

HUQ INDUSTRIES

Evaluating event day impacts

Measuring event day benefits with Huq's place performance platform

Assessing the effects of local events through footfall data could be straight forward, but often the results are not what you'd expect. Find out what events really do for local places in this best practice guide!

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What this guide covers

- ✓ Why hold local events
- ✓ Measuring the results
- ✓ Footfall measurement methods
- ✓ The real benefits of local events

Introduction

Understanding the value of events to the local economy is a hot topic for many local councils. Reasons for include using events as attractions to encourage footfall, to generate exposure for local businesses and to stimulate spending in the local economy. Events are also positive things for residents and visitors to gather around, and help to promote a sense of unity in the community.

On the other hand, events take time and effort to organise - often at the expense of other initiatives. They may also come with

production and safety costs, and can cause disruption for residents, traffic and businesses.

Through our work with 90+ local councils, leading retail and real-estate groups across the country, Huq has a unique opportunity to participate in discussions and test some of the ideas put forward by those advocating for and against holding events. The outcomes from our experiences are sometimes more nuanced than anticipated, and deserve some discussion. Let's start by outlining the event day aims.

Why hold event days?

Ask anyone in councils' Economic Development Teams and they'll tell you that the main reason is to bring people together to enjoy themselves and to support local businesses. They can also generate awareness of local goods and services, and offer a platform for the council to promote their projects and initiatives to the Community.



EVALUATION

How do you know if event days are successful?

Evaluating the success of event days should be straightforward. Organisers may anticipate positive feedback from vendors and participants, and evidence of increased footfall or other measures of engagement with town centres on event days. These KPIs would indicate that the event brought people to the area to engage and trade with the local economy.

