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TOURISM  
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AUSTRALIA

## EVENTS: DRIVERS OF REGIONAL TOURISM

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Summary

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AUGUST 2014







## EVENTS: DRIVERS OF REGIONAL TOURISM

### SUMMARY

Every year hundreds of events or festivals are held across regional Australia – including sporting, food and wine, music, arts and culture and community events. Events are ideal for generating awareness for regional destinations and driving visitation.

Tourism Research Australia's *National Visitor Survey* shows that over half of all domestic day and overnight trips in 2013 were to regional destinations (58%), where visitors spent \$34 billion.

Tourism Research Australia, the South Australian Tourism Commission and Tourism Victoria identified a need to better understand regional events as a tourism product, and their place in driving visitation to the region. GFK Australia were contracted to conduct the research.

This report summarises the key findings from the research, and includes:

- events and regional tourism
- trips taken for events
- event destinations and experiences
- encouraging event attendance
- communicating events
- opportunities.

#### Photo credits (in order of appearance)

Fork & Cork Festival, Mount Gambier, South Australia  
Courtesy of Tanya Ewan/RDA Limestone Coast

Dunkeld Races, The Grampians, Victoria  
Courtesy of Southern Grampians Shire

Festival, Bendigo, Victoria  
Courtesy of City of Greater Bendigo

### METHODOLOGY

An online survey was conducted in April 2014 with 2,401 respondents aged 15 years and older from across Australia. All respondents had attended an event in a regional area (not Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Darwin, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Canberra, and Gold Coast) in the last two years.

As it was possible for respondents to have been to more than one type of event, one event was allocated to each respondent. Interstate trips were given priority, followed by overnight trips within the respondents' home state. Quotas (age, gender and location) were set at the screening stage to ensure representation of the population in terms of age and gender.

The full report is available on request from [tourism.research@tra.gov.au](mailto:tourism.research@tra.gov.au).



## EVENTS AND REGIONAL TOURISM

Events are important drivers of regional tourism. Event goers are likely to attend more than one event, which provides opportunities for cross-promotion using databases and direct marketing.

- Eighty seven per cent of Australians travelled domestically in the last two years.
- Over half (56%) visited a regional destination.
- Almost one-quarter of Australians have been to at least one event in a regional area in the last two years.
- Respondents attended an average of three events, which was largely consistent across different demographic groups and for visitors from capital cities and regional areas.
- The most popular events were:
  - food and wine
  - music related
  - garden and botanical
  - sport (as a spectator)
  - art exhibitions.

