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How is the Residents' Level of Interest Influenced (or not) by Their Perceptions of the Social Impacts of A Recurring Event?

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Abstract

This study evaluated residents' level of interest in a recurring event based on their perceptions of the social impacts resulting from the event. A survey was conducted amongst residents employing a questionnaire. The results revealed four social impacts, namely, destination impacts, negative community impacts, public impacts and economic impacts. Negative impacts and destination impacts are the top two social impact factors. The residents' level of interest in the festival is low (with only 16% being avid fans), which is unexpected considering the periodic nature of the festival for the last 28 years. Unique to this study was that among the social impact factors, only public impacts were a predictor of residents' level of interest in the festival. Festival organizers need to ensure that the positive impacts supersede the adverse effects to improve residents' support for and interest in the festival. It was evident that residents do not necessarily support a recurring event, and that initiatives are needed to spark the interest of the residents as they influence the sustainability of such a festival.

Keywords: festival, social impact, resident, community, Hermanus, whale festival

Comment le niveau d'intérêt des résidents est-il influencé (ou pas) par leurs perceptions des impacts sociaux d'un événement récurrent ?

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Résumé

Cette étude a évalué le niveau d'intérêt des résidents pour un événement récurrent en fonction de leurs perceptions des impacts sociaux résultant de l'événement. Une enquête a été menée auprès des résidents à l'aide d'un questionnaire. Les résultats ont révélé quatre impacts sociaux, à savoir les impacts sur la destination, les impacts négatifs sur la communauté, les impacts publics et les impacts économiques. Les impacts négatifs et les impacts sur la destination sont les deux principaux facteurs d'impact social. Le niveau d'intérêt des résidents pour le festival est faible (seulement 16 % sont de fervents fans), ce qui est inattendu compte tenu du caractère périodique du festival depuis 28 ans. La particularité de cette étude était que parmi les facteurs d'impact social, seuls les impacts publics étaient un indicateur du niveau d'intérêt des résidents pour le festival. Les organisateurs du festival doivent veiller à ce que les impacts positifs l'emportent sur les effets négatifs afin d'améliorer le soutien et l'intérêt des résidents pour le festival. Il était évident que les résidents ne soutiennent pas nécessairement un événement récurrent et que des initiatives sont nécessaires pour susciter l'intérêt des résidents dans la mesure où elles influencent la durabilité d'un tel festival.

Mots-clés : festival, impact social, résident, communauté, Hermanus, observation des baleines

1.0 Introduction

Festivals are defined as a series of activities that attract visitors with similar interests to an individual location, enabling them to experience the culture, traditions, natural attractions, music, dance or arts or a combination of attractions (Irshad, 2011). According to O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002), communities are willing to share their culture, traditions, and environment as tourism products and resources to attract tourists with a more significant economic advantage than the residents of the area. The economic benefits of festivals, which are expressed in the form of increasing job opportunities, tourism development and the attraction of funding for local communities, have helped fuel the drive to develop festivals (Wilson et al., 2017) and, where possible, recurring festivals.

There is a direct relationship between festivals and tourism mainly because of income generation and economic growth stimulation (Getz, 1995; Uriarte et al., 2019). In a bid to boost economic stimulus, many cities have looked inwards to developing their tourism potential (Boo & Busser, 2006; Calero & Turner, 2020) through the use of festivals and events (Drammeh-Licentiatie & Andersson, 2019). Festivals generate revenue through the influx of tourists (Ololo et al., 2019; Yozukmaz et al., 2020), even more so in the case of a recurring event. Festivals help build the community identity by creating a cultural image (Gursoy et al., 2004; Yolal et al., 2016). Getz (1995) and Andersson and Getz (2009) opined that festivals have the potential to generate a significant amount of tourism when delivering services tailored to the needs of the income-generating region.

One such festival is the Hermanus Whale Festival in South Africa, which is land-based and attracts tourists from all over the globe (Hermanus Whale Festival, 2020). The festival aims to celebrate the conservation of whales and other marine wildlife (Hermanus Whale Festival, 2020). A literature review provides limited answers to this question. Answers to this question will shape future festivals, strategies for community inclusion and improved management of social impacts that will ensure that residents remain interested or grow to higher levels of interest over time.