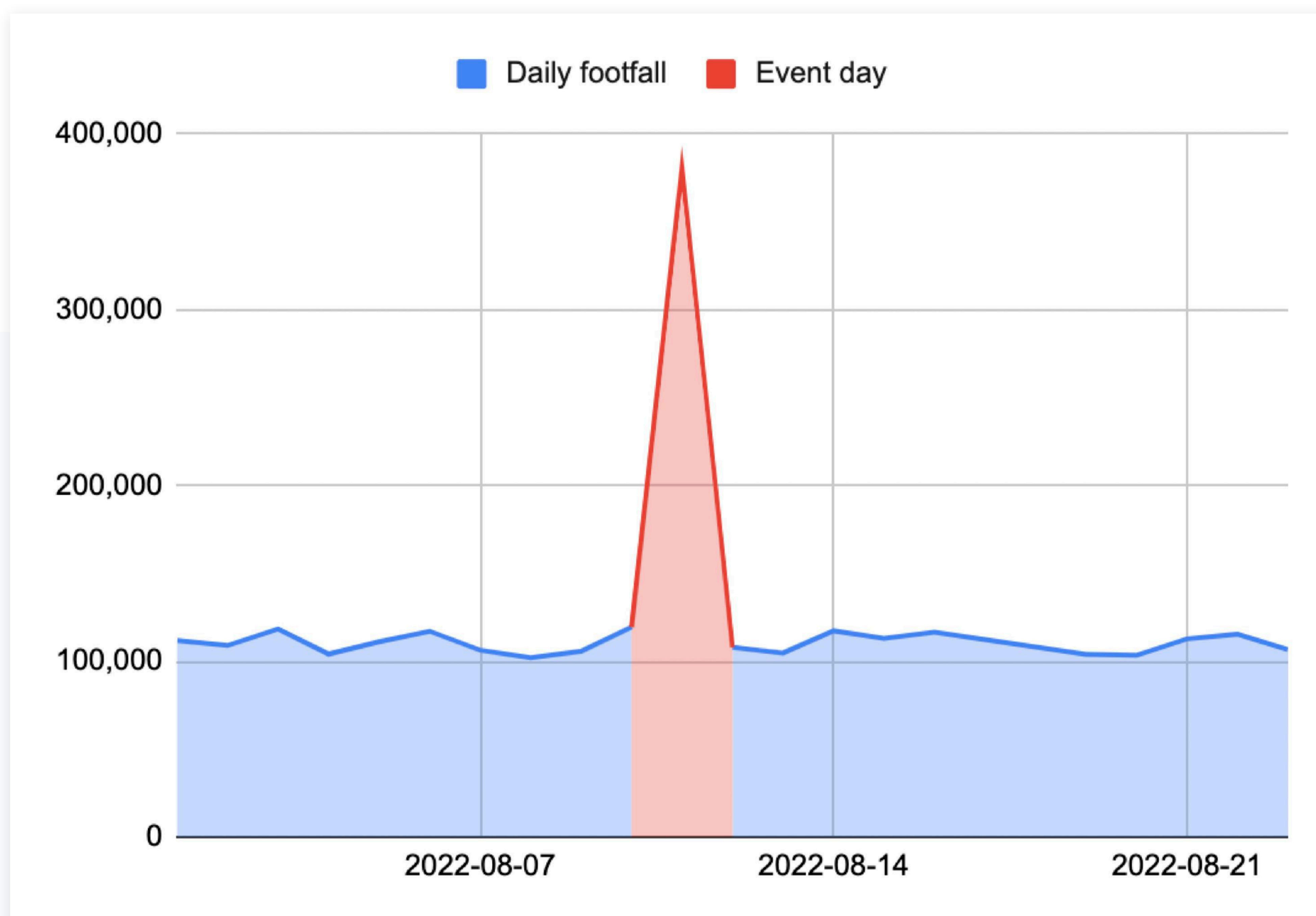


Fig 1: Illustrative example of event day footfall spike

In reality, the results aren't always this clear

For certain events this may be the case. But frequently we find that the impact that events have are different to those expected. And while measurable results exist, you won't always find them in the obvious places. That in itself leads

to interesting conclusions about the role and value that events have to offer for the local economy. These serve to inform organisers' expectations and ensure they accurately match outcomes with the investments they make.

TYPICAL OUTCOMES

What's the more typical pattern of behaviour?

Instead, most local events tend to have the effect of concentrating footfall (visitors) that already exists within a centre around the site of the event, and give focus to the experience for existing visitors. While perhaps not the original outcome desired, this is a great thing. Providing visitors with something to coalesce around to enjoy does wonders for their experience of that centre.

