

**Residents' expectations and perceptions
of the social impacts of community festivals**

Katie Small
PhD candidate, University of Western Sydney

and

Dr Deborah Edwards
Senior Research Fellow, University of Technology, Sydney

Contact details:

Katie Small

98 Staples Street

Kingsgrove

NSW

Australia

2208

Phone: +61 2 4620 3281

Fax: +61 2 4620 3799

Email: k.small@uws.edu.au

ABSTRACT

People are social beings and require agreeable engagements with others to flourish (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Festivals provide people with an opportunity for participation in social activities and engagement with others within a positive environment. Subsequently, staging festivals that meet the social needs of the community can satisfy these aspirations. However previous research by Small and Edwards (2003) has demonstrated that not all positive impacts are perceived positively or all negative impacts perceived negatively by the host community. They also found that not all expected negative and positive impacts actually occur during the staging of a festival.

To further understand this issue, a study was undertaken on two Australian community based festivals, one in Western Australia, and one in Victoria, which asked residents whether their expectations had been met on a range of social impacts. Preliminary findings indicate that whilst many negative expectations were met, respondents were prepared to tolerate those negative impacts in exchange for the positive benefits the festival would have on the community. It was also found that festivals can both build and diminish social capital within communities. This paper reports on these findings and identifies implications for the management and development of festivals.

Keywords: Community festivals, social impacts, residents' perceptions, expectations

INTRODUCTION

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005) in order for people to maintain their wellbeing they must become involved in transactions with others, because transactions between community members are the point at which social capital can be built or diminished. "Individual wellbeing, and the wellbeing of society, are intrinsically affected by this network and the interactions that take place within it" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005: 1). For example a transaction that increases goodwill between people and builds social capital is voluntary work. A transaction that depletes trust and diminishes social capital is crime. As social capital can be accumulated or diminished, when people interact with each other the stock of social capital will change (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Thus the wider community can be subject to low or high levels of wellbeing. 'The wider community encompasses transactions and social exchanges which people undertake beyond their immediate circle of family and friends' and what constitutes the wider community for the individual is determined by the key functions performed by individuals or other people and organisations.

One key function of the wider community is to provide a social and communication network that joins the individual to others with leisure activities, seen as important in achieving more general wellbeing outcomes (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Community festivals, defined as "themed public occasions designed to occur for a limited duration that celebrate valued aspects of a community's way of life" (Douglas, Douglas and Derrett, 2001: 358) are one function that provide opportunities for social exchanges between people. Community-based festivals and events characteristically originate from within the community, in response to a need or desire to celebrate their unique identity (Douglas et al., 2001). Community festivals enable individuals and groups to participate in the community and with each other through volunteering, leisure activities, and opportunities for social transactions. Such factors can be difficult to measure but are important precursors to wellbeing at a societal level. Also important are the type, quality and quantity of interactions that take place between community members, both as individuals and as groups.

Social impacts can be thought of as impacts on the day-to-day quality of life of local residents, changes to their lifestyle, values, social interactions, and identity (Glasson, Godfrey and Goodey, 1995). In small communities, local residents play an important role in the staging of festivals, often taking on roles of both host and participant. The hosting of a festival provides opportunities for a wide range of positive social impacts on residents of the host community including economic resurgence, community and cultural development, strengthening and maintaining a destinations unique brand, cultural exchange, positive environmental outcomes, and the building of friendships and business contacts (Presbury and Edwards, 2005; Small and Edwards, 2003).

Festivals and events can also impact negatively upon a community if they are not planned and managed correctly. Traffic congestion, parking problems, crowding in local shops, and overcrowded local facilities represent negative social impacts that serve to disrupt the lives of locals for the duration of the festival or event (Small and Edwards, 2003; Getz, 1997; Delamere, Wankel and Hinch, 2001; Douglas et al., 2001). While social problems which occur as a consequence of the festival or event, such as crime and vandalism, represent decreasing levels of safety for the host community, and can result in a growing level of local hostility towards festival and event visitors and negativity towards the festival or event (Delamere et al., 2001; Douglas et al., 2001).

