

Potentials and Impacts of Event Tourism Development: The Case of Aksum Town, Tigray National Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract | Tourism is recognized by several countries as a tool towards an integrated development. Events are a dynamic and fast-growing sector that has become a development tool in both developed and developing countries as a new tourism trend. This study examines event tourism's potentials and impacts in Aksum, Ethiopia. A mixed research approach with a descriptive design was employed through stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire and interview were instruments used for data collection. Questionnaire respondents were selected randomly while interview participants were recruited purposefully. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied for questionnaire data using SPSS software while content analysis was adopted for interview data. Findings revealed that Aksum has potentials for the development of religious and cultural events followed by historical and business events. The impacts of event tourism to Aksum were found as both positive and negative in relation to socio-economic and environmental activities. The main positive impacts were perceived as improving destination image and boosting local businesses, on the other hand, negative impacts include problems about unfair pricing of local goods and services, traffic congestion and overcrowding. The research concludes by suggesting possible ways of maximizing the positive role of event tourism and minimizing its adverse impacts.

Keywords | Event tourism development, potentials, impacts, Aksum

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1. Introduction

Tourism has shown a tremendous growth and regarded as a tool for economic development (Adongo, et. al, 2017; Kibrachew & Amare, 2019). It is one of the world's largest economic sectors accounting for 10.4% of global GDP and 313 million jobs or 9.9% of total employment in 2017 (WTTC, 2018). Before the surge on event tourism's popularity, tourism in the past has been solely based on accommodation and hospitality, transportation and entertainment sectors, dependent on various natural and man-made visitor attractions. This traditional set-up has shaped the minds of event organizers and managers, realizing an essential sector that must be tapped that led to the birth of event tourism (Etiosa, 2012).

Ethiopia, a country in the Horn of Africa, is rich in natural and cultural heritage. The country has various intangible heritage recognized by UNESCO like events or festivals which are having unique significance in presenting the society's living culture. The UNESCO recognition of Ethiopian events like *Meskel* Festival - the Finding of True Cross (2014), *Fiche Chembalala* - the celebration of Sidama People's New Year (2015) and *Gada* System - the Oromo People's democratic leadership style (2017) as world intangible heritage, shows the potential of events and festivals as key elements for growth and event tourism development in destinations. Aksum, located in Tigray Regional State of Ethiopia, is considered as the holiest site in the country and serves as a centre for religious events, an important destination for Orthodox Christian pilgrims. The Church of Zion in Aksum houses the Biblical Ark of the Covenant's Tablets of the Law, the inscription of the Holy Ten Commandments. Majority of Aksum population (about 88%) are Orthodox Christians, 10% percentage are Muslims, and the remaining are non-Orthodox Christians (CSA, 2007).

Events are considered vital to any destination and Aksum can take advantage of its numerous

events that attract several types of visitors. This intangible heritage must be explored and properly utilized for the benefits of the community hence, this study examines the potentials and impacts of event tourism development in the historic town of Aksum, Tigray Regional State, Ethiopia. It deals with the potentials of events and its positive and negative impacts.

2. Aksum Festivals and Special Events

Tigray, as the cradle of civilization, is considered a living museum since it houses myriads of natural, cultural, religious and archaeological tourism resources (Alemayehu, 2012). Aksum, home of the ancient Aksumite civilization also plays a key role in Tigrayan and Ethiopian tourism activities (Legesse & Alemshet, 2019). The holy town of Aksum, along with surrounding towns have been serving as a base for various cultural, religious and historical events which are significant at various levels. Historical event celebrations like the *Battle of Adwa* - a battle where Africans succeeded over the colonizers; the cultural events like *Ashenda* (Ayniwari) which is customary to married women and girls; religious events held at Aksum's Zion Church where the Ark of the Covenant is housed; *Hosana*; *Meskel*; Epiphany (*Timket*); Christmas and St. Yared commemorations are among the major events annually celebrated in Aksum. Aksum is an ideal place to reflect on the interrelationship between archaeology, material & living culture as well as identity (Tekle, 2008). These resources hold invaluable position for the development of event tourism in the region and the country, in general.

