

**Title**

An Analysis of the Social Impact of Festivals and Events in Limerick City, Ireland.

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**Abstract**

The scope of the events industry is vast and dynamic with events a fundamental part of society affecting “culture, business and lifestyles” (Getz<sup>2</sup>, 2008:18). Still in its infancy, the event industry must constantly prove its validity and this is achieved through constant evaluation, which is necessary and serves to set the foundation for improvement and development (Bowdin *et al*, 2004). While most evaluation for events is based on financial success, the impacts the social impacts should hold the same weight, as they promote social cohesion, community integration and cultivate society (Getz<sup>2</sup>, 2008). The festival and event sector in Limerick City (Ireland) has been growing rapidly so it provides the ideal platform to assess the social impacts of events as there is growing significance placed on the benefits of events for the community. The focus of the research was on determining the social impacts of events by uncovering the presence of two variable groups, the social benefits and the social costs. Secondary data collection facilitates collecting, understanding and interpreting primary data. Due the nature of the research both qualitative and quantitative data was collected with questionnaires providing a large amount of quantifiable information and a more in depth research supplied by interviews. Key findings are defined as data that was both significant and relatable to the analysis of the social impacts of events and festivals in Limerick City. The questionnaire received a solid response rate and the participants' practical event industry knowledge added to the legitimacy of the research. The interviews of the key informants provided a greater understanding of the topic and a unique point of view. As Limerick City continues to develop as a host community for events the social impacts will come to the forefront for event evaluation. The positive and negative impacts of events must to understand to make informed decisions about utilising events to achieve long-term goals that extend beyond the event (Fredline *et al*, 2003). As social impacts come to the forefront of event evaluation and academic studies it may be prove the theory that they are events “true legacy” (Pedersen *et al*, 2010).

## 1. Introduction

The event industry is relatively new, only properly established in the last twenty years, but during the last two decades the sector has seen immense growth (Yeoman *et al*, 2009). Festivals and events are increasing in popularity in communities and incorporate an extensive range of cultural and leisure activities and genres (Small, *et al* 2005). The aim, location, participants, programme, operations, look and feel are all elements of an event that collectively create a unique event experience (Getz, 2008). The cultivation of events as an industry has been a rapid process with the benefits of utilising events being recognised on a global scale (Tassiopoulous, 2007).

Events tourism attract visitors in the form of attendees and provide them with a unique experience adding to the value of tourism both financial and culturally (Raj and Musgrave, 2009). Increasingly organisations, on all scales, see events as an instrument to meet their needs. To properly gauge the success of an event an assessment must be carried out to discern both long-term and short-term impacts. Through evaluation it can be determined if events are realising the aims set out by the organisers and is a vital process of any strategy (Wood, 2005). While most evaluation for events is based on financial success, there are other implications that are just as significant. "Events are emerging globally as a significant and growing sector and are seen as having significant economical, socio-cultural and political impacts" (Raj and Musgrave, 2009:76). The social impacts are defined as costs, a negative bi-product of an event, and benefits, factors that improve the quality of life for the community and participants (Allen *et al*, 2007). By understanding the social implications of events the costs can be reduced and the benefits be extended yielding a more advantageous event (Delamere, 2001). The need for further research into events for Limerick City becomes more evident as the events industry has developed and evolved rapidly over the last number of years. Local government agencies, businesses and organisations are utilising events for their impacts and the need for a deeper comprehension of events is necessary. "Festivals in Limerick create memorable opportunities for audiences to engage in a wealth of unique and often new experiences in a celebratory atmosphere. It is the policy of Limerick City Council to support and develop existing festivals and encourage the establishment of new festivals and events on a yearly basis" (LCC, 2010:94). The need for an analysis of the social impacts of events was established through personal and professional interests of the researcher and a lack of previous research on the topic.

### *Research Aims and Objectives*

The first aim of the research was to explore the concept of social impacts as it is relevant to the events industry. To define the social impacts the variables of social impacts, evaluation techniques and the bearing they have on events had to be determined. To gain a practical knowledge of the impacts of events in Limerick City would extend event related knowledge. To discover the social benefits of events how they are identified and what characterises them. Determining the most successful types of events and event model in relation to social impacts. By having an understanding of what is the best event framework is for capitalising of social impacts would make benefits easier to attain. Lastly, to highlight the legacy left by events and how the events potentially influence and enhance the host community.

### *Research Objectives*

A review current literature relating to the impact of events to the host community was the first step in researching the social impacts of event. Current academic sources allowed previously conducted research on how the topic has been explore and defined to be discovered. The examination of reports and studies conducted about events hosted in Limerick City determined how much research has already been completed and its relevance to this paper topic. The generation and distribution of a survey and distribution to professionals working in or with the events and conducting interviews with key informants will provide primary research. The use of primary research allows for specific data to be collected that is fundamentally applicable to this paper. The analysis of the data collected to ascertain findings and draw conclusions about the social impact of events is the final objective.

## **2. Literature Review**

The scope of the events industry is vast and dynamic with events a fundamental part of society affecting “culture, business and lifestyles” (Getz<sup>2</sup>, 2008:18). The size and type of events vary greatly each with its own objectives and purpose from personal, professional, heritage and cultural events. Other industries have adopted events to further their goals through activities and the industry itself continues to develop. Events are being utilised for tourism objectives to market a destination, appeal to visitors and create a more far-reaching experience (Ntloko & Swart, 2008). As events become more frequent and elaborate, the utilisation of an evaluation process is crucial, as there needs to be constant checks and balances to highlight the benefits and reduce the risks (Oldenboom, 2006). Through evaluation events, the industry and the impacts can be examined to create an enhanced event experience. Financial gain is a main motivator for the staging of events, but events have other impacts, social and environmental, which can add equally to the value of events. The social impacts of an event can be extensive affecting the community and the individuals within it. Truly understanding the bearing events have on society implications must be recognised to elevate costs and promote the benefits. Limerick City is capitalising on events to further its objectives and with the social impacts at the core of its strategies. The analysis of the social impacts of event and festival in Limerick City must first start with a review of current literature to create an understanding of key themes and identify previous research (Dawidowicz, 2010). The events industry, its evolvment through other industries, such as tourism, the evaluation of events and their relationship with the host community through impacts, specifically the social implications and Limerick as a host city have been examined.

### *Events*

Events have existed in one form or another throughout history playing a central role in all societies as a form of celebration and as a marker for significant changes in the lives of those taking part (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012). A simplistic definition for an event is “a gathering of people for a specific purpose”, but with the reason for the event, scale, size and objectives varying greatly (Carter, 2007:3). Shone & Parry (2004) theorise that due to the complex nature of the events, which includes a diverse range of events both public and private, that an accurate measurement of events as an industry is problematic. Whether it is their impact or even the number of events taking place at given time or location there is no concrete way of gauging how significant the industry has become. However, the extent of the sector can be surmised through the infiltration of events into the private, public and professional lives of

participants and the growing reliance of other industries on events (Robinson *et al*, 2010).

Events have taken on new dimensions with people increasingly attending events for entertainment and leisure purposes (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012). In 2012, the Olympics Games in London sold over nine million tickets with an estimated global television audience of four billion for the opening ceremony (LondonTown, 2013). Additionally, events are growing as a corporate tool for businesses in the areas of communication, training, reward and marketing (Robinson *et al*, 2010). Companies are utilising events as public relation tools to promote their offerings and be able to engagement with customers directly. Red Bull, an “innovator” in brand marketing, has successfully developed its brand by its increasing involvement with extreme sports and youth culture through hosting events (Gorse *et al*, 2010:350). The evolution of events has led to the cultivation of other industries, such as education, marketing, business and technology (Allen *et al*, 2011). Event management is a legitimate area of academic study, marketing and corporate focused event companies are now commonplace and software programmes have been designed specifically for the planning and running of events. Business and organisations have incorporated events as a means to expand their business, increase market share and ultimately to generate revenue directly and indirectly through event activities (Robinson *et al*, 2010). As the private sector has embraced events as a corporate tool, the industry has advanced extensively through the involvement of the public sector. Governments have recognised the benefits of events in creating an image for a location, strengthen community ties and attracting international and domestic tourists (Robinson *et al*, 2010). As events are utilised by businesses as marketing tool, governments in turn support events as part of the tourism industry specifically as destination marketing (Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013). Due to events being intrinsically linked to other industries, the sector has seen substantial and rapid growth and requires further research to understand the nature of events and their influence.

### *Tourism and Events*

Tassiopoulous (2007:4) surmised that events have emerged as a “truly global sector of the tourism industry” and their positive impacts are starting to gain recognition. As one of the most substantial industries in the world, tourism is an integral part of a countries, cities, towns and villages with great influence on the host communities (Backman *et al*, 2007). In the current economic climate, tourism has become a more competitive market and cities must look to maximise internal resources to appeal to consumers (Richards & Palmer, 2010). Through events, tourists have direct access to sample the indigenous cuisine, culture and customs of a location and enjoy activities and entertainment (Tassiopoulous *et al*, 2007). Events are used as a tool to stimulate tourism by helping to develop and promote destinations and are a significant component of tourism, known as event tourism (Getz, 2008). Objectives under the scope of event tourism are to create a positive destination image, attract visitors beyond the tourist season, extend tourism throughout the region and increase the number of visitors (Tassiopoulous *et al*, 2007). As central as events have become to the tourism they are also reliant on tourism to create a specific market for events (Getz<sup>1</sup>, 2008).

Understanding the extensive benefits of events, governments are becoming increasingly supportive of events by being involved in the organising of events and providing resources (Allen *et al*, 2011). The importance of event tourism for the event industry is that in this role, they exert greater bearing on communities and their effects are more widespread. Events are not only beneficial from a tourism perspective, but also aid in domestic development both at a national level and within individual communities (Getz, 2008). Events can also positively affect the environment of their community by the process of urban renewal and development (Richards & Palmer, 2010). Although cities benefit economically from events tourism, events also provide a means of entertainment and socio-cultural identity for its citizens (Allen *et al*, 2011). With increasing frequency, governments are including events in long-term development strategies and leveraging their positive multi-faceted contributions to enhance cities and towns (Tassiopoulous *et al*, 2007). In order for private, and more crucially, the public sector to fully exploit the benefits of events it is imperative that the influence of events is understood. Events need to be evaluated to determine how successful they were, to gain an understanding of best practices, to discover any gaps in the market and to ascertain a comprehensive awareness of any impacts.

### *Event Evaluation*

Still in its infancy, the event industry must constantly prove its validity and this is achieved through constant evaluation, which is necessary and serves to set the foundation for improvement and development (Bowdin *et al*, 2004). For every event, the organiser and stakeholders have objectives and evaluation provides the means to determine if those goals were achieved (Getz<sup>2</sup>, 2008). As a fundamental part of the event management process evaluation assesses positive and negative outcomes while establishing areas for improvement (Bowdin *et al*, 2004). The event evaluation is a systematic process incorporated into the complete life of an event and will aid in the decision-making process (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012). Feedback needs to be constantly obtained and filtered through the each stage of the event as it will provide valuable data in organising an event, for example ticket sales will reflect the success rate of marketing activities. Generally, most evaluation is on an individual event basis where attendees, participants, partnerships, associations, the media and the local community are surveyed about the elements of the event. For a specific event, the overall event, entertainment, venue and amenities are analysed to garner data and to compare it to expectations (Carter, 2007). A formal post-event evaluation will result in quantifiable facts and figures, which can be used to measure value-for-money based on attendee experience (Chaturvedi, 2009). Individual event evaluation not only provides information to improve the event itself, but can also provide research for the planning of other events creating a superior experience (Carter, 2007). The findings from single evaluations also add to event industry's body of knowledge events industry where "insights are gained, lessons learnt and events perfected" (Bowdin *et al*, 2004:412). When evaluating events the assessment should generally include short-term, long-term, primary and secondary factors and effects (Getz<sup>2</sup>, 2008).