A growing awareness of these impacts has led to the measurement of social impacts that festivals and events may have on their host communities. Understanding the range of social impacts experienced by the host community can be important in determining the contribution that the festival or event makes to the wellbeing of the community and the subsequent level of support the festival receives from the resident population. A lack of consideration given to the social impacts of a festival can result in a dissatisfied local community, which will threaten the long-term success of the event, even if the event is economically viable.

A study of residents' perceptions of the social impacts arising from a festival is particularly appropriate given that social impacts are often difficult to measure objectively, since they cannot easily be quantified (Fredline, Jago, and Deery, 2002). The process of measuring social impacts involves making value judgments therefore it becomes important to evaluate a festival's perceived social impacts, from the perspective of the local community.

In a previous study Small and Edwards (2003) found that it was not only residents' perceptions of the social impacts that occurred which provides useful information but also knowledge of their pre-festival expectations of social impacts. Identification of differences between expectations and perceived actual impacts provide added insight into the community's level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the festival.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. Firstly, it presents the initial results from a wider study designed to understand residents' expectations and perceptions of the social impacts that two Australian community based festivals have on their community. Secondly, the paper reports on the ways in which festivals can contribute to the building of social capital within communities. Thirdly, this paper identifies the implications of these findings for the management and development of festivals.

METHODOLOGY

Festival case studies

This research employed a case study approach to examine the social impacts of two Australian community based festivals in Western Australia (A) and Victoria (B). The festivals were chosen for their similarity in festival size, community size, attendance, duration, and theme (see Table 1). It was important that the festivals be comparable as an aim of this study was to aggregate the responses in order to conduct data analysis.

Table 1
 Festival Profiles

CHARACTERISTICS	Festival A	Festival B
Location	Western Australia	Victoria
Theme	Blues music	Contemporary Australian music
Duration	3 days	3 days
Number of years running	14 th year 2006	10 th year 2006
Local population	Approx. 4,000.	Approx. 3,200
Visitor numbers	3,000 tickets sold and 10-15,000 for the free 1-day street party.	Approx. 8-10,000 over the weekend.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire used in this research consists of 5 sections which sought both qualitative and quantitative responses designed to measure residents' perceptions of the social impacts arising from community held festivals and events. Items for the questionnaire were drawn from several instruments in the field of event impact studies, in particular from previous research by Small and Edwards (2003) and Fredline (2000).

Section one asked a series of open ended questions that sought to find out residents' initial expectations and general perceptions regarding the social impacts of their festival. Respondents were asked to comment on what they *expected* the positive and negative social impacts of the festival to be. They were then asked if they *perceived* these positive and negative social impacts to have occurred as a result of the festival. Section two asked respondents to give their opinions on 41 social impact statements using the Social Impact Perception scale (SIP) developed by Small and Edwards (2003). Factor analysis was applied to the SIP scale, in order to identify the underlying dimensions of social impacts as perceived by the host community. The results of this analysis have been reported in Small (2006). Section three seeks respondents views on a range of factors including their length of attachment to an area, their economic dependence on the festival, their attitudes towards the festival, and whether they attended or not. These 'clustering variables' are used to group similar members of the community together. Section four asked for basic demographic and background information about the respondents and section five was for respondents to make any additional comments about the festival and its social impacts on the host community.

This paper will present the results of section one of the questionnaire, providing an analysis of residents' expectations and perceptions of the social impacts of community festivals.

Administration and response

The social impact questionnaire was sent to local residents within each of the two communities being studied. The sampling frames in each community were used to identify residential households, which were targeted as a way of accessing individual residents. Selecting all residential listings from each sampling frame in each community, 1,509 and 1,098 survey packets were distributed to households in community A and community B respectively. Within each survey packet there were two copies of the questionnaire and two reply paid envelopes, which allowed for more than one person within each household to respond, where applicable. This measure was taken in an effort to increase the response rate. A cross-sectional design was implemented, gathering data from residents at one point in time, approximately two weeks after the staging of each festival.

From a total of 3018 questionnaires (1509 survey packets) sent out in community A, and 2196 questionnaires (1098 survey packets) sent out in community B, 257 and 287 useable responses were received respectively. These figures represent response rates of approximately 8.5% in community A and 13% in community B. The responses from each community were aggregated, making the total number of useable responses 544.