Recurring festivals or events have an impact on local communities, be it positive or negative. The need to determine the effect of this festival is two-fold: first, to keep improving the festival by understanding the impacts it has on the local communities, and second, to ensure that a sustainable festival is held each year where high levels of community participation are achieved. Impact on communities can be divided into three categories: environmental, social and economic effects. The present research will focus on the social impact (social, economic and environmental effects) of this specific festival (Yürük et al., 2017). Hall (1992, p. 67) defined social impacts as "the manner in which tourism and travel effect changes in the collective and individual value systems, behaviour patterns, community structures, lifestyle and quality of life." Some of these changes only become evident over a longer term. Thus, it is crucial to analyze the social impacts of events and the level of resident interest in a recurring event, in this case, the Hermanus Whale Festival.

1.1 Impacts of Events and Festivals on Residents

Events and festivals have wide-ranging impacts on communities, influencing cultural, economic, and social dimensions. These gatherings act as platforms for cultural expression, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for diverse traditions and artistic talents within a community (Getz, 2008). The cultural

enrichment resulting from events contributes to the preservation and celebration of local heritage, enhancing the overall cultural identity of a community.

Economically, events and festivals play a vital role in stimulating growth. The influx of visitors during these occasions generates revenue through increased tourism, local business activities, and the creation of job opportunities (Richards, 2017). Research indicates that the economic benefits extend beyond the immediate event period, with the potential for long-term positive effects on local economies (Getz, 2008). This economic impact not only supports existing businesses but also encourages the development of new enterprises, contributing to a more robust local economy.

Socially, events and festivals foster community cohesion by providing opportunities for shared experiences and social interaction. Residents actively participating in these events through volunteering or showcasing their talents can strengthen social bonds, instilling a sense of pride and ownership within the community (Richards, 2017). Despite potential challenges such as temporary disruptions in the form of increased traffic and noise, the overall social benefits contribute to a more vibrant and connected community.

Festivals exert significant impacts on residents, encompassing both positive and, at times, opposing challenges that can affect various aspects of their lives. The positive effects are multifaceted, contributing to the overall well-being and community dynamics. Residents often experience cultural enrichment as festivals provide a platform for the celebration and preservation of local traditions, fostering a sense of identity and pride in one's cultural heritage (Getz, 2008). The social fabric of communities is strengthened through increased opportunities for shared experiences, social interaction, and community engagement during festive events (Richards, 2017). Residents actively participating in festivals, whether volunteering or showcasing their talents, can establish stronger social bonds and a deeper sense of belonging within the community.

Economically, festivals offer both opportunities and challenges for residents. On the positive side, these events can stimulate economic activities, provide job opportunities, and support local businesses through increased tourism and consumer spending (Richards, 2017). However, residents may also encounter temporary disruptions such as heightened traffic and noise during festivals, impacting daily routines and potentially causing inconveniences (Getz, 2008). Striking a balance between the economic benefits and mitigating potential disruptions is crucial for maintaining resident satisfaction.

Research by Getz (2008) and Richards (2017) provides comprehensive insights into the impacts of festivals on residents, emphasizing the need for community planners and organizers to consider the multifaceted nature of these effects. Understanding the dynamics of festival impacts on residents is essential for creating events that not only celebrate cultural diversity and foster social cohesion but also address potential challenges to ensure a positive and harmonious experience for the entire community.

It has been observed that engaging local communities at all levels of tourism improve sustainability over time, and their involvement assists in reducing the negative impacts and increasing the beneficial effects on the host communities (Post & Lundin, 1996; Lee, 2013; Lee & Jan, 2019; Digun-Aweto et al., 2019).

McGehee and Andereck (2004) and O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002) reported that an increase in the number of tourists due to festivals or events had provided

opportunities for locals to sell more of their products and services, which improved the growth and development of businesses in direct contact with tourism and related activities. Thus, festivals help improve the local economy (Yolal et al., 2009). The research of Yolal et al. (2016) observes that the economic benefits are usually one of the most visible positive impacts of festivals on the community. Kwiatkowski et al. (2018) noted that the impacts of the festivals are influenced mainly by the measure to which it is ingrained in the local economy and how large the festival is. The impact depends greatly on the local economy's size and structure and the festival attendees' composition (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Kwiatkowski et al., 2018). The implication is that the ripple effect helps strengthen the local and regional economy (Sharma et al., 2008). Saayman and Saayman (2012), Thrane (2002) and Saayman and Rossouw (2010) reported findings that reflect how visitor expenditure improved the local economy.