To accurately identify the value of events it is necessary for the evaluation to weigh all the aspects, not just financial gain, to obtain a complete picture (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012). Evaluation measures the success of an event, supplies industry research and examines their impacts. Event evaluation does not only pertain to the event and the industry, but needs to encompass the effects it has on all stakeholders. With large public events, typically those used for event tourism, growing in both in the number and in scale the extent of their influence become more widespread with more implications (Baum *et al*, 2009). Events can shape host communities as they can bring in revenue, alter the physical environment and transform the social landscape. A greater understanding of the impacts of events allows organisers the opportunity to lessen costs while cultivating the benefits (Tassiopoulous *et al*, 2007).

### *Impacts of Events*

The growth of the event industry and the reliance on events to deliver benefits requires event evaluation to focus more on the impacts versus the actual event (Ziakas & Costa, 2012). Along with the growth of industry events sizes have increased, as large-scale events become a staple in many communities. It is vital for organiser to understand that the larger the event the dimensions and extent of event impacts also develop. With the focus on event evaluation, it can be ascertained that events are a huge part of the global culture and even with the economic crisis; the benefits of events are still in high demand (Jones, 2012). Measuring impacts for past and future events is a means to enhance the event experience and to gain support for a prospective event (Ziakas & Costa, 2012). In the “open system model” inputs are converted to outcomes and impacts are a result of being effected by outcomes (Getz<sup>2</sup>, 2008). “All industries and all human activities have impacts, which can be positive or negative. The impacts may be seen primarily in changes to the state of the economy, to the natural and built environment and to people’s quality of life” (Davidson & Rogers, 2007:19).

The most obvious system in evaluating events is to examine the economic impact and with the high cost of running an event this become the most popular means of judging the success of an event (Richards and Palmer, 2010). However, there are other characteristics of events that provide a variety of benefits along with the economic side there are social and environmental impacts and together they form the “triple bottom line” (Bowdin *et al*, 2004). The triple bottom line modelled on the concept of sustainability and impacts on “the planet, people and profits” (Richards & Palmer, 2010:342). Sustainability is a term commonly associated with the environment, but that is only one of the three interrelated elements, along with social and economic impacts (Pedersen *et al*, 2010). The goals of a city when organising an event encompass an array of areas, such as financial, societal and political (Ziakas & Costa, 2012). Key components of managing events are to recognise access and handle the impact of events (Allen *et al*, 2011). The tourism and event industries need to understand the relevance of the three impacts, as they comprise of a range of themes, so they can weigh the costs between them (Weed, 2008). Through research and practice, the benefits of events are being substantiated and efforts are becoming strategic to maximise the impacts (Ziakas & Costa, 2012). While most evaluations concentrate of on the revenue generated by events the social implications are of equally significance (Delmere *et al*, 2001). Social impacts can have a further reaching effect as they leveraged into a long-term strategic plan for a community and have a

more substantial effect of attendees, participants and local residence (Tassiopoulous *et al*, 2007). Due to the downturn in the economy, organisers are also examining the social impacts as a means to garner support for events by extending benefits.

### *Social Impacts of Events*

Events can be a strong financial resource for the organisers and host community, but in order to ensure achieve a successful event social impacts must be thoughtfully factored into the event equation (Fredline *et al*, 2003). The events industry will not last relying on economic impacts alone, social impacts are integral to the continued growth of the industry as the community is central to each event (Small *et al*, 2005). Compared with economic impacts the social impacts should hold the same weight, as they promote social cohesion, community integration and cultivate society (Getz<sup>2</sup>, 2008). Social impacts are difficult to measure, unlike environmental and economic impacts, because they are many are intangible and their effect is perceived differently by each individual attendee (Fredline, 2003). The social impact of an event can be found in attendee interaction and the benefits are a hosting an enjoyable event that fosters positive guest relations and community spirit (Shone and Parry, 2004). There can be positive and negative social implications of an event, while benefits foster community spirit costs can alienate residents (Yang, 2011).

Getz<sup>2</sup> (2008) proposed that community events can be a vehicle for developing pride and bonds within local residence and engaging visitors. Before a community collaborates with an event organiser it is essential to identify the organiser's perception of the social impacts of an event (Gursoy *et al*, 2004). By an acute understand the social impacts organisers can take full advantage of the benefits, while properly planning to contend with the costs. The positive impacts of events can outweigh the short-term costs because they can create a "feel good" factor through anticipation and aspirations (Allen *et al*, 2007). In undertaking the development of scales to measure the social impacts, several authors outlined the variables influencing the societal aspect of events. In a 2001 article, Delamere (2001) divided the social impacts into two main types, costs and benefits, with benefits having two sub-headings, community and individual. Small (2007) began with forty-one statements and through factoring identified the six main categories; inconvenience, community identity and cohesion, personal frustration, entertainment and socialisation opportunities, community growth and development and behavioural consequences. Each type includes a grouping of individual related impacts, such as traffic congestion, lack of parking and road closures are all under the inconvenience heading (Small, 2007). An earlier study performed by Fredline *et al* (2003) also factored responses under six sections, but highlighted different areas; social and economic development, concerns about justice and inconvenience, impact on public facilities, impacts on behavior and environments, long-term community impacts and impacts on prices of goods and services.

An examination of each scale reveals that they are all based upon the same or similar characteristics, ranging from cultural impacts to noise levels. All three articles had comparable results with enhanced community image and identity and opportunities to have fun as the two highest rated benefits while the major costs where disruption of daily life and delinquent behaviour including underage drinking and vandalism (Delamere, 2001; Fredline, 2003; Small, 2007). Gursoy *et al* (2004) created a scale for socio-economic factors aimed specifically at event organisers and in relation to the social impacts. The application of the scale found that event organisers answered

favourably when asked about social benefits, but downplayed the negative implications. Community image and identity were rated highest with most respondents' strongly agreeing while increases the crime rate was strongly disagreed with (Gursoy *et al*, 2004). The studies illustrate the factors and highlight the broad scope of themes influencing the social aspect of events. An event analysis must take into consideration all the elements and categories that fall under the social impact heading. In Fredline *et al* (2006) the results of the application of the developed generic scale (Fredline *et al*, 2003) were published. The analysis compared each of the responses to social impact statements for three events, *Australian Grand Prix*, *Moomba Festival* in Melbourne and a regional festival in Horsharn, *Art Is...* . The following table, Table 1, is a depiction of the most relevant statements to this paper and measures the responses in percentage of change. For the purpose of this paper the average percent of change was calculated to offer a more inclusive examination of the results. Opportunities to have fun with family and friends rated the highest average benefit, while traffic congestion was the biggest average cost.

**Table 1: Social Impacts Analysis of Three Events by Fredline *et al* (2006)**

Social Impact by	Grand Prix	Moomba	Art Is...	Average
1 Community pride	68%	59%	64%	64%
2 Opportunity to showcase community	68%	70%	71%	70%
3 Range of things to do	68%	78%	76%	74%
4 Entertainment	69%	81%	74%	75%
5 Entertains local residents	64%	69%	88%	74%
6 Opportunities for fun with family & friends	79%	94%	90%	88%
7 Opportunities to meet new people	65%	56%	73%	65%
8 Increase in tourist/visitors	56%	39%	39%	45%
9 Positive media coverage	82%	70%	72%	75%
10 Good use of public funds	52%	62%	57%	57%
11 Improved public facilities	65%	48%	50%	55%
12 Improved public transport	40%	46%	40%	42%
13 Employment opportunities	72%	58%	43%	58%
14 Does not increase social inequity	54%	66%	68%	63%
15 Number of people in the area	60%	60%	46%	55%
16 Lack of parking	65%	65%	45%	58%
17 Traffic congestion	80%	74%	57%	70%
18 Noise	82%	56%	—	69%
19 Rowdy or delinquent behaviour	—	41%	63%	52%
20 Increase in crime levels	—	37%	—	37%
21 Increase in litter	38%	66%	56%	53%
22 Excessive drinking and drug use	—	—	—	0%

**(Fredline *et al*, 2006)**

Social impacts are “any impact which potentially has an impact on the quality of life” and better understanding of social impacts will facilitate the management of events in relation to the community, its residents and event participants (Fredline, 2003:3).



Managing the social impacts to match expectations of an event will ensure a more enjoyable attendee experience and can lead to an increase in revenue and a stronger event image (Richards and Palmer, 2010). As social impacts come to the forefront of event evaluation and academic studies it may be proven that they are events “true legacy” (Pedersen et al, 2010).

### *Events in Limerick City*

With an estimated population of over 56,000 Limerick City is Ireland's third largest city (CSO, 2013; LCC<sup>1</sup>, 2013). The festival and event sector in Limerick City has been growing rapidly with the city holding high profile events, such as the Special Olympics Ireland and followed by a yearlong celebration as a European City of Sport 2011. In 2011, the local tourism board reported over thirty festivals taking place in the region and in 2013 that number will increase to thirty-six in the city itself (Shannon Development 2011; Limerick.ie<sup>1</sup>, 2013). The events will take place throughout the year with the highlights being the St. Patrick's Day Parade and Riverfest, which attract local, regional, national and international visitors. The St. Patrick's Day celebrations will bring over 70,000 spectators into the city and as part of Riverfest, the Great Limerick run is set to host 10,000 participants and over 25,000 supporters (Limerick.ie<sup>2</sup>, 2013; Limerick.ie<sup>3</sup>, 2013). The city also hosts smaller scale events with sixty-one funded events planned in the county for The Gathering 2013 as well as a steady stream of music, art, sport and culture events (LCC<sup>2</sup>, 2013). Moving forward into 2014 the legacy of events continues as Limerick has been named Ireland's first National City of Culture, which will “help deliver economic and social objectives” (Hayes, 2012).

The notoriety of Limerick City for its commitment to sporting events and emphasis on nurturing art and culture heritage the event industry has become a priority within the community (Shannon Development, 2011). Limerick City has emerged as an ideal community to conduct event management research with a variety of size and types of events. Research has identified a lack of evaluation of events in Limerick City as a whole and specifically in reference to the social impacts. As events become an integral part of the community and the identity of the city further research into the impact of events is warranted in Limerick City.

## **3. Methodology**

### *Introduction*

The progression and development of people's understanding of the world is facilitated by the methodical practice of conducting research (Gratton and Jones, 2010). By investigating phenomena through research, greater awareness can be achieved as information is obtained, measured and evaluated. The main purpose of research is the “advancement of knowledge” through exploration, examination and analysis which aids in ascertaining the comprehension of a given topic (Glenn, 2010:1). The broad objectives of research are to assess the validity of a theory and gain greater understanding of a subject or in simple terms to answer a question (Kumar, 2008). Research can be defined as having three distinct characteristics, the systematic accumulation of information, analysing the results systematically and having a logical aim (Saunders *et al*, 2009).

The purpose of this paper is to generate a greater understanding of the social impacts of festivals and events in Limerick City through secondary and primary research utilising the most effective research tools. The focus of the research will be on

determining the social impacts of events by uncovering the presence of two variable groups, the social benefits and the social costs.