Data analysis

Nvivo qualitative software was used to analyse the open-ended responses. Expected impacts were first coded according to the 41 social impact statements from the SIP scale. These statements were used as a guide to the classification of social impacts, both positive and negative. Those impacts expected by respondents which didn't match up with any of the existing impacts from the SIP scale, were coded as 'community identified' impacts. The perceptions data were coded according to whether or not the respondent's expectations had been met. Response categories included, 'perceived the impact to have occurred', 'did not perceive the impact to have occurred' and 'don't know'. As some respondents felt the need to qualify their responses, and this qualification became important to making sense of the data, two additional categories were included: 'perceived the impact to have occurred with qualification', and 'did not perceive the impact to have occurred with qualification'.

The social impact statements were then categorised into the six underlying dimensions of social impacts, as identified in Small (2006). The six dimensions are inconvenience, community identity and cohesion, personal disruption, socialisation and entertainment opportunities, community growth and development, and behavioural consequences. The authors found that all the impacts, including the 'community identified' impacts, were able to be organised around the six underlying dimensions of social impacts.

RESULTS

Of the respondents who chose to answer the demographic questions, 56% were female and 44% were male. Approximately 46% of respondents attended the festival, 10% were volunteers at the festival, 5% were working, 30% didn't attend the festival, and 9% of respondents left town for the weekend. A large proportion of respondents (44%) said they 'love' the festival, 31% said they tolerate the festival, and 25% either said they dislike the festival, stay away during the festival, or adjust

their lifestyle because of the festival. These results suggest two things first, that it is not just those residents who attended the festival or remained in town for the festival weekend who responded to the questionnaire. Second, those residents who didn't attend the festival or left town for the weekend have also provided a response. This indicates that the data reflects the opinions of a cross-section of local residents with different attitudes and behaviours regarding the festival.

The following section presents the results of the open-ended questions on the expectations and perceptions of the social impacts of community festivals. Respondents were first asked what they *expected* the positive and negative social impacts of the festival to be. Respondents were then asked to answer, in their opinion, had these expected social impacts actually occurred as a result of the festival.

Residents' expectations and perceptions of positive social impacts

In all 523 people, representing 96% of the total sample, responded to the question asking them to state what they expected the positive social impacts of the festival to be. Respondents mentioned 30 positive social impacts, a total of 1,013 times. 27 respondents said they expected there to be no positive impacts and 16 respondents had no expectations at all.

Of the 30 positive social impacts, 17 matched up with the positive social impact statements featured in the SIP scale, and there were also 13 'community identified' impacts. All positive social impacts could be grouped under three dimensions of social impacts, as identified in Small (2006); community growth and development, entertainment and socialisation opportunities, and community identity and social cohesion. The dimensions and positive social impacts are presented in Table 2. The first two columns show for each positive social impact, the percentage of the sample that expected the impact to occur.

Table 2
 Positive Social Impacts

POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS	Expected Impacts as a % of respondents	Perceived Impacts as a % of those who expected the impact to occur				
		Yes	No	Qualified Yes	Qualified No	Don't Know
<u>Community Growth and Development</u>						
Impacts on local trade	30%	78%	6%	11%	-	5%
*Raises the profile of the town	21%	92%	-	3%	2%	3%
*Money to the community	19%	88%	3%	6%	-	3%
*Tourism	9%	85%	-	13%	-	2%
Fundraising opportunities	5%	92%	8%	-	-	-
Community groups work together	4%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Encourages people to move here	4%	95%	-	-	-	5%
*Encourages music interest and skills	4%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Good for the town	4%	85%	5%	-	5%	5%
Display musical talents	3%	80%	13%	-	-	7%
Job opportunities	2%	70%	10%	10%	-	10%
*Improvements to infrastructure	1%	80%	20%	-	-	-
Develop new skills	1%	100%	-	-	-	-
<u>Entertainment and Socialisation Opportunities</u>						
Entertainment opportunities	15%	93%	-	6%	1%	-
Opportunities for social interaction	14%	89%	4%	3%	-	4%
*A good time	13%	88%	8%	-	-	4%
More visitors to the community	11%	96%	2%	-	-	2%
*Brings a small town alive	7%	84%	8%	8%	-	-
Meet new people	5%	83%	13%	-	-	4%
Shared family experiences	3%	60%	20%	13%	-	7%
*A diverse range of visitors attend	3%	82%	6%	-	6%	6%
Host family and friends	2%	100%	-	-	-	-
*The free street party	1%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Youth related impacts	4%	76%	6%	6%	-	12%

