

# 2017 BALLOON FIESTA®

## Economic Impact & Guest Research



Photo courtesy of Bennie Bos

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Forward Analytics

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## Highlights of the Study

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- 2017 Balloon Fiesta attracted an estimated 887,970 guests over the nine-day event, October 7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>. Survey research shows the tremendous gathering included approximately 211,300 Albuquerque residents, while 572,000 guests, or 64.4%, came from outside of New Mexico. Survey respondents included residents of 43 other states, with most out-of-state visitors coming from Texas, California, Colorado, and Arizona.
- The 46<sup>th</sup> annual Balloon Fiesta had a total economic impact on Metro-Albuquerque's business volume of \$172.98 million. Balloon Fiesta directly increased the local business volume by \$101.75 million and \$71.23 million in indirect impact. The government revenue impact attributable to 2017 Balloon Fiesta is estimated \$5.71 million for the State of New Mexico; \$3.51 million for the City of Albuquerque, and \$826,735 for Bernalillo County.
- Balloon Fiesta guests (non-local) spent an estimated \$16.62 million at local restaurants. Survey research determined that 58.9% of guests paid for overnight accommodations, either at a hotel, motel, inn, or RV facility, resulting in \$40.09 million in local lodging revenue. The average overnight stay for non-local guests is 3.8 nights. Based on the revenue generated by hotels and motels only (where lodgers tax is applicable), Balloon Fiesta generated an estimated \$1.84 million in lodgers tax for the Albuquerque area.
- The \$101.75 million in direct spending attributable to Balloon Fiesta generated an additional \$54.62 million in New Mexico's employment wages supporting 1,419 FTE at an annual salary of \$38,474.
- Balloon Fiesta guests (non-local) spent an additional \$19.25 million with Balloon Fiesta concessionaires, many of which are regional businesses. Guests spent an average of \$28 per person on Balloon Fiesta grounds excluding parking and admission charges.
- The top attractions at Balloon Fiesta (as indicated by survey respondents) are balloon mass ascensions, balloon glows, and fireworks. Survey research proved that the event was an overall positive experience as an overwhelming 95.4% of guests were very *satisfied* or *satisfied* with 2017 Balloon Fiesta.
- While 52.4% of this year's guests experienced Balloon Fiesta for the first time, 26.2% attended five or more years (the average is 5.3 years). With 14 ballooning sessions available to guests, the majority (73.8%) attended 2 or more sessions and 12.1% attended 5 or more. The average number of sessions attended by guests this year is 2.7.
- Balloon Fiesta promotes Albuquerque and New Mexico's tourism industry and increases exposure of city and state as a tourism destination through traditional and social media that generated 1.71 billion gross impressions. Seventy percent of Balloon Fiesta guests shared images of the ballooning event on social media during their visit.

## Introduction

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Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta was launched in 1972 with a small gathering of 13 balloons lifting from the parking lot of the Coronado Center Shopping Mall. Today it is New Mexico's premier tourism event and the largest ballooning event in the world featuring over 500 colorful balloons every year. The 2017 celebration attracted 887,970 guests to Balloon Fiesta Park's 78-acre launch field, where guests are invited to join in on the rising action.

Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta (Balloon Fiesta) lasts nine days in early October, with a variety of events planned during the 9 morning sessions and five evening sessions. 2017 Balloon Fiesta was powered by nearly perfect ballooning weather allowing for 12 out of 14 sessions to get off the ground. The series of events include dawn patrol, opening ceremonies, mass ascensions, balloon glows, Special Shapes Rodeo™, laser light shows, and more. In addition to ballooning events, the fiesta offers entertainment such as car shows, chainsaw contests, music and dance performances, and children's activities.

In between sessions, Albuquerque and its surroundings offer exciting attractions, restaurants, retailers, and outdoor activities for tourists. Balloon Fiesta is known to be the busiest time of year for Old Town merchants. Santa Fe sees a boost in business as many fiesta guests take a 60+ miles day trip to the historic city. The local casinos, museums, and cultural centers all see an increase in visitors during Balloon Fiesta. It's this tourism activity that impacts the local economy, contributing to sales, profits, jobs and tax proceeds.

The Albuquerque economy depends on the revenue, employment, and income that Balloon Fiesta brings to the City. In assessing the success of the 46<sup>th</sup> annual Balloon Fiesta, the organizers and the city and businesses will take into account such financial measures as attendance numbers, hotel room sales and local business revenue during and around the 9-day celebration. The economic impact is carefully measured and outlined in the following report. But what can't be quantified is the community pride and vitality that Balloon Fiesta brings, how the event enhances the livability and image of Albuquerque and the State of New Mexico, and the sheer amount of joy and amazement that guests experience over the nine-day massive balloon spectacle in the sky.

