

EVENT TOURISM AS A DRIVER OF LOCAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract: *In a multipolar world, characterized by the diversification of global economic power and the rise of emerging markets, the economic implications of event tourism are increasingly relevant to rural communities. Event tourism plays a key role in the socio-economic development of rural communities, providing opportunities for economic growth, improvement of infrastructure and preservation of cultural identity. This paper analyzes the impact of event tourism on the local community through a case study. The goal of the research is to determine to what extent tourist events can contribute to the improvement of economic and social conditions in rural areas, as well as the perception of local residents, entrepreneurs and tourists about the importance of events for community development. Through a review of relevant literature and conducting survey research among three key groups of respondents, including local residents, event organizers, entrepreneurs and tourists, this paper provides insight into the economic and social effects of event tourism. The results of the research show that the positive impacts are increased income of local entrepreneurs, creation of new jobs and strengthening of social cohesion, while negative effects can be seasonality of income, overloading of infrastructure and environmental challenges. Also, the research results show that event tourism can be a significant tool for the revitalization of underdeveloped rural areas, but it requires adequate planning and support from local actors.*

Key words: *event tourism, rural development, socio-economic impact, local community, case study.*

JEL classification: *L83, O18, R11, Z32*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern age, tourism as an economic branch has a great impact on the environment and the local community. The attitudes of the local population towards the impacts of tourism have been the subject of research for a long time. Tourism as a social phenomenon and a natural phenomenon changes the environment in which it develops and at the same time brings changes to the local population. Thus, the term "impact of tourism" is gaining more and more attention in the literature and it is becoming the subject of numerous studies that have recently investigated the attitudes, i.e. the perception of the local population towards these impacts (Tepavčević, Blešić, Bradić and Ivkov, 2019). Tourism is one of the branches of the economy that has a significant impact on the economic, social, functional and physiognomic structure of rural areas. Today, tourism in rural areas has become a reality, the need and desire of tourists. Tourism can stop migration towards cities and contribute to the significant economic development of rural areas (Pavlović and Berleković, 2018).

Changes caused by the development of tourism significantly shape the daily life of the local population, and the effects can appear in different

forms. Positive impacts include creating new jobs, improving infrastructure, increasing cultural exchange, and improving the quality of life. These factors can create a sense of pride and connection to the community, which contributes to the long-term sustainability of tourism development. On the other hand, negative effects can threaten the daily life of residents such as traffic jams, increases in the cost of living, pressure on local resources and environmental degradation (Lee, 2013).

The structure of this research paper will deal with the consideration and examination of the population's views on the perception of event tourism for the development of a local community, with a special focus on the impact of event tourism on the development of local entrepreneurs in the rural environment. The support of the local population for the development of this branch of tourism is a key factor in the successful management of tourism development and marketing at the level of a local community. The personality of the residents and their perspectives on the communities and those who visit them play an important role in the formation of overall support for the development of tourism.

Event tourism represents an important segment of the tourism industry, contributing to the development of local communities through economic, social and cultural aspects. The organization of festivals, fairs, sports events and other manifestations can significantly affect the local economy, employment, infrastructure and community identity. However, although event tourism can bring economic benefits, challenges such as seasonality, environmental burdens and inadequate planning can reduce its long-term contribution to sustainable development.

The subject of this research is the analysis of the socio-economic impact of event tourism on the local community. The focus is on economic benefits, such as increased income from tourism, the creation of new jobs and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, but also on social effects, including improving the quality of life, preserving cultural heritage and strengthening social cohesion. Through a case study of a local community, the research will assess how the event contributes to its development and identify key challenges and opportunities for the improvement of this segment of tourism.

