



The impact of 'seasonal urban event' to the hosting city's urban vitality: case study of Summer beach and Winter Wonderland in Nottingham, UK

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ABSTRACT. Hosting seasonal urban events in open public spaces has a significant impact on urban vitality. By reviewing the categorisation of urban events, this paper explains the characteristics of 'Seasonal Urban Event' through time, scale, location, format, content, function, and aim. It mainly focuses on leisure and entertainment events through two cases, Summer Beach and Winter Wonderland at Old Market Square in Nottingham, UK. The research explores 'Seasonal Urban Event' by literature review, open data, observation, and the survey data analysis of participants' responses. The survey result indicates positive spatial and social engagement levels ranging from accessibility, legibility, permeability, flexibility to participation, satisfaction, and inclusivity. The potential benefits of social impact have been emphasised by participants' responses to elevating civic pride and improving the level of social inclusion. It concludes that 'Seasonal Urban Event', as a useful supplement method, may enhance urban vitality in the hosting city.

Keywords: Public realm; periodic activity; social interaction; branding; mixed methods research.

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Introduction

Urban events and urban vitality

Urban events have demonstrated significant economic, social, and cultural impacts on the cities worldwide (Liu, 2016). Holding significant events in a city has been seen as an effective method for city regeneration processes (Smith, 2012), as they can merge tourism strategies with urban planning and boost the confidence of local communities (García, 2004). Successful experiences of events have testified the significant economic impact within local contexts (Paiola, 2008). The outstanding contribution of such events is no longer limited to hosting international short-term or high-profile one-off sports or cultural mega-events that puts their emphasis on visitor economic benefits in urban, regional and international tourism marketing and promotion; creating new infrastructures; improving residents' sense of belongings and civic pride; and also helping to bridge the communication between local authorities with public and private investors; and to establish a long-term and permanent collaborations (Getz, 1991; Liu, 2014, 2016; Paiola, 2008; Quinn, 2009; Richards, 2000; Richards & Palmer, 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2004; Smith, 2014, 2016), as well as more extensive urban and regional development strategies (Hall, 2006), such as the Olympic Games, World Fairs, Football World Cup, and the European Capital of Culture (ECOC). Meanwhile, national and local events and activities have also been acting as a catalyst, playing essential roles in the urban regeneration processes (Smith, 2012), creating a sense of community (Jepson & Clarke, 2014), boosting the declined economy and establishing socio-cultural sustainability (Richards & Palmer, 2010), such as BBC Good Food Show in Birmingham, National Awareness Day events across UK cities, and Open Art Exhibitions around the UK.

The aims of urban events are not only improving the image of the city, enhancing a sense of place and local identity, but also enhancing the experiences of citizens and visitors, developing suitable activities for communities, and creating temporary job posts in the service sectors, which promote urban revitalisation and continue urban cultural development (Dinnie, 2008; Liu, 2014, 2016; Paiola, 2008; Smith, 2014, 2016; Tallon, 2013). They can also act in different roles in sustaining economic performances in global or national competitions among places and regions for tourism and investment attraction, talent attraction, and better

quality of life (Paiola, 2008; Richards & Palmer, 2010). Indeed, urban events bring vitality into public spaces through these temporary motivating activities (Bauman, 2012; Bishop, 2016; Bishop & Williams, 2012; Cheshmehzangi, 2012). The event-led strategy becomes one of the most active urban regeneration and revitalisation strategies globally (Liu, 2016). Last two decades, many scholars have explored the impact of mega-cultural events “[...] as a long-term legacy” (Liu, 2016, p. 161) to their hosting cities critically. However, there is a gap in the literature and practice investigating how comparably medium-sized and medium-duration urban events affect the hosting city, particularly the seasonal themed urban events that happen annually in the city centre’s open public spaces. Hence, the principal aim of this paper is to establish an in-depth understanding of why hosting periodic ‘Seasonal Urban Event’ could be one of the supplement methods for boosting urban vitality and enhancing positive social impact to the city.

Urban vitality is regarded as the unique power and energy within a city (Landry, 2000). It usually refers to the capacity of a place to induce lively social and economic activities (Jacobs, 1961). It has been widely accepted as an essential element for achieving good urban quality of life and the primary criterion in the quality assessment of the built environment (Lynch, 1981; Montgomery, 1995, 1998; Sung & Lee, 2015). It refers to the numbers of active people at different times of the day and night (Montgomery, 1995, 1998). High levels of vitality mean people can easily interact and benefit from social networks (Jacobs, 1961). It also means the public space is a safer, more desirable, and more attractive, offering more choices for social activities and being a place for cultural exchanges (Jalaladdini & Oktay, 2012). It helps to make a place more sustainable and attractive (Gehl, 2011) with the structured and underlying dynamic of activities (Montgomery, 1998).

Prominent successful urban places must combine quality in three essential elements: physical space, the sensory experience and activities (Montgomery, 1995, 1998). The variety of programmed urban events over the year provide essential opportunities to make it possible through high adaptability, permeability and functional diversity (Montgomery, 1998). Urban vitality is much depending on the gathering of people, dense concentration of people, accessibility, interaction and activities (Jacobs, 1961). Jacobs stated that people could easily interact and benefit from social networks with high vitality levels where safety and social stability are promoted. Urban events increase pedestrian flows and movements, which are vital for achieving urban vitality around the clock (Montgomery, 1994, 1995). It also increases in the number of people and the period people spend in a public open space. All these activities help provide the dynamic quality of successful urban places with high urban vitality (Montgomery, 1998). Seasonal urban events are not only populated the open public spaces with people and themed activities but also bring them back annually that sustain the urban vitality in the long run. This paper aims to explore the impact of seasonal urban events using mixed research methods, in which the quantified data analysis results of successful cases sufficiently proved the qualitative critical analysis result of the above literature review. It also aims to provide a broader sample for future comparison researches in temporary urbanism and social interaction.

