

A FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS OF A (SMALL) FESTIVAL

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ABSTRACT

The increasing popularity of festivals and events, coupled with their positive and negative impacts on host communities, has led to a growing body of research on the impacts of festivals and events. As a substantial amount of this research has focused on assessing the economic impacts of festivals, there is growing demand for the measurement of the socio-cultural impacts of these festivals and events. To address this issue a study was conducted that developed a framework for the social impact evaluation of festivals and piloted a tool that measured the community perceptions of socio-cultural impacts.

This paper has four aims. First, it provides an overview of the importance of understanding community perceptions of socio-cultural impacts that may arise from the staging of festivals and events. Second, the paper outlines a Social Impact Evaluation (SIE) framework suitable for the holistic evaluation of socio-cultural impacts of festivals and events. Third the paper reports on the piloting of a tool, the Social Impact Perception (SIP) scale that was created to measure community perceptions of socio-cultural impacts that may arise from the staging of a small community festival. Fourth, the paper provides recommendations for the future application of the SIE framework and the SIP scale.

KEYWORDS

Social impact perception, measurement, events

INTRODUCTION

Community-based festivals and events, are becoming more popular and, subsequently, more numerous. They encompass a diverse range of themes from the specific, food and wine, through to multi-faceted celebrations, such as multicultural festivals. Characteristically, they Originate within the community in response to a need or desire to celebrate their unique identity (Douglas, Douglas, & Derrett, 2001, p. 357). They may be defined as "themed public occasions designed to occur for a limited duration that celebrate valued aspects of a community's way of life" (Douglas et al, 2001, p. 358). They are usually small in scale and

attendance, and represent the point "where community and its outward manifestations of image and identity collide" (Derrett, 2000, p. 120).

Much research has focused on assessing the economic impact or "success" of festivals and events (Burns, Hatch & Mules, 1986; Crompton, Lee, & Shuster, 2001; Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis & Mules, 2000; McCann & Thompson, 1992; Tyrrell & Johnston, 2001), with only limited empirical research on the difficult to measure, yet very important, socio-cultural impacts (Ritchie & Lyons, 1990; Soutar & McLeod, 1993; Mihalik, 2000;

Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Fredline & Faulkner, 2002). This is because “the success of a festival or event is commonly measured in terms of its economic contribution to event stakeholders, the community and the region” (Douglas et al 2001, p.364). Among event organizers and researchers, however, there is growing recognition of the need to measure the socio-cultural impacts of festivals and events as host community dissatisfaction threatens their long-term success even if the event is economically viable.

It has been suggested that it is as a result of the unique interaction between tourists, and a destination area and its population that socio-cultural impacts occur. As festivals and events put the whole destination on display, including its community, it has the very real potential to create socio-cultural impacts. During a festival or event traffic congestion, parking problems, crowding in local shops and overcrowded local facilities can disrupt the lives of locals (Getz, 1997; Delamere, Wankel, & Hinch, 2001; Douglas et al, 2001). Serious social problems, including crime and vandalism, make locals feel vulnerable and promote a growing level of local hostility towards visitors who become symbols of negative change (Delamere et al, 2001; Douglas et al, 2001). These changes to daily life may create challenges to traditional morals and values, leading to loss of identity (Douglas et al, 2001). In terms of negative cultural impacts, festivals and events have the power to destroy cultural heritage by allowing for the commoditisation of culture to meet the needs of an increasing number of visitors (Getz 1997; Douglas et al 2001).

A number of studies (Pizam 1978; Brougham & Butler 1981; Milman & Pizam 1988; Perdue, Long & Allen 1990; Ap 1992; Madrigal 1993; Pizam, Milman & King 1994) have found that it is common that positive perceptions of the impacts of tourism are associated with those who have involvement in a business that directly benefits from tourism. Studies have found varying results regarding the role that proximity to the tourist activity plays in affecting residents' perceptions. Several studies (Pizam 1978; Brougham & Butler 1981) identified that the closer residents live to the tourist activity,

the more negative are their perceptions of the impacts of tourism.

