

The Impact of Fairs & Festivals on Stoughton Retail Businesses: A Multi-Year Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local retailers in smaller communities have faced insurmountable odds for the past 50 years. From shopping centers and strip malls, to mega-malls and big box stores, the local retailer has sought creative approaches to overcome the obstacles of its urban counterparts.

This study examines the impact of fairs and festivals on local retailers in Stoughton over a multi-year period. The objectives are (1) to determine the impact events have on retailers in terms of overall sales, net profit, store traffic, and overall business; (2) to determine the level of retailer satisfaction with pre-event planning, day of event responsiveness, and overall satisfaction; (3) to uncover attitudes about events in general; and (4) identify how event sponsorship and involvement impact satisfaction.

Results discussed in this presentation cover a two-year period where baseline figures were ascertained and confirmed. Continued surveys throughout 2009 and 2010 will help us determine what changes occurred as a result of the investigation.

The Stoughton retail community is comprised of approximately 120 stores, approximately 75 of which are in a four-block downtown area. Within 48-hours of the conclusion of a fair or festival, 60 retailers were sent an email with a link to a survey. Every event survey generated

between 15 and 34 responses. The events included are: (May) Syttende Mai; (July) Fine Artsy Fair/Sidewalk Sale/Taste of Stoughton; (August) Coffee Break; (September) Art Treasure Hunt; (October) Spooktacular Artfest; and (December) Victorian Holiday/Holiday Art Fair.

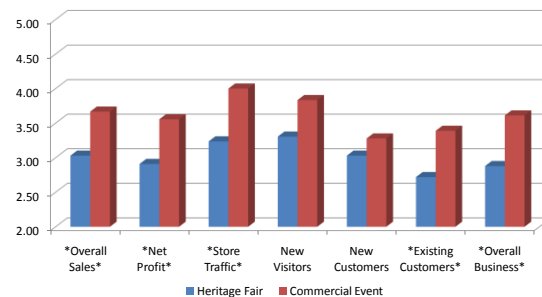
KEY FINDINGS

Discovery of Festival Types

Comparisons of a “Typical Day” versus a “Festival Day” and the impact of a festival on various business metrics revealed a distinction between *heritage fairs* and *commercial events*. Heritage fairs celebrate the history of the community while commercial events drive store traffic and revenue. Exhibits 1 and 2 illustrate the differences in sales, various types of store traffic, and overall business.

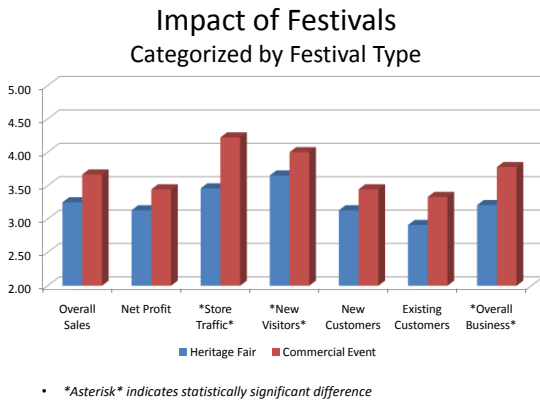
Exhibit 1

Comparison to Typical Day
Categorized by Festival Type



Asterisk indicates statistically significant difference

Exhibit 2



Satisfaction with Festivals

Festival type also impacts the level of satisfaction retailers have with pre-event planning, day of event activities, and overall approval of the event. Once again, commercial events outperform heritage fairs in all categories and overall. The differences are extreme as indicated by Exhibits 3 and 4.

Exhibit 3

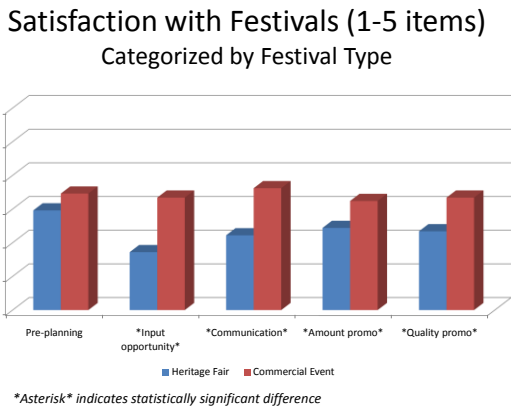
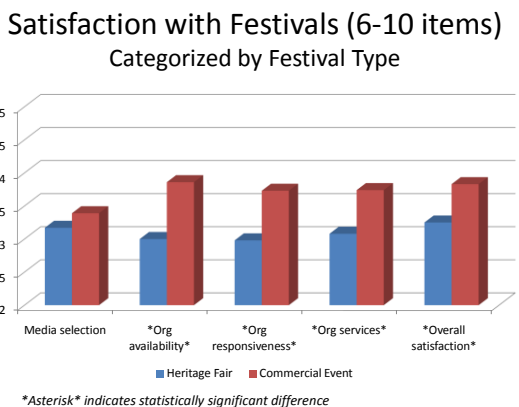


Exhibit 4



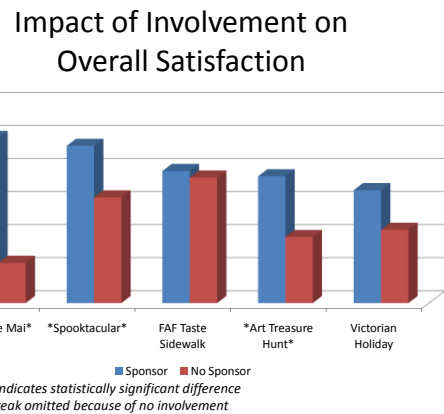
Attitudes about Festivals

While Stoughton retailers admit dissatisfaction with heritage fairs, they believe fairs and festivals are an important component of the community and would like to see more of them in the future. Retailers are somewhat emotionally tied to events in general and see them as being vital to the economic well being of the community. On average, retailers are neutral about their belief that immediate profits should be expected from event sponsorship.

Involvement Impacts Satisfaction

One of the most significant findings of this study was the impact of involvement on satisfaction. Over two-thirds of all respondents had been asked to become involved in the planning or implementation of various events. Half had accepted. As illustrated in Exhibit 5, the distinction between the two groups is significant.

Exhibit 5



CONCLUSION

The lessons from this study create more questions. Not all events are created equal. There is a clear distinction between heritage fairs and commercial events. Should heritage fairs be modified to be more commercially beneficial? Should retailers change their expectations? Also, if ringing cash registers satisfy retailers, why are they tolerant of activities that fail to drive store traffic? Finally, how can event organizers get more retailers involved? These are just some of the questions Stoughton retailers and event organizers must consider.