Community Identity and Cohesion

Togetherness within the community	6%	85%	-	9%	3%	3%
Community ownership of the festival	4%	95%	-	5%	-	-
*Community spirit	3%	94%	-	-	6%	-
Positive cultural impact	2%	80%	-	10%	10%	-
Increased pride in the town	2%	90%	-	-	-	10%
Enhanced community identity	1%	100%	-	-	-	-

There were 13 positive social impacts which grouped under the dimension of community growth and development. These include wider social benefits to the town and its residents provided by the festival, such as fundraising opportunities, money to the town, a raised profile for the town, the chance to display musical talents, and develop new skills. The most common positive social impact expected by 30% of respondents in this category, was related to positive impacts on local trade. But the way in which local trade would be affected was perceived differently by respondents. For example, some respondents identified an immediate impact on local trade during the festival weekend, referring to it as *“a ‘golden’ weekend for traders”* and *“the biggest weekend for the local accommodation, pubs, cafes and restaurants”*, while others referred to the long term effect of increased trade over the festival weekend, which *“increases the viability of the town’s businesses for the whole year”*. Respondents (21%) also had high expectations for the role that the festival would play in helping to raise the profile of the town. Comments included, *“it puts our town on the map”*, *“good publicity, greater awareness of the town”*, and *“plenty of visitors to town making it more well known in the state and country”*.

In all 11 positive social impacts grouped under the dimension of entertainment and socialisation opportunities. Entertainment opportunities were expected to be provided by 15% of respondents. Respondents expected that by staging a festival in their community, they were given the *“opportunity to attend live performances in our own town”*, and that the festival served to *“give locals some entertainment”*. Other impacts in this category include those related to meeting new people and opportunities for social interaction, which would result from having an increased number and greater diversity of visitors in the town. Respondents also expected to be able to share time with their families, and to host family and friends, believing that the festival *“provides a magnet that brings groups of friends/family of residents to town”*.

There were six impacts expected by respondents which grouped under the dimension of community identity and cohesion. These are impacts resulting from the festival that allow community members to feel a sense of identity and connectedness, and include feelings of togetherness, community spirit, enhanced community identity, and pride in the town. Togetherness within the community was expected by 6% of respondents as a result of hosting of the festival, with respondents noting that the festival *“brings a lot of community members together”*, *“unites the town in a combined positive effort”*, and *“brings the community together as a community event”*. A sense of community ownership of the festival was expected by 4% of respondents in particular in relation to those who volunteer at the festival. Respondent quotes

included *“there is a heck of a lot of residents doing volunteer work for the festival, over the weekend and leading up to it and this creates a sense of being part of it”*, and *“the volunteer base is strong, they are all positive and have a sense of ownership of the festival”*.

In addition to residents' expectations for social impacts, they were also asked to answer whether they perceived the expected social impacts to have occurred as a result of the festival. Respondents' perceptions as to whether the positive social impacts occurred are presented in columns three to seven of Table 2, as a percentage of those respondents who expected the impact to occur. The two columns headed 'yes' and 'no' represent the respondents who perceive the expected impacts to have occurred, and those who perceive the impact to have *not* occurred, respectively. The responses indicate that the majority of residents' expectations for positive social impacts were met. That is, they mostly perceived the expected positive impacts to have occurred as a result of the festival.

The two columns headed 'qualified yes' and 'qualified no' represent those respondents who felt they needed to qualify their responses. These responses represent further insights into residents' perceptions regarding the positive social impacts of festivals. Respondents who provided a 'qualified yes' felt that in many cases not only had the expected impact occurred, but it had *‘even exceeded expectations!’*. Conversely, there were other impacts which respondents said that although the expected positives occurred, they were at levels less than expected, for example, *“not as much as the town hoped”*. There were also a number of respondents who recognised that the expected positive impacts occurred, but qualified the response with a negative impact. Quotes from respondents included *“yes, however the event has grown to become a monster”* and *“yes, however reported drunken youths in the street are a concern”*.

