



# Understanding primary stakeholders' multiple roles in hallmark event tourism management



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Primary stakeholders in hallmark event tourism assume multiple roles over time.
- Phenomenological interviews reveal lived experiences of salient and multiple roles.
- Destination managers must understand primary stakeholders' roles in event tourism.
- This paper contributes to stakeholder theory in event tourism management.
- Findings are significant to further destination and tourism management contexts.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper contributes insights into stakeholder theory in hallmark event tourism and the implications for engaging primary stakeholders in further tourism management settings. The tangible and symbolic tourism benefits instilled in destinations by hallmark events are well-documented; with destination managers increasingly adopting event portfolio approaches to nurture and develop existing and new hallmark events. Nevertheless, limited understanding exists of how stakeholders engage with hallmark events over time; their lived experiences in event tourism; and consequent management implications. This paper uncovers multiple and shifting roles of primary stakeholders in a long-established hallmark event tourism context (Edinburgh's Festival Fringe). It presents a typology identifying five primary stakeholder roles. Phenomenological interviews with twenty-one primary stakeholders revealed that most fulfilled multiple roles. Existing concurrently and historically, these differed throughout stakeholders' lived experiences and engagement. In its findings, this paper extends knowledge of stakeholders' roles in event tourism and implications in further tourism management settings.

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## 1. Introduction

Event tourism has been adopted as a strategic approach throughout the destination management industry and is recognised as a key tourism product (Benur & Bramwell, 2015; McKercher, 2016). Conceptually, event tourism is gaining interest in the tourism and event research community (Connell, Page, & Meyer, 2015; Kim, Jun, Walker, & Drane, 2015; Patterson & Getz, 2013; Stokes, 2008). From a management perspective, event tourism is concerned with the production and marketing of events as motivators for tourism; and the value of these events within destination management settings. Destination managers, along

with event planners and producers, must be in a position to evaluate the tangible economic and marketing impacts of events; while attempting to gain an understanding of events' symbolic influences upon their hosts' destination image and brand (Getz & Page, 2016; Getz, 2008). Increasingly, such managers are therefore adopting approaches to drive event tourism, thus creating unique selling points and differentiating their destinations from competitors (Getz, Svensson, Peterssen, & Gunnervall, 2012).

Hallmark events are recognised as being valuable to destinations' managed event portfolios as they can make significant tangible and symbolic contributors to event tourism. They can enable opportunities for their host destination to gain competitive advantage in tourism markets while minimising negative impacts upon the local community (Hall, 1989, 1992; Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974). An early definition of hallmark events was developed by

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Ritchie (1984) and this highlights their characteristics and impacts:

*“Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention.”* (p 2).

The literature has considered hallmark events in terms of their definition, function, and form (Getz et al., 2012). They are recognised by their purposeful development and management within tourism destinations, and their status is defined by: longevity; quality of brand image; significance; and value. Although categorisations vary, they are commonly classified as having distinct features. Unlike mega or major events hallmark events are rarely recognised by scale of audience and media interest (Getz et al., 2012). Nevertheless, they are significant to the appeal and profitability of tourism destinations; and may be nurtured as responses to seasonality (Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974). Another dimension of hallmark events is their impact upon the international recognition of their host destination; causing them to become tangibly and symbolically embedded as permanent institutions within their community or culture (Ritchie, 1984).

Destination managers can certainly aspire to nurture successful hallmark events and related tourism activity through strategic event portfolio approaches (Getz & Page, 2016); yet, the particular nature of hallmark events suggests they cannot be created and managed purely through planning efforts. Being unlike other destination-based events, more often defined by scale or form, arguably the less tangible, and occasionally conflicting attributes of hallmark events contribute to them requiring a non-standardised management model. This is an important management consideration and has bearing upon the significance of stakeholders in hallmark event settings (Getz et al., 2012). Thus, in achieving and attaining hallmark status, it is essential to recognise that existing, or would-be, hallmark events must ensure sustained support and resources from numerous stakeholders.

