

## **FESTIVAL TOURISM AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD IN ESWATINI**

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**Abstract:** This paper explores festival tourism and its effectiveness as an instrument of sustainable livelihood in local communities. The study is premised on the contrasting scenario of the thriving MTN Bushfire festival in the midst of the communities in the Kingdom of Eswatini struggling under the weight of extreme poverty and high unemployment. A quantitative research approach was employed in collecting data from one hundred community members attending the festival. The key finding emanating from this study is that community members who took part in the study have a limited understanding of sustainable livelihood requirements as this is heavily skewed towards economic needs. The main recommendation from this study relates to greater stakeholder involvement and participation, especially communities, at all levels of festival planning, execution, and beneficitation.

**Keywords:** festival tourism; sustainable livelihood; MTN Bushfire festival; Eswatini; socio-economic impacts

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism research lends credence to the significant strides that the events niche has made with regards to its attractiveness as a focus area and an economic activity (Getz & Page, 2016, Panfiluk, 2015; Taks et al., 2015). Similarly, in the international literature, an increasing pool of studies seem to affirm a positive trajectory in the socio-economic contribution of events to the host communities (Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2015, Kwiatkowski, 2015; Frechtling, 2006; Gao & Wu, 2017; Nyikana, & Tichaawa, 2018). However, it is important to take cognisance and acknowledge the fact that diverse social (Yürük et al., 2017; Arcodia & Whitford, 2007), cultural (Connell et al., 2015; Neal et al., 2007; Ntloko & Swart, 2008) and environmental (Collins & Cooper,

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2017; Andersson, & Lundberg, 2013) impacts generally arise from hosting events. In fact, Getz (2013a, 2013b) purports that the interdisciplinary nature of studies related to events and the social science implication continues to expand. According to Steinbrink, Haferburg & Ley, (2011), there is a growing appeal for festivals and events tourism globally, and particularly in developing countries which seek to diversify their economies. The rationale for this is multifaceted but mainly premised on the notion that festivals and events, in general, will provide an additional incentive for tourists to visit their countries. Of course, increased tourist flows tend to stimulate investment (both local and foreign) in the local economy. Additionally, hosting festivals also serve as a stimulus for the development of other Small, Micro and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) which tend to be quite instrumental in job creation.

In the same vein, tourism development usually necessitates the upgrade or maintenance of the host destination infrastructure such as roads, water supply, transport system, information technology (IT), among others (Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2015). In an attempt to gain market share, Dwyer et al. (2005) assert that service providers in sectors such as accommodation, catering, restaurants and so on would want to improve their facilities and service quality during the period when the festival is taking place. Hence, hosting an event or festival could provide the extra impetus to fast-track development in the tourism sector. All these benefits accrue to the host destination before and during the event. Getz & Page (2016) advance the view that place-marketing has become a tradition and subsequently emerged as one of the principal motivations for destinations hosting tourism events and festivals. Successful delivery of the event introduces a new selling proposition to potential visitors and unveils a new tourism offering for the destination, thereby enhancing its competitiveness (Pike & Page, 2014). Ford & Peeper (2007) point to the United States of America (USA) as an illustration of this event-led tourism marketing approach where conventions and events have systematically been used to achieve key tourism objectives. Nyikana and Tichaawa (2018) equally acknowledge the prevalence of the event-led tourism proposition in developing countries, especially those in the Global South. As a development strategy, this approach tends to boost destination attractiveness, subsequently, attract new investment, create employment and ultimately result in economic growth (Bouhaouala, 2015). This explains, at least in part, the growing traction of developing countries, such as the Kingdom of Eswatini to host an increasing number of events in the expectancy that the dividends from such events would accrue to the communities and the kingdom at large. This paper seeks, therefore, to explore the sustainability of festivals as an instrument to improve the livelihood of local communities.

### **Festivals and sustainable livelihoods**

While research purporting the effectiveness of tourism in driving socio-economic change in communities has been around for decades, the same cannot be said of festivals as a tourism niche (Diedering et al, 2015; Murphy et al., 2007). Festivals and events, in general, have only recently emerged as viable options for uplifting community livelihoods and alleviating poverty (Wu & Pearce, 2013). The impetus in festivals as instruments of development has not only kindled research interests but also resulted in policy shifts in favour of the inclusion of festivals in strategies for Local Economic Development (LED). In fact, festivals now feature prominently in the economic planning and tourism development trajectories of many regions, communities and countries (Davies et al., 2010; Getz & Page, 2016; Tichaawa, 2016). This is hardly surprising because the benefits of festivals are multifaceted and present a holistic platform from which to approach the challenge of community livelihoods. Notwithstanding, literature highlighting the benefits of festivals and events has been

predominantly tilted in favour of direct economic gains such as job creation and income generation (Dwyer et al., 2005; Sharpley, 2002). It is, however, important to emphasise that the impacts of festivals stretch well beyond direct economic benefits as subsidiary industries such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, handicrafts and food processing tend to get a boost, albeit indirectly, from festivals (Muresan et al., 2016; Su et al., 2016).