FIGURE 1: DOMESTIC TRAVEL IN THE LAST TWO YEARS

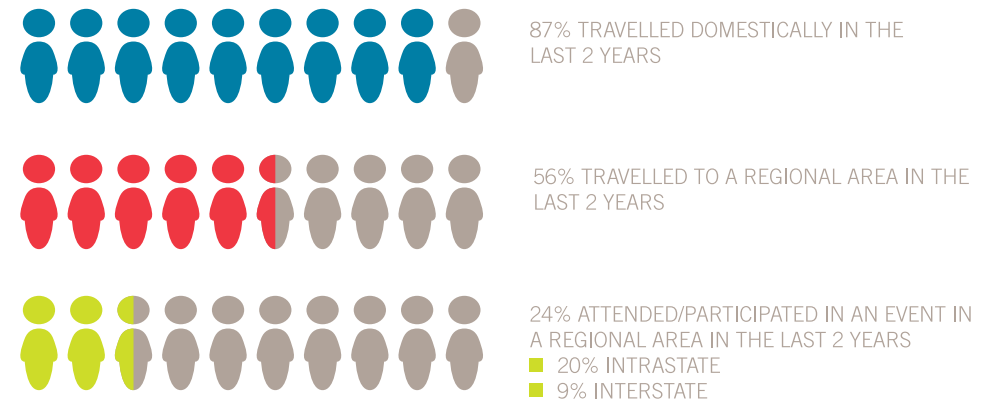
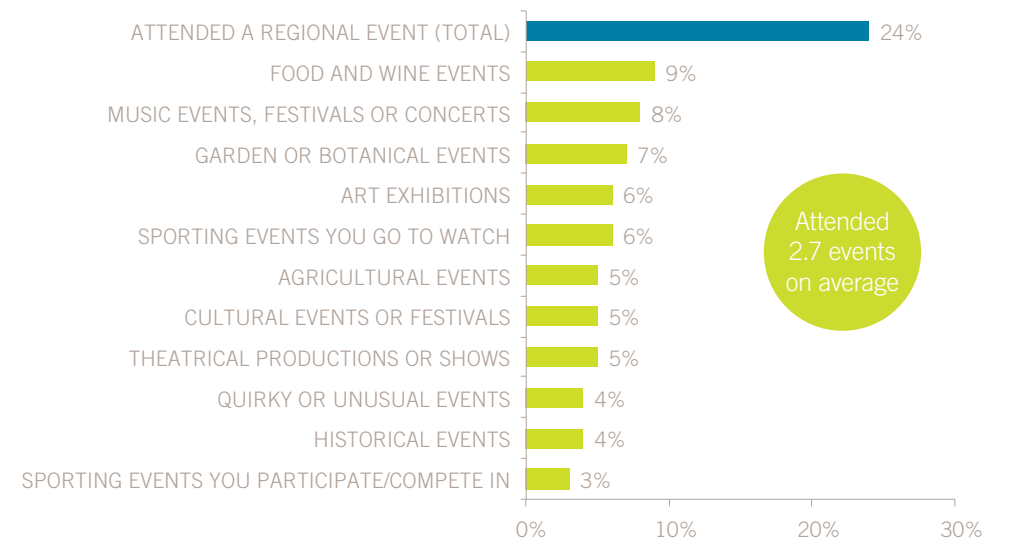


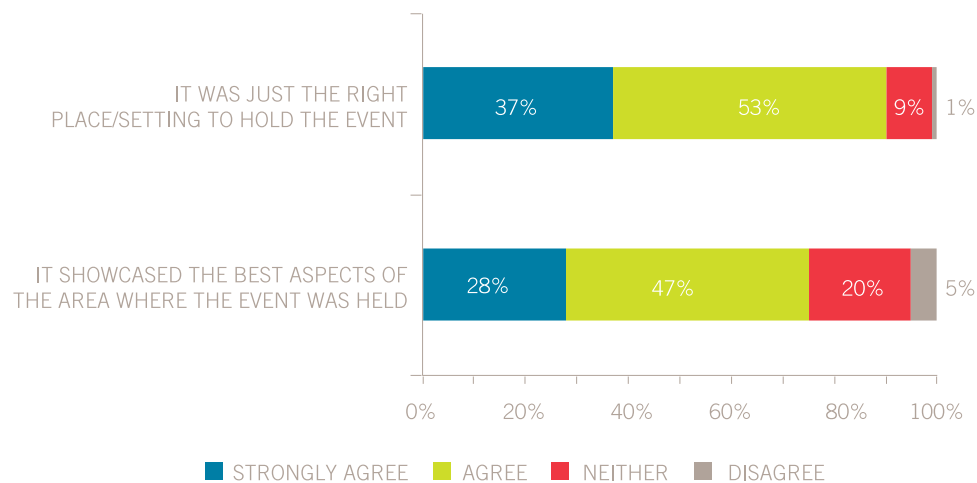
FIGURE 2: REGIONAL EVENT ATTENDANCE IN THE LAST TWO YEARS



Attendees become destination advocates and promote events through word of mouth, making positive experiences and impressions very important.