Conversely, other studies (Belisle & Hoy 1980; Sheldon & Var 1984; Keogh 1990) have found that the closer residents live to the tourist activity, the more likely they are to have positive perceptions of the impacts of tourism. Perdue et al (1990) suggest that the closer one lives to the tourist activities, the more likely they are to have strong opinions, whether they are positive or negative. These research findings suggest that the closer a person lives to the tourist activity, the greater they are going to be impacted by it, both positively and negatively. Thus whilst they may receive a greater portion of the positive impacts than those living further away, they will also receive a greater portion of the negative impacts.

The level of contact with tourists is another factor that influences resident perceptions of the impacts of tourism. Pizam (1978) found that a high level of contact with tourists is associated with negative perceptions of the impacts of tourism. In contrast, Rothman (1978) found that a high level of tourist contact results in positive perceptions of the impacts of tourism.

What these opposing findings tell us is that consideration must be given to the type of contact with the tourist, for example, fleeting contact as compared to an in-depth cross-cultural exchange that provides much more positive results for both parties involved. These opposing research findings also indicate that tourism impacts may be community specific, and thus the perceptions of impacts will be unique to individual situations.

Studies of residents' perceptions of the impacts of festivals and events, rather than general tourism development, have found that those members of the resident population, who identify with the theme of the event, are those who are more likely to have positive perceptions of the events impacts, while those residents who participate in an event are more likely to have positive perceptions of the events impacts (Fredline & Faulkner 2002b). Fredline and Faulkner (2002a) found that those who participated in a Motorsports event, either by

attending or watching the coverage on television, had the most positive perceptions of the events impacts.

The support of the local community is then gained by the hosting of a festival or event that has perceived positive socio-cultural impacts for locals. Therefore it becomes important to evaluate an event's perceived socio-cultural impacts, in order to ascertain its overall impact or acceptability, as perceived by members of the local community. The previous discussion has outlined a number of studies of residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism, and the impacts of events. These studies are of value because they illustrate the investigation of community perceptions of impacts, which is typically what is needed for the measurement of socio-cultural impacts, given their difficulty in being quantified to allow for objective measurement. Thus the problem is not that socio-cultural impacts have not been recognised but that measurement of these impacts has been impeded, as they can appear "intangible" and "unmeasurable".

Developing a Socio-Cultural Impact Measurement Framework

Relative to economic and environmental impact management, the challenge of quantifying socio-cultural impacts has delayed the development of readily applicable measurement frameworks. The most comprehensive work to date has come from the field of social research, where social impact assessment is used to anticipate social impacts before they occur.

Social impact assessment is anticipatory research that gathers data on the likely impacts of a number of alternative development options and uses the results to decide on the best alternative to implement (Finsterbusch, Llewellyn, & Wolf, 1983). The focus is on proactive assessment, in order to determine the likelihood of a projected set of impacts occurring from a range of alternative proposals. Social impact assessment is therefore suited to situations in which a number of alternative development proposals need to be assessed for their feasibility, in order to decide upon the best one to be implemented.

In the case of a tourism event, it would be ideal for organizers to select the most appropriate festival from a range of alternative event proposals following a social impact assessment. However, small communities typically have neither the time nor the resources to conduct feasibility studies on a number of different event proposals. More commonly the ideas for community festivals and events are generated either by an individual, or a group from within the community itself, who have identified a concept for a festival that is inherently suited to its community, encompassing specific values they wish to display. Thus, there is no range of alternative festival ideas to assess, but rather one idea that has been developed and is agreed upon for the community to host. Social impact assessment in such cases is resource intensive, time consuming, and inappropriate. What is really required is a flexible but logical framework that incorporates practical tools for evaluating the socio-cultural impacts of the event so that valuable feedback can be input into the organization of the future festivals and events.

An alternative approach to pre-event impact projection, is to "learn from mistakes" and document the socio-cultural impacts during and post the event. Retrospective studies serve to clarify what has already happened and help impact projection for the future. These studies combine hindsight (post-event analysis and conclusions), experience (lessons learned) and understanding (association of an event to specific impacts). Importantly, they identify what happened and document how change takes place (Barrow, 2000) so that impact measurement and management can continue over time.

The retrospective evaluation of festivals and events can play an important role reporting on the impacts, both positive and negative, and their relative importance to the host community. Such information promotes deeper understanding of issues concerning the community by event organisers and assists organisers to develop future strategies to maximise the positive impacts, and minimise the negative impacts of the future festival or event.

The following section describes the framework that was used to evaluate the socio-cultural impacts of a small community festival, the Australian Festival of the Book, in the Southern Highlands, New South Wales, Australia.