Material and methods

Appropriate methods and convincing evidence for evaluating the quality of research studies are essential, particularly for addressing the research question appropriately (Borrego, Douglas, & Amelink, 2009). The choice of the methods is driven by research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mixed methods research has grown in practice and recognition, where the combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies has required new thinking about the theoretical basis for integrative research (Wheeldon, 2010). It has been widely used in social science, engineering education and interdisciplinary research. This paper explores a qualitative research question: How seasonal urban events impact the hosting city, which involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. The exploratory design has applied, beginning with a primary qualitative phase that identifies important factors, then the findings are validated or otherwise informed by quantitative results that apply them into a more diverse sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research started with structured qualitative methods, including the literature review of existing theories, observations on-site, then followed by quantitative studies with random sampling data collections through questionnaires and surveys administered to the case study. Through the literature review, the Seasonal Urban Event has been defined and categorised; two consecutive years of observation ahead of the on-site questionnaire surveys have helped establish the qualitative research analysis and design and form the questionnaires. The questionnaire can often help collect qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously (Gogolin & Swartz, 1992). On-trend in social science research is developing new means of data collection that

are more explicitly user-generated (Wheeldon, 2010). Hence, the targeted events' participants have been chosen, which can produce more robust measures of the association while explicitly valuing the depth of the "[...] experiences, perspectives, and histories" of research participants (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2003, p. 3). Descriptive statistics such as percentages have been used to explore the situation where the significant differences and relationship between groups could be shown on various indicators (Borrego et al., 2009). The results are interpreted to determine the probability (Borrego et al., 2009), concluded on qualitative and statistical measure analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Urban event

In the urban design literature, as valuable tools, events, in contrast to people's everyday life, help to animate and vitalise cities from time to time (Liu, 2016; Paiola, 2008; Smith, 2016). Events used to be confined to purpose-built arenas, such as sports stadiums, but now as Smith (2016) stated in the opening of his book, "[...] more organised events are being staged in public spaces: in our parks, streets and squares" (Smith, 2016, p.1). Such events, often happening in urban areas or city centre, can increase urban vitality of the public spaces with limited impact due to the duration of the activities. However, they can still benefit various user groups and meet their needs temporarily in addition to their essential requirements of daily life. The everyday domestic routines of citizens are inevitably disrupted by attending or passing by these events. People are encouraged to interact with eventful activities and communicate with other participants. With diverse aims and outcomes, they result in different types.

Categorisation of events

Events usually can be categorised and shaped very differently depending on location (or place type), time (period or duration), and size of the event (or visitor number). Events occur across the world, in rural and urban locations, within developed and developing nations, as well as in the virtual domains (Richards, Brito, & Wilks, 2013). Traditionally, there were two types of events defined by time-scale: 'Temporary' or 'Short-term' events and 'Permanent' or 'Long-term' events (Haydn & Temel, 2006; Vale & Warner Jr., 2001); and also, two types by size-scale: local events and mega-events (Richards & Palmer, 2010). Extend the categorisation further, Smith (2016) stated the events "[...] are themed occasions which are ultimately defined by their limited time frame and their spatial focus" (Smith, 2016, p. 2). Lamond and Platt (2016) also claimed that "[...] events are frequently located in a matrix of two dominant dimensions; these can be summarised as one of scale and the other of content' (Lamond & Platt, 2016, p. 1). They explained that scale encompasses a series of sizes from small to mega. They defined that small events are highly localised activities with a small geographic reach; mega-events can mobilise substantial media resources and target a global audience. Similar to Lamond and Platt (2016), Richards et al. (2013) also categorised the events by their operational scales, from a small community event to professionally organised, politically driven mega-events that would take years to plan. Others also discussed the sizes of the events that can discern between mega, hallmark, and major (Getz, 2005; Goldblatt, 2002).

Despite location, time and scale, events can also be categorised by their formats, contents, organisers, functions, and aims. They are also named variously such as gala, festival, carnival, fairs, ritual, ceremony, conference, exhibition, show, and so on. Richards et al. (2013) stated that events encompass a wide variety of themes and formats, which offer a platform for many activities. They are from political protests (political events) to music festivals (entertainment and leisure events), art exhibitions (cultural events), sporting competitions (sports events), and trade exhibitions (business events) (Getz, 2005; Goldblatt, 2002; Richards et al., 2013). Pernecky and Lück (2013) mentioned that events also include religious events, conventions, and political rallies. Smith (2016) further mentioned three particular functional event's types in his book as "[...] commercially-, community- and politically-oriented events" (Smith, 2016, p. 1). Lamond and Platt (2016) commented that content is commonly broken down to a typology of events that can summarise to sport, culture and business. A common characteristic is that they are temporal, and can be planned or unplanned (Getz, 2008, Getz & Page, 2016) depending on their organisational formats and purposes. These events aim to express community values, visions, and hopes (Derrett, 2002; Pernecky & Lück, 2013).

Shone and Parry (2001) organised events combined by their contents, functions and aims into four categories: Leisure events (e.g. leisure, sport, recreation); personal events (e.g. weddings, birthdays, anniversaries), cultural events (e.g. ceremonial, sacred, art); and organisational events (e.g. commercial, political, sales) without mentioning their locations and durations. By reviewing the literature of event studies,

it seems that it is easier to categorise the events by their formats, contents, functions, aims and proposes, but still challenging to quantify the exact period and precise physical scope to differentiate between all these mentioned types (see Table 1). Furthermore, despite different combinations with location and time-size-scale; when the events happen; who the visitors are; and what their priorities are, brought a variety of choices to events' organisers in practice. Events are entangled with social, political, cultural, economic, historical, and psychological dimensions in our lives (Pernecky & Lück, 2013). All these events intend to build into the political, economic, and socio-cultural systems, especially those in urban areas. However, with the least attention in the research field, the pre-planned periodic seasonal themed urban event has never been thoroughly defined. This paper aims to give a clarified definition, particularly to this type of event through the duration. It further explores the fundamental characteristics of entertainment and leisure, which may form a few essential sub-categories by its content and function.