## Purpose of Study

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Special events and festivals of all kinds are becoming a major element in the competitive arsenal of cities and their economic development and tourism offices. Major events bring people to the city, provide attractions for the residents, and ensure the city's name is profiled in the national and international media. The local economies of the host cities benefit greatly as they are infused with millions of dollars in additional tourism-related revenue. But, the increase in major events inevitably increase the competition for valuable stakeholders, including investors, sponsors, politicians, and most important, attendees.

It's likely that public officials, the business community, and the community in general see the power of the annual Balloon Fiesta as a way to spur short-term tourism while shaping the image of Albuquerque and New Mexico year round. Yet, evaluating the impact of Balloon Fiesta is crucial to analyze the return on investment (ROI) for its backers.

In support of a more in-depth understanding of the positive impacts of Balloon Fiesta, Forward Analytics was contracted by Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc. (AIBF) to generate an Economic Impact Report. The following research study provides tangible and reliable information as to the economic returns attributable to 2017 Balloon Fiesta. It specifically explains the direct and indirect business volume and government revenues generated in Albuquerque and New Mexico. Through audience research, the study gathered standard economic impact data and additionally measured the following:

- overall event satisfaction
- demographic and socio-graphic of attendees
- attendance motivators
- communications and marketing activities
- and sponsorship awareness.

## **Methodology**

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The study utilized a customized survey to collect spending data, demographics, socio-graphics and more from a random sample of Balloon Fiesta guests. Prior to the event, Forward Analytics collaborated with AIBF to create a 4-page survey.

Forward Analytics conducted on-site, in-person interviews with 1,287 adult attendees (ages 18+) during 14 sessions of Balloon Fiesta. A small incentive (official Balloon Fiesta lip balm) was provided to survey respondents. The sample size represents a statistical significance of +/-2.73% margin at the 95% confidence interval. This means the results reflect the answers between 92.3% and 97.7% of the total event population. Generally, a +/-5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level is considered significant for making business decisions.

## **The Economic Impact Model**

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The methodology employed in the economic impact section of this report was derived from an original set of research tools and techniques developed by Cafferty & Isaacs for the American Council on Education (ACE). The ACE-based methodology employs linear cash flow modeling to track the flow of direct expenditures, or first-line spending, through a delineated spatial area. The ACE-based methodology is the most widely-used impact study tool and has been used throughout the United States in impact analyses for both profit and not-for-profit organizations, corporations, institutions and events.

The direct impact of a special event like Balloon Fiesta is primarily a function of visitor spending, or the actual dollar amount visitors spend due to attending an event. Direct business revenue is generated at local hotels and restaurants, retailers, entertainment venues, plus for travel sources like transportation, parking and fuel. The linear cash flow model used in this study takes into account the re-spending of first-line expenditures within the economy as a result of what professional economists term "the multiplier effect." The indirect impact tracks visitor spending in the tourism industry by successive recipients until the funds eventually leak out of the economy. The sum of these direct and indirect expenditures represents the total impact of Balloon Fiesta on the local business volume.

The direct spending of Balloon Fiesta guests generates government revenues for the city and state. Government revenue impact includes gross receipts tax, lodgers tax, and state gasoline excise tax

Economic impact generally measures *new money* brought into the economy by out-of-area visitors and is then spent locally. Spending by local residents represents a redistribution of existing money in the community and is not included in this study. Survey research revealed that 23.8% of Balloon Fiesta guests reside in the Albuquerque Metro area and are considered local residents (and their spending information is not included in this study). That said, 76.2% of Balloon Fiesta guests (676,600 non-residents) spent “new dollars” and impact the local economy as outlined further in this report.