### *Research Methodology*

There is a variety of research approaches, such as descriptive, explanatory and predictive, but this paper will be focusing on exploratory research. Through exploratory research, the main objective will be to garner a general understanding, discover trends and draw conclusions that are not based on a pre-established hypothesis (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Matthews and Ross (2010) consider the limited previous experience by the author as an aspect of exploratory research that coupled with the lack of a formal analysis of impacts of events in Limerick City this approach is most appropriate. To further distinguishing between research types would be to describe the approach undertaken as inductive as it relies on generating a theory from the collected data (Clough & Nutbrown, 2005). When conducting formal research there are a sequence of stages that must be adhered to and it is known as the research process (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Kothari (2004) designed a flow chart to demonstrate the step-by-step system highlighting the importance of evaluation. Although there is a progression, through tasks, feedback is an essential element and the research will find themselves shifting between stages throughout the process (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Methodology supplies the motive for the types of research chosen, while research methods are the techniques used to accumulate the data (Clough & Nutbrown, 2005). When collecting data there are proven methods for the purpose of research and these tools gather, organise and aid in the examination of information (Walliman, 2011). In the following sections, the methods selected for this research paper are discussed and examined.

### *Secondary Data*

Research can be categorised as primary or secondary, research that has been collected and explored and is available to a researcher is known as secondary data (Nykiel, 2007). When utilising secondary data the researcher is, reusing data for a purpose that was not originally intended when it was collected (Sachdeva, 2009). There is a vast amount of secondary data available from government agencies or academic published works (Matthews & Ross, 2010). As part of research, process secondary data is analysed for the literature review to aid in gaining insights into a topic. To gain an understanding of the subject matter current academic sources were reviewed with a focus on the events industry, event evaluation and the impacts of events. The information collected was amalgamated to identify common themes and compare a variety of studies and opinions on the topic. Journal articles were assessed to explore the scope of research that has been previously conducted and to ascertain types of methodologies used in similar prior research. There were seven key articles used extensively to meet the objectives of secondary research, providing insight into social impact variables and scales developed to measure the impacts. Small (2007) highlighted social costs and benefits, created the Social Impact Perception (SIP) scale and applied it to two small community festivals. Determining the extent of gaps in knowledge on the subject was another aim of secondary research. Although the subject is covered by a variety of authors who emphasise the significance of the social impacts there is a lack of dedicated comprehensive research on the topic. In addition, being that social impacts are mostly intangible and the vast number of potential benefits and costs measuring the true implications is difficult. However, an advantage for the research did present itself in the need for a social impact analysis for Limerick

City as one had not been solely conducted before even for an individual event or festival. Finally, secondary research did provide a framework for this paper especially in reference to primary research methods, such as tools and the design of materials (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Secondary data collection can facilitate collecting, understanding and interpreting primary data. Enhancing the researchers knowledge base will provide a greater familiarity with the topic and can lend itself to a more comprehensive investigation. In addition, secondary data complement primary data through statistics, such as demographics (Sachdeva, 2009). Secondary data provided research from a variety of studies completed that included a range of event types and sizes. The studies outlined the variables included in this study and provided scales and results that were easy to compare. The main advantages of secondary data are that it provides a base for research by furnishing information on the topic that was already validated and easy to access (Adam, 2007; Sachdeva, 2009). Secondary data does have disadvantages the limited in depth research previously mentioned required more time be dedicated to understanding the topic hindered the administration of the primary tools. Although, there are a diverse group of scales for measurement their application was limited to the initial design study and their benefit could not be verified (Adam, 2007; Sachdeva, 2009).

### *Primary Data*

The main source of most research is through primary data and through this data; the research will gain key understandings of the topic. The researcher designations how, what, when, who and why the data is to be collected through research methods. The research design is controlled by the researcher and all information generated is original (Gratton and Jones, 2010). The main research tools for gathering primary data are questionnaires, interviews, observations, experiments and logs or diaries (Kothari, 2004). The primary research for this paper was collected using questionnaires and interviews as they provide the most direct means to gather and arrange information. The two types of results produced by primary research are quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data can be measured numerically and easily analysed, as it is structured working data (Matthews & Ross, 2010). While quantitative data is about the "what, where and when", qualitative examines the "why and how" (Glenn, 2010). Qualitative data is based on personal opinions, feelings and experience and is not easily measurable but does provide a more dynamic and detailed data (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Due to the nature of the research both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected with questionnaires providing a large amount of quantifiable information and a more in depth research supplied by interviews.

Primary data collection can be catered to a specific topic, which allowed a social impact analysis to be performed for Limerick City. The data is both credible and dependable as the researcher knows the source and the information can be verified. Mixed methodologies can be used to maximise data collection, as previously stated questionnaires and interview provide well-rounded information. The tools of primary research were able to be administered to a relevant sample, those involved in the managing of events in Limerick City. One of the main advantages to primary data collection is that the researcher had control of the design and tailored tools and samples to fit the needs of the research to gather the pertinent information and omit obsolete data. The foremost disadvantage of primary data collection is that it is time consuming; tools must be researched, designed, administered and responses collated

by the researcher. All the information must then be analysed and related to secondary research. Also, depending on the methods the process can be expensive, but technology can be used to eliminate unnecessary costs. A critical disadvantages can be in the design of the tools use, where too much or too little data is collected creating a negative impact analysis. In addition, the wording can cause confusion and result in an erroneous response affecting the findings.

### *Questionnaires*

A questionnaire or survey is a primary research method for primary data collection and contains a set standard of questions to be filled out by selected respondents (Gratton and Jones, 2010). In order for a researcher to facilitate obtaining data from a large pool of people a questionnaire may be used. Questionnaires general generate quantitative data that can be quantified, graphed and assessed by the researcher (Wisker, 2008). The format of a questionnaire is a list of questions with a limited choice of pre-determined answers that respondent selects from (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Questionnaires allow the researcher access a larger sample than other primary research. The survey for this paper was distributed to over one-hundred and fifty possible respondents compared to only three interviews. The process is less time consuming for the respondent and the online questionnaire meant they completed it at their own leisure. Advancements in technology eliminate geographic boundaries, meaning the sample could include those who had moved away but had event experience in Limerick City. A key advantage to questionnaires is the data collected can be substantial and the results are generally easily measurable. The survey was designed to focus on quantitative data and with eighty-four responses, the information was significant and expedient. Also, conducting the questionnaire online diminished bias as the administrator was not present to prompt or lead the respondent (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The main disadvantages to questionnaires is that the response rate tends to be low and with using online tools there is no assurance of who actually filled out the survey. Questionnaires are time-consuming as they need to be researched, designed, tested and distributed in addition the data can be vast and it need to be organised and quantified. As online tools reduce bias the lack of guidance for respondents especially in relation to questions that are too detailed or too ambiguous may cause confusion and frustration. The survey must be carefully designed as to not mar the findings and could lower the respondent rate. To circumvent any issues the questions were straightforward and kept closed where possible to eliminate confusion?

### *Design of Questionnaires*

The design of the questionnaire was based on several journal articles, mentioned earlier in the literature review of social impacts, which developed scales to measure the social impacts. The authors weighted, factored and in the case of Delamere (2001) plotted a large number of implications to analyse the social impacts of events. The Social Impact Perception Scale, the Finnish Event Evaluation Tool, the Festival Social Impact Attitude Scale and other methods developed were reviewed for their potential application to this paper. However, it was determined that the scales although comprehensive were lengthy and complex and would not be appropriate for this current analysis of the social impacts of events in Limerick City. Although none of the previously created methods were utilised the instrument for this research was based on different elements of each including the overall layout, social variables and question design. The questionnaire was structured to maximise respondent rates by not being

overly complicated or requiring a significant amount of time to complete. Closed questions were the main component of the questionnaire in order to streamline the survey and create more structured measurable and comparable data (Adam, 2007). The only open questions used were when it became impractical to include all possible answer options. Similar to the layout use by Gursoy *et al* (2004) the questionnaire was divided into three sections and followed a logical progression as to promote the response rate. The introductory questions of the questionnaire profiled the respondents and identified relevant specific expertise in relation to the topic. The current profession of respondents was established with experience being gauged on the number, type and size of events worked on in Limerick City. An event profile was premise for the second section where information on the scale and type of events was ascertained. The reason for the event, such as revenue, publicity or community went to understanding the motivation behind the event. By including a question about the type of venue it allowed data to be collected on the most common sites as different locations have different social implications. The section continued with questions relating to amenities and features, such as use of public resources, attendees and media coverage, which are determinants of social impacts.

Lastly, the third section was solely focused on the social impacts of events and festivals in Limerick City. Respondents were asked to rate their opinion on statements regarding the social impacts of events in Limerick City. The social impact statement technique was taken from the methods developed by Delamere (2001), Fredline *et al* (2003, Gursoy *et al* (2004) and Small (2007), who all used a variation in their questionnaires. A five-point likert scale will be used to quantify the answers ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and the statements will be a mix of the social costs and benefits (Gratton and Jones, 2010). The final question was to determine how respondents viewed Limerick City by incorporating descriptive words and phrases that were rated on a scale. The tool was adapted from an analysis performed by Wood (2005) for local authority events in Blackburn. The final draft was thirty-one questions over the three sections and was comparably lower to the other scales. Small (2007) and Delamere included over forty impact statements in each scale and Fredline *et al* (2003) had an eighty questions that took between fifteen and thirty minutes to complete. With the number of questions being significantly higher than most general surveys there was concern over response rates, but the question design ensured the survey would not be time consuming. Overall, the objective of the survey design was a combination of a variety of methods to create an accessible tool that yielded measurable results for social impacts.

### *Questionnaire Sample*

The sample for the questionnaire is a purposive sample where respondents have been specifically targeted for their experience in the event industry in Limerick City (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The target group for the survey was those directly involved with the running and hosting of events in Limerick City as the responses relied on their knowledge, expertise and ability to review the social impact of events. The majority of earlier studies mentioned have concentrated on residents and attendees to as their sample, but due to time limitations it was determined that concentrating on individuals working in the events industry was more constructive in terms of data collected.

Gurosy *et al* (2004) purposely targeted event organisations to understand their perception, but this research looked at those who have worked on events to gain a complete synopsis of the social impacts in Limerick City. The questionnaire was distributed to over one-hundred and fifty potential respondents from a diverse range of professions related to events within the city. Event organisers, venue managers and event management students were the main sample sub-set, but with events encompassing so many other industries; such as tourism, marketing and media, all stakeholders involved in the event process were included. Local publically funded agencies, non-profit groups, sporting bodies and art and heritage organisations who have worked on events were also contacted to participate in the research. By expanding the respondent parameters the sample to contain an array of experiences and viewpoints, thusly enhancing the results.

As part of the survey design a cover letter accompanied the survey detailing the reasons for the research and survey, who was being targeted and why and what was required. The letter also highlighted that the questionnaire would not entail personal and sensitive information. The nature of the survey and the data collected circumvented any ethical considerations due to the design of the questions and the distribution method. All questions related only to a generalisation of the events they had been involved with therefore respondents could not be individually identified from responses. In addition, the survey was administered online and barring an IP address, the source was not catalogued maintaining anonymity. The survey was pilot tested to determine how it may be interpreted by respondents and adjusted accordingly for any anomalies (Sharp *et al*, 2002). The test group comprised of six academic peers who have both experience in the events industry in Limerick and familiarity with the topic. Also, having practical knowledge in designing questionnaires they foresaw issues in relation to layout, wording and the construction of each question. The feedback received correlated to the length of the questionnaire, but after reassessment it was felt that all the thirty-one questions were relevant. After the completion of the pilot-testing phase the questionnaire was deemed ready to be distributed.