The stakeholder approach suggests that effective management is based upon understanding the often complex relationships with, and amongst, stakeholders. These groups and individuals affect and are affected by organisations, which are in turn dependent upon their key stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). In applying stakeholder theory to event tourism contexts, it is recognised that events can only occur as a result of the interaction of key stakeholders with the managing organisations (Clarkson, 1995). The survival and continued success of hallmark events is therefore dependent on those groups of ‘primary’ stakeholders who are most involved and engaged (Reid, 2006). Of significance to categorising hallmark event stakeholders is the argument that primary event stakeholders assume multiple roles and these may not be permanent or fixed (Getz, Andersson, & Larson, 2006; Reid, 2006). Despite the acknowledgment of these shifting roles, there is little understanding of how and at what stages stakeholders assume manifold roles in event tourism settings. Appreciating how and when these engagements occur is relevant to building upon existing stakeholder theory and is pertinent to the tourism management and studies literature.

The purpose of this paper is to provide new insights into primary stakeholders’ roles and lived experiences in a hallmark event tourism setting, thus contributing to stakeholder theory and management approaches in event tourism. It reflects upon the implications of these insights to destination managers, event producers and planners. The paper draws from an existing iconic hallmark event setting: the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which drives event tourism in the capital city of Scotland. Underpinned by

stakeholder theory, it presents a hallmark event stakeholder typology, based on Clarkson’s (1995) concept of primary stakeholders, who as noted are essential to the continued success of an organisation (Clarkson’s (1995)) and were therefore of key concern to this study. The paper firstly adapts a generic stakeholder typology from the literature and, through the use of key informant consultation and document analysis, applies this to the present context. It then presents findings of interviews with twenty-one primary stakeholder informants explored from a phenomenological perspective. Findings reveal new understandings of the various roles assumed by these stakeholders throughout their lived experiences of this particular hallmark event. In uncovering this new knowledge about primary stakeholders’ roles in an existing hallmark event tourism context, this paper aims to equip managers with valuable insights into successful stakeholder management in the context of hallmark events.

The findings of this study are anticipated to be of relevance to current and future strategic event tourism approaches, such as strategic portfolio development. They offer a better understanding of how the changing roles of primary stakeholders can impact upon relationships with long-established hallmark events, leading to sustained success. This has implications for the present and future management of event tourism and stakeholder approaches in destinations and other settings. The paper concludes by considering the management implications of this more in-depth understanding of primary stakeholders’ changing roles and lived experiences in engaging with hallmark events; and in their future growth and development. Additionally, it reflects upon the potential benefits of this extension to stakeholder theory in driving event tourism development in destinations; as well as the potential consequences of this in further tourism management settings.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Hallmark events

The frequency and permanence of hallmark events has been debated in the literature with suggestion that they can be one-time occurrences that mark historical occasions (Graham, Goldblatt, & Delpy Neirotti, 1995). Nevertheless, it is commonly argued that to develop hallmark status events must be periodic, and of a limited duration, to gain stature and build reputation over time (Frost, 2012; Getz, 1991). In terms of existing hallmark events, the literature includes examples, such as Ritchie and Beliveau’s (1974) early study of the Quebec Winter Carnival, existing as an annual seasonal festival since 1894, but officially founded as an event in 1954 to drive tourism and the city’s economy. Getz (1993) has studied the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede as an example of a hallmark event. Meanwhile, Ritchie and Crouch (2003, p. 119–120) list a series of permanently recurring and periodic hallmark events, including: the Boston Marathon; Munich Oktoberfest; New Orleans Mardi Gras; Running of the Bulls in Pamplona; and Wimbledon Tennis tournament. Frost (2012) names the Indianapolis 500 car race, and suggests that hallmark events may take the form of traditional or modern ‘pop’ cultural events. In terms of destination management approaches, Getz et al. (2012) discuss the literature and also note the event tourism industry’s adoption of the hallmark terminology in practice. They cite examples from Melbourne in Australia and Hamilton in New Zealand where the term ‘hallmark’ is used in marketing materials to describe cultural, sporting and converged events of a recurring and permanent nature, thus supporting the discussions in the literature.

It is agreed that the functional attributes of hallmark events drive their significance as tourism products within their host destinations, allowing them to be major tangible contributors to event

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