

# An Insight to Event Marketing (EM): As a Promotional Tool for Tourism Industry

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*Marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind consumers – directly, or indirectly – about the products and brands that they sell.* **Kotler and Keller**

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## ABSTRACT

A field study with consumers participating in different types of events indicates that event attendance increases brand equity and that brand experience is the most important mediator. Events have become an increasingly significant component of destination branding, which is known as tourism marketing. Many destinations, throughout the world, have developed events portfolios as a strategic initiative to attract tourists and to reinforce their brand. The purpose of this paper is to provide a better understanding on how organisations can use EM as a promotional tool. The present paper assesses event marketing as a descriptive study by focusing on a marketing outcome of critical importance to marketers for tourism place and industry.

**KEYWORDS:** Tourist destination, Events, Event marketing, Brand, Destination image, Attributes, Promotion

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's fast growing world, the number of cities, regions and countries, which are competing for the attention of buyers, is overwhelming. Europe has over 100,000 communities competing for resources, visitors, conventions, businesses and talented residents. For a long time, places could just promote their existing place package. Place marketing is a market-oriented, coordinated set of activities to improve the real quality of a city and to efficiently communicate the quality to target audience.

Marketing of places requires a deep understanding of how place buyers make their place decisions. With this

understanding, place sellers can take the necessary steps and tools to compete aggressively for the marketing of the tourist place. Today, the marketing of the tourist place needs to be changed and developed according to the target audience needs and aspirations. Places, as well as goods and services, need skilful marketing. In the 2000s, a drastic shift occurred in the marketing communications and media businesses. While traditional advertising still commands the largest percentage of media spending, its relative share has been shrinking and mass media ad revenues have been declining steeply (Vranica, 2009). As a result, marketing managers and advertisers have begun to re-evaluate conventional, mass media based models of persuading

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consumers. They are increasingly interested in alternative communication platforms and brand touch points for influencing consumers and enhancing brand impact.

In contrast to the distant, one-way and broad-based nature of mass media advertising, and even most new digital media, events allow for direct, highly interactive and local consumer-brand encounters where consumers can experience the brand in an immediate way. Indeed, to stress the fact that direct contact and interaction at a local event may result in memorable brand experiences, event practitioners have begun to refer to event marketing as 'experiential marketing'. Moreover, rather than defining the objectives of events in terms of persuasion and attitude change, event practitioners increasingly emphasise that events can create a deeper and more meaningful, brand-equity building connection with consumers through these experiences than indirect, broad-based mass media (Miller and Washington, 2012; MPI Foundation, 2008).

However, despite the popularity of event marketing and some recent attempts to assess its effectiveness (e.g. Martensen *et al.*, 2007), many companies are still unsure whether events can influence marketing outcomes effectively and, most importantly, how they might do so (Wood, 2009). According to Gupta (2003), 'event marketing has been viewed as valuable in generating awareness for the brand and corporate images, but less has been studied about its ability to communicate a more sophisticated, specific message or contribute to other aspects of brand equity'. The present paper assesses the impact of event marketing by focusing on a marketing outcome of critical importance to marketers – brand equity. In spite of the importance of brand equity to business (Christodoulides and De Chernatony, 2010), and the popularity of events as a promotional tool, the relationship between event marketing and brand equity is largely under-researched.

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### Event Marketing

Events are an important motivator of tourism and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans

of most destinations. The roles and impacts of planned events within tourism have been well documented and are of increasing importance for destination competitiveness. Yet, it was only a few decades ago that 'event tourism' became established in both the tourism industry and in the research community, so that subsequent growth of this sector can only be described as spectacular. Equally, 'event management' is a fast growing professional field in which tourists constitute a potential market for planned events, and the tourism industry has become a vital stakeholder in their success and attractiveness. But not all events need to be tourism oriented, and some fear the potential negative impacts associated with adopting marketing orientation. As well, events have other important roles to play, from community-building to urban renewal, cultural development to fostering national identities tourism is not the only partner or proponent.