Table 1. Categorisation of events

Categorised by	Possible categories
Property	public or private
Location	urban or rural
Place	indoor or outdoor
Duration	short/temporary or long/permanent
Organising type	spontaneous/unplanned or pre-planned/organised
Size (physical)	small or mega
Scale (impact)	local, hallmark, national, or international
Format	meeting, conference, festival, exhibition, competition, show, and so on.
Content	political, economic, social, cultural, religious
Function	sport, business/commercial, entertainment, leisure, music, art, food, health
Aim (express)	value, vision, hopes

Seasonal urban event (SUE)

Often to see, the temporary-small urban events, such as a week-long local food festival at Brendly Place at Birmingham, or, 3-day promoting events for a new mobile shop on high streets, focus on residents and communities. The vibrant street is beneficial to the economy and also people's social and daily lives (Yue & Zhu, 2019). They offer a wide range of learning opportunities and enhance the vitality of the city (Smith, 2012). These events often appear as independent projects that have temporary and limited impact on the economic environment and social engagement. They also have high flexibility in terms of themes from time to time. Permanent-small events are more organised, planned and continued (Haydn & Temel, 2006), which are often closely associated with the surrounding physical environment, such as the healthy food cooking education programmes at Broadway Market in London. The programmes run lunchtime all-year-long with different chefs and invited celebrity guests. They often help to achieve high social sustainability through interacting engagement between the participants and the events in an extended period. Such events have emerged "[...] as a valuable tool for giving (or adding) life to city streets and enhancing the image of the city both as a community entity – renewing citizens' pride in their home city – and as a destination" (Paiola, 2008, p. 515). They become a part of the city image and characteristic of the place, which has a more substantial impact on the citizens and the place.

Frequently in literature, one-off (for the same city) sports and cultural mega-events in the capital and global cities always get the most attention due to their multiple impacts on the hosting city and citizens, such as the Olympic Games (few weeks) and ECoC (one-year long). They produce significant changes in the city landscape, infrastructure, and its functions can be transferred into the city's identity and core value (Dinnie, 2008). Furthermore, researches on local events often focus on short-period cultural and educational events. It seems that medium time-scale and medium size-scale periodic urban events, particularly outdoor events, are acting as a missing parcel often been ignored. This paper intends to define and name this type of event that officially pre-planned activity happening annually on open public space as 'Seasonal Urban Event', which has strongly themed characteristics and a particular period associated with seasons.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, 'Season' has meanings of "[...] one of the four periods of the year; spring, summer, autumn, or winter [...]" and "[...] the period of the year when something that happens every year happens" (Cambridge University, 2004, p. 582); 'Seasonal' means "[...] relating to, available, or happening during a particular period of year [...]" and especially "[...] the same time every year" (Cambridge

University, 2004, p. 582). In this paper, 'seasonal event', indeed, means seasonal themed annual event. Seasonal Urban Event means the events mainly happening in urban areas rather than rural areas, also in open public spaces rather than indoor venues. It mainly focuses on regional areas and local communities rather than national and international visitors. It is often lasting a few weeks to three months (including pre-event preparation and after-event restoration periods). It simultaneously has the strengths and advantages of both short-term and long-term events, and, local and mega-events.

It often transforms the public physical environment dramatically to echo the unique theme. It not only focuses on particular visitors' economic gain through entertainment and leisure activities but also creates opportunities for the residents and communities to engage with the activities and communicate with other participants. Emblematic events are always proposed in winter to enhance pedestrian activity by celebrating the season (Paukaeva, Setoguchi, Watanabe, & Luchkova, 2020). Traditionally, a very typical seasonal urban event is annual Christmas Market in European cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Cologne, Copenhagen, Estonia, Lille, Krakow, Nuremberg, Paris, Prague, Salzburg, Vienna, Zagreb, and so on. For example, in 2019, many cities in the UK hosted Christmas Market in open public spaces, including parks, streets and squares; some are shown as examples in Table 2:

Table 2. Christmas Markets in the UK cities.

Hosting City	Event Period	Duration	Location
Edinburgh	16/11/2019-4/1/2020	50 days	East Princes Street Gardens
Birmingham	7/11/2019-23/12/2019	47 days	New Street and Victoria Square
Nottingham	15/11/2019-31/12/2019	47 days	Old Market Square
London	21/11/2019-5/1/2020	46 days	Hyde Park
Glasgow	9/11/2019-23/12/2019	45 days	St Enoch Square
Leeds	8/11/2019-21/12/2019	44 days	Millennium Square
Manchester	9/11/2019-22/12/2019	44 days	Albert Square, Cathedral Gardens, Market Street, Exchange Square, Corn Exchange, Exchange Street, New Cathedral Street, King Street, St. Ann's Square, Brazennose Street
Cardiff	14/11/2019-23/12/2019	40 days	St John Street, Working Street, Hills Street, Trinity Street and the Hayes
York	14/11/2019-22/12/2019	39 days	Kings Square, St Sampson's Square, Parliament Street, Shambles Market
Liverpool	15/11/2019-23/12/2019	39 days	St George's Plateau
Glasgow	25/11/2019-31/12/2019	38 days	George Square
Chester	16/11/2019-22/12/2019	37 days	Town Hall Square
Winchester	21/11/2019-22/12/2019	32 days	Winchester Cathedral
Blenheim Palace	22/11/2019-15/12/2019	24 days	Blenheim Palace
Bath	28/11/2019-15/12/2019	18 days	Streets around Roman Baths and Bath Abbey
Oxford	5/12/2019-21/12/2019	17 days	Broad Street

This particular seasonal urban event has been explored widely in economic and tourism studies, but less focused on social and environmental impact. Also, with other seasonal urban events have been developed globally, such as 'Moscow Spring', 'Moscow Summer: Flower Jam', 'Golden Autumn', and 'Journey to Christmas' in the programme of Moscow Seasons (running between 2016-2018), which run between 10 days up to one month that very much associated with the characteristics of four seasons, relevant food, and social activities. The attention to the social impact of events has been increased. In order to understand such impact in-depth, two typical seasonal urban events in the UK are examined below to explore the characteristics in promoting urban vitality while exploring success.