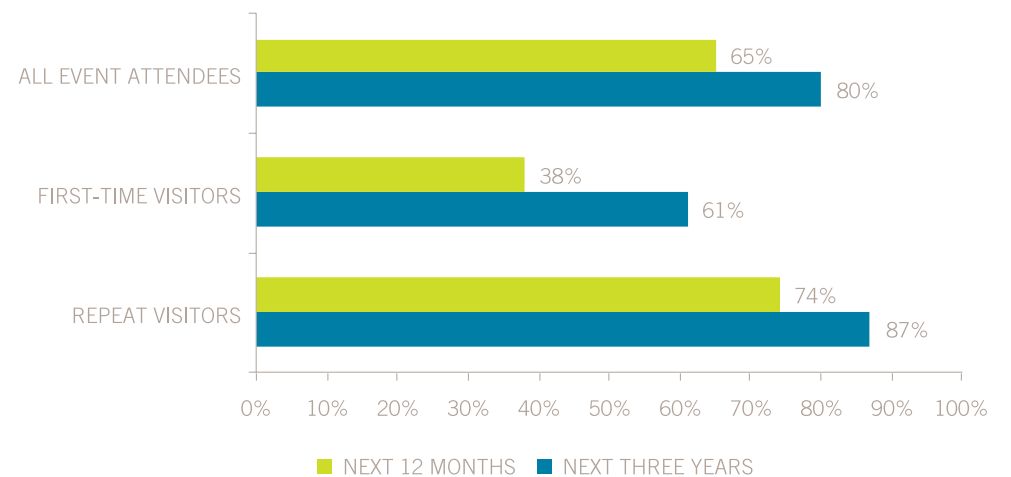
- In relation to their particular event, most attendees felt the location was a good fit that showcased the best aspects of the area.
- Events fulfilled expectations, with 28% of attendees very satisfied and 48% satisfied.
- Fifty nine per cent of attendees made positive recommendations for the event to others.
- Forty two per cent had recommended the destination where the event was held to others.
- Events held in natural settings such as food and wine events (48%) or garden and botanical events (50%) were more likely to be recommended by attendees to others.

FIGURE 3: SATISFACTION WITH DESTINATION



- Fifty eight per cent of attendees were likely to attend other similar events.
- For 57% of first-time visitors to the region, the event was the main reason for visiting; likewise for 69% of repeat visitors.
- Three-quarters of event attendees would not have gone to the destination on this occasion if not for the event.
- Most event attendees intend to return to the destination in the future: however, this is more likely for repeat visitors than first-time visitors.

FIGURE 4: INTENDED FUTURE VISITATION TO DESTINATION

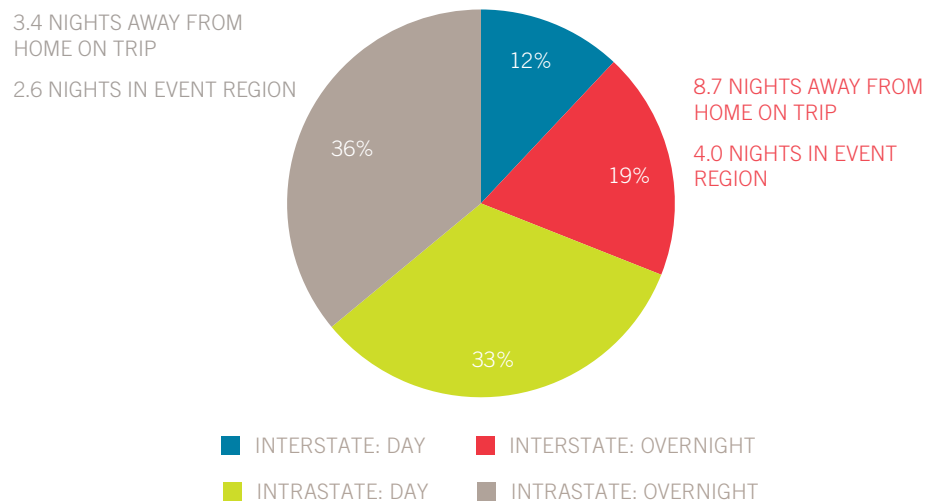


## TRIPS TAKEN FOR EVENTS

Encouraging visitors to stay longer provides opportunities to showcase regional areas and their attractions and increase spend in regional destinations.

- Trips taken for events were fairly evenly split between overnight (55%) and day trips (45%).
- Respondents were more likely to travel to events within their own state, and more often within two hours' drive from home (58%) than over two hours' drive from home (42%).
- On average, those who made overnight trips stayed just over five nights away from home and three nights in the region where the event was held.
- Length of stay was longer for those on interstate trips.
- Most respondents travelled to events using their own transport (76%), with 41% of those who were staying overnight opting to stay in paid accommodation close to where the event was held.