However, records show that great majority of foreign visitors to Aksum arrived on packaged tours, and stayed for only one night (UNESCO, 2008). This has proven that more work must be done to increase the visitors' length of stay by di-

versifying the attractions and offering additional activities. Event tourism in Aksum has a great potential to attract local and international tourists especially Christian pilgrims for the benefit of enhancing the town's socio-economic growth and image building. Aksum's strategic location on the central part of Tigray region, its available air and road transport networks and accommodation facilities, UNESCO inscribed historical and cultural heritage sites, the presence of educational institutions such as Aksum University and the establishment of Pan African University, do have significant contributions to the flow and number of business tourists, pilgrims and researchers to these sites.

The religious events like Epiphany, *Meskel* (the Finding of the True Cross), St. Mary of Zion or *Hidar Tsion* celebration (Arrival of the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem to Aksum), Christmas (the birth of Jesus Christ), *Hossana* (cele-

brated a week before Easter to commemorate the Triumphal Entry of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem) and *St. Yared Memorial* and *Geez'* language festivals are among well-known religious events and festivals in Aksum. Among these events which are specific and common to Aksum are: *Hidar Tsion* (celebrated during December), *Hossana* (celebrated during the month of April) and St. Yared Memorial and *Geez'* festivals (celebrated annually during the month of May). *Ashenda* (Ayniwari) is a cultural event which is famous in the town, participated by girls and women during the month of August. Thousands of Orthodox Christian pilgrims from the country and around the world travel to Aksum to attend and witness these events. Religious events and festivals attract a huge interest, usually motivated by individual preference and socio-cultural factors (Faria, Vareiro & Malheiro, 2021).



Figure 1 | A common traditional Ethiopian dance (2020)

Ethiopia is considered one of the only two African countries to have never been colonized and its culture has been less exposed to outside influence. In Tigray, music traditionally plays a significant role for social purposes like in religious festivals (*shibsheba*), weddings, funerals and in motivating warriors. The music is designed to suit the occasion, especially the church songs. Tigray's traditional secular music is strongly influenced by religion

that combines songs and dance at the same time. Ethiopian church songs were created by St. Yared. His songs are generally known as *Aquaquam*, a unique style of chant and spiritual skip accompanied by instruments such as drum (*kebero*), sistrum (*tsinatsil*) - a kind of sophisticated rattle, prayer stick (*mequamia*) and trumpet (*meleket*). The following are considered major and known religious and traditional events in Aksum.

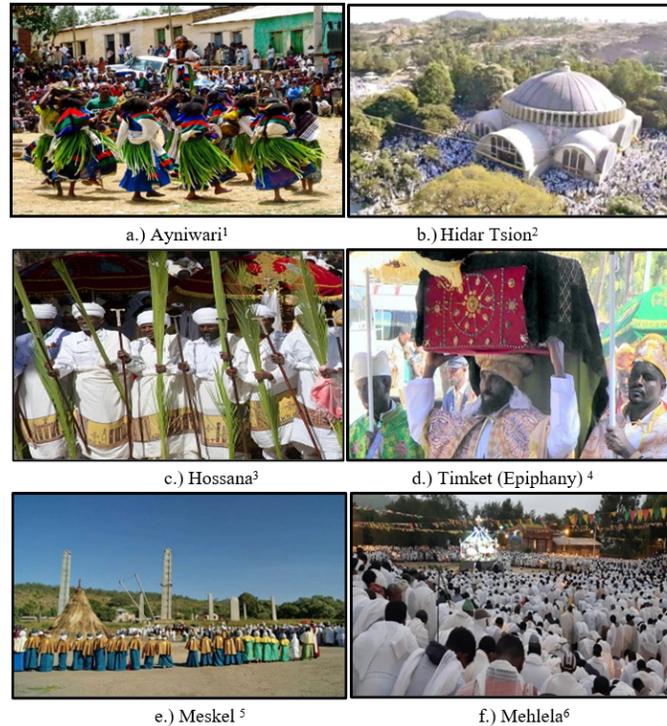


Figure 2 | Major Religious Events in Aksum (2020)