Summer beach and winter wonderland at Old Market Square in Nottingham, UK

Populated with estimated over 823,100 people in the urban area, including around 331,000 people in the city boundary (The Office of National Statistics, Mid-Year Estimates 2018) (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2019), Nottingham is a city in the East Midlands of England, located in the UK. It has a history dated back to 600 AD, and well-known because of a popular heroic figure Robin Hood. According to the World Population Review, Nottingham is a major tourist destination with the sixth-highest tourism spending in all of England with national and international visitors, supported by one of the country's largest transportation networks. According to ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2018 (Nottingham City Council, 2020), with two major

universities populated with 43,000 students, 29.7% of the population between 18 and 29, full-time university students comprised about 1 in 8. Children aged 0-17 were estimated 68,000, 20.76% of the total population in the city boundary, and 166,500 as 20% of the overall population. Despite its young age structure, Nottingham has a higher than average rate of people with a limiting long-term illness or disability. About 34.2% of children and 25.8% of people aged 60 and over were affected by income deprivation in 2018. Improving health and well-being, enhancing equity and social inclusion, and improving quality of life are the priority areas for local government and authorities. Nottingham City Council started to programme high quality social and cultural events in the Old Market Square to enhance of citizens and visitors' experience. Notably, two seasonal entertainment and leisure events, Summer Beach and Winter Wonderland work sufficiently here and have long-lasting consequences on revitalising the city centre.

As a city in the Midlands, Nottingham is away from the seaside. As a typical seasonal urban event, the summer holiday-themed beach event was started in 2009 as the first premier urban beach event in its kind. It has been planned to happen between July and September for five-week up to six-week ever since. A temporary sand beach with traditional seaside attractions, such as cocktail bars, games stalls, live music entertainment, beach volleyball, night movies and kid's films, and children's games and playground, is well facilitated with the existing permanent fountain structures on the square. It means that citizens could enjoy a beach style holiday life in their doorsteps, which potentially could help them to save expenditure and time travelling. According to the case study data from Mellors Group, Nottingham City Council estimated that 868,000 people visited in 2018, and over 800,000 people passed through the beach during its six-week stay in 2019. It has run for 11 consecutive years and attracted local, regional, national and worldwide publicity, press from Daily Telegraph, The Sun, BBC News, The Guardian, GMTV to the Mumbai Times, Australian Press, Brazilian TV, and Reuters Press (Mellors Group, 2019), which has branded the event nationally and internationally.

The success in delivering city beach-themed events resulted in Mellors Group taking up the opportunity to branch out into the Christmas market. From 2011 onwards, the company has successfully delivered the Winter Wonderland theme events instead of traditional German Market during Christmas holiday seasons and extended to other UK cities such as Liverpool and Chester. The events feature a headline attraction, grotto, ice rink, themed bars, snow dressing, rides and cabins in addition to traditional Christmas stalls offering a broad range of gifts, food and drink. The square is embellished with Christmas lights and decorations during the entire season every year. It also lasts for five to six weeks between November to the beginning of January. In 2016, a new sponsor, NET Trams, joined the partnership with Mellors Group and Nottingham City Council. With travel offers, free park & ride sites, cross-city services from every seven minutes and a tram stop directly on the event's doorstep, the public transport network has provided the best way to join the event. Besides, both unique seasonal themed entertainment and leisure events are free of charge, particularly for the sand beach. The events have transformed the Old Market Square to an attractive place for residents and visitors with distinctive new looks periodically.

To get an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and impact of these events. A survey with general participant information (such as age, gender) and 24 structured questions with multiple choices, one open-end question have introduced and applied to this research. Over 200 participants in each event has returned the valid answers, which the results are discussed below.

Results and discussion

This paper is based on mixed research methods conducted using observation, open data, and case study with surveys data collection. One of the effective methods used in the social research impact is the survey, which provides quantitative data collected through a survey instrument (McCrea, Stimson, & Western, 2005). It is a systematic collection of quantitative data and opinion from a number of individuals and projects. It allows comprehensive analysis across individuals and projects. In this research, a designed questionnaire aiming to understand individual's visiting experiences has been distributed to over 250 participants (over 18) within a week in each event in 2016. The questions were designed based on the literature review and the authors' observation of participants' activities conducted between 2014 and 2016. In particular, the questionnaires have been completed with the same numerical value on the weekdays and weekends. The general data of participants, such as age and gender distribution, where participants live, the transport means of how they come, the accompany they come with (including their relationship), and the frequency of their visits were asked in the first session. The key questions, such as their aims of visits, the length of their stay,

and the satisfaction rate have generated the data towards understanding the events' success. The surveys also collected the data to analyse the tendency of different types of users, the overall impact of the events to the citizens, the interaction between the visitors and the events, as well as to investigate the effect of the events on the urban vitality in the city centre.

To measure and quantify the qualitative elements, the researchers have asked the participants to rate their overall satisfaction directly with five degrees from highly dissatisfied to highly satisfied. It has been regarded as one of the critical measurements to estimate the events' potential positive social impacts. Extended questions, such as whether the event helps to establish civic pride, improve the image of the city and vitalise the local environment have also been asked directly. Furthermore, whether the participants believed that the event helps promote the formation of the local community, enhance the communication between people and cultivate social cohesion have been raised. Their expectation intention to stay period, the destinations before and after visit have been requested to answer. Finally, the survey using a mapping approach asked participants to do a diagram drawing at the end of the questionnaire. They helped investigate the route that participants took from their arrival points at the city centre to their accessing points at the events, and understand the permeability of the spatial arrangement. The questionnaire's return and validated rate were as high as 80% out of over 500 distributed. However, the details in responding to extended questions were limited by inadequate responses to open questions.

Participation propensity and engagement

Figure 1 provides a comparative overview of the participants' gender and age figures, and the relationship between the participants in both events. It shows the age-specific distribution and the tendencies of choosing accompanies for each occasion that echoed the population structure of Nottingham. As the results indicated, 50% of the participants in Summer Beach were between age 35 to 65, and most of them came with their children or grandchildren for a family day out. However, over 65% of the participants in Winter Wonderland were between age 19 to 34. Combining with the results from the participants' relationship in each event suggested that the summer event attracts families with young children the most; the winter event attracts young adults' groups as a night out activity for friends the most. Indeed, the results have helped to understand the events' inclination of target groups, as well as future-orientated event development for increasing the number of potential participants.

