GEO301

Queenstown Winter Festival

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**Task 2**

The Queenstown Winter Festival (QWF), is a large-scale event that requires significant amounts of pre-planning in order to be safe and successful. In order for the event to go ahead, sponsors, entertainers, consents and permits need to be confirmed. Sponsorships are essential due to the money that they are able to put into the event. Sponsors, depending on their contribution and size, are able to name events at the highest level and at the lowest level, can support a specific event. Negotiations occur between event organisers to ensure that both the sponsor and event coordinators are satisfied with their investment. Entertainers are an essential part of the QWF as they are one of the key attractions that bring tourists into Queenstown. Entertainers are found through contacting agents, managers and the artists themselves with talks starting as early as September 2018 to sign up headline acts due to many doing concerts overseas. The overall goal of hiring entertainers for the festival is to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of both local and foreign artists. Entertainment is popular due to its free admission which has proven to boost its popularity. On average, each event requires 2 to 30 staff members to successfully organise and operate the event on the days that the festival runs. Suppliers are also vital to the operation of the QWF with 15 different suppliers being contracted to provide events with necessary stock.

Consents are crucial if an event requires some form of shelter for the event to take place. Organisers must go through a thorough process with the Queenstown Lake District Council if they are to obtain resource consent for their event. For temporary events that require the use of buildings for carnivals, fairs, markets, filming and entertainment, the number of people partaking in the event cannot exceed 500 if it is based inside a building and 200 if based outdoors. The activity cannot last any longer than 7 days at the same location and must comply with any noise restrictions that are put in place. The date of the event must be disclosed along with leniency regarding weather conditions and the requirement to postpone. If a future event is to occur, organisers must explain when the event is to occur and what time of the year is preferred. The expected numbers for those attending must include the expected number of participants in each year that the event is expected to run along with the number of staff running the event and potential spectators. Traffic and transportation regarding the event must be organised in the consent if the event is going to disrupt the usual movement of vehicles and pedestrians. Temporary road closure, public transport and parking must be considered when applying for consent to ensure the success of the event and to maintain safety. One of the most important aspects of applying for consent is ensuring that a reliable safety plan is implemented in the event of an emergency. Organisers have to provide the council with information regarding the emergency plans, must state that emergency services will be notified in the event of an emergency and lastly, whether any emergency services will be on-site for the duration of the event’s run time. If the event wishes to sell alcohol, it must have obtained a liquor license. This can only be approved once the resource consent has been approved and managers of the event must supply documents that detail how entry to the event is managed, security, how alcohol is managed, emergency management and key contact people.

Since the QWF is such a large festival, it should be taken into consideration the amount of success that the event had not only in its run time but also in its preparation. In a 100% Pure New Zealand article, Destination Queenstown Chief Executive, Graham Budd, believed the event to be an overall success. *“It was a fitting event to mark the Real Journeys Queenstown Winter Festival's 45th anniversary, and to celebrate this iconic Queenstown event, which is by Queenstown, for Queenstown, showcasing Queenstown,” said Mr Budd. "It's been four days of fun, madcap antics and amazing live entertainment across Queenstown and our team is already starting work on planning next year's event."* General Manager of the Queenstown Novotel, Jim Moore, was also quoted stating, *“the action-packed festival creates a real drive for visitors to come to be part of the event, bringing life to town and a buzz of excitement for visitors and locals alike."* These statements clearly show that the festival appeared to be a massive success in their opinion. Some of the key events that were a major success at the QWF were the birdman swing, the Winter Festival Ball and team dynamics. In 2019, the QWF had a peak attendance of 56,910 and reached an audience of 151 million people around the globe and managed to raise $1.9 million solely from news coverage.

The QWF had some negative aspects with some confusion occurring around an event called Mardi Grass along with logistical issues and the protection of grounds. By far the largest problem was the levels of drugs detected in the wastewater during and after the event. Stuff published an article detailing statistics about the level of drugs detected in waste around the country. In 2019, Southern New Zealand placed second on the rankings for MDMA/Ecstasy use with approximately 275g per 1000 people per day. Ecstasy alters the senses of someone’s surroundings that alter sensations, increases energy, empathy and heightens the sense of pleasure. Control around the use of drugs should be better managed at the festival due to the use of them being illegal and also potentially harmful to not only the user but potentially those around them.

**Task 3**

**Social Impacts**

The Queenstown Winter Festival had many noticeable positive social impacts. The long term positives included 56,910 people attended the event from all over the world and New Zealand. Thanks to media coverage, the event was spread to more than 150 million people along with 102 news articles being published solely on the festival. Social media helped fuel the flame that was the QWF with more than 800 posts being uploaded onto various social platforms (excluding Instagram). New Zealand internet personality, How To Dad’s coverage reached more than 3 million viewers on his social media accounts. Long term positive social impacts included high school students leaving to study tourism at the New Zealand University of Tourism.