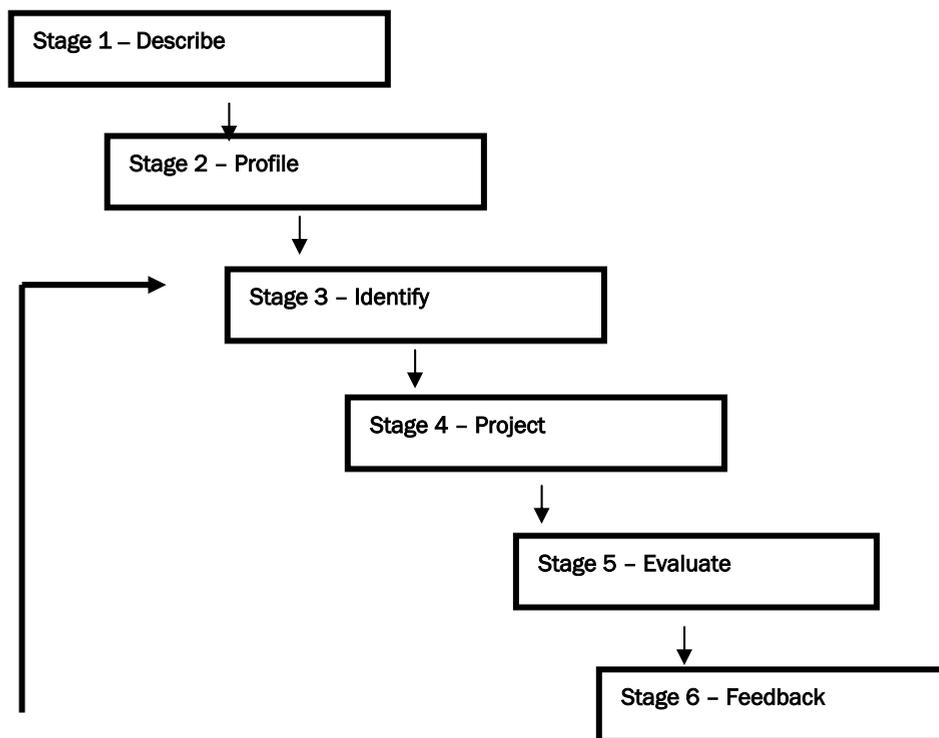
Developing a Social Impact Evaluation Framework

Figure 1 presents a framework that was adapted from traditional social impact assessment models by Finsterbusch et al (1983), Wildman and Baker (1985), Thomas (1998), Burdge (1999), Barrow (2000), and Thomas (2001) for the evaluation of socio-cultural impacts of a festival or event. The resulting six stages in the Social Impact Evaluation (SIE) framework were selected according to their appropriateness to the evaluation of the socio-cultural impacts of a small community festival. The

framework incorporates six stages: describe, profile, identify, project, evaluate and feedback. Stages one to three of the framework contribute to building a holistic 'picture' of the festival or event while stages four and five specifically measure the impacts that may arise from the staging of the festival or event. (SIE) framework were selected according to their appropriateness to the evaluation of the socio-cultural impacts of a small community festival. The framework incorporates six stages: describe, profile, identify, project, evaluate and feedback.

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FIGURE 1. SOCIAL IMPACT EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



Each stage of the framework is described below.

1. **Describe**
Describe the festival or events characteristics including type; activities offered; location and time; physical layout; geographic setting; and details of the festival and events organisation and funding structures.
2. **Profile**
The second stage is to produce a destination profile for the event host community. This should include a profile of the destination itself, as well as the characteristics of the sub-groups of local residents most likely to be affected by the festival.
3. **Identify**
Identify the range of potential socio-cultural impacts likely to occur as a result of the festival being held, using any combination of methods including brainstorming by a panel of experts, interviews with industry and community representatives and desk research of existing impact literature.
4. **Project**
The fourth stage is to project the socio-cultural impacts that are likely to occur from hosting of the festival. Just as in the social impact assessment process, the projections are made before the festival is held, and represent the pre-festival perceptions of community members.
5. **Evaluate**
Evaluation of the perceived socio-cultural impacts of the festival is carried out after the festival has taken place. It aims to determine the overall "impact", or acceptability, of the festival in the eyes of the host community. Evaluation requires thorough data collection and analysis in order to make conclusions on the perceived positive and negative socio-cultural impacts of the festival.
6. **Feedback**
Findings are communicated to event organisers and stakeholders. This is an opportunity to develop future strategies that can capitalise on positive impacts, and ameliorate negative impacts.