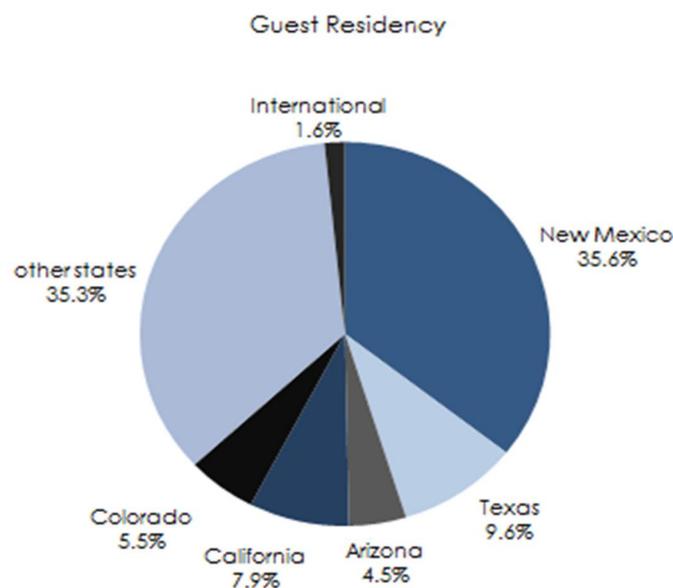
## Summary of Findings

### Demographics and Guest Information

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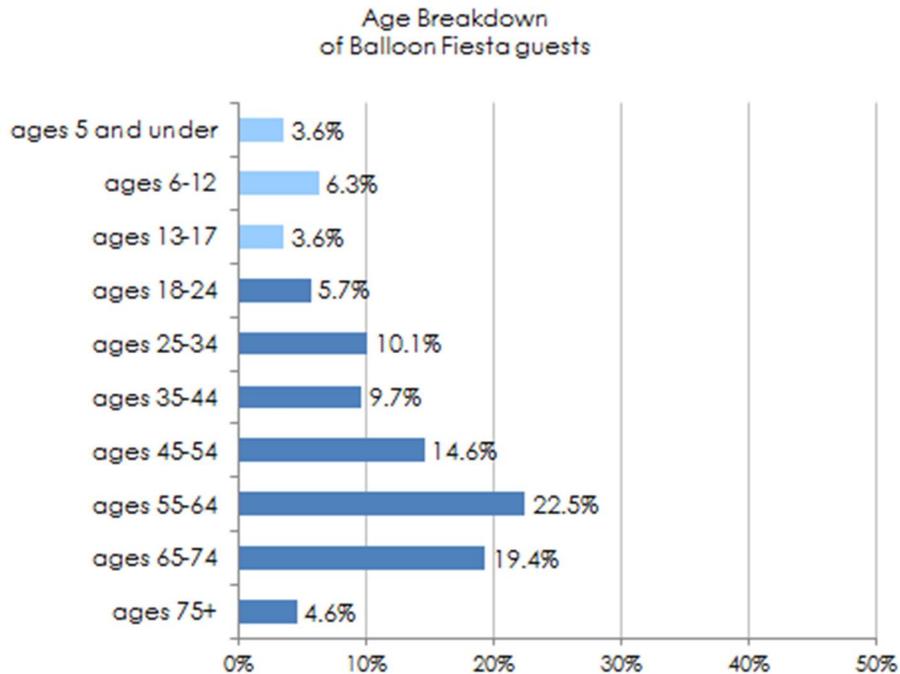
The business of special events has grown to enormous proportions and now represents a significant contribution to the tourism industry. Events generate local economic activity and development and help build a sense of local pride and a sense of community. Further, a successful event promotes the region and its attractions which then attract tourists in its own right. In order to continue the flow of economic, marketing and social benefits of an event, knowing the demographics and motivations of the audience is essential.

2017 Balloon Fiesta boasts an attendance of 887,970 guests throughout the nine-day ballooning celebration. Survey research shows that 35.6% of guests are from New Mexico (with 23.8% residing in the Albuquerque Metro area). Therefore, almost 572,000 guests travelled to Albuquerque from out-of-state or out-of-country. Survey respondents include residents of 43 other states with 27.5% residing in the nearby states of Texas, California, Colorado, and Arizona. International guests make up 1.6% of the survey sample and include the countries of Canada, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Scotland, to name a few. The average overnight stay for non-local guests is 3.8 nights.



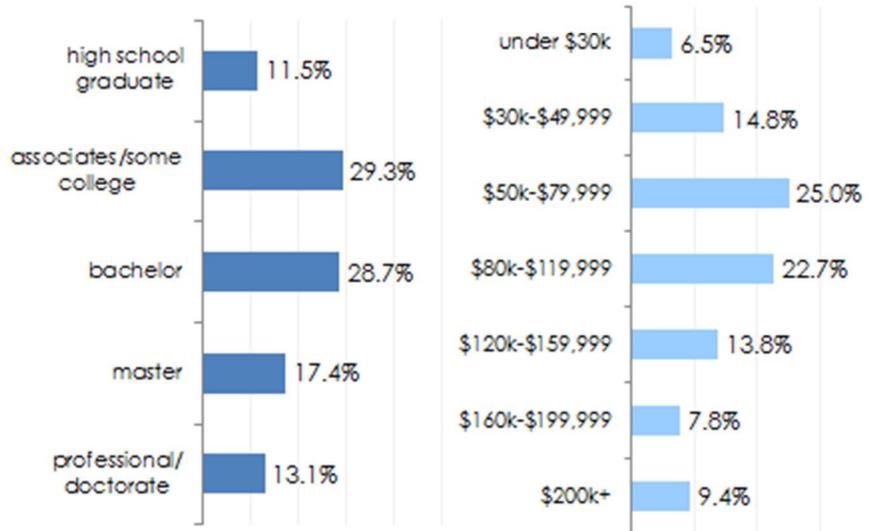
More than half (52.4%) of this year's guests experienced the amazement of Balloon Fiesta for the first time. And slightly more than one-fourth (26.8%) of guests have been drawn to the awe-inspiring event and have come five or more years.