Lasso & Dahles, (2018), Yürük et al, (2017), Caiazza and Audretsch, (2015) and Huang & Zhang, (2012) emphasise the importance of adopting a more holistic approach to the analysis of the impacts of festivals by examining the socio-cultural attributes of festivals and events. These studies point to the fact that behavioural changes might take long to manifest but do have lasting effects. Similarly, Getz (2010) and Gibson and Wong (2011) lament the paucity of research into the environmental impacts of festivals. Andersson & Lundberg, (2013); Collins et al. (2012); and Patterson et al. (2008) assert the importance of adopting a more balanced approach towards an analysis of the benefits of festivals. In this regard, Collins & Cooper (2017) propose the implementation of the triple-bottom-line approach that will ensure a comprehensive analysis of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of festivals.

### **Sustainable livelihoods**

The dynamism and whirlpool in festivals to trigger a change in communities has been widely acknowledged in literature (Wu & Pearce, 2013; Sirima & Backman, 2013; Su et al, 2016). While some changes attributed to festivals and events might be undesirable, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that properly planned and executed festivals can significantly improve living conditions in communities (Gao & Wu, 2017; Niehof, 2004; Su et al., 2016). This credits festival tourism as a favourable instrument for enhancing livelihoods in communities. The community livelihood approach is a people-centred perspective that recognises human well-being as the nucleus of sustainable development. Hence, the concept of sustainable livelihoods advocates meeting the needs of individuals and communities in the present and distance future as the cornerstone of sustainable development (Gao & Wu, 2017; Su et al, 2019). In this context, the sustainable livelihood strategy recognises the complexity of human needs and aspirations which extend well beyond economic provision (poverty alleviation, food security, job security, etc) to examine issues such as improved wellbeing, socio-cultural sustainability, and natural resource sustainability. Chambers & Conway (1992) describe a livelihood that is sustainable as one that is able to withstand the shocks associated with livelihood assets and make it possible for similar assets to be availed to future generations to provide for their own needs. Ellis (2000) explains that insights into a livelihood situation can be analysed at various hierarchical levels, starting from households to eventually portray the community situation.

From a community perspective, Kheri & Nasihatkon (2016) purport that livelihood diversity is central when assessing livelihood sustainability. They (Kheri & Nasihatkon, 2016) argue that the sustainability of livelihoods hinges on the flexibility of choice within communities with regards to income allocation, freedom to select from a number of activities and mobilise various resources. The notion of the flexibility of choice is considered important because community members, especially in rural areas, do not usually rely on one economic activity to meet their needs, but rather engage in a number of activities (Chambers & Conway, 1992). Therefore, livelihood resources have been identified as consisting of natural, physical, economic, human and socio-cultural resources that can be used to generate outcomes in a livelihood system (Tao & Wall, 2011). It is in this context that Chambers & Conway (1992) cited in Tao & Wall (2009) define a livelihood as comprising, “the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable

when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.”

### **Tourism in the Kingdom of Eswatini**

The Kingdom of Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland is a landlocked monarchy in Southern Africa. The country's population of 1, 147, 842 inhabitants share a landmass of 17,300 square kilometres (World population review, 2019). Poverty levels in the kingdom of Eswatini are quite high at 39.7% (World Bank, 2019), with an unemployment rate of 47.1% (CIA, 2019) and life expectancy currently stands at 31.88 years (World population review, 2019). Geography and economic dependence create a strong bond between Eswatini and South Africa, considering that the two countries share borders to the northwest and south and the kingdom of Eswatini relies on South Africa for 85% of its imports and 60% of its exports (World Bank, 2019).