In order to achieve stages four and five and to measure the socio-cultural impacts of festivals and events, a Social Impact Perception (SIP) scale was developed.

Developing the Social Impact Perception Scale

While there are some well-known tourism impact scales, such as Lankford and Howard (1994) and Ap and Crompton (1998), few aim to measure the impact of festivals and events. Given that socio-cultural impacts are often difficult to measure objectively since they cannot be easily quantified, such impacts are being examined through the investigation of residents' perceptions of these impacts (Fredline, Jago & Deery 2003). In particular the work of Delamere, Wankel and Hinch (2001) and Fredline, Jago and Deery (2003) have been vital to opening up this field of study. Alternatively, valuable tools have been developed in the field of environmental impact management by respected authors such as Green, Hunter and Moore (1990).

Research by Delamere, Wankel and Hinch (2001) built upon existing tourism impacts research to develop a scale of social impacts specifically related to festivals. The scale was developed using a Nominal Group Technique (NGT) procedure, which allowed for the initial generation of potential social impacts of community festivals. This list was supplemented by impacts identified through a review of relevant tourism impacts literature, and was finally reviewed by an expert panel, who made some further additions. The Festival Social Impact Attitude Scale (FSIAS) consists of 47 items in two categories of social costs and social benefits. The scale recognises the social impacts of festivals separate from the social impacts of general tourism development, and in doing so, it provides greater value to festival researchers than generic tourism impact scales.

Fredline et al (2003) developed an instrument based on Fredline (2000) to compare the social impacts of three medium to large-scale events. This study was undertaken with the aim of testing and validating "an instrument that can be used to compare the social impacts of a variety of events" (Fredline et al 2003, p. 23).

Fredline et al (2003) developed an instrument to be used in assessing the social impacts of events. Comprised of 45 impact statements, the instrument consists of 3 parts measuring 1) the overall impacts of the event, 2) the specific impacts of the event, and 3) the independent variables (including contact with tourists, participation, identification with the theme etc.). To measure the specific impacts of an event they use a three-part scale. First, respondents are asked “to assess whether they believe the item has changed because of the event and to identify the direction of the change” (Fredline et al 2003, p.29). If they perceive a change, they are then asked to assess how it has affected both their personal quality of life and their community as a whole. Responses are rated on a likert type scale ranging from -3 (very negative impact) to +3 (very positive impact). This scale provides a valuable tool for the measurement of socio-cultural impacts of festival and events, and has been used in the development of the scale for the purpose of this research.

The SIP scale strives to be the next step along the path to event impact management by integrating tools from the established field of environmental impact measurement and the newly emerging social impact measurement of festivals and events. The SIP scale is designed to help project and then evaluate the socio-cultural impacts of a festival.

The scale was principally adapted from Green et al (1990) who used a simple, yet effective, method to assess the environmental impacts of tourism. They developed a comprehensive questionnaire encompassing a wide range of potential environmental impacts that were likely to occur as a result of a tourism development. Firstly, respondents could comment on whether or not they perceive an impact to have occurred. Secondly, they could categorise the impact as being positive or negative in nature. Thirdly, respondents were given a scale on which they could represent the level of the impact.

Their approach was used to guide the development of the SIP scale, as it provided a useful format for gaining three types of information from respondents; did they perceive the impact to have occurred, did they perceive the impact to be positive or negative and their perceived rating of the impact. That is, on one level, respondents could comment (either Yes or No) on whether or not they perceived that the stated impact had occurred and was attributed to the festival. They could then categorise the impact as being positive or negative. Thirdly, respondents were asked to indicate the extent of the impact along the scale provided, with “little impact” as one anchor, and “great impact” as the other anchor, but no specified values in between. Figure 2 displays the social impact perception scale developed for this study.