The survey was distributed to via email through a link and included the aforementioned cover letter explaining the motivation for and aims of the survey. The growing popularity of online questionnaires due to ease of access and low cost were the also the determining factors in the selection of an online distribution channel. The survey design worked well within the limitations of online questionnaires with very few open or sensitive questions. As discussed in the primary research disadvantages survey responses are typically low and even more so for online-generated questionnaires. To increase the number of replies a large sample was contacted and professional connections within the events industry in Limerick City were utilised. The online survey site Survey Expression was chosen based on the features that accompanied the free software version. The website provided a professional look with question templates, unlimited questions, a maximum of two-hundred responses and printable reports. A comparison of competitor websites found Survey Expressions as the ideal programme to create and distribute the questionnaire.

### *Interviews*

Bowdin *et al* (2004) identified the importance of accessing the social impacts when evaluating events, but expressed the need for a more descriptive account than can be supplied by data and figures to properly understand the benefits. Interviews provide

researches with a more in-depth understanding of the topic and create “rich” qualitative data (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Through personal experiences and viewpoints, the interviewees supplied unique understanding of the social impacts of events and festivals in Limerick City. The qualitative data collected compliments the quantitative data gained from the questionnaires and created a comprehensive research process.

The interviews provided a more insightful perspective on the social impacts of events and festivals in Limerick City. While conducting the interviews the research was able to read non-verbal cues and get a better sense of how to direct the interview. More extensive information was supplied as overlooked topics and point arose through an open dialogue as a more comfortable and sincere atmosphere was created. During the interview process the researcher discovered issues relating to social impact in Limerick City that were not addressed in the questionnaire. A more profound assessment of the research topic was gained through conducting interviews. The main disadvantage to using interviews as a primary research tool is that they are time consuming. Desired interviewees may be problematic to obtain an interview because of scheduling, access or an unwillingness to participate. The data collected is challenging to analyse as it is qualitative and not easily measurable. Also, the presence of the interviewer can create bias as they can influence the responses. Conversely, the interviewee can lead the interview and causing a lack of information pertaining to the actual topic. A comprehensive understanding of the topic and selecting the appropriate candidates minimised the main disadvantages of interviews. However, the research had issues when trying to organise one interview which will be further explored in the limitations section of this chapter.

By having a free-flowing discussion about the topic stronger developed data can be accumulated creating a more accurate representation of the subject (Sharp et al, 2002). Initial contact with interviewees was through email with an explanation of why their insight would be beneficial to the research. The ethical consideration for the interviews was low as the subject required very little sensitive information beyond the interviewees’ opinions. However, interviewees were assured that the interview would only be used for this paper. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and were recorded with the permission of interviewees. The interviews were guided by a list of topics tailored for each individual interviewee based on their current and past position within the events sector in Limerick City. The guidelines were based on the questionnaire research and structure following a natural progression. When appropriate questions from the survey were asked to gain insights into key benefits and costs. A semi-structure interview took place guided by a list of topics tailored to each interviewee that allowed the interview to be more organic and have flexible feel. Originally, there were four proposed individuals to be interviewed for this paper, but due to a lack of access one was not conducted.

### *Limitations*

All research design has limitations stemming from several factors, which may create gaps in the research. The foremost constraint is time as it effects the amount of research that can be conducted especially concerning primary research. Limited time combined with time of year impacted on the research for this paper. In order to perform a complete social analysis for the social impacts of events residents and event attendees ideally should also be surveyed. There were no large community events taking place during the course of the research and therefore accessing event

attendees was deemed too challenging. To survey residents a questionnaire would have to be posted or hand delivered with a stamped address envelope to aid in collection and this would not only be time-consuming and have a high financial cost.

As previously mentioned there was a problem with accessing a potential interview candidate from a local residence committee. It found that discussing the topic with a group set up to address the social costs of an event would add a much needed dynamic to the research, but after repeated tries a representative could not be reached. Although the survey was distributed to a large sample size not all potential respondents could be reached directly as many only had a general contact email. Also, the surveys were only administered to those working with or in the industry and as experienced by Gursoy *et al* (2004) the results tend to be favourable when discussing the benefits while the influence of the costs are undervalued. The author being a student creates a limitation due to a lack of experience that affects the research and the analysis of the findings. A significant portion of time had to be dedicated to researching the topic, but also the process to carry out research. The initial deficit in knowledge about the social impacts coupled with comparatively minimal industry experience created a gap in the working knowledge of the researcher. The primary research tools were not utilised to their full potential because of inexperience thus affecting the collation and examination of the data. In the design of the survey, questions allowing multiple answers do not account for those working on the same event so there is no accurate count of how many events had features with social implications, such as road closures. However, this was taken into account during the initial design and it was reasoned that it was an acceptable cost. The surveys were designed to account for the perception of the impacts versus a study of events themselves and understanding the respondent experience was more central to the topic. Knowing the amount of events that have features with social implications does not necessarily result in an accurate depiction of the social impacts. In the scales developed the authors used a factoring process to measure the results of their research which created weighted and manageable results. The researcher for this paper was unfamiliar with the technique and did not feel comfortable in applying it when analysing the data collection.

Several areas have been affected by limitations and could be improved upon given the necessary resources. Time will always be a factor but more dedicated time would create a more in depth study of the social impacts. Being able to apply primary research methods to all groups affected by events would reveal an enhanced representation of the benefits and costs. The time and cost elements have required that residents and attendees be omitted from the process leaving those involved in events which caused biased results. The inexperience of the researcher affected the entirety of the research and has had bearing on the results. Limitations are part of the research process and must be properly acknowledged to understand the constraints and weakness of the research.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

After the primary research tools have been administered, the data is then collected and analysed. The results are processed through four-steps, "editing, coding, classification and tabulation", where the researcher extrapolates conclusions and uncovers patterns (Kothari, 2004:122). The use of mixed methodology means there

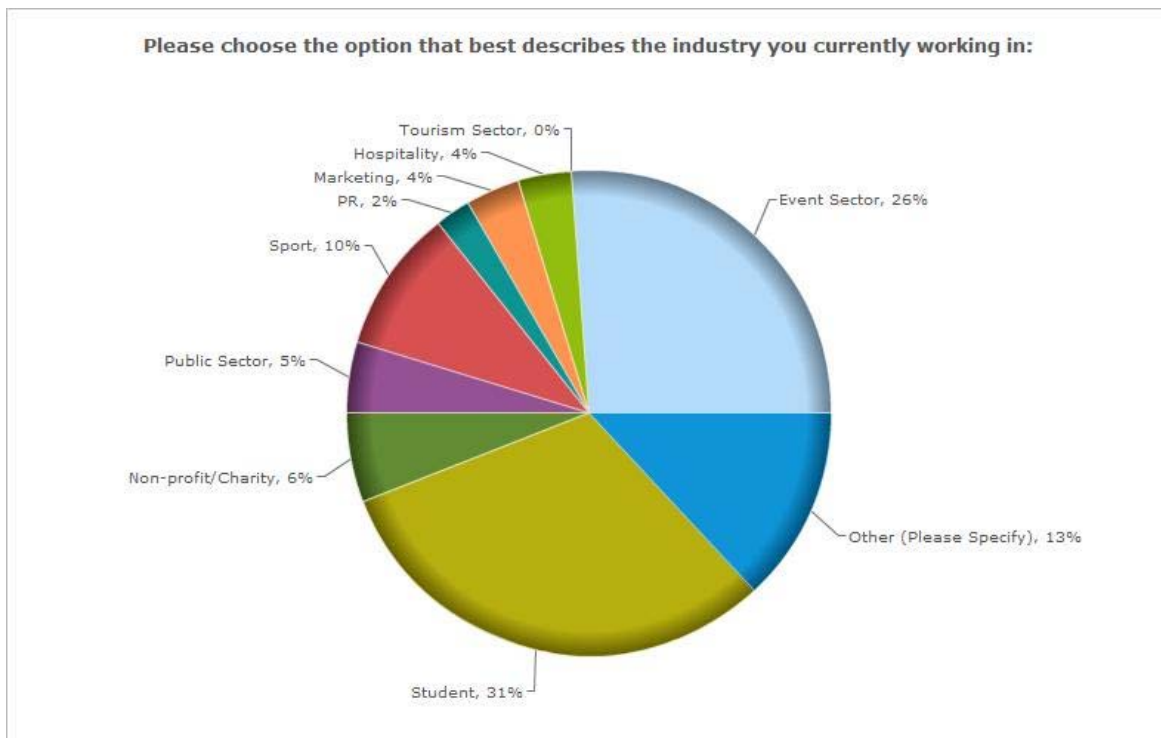


are two approaches to data analysis, the quantitative data are represented graphically and the qualitative results are discussed through emerging issues.

### Questionnaire Data Analysis

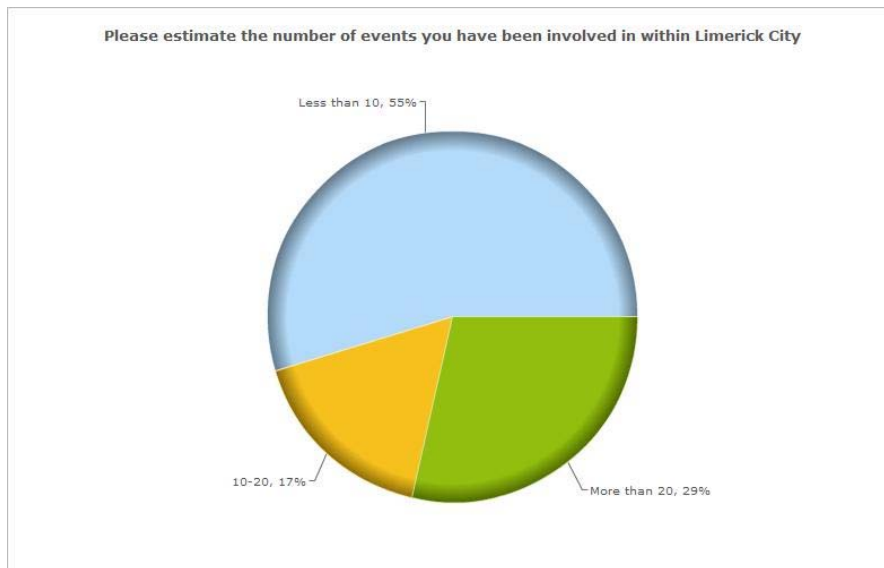
The following are the results from the questionnaire with a 56% response rate from professionals working on events in Limerick City. Comparatively two of articles researched had 8%-13% reply rates, one had over 20% with the highest being 59%. In total, there were ninety-four respondents with ten omitted due to being incomplete during the editing phase. A review of the questionnaires individually found to all be completed properly and relevant, thus no others were excluded. The coding, classification and tabulation for the questionnaire where all completed by software on Survey Expression's website. The survey was divided into three sections, respondent profile, event profile and social impacts and consisted of thirty-one questions. The first stage of the questionnaire established a professional profile of the respondents in relation to their experience working on events in Limerick City. The aim of the questions was to ascertain the level and type experience of respondents as to gauge the credibility of the overall responses to the questionnaire. The first question creates an overview of the industries the respondents are currently working in with main target group, the events sector and students, having the highest rates of 26.19% and 30.95%. The 13% that listed other represents eleven people who listed employment in arts, media, education, non-event related jobs or who are currently unemployed. The distribution of the survey was intended to capture a range of professions related to events in Limerick city and the sample received reflects a good result. All industries, bar the tourism sector, were represented in the questionnaire with a total of twenty-five respondents.