Research as part of this paper will answer how tourism affects domestic entrepreneurs of a local community, and the case study is the municipality of Osmaci. The reason why this municipality was chosen for the case study is that this local community belongs to a group of extremely underdeveloped municipalities in Republic of Srpska, and we want to examine whether the economic and social situation within this local

community can be improved by enriching the tourist program. For many years, a traditional manifestation has been taking place in this local community, which was given a new name in 2024 with an expanded program of holding the manifestation itself, and therefore received a completely new form. The event "Dani Osmaka", which is the subject of the case study, is characterized by a cultural, artistic, social, traditional, gastro-tourism and entertainment program.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural tourism has been studied for more than a century and is often seen as a way to encourage socio-economic development or revitalization of rural areas (Rosalina, Dupre & Wang, 2021). Tourism development is closely related to people, space and products, and has unique effects on the environment and economic growth (Nepal, 2007; Wang et al., 2016; Xia et al., 2011). Tourism in villages can stimulate rapid economic growth, create more jobs and improve the quality of life of residents. However, its downsides include environmental damage, depletion of local resources and infrastructure overload. Therefore, it is of particular importance to understand the relationship between the value of tourism income and the promotion of sustainable rural development (Yang, Yang, Chen, Su, Zhi & Xi, 2021).

Transparent communication, education about the benefits of sustainable tourism, as well as concrete measures to reduce negative effects, can strengthen the trust and joint work of the local population and tourist entities. In this way, tourism can become a tool for development that benefits both the local community and tourists. The policy of social connection between tourists and the local population, local population and companies, as well as the connection of the private and public sectors significantly affects the increase of the living standard of the local population in underdeveloped areas, i.e. in the rural area. Through tourism, different cultures meet and interact, which enables the exchange of ideas, customs, traditions and values, and is often seen as a bridge between cultures, but also as a responsibility that requires a sustainable approach, respect for local communities and the environment, and the preservation of cultural identity. The characteristic of tourist programs of rural tourism is the effort to offer guests, i.e. to provide personalized service to visitors from other local communities, and to bring them closer to the physical and human characteristics of the rural area, as well as to enable them to participate as much as possible in the activities, traditions and way of life of the local people. The paper of the

authors Tepavčević, Blešić, Bradić and Ivkov (2019) focuses on the attitudes of the local population towards the development of tourism, highlighting its key role in shaping the success of tourism products. The local population's quality of life and their level of satisfaction with tourism directly affect their support for tourism development. Depending on the involvement in tourism activities and the economic benefits they achieve, local residents may have positive or negative attitudes towards tourism. The research indicates the importance of differentiating the attitudes of the local population according to socio-demographic characteristics, distance from tourist sites and economic dependence on tourism. For example, unemployed respondents often see tourism as a chance for employment, which forms a positive attitude towards its development. Also, the younger population shows greater support for tourism and notices its positive effects. On the other hand, the lack of awareness of the potential negative consequences of tourism, as well as the possibilities of tourism development in the city, indicates the need for additional education and information of the local population. Despite the minimal negative effects due to the lack of mass tourism, residents have not fully realized the city's potential for tourism development, which is an obstacle that needs to be overcome in order to create quality tourism products.

According to the World Tourism Organization, rural tourism includes tourist activities that take place in rural areas and are based on natural resources, cultural and historical heritage, tradition, rural lifestyle and specific activities in rural areas (Škrget, 2019). These activities include (UNWTO):

1. **Agrotourism** – Visits to agricultural households, participation in seasonal agricultural work, familiarization with the production of local products and tastings.
2. **Eco-tourism** – Staying in nature with activities such as hiking, biking, bird watching or flora and fauna, with an emphasis on sustainability.
3. **Cultural tourism** – Visits to rural events, festivals, ethno-villages, old crafts and learning about local culture and customs.
4. **Recreational activities** – Hunting, fishing, horseback riding, nature walks or participation in sports events specific to rural areas.
5. **Wellness and relaxation** – Staying in a peaceful environment for relaxation, wellness treatments and returning to nature.

Rural areas most often include a lack of permanent income, a low education rate, an older population, neglect of buildings, unsatisfactory provision of

basic services and infrastructure, which actually points to the reason for the abandonment and depopulation of rural areas (Smolčić Jurdana, Soldić Frleta & Đedović, 2018). Reasons for abandonment and depopulation:

- Unattractiveness of rural areas for young people due to limited opportunities for career, education and social life,
- Economic insecurity and low investment in the development of rural areas,
- Insufficient promotion of rural values and potential, which further reduces interest in living in those areas.