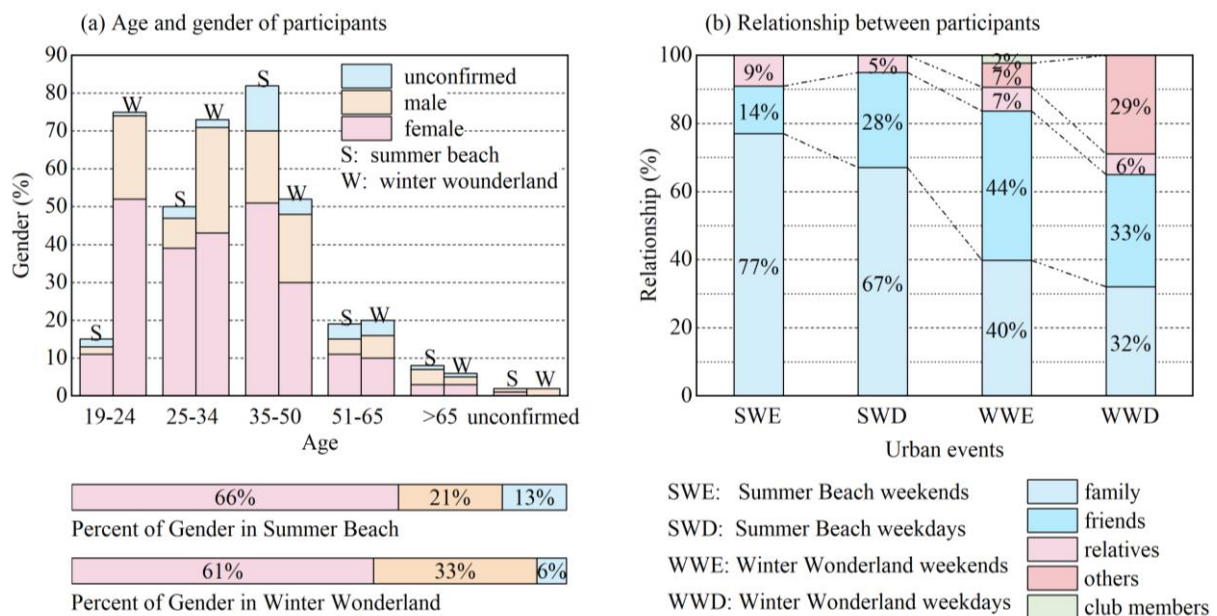


Figure 1. Analysis of participations' gender, age and relationship.

Furthermore, according to the Third European Quality of Life Survey (Abdallah, Stoll, & Eiffe, 2013), the subjective well-being of people who have frequent social contact with family and friends is more significant than people who do not. This research shows that both events have successfully provided a seasonal gathering place and opportunity for family and friends in addition to their general routines. It pumps the vitality into

people's lives and vitalises the city centre with their engagement, particularly outside their daily activities. A positive, sustained social impact to the participants has also been shown later in the result.

Locality, accessibility and legibility

According to the survey result (see Figure 2(a)), nearly 70% of summer event participants were from Nottinghamshire, which 26% came from Nottingham City area and another 43% from surrounding places within the urban boundary. It indicates that the summer beach theme was strongly local orientated for fulfilling residents' demands due to the city's location is far from the seaside. It benefits local communities and enhances the urban vitality year after year in a long-term rather than aims for substantial economic returns in a short period. On the other hand, the winter event figures were quite different. 53% of participants were from Nottinghamshire, which was over 16% lower than the summer events. However, people from other UK cities have increased from 29% to 42%, which means more national visitors were attracted in the winter event than the summer event.

Furthermore, the international visitors' figure has also doubled compared to the summer event. It was possibly caused by Christmas tourist season nationally and internationally. According to open questions, previous years, many international students from two Universities in Nottingham might go back home in holiday periods. However, in recent years, the number of international students' families and friends' visits were increased. It might explain the increased number of international visitors according to the answers from extended survey questions. Foreign visitors could be ambassadors for the city and generate positive word of mouth to promote economic development and international process (Kong & Chen, 2018). Even though various themed Christmas markets are available in the UK (see Table 1) and Europe ahead of Christmas each year, Nottingham Winter Wonderland has been one of the most prolonged events among all of them since its establishment in 2011. It may also increase the chance for more people from other cities or even other countries to visit, and extend the impact of the event nationally and internationally.

The surveys' results of both Summer Beach and Winter Wonderland events showed positive outcomes in terms of evaluating the success of the events by the participants. The factors behind these evaluations were mostly recorded in the open-end questions. The event location, 'easy access', 'well-navigated sign system', 'highly distinctive', 'landmarks', were mentioned multiple times. People felt that the general accessibility to the site and legibility around both events were high. The location of both events has been taking place at the Old Market Square, which is the heart of the city. It is one of the most recognisable places in the city or even the country. It is the most accessible place to get within the region. For public transport accessibility, 17 bus stops and three tram stops are around the event location within 3 minutes of walking; for private cars, ten car parks are within 10 minutes walking distances; for people come with their bikes or rental bikes, multiple cycling storages and two rental bike stations are near the Old Market Square within 5 minutes walking distance. Furthermore, for a tram stop and many bus stops, the Old Market Square is visible at the point when people get off. Distinctive Council House and high permissable street pattern help pedestrians to get easy access to their destination on the ground. Indeed, for residents, the Old Market Square acts as a stage of their daily life. Familiarity and frequency of using the place help to raise the accessibility rate and enhance the vitality.

The results also evidentially recorded the transport means of all visitors for both events (see Figure 2(b)). By reviewing bus and private car use figures, there was not much difference between two events for weekdays or weekends. However, looking at the tram use, the results clearly showed 27% and 21% of visitors came to summer event during weekends and weekdays, which the winter figures dropped to 10% and 7%. It indicated that more participants from local areas coming for the summer event and less for the winter event. On the other hand, the summer event figure showed that only 6% of visitors came by train during the weekends. However, the number increased to 25% for the winter event. It indicated more visitors from other cities and countries contributed to the events' participants and explained how visitors from other places might travel to Nottingham. In addition, over 62% (summer) and 57% (winter) of people came by public transport and also a noticeable number of people came on foot. It indicated that the chosen location of the events has excellent public transportation services with high accessibility that has encouraged people to be greener and more sustainable when travel.

