

Economic Impact of Events

Summary of a study into four Shrewsbury festivals

Aims

During 2013 Shropshire Council commissioned four Economic Impact Assessments for four different festivals in Shrewsbury. The aim was to identify and quantify the additional spending that different types of event bring into the area, and therefore understand the impact of events on the visitor economy. The studies also found out some of the visitor characteristics and behaviour which event organisers can use to refine their marketing. By producing this information Shropshire Council hopes that event organisers will be able to demonstrate value to support funding and sponsorship bids and harness appropriate support from the community. The work arose out of recommendations in the Shrewsbury Visitor Economy Strategy 2012 prepared for Destination Shrewsbury by Britton McGrath.

The Events

The four events chosen were:

Shrewsbury Cartoon Festival - established in 2004. From a small start this had become an annual two day event by 2013 and was held on Saturday and Sunday 20th & 21st of April. Most of the Festival activities are free to the public. Activities take place in venues around the town with a strong focus on outdoor cartooning in The Square.

www.shrewsburycartoonfestival.com

Shrewsbury River Festival - a one day free admission public event which was first held in 2012. The River Festival took place on Sunday 9th June mainly on the River Severn section that flows alongside The Quarry, with activities in The Quarry and on the river.

www.shrewsburyriverfestival.co.uk

Shrewsbury Food Festival - 2013 was the first year for the Food Festival. The event was held on Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th June in The Quarry with fringe activities taking place around town. An admission charge was made for the main Festival in The Quarry but activities elsewhere in the town were mostly free to access.

www.shrewsburyfoodfestival.co.uk

Shrewsbury Folk Festival - the annual Folk Festival outgrew its original home in Bridgnorth and moved to Shrewsbury in 2008. In 2013 it was held on the West Mid Showground on the edge of town from 23rd to 26th August. The Festival provides on-site camping facilities and its pricing structure allows for whole festival admission with overnight camping or single day entry. Admission charges for adults range from £140 for whole Festival with camping to £32.50 for a single day admission. There are also family tickets, youth and child tickets. The Festival provides a free shuttle bus into the town centre. During the Festival period many of the dancers and musicians give fringe performances and a parade in the town which are free to the public.

www.shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

The events were chosen to reflect a range of event types - one day & multi day, admission charging and free, new and established, arts focused and general. The Folk Festival is considered a large event of its type within the West Midlands region. The other three festivals are considered small to medium, significant enough because of their theme and focus to attract visitors in their own right but not (or not yet) big events on a regional or national scale. All the events have a large element of outdoor activity. The River Festival

and Food Festival enjoyed exceptionally good weather in 2013. The Cartoon Festival and Folk Festival had more mixed weather conditions to contend with.

Method

The study was based on face to face interviews with visitors at all four events. The interviews and analysis were carried out by The Research Solution*. The survey results were collated and analysed using the SNAP data analysis package and taking into account 'multiplied' expenditure i.e. expenditure generated by visitors to the event that was further recycled within the town economy, and 'displaced' expenditure i.e. expenditure which would have occurred anyway because the visitor would have gone somewhere else/done something else within the area. The survey does not include the spending made by the festival organisers in actually setting up and staging the event.

*The Research Solution is a Midlands based research company with particular experience in tourism and leisure. Their work includes economic impact modelling using nationally recognised models for a number of local authorities, public organisations and private sector clients.

Summary of main findings

Table 1. Additional spending generated by events

Event	Additional spending in the area
Cartoon Festival	£194,462
River Festival	£166,961
Food Festival	£180,510
Folk Festival	£548,077

Table 2. Types of Visitor

Event	Overnight Visitors	Day Visitors	% of day visitors non resident in Shrewsbury
Cartoon Festival	20%	80%	49%
River Festival	3%	97%	52%
Food Festival	15%	85%	80%
Folk Festival	76%*	24%	46%

*61% of the overnight visitors to the Folk Festival camped on site,

Table 3. (non residents only) No. of first-time/infrequent visitors and propensity to return/recommend

Event	% 1 st time or infrequent visitors	% very likely to return to Shrewsbury	% very likely to recommend Shrewsbury
Cartoon Festival	84%	54%	74%
River Festival	40%	83%	78%
Food Festival	16%	91%	84%
Folk Festival	73%	85%	92%

Impressions

Overall enjoyment of the events was rated very highly in every case – between 96 and 99% of visitors rating the event as good or very good. The overall impressions received by visitors of Shrewsbury were also favourable. 96 – 100% said their impression of the town was good or very good.

Publicity & information

The ways in which people had heard about the events varied but word of mouth recommendation was powerful for all four events even the first timer, the Food Festival. A mix of radio, newspaper, websites and leaflets in differing degrees provided sources of information for visitors suggesting that all these publicity activities continue to be important for reaching audiences and have the potential to be used even more effectively.

Conclusions

The results for all the events show the value of events to the local economy. Visitors to the event spend in accommodation, shops, restaurants and on travel and other attractions. All the events attracted visitors from outside of the area with some attracting overnight visitors to hotels & B & Bs. Events provide a reason for people to visit a destination and can be particularly useful in attracting first time or very occasional visitors to the area who might not otherwise visit but who may go on to become return visitors or recommenders. There was also a high 'feel-good' factor generated amongst visitors to these selected events. People were left with very positive impressions of both the event and the town making it more likely that they would return and/or recommend. Even modest scale events and festivals appear to be giving good value in terms of their financial return to the economy during the event period, and their contribution to encouraging future visits and consumer recommendations.

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