

## Resident Perceptions of Special Event Impacts and Event Tourism in Wellington City.

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### Abstract

Host community support and acceptance of tourism activities is of critical importance if the industry is to sustain any degree of a symbiotic relationship with its host. It is at the community level where the impacts of tourism are generally manifest and as such, assessments of resident's perceptions are a vital source of information that should be considered by both tourism planners and industry practitioners.

Tourism is known to induce a range of impacts, either benefits or costs, upon the host destination. It is predominantly the economic benefits for which tourism is lauded, almost always at the expense of the seemingly less important environmental, social and cultural impacts. The socio-cultural impacts of tourism represent the changes to the social and cultural fabric of a community as a result of tourism activity.

This thesis addresses the impacts of special event tourism upon the social and cultural dimensions of a host destination, as perceived by its residents. More specifically, the thesis examines the perceptions held by residents towards special events and their resultant impacts upon Wellington City, New Zealand.

The methodology employed to sample and analyse primary research data was exploratory in nature and utilised self-administered questionnaires with a reply paid post method of response. Subjects were randomly sought using an alphabetical street index of the five Wellington City Local Government determined wards. Additionally, a central city 'ward' was constructed. A total of 120 questionnaires were systematically distributed to the randomly selected dwellings within each ward. Of the total 720 questionnaires distributed, a response rate of 36% was attained.

Findings indicate residents strongly perceive the overall impact of special events to be positive in nature. There is much support for special event tourism being used as the major form of tourism promotion for Wellington. However, contrary to the literature, Wellington residents indicated the most important impacts resulting from special events are of a socio-cultural nature. Although very important, it is indicated that the economic impacts are predominantly a secondary concern.

Should Wellington City adopt an event-driven tourism strategy, it needs to be integrated with respect to the wider community and economic development initiatives, and not with each of these factors being considered in isolation of each other. An event-tourism strategy could be utilised, not only as a tourism initiative, but also as a wider community development device.