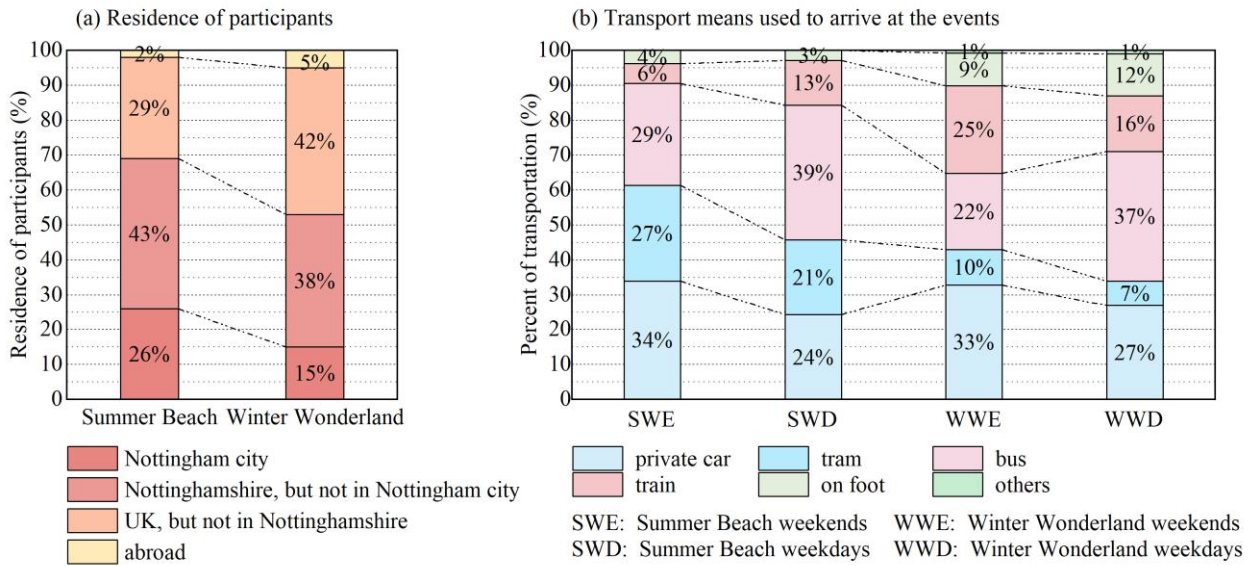


Figure 2. Participants’ areas of residence and transport means have been used to arrive at the events.

Duration of stay and destination

Vitality deals to the degree with which urban space is socially successful (Jalaladdini & Oktay, 2012). Urban vitality is strongly associated with the number of people in and around the place and the duration of the activities (Montgomery, 1995, 1998). Figure 3 presents how long the participants stayed and planned to stay. With the average result from the two sets of figures, it could see that people average spent 3 hours and 54 minutes in the summer event and 3 hours and 17 minutes in the winter event. Total people stayed between 1 to 4 hours are over 80% in summer, but there was a definite high peak to show that 44% of people stayed between 1 to 2 hours in the winter event. 67% of people stayed less than 2 hours and dropped dramatically for longer hours of staying in winter. According to the surveys, the results were closely related to the weather, the aim of the visit, and the activities the events provided.

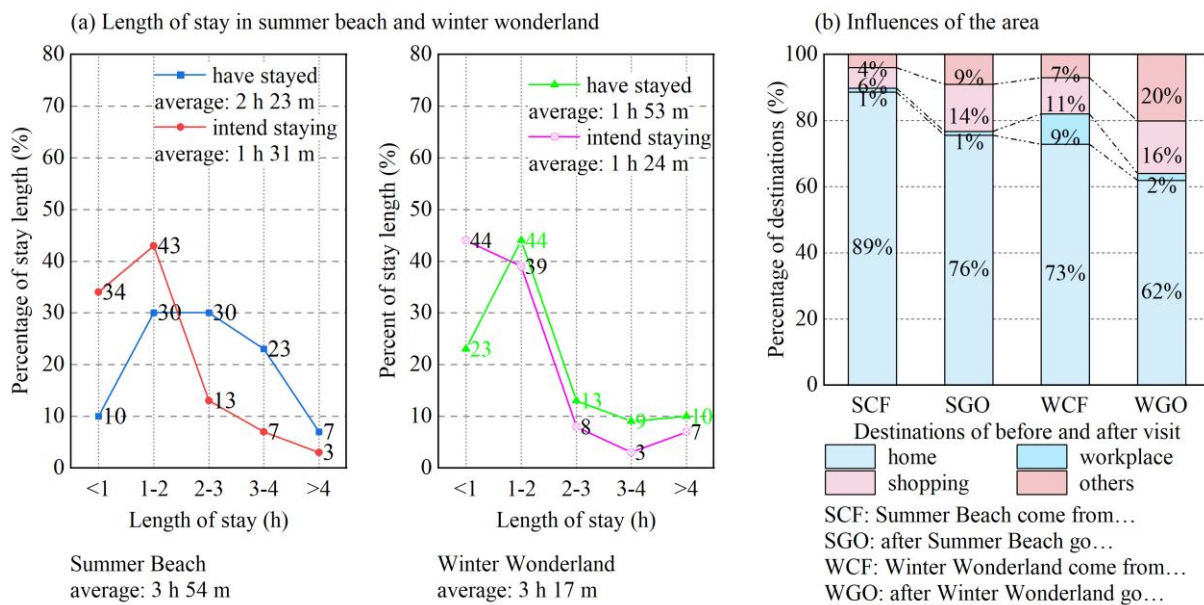


Figure 3. Length of stay and influences of the area.

By hosting a differentiated portfolio of events, places may induce tourists to repeat their visits over time (Paiola, 2008). For the summer event, families with younger children were the key participants. Throughout the day, there were many activities for different age groups, whether they were pre-planned or happened spontaneously on the sand beach. People expressed that warm weather encouraged longer stay for outdoor

activities. By observation between 2014 to 2018, it indicated that parents and grandparents often sit alongside the sandpit or playground area, talking to other adults, using mobile phones or watching kids play. Occasionally, they joined the activities as well. They expressed that the period of their stay highly associated with when the youngsters got tired. Figure 3(b) shows that often people came from home (89%) and the only destination was the Old Market Square for Summer Beach. Afterwards, most of the participants headed back their homes (76%) rather than other places. For the winter event, people often visited the market not only for Christmas shopping but also for food and drink. The Ice Rink also provided a different choice for the visitors. Encouragingly, last few years increased indoor areas of German Bar and additional indoor spaces might help people spend more time at the square, which also enhanced urban vitality by providing eventful places for people to meet up.