FIGURE 2. SOCIAL IMPACT PERCEPTION SCALE (SIP)

Impact Statement	Impact			Level of Impact										
	Y	N	DON'T KNOW	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
The footpaths and streets were crowded during the festival														

While the SIP scale mimics the rating system of Green et al (1990), important modifications were made, not the least of which was replacing environmental impacts with pertinent socio-cultural impacts. The addition of a "Don't Know" response category was considered an important option for those who were undecided as to whether or not the impact had occurred, as potentially significant research findings could stem from investigating why some respondents were unable to comment on certain impacts. Finally, the "little impact/great impact" scale was replaced with a quantitative Likert-type scale. This allows respondents to indicate the extent of the impact along a five part directional scale, which ranges from negative five to positive five, with zero as the midpoint representing "no impact", one representing a "very small impact", two representing a "small impact", three representing a "moderate impact", four representing a "large impact", and five representing a "very large impact". Values on the negative side of the scale represent varying levels of negative impacts, while values on the positive side represent varying levels of positive impacts.

As the SIP scale was developed using an environmental impact framework, it has a different approach to previously developed models for event impact management. To demonstrate the potential value of the SIP scale, it is important to critique it within the area of event impact management.

The FSIAS developed by Delamere et al (2001) to measure and interpret resident perceptions of social impacts of community-based festivals asked residents to rate whether or not they believe the specified impacts would occur (projection), and the level of importance, or value, they places on these impacts. They used a 1 to 5 Likert rating scale where projected impacts are ranked from 1 "Not at all" to 5 "A great deal" and the level of importance was ranked from 1 "Completely unimportant to me" to 5 "Very important to me".

The FSIAS provides insight into what impacts respondents expect will result from their festival and which of these are important to them, but says

nothing about the type of impact this will have on them. The SIP scale asks respondents will the impact be a positive or a negative impact, and at what level will this impact occur? Will it have a very small impact or a very large impact? Delamere et al (2001) determines if an impact exists and its level of relative importance. The SIP scale develops this further to provide data on the nature (positive or negative) of the impact and its level of impact (rather than importance) to the respondent.

Both Fredline et al (2003) and the SIP scale ask respondents to state if an impact has occurred and rank the level of the impact on a Likert scale, so conceptual similarities exist. Fredline et al (2003) ask respondents whether they believe the impact item has changed as a result of the event, and to identify the direction of the change (increase, decrease, no change, or don't know). If they perceive a change (an increase or decrease), they are then asked to assess how it has affected both their personal quality of life and their community as a whole. Responses for both the personal and community ratings use a 3-point Likert scale ranging from -3 "Very negative impact" to +3 "Very positive impact". However, the use of scales with fewer values violates normality assumptions, and the more likely, the departure from the postulation of nominal distribution required for many tests (Garson, 2004).

The SIP scale addresses this issue with a 5-point likert scale ranging from -5 to +5 which helps to separate the data, facilitate observations of patterns within the negative and positive rankings and to enable the data to undergo higher order analysis.

Moreover, the Fredline et al (2003) scale only allows those respondents who agreed that an impact occurred, to rate that impact. The SIP scale however allows all respondents to rate the nature and level of the impact, regardless of whether they perceive the impact to not have occurred. This is important as the perception that an impact hadn't occurred may have a positive or negative impact in itself.

The final difference between the SIP scale and that of FSIAS or Fredline et al (2003) is that it sits within a framework, SIE, which means it is applied both in the projection stage to access pre-festival expectations, and in the evaluation stage to access post-festival perceptions. FSIAS is only pre-event assessment while Fredline et al (2003) is only post-event evaluation. The SIP scale provides a greater amount of information to festival organizers as it traces a process and replaces expectations or fallacies with empirical data that can actually help with the future planning of the event.

SIE and the SIP Scale in the Real World: A Pilot Study

The SIE and SIP scale were piloted in a study of socio-cultural impacts of a small community festival, the Australian Festival of the Book, 2002 held in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, Australia (see Small and Edwards, 2003 for

further details). The SIE was the process framework while the SIP scale was used to undertake the fourth and fifth stages in the SIE, to project and evaluate the socio-cultural impacts of the festival.