The government of Eswatini recognises the tourism sector as a major national priority in its quest to improve the quality of life of the citizens. In this vein, the government envisages a tourism sector that is instrumental in poverty alleviation, job creation and the redistribution of incomes to reduce inequality (Government of Eswatini, 2010). Festival tourism features prominently among the six identified niche areas that the government intends to pursue growth (government of Eswatini, 2010). There is substantial evidence that suggests that government initiatives aimed at promoting tourism have produced positive results. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) economic impact statistics reveal that the tourism sector in Eswatini made significant strides in 2018 as the sector registered a growth of 3.9%, surpassing the world economic growth rate of 3.2% (WTTC, 2019). With regards to general economic performance, the travel and tourism sector contributed +6.4% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 4.6% to total employment (WTTC, 2019). It is against this background that this research interest emanates; to assess the impact of the MTN Bushfire festival as an instrument of sustainable livelihoods among the neighbouring communities.

### **The MTN Bush fire festival**

The MTN bushfire festival is an annual celebration of music and art held in the scenic farmlands of the Malkerns Valley in the Kingdom of Eswatini. During the three-day period, participants use different platforms to engage in discussions, workshops, art exhibitions and of course, the music festival. However, while the organisers describe the event as a celebration of the human spirit through a symbiosis of music and various artistic expressions (MTN Bushfire.com, 2019), critics regard the festival as a “clash of cultures” during which the cultural norms and values of the monarchy are annihilated by the social “freedoms” of the modern world epitomised by drug and substance abuse (Akoob et al., 2018). According to MTN Bushfire.com (2019), over 30, 000 people from sixty different countries attended the MTN Bushfire festival in 2019.

The festival promotes responsible global citizenry through themes such as “Bringyourfire” in the bring your fire zone where the participants are encouraged to light the fire of their passion through activism in various social engagements; “Lightyourfire” through the MTN Bushfire schools’ festival which takes the form of an outreach programme in schools to orientate and support learners in the arts; the “Craftyourfire” festival with the MTN Bushfire arts round table during which professional artists present discussions on how to be successful in the performing arts; “#Shapeyourfire” representing the legacy internship and volunteering programmes; the “Greenyourfire” aimed at encouraging environmental sustainability; and the “Moveyourfire” with Igoda Southern African music festival (MTN Bushfire.com, 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to analyse the perceptions of community members on the livelihood sustainability of the MTN Bushfire festival.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In order to analyse the effectiveness of the MTN Bushfire festival as an instrument of sustainable livelihoods among the communities in close proximity to the festival venue, a quantitative research approach was employed. To this end, a questionnaire with close-ended questions was developed for distribution among qualifying participants during the three-day long festival. Following a review of the literature on sustainable livelihoods, various aspects and determinants of sustainable livelihoods were identified for inclusion and testing through the questionnaire. The idea was to gauge the perceptions of the community members present at the MTN Bushfire festival regarding the extent to which they thought the festival met each of the identified sustainable livelihood elements. To further ensure that each retained sustainable livelihood construct was aligned with festivals, the list of constructs was benchmarked against the instrument for measuring community perceptions of the impacts of festivals (Viviers & Slabbert, 2012).

The questionnaire was distributed during the MTN Bushfire festival from the 25 – 27 May 2018. It is important to note that only festival participants permanently residing in the host region of the festival were considered eligible to take part in the study. To ensure that this condition was met, selected field workers were all registered on the Btech tourism programme and originally from Eswatini. This was meant to ascertain their familiarity with the local culture and language. The field workers were then able to validate any potential respondent as a local citizen through a conversation in the local language. During the festival, participants were randomly approached and asked if they came from any of the surrounding communities. A positive response and validation through conversation were then followed by a verbal question asking if they would like to take part in the study. Potential respondents who expressed their willingness to participate in the study were handed the questionnaire to self-complete. A total of 100 questionnaires were duly completed and successfully collected among MTN Bushfire participants who identified themselves as inhabitants of the local community. Equally worthy of note is the fact that the population of this study was considered unknown considering that it was virtually impossible to identify all local community members in attendance at the MTN Bushfire festival during the three days of the event. However, MTNbushfire.com (2019) and Akoob et al. (2018) indicate that most of the participants at the MTN Bushfire festival come from about 60 different countries.

## **RESULTS DISCUSSIONS**

### **Profile of the respondents**

Data captured in table 1 below reveals that most of the respondents were female (57%) and the dominant (32%) age group was between the ages of 26 – 30 years old, followed by the 20 – 25 years age group (18%). It is also evident from the data in table 1 that majority of the respondents (69%) are employed by private sector organisations and 62% of the respondents have been educated to the level of a certificate or degree. It is hardly surprising that most of the respondents (61%) come from the Malkerns valley as this is the host community of the MTN Bushfire festival. The rest of the respondents come from the communities of Ezulwini (17%), Mbabane (8%), Mahlanya (7%), Lobamba (3%), Manzini (2%) and Matsapha (2%).