2.1. Impacts of Event Tourism

Event tourism is a systematic planning, development and marketing of special events and festivals which are considered as visitor attractions and catalysts for infrastructure, economic and destination development (Getz & Wicks, 1993). Ha-

ving diverse event themes such as festivals, political events, cultural activities, sports and religious meetings held both at international and national levels, these all can become an essential part of urban living. Events can be classified as: a.) cultural celebrations, political events and arts & entertainment; b.) commercial events, education

¹ It is a unique Tigrayan traditional festival which takes place to mark the ending of fasting period called “filseta.” This event is mostly for girls and young women that takes place annually and lasts for a week on average during August (Nehase).

² A festival celebrating the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem to Aksum.

³ The feast precedes the holiest week in the entire Lent. The last week is known in Ethiopia as “himamat” which corresponds to “passion week,” a time during which the laity live moments of pain and suffering, commemorating the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The most pious ones extend their fasting time to two days, three days or even a week depending on their spiritual strength. Along with the fasting, prostration is the hallmark of the week.

⁴ Epiphany (Timket) is considered as one of the most significant of all religious celebrations. The word “Timket” has derived from the Ge’ez word “Astrayo” which means “to reveal”. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church celebrates Timket as a mark of commemoration to the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Today, Timket is a three-day festivity that usually falls on January 18th, 19th and 20th (Tiri 10, 11 and 12 of the Ethiopian calendar).

⁵ Meskel (The Finding of the True Cross) has been celebrated in Ethiopia for over 1600 years. Since Christianity started as a state religion in Aksum, it is obvious that the celebration of Meskel might have been started here after Christianity was officially declared. The word actually means “cross” and the feast commemorates the discovery of the cross (upon which Jesus was crucified), by Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. The original event took place on 19 March 326 AD, but the feast is now celebrated on 27 September (Meskerem, 17 in Ethiopian Calendar).

⁶ Mehlela is a sacred prayer performed by the people of Aksum from the 1st day to the 7th day of every month. The followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Church start to pray from 4:00 P.M. till the morning up to 7: 00 A.M. During mehlela, the people of Aksum pray to God to bring peace and order, sustain the health of human beings and other creatures including domestic and wild animals, bring rain and sustain happiness and joy. The people pray for the world and to get compassion from God (Egziabher).

and scientific events; and c.) sports, recreational activities and special events (Çelik & Çetinkaya, 2013; Getz, 2008). Events are becoming more important for urban development and to residents of the host community (Popescu & Corboş, 2012). They are spatial-temporal phenomenon which are considered unique because of interactions among people, the setting and management systems that include design elements and programs (Getz, 2008; Skoultos & Tsartas, 2009). Several countries are allocating considerable resources in developing, attracting and supporting major events to increase visitor numbers and expenditure (OECD, 2017). Events are a valuable tool for local development (Serrao & Costa, 2020) and they are linked to a re-imaging process and strategies for urban regeneration. If events are managed and hosted effectively, they can lead to several positive impacts either economically, commercially, environmentally, psychologically or politically (Hall, 1992). Events provide benefits to economy, tourism, society and culture of the destination (Yolal, Cetinel & Uysal, 2009). They can positively influence the destination's image and identity (Faria, et. al, 2021), boost regional development and enhance long-term socio-economic impacts (Mules & Faulkner, 1996). Events can also expand the visitor economy, provide media exposure, stimulate an infrastructure upgrade and propel new partnerships in financing sports, tourism, culture and leisure facilities (Fourie & Gallego, 2011; OECD, 2017). Moreover, they support the tourism industry that plays a critical role as an engine for development of regions (Eusébio & Carneiro, 2012).