In accordance with the SIE framework, the researchers "described" and "profiled" the Australian Festival of the Book. In Stage Three, identifying potential socio-cultural impacts, members of the festival organising committee were asked to give their views on what they perceived to be the likely positive and negative socio-cultural impacts that would occur as a result of staging a festival. This group was chosen given the likelihood that they would provide insight into more impacts that specifically related to their community and festival, than those identified in the literature. These responses were incorporated with socio-cultural impacts identified from a literature review and separated into five categories of socio-cultural impacts. A full list of items can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1. IDENTIFIED ITEMS FOR THE SIP SCALE

1. Community impacts	2. Leisure/recreation impacts
Crowded footpaths and streets	▪ Increased entertainment opportunities
▪ Difficulty finding car parking	▪ Increased future use of existing recreational and leisure facilities
▪ Traffic congestion	3. Infrastructure impacts
▪ Crowding in local shops and facilities	▪ Restoration of existing public buildings
▪ Public transport services congested	▪ Public facilities will be maintained at a high standard
▪ Noise pollution	4 Health and safety impacts
▪ Increased range of goods and services	▪ Increased police presence
▪ Increased price of goods and services	▪ Increased crime and vandalism
▪ Increased job opportunities	5. Cultural impacts
▪ Increased business opportunities	▪ Impacts on local character of the community
▪ Increased local pride	▪ Impacts on the region's cultural identity
	▪ Increased local interest in the region's culture and history
	▪ Increased local awareness of the cultural activities available
	▪ Interaction with visitors offers an educational experience

Stage Four "Project" and Stage Five "Evaluate", of the SIE framework, were implemented using the SIP scale and facilitated by the Delphi technique, a tool designed to draw out wider community perceptions by surveying a smaller panel of expert members of the community. In this case, 32 stakeholders from the wider community (including tourism, government, and business) participated in three applications of the SIP scale. This enabled pre-festival "projection" and the post-festival "evaluation". From this procedure, the SIP scale produced quantifiable data that numerically reflects trends in community opinion that could be statistically analysed, in this case using SPSS.

Conclusion of Pilot

A full discussion of the results can be found in Small and Edwards (2003). The practical application of the SIE and the SIP scale demonstrate that care should be taken when making statements about socio-cultural impacts arising from festivals and events. For example, if a respondent says increasing traffic is important to them, then that is all we know. We are none the wiser as to what sort of perceived impact this will have on them and we can not assume that this impact is negative. This is evidenced by Small and Edwards (2003) who found that prior to the festival, respondents rated the non-occurrence of impacts such as increased traffic and crowding in local shops, as a positive impact however, when increased traffic and crowding in shops was perceived not to have occurred they were rated as negative impacts. In other words, those impacts respondents thought they'd be happy about not having, were actually those that they would liked to have seen occur. For a more detailed account of findings please see Small and Edwards (2003).

The example above demonstrates that we need to move beyond assumptions when making statements about socio-cultural impacts arising from festivals and events. Organisers need to know what sort of impacts the event will have on people, so they know whether to maximise or minimise those impacts in the planning of future festivals and events. The SIP scale makes a formative argument for tools that distinguish the socio-cultural impacts of festivals and events from other social change.

The Future for the SIE Framework and the SIP Scale

The Australian Festival of the Book highlighted that the SIP scale provided useful information for festival organisers, given that the scale accesses not only respondents' perceptions of impact occurrence, but also information regarding the type and level of impact this has on them. It would be useful to undertake a longitudinal study to see how event organizers incorporate feedback from SIP into event planning processes. By undertaking a longitudinal study on the same festival changes in socio-cultural impacts can be chartered over time to measure changes in resident perceptions. At this point in its application, the SIE framework and the SIP scale were found to be useful to festival organisers who want to know what sort of impacts the festival will have on people (project), so they know whether to maximise or minimise specific impacts in the planning of future festivals and events.

The rigor, flexibility and applicability of the SIE framework should be tested in further conceptual and empirical research. Ideally tourism researchers will apply the SIE framework and the SIP scale to a broad range of festivals and events so research on measuring socio-cultural impacts can be advanced. The SIP scale establishes the perceived value of socio-cultural impacts in communities and these findings can inform policy making regarding the type of event most likely to enhance the socio-cultural quality of communities.

The application of the SIE framework and the SIP scale to the Australian Festival of the Book was the initial pilot study for the socio-cultural impact measurement tools. The SIP scale and SIE framework will be further developed and tested in future research by the authors but other researchers are invited to use this tool, however, we would not expect the SIP scale impact statements to be generic to other festivals and events. On the contrary, it is hoped the SIE process coupled with the SIP scale will be flexible and allow researchers to apply the principles in their particular area of research.

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