Spatial utilisation and atmosphere creation

Temporarily utilising public space is determined to change the atmosphere and improve the quality of life (Oswalt, Overmeyer, & Misselwitz, 2013) primarily through containing diverse behaviour, uses and activities, such as periodic festivities and events (Jalaladdini & Oktay, 2012). Events can add flexibility to existing fixed structures and add the image value of a landmark (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Understanding how spatial organisation and facilitation can provide appropriate support to the event is crucial to success. Clearly, due to the themes of both events, the summer event was strongly associated with the water fountain feature on the square and had a protected area for children to play with water because of the safety issues. It created an active holiday beach-themed atmosphere with a sandy beach, a pool and the existing fountain. The participants indicated in the survey that the particular spatial correlation between the event and existing facilities on the square is significant to them. Due to the weather and the ice rink's location, the winter event was disengaged with the fountain totally, but the Christmas stalls were facing to the existing street front of surrounding buildings that created a new façade of the square temporarily. It has helped enhance the shopping experience of the visitors by extending the existing shopfronts, which provided the terrain for social interaction (Montgomery, 1998). The dialogue between existing street frontage and newly created opposite-side temporary stalls enhanced Christmas atmosphere.

According to Cheshmehzangi (2012), the increased publicity and popularity make more people using the centre of the square as the passageway more frequent than before. The characterised place with the water fountain affiliates with the seasonal themed urban events bring unique experiences and scenes to the visitors. Such events bring a historical place, citizen's daily life and new dramatic images of the events together. They successfully transform an ordinary public square into an inspirational place from time to time. Such a place has become the perfect stage for a stream of events. The climaxes of the events, such as opening and closing ceremonies, bring an exciting and festival atmosphere to encourage people to celebrate their lives and their city. It proves that successful seasonal urban events, as temporary uses of public places, positively influences urban vitality.

Satisfaction rate and issues

According to this research, the satisfaction rate of participants indicated the success of seasonal urban events, and how vibrant the events could be. As the results showed (see Figure 4(a)), the overall levels of visitors' satisfaction for both events were enormously high. 94% of respondents in Summer Beach and 93% from Winter Wonderland showed above the satisfaction levels in terms of the atmosphere and ambience. Overall experiences of satisfaction also reached 93% and 94%. It echoed the Nottingham City Council's Public Survey responses in 2019, as 96% of the public rating the summer event as "[...] very good (72%)" and "[...] good (24%)" (Mellors Group, 2019). In this research, 73% of people from the summer event and 89% from the winter event showed the interests of returning the event during the same year or in the future years. For whom visited the event more than once, expressed that the changes of activities, creativity and innovation of the event, bring them back again and again even during the same season. An expectation of possible new activities attracts them to visit each year, resulting in a self-sustained vitality of the events in the future.

The survey also asked the participants' opinions about current issues and future improvement of the events. The top weakness identified in both events that threats the urban vitality was related to lack of street furniture. A large number of appropriate temporary benches and seats were highly requested in the answers of individual questionnaires (see Figure 4(b)). Besides, the locations and numbers of the entrances were also mentioned to be improved in terms of visibility and accessibility. However, people experienced that the signs for both events were clear, which helped the legibility to navigate visitors around the place. Participants also expressed the overcrowding issues, and the capacity of the event space was low, particularly during the

summer weekends. Storage places and subsidiary facilities were also required to be supplied in the future years, such as toilets and changing rooms even though the improvement has been observed each year. The survey still showed the room of improving spatial organisation and better facilitating the events that would extend the period of their stay.

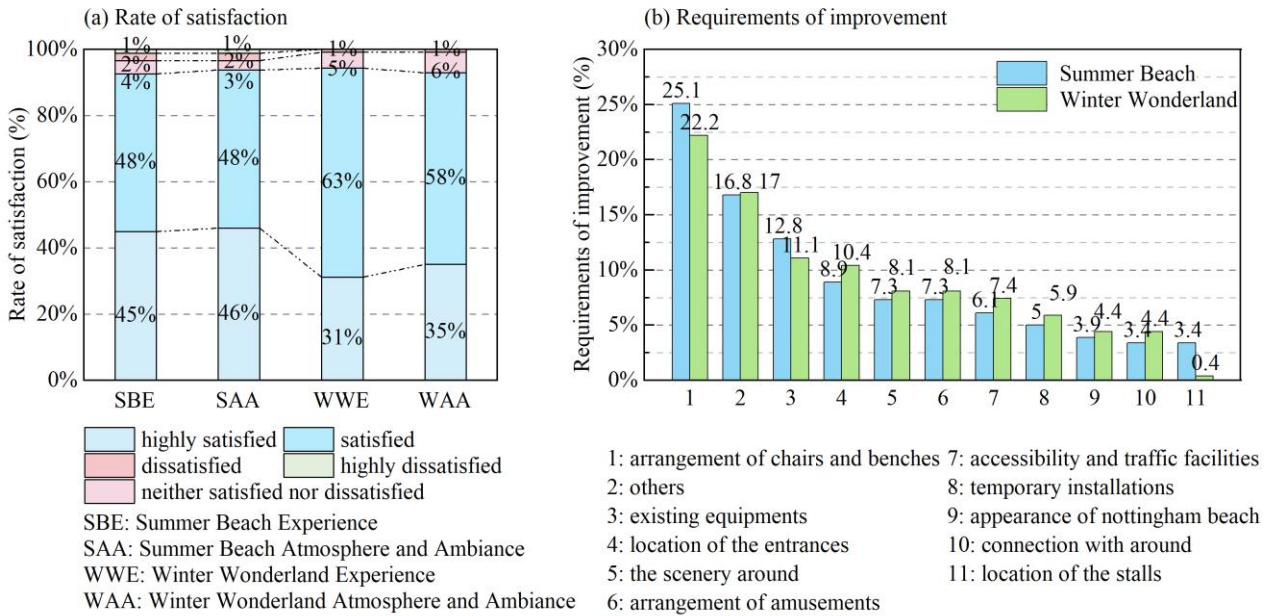


Figure 4. Requirements about spatial utilisation and satisfaction of participants.