The increase in “festinos”—defined as a festival goer (Saayman & Saayman, 2006, p. 573)—has a direct relationship with the pressure on social amenities, which might lead to an improvement (or degradation) of social amenities (Huh & Vogt, 2008). Andereck et al. (2007) reported that community members who have a tourism enterprise or are directly linked to a tourism venture usually have positive notions about tourism. The issue of residents living close to the festival areas can have a two-sided perception, some positive and others negative (Wang & Pfister, 2008; Sharma et al., 2008). Usually, residents who have a direct connection with a festival and benefit directly from it have a positive perception of its socio-cultural or economic benefits. On the contrary, community members with negative perceptions of a festival sometimes feel left out as they feel that festivals invade their privacy, leading to overcrowding of social amenities and public spaces.

1.2 Level of Interest in Festivals

Festivals are linked to destination attractiveness, which is usually centred on recurring event types, be it natural, sports, cultural, heritage or historical (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2018). Gibson et al. (2011) implied that stakeholders, such as residents, are interested in being players in the festival processes help to better the festival and may sometimes yield more economic benefits due to participation. Community participation is thus essential in hosting festivals. However, many festivals are organized with little or no involvement of local communities and with organizers of these festivals as the major benefactors of the investment (Tosun, 2000; Saufi et al., 2014). However, host communities' participation is pivotal to tourism's sustainability since it creates an inherent need to protect and preserve resources because a sense of ownership has been established (Dragouni & Fouseki, 2018).

The studies of Mahony and van Zyl (2002), Tloko and Swart (2008), Slabbert and Saayman (2011), Slabbert and Viviers (2013), Slabbert et al. (2013), Muresherwa et al. (2017), and Scholtz et al. (2019) evaluate the impact of festivals on host communities in South Africa in general. Still, there has been little research which focused on a naturally occurring event such as whale aggregation at Hermanus, around which a marine wildlife tourism festival has been developed and the level of interest of residents. Findlay (2007) investigated the attitudes and expenditures of tourists attending the Hermanus Whale Festival, while the research of Kruger et al. (2018) examined factors that determine memorable experiences for whale watchers. This study significantly contributes to the research focused on increasing the level of

interest of residents in recurring events based on the social impacts thereof. Increasing the interest of residents has been a challenge experienced by a number of events.

The exploration of individuals' motivation to attend festivals is grounded in key contributions from event tourism and consumer behaviour literature. Crompton's seminal work in 1979 advanced our comprehension of travel motivations by introducing the concept of push and pull factors, laying the foundation for subsequent research (Crompton, 1979). Pearce and Lee's 2005 study further refined the theoretical landscape with the travel career approach, integrating push and pull factors to illuminate motivations' evolving nature over a tourist's travel trajectory (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Kim et al.'s 2005 application of the push-pull model to golf tourism showcased its versatility, demonstrating its effectiveness in diverse contexts, including the nuanced motivations linked to festival attendance (Kim et al., 2005). Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn (2016) explored tourists push and pull travel motivations to participate in Songkran Festival in Thailand showcasing the relevance to revised marketing strategies, promotion and decision-making about destination development (Tsai & Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016). Furthermore, Fakeye and Crompton's 1991 study significantly advanced our understanding of the interplay of push and pull factors among different visitor segments, particularly through the lens of destination image (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Collectively, these influential works provide a robust foundation for researchers exploring the intricate dimensions of attendee motivations at festivals, offering insights that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing event participation.

2.0 Methodology

The methodology focuses on the study area, questionnaire, sampling, and survey and statistical analysis.

2.1 Study Area

The research was carried out in the coastal town of Hermanus on the southern coast of the Western Cape province of South Africa, 34°25'7.32"S, 19°14'4.06"E, which is famous for land-based watching of the southern right whales. Hermanus is a city located on the southern coast, where southern right whales congregate from July to October, corresponding to the latter part of winter and early spring (Hermanus Whale Festival, 2017). As a result of this unique natural occurrence, the Hermanus Whale Festival commenced in 1992 and has been presented for 28 years (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). According to Rogerson and Rogerson (2019), the coastal town of Hermanus has experienced a boom as a tourism and ecotourism destination with about 90,000–100,000 annual visits, which creates opportunities for the residents.