Apart from tangible contributions into a country or region, events create jobs, form businesses (Ferdinand & Williams, 2013) and generate multiplier effects (Ferdinand & Shaw, 2012). Events contribute to tourism development through destination marketing, international prestige and promotion of projects and investments (Allen, et al., 2002). Expenditures are also generated in the local economy in terms of its benefits from tourism-

related activities and the subsequent branding of the destination following an event's success (Migueis, Fernandes & Ribeiro, 2017; Roche, 1992).

Furthermore, events' socio-cultural impacts include improving the standard of living; enhancing local pride and community spirit; strengthening the host destination's traditions and values (Arcodia & Whitford, 2008); motivating tourists in learning the culture and customs of the territory such as religious events and festivals (Moreira, 2015) and promoting awareness about environmental protection and best practices (Allen, et al., 2002). In contrast, events may affect the host community negatively through increased prices of local goods and services, traffic congestion, overcrowding, environmental pollution, crime rate and a destination's poor or bad image due to inadequate facilities (Skoultos & Tsartas, 2009). Tourism stakeholders such as central government, DMOs, local authorities and businesses must take advantage of maximizing events' positive effects (Madinios & Vassiliadis, 2006) in order to formulate better strategic management plans and programmes to ensure competitiveness and sustainability (Liberato, Mendes, Liberato & Alén, 2021) which are essential to any destination like Aksum.

3. Methods

This study explored the potentials and impacts of event tourism development in Aksum. A mixed research approach with a descriptive design was employed. Questionnaire and interview were the instruments used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two parts: Part 1 - demographic profile and Part 2 – questions related to Aksum events, event tourism types and event impacts using Likert scale while the interview covers general questions about Aksum events and its development, events' impacts and stakeholders' roles.

Questionnaire respondents were tourism service providers (tour guides, travel agencies, managers and owners of hotels and restaurants), professionals in tourism and related fields (staff from Culture and Tourism offices and scholars from educational institutes), religious organization staff and visitors. Samples were considered the best representatives in providing relevant information to this study. Since the population were heterogeneous, stratified random sampling technique was used. The target population has been stratified into strata like tourism service providers (50), professionals (15), church staff (10), and visitors (30), for a total of 105 respondents. Respondents were stakeholders or with involvement in Aksum events. Tourism service providers were directly engaged in selling goods and services to tourists while tourism professionals were selected since they have theoretical knowledge and practical experience over the general tourism and events business concept. Some professionals were staff of the local government tourism office, who were mainly responsible for the town's tourism planning and management while others were involved in research and education associated with public higher institutions in Aksum. The religious organization Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the chief initiator and promoter of major Aksum events specifically religious festivals which are organized by them in collaboration with other stakeholders while visitors were selected randomly from participants of actual events in order to get their personal feedback.

Apart from questionnaire, four interviews were administered, with Managers of Aksum Culture and Tourism Office, Aksum Town Police Office, Aksum Trade and Industry Office and Head of Aksum Town Administration - Department of Town Cleaning and Beautification. These qualified respondents have direct role or involvement in Aksum tourism activities and events. The Manager of Aksum Culture and Tourism Office (government re-

presentative) has the overall knowledge and information about Aksum tourism activities and events. On the other hand, the Aksum Town Police Office Manager was selected since the office is in-charge of peace, security issues, crowd control and traffic administration during event planning and management. The Aksum Trade and Industry Office plays a significant role in creating awareness for the trade and business community, monitoring the quality of service and price control of goods to avoid inflation during an event while the Department Head of Aksum Town Cleaning and Beautification is concerned with the environmental management, orderliness and cleanliness at all stages, pre-, during and post-event.

Data were collected and analyzed during the period from October 2019 until April 2020. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied for questionnaire data of 105 responses, using SPSS version 20 software while content analysis was adopted for interview data.

4. Results and Discussion

The following information include the opinions collected through questionnaires distributed to 105 respondents. Respondents were Aksum town hotel and restaurant managers, tour guides, travel agents, tour operators and tourism professionals who gave their perceptions toward potentials and impacts of event tourism in Aksum. Responses for the questionnaire were rated as 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = average, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. The interviewees' opinions from four government offices - Aksum Culture and Tourism Office, Aksum Trade and Industry Office, Aksum Police Office and Aksum Town Department of Cleaning and Beautification were also taken to provide additional information.