According to the survey, seasonally themed events and distinctive features certainly helped improve the image of the city (see Figure 5(a)). 89% of people from the summer event and 88% from the winter event expressed that the events brought a positive impact on the the city’s image, and brought new characteristics to the urban identity. Notably, they expressed the annually periodic events regularly happen each year at the same season bringing expectations and excitement to them. Furthermore, the majority of respondents at both events evaluated positively in terms of social sustainability (see Figure 5(b)). They believed that such events helped improve communication between local people, sense of local community, and social cohesion. It also helped to enhance social inclusion by free of charge to access the event area. Furthermore, average over 80% of people believed that the seasonal urban events enhanced the civic pride of local people.

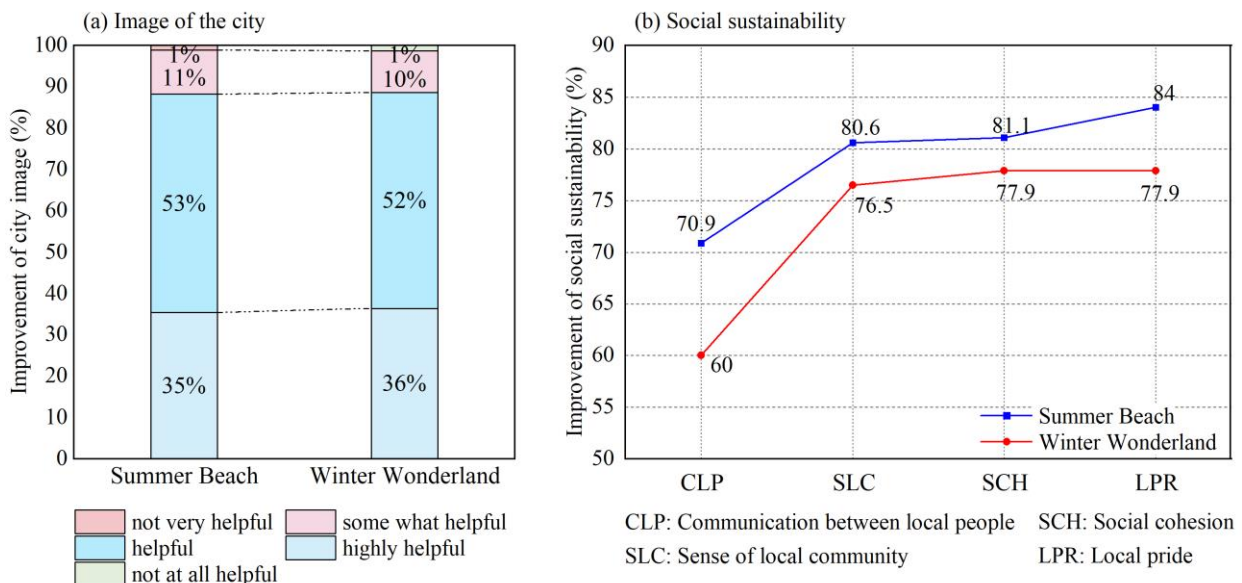


Figure 5. Participants' rating of improvement of city image and social sustainability.

Conclusion

A lasting legacy of a city?

This paper has explored the characteristics of a particular typology of the public urban event – ‘Seasonal Urban Event’, which has a ‘periodic’ or ‘regular’ nature. It adds regularity as a characteristic of the urban event. It often indicates that the event happens annually around a specific season. However, it does not mean that the event would be repeated in the same format, content, organisation, and spatial structure every time. Under the same themed umbrella, the flexible and highly adaptable elements could be spotted each time. For instance, according to the observation between 2015 to 2018, average around 25% new stalls and activities were introduced to the public on purpose each year in Winter Wonderland. It helped to be more responsive to residents’ needs and preferences through regular transformations (Bishop & Williams, 2012). It brought a fresh look and excitement to the event and new experiences to the residents and visitors. It helped attract people to revisit the events and refresh their memories of the events regularly. They may contribute to enhance the urban identity and re-image of the city and brand the city nationally and internationally through media broadcast. It always reactivates the urban environment dynamically and brings vibrant and vitality to the public space of the hosting city in a regular pattern.

Defining ‘Seasonal Urban Event’ helps to understand its impact on society and the environment. Balancing social and economic benefits is one of the challenges that future seasonal urban events are facing. For instance, the research of impact on surrounding street frontages should be carried out in the future. Whether the events have influenced the income of the different stores would be valuable as the additional success or concern to the event organiser. Furthermore, with the success of the events, practical spatial arrangement and facilitation issues as indicated above also need to be resolved accordingly. Although the accessibility of the site is high, the access points of entry need to be increased, which affect permeability within the site boundary. Besides, maintaining the high satisfaction rates of events would be a particular challenge to the event organiser. Even though unpredictable challenges may arise with the change of people’s demands, the characteristics of flexibility and adaptability of the seasonal urban event would help face and overcome future challenges.

Seasonal urban events can provide a series of opportunities to encourage performance and complex range of activities. They act as meeting places and catalysts for aesthetic excellence not only supporting education, local identity, civic pride, economic activities, regional development, and national and international tourism but also stimulating diversity and enhancing social cohesion (Richards & Palmer, 2010). An important role is played by the events related to some contextual characteristics, leveraging some capabilities embedded in the local social systems and social networks (Paiola, 2008). Seasonal Urban Event, which characterised with a themed, periodic and regular pattern, promotes local life and participants experience appropriately. It becomes a useful tool for enhancing urban vitality for the present and future.

As Bishop (2016) stated: “The city is never an end state but is perpetually evolving” (Bishop, 2016, p. 43), so as Seasonal Urban Event. People’s demands, participating experiences, and success of the events are the fundamental driving forces of the ever-changing development. Positive social impact and economic benefit would help to sustain the event itself to happen regularly. The nature of periodic, flexibility and variety has high adaptability to people’s needs, the fashion of tendency and the physical environment. It makes the Seasonal Urban Event has become an effective supplementary to urbanism. Indeed, a well-organised themed Seasonal Urban Event could become a periodic landmark of a city and move forward to a lasting legacy of the city. Promotion of Seasonal Urban Event nationally and internationally enhance urban vitality, public health and well-being, urban policy and city management, tourist development, and may achieve future social sustainability globally.

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