Balloon Fiesta is a family-friendly event that appeals to people of all ages. The majority of guests attended with their family (65.1%). Twenty percent of guests shared the experience with friends, 14.2% with both friends and family. Twenty-three percent of guests came with children. The group size averaged 3.82, of whom 3.30 were adults and .52 were children. Nearly half of guests (47.4%) came in pairs. The age breakdown of guests is illustrated below.

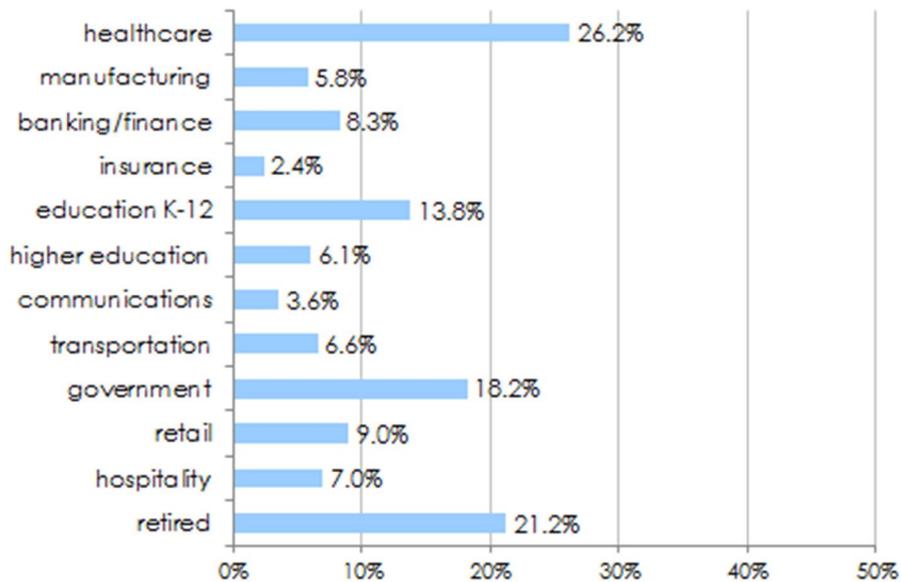


The gender of survey respondents is 69.2% female and 30.8% male. Survey respondents indicate their ethnic or cultural background as 77.2% Caucasian/white; 17.9% Hispanic; 3.1% Native American; 2.5% African American, and 1.6% Asian American. The respondents at Balloon Fiesta have a high level of education with 88.5% having some college or above. More specifically, 29.3% have an associate degree or some college; 28.7% have a bachelor degree; 17.4% have a master degree, and 13.1% with professional or doctoral degree. Slightly more than half of guests (53.6%) reported having an annual household income above \$80,000. Their occupations cover a variety of industries, while 21.2% of survey respondents reported a retired status.

### Education and Income of Guests



### Employment by Industry Percent distribution of Balloon Guests



Aside from the excitement of ballooning events, the festival grounds bursts with an array of activities to entertain and educate guests throughout the day. Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of these various attractions on a scale of 1-10, where 1=very important and 10=not important. Unsurprisingly, balloon mass ascensions and balloon glows are rated

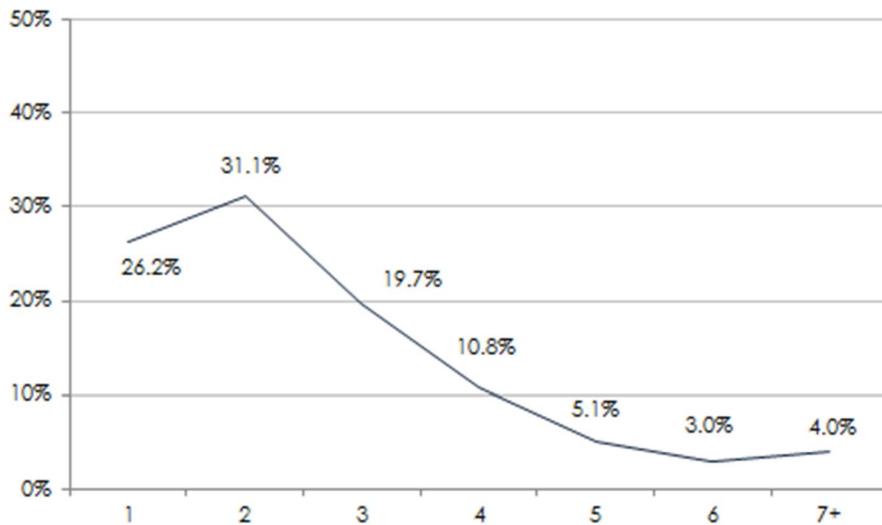
top attractions. The listed percentage is the sum of respondents rating each attraction as 1-3 (most important).

| Balloon Fiesta Attraction   | Importance Rating |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Balloon mass ascensions     | 95.8%             |
| Balloon glows               | 85.8%             |
| Fireworks                   | 52.7%             |
| Food                        | 49.6%             |
| Balloon flying competitions | 41.7%             |
| Exhibits                    | 31.2%             |
| Music Fiesta™               | 29.5%             |
| Balloon Discovery Center    | 26.3%             |

Survey respondents had the opportunity to list “other” Balloon Fiesta attractions or activities of high importance. Special shapes, balloon rides, field access or close proximity to balloons, clean restrooms, kid’s day and activities are also of top significance.