Table 1 | Potential types of events in Aksum

The following events as potentials for the development of event tourism in Aksum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Religious Events	2	5	4.08	.665
Cultural Celebration Events	1	5	3.70	.814
Historical and Political Events e.g. Battle fields, VIP visits and meetings	2	5	2.94	.913
Sport Events (Modern and traditional competitions e.g. cycling and football)	1	4	2.32	.713
Business and Trade Events e.g. Conferences, Expos and trade fairs etc.	1	5	3.30	.931
Arts and Entertainment e.g. concerts and award ceremonies	1	5	2.36	.776
Education and Scientific Events e.g. Workshops and Seminars	1	5	2.52	.909

N = 105

Table 1 presents the respondents' ideas on the availability and development status of events in Aksum town. It shows the respondents' agreement, where religious and cultural events have the mean values of 4.08 and 3.7, respectively. It shows that respondents agreed on the idea of religious events having the biggest potentials for the development of event tourism. Religious events by their nature take places in ceremonial acts regularly, in accordance with the calendar and change little over the centuries. As a result, the programs for religious event celebrations remain constant over time (Rizzello, 2012). Hence, the five major religious events in Aksum are celebrated annually on specified days and months supported by their attractive Orthodox Christian spiritual ceremonies. According to Rizzello (2009, 2012), visitors to holy places stay in the area for just a few hours with negligible economic effects. Besides, they are not participating in recreational activities during their stay. The interviewees also agreed on five events related with Ethiopian Orthodox namely: Meskel, Hidar Zion, Christmas, Epiphany and Hossana, as main events in Aksum which could attract more pilgrims from different parts of Ethiopia and abroad. They also agreed that pilgrims from outside Aksum participating in a major event like St. Mary Zion during November or Hossana in April start their journey back home after the end of the ceremony.

Meanwhile, both respondents for questionnaire and interview have agreed that annual cultural events such as *Ashenda* or *AyniWari* celebrations

are second potential events in Aksum having the mean value of 3.7. Other events like business and historical events have been rated 3.3 and 2.9, respectively. The interviewees also commented that political events (battle fields, VIP visits and meetings) and business and trade events (conferences, expos and trade fairs) are less known to Aksum when compared with religious and cultural events that require further improvement and promotions. Other events: education and scientific events, arts and entertainment, and sport events have mean values of 2.52, 2.36 and 2.32, respectively, below the average rate. During an interview, sport events (modern and traditional competitions e.g., cycling and football); education and scientific events (e.g. workshops and seminars) are available but less developed in Aksum which also require additional marketing and collaboration with higher education institutions.

Table 2 shows the respondents' opinions over the positive impacts of event tourism in Aksum. The estimated mean values show that event tourism plays a significant role in improving destination image (3.88), boosting local business (3.86), promoting the destination by attracting international, national and local media (3.82), increasing income of service providers (3.78), developing mutual understanding and respect between the host and guests (3.74), increasing environmental cleanliness (3.70), enhancing social pride and respect (3.62), and promoting infrastructural development to Aksum town (3.60). The mean values of event

Table 2 | Positive Impacts of Event Tourism in Aksum

Event tourism brings the following benefits to Aksum town:	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Boosting local business	2	5	3.86	.639
Increasing income of service providers	1	5	3.78	.815
Improving destination image	1	5	3.88	.961
Promoting Infrastructural development	1	5	3.60	.926
Promoting the destination by attracting international, national and local media to the town	1	5	3.82	.962
Increasing environmental cleanliness	1	5	3.70	.839
Enhancing social pride and respect	1	5	3.62	.967
Developing mutual understanding and respect between the host and guests	1	5	3.74	.777
Increasing entertainment opportunities for the locals	1	5	2.64	1.045

N = 105

tourism benefits range from 3.6 to 3.88 which are above the average rate. On the other hand, event tourism has fewer roles in increasing entertainment opportunities for locals, with a mean value of 2.64, suggesting that respondents have lower agreement on this aspect.