Solutions and possibilities for revitalization:

- Development of rural tourism that boosts the local economy.
- Introducing subsidies and programs for young people who want to stay in rural areas.
- Renewal of infrastructure and modernization of services.
- Education and promotion of traditional crafts and sustainable development (According to the guidelines of the World Tourism Organization UNWTO).

To avoid negative consequences, it is important to manage the socio-cultural impacts of tourism so that the local population benefits. Tourism as an economic branch has positive socio-cultural impacts for a local community, including (Gržinić, 2019):

- improving the quality of life,
- encouraging cultural exchange and,
- preservation of cultural identity and tradition.

The negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism on a local community that can be experienced are (Gržinić, 2019):

1. Cultural degradation:

- Commercialization of tradition in order to adapt to tourists and,
- Loss of authenticity in local customs and practices.

2. Social problems:

- Uneven distribution of income, which can increase inequality and,
- Conflicts between local residents and tourists due to different customs or too many visitors.

3. Changes in lifestyle:

- Adoption of foreign habits and lifestyles, which can damage the local identity and,
- Loss of privacy and peace due to increased tourist visits.

In order to maximize positive and minimize negative impacts, careful planning and involvement of the local community in the development of tourism activities is necessary.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology to analyze the perception of event tourism and its impact on the local community and entrepreneurship.

The goal of the paper is to determine to what extent event tourism can serve as a tool for economic recovery and development of underdeveloped local communities, and how this type of tourism can contribute to the development of local entrepreneurship.

According to the above, the specific objectives of the research are:

1. Examining the importance and impact of event tourism on the local community, and especially on rural entrepreneurship.

This goal includes an analysis of the role of event tourism in the economic, social and cultural development of local communities. It is being investigated how different types of events (cultural, sports, traditional, fairs) can contribute to increasing income, improving infrastructure and strengthening the recognition of the local community. The focus is also on whether event tourism can serve as a tool for the revitalization of underdeveloped areas and what long-term benefits it can bring both for the entire society and for local entrepreneurs.

2. Research on the perception of local residents, entrepreneurs and tourists about the importance of events for the economic and social development of society.

This goal refers to the collection of opinions and views of key stakeholders - local residents, entrepreneurs who can benefit economically from the events, as well as tourists themselves. It is analyzed to what extent the local community supports the events and whether it recognizes them as a development factor. Also, the attitude of entrepreneurs is investigated as to whether such events help them to increase their income, attract new customers and improve their business. The attitudes of tourists will help in understanding the attractiveness of events and the possibilities for their improvement.

3. Identify of the positive and negative effects of event tourism.

Research hypotheses are defined as follows:

H.1: The degree of satisfaction of the participants of the manifestation in the rural environment is positively correlated with the development of local entrepreneurs, which is reflected through an increase in income and interest in local products.

H.2: There is a statistically significant difference in the perception of event tourism between different groups of respondents (local residents, entrepreneurs, tourists).

The main method of data collection is survey research, which was conducted among three key

groups of respondents: local residents, local entrepreneurs and tourists/visitors of the event. The survey consists of 16 questions and covers various aspects of event tourism, including its economic, social and cultural impact, through which empirical data was collected on the attitudes and opinions of the local population regarding event tourism and its contribution to the local community and population. The survey was sent in electronic form to 120 different addresses, in the period from January 1 to February 1, 2025. The questions were mostly formulated in the form of a 5-degree Likert scale, but also as open questions, where respondents could leave their answer. The sample of respondents was selected by random sampling within the municipality of Osmaci. Most of the respondents were local entrepreneurs whose email addresses or contact numbers were publicly available on their websites, then residents and tourists from surrounding cities and towns who have social networks, and who were visitors to the event. A total of 58 of the 120 respondents answered the survey. Respondents were exclusively adults, while all younger participants of the event (under 18 years of age) were not included in the survey. Given that the total attendance during all days of the manifestation was exceptional, that total official number of participants and visitors cannot be taken as the number of the population. The reason for this is that during those days of the manifestation, the same tourists came, and it is possible that the same visitors were counted several times. Also, the sample did not include visitors under the age of 18, and the population consists of a significant number of visitors of that age. Given that it is categorical data, appropriate values will be assigned so that a set of data will be formed that has a certain number of variables. So, for example, there will be two values for the gender of the respondent, 1 for male and 2 for female. If it is a question of age, the value 1 will be assigned for the interval 18-30 years, the value 2 for 31-40, the value 3 for 41-50 and the value 4 for years over 50. Such data will be able to be further analyzed for the purpose of descriptive statistics, as well as determining the distribution of data and their graphical representation. but also for various assessments of mean and variance at the sample level.