As previously indicated, guests come to Balloon Fiesta year after year (the average is 5.3 years) and most attend several sessions each year. The unique layering of activities at Balloon Fiesta grounds captured the majority of guests (73.8%) for 2 or more sessions, with 12.1% attending 5 or more sessions. The average number of sessions attended by guests this year is 2.7.

How many sessions do you plan to attend during your visit to Balloon Fiesta this year?



No doubt, guests have high levels of satisfaction with many aspects of Balloon Fiesta. When guests were asked to rate their satisfaction, the quality of Balloon Fiesta grounds and balloon shows rise to the top. Ninety-eight percent of survey respondents rated the quality of grounds as *excellent* or *very good*, and 96.7% rated balloon shows of a similar quality.

| Balloon Fiesta Features           | High Satisfaction Rating |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Quality of Balloon Fiesta grounds | 97.9%                    |
| Balloon shows                     | 96.7%                    |
| Website                           | 75.7%                    |
| Quality and selection of food     | 70.9%                    |
| Laser light show                  | 65.0%                    |
| Live entertainment/concert        | 64.2%                    |

The guest's perception of safety and security is critical to the satisfaction and success of Balloon Fiesta. Crowd density, guests walking the field, sudden changes in weather and the inevitable rush to leave following the events are all considered by those who plan and manage the safety at Balloon Fiesta. But the mass shootings in Las Vegas a week before the start of Balloon Fiesta necessitated a swift, supplemental safety plan with increased security for this year's events.

According to survey research, the majority of guests (97.4%) felt *very safe* or *safe* while attending 2017 Balloon Fiesta. Among those who previously attended, no guest felt *less safe* at this year's events. Fifty-six percent of (repeat) guests felt security was *about the same* as previous years, and 44.3% felt *safer* than other years.

Traffic management and car parking is also an integral aspect of Balloon Fiesta's safety plan. Event planners encourage transportation alternatives to limit cars, such as NM Rail Runner, biking and free bike valet service (which is applauded by its users). Balloon Fiesta also promotes Fiesta Express Park & Ride, shuttle services from several remote parking locations around Albuquerque. Thirty-three percent of survey respondents used Park & Ride this year, and another 17.8% experienced it in previous years. Of these users, 76.4% said they would use it again.

As for those who never used Park & Ride or would not do so again, 30% said it's *no more convenient than driving*. And 13.4% *don't like taking buses/shuttles/public transportation*. Another 13.2% indicated that *there is no Park & Ride location near where they live/stay*. And 8.1% *feel it is too expensive*. For some, the shuttle was not operating on the days of their visit (Monday through Wednesday), or they used a hotel or RV park shuttle, or they simply were unaware of the shuttle.

Forward Analytics survey team heard several complaints pertaining to the Park & Ride, as well as the traffic congestion and closed roads and signage. (These negative comments were heard mostly during the first weekend of Balloon Fiesta.) Problems were apparent as exit lines for shuttles stretched far into the balloon field. Long lines and waits at the various remote parking locations were also reported. Further, several people expressed the inability to purchase Park & Ride tickets online.

## Sponsorship Awareness

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Most festivals the size and scale of Balloon Fiesta rely on the financial contributions of their sponsors. For their investment, sponsors of these events expect results. The popularity of event sponsorship with corporate marketers is due in part to its ability to generate positive and potentially lasting consumer brand awareness and emotions.

Survey research tested the awareness and emotions guests formed with sponsors of Balloon Fiesta. First measured was unaided sponsorship awareness. Guests were asked, "Can you list any corporate sponsors who support Balloon Fiesta?" Guests had notable awareness of corporate sponsors as nearly 68% could identify two or more sponsors as top-of-mind corporate sponsors. Forty-five percent of guests could identify four or more sponsors.

Canon, the Presenting Sponsor, was identified by 51.4% of guests. Then, Wells Fargo (42.2%), Verizon (40.4%), Coca Cola (32.6%), and Krispy Kreme (21.8%) ranked on top for building a strong brand through their sponsorship of Balloon Fiesta.