**Figure: 2 Current Industry of Employment**



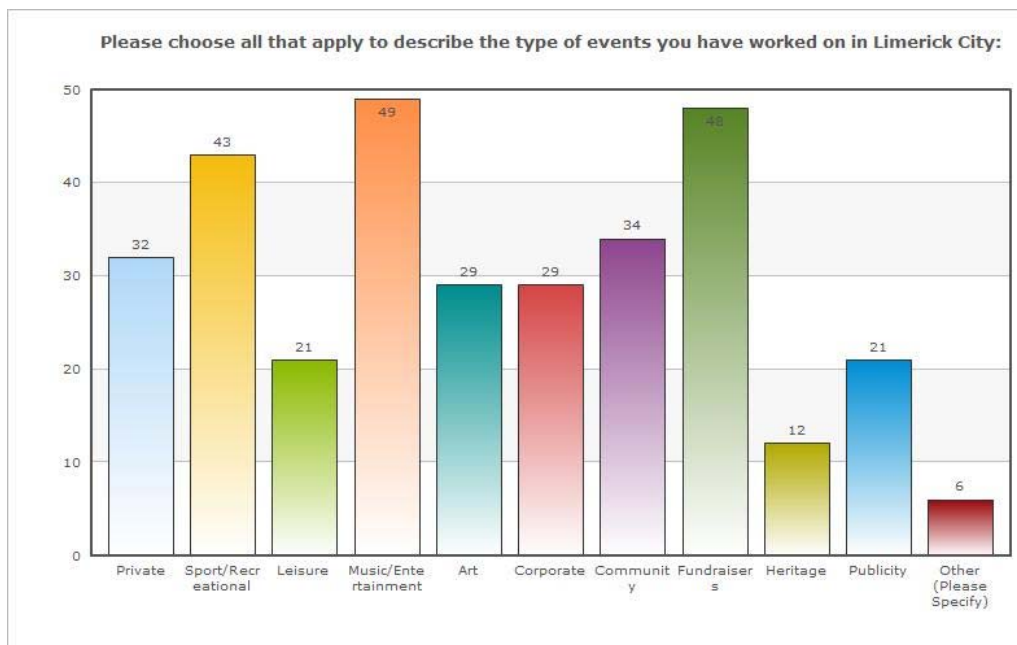
The four questions that followed pertained to the characteristics of the events the participants worked on within Limerick City to determine the levels of experience and the diversity of events. Over 50% have worked on less than ten events, which would correlate the high number of student responses and to professions not directly related to events, such as the public sector, hospitality and marketing. With twenty-four respondents having worked on over twenty events the group includes a high-level of experience.

**Figure: 3 Number of Events**



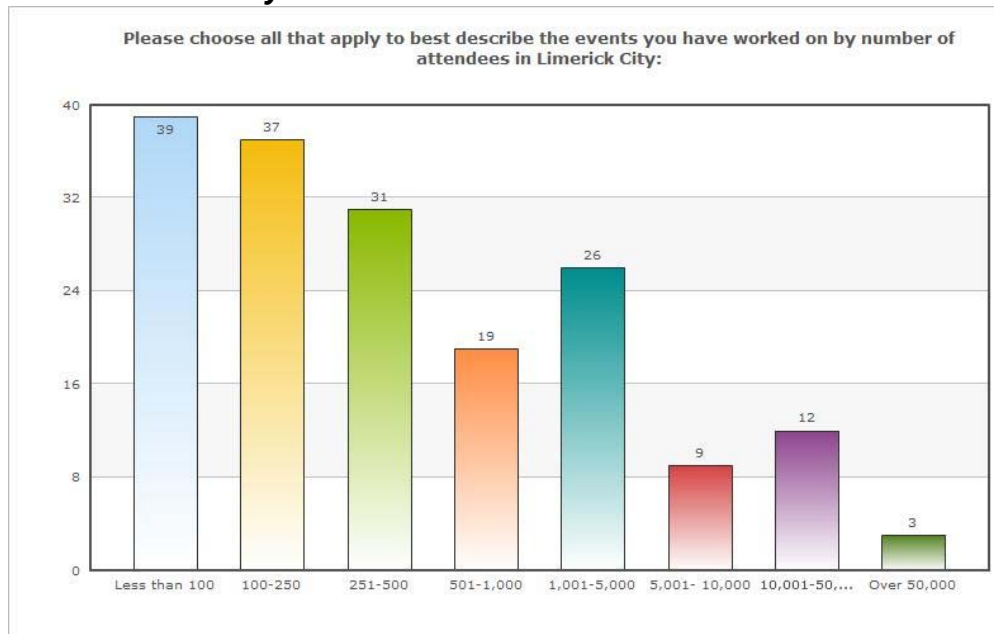
To gain an understanding nature and variety of the events the participants were asked to choose all the types of events they have worked on in Limerick City. Since, the respondents could select multiple answers, the average number of categories of events for each was almost four. The results highlight the array of events worked on by respondents as diverse and evenly spread. Although many of the respondents may have been referring to the same event it is still acceptable to find that music/entertainment, fundraising and sport/recreation are the most common events in Limerick City.

**Figure: 4 Types of Events**



The attendee numbers described the size of the events worked on in Limerick City ranging from less than 100 to over 50,000. Again, respondents were allowed to choose multiple answers with 39 having worked on small scale event of less than 100 and only three involved with an event over 50,000. The data allows the classification of the majority of event in Limerick being under 500 attendees and as expected the minority over 5,000, which are sport and community events.

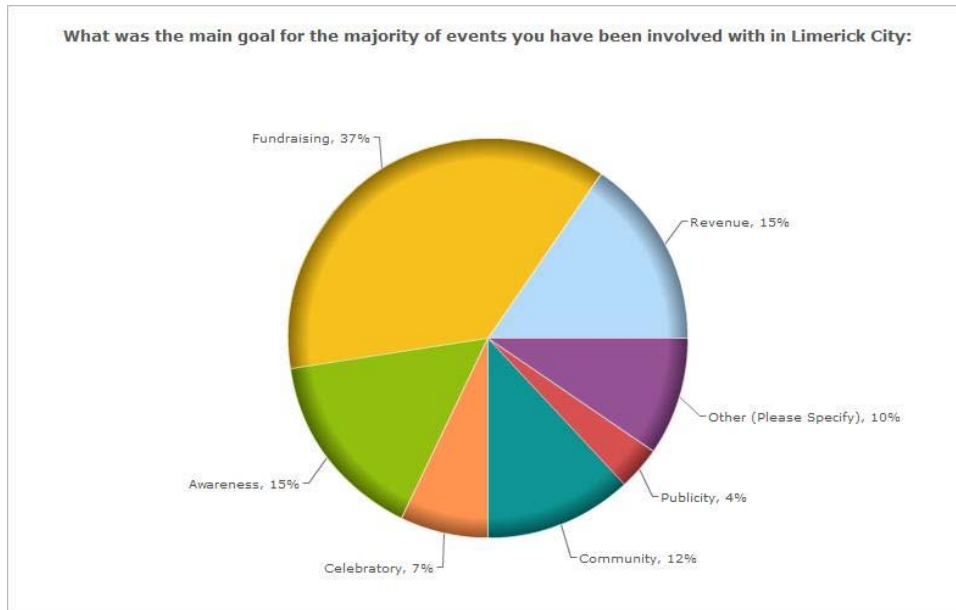
**Figure: 5 Event Size by Attendees**



### *Event Profile*

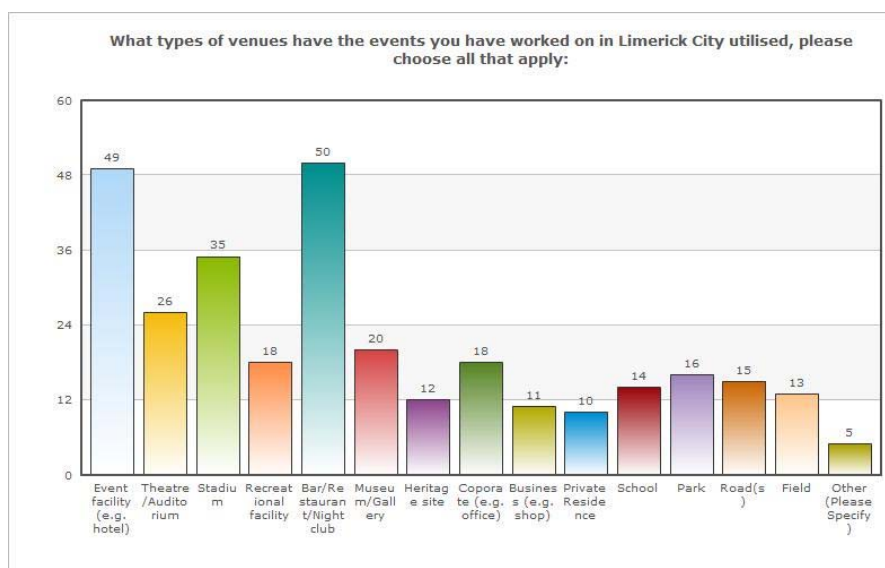
The second section of the survey included questions about the specific events worked on in Limerick City in order to create an event profiles. Through the event profiles, an assessment of the potential social impacts can be determined due to range of features, such as disruption to daily life of residents, media coverage and the use of public funds. Also, as a continuation of the first section respondent experience with the social impacts can be garnered from the results of the event profile. As discussed in the limitations, the questions allow for multiple answers and therefore the results do not reflect a total number of events as respondents will have worked on the same events. The main goal of the majority of events worked on was fundraising at 37% along with 15% for awareness demonstrates that many events are altruistic in nature, which is of great benefit to the community. The fundraising and awareness events are most commonly used by charities and non-profit organisations and provide validation outlined in secondary research. Coupled with 19% of events being held for celebratory and community the overall motives for the events worked on by respondents have a positive social impact.