In this paper, descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and Kruskal-Wallis test within the SPSS program were used for statistical data processing. Non-parametric statistical tests were used in this research due to the nature of the data and sample size. Descriptive analysis was used to show the basic characteristics of the sample. Correlation analysis, specifically Spearman's correlation, was applied to examine the relationship between

different aspects of the manifestation, such as economic and social impacts.

The Spearman correlation test is a non-parametric statistical method that measures the degree of monotonic relationship between two variables. Unlike Pearson's correlation, which measures linear association, Spearman's correlation (r_s) is based on data ranking and can capture non-linear but monotonic relationships (De Winter, Gosling & Potter, 2016). The Spearman test is often used in psychology, economics, and the social sciences when analyzing associations between variables that are not necessarily numerically linear or when data come from ordinal scales (eg, Likert scales in surveys).

The Kruskal-Wallis test, as a non-parametric alternative to ANOVA, was used to compare attitudes between multiple independent groups, such as local entrepreneurs, residents, and tourists, in order to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the perception of the event among them (McKnight & Najab, 2010). These tests enable a deeper analysis of the impact of event tourism on the local community and the identification of key factors that influence its development.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the key research results related to the perception of the local population, entrepreneurs, tourists and the organizers of the "Dani Osmaka",

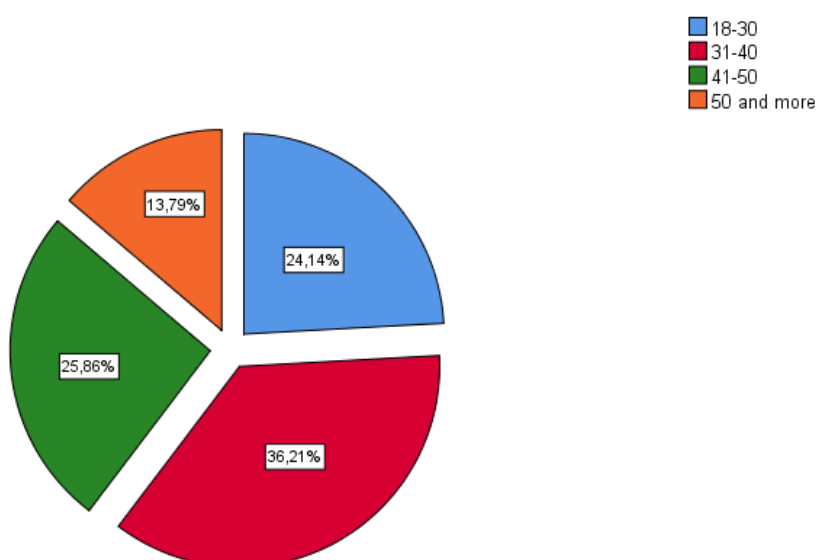
event will be presented. The results will be presented through tabular and graphical displays.

The focus will be on the following aspects:

- General characteristics of the sample - analysis of respondents' demographic data (gender, age structure, educational level).
- Perception of the importance of the event - impact on the preservation of culture and tradition, development of the local economy and sense of community.
- Economic effects of the event - impact on entrepreneurs' income and interest in local products and services.
- Social effects of the event - the role of the event in strengthening local identity and improving the quality of life.
- Key challenges of the manifestation – analysis of the respondents' open answers.

The analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents shows a balanced distribution according to gender, where 44.8% are men and 55.2% are women, which enables relevant conclusions regarding gender differences. The analysis of the age structure of the respondents shows that the largest percentage of participants in the research is between 31 and 40 years old (36.2%), followed by people aged 41-50 years (25.9%) and young people from 18 to 30 years old (24.1%). The least represented group are respondents older than 50 years (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Age structure

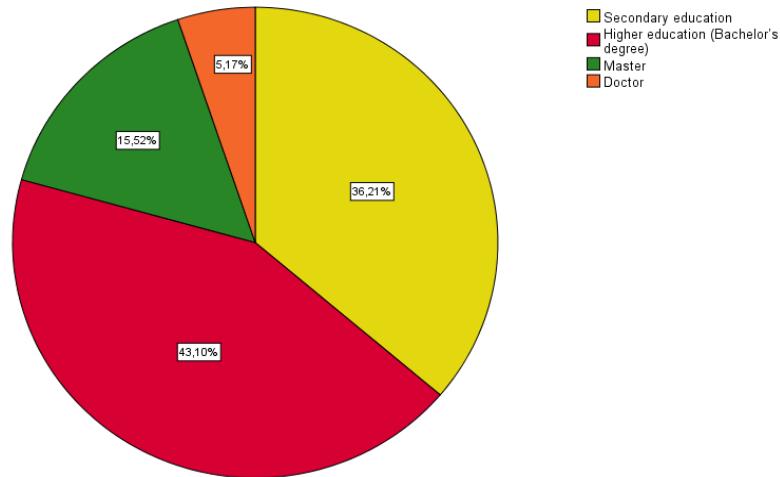


Source: Authors

The educational background of the respondents shows that the largest proportion, 43.1%, have obtained a higher education degree (bachelor's level). This is followed by 36.2% of respondents

who have completed secondary education. Additionally, 15.5% hold a master's degree, while a smaller percentage, 5.2%, have achieved a doctoral degree (Figure 2.).

Figure 2. Education structure

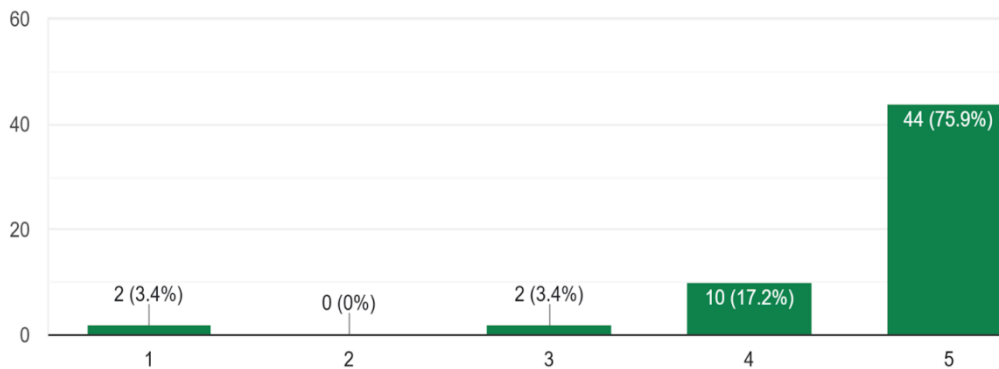


Source: Authors

The question about the contribution of the event to preserving local culture and tradition shows that the majority of respondents believe the event has a significant impact. Specifically, 75.9% of respondents gave the highest rating (5), while

17.2% gave a rating of 4. Only 6.8% of respondents gave lower ratings (2 and 1), indicating that the perception of the event as a factor in preserving local culture is very positive (Figure 3.).

Figure 3. Respondents' perception of the event's impact on local culture and tradition



Source: Authors

The results of research on the impact of event tourism on the development of local entrepreneurs indicate significant support for this aspect of the event.

Namely, 55.2% of respondents believe that the event has a positive impact on the development of local entrepreneurs, while 34.5% fully agree with this statement. Only 10.3% of respondents take a neutral position, while no respondent expressed disagreement with the opinion that the event contributes to this segment of the local economy. These data indicate the dominant view that the event has a significant positive effect on local entrepreneurs, which suggests its potential as a

driver of economic development in the community.

Accordingly, hypothesis H.1 is tested. Given that we are dealing with ordinal variables and data that do not follow a normal distribution, Spearman's correlation test is used (Table 1).

Table 1. Spearman correlation

			STF	DLE
Spearman's rho	STF	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	0,436**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0,001
	DLE	Correlation Coefficient	0,436**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,001	.