The interviewees highlighted the impacts such as hotels' high occupancy rate and increased sales of hospitality goods and services where small business owners like street cafes to large hospitality establishments earn the highest sales during an event. Events also attract media attention and opinion makers following invitations of well-known

personalities, politicians and religious leaders. Besides, every year, at the eve of any Aksum event, new infrastructure development like asphalt and interior road preparations, town cleaning, greening and road painting are some positive impacts. Cultural events such as Ashenda (*Ayniwari*) have positive impact in creating community entertainment as perceived by interviewees. Ashenda's final event ceremonies are usually participated by well-known bands, artists and musicians who demonstrate traditional songs and dances while thousands of people join along the celebration.

Table 3 | Negative impacts of event tourism in Aksum

Event tourism results the following negative impacts to Aksum:	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural clash between host and guest	1	5	2.22	1.036
Security problem e.g. theft and robbery	1	5	2.50	1.015
Environmental pollution e.g. air and visual pollution due to solid waste disposals	1	5	3.46	1.014
Traffic congestion	1	5	3.94	.935
Overcrowding	1	5	3.80	1.050
Inflation	1	5	3.68	1.077
Unfair pricing of local goods and services	1	5	3.70	1.147

N = 105

Table 3 reveals that event tourism has also negative impacts to the destination. Majority of the respondents agreed event tourism has negative socio-economic and environmental impacts to Aksum town. Hence, the estimated mean values show that problems of traffic congestion (3.94),

overcrowding (3.80), unfair pricing of local goods and services (3.70) and inflation (3.68) are considered as major costs of event tourism in Aksum. Based on results, the mean values of event tourism costs range from 3.68 to 3.94. Respondents also perceived event tourism has negative impacts

of environmental pollution and overcrowding, with mean values of 3.46 and 3.80, respectively.

The Head of Aksum Town – Department of Town Cleaning and Beautification has acknowledged these points by emphasizing the insufficient number of standard public toilets in and around the town and heritage sites where events are held annually. He explained, *“in order to minimize the problems of air and visual pollution, they are trying their best to mobilize their staff in all kebeles (districts) to create awareness among event participants in the proper usage of available toilets during the events. Participants on trade exhibitions are also creating problems such as improper waste disposal of plastics and other packaging materials after selling their goods.”*. To resolve the problem, the office has been giving awareness programs about waste disposal and instill responsibility to event participants while the municipal team makes the waste collection in an organized manner.

Responses toward event tourism and its impact in creating cultural clash and security problem e.g. theft and robbery, have mean values of 2.2. and 2.5, respectively. An interview made with Aksum Town Police Officer stated their office was continuously making efforts to minimize the rapid growth of unethical and illegal activities like theft and robbery which were uncommon to the town. There were situations where gangsters robbed individuals during the night that require urgent attention, since these have an impact to the town’s image. Hence, there are no other circumstances where event tourism brings problems of cultural clashes and security issue to the whole community. A cooperative effort with the community, government and religious institutions to teach the youth about moral norms and ethics and impose corrective punishments are necessary. Other interviewees mentioned that residents of Aksum are warm, friendly people, with a welcoming gesture e.g. washing the pilgrims’ feet and offering local food and beverage that contribute to mu-

tual understanding, respect and deeper interaction between them and the guests.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that religious events related with Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and cultural events like AyniWari (Ashenda) celebrations were perceived to be well-known and have great potentials for event tourism development in Aksum. The events are celebrated annually and known to attract thousands of people at a time. Business, historical and political events were also perceived having potentials for event tourism development in Aksum. Other event types such as education and scientific events, arts, entertainment and sports were regarded as having less potentials.