FIGURE 5: TYPES OF TRIPS AND NIGHTS ON TRIP/IN REGION

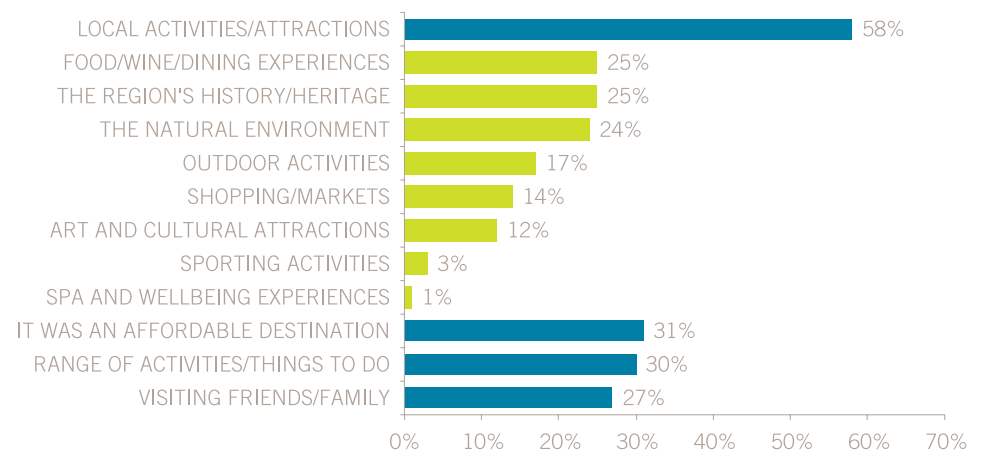


## EVENT DESTINATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Events should highlight local attractions and any unique tourism offerings in the region, while making it easy and affordable for attendees to access them.

- Beyond the event itself, destinations were visited for:
  - affordability
  - local attractions
  - the range of activities available
  - to visit friends and family.
- The following attractions and experiences were rated as important by around one-quarter of respondents:
  - history and heritage
  - culinary experiences
  - the natural environment.

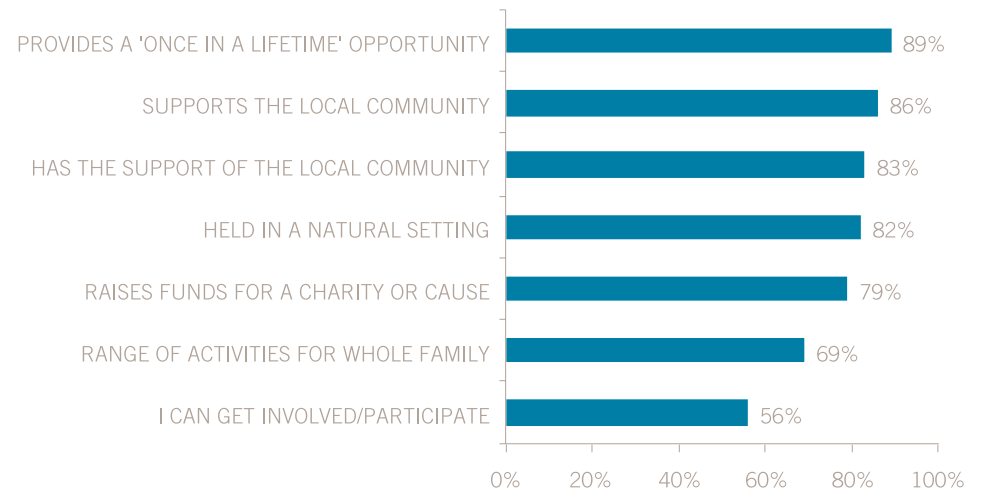
FIGURE 6: REASONS FOR GOING TO THE DESTINATION



When promoting events, it is important to highlight the range of experiences available (both at the event and the destination), as well as the natural setting and how the event benefits the community.

- Events appealed to respondents for a number of reasons, including:
  - social
  - experiential
  - furthering personal interests
  - experiencing regional destinations
  - providing the opportunity to get away.
- Respondents were also looking for:
  - opportunities for once in a lifetime experiences
  - events which have positive impacts (on local community, charity or causes)
  - events that are held in natural settings
  - a range of activities at the event.
- The desire to get involved or participate in events was less prevalent.