2.2 Questionnaire

The in-person survey was conducted to determine residents' perceptions of the festival. Literature consulted in preparing the questionnaire includes research that has been conducted amongst residents who attended the Winter Wonderland Festival in London, United Kingdom; Innibos National Arts Festival in Mbombela, South Africa and Vryfees, Bloemfontein, South Africa as well as residents living in close proximity to the West Coast National Park (South Africa) Addo Elephant National Park (South Africa) and Tsitsikamma National Park (South Africa). The questions for the survey were developed from studies conducted at previous festivals (Slabbert et al., 2012; Van der Merwe et al., 2011) and modified to fit the objective of the Hermanus Whale Festival

with reference to measuring the level of interest. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A required demographic information of the respondents (age, gender, occupation and educational status). Section B consisted of questions pertaining to the level of interest; residents were asked to indicate their level of interest in the festival, ranging from avid fan, casual fan, little interest, to no interest at all. Section C comprised constructs relating to social impacts of the festival on residents, consisting of 32 constructs designed to evaluate the social impacts of the festival on the residents using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly.

2.3 Sampling and Survey

This survey took place at the festival's main terrain and other surrounding areas outside the festival terrain in Hermanus. It was conducted from September 30 to October 2, 2017. This survey was done using convenience sampling (non-probability sampling) since a list of residents could not be obtained (Neuman, 2013; Creswell, 2014).

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in research where participants are chosen based on their easy accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Unlike probability sampling methods, such as random sampling, convenience sampling does not ensure that every individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Cohen et al., 2018).

In convenience sampling, participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate rather than through a random or systematic process. This method is often chosen for its practicality and ease of implementation, especially when time, resources, or logistical constraints limit the feasibility of more rigorous sampling approaches.

Respondents were asked whether they were residents of the area, and upon indicating that they were residents, the purpose of the survey and the questionnaire was explained to them, and they were kindly asked to complete it. Out of 250 questionnaires, a total of 200 were analyzed.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

The data was coded using Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Version 20). Excel was used for imputing and transferring the data from the paper survey to the computer. The data was transferred from Excel to SPSS for statistical analysis. Frequency tables were developed to analyze the profile of the respondents. To identify the social impacts, an exploratory factor analysis—a principal component factor analysis using a Varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalization—was performed on the 32 social impact constructs. Using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) criteria for sampling adequacy, a value higher than 0.8 was recorded, indicating that the sampling was adequate and suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2018). Kaiser's (1970) criteria were employed in extracting factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Factor loading with values greater 0.4 was recognized as items contributing significantly to the factors. A Cronbach alpha, which is also referred to as the reliability coefficient, was used to determine the internal consistency of the factors. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test for significant differences in the social impact factors on the interest level of residents in the festival. Linear regression was used to examine significant differences between the levels of interest in the festival and the perceptions of the social impacts on residents. A regression analysis was used to predict the value of the level of interest in the social impact factors.

3.0 Results

The results section consists of four subdivisions: first the profile of respondents; second, the level of interest of residents; third, the social impacts analysis; and fourth, the effect of social impact perceptions on residents' level of interest.

3.1 Profile of Residents

Table 1 gives an overview of the profile of residents who participated in the research, indicating that the vast majority of the respondents were middle-aged and educated, and the most significant percentage spoke English and Afrikaans. Table 2 indicates the level of interest and shows that 46% of the community are interested in the festival and will attend when they can.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Residents

Category	Demographics
Gender	Male 73%, female 27%
Age	Average age 38.4 years
Level of education	No school 3%, matriculation 47%, diploma/degree 33%, post-graduate 5%, professional 4%, other 8%
Language	Afrikaans 47%, English 41%, other 12%

Table 2. Community Levels of Interest in Hermanus Whale Festival

Level of interest	Percentage
I am an avid fan of this festival and try to attend as many as possible (avid fan)	16%
I am interested in this festival and attend when I can (casual)	46%
I am not interested in this festival, but I sometimes attended it because friends and family are interested (passive)	26%
I have absolutely no interest in this festival and do not wish to attend it (no interest)	12%

3.2 The Social Impacts of the Festival

The factor analysis (see Table 3) revealed four factors from the 32 social impacts constructs tested. The constructs have been labelled in Table 3 as Factor 1: Destination impacts; Factor 2, Negative impacts; Factor 3: Public impacts and Factor 4, Economic impacts.