Event tourism has both positive and negative impacts to destinations. Based on this study, the positive impacts of event tourism include: (1) improving destination image; (2) boosting local businesses; (3) promoting the destination by attracting international and local media; (4) increasing service providers’ income; (5) developing mutual understanding and respect between the host community and guests; (6) increasing environmental cleanliness; (7) enhancing social pride and respect; and (8) promoting the town’s infrastructural development. These were also relative to some studies where events have been considered as a key element to affirm a destination’s social and cultural identity (Marujo, 2014); enhance local and regional development strategies (Vassenska & Stan-kova, 2015); and contribute to rural development (Irshad, 2011).

In contrast, the negative impacts of event tourism to the town include (1) traffic congestion, (2) overcrowding, (3) unfair pricing of local goods and services and (4) inflation which are considered major problems while negative host-guest relation and security issues are considered minimal as perceived

by respondents. The main goal for event planners and destination managers is to focus on positive impacts to benefit the local population (Skoultos & Tsartas, 2009). Events provide several socio-cultural, economic and environmental benefits to any locality and have huge potentials for Aksum town. Tourism stakeholders in Aksum must collaborate to achieve the common goal of developing event tourism.

Several recommendations have been provided to concerned key actors of event tourism in Aksum. The local, regional and federal government bodies must consider the provision of incentives in the form of tax holidays and duty-free importation of event facilities to enhance private sector participation. Sufficient budget must be allocated to improve event marketing and promotions and support the funding in the construction of additional public toilets around the town's main heritage sites, and establishment of a meeting venue with a big seating capacity, equipped with modern equipment and facilities. This venue shall become the main meeting hall and/or exhibition centre in handling major events that include trade fairs. Additional bigger venues and facilities that can be multi-purpose built are also needed to support various events including sports. Local initiatives such as putting standard dust bins in proper public areas to maintain cleanliness, developing proper traffic management scheme to minimize accidents, and proper zoning in Aksum's major heritage sites to manage overcrowding, are all necessary.

Trainings must be arranged for event tourism stakeholders such as event planners, transport sectors, hoteliers, food and beverage establishments' staff to enhance knowledge and skills especially in the field of event management. Aksum municipality must also encourage international and national scientific workshops in collaboration with higher education institutions to promote more scientific events in the area.

Strengthening partnerships and collaboration with the local communities and Ethiopian Ortho-

dox Church, since maintaining cooperation among key stakeholders would assure the sustainability and successful development of event tourism in the town. Through partnerships, local people's participation also strengthens the local development process (Serrao & Costa, 2020) and local community's identity (Farmaki, et al., 2018). An effective government regulatory system or mechanism must be developed against businesses and individuals who are involved in illegal trading, price fixing, cheating and bad service. In addition, risk management is fundamental to prevent future risks (Rodrigues & Costa, 2021) and guarantee long-term success. Aksum must also consider inviting more national and international media to participate in significant events to enhance its positive destination image.

5.1. Relevance of the Study

Every public development plan and policy is effective when supported with scientific research. This research that focused on the potentials of events which are unique and common to historic town of Aksum is valuable to identify the available opportunities in diversifying the tourist attractions of the town apart from the tangible historical and archaeological heritage. This can help the government to give due attention on the town's intangible heritage which serve as the basis for the development of event tourism. The research has also presented relevant information in promoting the benefits of event tourism to the community and some measures in minimizing its adverse impacts. With key information, this study would provide basic inputs to local and regional government tourism policy makers when drafting strategic plans and programs, taking into consideration the inclusion of stakeholders to develop and market events in a sustainable manner. It has also significance for the local community as it would preserve their living heritage apart from other socio-economic benefits.

Furthermore, this is considered as one of the few empirical studies made regarding Aksum events, which also serves as a contribution to the literature and reference for future research work about events and tourism development in Tigray region and Ethiopia, in general.

5.2. Limitations

As event tourism is still a new concept of business in Ethiopia, the researchers were not able to find enough local literature as well as secondary data such as visitor statistics and travel demand. This has somewhat impacted the amount of information that could have been added, for example, the market share of events' sector in Aksum, profile and number of visitors attending the major events. This study has focused on the potentials and impacts of events in Aksum. Issues relevant to events and tourism development in Aksum like challenges, event plans, strategies and marketing must be taken into consideration for future studies.

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