Those who provided a 'qualified no' were communicating that not only did they perceive the expected positives to have *not* occurred, but in fact, they see the impacts of the festival as being *“more negative than positive”*. A quote from one respondent illustrates this sentiment: *“No. I believe the whole scale of the festival is such that it overwhelms the local community. The anti-social behaviour of the type of visitor attracted creates real problems”*.

Residents' expectations and perceptions of negative social impacts

In all 507 people, representing 93% of the total sample, responded to the question which asked them to state what they expected the negative social impacts of the festival to be. In total, there were 41 negative social impacts mentioned by respondents, a total of 1,205 times. 57 respondents said they expected there to be no negative impacts as a result of the staging of the festival, and 14 people had no expectations at all.

Of the 41 negative social impacts, 20 matched up with the negative social impact statements featured in the SIP scale, and there were also 21 'community identified' social impacts. All negative social impacts could be grouped under the six dimensions of social impacts, as identified by Small (2006). The dimensions and negative social impacts are presented in Table 3. The first two columns show for each negative social impact, the percentage of the sample that expected the impact to occur.

Table 3
 Negative Social Impacts

NEGATIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS	Expected Impacts as a % of respondents	Perceived Impacts as a % of those who expected the impact to occur				
		Yes	No	Qualified Yes	Qualified No	Don't Know
<u>Behavioural Consequences</u>						
*Drinking and its impacts	26%	45%	14%	27%	12%	2%
Delinquent behaviour	17%	41%	16%	41%	2%	-
Vandalism increased	14%	43%	18%	36%	3%	-
Underage drinking	11%	75%	2%	21%	2%	-
Crime increased	9%	25%	39%	23%	9%	4%
*The types of visitors attracted	7%	42%	17%	28%	11%	2%
Increased use of prohibited substances	6%	52%	19%	13%	6%	10%
*Youth related impacts	6%	90%	3%	-	-	7%
*Violence	5%	23%	36%	18%	14%	9%
*Decreased road safety	2%	90%	10%	-	-	-
Lacking police presence	1%	75%	25%	-	-	-
*Bad language	1%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Locals frightened	1%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Family atmosphere reduced	1%	25%	50%	25%	-	-
<u>Personal Frustration</u>						
Disruption to normal routines	7%	76%	5%	16%	-	3%
Frustration with visitors	5%	75%	13%	4%	4%	4%
*Reduced access for locals	5%	83%	-	17%	-	-
More visitors to the community	3%	75%	17%	8%	-	-
*Impacts on older residents	3%	100%	-	-	-	-
Locals take second place to visitors	2%	100%	-	-	-	-
Locals avoided the festival	2%	63%	13%	24%	-	-
*Frustration with visitor attitudes	2%	88%	-	12%	-	-
*People sleeping everywhere	1%	100%	-	-	-	-

<u>Inconvenience</u>						
Increased noise levels	28%	63%	6%	28%	1%	2%
Increased litter	21%	61%	2%	33%	3%	1%
Increased traffic	15%	61%	8%	30%	-	1%
Difficulty finding parking	9%	74%	2%	24%	-	-
Crowded streets	8%	70%	-	25%	-	5%
Road closures	4%	68%	5%	27%	-	-
Crowding in local facilities	2%	55%	18%	27%	-	-
<u>Community Identity and Cohesion - Negative</u>						
*Negative residents	4%	72%	22%	6%	-	-
*Dissatisfaction with the festivals' organisation	2%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Inappropriate sponsors	2%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Divides the community	1%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Worn out volunteers	1%	83%	-	17%	-	-
<u>Community Growth and Development - Negative</u>						
Impacts on local trade	3%	92%	-	-	-	8%
*Strain on local resources	2%	71%	-	29%	-	-
Increased price of goods and services	1%	100%	-	-	-	-
*Tourism	1%	50%	-	50%	-	-
<u>Entertainment and Socialisation Opportunities - Negative</u>						
*Decline in free street entertainment	1%	50%	50%	-	-	-
*That costs prohibit attendance	1%	100%	-	-	-	-