**Figure: 5 Goal of Events**



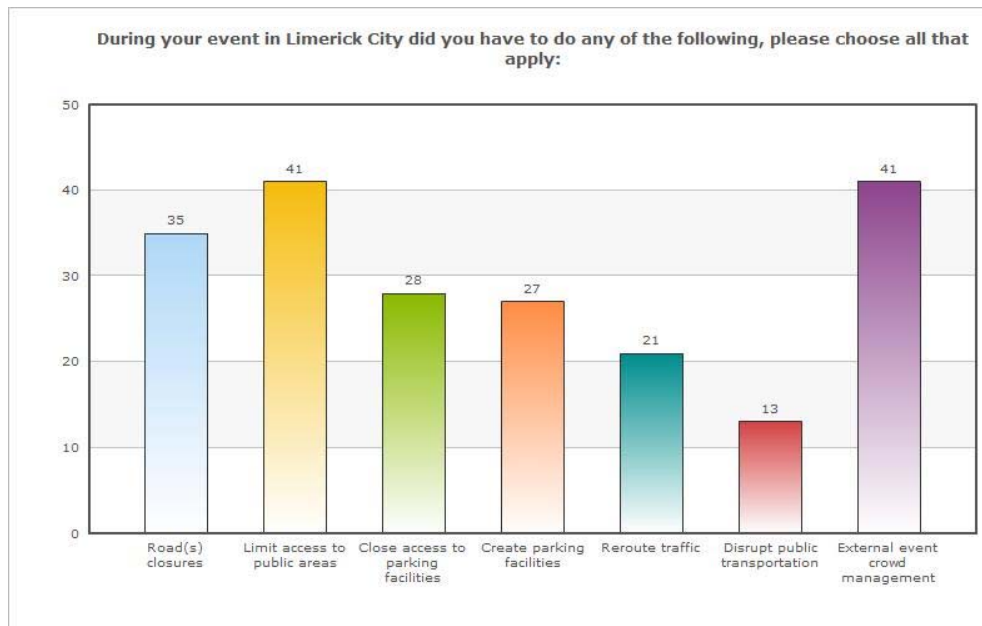
The type of venue can help determine if the past events in Limerick City led to the displacement of residents during an event. The use of non-purpose built venues creates not only extra issues for event organisers, but can infringe on the community through resource allocation and disruption of normal daily activities. The 84 respondents reported working on 312 events across the full range of venue options given. Purpose built and private venues accounted for 90% of sites the events utilised while only 31 participants have worked on an event in Limerick city located on a road or park. The bulk of events have been held in venues that would not create a negative social impact.

**Figure: 6 Venue Types**



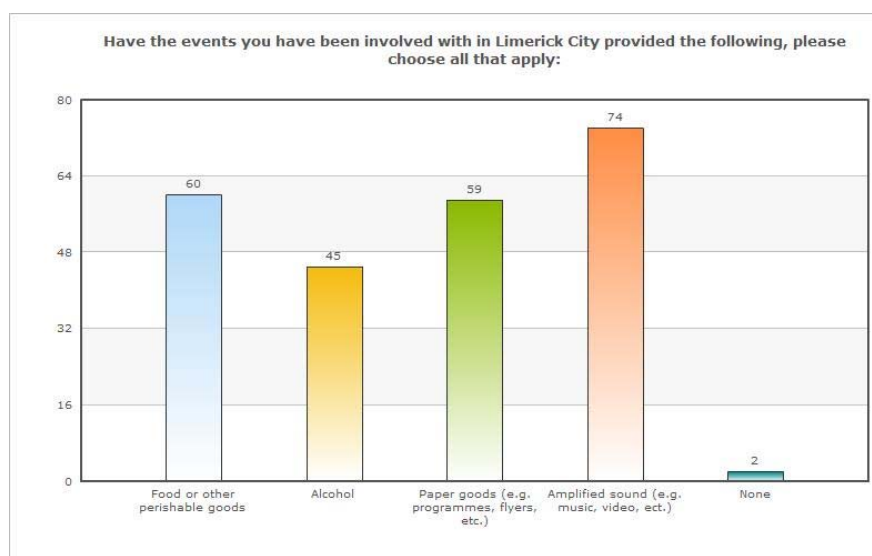
The interruption in daily life, a major social cost, can be caused by road closures, traffic re-routing, limited access to public areas and the need for crowd control. The graph illustrates that all respondents have been involved in events in Limerick City that have required these measures which could denote events having a high cost to the community. Fredline *et al* (2006) in the research for three events found that traffic congestion and lack of parking both changed significantly due to events by 70% and 58%. Respondents had 206 occurrences of event logistics that could attribute to traffic, parking and other negative social impacts.

**Figure: 7 Social Costs Public Access**



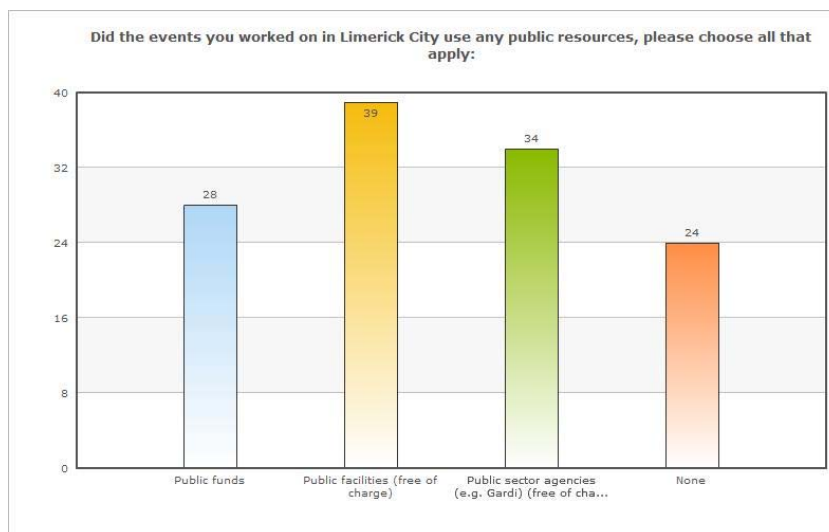
Other social costs of events are litter, noise and excessive drinking are what Small (2007) referred to as personal frustration and behavioural consequences. Alcohol can be linked to anti-social behaviour, providing food, beverages and paper goods can lead to littering and amplified sound can affect local residence. Approximately 99% of respondents worked on events in Limerick City where at least one of these was a provided so the potential negative social impact could quite high.

**Figure: 8 Social Costs Event Amenities**



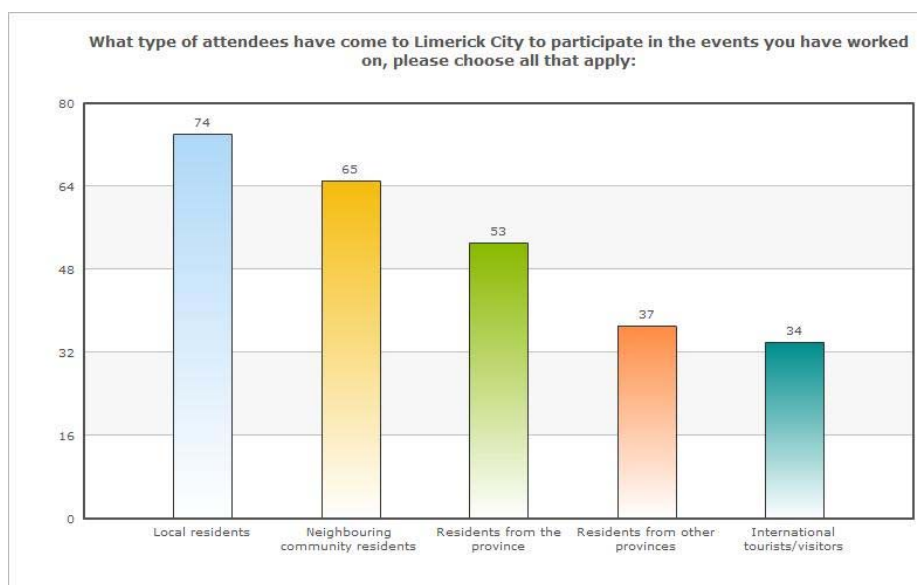
The use of public funds and resources can cause a negative perception of events and be seen as a social cost. Most of the events in Limerick require government assistance and depending on the perceived opportunity cost there is the potential for a negative impact. However, Fredline *et al* (2006) found that their research that 57% of residents believed event were a good use of public funds. A significant number of participants (24%) have not worked on an event that utilised public resources and public facilities being the most used resource at 30%. Only 22% of respondents reported their events receiving financial support, which is the resource that would cause the most controversy.

**Figure: 9 Public Resources**



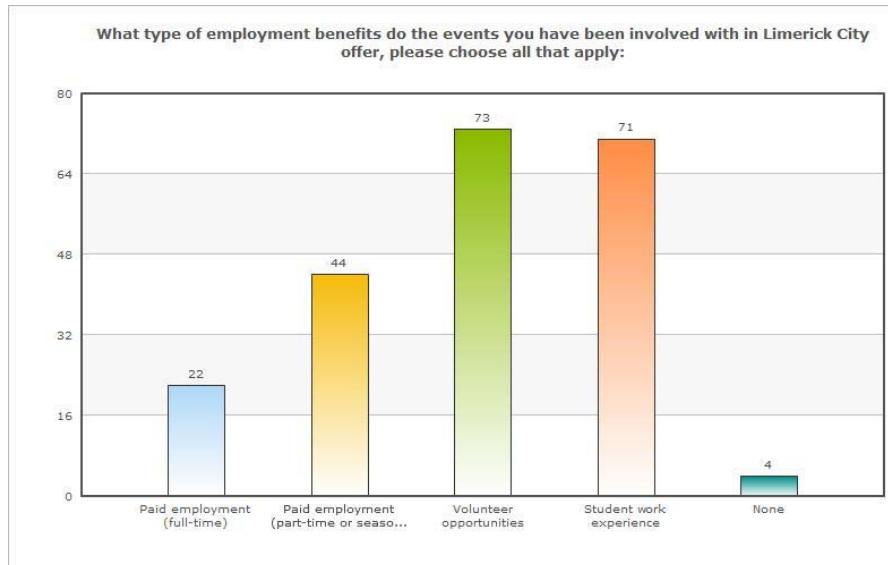
A benefit of events can be the social interaction between local and non-local residence from a community and social-cultural standpoint. The majority of respondents (88%) have worked on events that include the local community which provide opportunities socialise and provide entertainment both rating very high in research by Fredline *et al* (2006). With thirty-four respondents having worked on events with international visitors the margin for the social benefit is quite high as tourism and culture are both positive impacts.

**Figure: 10 Attendees by Place of Origin**



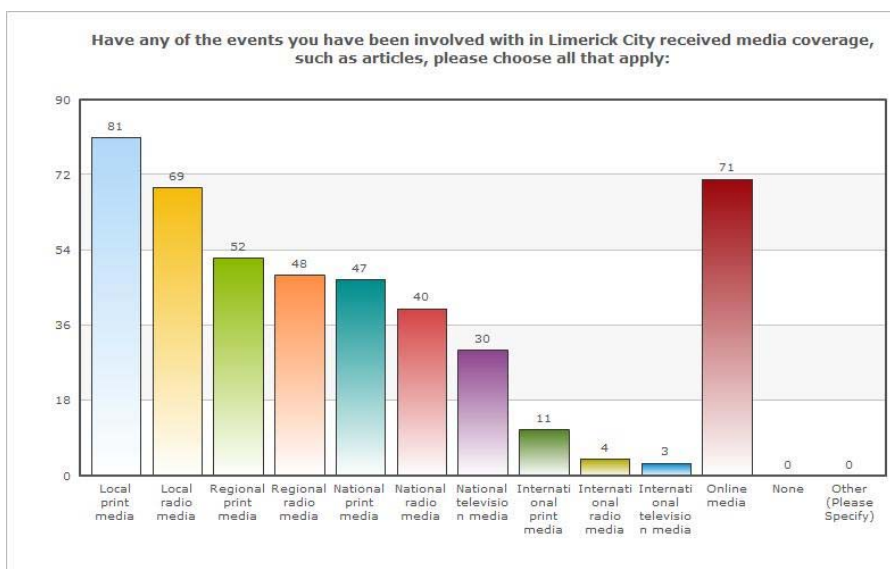
By creating employment opportunities events not only add to the local economy, but also provide valuable work experience and a chance to meet new people for workers (Fredline *et al*, 2003). Respondents reported that both volunteering (87%) and student work experience (84%) were largely utilised by Limerick City events.