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

STF - respondent satisfaction with manifestation - measured using a scale from 1 to 5, where respondents expressed personal satisfaction with the event

DLE - Participants rated the increase in interest in the products of local entrepreneurs, using the same scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "no interest" and 5 "high interest".

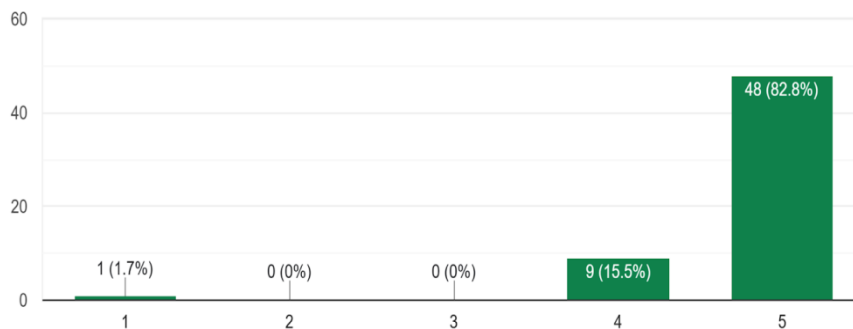
Source: Authors

The results of Spearman's correlation show that there is a moderate positive correlation between the degree of satisfaction of the participants of the event and the development of local entrepreneurs. This correlation is statistically significant, which means that the increase in participants' satisfaction with the event is associated with better conditions for the development of local entrepreneurs. In order to further improve the impact of the event on local entrepreneurs, it is recommended to increase

the interaction between participants and entrepreneurs, better promotion of the event and its impact, and continuous support through education and engagement of entrepreneurs throughout the year. In addition, the evaluation of the participants' experiences can help identify the key factors that most influence their satisfaction and thus improve the event for the further development of local entrepreneurs.

Based on the results, almost all participants (82.8%) believe that the event is a very important factor for the promotion of the place where the event will be held, as they rated it with the highest marks (5). A smaller number of participants (15.5%) gave a score of 4, while only 1.7% of participants marked the event with a score of 1. These results clearly indicate that the majority of respondents recognize the importance of the event in promoting the local place and increasing its reputation (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Respondents' perception of whether event tourism is an important factor for the promotion of the rural environment



Source: Authors

To test H.2, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used in the research (Table 2).

Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis test

	Null Hypothesis	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of STF is the same across categories of status.	0,576	Retain the null hypothesis.

Source: Authors

According to this result, there is no significant difference in the attitudes about event tourism among different groups of respondents (residents, entrepreneurs, tourists). Therefore, the hypothesis that the satisfaction distribution of respondents

differs depending on the status of the respondents was not confirmed.

Examining this hypothesis (H.2) was important for several reasons:

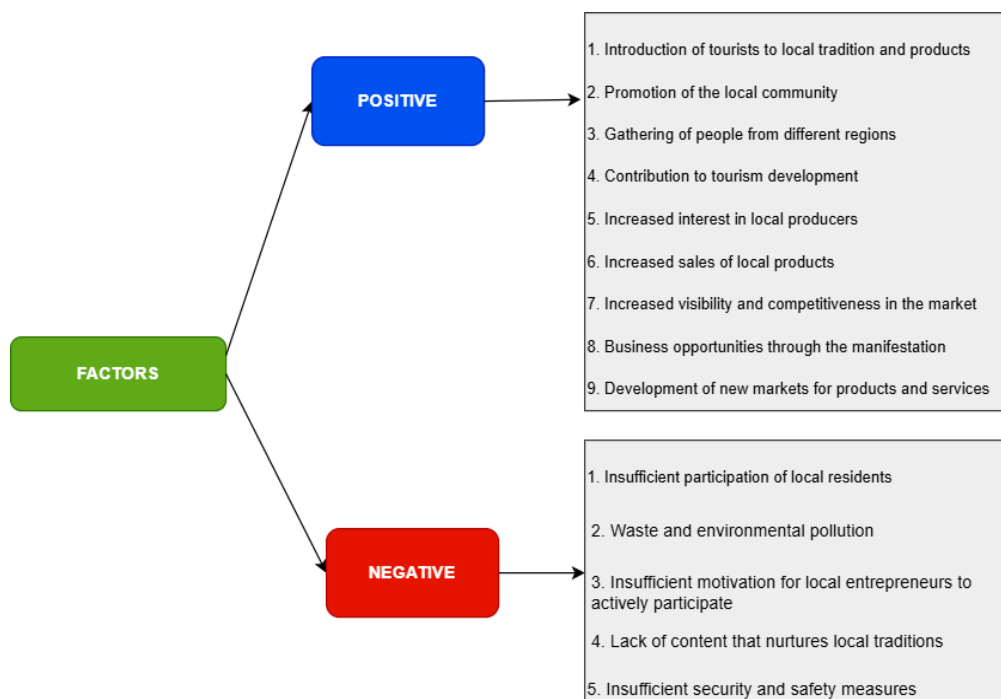
1. Understanding different views - Different groups of respondents, such as the population, entrepreneurs and tourists, may have different perspectives and experiences regarding event tourism.
2. Directing marketing strategies - If it turns out that there is a statistically significant difference in the perception of event tourism between these groups, event organizers could adjust their marketing and promotional strategies to satisfy different interest groups. For example, strategies for tourists could be focused on cultural aspects,