Grouped under the dimension of behavioural consequences, residents expected 14 negative social impacts. The negative behavioural consequences that residents expected to result from the hosting of the festival, included drinking and its impacts, delinquent behaviour, vandalism, underage drinking and crime, particularly in relation to youth. Of these, the most common negative social impact expected by 26% of respondents was related to drinking and its impacts. Respondents showed concern about *"excessive drinking of alcohol in streets, parks and on beaches"* and *"the small minority who over indulge in alcohol then create nuisance and damage"*. Another 17% of respondents expected there to be cases of *"delinquent behaviour"* or *"anti-social behaviour"*.

There were nine negative social impacts expected by respondents which grouped under the dimension of personal frustration. These include impacts that personally affect local residents, in particular, relating to their feelings of frustration and disruption caused by having more visitors in their community. Respondents expected the festival to cause disruption to their normal routines stating that *"the town is too busy for locals to do what they normally do"*, the festival *"interferes with*

the normal activities of residents”, and “our normal day-to-day lives and routines are disrupted”.

Seven negative social impacts expected by respondents grouped under the dimension of inconvenience. Respondents expected an increase in noise, an increase in traffic, difficulties in finding car parking, having roads closed, and having crowded streets and facilities. An increase in noise was expected by 28% of respondents who stated “extreme loud noise”, “the noise after midnight”, and “crowds of noisy people, noisier ‘instruments’ (so called music!)” were negative impacts. Approximately 21% of respondents expected increased litter to occur as a result of the staging of the festival. In general, they were concerned about “mess and litter in parks and streets” and “loads of rubbish, empty bottles, cans etc”.

There were a further 11 impacts which grouped under the dimensions of community identity and cohesion, community growth and development, and entertainment and socialisation opportunities. The data suggests that these dimensions have both positive and negative qualities. That is, there are impacts that can diminish, or have negative impacts on the areas of identity and cohesion, community growth and development, and entertainment and socialisation opportunities. For example, having residents who are negative about the festival, inappropriate sponsors, and dissatisfaction with the organisation of the festival, are impacts which negatively affect a community’s identity and cohesion.

There were four impacts, previously discussed as positive social impacts (‘tourism’, ‘youth related impacts’, ‘impacts on local trade’ and ‘more visitors to the community’), which some respondents expected to be negative impacts also. For example, ‘impacts on local trade’ and ‘more visitors to the community’ were expected to have negative impacts by 3% and 2% of respondents respectively. Respondents referred to “*outside traders taking potential revenue from the town*” and perceived that “*some business people were the losers in trade while others made a good profit, mainly food, drink and fuel*”. For others having “*lots of people*” and “*many more people in town*” was perceived to be a negative given that increased visitors are a cause of resident frustration and a source of disruption to their everyday lives.

Respondents’ perceptions as to whether the negative social impacts occurred are presented in columns three to seven of Table 3. Responses indicate that the majority of residents’ perceived the negative social impacts to have occurred however many of these responses were qualified, in some way justifying the occurrence of the negative impacts. In particular, for negative impacts related to inconvenience and behavioural consequences, there are relatively high levels of ‘qualified yes’ responses. The ‘qualified yes’ responses say that the expected negative impacts occurred but: “*they were minimal*”; “*they are under control*”; “*they can be tolerated*”; “*they can be managed*”; and “*they didn’t worry me personally*”. Essentially respondents are saying that there are negative impacts but they are tolerated for a variety of reasons. Conversely, there were cases in which respondents felt the negative impacts had a “*particularly significant affect on them*” and some who stated that the negative impacts were “*worse than expected*”.

Those who provided a ‘qualified no’ were communicating that not only did they perceive the expected negatives to have *not* occurred as a result of the festival, they felt they didn’t occur because they had “*gotten them under control*”.