Event marketing is a relatively new phenomenon which emerged in the 1980s, but its origins date back over 100 years to philanthropy and sponsorship (Cunningham *et al.*, 1993). Formally, it has been defined as 'the practice of promoting the interests of an organisation and its brands by associating the organisation with a specific activity' (Shimp, 1993). Such an activity can be either owned by the company, or owned by a third party and endorsed by the company through sponsorship programs (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Although, in the former case, it is the company that stages the event, in the latter case, the company provides a financial or in-kind assistance to a third party in exchange of visibility throughout an event.

In other terms, event marketing includes but is not limited to event sponsorship. Events can take various forms, including incentive/reward programmes, product launches, open days, conferences, product sampling, publicity events, so-called created events, road shows, press conferences, competitions/contests, exhibitions, corporate entertainment, charity fundraisers, trade shows and product visitor attractions (Wood, 2009). Additional forms of events, such as street events and pop-up shops, have been developed recently under the umbrella of 'unconventional communication' (Brioschi

and Uslenghi, 2009). Examples include the; Diesel Black Friday' organised in various Italian cities, during which Diesel actors playing bank clerks and bank directors went around the cities and gave away 'Diesel Black Money' – a coupon to get 30% off in Diesel shops. In the United Kingdom, Vodafone brought cricket to the street in an event featuring cricket competitions, complete with DJ music, barbecues, drinks and the special appearance of legends of the game. Another example regards the numerous galleries that Illy has opened worldwide, including cities such as Istanbul, London, Milan and New York, where coffee lovers could sign up for courses on how to prepare the perfect cup of coffee, meet writers and essayists and attend art exhibitions taking place inside the gallery. These new forms of events require a lower investment than advertising, but aim to reach a large audience due to word-of-mouth mechanisms and media coverage; clearly, the more creative and original events are, the more likely they are shared by a larger audience (Brioschi and Uslenghi, 2009; Rinallo, 2011).

In general, event marketing can help companies achieve corporate objectives (e.g. increasing public awareness, corporate image, community involvement), marketing objectives (e.g. reaching target markets, brand positioning, increasing sales), media objectives (e.g. generating visibility, generating publicity and counter negative publicity, enhancing ad campaigns) as well as personal objectives (management interest) (Pope, 1998).

However, it is still unclear how to evaluate the effectiveness of event marketing (Gupta, 2003; Martensen *et al.*, 2007; Sneath *et al.*, 2005). Research on this topic is limited, especially compared to advertising, and it is inconsistent because results have been mixed (Gupta, 2003). Recently, MARCOM scholars have started to examine event marketing in terms of the persuasion process and the ability to positively affect the brand (Martensen *et al.*, 2007; Sneath *et al.*, 2005) Marcom (sometimes spelled "marcomm") is an abbreviation for "marketing communications." Marcom is targeted interaction with customers and prospects using one or more media, such as direct mail, newspapers and magazines, television, radio, billboards, telemarketing, and the Internet.

## Destination Marketing

Marketing is a process through which individuals and groups provide, exchange and obtain products – ideas, goods and services – capable of satisfying customers' needs and desires at a desirable price and place. Marketing requires a strategy. It is an all-encompassing, planning, scheduling, studying, figuring stuff out, researching, testing and practicing strategy. Destinations are places that attract visitors for a temporary stay and range from continents to countries to states and provinces, to cities, to villages, to purpose built resort areas. At the foundation level, destinations are essentially communities based on local government boundaries. Tourists travel to destinations. Destinations are places with some form of actual or perceived boundary, such as the physical boundary of an island, political boundaries or even market-created boundaries. Destination marketing refers to a management process through which the national tourist organisations and/or tourist enterprises identify their selected tourists, actual and potential, communicate with them to ascertain and influence their wishes, needs, motivations, and likes and dislikes, on local/rural, regional, national and international levels, and to formulate and adapt their tourist products accordingly with a view to achieving optimal tourist satisfaction, thereby fulfilling their objectives.

The marketing concept is often used inappropriately, reducing it to the promotion and sale of products and tourist destinations, and in particular to advertising and to tourism fairs and events. While these functions are important, there is much more to marketing. Tourism destinations are probably among the most difficult 'products' to market, involving large numbers of stakeholders and a brand image.

A destination marketing organisation is any organisation, at any level, that is responsible for the marketing of a destination. This therefore excludes separate government departments that are responsible for planning and policy.

## Event Perspective

Planned events are spatial–temporal phenomenon, and

each is unique because of interactions among the setting, people and management systems – including design elements and the programme. Much of the appeal of events is that they are never the same, and you have to ‘be there’ to enjoy the unique experience fully; if you miss it, it’s a lost opportunity. In addition, ‘virtual events’, communicated through various media, also offer something of interest and value to consumers and the tourism industry; they are different kinds of event experiences.

Planned events are all created for a purpose, and what was once the realm of individual and community initiatives has largely become the realm of professionals and entrepreneurs. The reasons are obvious: events are too important, satisfying numerous strategic goals – and often too risky – to be left to amateurs. Event management is the applied field of study and area of professional practice devoted to the design, production and management of planned events, encompassing festivals and other celebrations, entertainment, recreation, political and state, scientific, sport and arts events, those in the domain of business and corporate

affairs (including meetings, conventions, fairs and exhibitions), and those in the private domain (including rites of passage such as weddings and parties, and social events for affinity groups).

Figure 1 provides a typology of the main categories of planned events based primarily on their form – that is, obvious differences in their purpose and programme. Some are for public celebration (this category includes so-called community festivals which typically contain a large variety in their programming and aim at fostering civic pride and cohesion), whereas others are planned for purposes of competition, fun, entertainment, business or socialising. Often they require special-purpose facilities, and the managers of those facilities (like convention centres and sport arenas) target specific types of events. Professional associations and career paths have traditionally been linked to these event types.

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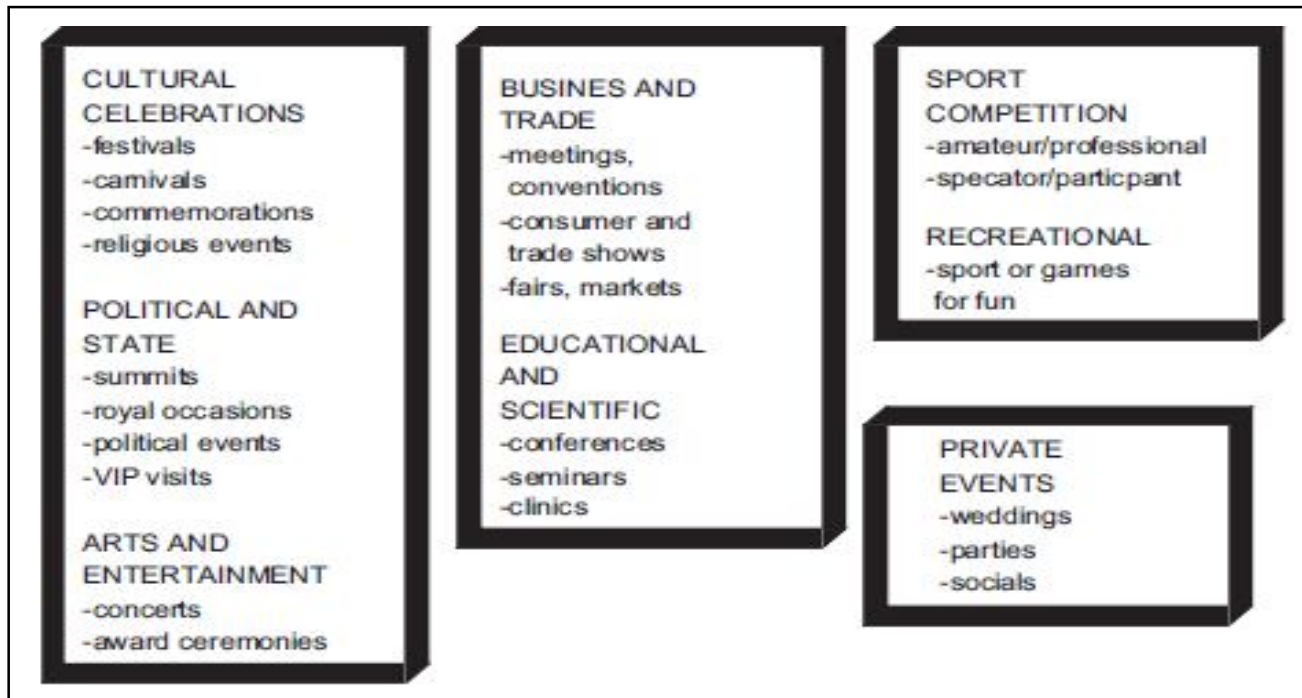
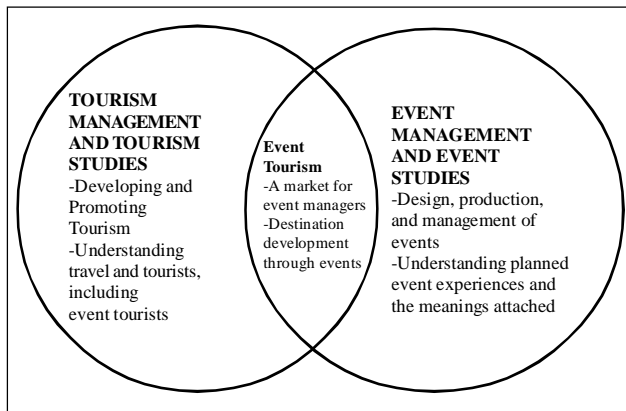


Figure 1: Typology of planned events

entertainment, recreation, political and state, scientific, sport and arts events, those in the domain of business and corporate affairs (including meetings, conventions, fairs and exhibitions), and those in the private domain (including rites of passage such as weddings and parties, and social events for affinity groups). Figure 1 provides a typology of the main categories of planned events based primarily on their form – that is, obvious differences in their purpose and programme. Some are for public celebration (this category includes so-called community festivals which typically contain a large variety in their programming and aim at fostering civic pride and cohesion), whereas others are planned for purposes of competition, fun, entertainment, business or socialising. Often they require special-purpose facilities, and the managers of those facilities (like convention centres and sport arenas) target-specific types of events (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Event tourism at the nexus of tourism**

Professional associations and career paths have traditionally been linked to these event types – the marketing of events to tourists and the development and marketing of events for tourism and economic development purposes (Figure 3).

All marketing activities should be grounded to the principle like – more visitors, increased length of stay, increased spend per night and will be based on a rationale that includes identifying how the proposed marketing activity will generate incremental overnight visitor expenditure, in terms of one or more of these



**Figure 3: Proposed model to enhance tourism**

levers. All stakeholders and partners will work in a collaborative, integrated manner to focus on destinations and achieve an impact at the industry level. The complete scenario of where the visitor is coming from, the destination they are going to, who they are and their reason for visiting must all be looked at collectively. Development opportunities will also be explored in parallel; to build additional reasons to visit can then be explored strategically, based on the positioning of the destination and the strength of the opportunity.

## CONCLUSION

Events and tourist destinations are interlinked. Event brand can influence improvement of the image or building of a destination brand by the transfer of elements of event brand to destination or vice-versa. The recommendations, which impose while writing this research conclusion, are the following: in order for the tourism destinations to, in a quality manner, continue with the started process of branding, it is necessary to conduct visitor-oriented research, that is research the motives of tourist and visitor arrival. Such research is, otherwise, neglected due to the lack of financial means. Then, based on defining of the main visitors motives and needs, it is necessary to define destination development strategic guidelines and to design event programmes in accordance with those needs. All stakeholders, starting from the citizens to the local authorities, need to be involved in the process of defining

destination and event goals, as well as in their coordination, in order for the strategy to be in line with the principles of sustainable development. A quality strategic document, in which all destinations, events and stakeholders' goals are coordinated, represents a link which connects those three key players, thus enabling the transfer of the event branding process to the whole destination, that is that benefits from branding become mutual. Involving key stakeholders, such as citizens, local authority and investors in the process of adoption of strategic documents, will later serve in the process of branding in the manner that it will ensure their support. It is the lack of support by the local

authority, investors and citizens, as well as sponsors itself that is a frequently stated limitation in the process of destination branding by means of events. Event managers must raise the awareness of the importance of defining of long-term strategic development documents, as the first step in the process of branding which will facilitate quality and focused development towards the desired goals. Destination branding of the tourist places requires involvement of professionals from local authorities and tourist organisations, as well as the support of the local community; this is how their previous involvement in the realisation of a long-term destination strategy will make destination branding easier.

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