FIGURE 7: PREFERENCES FOR EVENTS IN REGIONAL AREAS

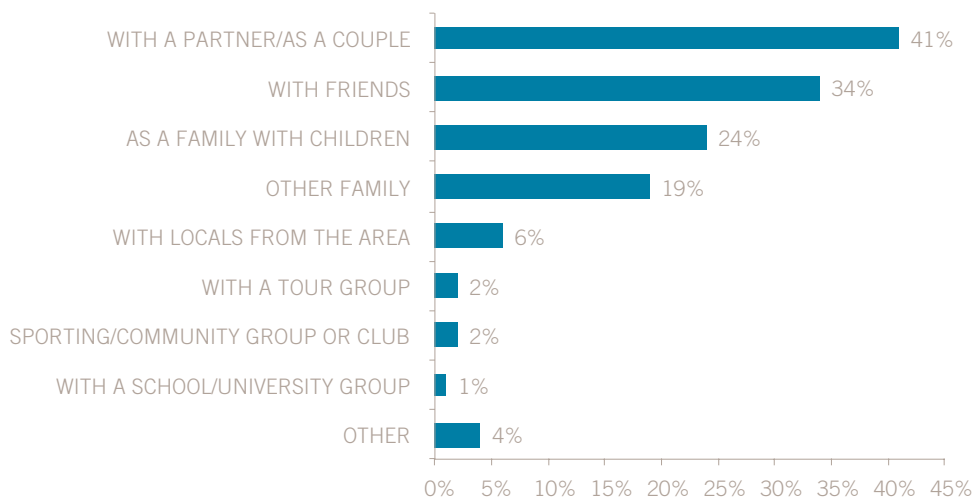


## ENCOURAGING EVENT ATTENDANCE

Value is a key driver of encouraging event attendance. There are opportunities to develop and cross-promote packages including attractions, accommodation and transport options to make longer trips more appealing to visitors.

- When respondents were asked about ways to encourage higher attendance at regional events, value for money was the most popular response (63% mentioned better value for money).
- Other responses included:
  - highlighting attractions of the area/region where the event is held (40%)
  - making it easier to find accommodation (36%)
  - making it easier to get to events (34%)
  - making it easier to organise trips (26%).

FIGURE 8: TRAVEL PARTY\* FOR THE EVENT

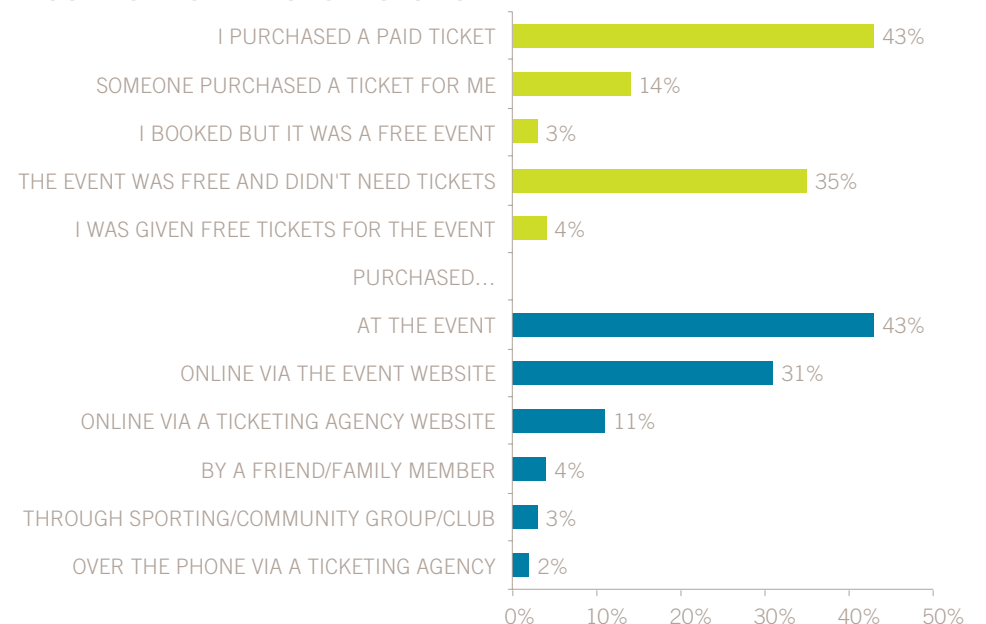


\*Total is more than 100% as multiple responses allowed

Event ticketing options should accommodate the different types of parties who attend (couple tickets, flexible multiple tickets or discounts for multiple tickets), and potentially make it easier for parties with multiple attendees to book and separately pay for group tickets.