DISCUSSION

The 'expectations' data tells us that overall, residents expected a greater number of negative impacts to result from the festival than positive impacts. Whilst residents expected a total of 30 positive social impacts, they expected 41 negative social impacts. One reason for this could be the greater visibility of certain negative impacts as opposed to positive impacts. For example, negative social impacts such as noise, litter, delinquent behaviour and traffic are all relatively 'visible' impacts that are on display for residents to see. In contrast, some of the positive social impacts are less visible, including things such as community togetherness and an increased pride in the town. It may also be that residents can recall more easily the negative impacts of the festival, given their visible nature, whereas the positive social impacts, which can be less obvious, don't tend to come to mind as easily without prompting. However, this does not mean that overall the festivals' were not successful, or that the positive impacts are outweighed by negative impacts.

An important finding from the expectations data was that the same impact can be perceived in different ways by different people. Whilst one person may perceive positive benefits related to socialisation and interaction that result from having more people in town, another person will perceive negative outcomes of having more people around. It is therefore important to recognise that people can perceive the same impacts as having different effects. This finding reinforces the need to move beyond assumptions when making statements about social impacts arising from festivals (Small, Edwards, and Sheridan, 2005).

What this and previous research suggests is that there can be no single measure of social impact items that satisfy all people involved in a festival. Rather, a range of social impacts need to be available from which researchers, festival organisers, policy makers, and other community groups can select to inform their own particular issues of interest. Having a qualitative section within any quantitative questionnaire will allow for a greater depth of information to be gained from respondents than can be gained using quantitative measures alone.

Findings from the qualitative section of this study provided detailed responses which gave further insights into the perceived positive and negative social impacts of the festivals. For example, people made exceptions and justifications to their responses on whether an impact had occurred such as 'but they were minimal', 'but they are under control', 'but they can be tolerated'. These findings support the idea that local communities are often prepared to put up with temporary inconvenience and disruption given the other positive benefits that they are likely to receive (Small and Edwards, 2003). Therefore it may be that whilst residents recognise that these negative social impacts occur, some residents are willing to tolerate negative impacts where they see them as being necessary to realise positive outcomes for the community as a whole, or where they perceive there to be strategies in place to deal with those negative impacts. Therefore understanding the scale of the negative impacts and how festival organisers deal with them is important.

There are a number of implications arising from this study. First, event planners and managers should be mindful of putting in place strategies to ensure that positive social impacts are achieved. Second, strategies that are directed at dealing with negative impacts will be perceived positively by the local community, making the negative impact more acceptable. Third, festival organisers and policy makers should be aware that festivals can both build and diminish social capital. Social capital is built as festivals contribute to positive social transactions and social

engagements such as opportunities for social interaction; togetherness within the community; meeting new people; community groups working together; shared family experiences; hosting family and friends, and opportunities for volunteering and community involvement. Social capital can be diminished if festivals contribute to negative social transactions and social engagements such as facilitating an increase in delinquent behaviour, vandalism, crime, drinking and its impacts, violence, a strain on local resources, and divisions within the community. A perception of safety in the community is important as the community bears the financial and social costs for crime and other anti-social behaviour. If a festival contributes to the increased occurrence of anti-social behaviour then festival organisers will need to work with local government to develop policies that provide a safer environment and facilities during the course of the festival. Additionally, festival organisers will need to carefully consider the types of impacts a festival has in order to put in place measures that contribute to the enhancement of social interactions and social engagements.

This study does raise a number of questions which represent issues for further investigation. When is a community's capacity to tolerate negative impacts surpassed? What makes some communities more tolerant than others? Does there need to be strong community cohesion for a festival to be successful in the first instance? As always, further research will be required to understand these important issues in more depth.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this research have practical use in the planning and management of future festivals. This research provides event organisers and stakeholders with knowledge of the impacts a festival is having on its host community. By examining the differences between expectations and perceived actual impacts, this research provides insight into the community's perception of that festival. It is important for event organisers to understand that not all expectations, positive or negative, are actually met in the eyes of the host community. Knowing that there are a range of perceptions and justifications for the occurrence of negative impacts, has implications for the establishment of guidelines and policies in the planning, development and management of future festivals.

Although festivals can contribute to the building of social networks within communities, they can also contribute to the break down of these networks. The identification of the expected positive social impacts can assist festival organisers to put strategies in place to ensure that the festival meets the community's expectations. While the identification of the expected negative social impacts can assist organisers to develop strategies that will equip them to deal with those impacts should they arise.

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