### **Respondents' perceptions of the livelihood sustainability of the festival**

The literature on livelihood sustainability (Muresan et al., 2016; Su et al., 2016; Yürük et al., 2017; Caiazza & Audretsch, 2015; Huang & Zhang, 2012) reveals three important considerations in achieving livelihood sustainability, namely: economic factors, socio-cultural factors, and environmental aspects. Hence, the respondents' perceptions have been clustered following this approach for ease of analyses.

*Economic aspects of the livelihood sustainability of the festival*

Data captured in table 2 below reveals that most of the respondents (73%) fully agree or agree with the assertion that the MTN Bushfire festival contributes to job creation in the Kingdom of Eswatini. Similarly, 72% fully agree or agree that the festival contributes to income generation and financial support (71%) for Small, Micro and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) in the Kingdom. However, in sharp contrast, only 28% of the respondents fully agree or agree that the MTN Bushfire festival can reduce poverty in Eswatini. Even more interestingly, the data in table 2 seems to highlight the fact that despite the short term gains in jobs, incomes and financial support, long term benefits such as poverty alleviation, better training, more investment and increase in property value can hardly be achieved through once-off occurrences such as the MTN Bushfire festival.

**Table 1.** Profile of respondents

Demographic characteristic	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage
Gender	Male	43	43%
	Female	57	57%
Age	20 - 25	18	18%
	26 - 30	32	32%
	31 - 35	16	16%
	36 - 40	11	11%
	41 - 45	5	5%
	46 - 50	6	6%
	50+	12	12%
Occupation	Unemployed	5	5%
	Self-employed	6	6%
	Government employee	12	12%
	Private sector employee	69	69%
	Other	3	3%
Education	No schooling	4	4%
	Grade 1-11	13	13%
	Grade 12	21	21%
	Certificate	20	20%
	Diploma/Degree	31	31%
	Postgraduate	11	11%
Community of origin	Ezulwini	17	17%
	Lobamba	3	3%
	Mahlanya	7	7%
	Malkerns	61	61%
	Manzini	2	2%
	Matsapha	2	2%
	Mbabane	8	8%

*Socio-cultural aspects of the livelihood sustainability of the festival*

With regards to the socio-cultural impacts of the MTN Bushfire festival on the community, data presented in table 3 reveals that the gap between the aspects that the respondents tend to either agree or disagree with is not as wide as in the economic aspects. For instance, majority of the respondents (56%) fully agree or agree that they have a sense of cultural pride during the MTN Bushfire festival and 66% of the respondents fully agree or agree that the festival creates a platform for people to know about their culture. Still, on the cultural domain, majority of the respondents (55%) fully agree or agree that the festival gives them an opportunity to learn about other cultures.

However, the respondents' views on the social impacts of the festival are largely negative. Even though majority of the respondents (56%) are of the view that the MTN Bushfire festival has a positive impact on peaceful living among people, there is a general perception that the festival will not whisk away the social ills in the community.

**Table 2.** Perceptions of respondents on the economic impacts of the MTN Bushfire festival on community livelihood sustainability

IMPACT AREA	RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Fully agree
More jobs	5%	5%	17%	<b>36%</b>	<b>37%</b>
More income	5%	6%	17%	<b>40%</b>	32%
Financial support for SMMEs	7%	7%	15%	<b>37%</b>	34%
More training	13%	18%	25%	<b>27%</b>	17%
Less poverty	13%	24%	<b>35%</b>	18%	10%
More investment	7%	19%	27%	<b>28%</b>	19%
Increase value of land/property	7%	21%	<b>32%</b>	12%	28%

For instance, only 28% of the respondents agree/fully agree that the festival contributes to a reduction in crime and even fewer respondents (16%) express the view that the festival leads to a reduction in prostitution. Curiously, majority of the respondents do not appear to attribute the prevalence of any social ills to the MTN Bushfire festival. A close examination of all the data on socio-cultural impacts reveals that apart from the impact on "less prostitution" where majority (57%) of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree, there is no other impact area on which there is a simple majority (50%) on either side. This general sense of indecision puts into question, at least from the point of view of these respondents the view that the MTN Bushfire festival flaunts the socio-cultural values of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