- Events were typically attended:
  - as a couple
  - with friends
  - as a family with children/other family members.
- The majority of attendees (60%) purchased or booked tickets for the event (including a small percentage who booked tickets for free events).

FIGURE 9: TICKET PURCHASES FOR THE EVENT

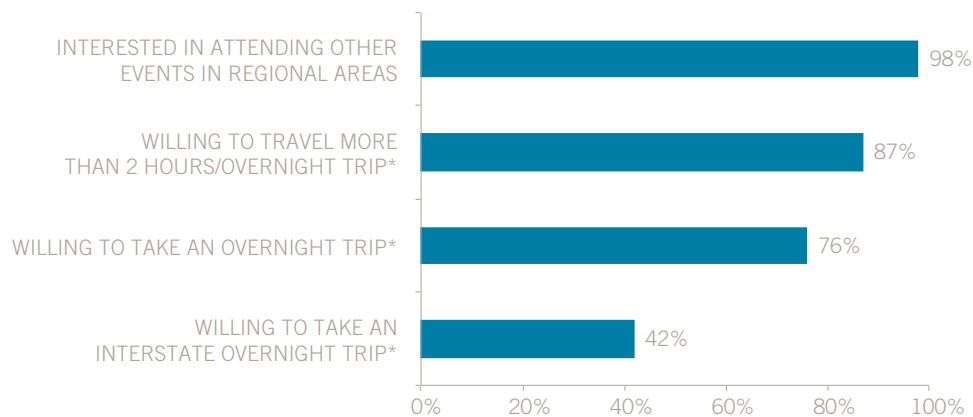




There is high demand for events in regional areas across different event types and these events have the potential to drive both intrastate and interstate trips.

- For those who had attended events in the past two years, there was universal interest in future events held in regional areas.
- There was willingness to go to events as part of day trips and/or overnight trips to regional areas.