Survey research further demonstrates the combination of awareness, favorability and effectiveness is unparalleled for Balloon Fiesta sponsors. Respondents were presented with a series of "emotional" and "attitudinal" statements pertaining to Balloon Fiesta sponsors then asked to what level they agree or disagree. Here are the reactions:

- **Balloon Fiesta guests recognize and appreciate sponsor's contributions:** The majority of guests (90.1%) *strongly agrees* or *agrees* that corporate sponsorship makes Balloon Fiesta possible.
- **Balloon Fiesta sponsorship touches the soul:** 85.1% of guests indicate having a positive attitude toward Balloon Fiesta sponsors because of their association.
- **Sponsorship sells:** 52.2% of guests are more likely to purchase brands from Balloon Fiesta sponsors because of their association.
- **Balloon Fiesta is a "good buy" in marketing:** 56.4% of visitors felt that Balloon Fiesta sponsorship is a better way to reach them more than through traditional advertising.

Sponsorship works through harnessing the emotional connection between an event and its audience. Undoubtedly, Balloon Fiesta provides bottom line benefits to all of its sponsors. The event is an extraordinary environment for brands to align themselves with a positive experience and a passionate audience. Survey research proved that the event was an overall positive experience as **95.4% of guests were very satisfied or satisfied with 2017 Balloon Fiesta.**

Lastly, corporate sponsorship did more than promote a company, brand or service. Balloon Fiesta sponsorship benefits livability and image for the City of Albuquerque and State of New Mexico. Balloon Fiesta guests, both local and non-local, felt this way. An overwhelming 95.5% of survey respondents agreed that Balloon Fiesta adds value to the Region. The event showcases the city and state's exceptional cultural, recreational, tourism and business opportunities bringing on-going economic benefits.

## Economic Impact of 2017 Balloon Fiesta

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### Revenues Generated by Balloon Fiesta Guests

Guest spending makes up the majority of economic impact attributable to Balloon Fiesta. The total economic impact of guest spending (those who do not reside in the Albuquerque Metro area) is estimated to be \$172.98 million. The total economic impact consists of \$101.75 million in direct impact and \$71.23 million in indirect impact.

The following chart illustrates the business revenue generated by non-local guests who traveled to Albuquerque to experience Balloon Fiesta. The chart provides a breakdown of revenue at local restaurants, retailers, attractions, hotels, etc. generated in the Albuquerque Metro area. Each guest spent an estimated \$150 outside per day of Balloon Fiesta grounds.

### Economic Impact of Balloon Fiesta Guests

| Balloon Fiesta Guest spending<br>outside of Balloon Fiesta grounds | Impact Dollars       |
|--|----------------------|
| Food and drinks at restaurants/bars                                | \$16,618,100         |
| Non-festival entertainment   | \$10,230,700         |
| Retail purchases   | \$17,687,200         |
| Parking  | \$1,042,000          |
| Gasoline   | \$6,231,800          |
| Uber/other ground transportation                                   | \$839,000            |
| Car rental   | \$6,685,100          |
| Misc. items and services   | \$2,327,600          |
| Overnight accommodations   | \$40,090,500         |
| <b>Direct Impact</b>   | <b>\$101,752,000</b> |
| <b>Indirect Impact</b>   | <b>\$71,226,400</b>  |
| <b>Total Impact</b>  | <b>\$172,978,400</b> |

Balloon Fiesta provides an extended sales channel for local and non-local businesses as concessionaires at the event. Concessionaires have the opportunity to market and sell their products and services to hundreds of thousands of guests of diverse ages, ethnicity and interests. At each event, you will see a parade of guests marching the one-third mile stretch of Main Street while looking for their favorite eats and unique merchandise.

Survey data demonstrates that 2017 Balloon Fiesta guests (non-resident) spent \$19.25 million with Balloon Fiesta artisans, retailers and food concessionaires, many of which are local businesses. Each guest spent an average of \$28 (not including admission fees and parking).

Please note: Forward Analytics does not include the vendor revenues in the overall economic impact measure as the research was not designed to track transitory retail, which would require understanding which funds remained in Albuquerque. (e.g., does a merchandiser take their profits back to their residing state?)

### Guest Spending on Balloon Fiesta grounds

| Vendor Revenues   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| Food & drinks   | \$8,410,500         |
| Retail purchases  | \$9,459,300         |
| Misc. items & services                                    | \$1,380,300         |
| <b>Total Spending with Balloon Fiesta Concessionaires</b> | <b>\$19,250,100</b> |

### Government Revenues Attributable to 2017 Balloon Fiesta

In addition to the direct and indirect and revenues received by local businesses and organizations, Balloon Fiesta generates substantial tax revenues for the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and State of New Mexico. Tax revenues are paid directly by guests on purchases such as retail, food and drinks, overnight lodging, and gasoline. *This study only measures the government revenues generated from the direct impact of guest spending. It does not measure the government revenues generated by the indirect impact of the event, nor does it consider revenue enhancements resulting from increased employment (i.e., income withholding and unemployment taxes).*