**Table 3.** Perceptions of respondents on the socio-cultural impacts of the MTN Bushfire festival on community livelihood sustainability

IMPACT AREA	RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION RATING				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Fully agree
Cultural pride	5%	14%	25%	21%	<b>35%</b>
More people knowing about our culture	2%	11%	21%	25%	<b>41%</b>
Learn more about other cultures	7%	9%	<b>29%</b>	27%	28%
More peace among people	6%	16%	22%	<b>34%</b>	22%
More sports and recreation facilities	13%	28%	<b>32%</b>	17%	10%
More diseases	17%	<b>30%</b>	24%	12%	17%
Less crime	14%	<b>30%</b>	28%	14%	14%
Less prostitution	27%	<b>32%</b>	25%	8%	8%
Entertainment facilities	5%	12%	<b>36%</b>	23%	24%

*Environmental aspects of the livelihood sustainability of the festival*

Data presented in table 4 below reveals the perceptions of the respondents regarding the impacts of the MTN Bushfire festival on various aspects related to environmental sustainability. According to Su et al (2019); Lasso & Dahles, (2018) and Tao et al (2009), natural resources and environmental sustainability are important components of any livelihood strategy. Hence, this study deemed it necessary to find out the respondents' perceptions of the impact of the MTN Bushfire festival on different aspects of the environment. Data displayed on table 4 reveals that majority (57%) of the respondents do not share the perception that the festival contributes to animal and plant (56%) protection. In both impact areas (animal and plant protection), only a minimal proportion (11%) of the respondents are of the view that the festival makes any positive contribution to animal and plant protection. However, majority (43%) of the respondents agree or fully agree that the MTN Bushfire festival has a negative impact on the environment through increased littering. While slightly greater proportion (37%) of respondents do not share the view that the festival causes increased pollution, a close proportion (34%) agree with the assertion, and 29% of the respondents are not sure. However, there is greater clarity regarding the impact of the MTN Bushfire festival on environmental protection. Most of the respondents (49%) attest to the positive impacts of the festival on the environment and only 23% indicate that the impact on the environment is negative.

**Table 4.** Respondents' perceptions on the environmental impacts of the festival

IMPACT AREA	RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION RATING				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Fully agree
Animal protection	22%	<b>35%</b>	32%	<b>9%</b>	2%
Plant protection	20%	<b>36%</b>	33%	6%	5%
Increase pollution	11%	26%	<b>29%</b>	15%	19%
Increase littering	10%	16%	<b>31%</b>	19%	24%
More waste of water	22%	24%	<b>27%</b>	13%	14%
Greater environmental protection	6%	17%	<b>28%</b>	25%	24%

**Table 5.** Perceptions on the impact of the festival on personal quality of life and community quality of life

Impact of MTN Bushfire festival on personal quality of life	Percentage	Impact of MTN Bushfire festival on community quality of life	Percentage
Very negative	1%	Very negative	2%
Negative	5%	Negative	6%
No change	32%	No change	16%
Positive	23%	Positive	37%
Very positive	<b>39%</b>	Very positive	<b>39%</b>

*General perceptions on the impact of the festival on quality of life*

The final section of the questionnaire required respondents to indicate their perceptions on the impact of the MTN Bushfire festival on their personal quality of life and the quality of life in the community. There is no doubt from data captured on table 5 that the general sentiment is positive (62% for personal quality of life and 76% for



community quality of life). Notwithstanding, it is quite intriguing that there is a large gap (14%) between the positive impact of the festival on personal quality of life and community quality of life. Similarly, 32% of the respondents express the view that the festival has no impact on their personal quality of life, while only 16% of the respondents indicate that the festival brings no change to the quality of life in the community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of festival tourism as an instrument of sustainable livelihoods. This was explored in the context of the annual MTN Bushfire festival held in the Malkerns valley in the Kingdom of Eswatini. Considering the high levels of poverty and unemployment in Eswatini, this study was deemed urgent and valuable in the sense that the results could provide an opportunity to improve the livelihood situation of the people of Eswatini. The following conclusions emanate from the findings of this study: Firstly, findings on the economic impacts of the MTN Bushfire festival on community livelihood lead to the conclusion that the respondents see the benefits of the event as mainly short term. This is plausible because, during the festival or at least in the short term, it is easy to see people in active employment, earning wages/income or selling various items. However, beyond these tangible benefits, the respondents do not foresee any significant changes to the community's livelihood with regards to poverty alleviation, greater investment and skills development. This is in contrast to the existing literature on sustainable livelihoods (Lasso & Dahles, 2018; Akoob et al., 2016; Su et al, 2016) which advocate long term economic gains for the local people. The second conclusion regards the findings on socio-cultural impacts of the MTN Bushfire festival on the community's livelihood. The near-even spread of the respondents' perceptions on various socio-cultural impacts of the festival lends the conclusion that these items are not highly rated among community members (respondents).

