Wellington City Council

Understanding Demand for Entertainment in the Courtenay Precinct

Executive Summary

September 2024

truwind
RESEARCH FIRST

Research Context and Objectives

The research was conducted to understand the changing demand for entertainment in the Courtenay Precinct area, and where the opportunities lie for improvement.

Courtenay Precinct is central to Wellington's hospitality offerings, an entertainment hub with food, bars, clubs, theatres, and cinemas. However, perceptions of the area have fallen in recent years and experience, safety and investment issues have been acknowledged by Wellington City Council.

Research Approach

A quantitative research method was applied through face-to-face intercept surveys completed with the general public in the Courtenay Precinct area.

The interviews were completed across four days in August at two time slots (1 pm-4 pm & 6 pm-9 pm). Interviewers were located outside the St James Theatre and by the tripod/bus stop near Sweet Mother's Kitchen. A range of times and locations were selected to capture a variety of respondents.

The first weekend was selected as an All-Blacks rugby game was held on Saturday, 10th August. Therefore, the event was expected to draw more people to town, supporting participation.

Over the sessions, a total of 614 interviews were completed:

Date	Fridays 9th August	Saturday 10th August	Friday 16th August	Saturday 17th August	TOTAL
Completed interviews	N=168	N=156	N=155	N=135	N=614

Please note that in this report figures and tables have been rounded off to the nearest whole number. Therefore, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures.

Courtenay Precinct – Visitor Profile

43%
18-34 years

53%
Males

45%
Females

88%
Domestic

10%
International

37%
Arrived on public transport

40%
Arrived on foot

67%
Wellington region

Although a cross section of age ranges are visiting the area, there is a skew towards the younger age group, who make up half of evening visitors. Friday nights have particular appeal for male visitors. Good transport links to the area, day and evening, are key with over a third reliant on public transport.

Reason for Visit

33%
Passing through for transport

24%
Dine at a restaurant

12%
Visit Bars / Pubs

11%
Dine at a cafe

9%
Attend an Event

8%
Shopping

7%
Show at the Theatre

37%
Visiting several times a week

77%
Spend up to 2 hours
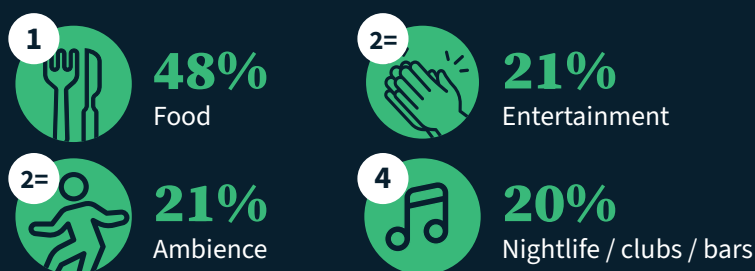
31%
Under 30 mins

Much of the foot traffic in the area is passing through for transport – this increases the frequency of visits but does have implications for the amount of time spent in Courtenay Precinct and the opportunity window to increase trade for local business.

What is important in choice of activity

1 76% High quality food / drink

2 74% Ambience

3 61% Budget-friendly

4 52% Local product / offerings

5 51% New experience

6 50% Live attraction

What visitors enjoyed

1 48% Food

2= 21% Entertainment

2= 21% Ambience

4 20% Nightlife / clubs / bars

Suggestions for improvements

1 17% Entertainment

4 13% Cleanliness /Maintenance

2 14% More/improved places to eat

5 10% More / improved Shops

3 14% Safety /security

Courtenay Precinct is delivering on three key aspects that visitors are looking for when choosing an activity – a perceived good range of food and drink options and a lively, vibrant ambience. They also appreciate the variety of entertainment on offer, and are enjoying a range of options from shows, film festivals, live music – all within close proximity and with easy transport links. However, visitors still see ways for the area to improve its entertainment and dining options. For food options, they're looking for wider variety, late night availability and with an eye on budget. The closing of the Reading Cinema is seen to leave a gap in the entertainment offering and is impacting on perceptions of the general maintenance of the area, which for some, is felt to need attention. The vibrant ambience visitors enjoy, can tip over into security concerns and lead to feeling of being unsafe at night. The opportunities for shopping are seen to be lacking, particularly clothing, and vacant shops contribute to negative perceptions of the general maintenance of the area.

Opportunities for Courtenay Precinct

With a high volume of passing traffic due to public transport links, there is opportunity to encourage this group to explore more of the area. Capturing attention to what is on offer and creating an ambience focused around transport hubs could help. Initiatives such as 2 dine for 1, employment perks at local businesses and happy hour deals could help encourage the pre-work or post work travelers to spend more time in the area.

The introduction of initiatives such as food trucks, night markets or a food hall could help further strengthen the area's food offering – meeting needs for variety, later dining options and lower cost options (which is key for younger patrons).

The closing of Reading cinema is felt to have left a gap in the entertainment offering – understanding what this delivered and how these needs can be met alternatively could further enhance a visitor's entertainment experience. Live attractions such as music and street performances, whilst not the most important factor in choosing how to spend their time, creates a memorable experience and has a positive impact on the atmosphere of the area.

Although food and entertainment are the key motivators for a visit to Courtenay Precinct, extending the retail offering could enhance the visitor experience and help have a flow-on positive effect on the hospitality sector in the area. Utilising vacant shops with "pop-ups" could help meet wants for new experiences and local products, as well as address the negative impact vacant premises are having on perceptions of the maintenance of the area.

Attention to the general appearance of the Courtenay Precinct with a focus on lighting, greener spaces and cleanliness can enhance the overall visitor experience.