Table 3. Factor Analyses on Social Impact Constructs

Factors	Factor 1: Destination impacts	Factor 2: Negative impacts	Factor 3: Public Impacts	Factor 4: Economic impacts
Mean value	4.13	4.27	3.42	3.89
Cronbach Alpha	0.963	0.889	.904	.764
Inter-correlation item	0.635	0.473	0.583	.620
Explained variance	31.12	18.18	18.07	7.73
The overall appearance of the area has improved	.855			
The image of the city/town has improved	.843			
More tourists visit this area	.810			
The economy of the area has improved	.792			
More people are aware of Hermanus as a destination	.785			
The maintenance of public facilities has improved	.768			
The living standards of locals have improved	.731			
Infrastructure in the area has improved	.718			
Trading in the area has increased	.717			
Here are opportunities for people to have fun	.696			
Opportunities for shopping have increased	.645			
There are more opportunities for entrepreneurs	.641			
Friends visit me	.632			
Residents have more pride in their community	.604			
Interactions between locals and visitors have increased	.580			
Excessive drinking and/or drug use has increased		.895		
Damage to the environment has increased		.887		
Disruptive behaviour has increased		.846		

Table 3 continued

Incidents of crime have increased	.817	
Noise levels in the area have increased	.694	
Residents get irritated with the number of people attending	.691	
Prices of some goods and services have increased	.629	
Traffic congestion in the area has increased	.584	
The overall cost of living has increased	.560	
The rights of have increased	.826	
Litter in the area has decreased	.753	
Parking availability in the area has increased	.748	
Public funding for community activities has increased	.677	
Employment opportunities in the area have increased	.623	
Entertainment opportunities have increased	.526	
Opportunities for local businesses have increased		.603
The turnover for local businesses has increased		.595

3.2.1. *Factor 1: Destination impacts.* This factor consisted of constructs such as "overall appearance of the area has improved," "residents have more pride in their community," "maintenance of facilities has improved," and the "image of the town has improved." This factor also had the second-highest mean value (4.13), making it the second most important social impact. These statements indicate that the residents were aware of the effect of the recurring festival on town growth, and they rated it fairly positively.

3.2.2. *Factor 2: Negative impacts.* The impact of the festival in the community had adverse effects. The constructs of factor 2 include "traffic congestion has increased," "prices of goods and services have increased," and "damage to the environment has increased." With an increase in the number of people attending the festival, it is only natural to have more cars on the roads, which will lead to traffic congestion, translating into more pressure on local resources. Due to the recurring nature of the event, it would be expected that residents might have achieved some level of

tolerance for the negative impacts because they are exposed to them for a limited time. The contrary seems true since the negative impacts are still a top concern for residents. Also, the festival attraction will lead to increased noise levels for households in the active areas. Consequently, prices of goods and services may go up in the areas where these festivals occur. This factor had the highest mean value of 4.27, making it the most important social impact factor.

3.2.3. Factor 3: Public impacts. Public impacts are one of the paramount aspects that determine residents' quality of life (Kim et al., 2012), which makes it an essential factor in research relating to the social impacts on communities. Chen et al. (2013) indicated that well-being (of which public impact is a significant factor) is one of the yardstick parameters used to measure how locals perceive their lives. The statements in this factor consist of "litter in the area has decreased," "entertainment opportunities have increased," and "the rights of residents have increased." This research contradicts that of Aref (2011), noting that quality of life is influenced positively by tourism.

Public impacts were rated the lowest, which might influence the level of interest in the festival and, therefore, the long-term sustainability thereof. It would have been expected that the public impacts would have a more positive rating due to the length of time over which the event has been recurring and the time that were available to create opportunities and improve the public facilities and environment. Some residents might have lost faith in the so-called opportunities provided by the event since it did not materialize over a period of 28 years. This is a concern that needs to be dealt with.