FIGURE 10: INTEREST IN FUTURE EVENTS



\*For the particular regional event that interests them

TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT EVENT TYPES

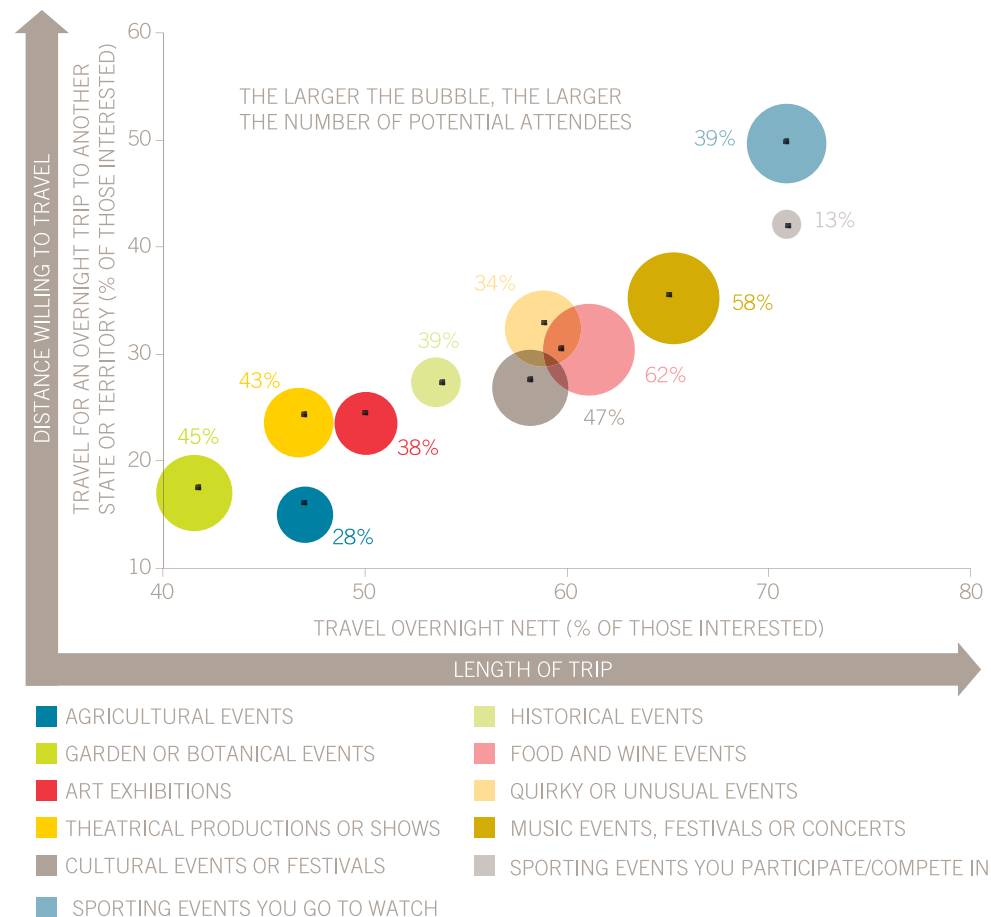
Event (% attended)	More likely to...	Less likely to...
<b>Food and wine events (15%)</b>	be pre-planned (71%) be attended by couples (49%)	be a trip driver (55%) have purchased a ticket (41%)
<b>Music events, festivals or concerts (13%)</b>	attract females (60%) attract 15-34 years olds (49%) be intrastate overnight trips (43%) be attended with friends (61%)	be intrastate day trips (26%)
<b>Garden or botanical events (11%)</b>	attract 65 year olds and older (25%) be an intrastate overnight trip (50%)	attract 15-34 year olds (25%) have purchased a ticket (44%)
<b>Sporting events you go to watch (10%)</b>	attract males (59%) be a trip driver (71%) be pre-planned (86%) have purchased a ticket (68%)	
<b>Art exhibitions (10%)</b>	attract females (61%)	be pre-planned and decided on the road (28%) have purchased a ticket (50%)
<b>Cultural events or festivals (8%)</b>		be intrastate overnight trips (26%) have purchased a ticket (43%)
<b>Theatrical productions or shows (8%)</b>	attract females (63%) have purchased a ticket (82%)	
<b>Agricultural events (8%)</b>	attract males (58%) be attended with other family (25%) have purchased a ticket (68%)	
<b>Quirky or unusual events (6%)</b>	attract males (59%) be intrastate day trips (43%)	
<b>Historical events (6%)</b>	be attended as a family with children (32%) visit to experience new things (36%)	be a trip driver (52%) be intrastate day trips (43%)
<b>Sporting events you participate/compete in (5%)</b>	be a trip driver (88%) be pre-planned (92%)	attract 15-34 years old (24%) be attended by couples (32%)

Investment in music, food and wine, spectator sport and cultural events has the greatest impact in increasing regional visitation. Sporting competitions have a strong niche appeal and ability to drive trips further from home, but are best promoted through special interest groups.

Both mainstream and niche events have the potential to drive regional visitation.

- The highest value events (those with broad mainstream appeal that can drive overnight trips) were:
  - music
  - food and wine
  - cultural
  - spectator sporting events.
- The following events had broad appeal, but were more likely to drive day trips compared to other events:
  - Garden/botanical
  - theatrical productions or shows
  - historical events
  - art exhibitions.
- Sporting events to participate/compete in were high value niche events (low in mainstream appeal but high impetus to travel for overnight trips).
- Quirky or unusual events and agricultural events had smaller levels of appeal and were more likely to induce day trips.

FIGURE 11: APPEAL OF EVENTS



## COMMUNICATING EVENTS

Social advocacy and recommendations are vital in generating awareness and knowledge about events. Social media or interest groups/sites should be used to promote events, while also using local promotion to capture impulse or unplanned attendance.

- Most event attendees first heard about the event via word of mouth; from friends and family; having been to the event previously; or through promotional activity (via newspapers, TV ads/travel programs, radio).
- Word of mouth was also an important source of information about the event itself, as was the specific event website.
- Females (35%) and those aged 15–34 years old (43%) were most likely to be the ones telling their friends and family about events – these groups reported being the first to find out about events.
- Local visitor information centres and tourist offices were important for driving impulse attendance – 25% of visitors who decided to attend an event while they were on the road learnt about the event from information centres.