The State of New Mexico receives an estimated \$5.71 million in tax revenues from the direct economic activity attributable to 2017 Balloon Fiesta. The City of Albuquerque gained an estimated \$3.51 million in tax revenues and Bernalillo County gained an estimated \$826,735. The government revenue impacts allocable to 2017 Balloon Fiesta comprise the following:

#### Gross Receipts Tax (Sales & Use Tax)

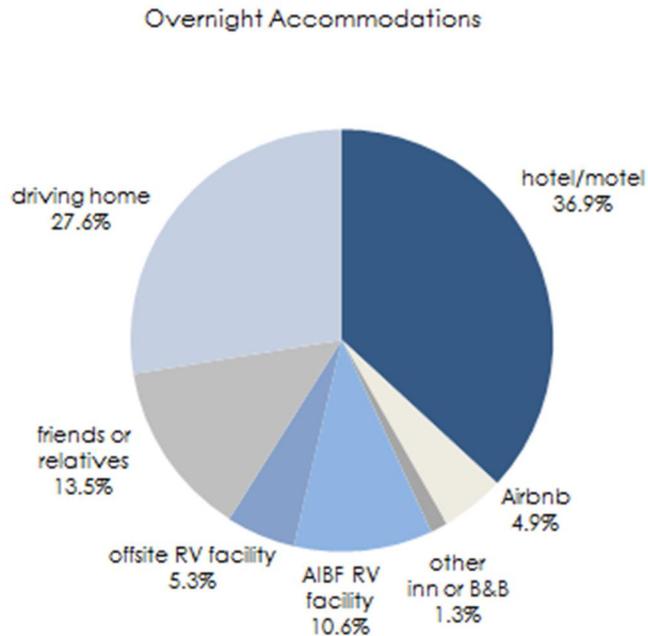
As stated above, Balloon Fiesta guests spent an estimated \$101.75 million at restaurants, hotels, retailers, tourist attractions, etc. in the Albuquerque Metro area and beyond. The direct spending generated an estimated \$5,214,800 for the State of New Mexico, \$826,735 for Bernalillo County, and \$1,674,400 for the City of Albuquerque.

#### Lodgers Tax

Economic impact analysis measured an estimated \$40.09 million spent by Balloon Fiesta guests at Albuquerque's overnight accommodations. Presently, all bookings for

overnight lodging are subject to taxes including the Albuquerque Lodgers Tax of 6% and the NM Gross Receipts Tax. But at the time of 2017 Balloon Fiesta, the lodging tax did not apply to vendors who *did not offer at least three room of lodging on the premise*. That said, the lodgers tax measured in this report is calculated only from hotels and motels revenues. The estimate does not include a percentage of direct revenues generated at the small overnight establishments (but gross receipts taxes apply).

Survey research determines that 36.9% of Balloon Fiesta guests stayed at a hotel or motel, while 6.2% stayed at an Airbnb rental or other inn or B&B. Measured by the cost of hotel and motel accommodations and the average number of hotel/motel overnights, Balloon Fiesta generated an estimated \$1.84 million in lodgers' tax for Albuquerque.



**State Gasoline Excise Tax**

Balloon Fiesta guests (non-resident) spent an estimated \$6.23 million in gasoline while traveling to and from and around Albuquerque. A gasoline excise tax of \$.17 per gallon generates an estimated \$495,050 for the State of New Mexico.

**Employment Impact**

The \$101.75 million in direct impact attributable to Balloon Fiesta generates an additional \$54.62 million in New Mexico's employment wages\*. The additional employment wages supported an estimated 1,419 FTE jobs at an annual per capita personal income of approximately \$38,474. The impacted industries include tourism and hospitality, but also

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\* Forward Analytics utilizes the Gross Employment Multiplier of 1.5368 generated by the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis to determine the employment wage impact.

comprise other major employment sectors like construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, professional, etc.

## Marketing Impact

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All eyes are on Albuquerque. Balloon Fiesta is known as “the most photographed event in the world” with over 500 hot air balloons filling the skies each year in early October. This year, Balloon Fiesta was a showcase for 978 total registered media personnel, representing 216 media outlets. Nine international media outlets participated and shared breathtaking beauty with their country.

Balloon Fiesta's media campaign included both traditional and social media coverage generated more than 1.71 billion\* gross impressions, driving awareness for the event, Albuquerque and New Mexico. The breakdown by media outlet is as follows:

Broadcast impressions: 154,725,284\*\*  
Online and Print impressions: 1,547,222,488\*\*\*  
Social media impressions: 9,256,537\*\*\*\*

Broadcast coverage included more than 1,500 stories reaching an audience of 308.52 million\*\*. Online and print coverage (including blogs) generated 2,907 stories reaching an audience of 1.55 billion\*\*\*.

While media certainly has its spread, *previous attendance* and *word of mouth* prevails as the top promotional tool used by guests to learn about Balloon Fiesta and its events. Balloon Fiesta website was utilized for advertisement and information by fewer guests this year (compared to 2015 audience research) but the use of social media increased.

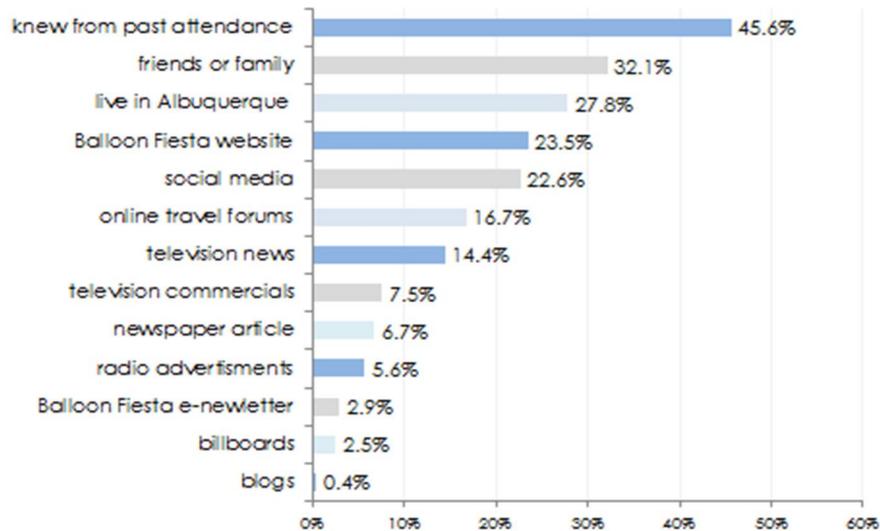
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\*\* Tracked through Meltwater, in partnership with TVEyes, Dates: January 2017-October 2017

\*\*\* Tracked through Meltwater, Dates: January 2017-October 2017

\*\*\*\* Tracked through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram Analytics, Dates: January 2017-October 2018

### How did you learn about Balloon Fiesta and its events?



Balloon Fiesta strategically uses social media to maximize the reach of the event. It uses several platforms to connect with the varied audience of Balloon Fiesta and the mix of people interested in finding information and images related to the event. Accordingly, Balloon Fiesta has built robust followings in Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with posts reaching an audience of 10,191,683 social media users. Facebook had a reach of 7.89 million users from January to October. Twitter earned 2.25 million impressions with 16,163 using #BalloonFiesta\*\*\*\*. Instagram reached 43,785 users with 23,248 pictures posted with #BalloonFiesta\*\*\*\*.

Visual social media offers an opportunity for guests to share awe-inspiring photographs and videos of Balloon Fiesta with their friends and family and social community. In fact, event organizers encourage it with photo contests and prizes. Photos weave their way through the social media feeds of other users and networks which boost *likes*, *comments*, or *shares*. These actions increase the exposure of Balloon Fiesta. Furthermore, an image of a sky full of balloons or a single balloon inflating and departing builds emotions, excitement, and interest and inevitably grows the event audience.

Survey research showed that 70.2% of Balloon Fiesta guests shared images of the ballooning event on social media during their visit. Of those who shared, 82.2% percent posted images on Facebook; 29.8% Instagram, and 9.5% Snapchat.

Balloon Fiesta also provides information and engages the guests through its mobile app. The app has a calendar of events, food and retail vendor locations, weather conditions, balloon pilot information, etc. Fourteen percent of survey respondents loaded the *official* Balloon Fiesta app. Eighty percent of app users were *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the program

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\*\*\*\* Tracked through Hashtracking, Dates: January 2017-October 2017

## Volunteer Impact

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Volunteering is an important part of what makes magical events like Balloon Fiesta possible, and they are an important part of participating in the community at large. Volunteers provide the biggest resource to ensure the success of festivals. Undoubtedly, their wholehearted efforts enhance the actual scale of the event, as well as the social and economic impacts of Balloon Fiesta.

An overwhelming 1,102 lofty volunteers are to be commended for all their energy and the many hours they gave to help make the 2017 Balloon Fiesta an over the top experience. Volunteers serve on over 40 teams, from providing guest services to flight operations to ushering at Music Fiesta. They donated an estimated 33,060 volunteer work hours.

Appraising the exact dollar amount is less critical than the notion that those who volunteered their time could have spent it in many ways but decided the event and their community was of key importance and worth donating their time. But quantifying their efforts gives us the opportunity to recognize and better appreciate their efforts. Tallying people and hours helps us measure the traditional "inputs" of volunteer time, economic values lets us understand the "outcomes" achieved by volunteers. If the total of 33,060 volunteer hours is calculated at the *government dollar value of a volunteer hour in New Mexico* (\$19.77 in 2016), an estimated \$653,600 is donated in time to Balloon Fiesta, the City of Albuquerque, and its residents.