3.2.4. Factor 4: Economic impacts. This factor had a mean value of 3.89, with two constructs: "opportunities for local businesses have increased" and "turnover for local businesses have increased". These findings were corroborated by the results of Yola et al. (2016), asserting that festivals can create economic benefits. Festivals attract individuals in large numbers to these events, which provide an avenue for local businesses to take advantage of the large numbers to increase sales and services rendered (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Sharma et al., 2008). The subsequent impact of more businesses in the area plays a pivotal role in the creation of more employment opportunities for locals, which are in tandem with the research of Haley et al. (2005), which suggests a positive economic impact for residents. Residents who participate in festivals and events are more likely to be the forerunners of this perception or actually benefit from the positive economic impacts. Economic impacts are always considered as important but in the case of this festival it did not play the most significant role.

3.3 Predictors of Festival Level of Interest

The regression results (see Table 4) indicated that only the public impacts factor reported significance ($p > 0.05$), accounting for 31% of the total variance [$F(4, 82) = 10.655, p = 0.000$].

Table 4. Regression Analysis of the Level of Interest on Social Impact Factors

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	22.410	4.590		4.883	.000
Destination impact	-.054	.125	-.090	-.431	.668
Negative	-.149	.171	-.120	-.872	.386
Public	1.275	.302	.666	4.222	.000*
Economic impact	.311	.721	.067	.431	.668

3.4 Analysis of Variance on Social Impact Factors and Community Level of Interest

The 'F' value was significant ($p < 0.001$) for the following factors (see Table 5): destination, public and economic impact factors. There are thus significant differences among the levels of interest of residents and the social impact factors. In a bid to determine which groups differed, a Tukey's post hoc test was used, and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance Between Social Impact Factors and Community Level of Interest

ANOVA		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Destination impacts	Between groups	17290.870	3	5763.623	14.982	.000*
	Within groups	48087.889	125	384.703		
	Total	65378.760	128			
Negative impacts	Between groups	63.026	3	21.009	.194	.901
	Within groups	16281.312	150	108.542		
	Total	16344.338	153			
Public impacts	Between groups	2568.874	3	856.291	20.980	.000*
	Within groups	6081.375	149	40.815		
	Total	8650.248	152			
Economic impacts	Between groups	306.898	3	102.299	15.224	.000*
	Within groups	1169.215	174	6.720		
	Total	1476.112	177			

Tukey’s post hoc test was performed to indicate the group subsets (see Table 5), and three subgroups were identified: subset 1, subset 2, and subset 3; within each of the groups.

Table 6. Tukey's Post Hoc Test of Social Impact Factors on Levels of Interest

Tukey a,b, c	Level of interest	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
			1	2	3
Destination impacts	Avid fan	17	49.05a		
	Casual	37		73.37b	
	Passive	57		82.82b	
	No interest	18		86.66b	
Public impacts	Avid fan	17	11.70a		
	Casual	40		18.22b	
	Passive	70		22.01b	
	No interest	26			26.34c
Economic impacts	Avid fan	19	4.78a		
	Casual	46		6.84b	
	Passive	86			8.36c
	No interest	27			9.37c

4.0 Discussion

These results indicate that the residents are somewhat disinterested in the festival due to the high proportion of residents showing more passive and casual interest levels. This might result from unmet resident expectations or negative effects experienced over the years. This, however, is a red light as it will influence the festival's sustainability.

Forty-six percent of the respondents indicated to be interested in the festival and attended when they could. At the same time, 26% were not interested in the festival but sometimes attended it because friends and family were interested, and only 16% were avid fans of this festival. In comparison, 12% have absolutely no interest in this festival and do not wish to attend it. Four categories of fans were identified: (1) avid fans, who can be compared to the innovators and the early adopters; (2) casual fans, who represent the early majority; (3) passive fans, who represent the late majority; and 4) the no-interest groups. Public impacts (which was rated the lowest) are thus the only factor that significantly play a role in increasing residents’ levels of interest in festivals. The significance of public impacts suggests that residents feel there is an area which can be easily improved by the festival organizers and local authorities for residents.

Rollins et al. (1999) noted that the negative impacts of festivals included overcrowding, reduced privacy, vandalism, hooliganism and traffic jams during the

festivals. Similarly, Slabbert et al. (2013) reported similar findings, stating that festivals negatively impact the community and the environment. It is, however, clear that residents do not tolerate these impacts, which might be a reason for lower levels of interest than expected.