[Link to social media toolkit](#)

FIGURE 12: SOURCES OF INFORMATION – FIRST HEARD ABOUT EVENT

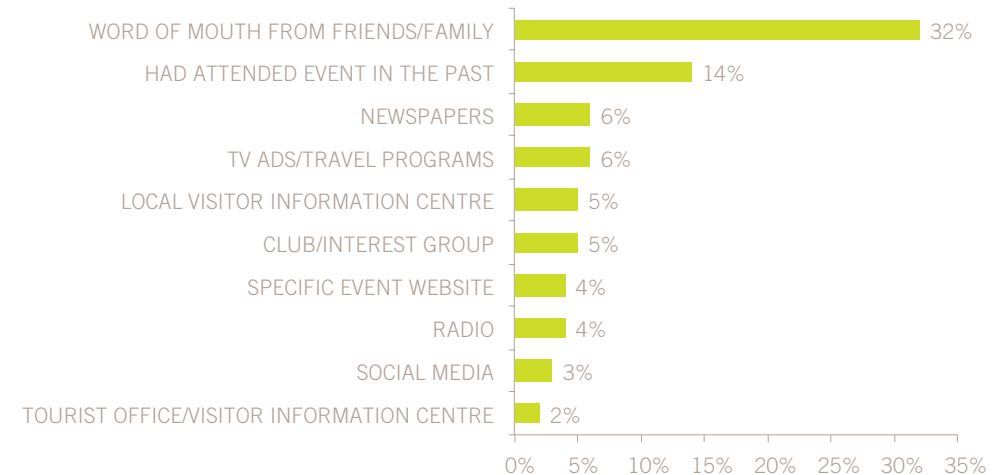
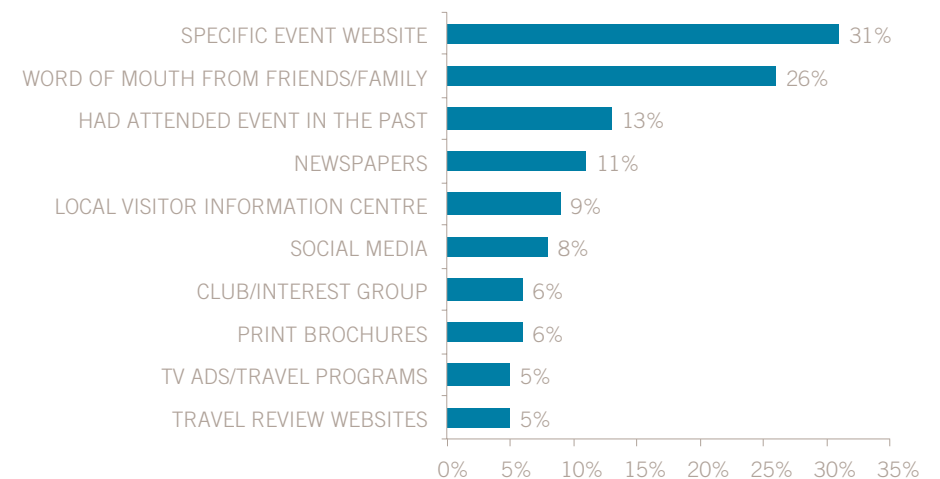


FIGURE 13: SOURCES OF INFORMATION – FOUND OUT MORE ABOUT EVENT



## OPPORTUNITIES

There is strong evidence that demand for regional events is high and that these events can drive regional visitation.

- Make it easier for people to attend events by:
  - providing affordable packages or bundling
  - offering a variety of ticketing options to suit different travel parties
  - promoting ease of access.
- Promote the breadth of experiences/attractions at destinations to encourage/justify longer trips.
- Use direct marketing and targeted promotions to previous event attendees, as they are likely to attend other events.
- Build on the social aspect of events, in particular by using social media to encourage word of mouth promotion and engagement.
- Include events that have the greatest appeal such as:
  - music
  - food and wine
  - spectator sport
  - cultural events
  - garden/botanical
  - theatrical productions or shows
  - historical events
  - art exhibitions.