Short term negative impacts included transport around Queenstown. With the massive influx of people, public transport struggled to manage the demand and as a result, people arrived late to events or were unable to get transport due to the lack of availability. Signage was also an issue with events being poorly signed resulting in many people losing their way. Queenstown weather is often very wet and dark in the Winter months which doesn’t help when the majority of events are based outdoors. Some events are unable to operate in the event of wet weather and snow so the dependence on the weather being optimal is a liability that many organisers overlook. There was also confusion surrounding the naming of events which led to people arriving at the wrong events and misinformation being spread and increasing confusion. The timing of cultural events was also controversial due to them taking place at 6 pm but the festival opened at 12 pm. Many thought that it would have been more appropriate to have these occur at the opening of the event rather than at night. Many participants also believed that the events at Earnslaw Park closed far too early and it was asked that for future events the opening times were increased to meet the demand of participants. It was also noticed that small businesses were not decorating their storefronts to help with the immersion into the winter festival and that businesses should put more of an emphasis on themes, especially around this time of year. As previously mentioned, Southern New Zealand is the top consumer of MDMA/Ecstasy and this undoubtedly has some form of a link to the Queenstown Winter Festival. Alcohol is also a major issue with the QWF with fights often breaking out between intoxicated adults. In 2010, the Otago Daily Times published an article reporting on an incident where a 32-year-old male was admitted to hospital after being struck in the back of the head by a drunk. The victim had a concussion and three stitches on the back of the head due to a gash. The Queenstown Winter Festival also had some negative social impacts with some of the most noticeable being drugs and alcohol abuse. The main long term negative impact for the QWF was the presence of Covid-19 that occurred through 2020. The virus dealt a huge blow to the tourism industry and forced business to close. As a result, people were left with having to sell their businesses to live and seek other forms of employment potentially outside of Queenstown.

**Economic Impacts**

The Queenstown Winter Festival is a period where the economy in Queenstown is able to thrive and expand. Over the Festival’s four day run time, $9.9 million was made and redistributed into the economy. This figure was an increase of more than 10% to the previous year which is great for the economy in the short term and long term. Schools are also shut during the event and most high school students are able to acquire casual work for the festival's run time. This is important as it allows young individuals to gain work experience and to also experience the festival in full swing. In the long term, those who return to the event, again and again, are reinvesting their money into the economy and are indirectly contributing to the funding of the event so it can run year to year.

Short term negatives for the event were that large international accommodation corporations would not be keeping the majority of money earned in Queenstown or New Zealand but would instead be sending it overseas to shareholders. This would be the opposite with locally owned accommodation with the money remaining in the Queenstown economy and continuing reinvestment. Long term negatives again include the Covid-19 pandemic. Queenstown’s economy is reliant on virtually only tourism which means if there are no tourists arriving, businesses are forced to close resulting in the economy struggling to keep itself alive. This then led to a flow-on effect which resulted in the QWF being cancelled due to Covid and the restrictions in place regarding international travel.

**Environment Impacts**

The Queenstown Winter Festival also had many benefits to the environment in the short term and long term. In the short term, access to ski fields and their general maintenance were greatly improved to keep up with vehicle and foot traffic during the QWF. In the long term, it is crucial that Lake Wakatipu remains a natural environment to preserve the scenery and to keep restricting housing development to Queenstown Central.

Over the duration of the event, the environment is impacted in a variety of negative ways. In the short term, ground protection at multiple events proved to be ineffective. Grass ends up being torn up and if left untreated in the long term, it struggles to grow back before Spring. Wet weather and cold temperatures inhibit the rate at which grass grows back so adequate care of the event area is crucial to upkeep public areas for the Summer. Rubbish is also a major issue with the festival since some primary school classes close for the duration of the QWF solely to collect rubbish that piles up around the streets in the mornings before schools open. Queenstown’s sewage system is relatively old and struggles to sustain the amount of waste produced when Queenstown has an influx in population. Previously, sewage has burst from treatment plants and leaked into Lake Wakatipu which shows how crucial it is that this issue is addressed to prevent it from happening again.

In my opinion, the most important aspect of the QWF is ensuring the event is safe for everyone. This is because too many drug and alcohol-related incidents occur every year at the festival and as a result, people are admitted to hospital due to significant injures. Keeping a tight control on how drugs and alcohol are managed at the event to ensure the safety of individuals. How this could be done is to have more of a police presence on roads to and from events that can breathalyse people upon entry and exit to ensure people remain safe and can enjoy themselves in a responsible way.