The results of this research are supported by the work of Rollins et al. (1999), Richards and Wilson (2004), Andereck et al. (2005), Huh and Vogt (2008), who stated that festivals create a sense of pride for community members and also boosts the identity of the community. Similarly, the findings of Pavluković et al. (2019) corroborate the research results, indicating that festivals affect tourism development and the destination's image.

The avid fans differed from all the other groups in terms of destination impacts, public impacts and economic impacts. These fans indicated their favourable perceptions and their keen level of interest in support of the festival. Avid fans rated the identified social impacts higher, which supports the notion that those supporting the event experience the impacts thereof more positively. Fredline and Faulkner (2002) noted that perceptions of residents were the highest among those who participated in a motorsport event. Avid fans public impacts rated as more important than the casual and passive groups. Not surprisingly, the no-interest group rated it least important. Their level of interest is clearly influenced by their perceptions of the social impacts of the event. Regarding economic impacts, the avid fans were distinct from all the other groups. The avid fans can be likened to be a mix of the innovators and the early adopters. This group of individuals are the first and the most likely to benefit economically from the festival.

Similarly, with respect to public impacts, the avid fans also were distinctively different from the casual and passive interest groups (these groups were homogeneous, belonging to the same subset), while the no interest groups belonged to the last subset group. Destination impacts may be easier to address because of the lesser degree of variation when compared to public and economic impacts. It also creates the potential to have more residents in the casual interest group so that, with the right motivation, these residents could be moved to the avid fan group—which would be the ideal resident group.

The whale watching phenomenon has played a significant role in improving local host communities by creating activities to be enjoyed by visitors and having an extended positive effect on the local economy and employment. The following main findings are evident:

1. Although previous research (Yolal et al., 2009; Yozukmaz et al., 2020; Eluwole, 2022; Doe et al., 2022) points to the importance of economic benefits, especially in the case of a recurring event, it was found in this research that residents rated the negative impacts of the festival as the most important social impact. Finding the balance between attracting enough visitors to benefit economically from the festival and not exploiting the resources and hospitality of the residents seems to be challenging. Kruger et al. (2018) found that many tourists are attracted to the Hermanus Whale Festival because of the entertainment offered, which is not the main objective of the festival. Residents might thus feel negative as the tourists lose sight of the purpose of the festival. This could be a reason why the negative impacts of the festival were the major concern of the local community. If the residents feel this way after 28 years of hosting the

festival, a review of the current structure and dynamics is needed and should include the views of the local community provided in this study.

2. The economic impacts of festivals have implications for development in furthering business creation, employment, and opportunities for locals and youth (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019; Qu & Cheer, 2022). Similarly, since economic benefits are easily recognizable, it implies that these types of events are not only adding intangible benefits but tangible benefits that increase the spending power of locals actively involved and also trigger creativity and entrepreneurship, having a ripple effect of development in the area. The more pronounced the economic impacts of festivals are, the more it is supposed to improve the image and value of the festival and increase the support by the local community of Hermanus, which was not quite the case. This finding differs from the research by Muresherwa et al. (2017) and Slabbert et al. (2013). If host communities perceive reduced negative impacts of the festival, the level of interest naturally increases, keeping in mind that residents do not always perceive the social impacts of festivals in the same manner. Jepson et al. (2008) observed that if local involvement in the festival is high, it creates a base for cultural diversity and socialization of people, culture, and tradition in one place.
3. This research points to the low level of community interest in this recurring festival. Based on Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory, it is expected that over the long term, the no-interest group would have decreased, eventually getting interest and support for the festival over time, and the resident's level of interest in the festival would have reached a level higher than reported in this study but the contrary was found. Chi et al. (2018) noted that residents' decision to support or not support is based on assessing the total positive and negative impacts. Only when the positive impacts supersede the negative impacts in terms of benefits over perceived costs are residents supportive. The avid fan group can consist of individuals with high place attachment to their communities and an understanding of the benefits created by the festival. In this case, they might disregard the negative impacts and focus on the positive impacts, which can result in them being seen as easy innovators and early adopters. Festival organizers should utilize these to disseminate information about the positive effects of festivals and win support for the festival. It is important for festival planners to ensure that avid fans are integrated into the festival's planning and organizing with specific reference to marketing planning and efforts since this group of individuals have the capacity to increase local community interest and highlight positive attributes. The low level of interest in festivals can also be attributed to initial overconfidence bias (Erceg & Galić, 2014); over-predicting the effect in terms of the potential benefits as a result of the festival, thus reducing the level of interest when over-magnified can lessen interest over time (especially in the case of a recurring festival). This finding corroborates with the research of Pavluković et al. (2017), who reported that the undesirable impacts of festivals have the ability to affect adversely the positive attitudes created in locals by the festival with the resultant effect of reduced support.