**Figure: 11 Employment Opportunities**



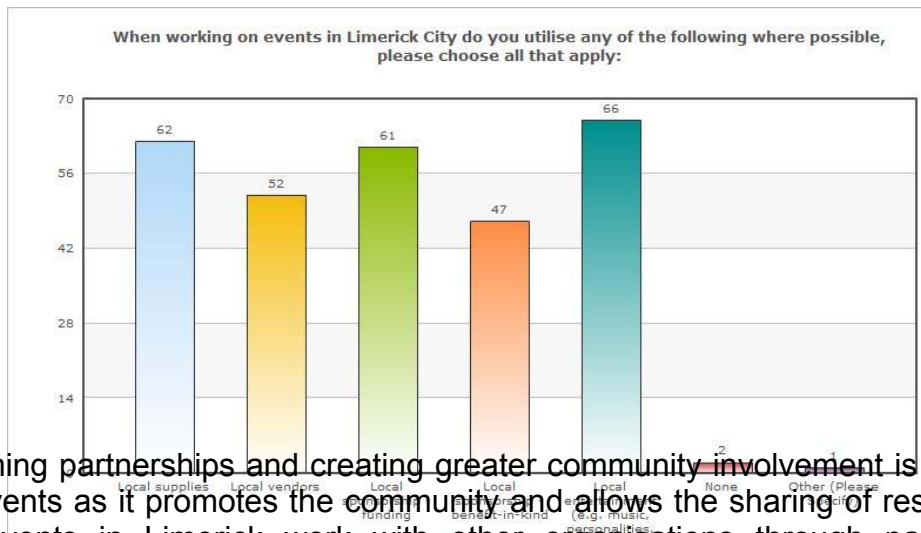
The media coverage for events can create a positive public relations and enhance the image of the community which is the highest rate social benefit across all studies (Delamere, 2001; Fredline, 2003; Small, 2007; Gursoy *et al*, 2004). Limerick events generate strong media coverage on a local, regional and even national level which facilitates in showcasing the city in an encouraging light. Predictably, the highest coverage came from local (96%) and online (85%) media, but 36% reporting working on an event that received national television media attention and 3% even got international television media.

**Figure: 12 Media Coverage**



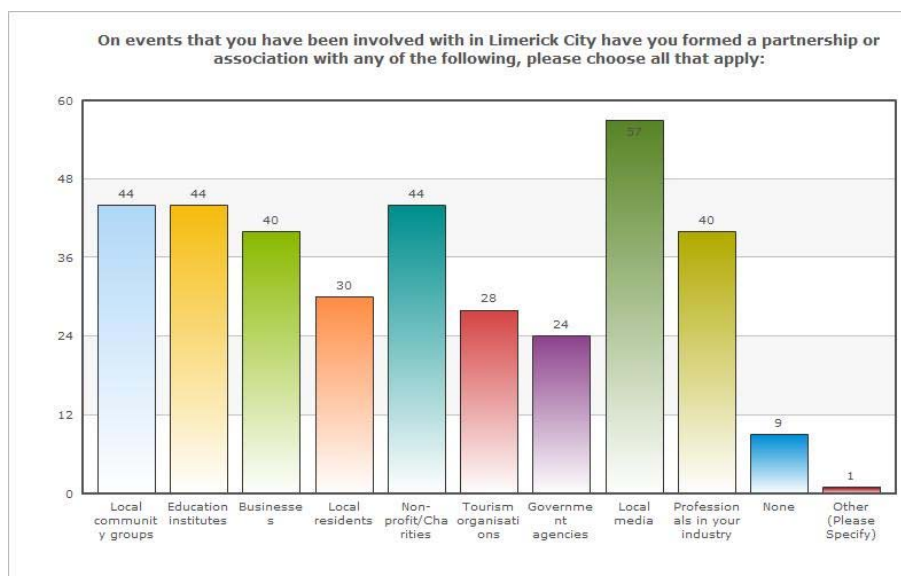
One of the social impact categories created by Fredline *et al* (2003) was social and economic development and utilising local businesses fulfils that criteria. Events stimulate the economy and promote social benefits as it creates a sense of community. The majority of events worked on by respondents report where possible they have worked with local business. Only 2 respondents have not worked with local business on any event in Limerick, but 79% have employed local entertainment and 74% have bought from local suppliers.

**Figure: 13 Local Business**



Forming partnerships and creating greater community involvement is a huge benefit of events as it promotes the community and allows the sharing of resources. Nearly all events in Limerick work with other organisations through partnerships and associations. The results show only 10% of participants have worked on an event that did not create relationships with other organisations. Community groups, education institutes and charities all have the highest rate (over 50%) of partnerships with events

**Figure: 14 Partnerships and Associations**





## Social Impacts

The last section of the survey asks respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements reflecting the social impacts of events. The statements are based on events in Limerick City and underscore the main determinants in the social impacts of events. The following charts illustrate the respondent results for each statement and overall the results are consistent. The respondents believe greatly in the social benefits of events as they have agreed or strongly agreed with statements relating to the positive impacts. The social cost statements were also steady with most responses disagreeing with the negative impacts. The Table 2. displays the results from the social impact statement section of the survey as discussed in the methodology. The results support previous findings by the studies researched with the enhancing the image and identity of the city being strongly agreed with by respondents. However, the social impact of having to something to look forward to rate the highest with 64% of participants strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing. Fredline *et al* (2006) found having fun with family and friends having the highest percent of change at 88%, but only 45% strongly agreed with this statement. The research revealed the biggest negative impacts were disruption to daily life and delinquent behaviour which is in-line with Fredline *et al* (2004) as traffic had a 70% change and rowdy behavior changed by 52%. In relation to the social costs, only 18% agreed that events disrupt the daily lives of residents, although it did rank as the biggest social cost. Also, delinquent behaviour was the second biggest cost with 13% agreeing and 26% being undecided. As expected the results are based on the perceptions of those working on events and may not accurately reflect the real social impacts of events in Limerick City as discovered by Gursoy *et al* (2004). In their study Gursoy *et al* (2004) also found enhanced image and time with family as the most important positive impacts. The research illustrated that the negative impacts were largely disregarded with high responses of totally disagree and agree for traffic congestion and increased crime rate. Overall, the results are on par with finding from similar studies with only small minor non-consequential variations.

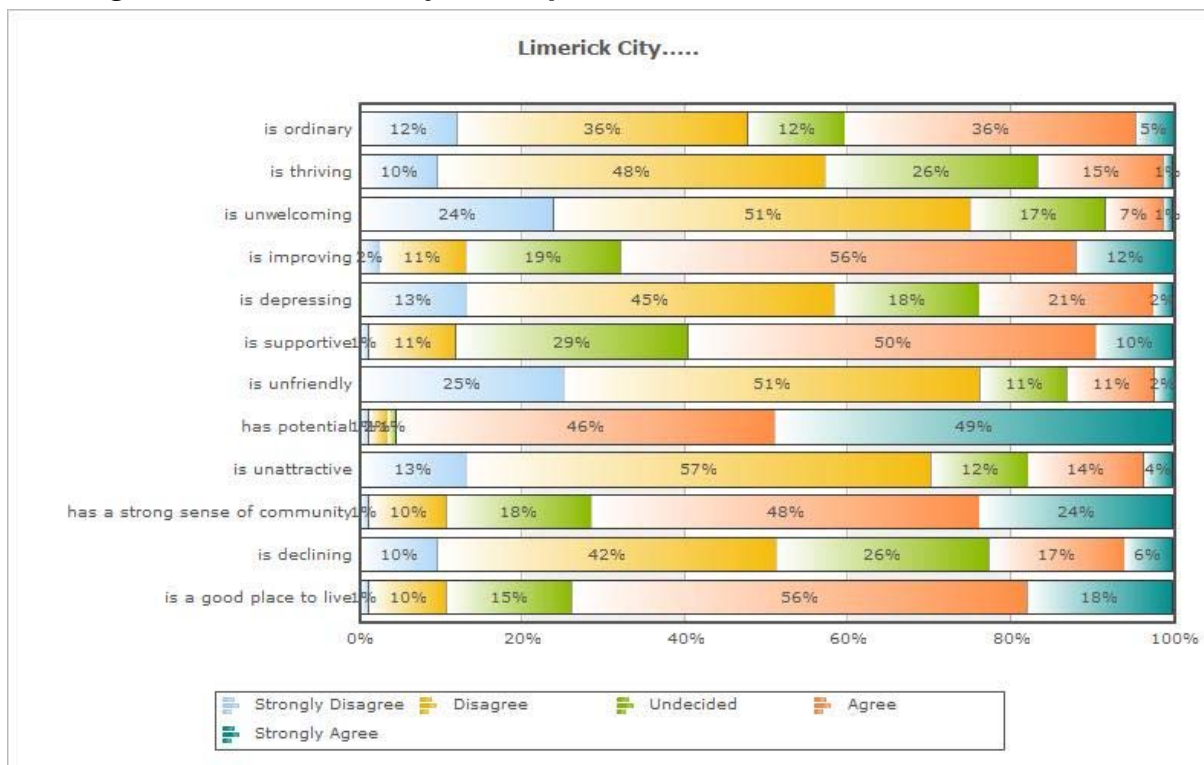
**Table: 2 Social Impact Statements**

Social Impact Statements					
Benefits	SA	A	U	D	SD
Events provide something to look forward to within the community	64%	33%	1%	0%	1%
Events in Limerick City enhance the city's image and identity	61%	36%	2%	1%	0%
Events allow the opportunity to showcase new ideas and discover new skills	60%	38%	2%	1%	0%
Events provide a means of entertainment through a variety of activities	58%	40%	0%	0%	1%
Events proved opportunities to meet new people and have new cultural experiences	55%	44%	0%	0%	1%
Events create a positive publicity and recognition for Limerick City	52%	46%	1%	0%	0%
Events showcase what is unique and special about Limerick City	46%	40%	8%	5%	1%
Events provide opportunities to spend time with family and friends	45%	50%	4%	1%	0%
Events increase interaction between residents and visitors/tourists	43%	44%	12%	0%	0%
Events promote the development and maintenance of public facilities in Limerick City	37%	40%	17%	6%	1%
Events increase a sense of community and well-being within Limerick City	36%	7%	1%	1%	0%
Costs	SA	A	U	D	SD
Events drain community resources in Limerick City	1%	4%	15%	46%	33%
Events intrude and disrupt the lives of local residents in Limerick City	0%	18%	18%	43%	21%
Events increase delinquent and rowdy behavior in Limerick City	1%	13%	26%	40%	19%
During events the rate of vandalism and crime increases in Limerick City	0%	7%	23%	35%	19%
Events in Limerick City create social inequity	6%	14%	30%	32%	1%

**Key:** SA: Strongly Agree A: Agree U: Undecided D: Disagree SD: Strongly Disagree

The final question required respondents to rate the descriptive words in relation to Limerick City. Most responses fall in the middle with very few creating a strong reaction, however it is interesting to note while 48% disagree that Limerick is thriving, 56% stated that it's improving and 49% strongly agree that Limerick City has potential. The graph below illustrates the results and they fall in line with the previous social impact statements, as the majority tend to agree with the positive and disagree with the negative.