while for entrepreneurs it could be focused on business opportunities.

3. Understanding the views of different groups of respondents helps in creating manifestations that are beneficial for all parties involved. Finally, it was important to examine the positive and

negative sides of event tourism. Based on the answers, we can create a table that separates the basic positive and negative factors of the manifestation according to the respondents' perception (Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Positive and negative factors of event tourism



Source: Authors

In conclusion, the manifestation has a clear positive impact on local community development, particularly in terms of tourism and local business promotion. However, addressing the identified negative factors - especially in terms of local participation, waste management, and supporting entrepreneurs—could further enhance its long-term sustainability and success. To enhance the impact of the event on the local community and entrepreneurs, it is necessary to address the key challenges identified in the research. Primarily, improving the promotion of the event through digital marketing and collaboration with tourism organizations can increase its visibility and attract a larger number of participants. Additionally, addressing environmental issues, such as waste, can be achieved by introducing biodegradable materials, and organizing cleanup initiatives. Greater involvement of local residents and entrepreneurs can be encouraged by easing participation conditions and organizing workshops and meetings. Security concerns require better event security organization and traffic regulation to ensure the safety of attendees. While the event contributes to preserving local identity, adding

more educational and cultural content can further enhance its significance. Finally, increasing the frequency of the event by organizing smaller thematic gatherings throughout the year can contribute to the continuous promotion of the local community and further strengthen its economic and cultural development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the conducted research on the socio-economic impact of event tourism on the local community through the case study of the "Dani Osmaka" event, it can be concluded that such events have multiple positive effects on the development of the local environment. The analysis of the collected data indicates that the event contributes to the preservation of local culture and tradition, strengthens the sense of community among residents and has a positive effect on the development of local entrepreneurship. The results show a high level of agreement among respondents with the statement that the event stimulates interest in local products and services, which confirms its importance for the

economic growth of the community. Also, its role in the promotion of the rural area has been recognized, which contributes to increasing the tourist attractiveness of this place. Although the advantages of the manifestation are multiple, the research also pointed to certain challenges, such as insufficient participation of the local population in the organization and promotion of the event, limited budget funds and the need to improve security measures. In addition, there is an evident need for better waste management during the event, in order to reduce the negative impact on the environment. Overall, the event represents a significant potential for the development of local tourism and economy, but for its long-term improvement, continuous investment in organization, promotion and infrastructural support is necessary. Future research can focus on quantifying the economic effects of events, investigating their long-term impact on the development of local entrepreneurs and tourism. Also, it would be useful to examine how the manifestations affect social cohesion and intergenerational relations in the community. Analysis of the sustainability of tourism through manifestations, with an emphasis on ecological aspects, can contribute to better organization and reduction of negative impacts on the environment. Investigating the role of digital technologies in the promotion of events can improve their effectiveness and accessibility. Comparative analysis with similar manifestations in other rural areas can provide valuable knowledge for improving the organization and social impact of the analyzed manifestation.

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