Due to the low rating of public impacts, residents' levels of interest are consequently minimal, which could be a major inclination toward a low level of interest by residents. Furthermore, due to the recurring nature of the

festival, it is important to focus on residents' level of interest in the festival, considering the small population of Hermanus Town. Improving the public impacts can be achieved through destination marketing, which creates attractions for event sponsors and investors, thus helping to create a strong community image and facilitate community development (Quinn, 2006; Yolal et al., 2016) as well as visible changes to the public environment. Increased interest in the festival can play out via ease of access to benefits such as direct or indirect income generation or employment, and also a resultant effect on tourism enterprise. Furthermore, through the selling of goods and services catered to meet the needs of tourists with ripple effects of improving community well-being (Pavluković et al., 2019).

4. It was expected that a higher percentage of community members would be interested in the festival, but on the contrary, the research indicated that only 16% were avid fans. The level of interest of residents was predicted only by public impacts. The level of interest and involvement in festivals influences the desire to participate in future events based on the gratification received or experienced (Mensah, 2013). The avid fans can be regarded as the early adopters of the festival, these are one of the first groups to set the pace for the community. These groups of individuals can create momentum for community festival support which is in tandem with the research of Marcouiller & Western (2019). It can be implied that this group will be the first to benefit both actively and passively from the festival. The research points out that the festival organizer needs to identify the avid fans of the festival to engage and help increase the locals' support and level of interest in the festival. Also, the results indicate that the group is significantly different than the casual, passive and no-interest groups in terms of destination, public and economic impacts, implying that they can be catalyst drivers for increasing community support for festivals. Levels of interest of community members affected by public impacts suggest that the collective positive attributes of the festival in terms of increased employment rate, decreased litter and increased rights and increased public funding for community development play a role in shaping levels of interest. This finding indicates that a natural recurring festival can influence community member's interests in festivals negatively or positively depending on the effect of collective public social impacts.
5. Due to the recurring nature of the festival, it was expected that a more significant number of community individuals would be interested in participating in the festival. Still, on the contrary, the levels of interest rates were lower than expected, a pointer to the effect of the festival's actual or perceived negative impacts on the community. Research by Simpson (2009) identified negative social impacts, while Slabbert et al. (2013) identified positive and negative environmental, social and community impacts. Other factors identified by Slabbert et al. (2013) include community development, quality of personal living and economic factors, which were also identified in this study. Similarly, Muresherwa et al. (2017) grouped social impacts into three categories, namely economic, social and environmental impacts. The findings of the studies above do not differ significantly from the results of this study, as the positive and negative impacts have environmental, social, and cultural quality of life constructs.

5.0 Conclusion

This paper aimed to evaluate the level of interest of residents in the Hermanus Whale Festival (a naturally recurring event) and the social impacts on the host communities of Hermanus. This is the first research into the effects of the whale watching festival on host communities in South Africa at Hermanus. The study makes the following contribution to the field of research. It was the first time in South Africa that a festival that was developed due to a naturally occurring event (whale watching) was analyzed to see how the communities perceive the festival's impacts, which has existed for over 25 years. The survey results revealed four significant impacts of the festival on the host communities, with the negative impacts rated the highest. The research revealed that public impacts were the only factor that had significantly affected the community's level of interest in the festival, which is different from previous research conducted at other festivals, not based on a naturally recurring event. This indicates that festivals recurring over a long period need to plan for the improvement of public impacts. It was clear that one cannot assume that residents will feel positive about an event just because it has been running for a number of years. The festival needs to be analyzed on an annual basis to measure the level of interest from residents, as it does have an influence on the sustainability of the event. The study also proposes that avid fans of the festivals are few but can play a significant role in increasing the community's interest in the festival.

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