This assertion is further strengthened by the large percentage of respondents who are not sure if socio-cultural impacts from the event are negative or positive. Studies by Diederling & Kwiatkowski (2015), Yürük et al (2017), Caiazza & Audretsch (2015) and Huang & Zhang (2012) attest to this view that socio-cultural attributes of community livelihoods are not given the same attention as economic factors. A similar conclusion of an apathetic attitude can be reached regarding the environmental impacts of the festival on community livelihood. This is evident in the consistently high percentage of respondents who expressed the view that they were not sure of various impacts of the MTN Bushfire festival on the environment. In fact, it is on the environmental impact factors that most respondents disagreed that the festival generated benefits to the community. Again, this low rating of the environmental benefits of festivals is consistent with previous studies (Collins & Cooper, 2017; Gibson & Wong, 2011; Dolles & Soderman, 2010).

## **Implications**

The findings and conclusions of this study avail the following implications: Organisers of the MTN Bushfire festival need to engage the community and other development stakeholders more closely if the event aims to make a more effective contribution to the livelihood of the local community. This entails getting more meaningful participation from the community members from inception to planning and execution of the festival. As obtained in literature (Su the, 2019; Tao & Wall, 2009) ownership of assets is an important aspect of sustainable livelihood. Hence, the need for the local community to have a sense of ownership towards the MTN Bushfire festival.

Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that community gains from the MTN Bushfire festival are sustained in the long term. This aspect is particularly important if the event is to have any legacy beyond the last event. In other words, if any jobs, incomes and SMME benefits are to varnish with the last musical display, then the event will have little

or no long-term impact. Pre-festival outreach activities such as youth events organised in schools should be extended to communities. The implications of this study also reside in the need for community awareness programmes regarding how to transform events such as the MTN Bushfire festival into instruments for sustainable livelihood opportunities. This will entail getting community members alert on the usefulness of their natural resource base and the need to ensure it is protected. They will, therefore, be vigilant on any cases of abuse, rather than stay in the current state of apathy.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that greater stakeholder engagement be sort for the MTN Bushfire festival. Organisers of the festival should invite community members, Eswatini government officials and leaders of social and environmental organisations to their planning meetings and involve them in the execution of the festival. This will work towards sustaining both the festival and the community as all stakeholders will have a strong motivation to protect it. There is an urgent need to sensitise communities on the fact that sustaining their livelihood goes beyond having access to economic opportunities. It requires taking ownership of and sustaining natural resources, environmental and socio-cultural assets (Collins & Cooper, 2017; Gibson & Wong, 2011; Su et al, 2019). To this end, it is recommended that the government takes leadership in educating communities on the economic opportunities that festivals such as The MTN Bushfire festival, and the responsibility of festival organisers to the community, the environment and the socio-cultural norms of the local people.

The misconception that economic opportunities will resolve all community challenges should be addressed. From the triple-bottom-line perspective, it is recommended that organisers of the MTN Bushfire festival place more emphasis on environmental education of the host community. This is necessitated by the respondents' passive attitude towards environmental considerations. Furthermore, this study recommends that further studies be conducted on the socio-cultural costs of the MTN Bushfire festival on Eswatini. The current study has revealed the respondents' low consciousness on the socio-cultural impacts of the festival. Considering the high profile of the cultural theme on the Eswatini tourism marketing material (government of Eswatini, 2010) there is a concern that the MTN Bushfire festival could erode some of the kingdom's socio-cultural prowess. Finally, it is recommended that more effort be put into encouraging local community participation at the MTN Bushfire festival.

Finding local participants at the festival proved to be a great challenge, hence the limitation imposed on this study by the low response rate. It is acknowledged that a higher rate of respondents in this study might produce a different result in certain aspects of the study. However, this can only be tested if more locals have access to the festival. The organisers of the MTN Bushfire festival are therefore urged to actively engage local communities in this regard.

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