

Key portfolio decisions for Geraldine include:

4. **Placement:**

   What is the optimal sequencing of events across the portfolio’s calendar?
   (timing and ordering)

   Events should be sequenced and timed within the portfolio so that they do not conflict with each other, host community circumstances and seasonality considerations.
So what? Practical implications of Geraldine’s event portfolio (after Ziakas, 2013)

Key portfolio decisions for Geraldine include:

5. **Fit:**
   How can the different events be connected and harmonised across the portfolio?
   (relatedness)

*Connectedness among events can enhance the value and meaning they convey and build the ‘personality’ of an events portfolio*
So what? Practical implications of Geraldine’s event portfolio (after Ziakas, 2013)

Key portfolio decisions for Geraldine include:

6. **Leverage:**
   How can the portfolio be used to leverage improved economic and social outcomes? (value-add)

*There are a range of opportunities for fostering event visitor spending while in a destination area (outside of the event). Events also provide recreation opportunities and enhanced social interaction for locals*
Some concluding comments about Geraldine

• Purposeful and strategic approach to events based on ‘knowing their target markets’ (community and social outcomes first; visitors and economic benefit second)

• Geraldine’s portfolio utilises existing events and festivals (brand authenticity; strengthen the ‘core’; extant expertise; efficiencies)

• The portfolio has diverse, yet complementary, elements which mitigate risk (type; stakeholders; audience; brand role)

• Questions remain about a diluted destination brand for Geraldine (identity; visibility in the market)

• Managing Geraldine’s event portfolio is challenging (co-ordination; collaboration; multiple stakeholders)

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Thank you for your attention.

Any questions?

Reference: