

# What Is an Event and What Is Event Marketing?

“Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you’re doing the right thing.”

*John D. Rockefeller, oil magnate and philanthropist (1839–1937)*

### **When you have completed this chapter, you will be able to**

- Make practical distinctions between the marketing of events and events as marketing strategies themselves,
- Understand the wide scope of various event marketing activities and the multiple elements of their makeup,
- Describe and effectively argue to other stakeholders the importance of marketing through and with events,
- Develop an understanding of the diversity, scale, and variety of events that require marketing strategies, and
- Comprehend how event marketing is expanding globally and improving to benefit events themselves and the numerous products and services marketed through events.

Strategic event marketing is doing the right thing and letting people know you are doing the right thing. The difficult part is to know what the right thing is and knowing the best way to let people know. For example, would an event supporting ecology sponsored by the oil industry be a good thing, and if it is, who should be informed, and how?

The application of strategic marketing concepts to the organization and promotion of planned events is concerned with overcoming a range of difficulties. Put simply, it will help you to design the event that is most likely to meet its objectives, and to manage the communication of the event to its best advantage. It involves only straightforward thinking and will appeal to you by being described in plain language without recourse to specialist terminology.

## **Creativity, Excitement, and Enthusiasm Are Prerequisites**

History is rich with examples of creative geniuses who have dreamed beyond the borders of the conventional in order to develop awareness and increase sales of their planned events. For example, in 1951, Bill Veeck, the owner of the Cleveland Indians, hired the services of Eddie Gaedel, an American with dwarfism, to become the shortest player ever to play in the major leagues. This proved to be a great success. What should we make of such bold operators? Perhaps they were brilliant, or perhaps they got lucky. While we can learn from their unique and sometimes outrageous stunts and attractions, we should not let mavericks be our inspiration, although we will pay homage to their innovations in chapter 2. They all wanted to entertain, and so should you. Like you, they wanted to create excitement, and they were certainly enterprising characters, as no doubt you are. What, however, of the many more whose enthusiasm led nowhere?

Now would be a good time to draw a line under something. Events are about excitement, creativity, and enthusiasm, and the generation of experiences and memories. These things are really prerequisites to a successful planned event. They almost go without saying. Without creative flair, it is difficult to imagine an event of any kind engaging attendees, but event marketing is not merely about creativity and enthusiasm, as they are not enough in themselves to deliver a successful event.

Marketing requires creative minds to come up with interesting things, but at its heart it is about making sure that what's on offer is going to be wanted in numbers sufficient to make the event worthwhile, and to find a way of attracting sufficient attendance and involvement. If your event seems great to you, that doesn't mean it's going to seem great to anyone else. You have to find out whether your creative genius is seen as

being such by others before you can call it that. Moreover, the sheer number of events on offer today has created a difficulty in getting noticed and attracting sponsorship. How robust is your promotional program? Is it going to make you shine or is your message going to be submerged in the ocean of marketing communications that pervade the traditional and electronic media? Strategic event marketing is about reducing the risk of a negative outcome through the application of marketing methods, which can be stated bluntly as using market intelligence to correctly position your event in a competitive market and utilizing appropriate communications to promote your event to the target audiences you have identified. No doubt that seems straightforward enough, as indeed it is.

## The Intercommunications Context of Modern Marketing

Hoyle argued in the first edition of this book that people have so much entertainment and communication at home that they need to be compelled by an irresistible event to get them out and about. If the entire world is accessible without leaving the house, there is less impetus for people to go looking for diversion. That may apply in many instances today, but there has been a fundamental change in behavior that has superseded that perspective.

In the twenty-first century, communication has morphed into intercommunication. Never before in human history have people been so able to communicate with each other so easily, and so readily with professional purveyors of information. It has been, and continues to be, a quiet revolution. This is the smartphone generation. Now home entertainment happens everywhere. That's not to say that in-home entertainment isn't still big business, but that's only because people spend some of their time in the home. They don't rely upon static devices that are plugged into the mains. Developments in battery technology, the advent of the ubiquitous laptop, and most importantly, the evolution of the handheld device, have changed the face of entertainment and communication most markedly.

In the past, home entertainment was viewed as competition for planned events and represented a point of resistance to involvement with things happening outside in the world. That was pretty much the view of filmmakers to television when it arrived, and later to the video and DVD markets. Yet the cinema is thriving. Perhaps these developments should have been looked at as drawing attention to cinema, not away from it. Mind you, it's easy to be wise after the event, and things always seem simpler with the benefit of hindsight.

### **FIVE WAYS TO BENEFIT FROM INTERCOMMUNICATION**

1. Make your event a virtual experience online for the benefit of attendees and nonattendees alike.
2. Post videos of your event on YouTube, and be sure to make them interesting.
3. Insist that your online event information is compatible with handheld devices.
4. Invest in your event web page so that it is interactive and involving.
5. Use social networks to advertise and promote your event.

We will examine the integration of fingertip intercommunication with events in the minds of contemporary consumers and explore the idea that rather than being an impediment to involvement with events, technology is the event marketer's friend—as indeed events have proven to be the brand marketer's friend. More than ever, brand owners are turning to events to boost the power of their offerings in the marketplace.

## **Events as a Marketing Tool**

For the purposes of this text, the term *brand* will be used at the widest level to cover all kinds of available choice. We know that, for example, Ford and McDonald's are both well-known and long-established brands. Barack Obama, the president of the United States, is also a brand and the Democratic Party too is a brand. Ireland is a brand and Catholicism is a brand. Oxfam is a brand and Hilton is a brand. Evolution is a brand and so too is creationism. Where there is choice between things, we can consider these things brands. To that extent, we can consider ourselves as brands, and indeed we do fit the criteria, and as we will discuss later, consumers use products, services, and experiences to brand themselves as particular kinds of people.

**B**rands have certain characteristics that make them identifiable, and they promote their virtues to further their ends. As an example, consider the Red Bull brand, a high-caffeine energy drink that has achieved a premium brand status and that supports a heavy price differential in the marketplace over near-identical products. Red Bull is very identifiable, has become associated with a certain energetic lifestyle, and is very often used by young hedonists as a vodka mixer that merges alcohol intoxication with a measure of wakefulness. The brand uses events to add status and excitement to its image. They sponsor a Formula 1 team for the International Grand Prix circuit, an event of some glamour and prestige, which ensures international promotion and media coverage. Their slogan that Red Bull “gives you wings” is mirrored in the adrenaline of the Formula 1 experience. There is also the Red Bull Air Race World Championship, featuring the world’s best race pilots in a motor sports competition that combines speed, precision, and skill; touching down in six cities worldwide, each Red Bull Air Race is unique. From the heart of the city to the open countryside, over land or water, a Red Bull Air Race can take place almost anywhere (see [www.redbullairrace.com](http://www.redbullairrace.com)). Spectacular backdrops and jaw-dropping action guarantee that spectators experience one of the most innovative and exciting new sports around today. This event really does give you wings and is an example of a major international premium brand using events as the major aspect of their image-building promotions. Red Bull, of course, also advertises, enjoys widespread distribution, has an iconic packaging design, and as mentioned has managed to maintain a remarkable price premium. The events approach to brand building has allowed the brand to maintain a level of differentiation from near-identical competitor products that supports their pricing policy. For Red Bull, and major brands throughout the world, planned events are an integral component of the marketing mix.

To see how seriously Red Bull takes their strategic use of event marketing, visit their events web page for an example of first-class consumer involvement that does much to supplement the traditional on-site advertising and product sampling techniques that we have grown to expect. Their worldwide events strategy is to be enjoyed by live participants, and also to be followed online as a brand narrative that provides powerful communication of values.