**Figure: 15 Limerick City Description**



### Interview Data Analysis

As previously covered in the methodology section interviews were chosen as a primary research method to create a deeper understanding of the social impacts of events in Limerick City. In order to analysis data collected from key informant interviews there are three main processes, “summarising, categorising and structuring” of the meanings (Saunders, 2009: 440). The interviews were completed with three individuals who have different roles in the pertaining to events in Limerick City, therefore the approach most fitting was deemed summarising. The interview content will be individual reviewed and then compared to uncover emerging trends.

### Interview 1 Summary

The first interview was conducted on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at 2:30pm in the Limerick City Council Offices. Currently Interviewee 1 is the department head for Corporate Services for Limerick City and was previously ran the Department of Housing, Culture and Sport. In his previous position, gained experience in the event industry as he was deeply involved in the launch of the *Great Limerick Run* and was integral part of the team that won the bid for *City of Sport* in 2010 and *Ireland's City of Culture* 2014. He expressed the city council's support of event as part of initiatives to promote Limerick as a destination, create community engagement and develop a positive image for the

city. Events have a financial implications, such as the Great Limerick Run generated €2.2 million in revenue in 2011, but also they have social impacts which are fundamental to the growth of the city. In relation to social costs there has not been substantial resistance from local residents about road closures or limiting access to public spaces. The local government does support events using public resources, but they are very conscientious about investments. The office works towards creating partnerships and providing assistance to event organisers. A key point that came up during the interview was Limerick's role as a regional city and how it impacts events in the city, such as the hosting of the *St. Patrick's Day Parade*. Patrick is of the belief that the local community is very engaged in events as there are numerous events being held throughout the year and for example there are over 700 sports clubs in the area alone. Moving forward Limerick City Council is looking to create a unique selling point for the city by essentially creating a brand and events are big factor in this strategy.

### *Interview 2 Summary*

Interviewee 2 the head of Limerick Communications Office was interviewed on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at 1:30pm in the Limerick Communication Offices. As the head of the Communications Office Interview 2 has three roles, festivals and events, public relations and marketing. The public relations for the city are handled by the office, they produce marketing materials for festivals and events and she is part of the executive management team for *Riverfest* and the *St. Patrick's Day Parade*. Events are utilised by Limerick City as public relations tool to get people to start thinking about Limerick as a destination. In 2010, it was the first year the city received more positive than negative national press due to the number of events being held that year. Community engagement depends on the type of event, but individual events do cater to various demographics. The *Life Long Learning Festival* has over 150 events planned working and a key group for the festival is the elderly. The *Pig n' Porter* appeals to sports clubs, *Make a Move* festival targets youth cultural and the *Choral Festival* attracts international and local choirs. With so many free events encompassing a broad variety of themes there is ample opportunities for residents to become involved. Partnerships are an integral part of events and strong links with local business and government agencies are created through events.

The social costs are taken into consideration, but the office received very few if any viable grievances. With road closures, most of the events are during the day and generally take place on a Sunday lowering the potential implications for disruption of daily life. For the *St. Patrick's Day Parade*, information on road closures and traffic re-routings are published in print media, announce on local radio, posted on social media and detailed through signage. As far as alcohol abuse and delinquent behaviour there are implications, but as the events are day events they are less likely to contribute these costs. Plus, events that take place in the public domain guards are ultimately responsible for managing issues. Public funds and resources are appropriated for the large community events, but those events provide benefits to the community. As a whole events are being utilised for their social impacts by organisers, but it does depend on the reason for events, organisations whose motives are not financial are more focused on the social implications. "Events give the city life" and are hugely important in an economic, image-making and social roles. Overall there is strong support of events in Limerick City and hopefully there will soon be a dedicated festivals office.

### *Interview 3 Summary*

Interviewee 3 is, *managing partner of I Love Limerick which is a public relations and publicity organisation in Limerick City. He has wide variety of event experience from wedding planning and festivals to community events. In 2008, he organised Limerick Pride a weeklong festival of events and in 2011 he hosted This is Limerick bring heads of charities and organisations together. When being involved with events He found very few issues with road closures as everyone is very supportive of events. The local government is very accommodating and has supported a lot of event with public resources. Litter and delinquent behaviour are always going to be an issue but the positives outweigh the negatives of events. It is his belief that the most important benefit of events is social integration as it can be used as a tool to lessen social segregation through engagement. As a public relations tool events create positive attitudes for visitors and facilitate publicity and awareness. Events are dependent on public relations and marketing, but they also can provide publicity for the host community and organisation. Events are measured more on the economic value, but the social-cultural aspect is just as important as it generates pride.*

### *Emerging Trends*

The interviewees were people who are involved with events in Limerick City and as with the questionnaire their viewpoint may be skewed to the positive. However, it is believed that they gave an honest account based on their experiences and opinions. All three support the use of events as for positive social impacts especially when it comes to the identity for the city. The interviewees have never had a significant complaint or issue about any social costs for events. Limerick residents are very engaged with events and the range of types allows for social inclusion for all groups. The overall agreed benefits of events are entertainment and socialisation for residents, they attract visitors, offer cultural experiences and built an identity for the city. Events are a key component in the city's future as their positive impacts stimulate development for Limerick and its community.

## **5. Conclusion**

### *Research Aims and Objectives*

The objectives for this paper were successfully achieved by following the research process. A current literature review provided insights into the event industry and how social impacts are central to the host community. The investigation into previous reports on events hosted in Limerick City revealed that very few events have been analysed and there was a gap in the research when it came to the social impacts. Following guidelines produced by research primary research methods were designed and administered providing significant information on Limerick City events and their potential social impacts. The inductive approach led to theories being developed through the examination of data. The most of the aims of the research have been met through the objectives discussed in the previous section. The research explored the concept of social impacts and their importance to the event industry. The social benefits were identified through secondary research and the presence of social costs was discovered. Primary research led to a working knowledge of the perceived impact of the social implications of events in Limerick City. The determination of an ideal event model for the social impacts was not covered in this research as it was too ambitious for this paper. The most successful types of event for social impacts could be argued to be events whose main goal was not financial. Economic impacts are still considered more noteworthy than social or environmental, thus less time and effort is given to

maximising the social benefits. Finally, the legacy produced by events in the host community can be substantial if the economic, environmental and specifically social impacts are leveraged appropriately.

### *Concluding thoughts*

The critical literature review was the foundation for the primary research phase as it aided in the development of methods and provided comparable data previously analysed. The questionnaire and the interviews produced a considerable amount of data to examine. Key findings are defined as data that was both significant and relatable to the analysis of the social impacts of events and festivals in Limerick City. The questionnaire received a solid response rate which lends itself to drawing credible conclusions. Also, the profile of the respondents was ideal due to the dispersal across industries and their experience based on types, scales, style of venue and size of events. From the event profile section it can be surmised that the majority of participants have worked on events that have potentially high social implications both positive and negative. The participants' practical event industry knowledge and familiarity with the social impacts added to the legitimacy of the research. The probability of negative impacts occurring was ascertained through questions relating to the event features and amenities. All respondents have worked on events that limited access to public areas with 42% of participants reporting road closures as a feature of an event they have been involved in. Less than 3% of respondents have not worked on events that provide services or products that contribute to litter and anti-social behaviour. Noise pollution can cause disruption in the daily lives or cause them to leave the city and 88% of respondents have worked on an event in Limerick with amplified sound. The use of public resources can be seen as a negative impact and an estimated 70% of respondents was involved with an event that received a form of public aid. The social costs of events based on this section of the research alone are quite substantial, but further findings will clarify if how significant they are.

In the same manner as the social costs, the likelihood of social benefits was established. The importance of socialisation as a social impact is prominent and there was a solid result over the range of attendees at the local, national and international level. Only 5% of participants worked on events that did not include employment opportunities. Media coverage is part of creating and verifying the positive image for a host community and all participants' events have received some form of media attention. Just over 2% of events have not used local products and services which is a great result as it has both an economic and social impact. As well as sourcing local suppliers, forming associations with other organisations also strengthens ties to the community with 90% having reported forming at least one partnership. Again, like the social costs, the benefits of events are clearly present in the events hosted by Limerick City. The social impact statement questionnaires provide perspective on the event profile section, because they accounted for the perception of the impacts. Being that social implications are mostly intangible there are not concrete and depend greatly on the individual's opinion of them. The responses to the statements were matched the findings from previous social impact studies and can be recognised as being an accurate representation of the social impact analysis. The two main costs, traffic congestion and delinquent behaviour, and benefits, promoting positive image and fun with loved ones, were fundamentally the same across the board for all the research. The last question gauge how the respondents viewed Limerick City and fell on the positive side of the scale. The finding that 74% of participants think Limerick City is a

good place to live shows that those involved in the events believe in the city and are more likely to stay and create event opportunities. The interviews of the key informants were of those who like the survey participants have a more positive view of the social impacts of events. Nevertheless, their belief in the positive implications of events fosters an environment where events can flourish and really provide benefits for the community. The use of events as an image maker, to create engagement and integration and provide entertainment of the local community are all impacts the three interviewees strongly agreed on.

As Limerick City continues to develop as a host community for events the social impacts will come to the forefront for event evaluation. The positive and negative impacts of events must be understood to make informed decisions about utilising events to achieve long-term goals that extend beyond the event (Fredline *et al*, 2003). It is becoming clearly apparent to event industry professionals and academics that the social impacts for the host community require more dedicated assessment (Small, 2007). Cities have been influenced by hosting events and events are becoming of greater significance in creating identity not just supplementing the economy (Ziakas & Costa, 2012). The practice of rationalising the need for an event through revenue generated is a more straightforward process, but the social impacts should be factored in with the same influence (Wood, 2006). One of the most important roles as an event manager is to anticipate impacts to lessen the costs and bolster the benefits (Allen *et al*, 2007). As the event industry is still maturing, evaluation is key to aiding in development and proving the worth of the sector (Allen *et al*, 2007). Events are part of everyday life and have been used for years as a form of celebration and entertainment, but the industry is growing and with it, events are seeing growth in size and scale. Other industries are using events to support their aims and to facilitate their business due to the positive impacts. The expansion and extension of the events industry requires greater awareness of the influence events have on stakeholders and the host community. For the researcher an insight was gained through respondents who have worked on events staged in Limerick City and aided in generating an awareness and appreciation for the social implications. The research has provided another dimension to the authors' knowledge of events and deepened the understanding of all the characteristics of events.

### *Recommendations*

The main recommendation arising from the research is that event managers, especially in Limerick City, should be very well versed in the social impacts of events. As stated throughout the research understanding the implications will aid in limiting costs and maximising benefits. The social impacts are also a meaningful way to evaluate events as they have a longer lasting legacy than economic impacts. Also, due to the economy the social benefits provided can be leveraged to gain support and investment in events. The recommendations for the research are based on the limitations discussed in the methodology section. The lack of time only allowed for a partial social impact analysis as not all relevant stakeholder input was collected. To create a thorough examination it is recommended that event attendees and residents also be surveyed as they would have a more impartial viewpoint. It is suggested that spectators and participants for the three largest Limerick events, the *St. Patrick's Day Parade*, *Riverfest* and the *Great Limerick Run* receive questionnaires as well as a few smaller community events, such as the *Life Long Learning Festival*. Residents should also receive a survey and interviews with residents groups should take place, specifically

within the city and near local venues. Organisations, business and community groups could also be interviewed or given a questionnaire. The events themselves could be assessed for social impact features and amenities to garner how many events provide social benefits and are a risk for social costs. The paper has created a platform for the possibility of a more in depth study into the social impacts of events and festivals in Limerick City.

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