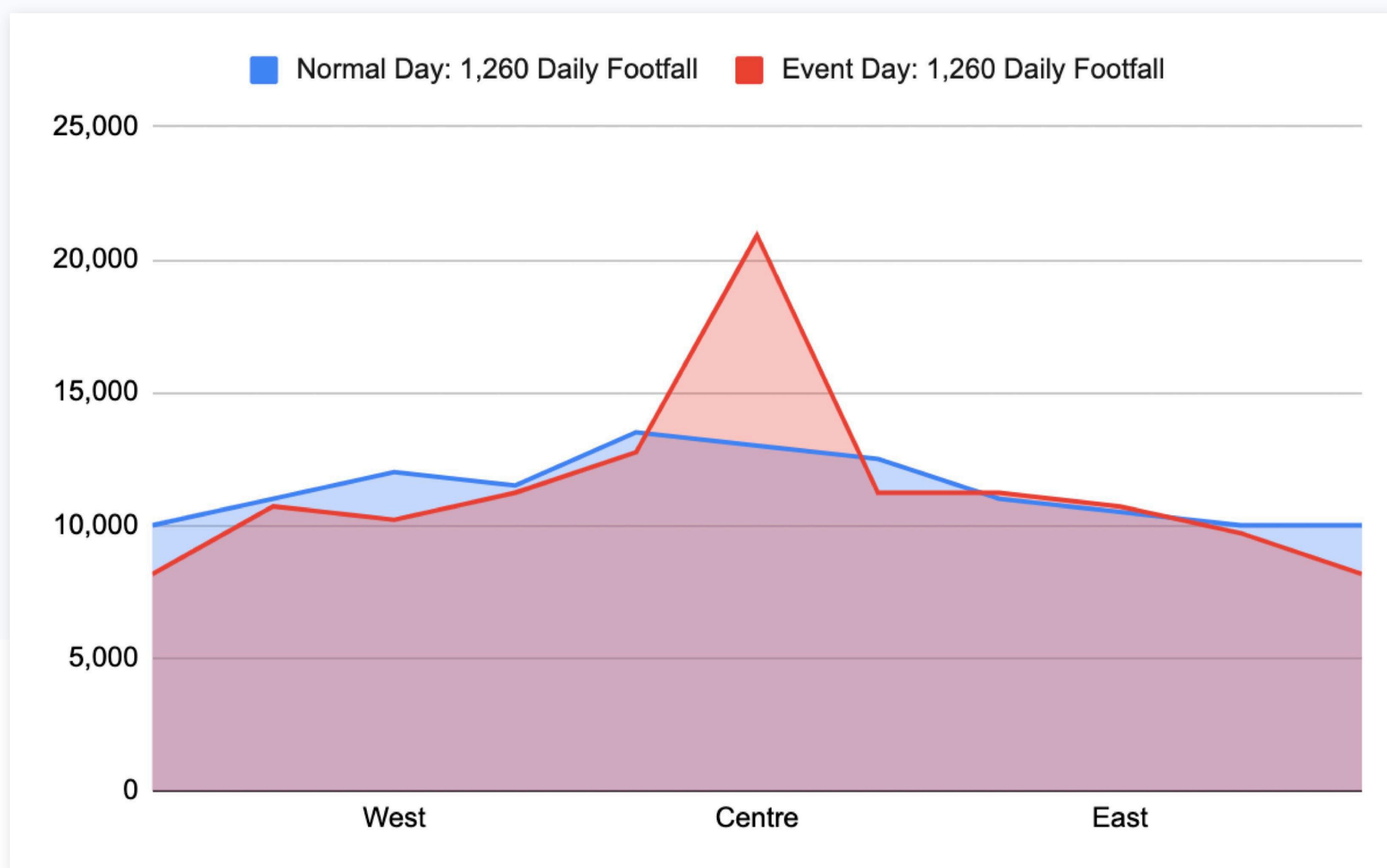


Fig 2: Example of equivalent net footfall across two days, with event day footfall more concentrated in one area.

🔍 Events help focus existing footfall

Events provide an acute opportunity for visitors to come into contact with the council and the local businesses supporting the event. It's also possible to detect event impacts through

increased dwell-time or by identifying new density hotspots. But the outcome will not necessarily be an increase in net footfall on the day as a result of new people visiting.

Approaches to people counting

It's possible that the impact of event days shows up more clearly in footfall measurement data from other monitoring methods - like cameras, beam or even from manual counting. Why is this? Let's remind ourselves of Huq's footfall counting methodology and how the differences between fixed point solutions and mobility-led platforms.

► *Fixed point* solutions share the same qualities. They are installed at specific locations, which may correspond to where the event is. Footfall counting outputs will only refer to that area. Secondly, they cannot differentiate between one person passing a sensor one hundred times, and one hundred people passing once. Accordingly, these outputs are not so much a measure of "how many people are present in a place" as they reflect how "busy" a certain place is or was. Conflating this measure with attendance is highly liable to overstating the outcome.

► Footfall monitoring using *mobility solutions* has qualities that produce a different outcome. Firstly, the observational data exists not for specific locations, but across the centre as a whole. Secondly, the data contains an identifier for each visitor that allows for reliable and accurate disambiguation between unique visitors (or footfall) versus "busy-ness" at a point. As such, this measure of footfall describes the visitor population as a whole [on the day], regardless of how many times they moved through the area, how long they spent or what they did there.

TL;DR In summary

In summary, Huq's footfall monitoring will only show a rise if there are 'net new' visitors to the centre - not simply if visitors chose to congregate at certain locations at certain times. You may *want* to detect an impact on footfall in relation to the event - but it's important to reflect on what you're really asking for. Are you looking to know how many people visited your centre on an event day - or how many of your town centre visitors attended the event?

What event days really do for local areas

Having evaluated hundreds of event days and their impacts across local towns and centres, it's clear that it takes an event of really quite some magnitude to bring a significant cohort of people to an area that wouldn't otherwise go there - for work, shopping, leisure or other. The idea that putting on an event will result in a net rise in footfall on the day is in most cases quite a stretch. But that does not mean that events don't have an important and valuable role to play.

Events are very often successful in diverting footfall from other parts of the centre to the place where the event took place, with benefits to the businesses and organisations associated with the event through greater contact and exposure. Events can do a lot to improve the experience of visitors to the centre and help people to learn something or have a great day out.

But in most cases that's the primary effect - events perform as a way to stimulate and focus existing footfall from across the centre. It's not a given that they'll succeed in attracting net new visitors to your centres every time.



THANK YOU

Further reading

- ✓ huq.io/latest-research-reports
- ✓ huq.io/customer-success
- ✓ huq.io/modules/footfall
- ✓ success@huq.io