

---

# 14

## **Valuing Arts Festivals: A case study of the South African *National Arts Festival***

Jen D. Snowball

### **Introduction**

The South African *National Arts Festival (NAF)* is in its 42nd year and has evolved to be one of the largest cultural festivals in Africa. The value of cultural festivals extends well beyond the financial (that is, economic) impact, including such things as building social cohesion, cultural capital and identity. Significant advances in measuring such values, using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, have been made in the past 30 years. Nevertheless, economic impact studies are still one of the most widely used valuation methods for cultural events, largely because they demonstrate to funders, government and artistic producers the monetary contribution of the events to the city or region in which they take place. Economic impact studies are thus a powerful tool for arts proponents in arguing for increased resources and demonstrating the impact of this sector of the cultural industries. Using research undertaken at the *National Arts Festival*, this chapter discusses the measurement of festival impacts, describing the method and results, and pointing out how festival organisers used the information. It also demonstrates how impact studies, if conducted in multiple years, can track changes in festival audience composition, which can be useful for event management and organisation.

### **Cultural value: definition and measurement**

The value of arts and culture, what are now referred to as the cultural and creative industries, has tended to be underestimated in both developed and developing countries alike. Towse (2011) argues that this is because the cultural or creative industries, at both national and international levels, have been poorly served in terms of the collection of data, which tends to be spread across a number of government departments and captured in different ways in each country, making rigorous international comparisons difficult. This is exacerbated by the unique feature of arts and culture compared to other sectors: that it gives rise to two separate, but related, forms of value: intrinsic value and instrumental value.