*([www.redbull.com](http://www.redbull.com))*

## Events Within the Marketing Mix

It is increasingly likely that a brand owner might very well decide that some kind of event would be useful in the marketing of their brand. It is unlikely that they would use an event in isolation, but would rather think of it as an aspect of their marketing mix. This is common practice. This scenario has a brand in a busy competitive market wanting to have the edge on competitors by influencing the thoughts and behavior of potential and actual customers.

Marketing interventions concentrate around key activities, and this is most clearly illustrated with reference to a basic product. Let us examine oatmeal, or porridge as it is known in Scotland. I will try to make perfectly clear how events integrate into a traditional marketing mix with reference to this plain cereal product.

What does a brand owner actually do with oatmeal? Well, they start at the beginning and package it, to keep it fresh, and they design the packaging to be recognizable, perhaps with a Scotsman in a kilt tossing his caber. Then they will find a level of distribution that matches their production capacity; they will make it readily available. They will price the oatmeal to optimize demand. They will have used research to inform all of the above, and all being well they will have a brand. That's the way it is for most brands in the market, a distribution- and price-based proposition. The term *marketing* is often used by the general public and the media to denote promotional activity, often specifically advertising, yet most commonly it reflects the business of securing distribution.

The promotional aspect of marketing generally reflects a brand's effort to achieve growth in market share, and expenditure on promotional activity in turn is relative to the ability of the parent organization's capacity to invest in this growth-orientated activity. It also becomes appropriate to invest in brand building through promotion when competition is intense.

Therefore, when there are many brands of oatmeal in the market, or when there is a general competitiveness within the cereal market, the brand owner might decide to advertise, to stress some aspect of the brand, to infuse some positive associations, and they might sponsor something appropriate. This is all standard brand marketing activity. In promoting by these standard means, the brand owner is attempting to position their brand. That is to say, they seek to provide a means of positively differentiating their brand from the competition. They will furthermore most likely develop a website to engage consumers to support their marketing mix.

There will be a variety of ways to position a brand. In the case of an oatmeal product, they might decide to go for the anticholesterol angle, marketing oatmeal as a kind of health food. But the competition is, well, being competitive and will be offering similarly positive messages. How to generate a competitive advantage? How to differentiate yourself from those other brands?

A smart brand owner might very well decide to invest in an event to give it additional appeal or edge. What about a cholesterol check road show in support of the brand? Take the brand to the people; generate some interest and excitement. Generate some media exposure via the event to further support the brand proposition. It is clear and straightforward that a brand owner would want to get involved in events. It adds a further persona to the brand personality. To put it bluntly, it adds another string to its bow.

In 2008, Emmi UK ran an eight-week road show for its cholesterol-reducing healthy cheese alternative, miniCol. The campaign, aimed predominantly at the over-55 market, involved a team of trained brand ambassadors, chosen to appeal to the target audience, and toured the major UK grocery multiples. A mobile stand was placed at the entrances to stores where brand ambassadors interacted with consumers, explaining the scientifically proven benefits of the product before offering them a free sample.

Consumers also received a leaflet containing insights into cholesterol reduction, healthy lifestyle advice, meal ideas, and money-off coupons. To add to the experience, a theater chef prepared a selection of recipes, demonstrating the wide uses for the product in everyday cooking. This experiential marketing campaign utilized the road show event format to differentiate their product and their profile.

([www.emmi-minicol.ch](http://www.emmi-minicol.ch))

How much more difficult it would have been for this brand to create such impact by less outgoing marketing tactics. The use of this event road show managed to create interest and trial, provided samples, and connected with real people.

Steve Winter is President of Brotman Winter Fried Communications, an agency specializing in public and media relations as well as promotions. Winter comments on the emergence of events as an integral aspect of the marketing mix:

*Event creation and production is a critical element to an overall marketing and communications program. Years ago, marketing was very much segmented by channel. You either required advertising, public relations or promotions as a channel to reach the consumer, but as the industries converged through the years, so too did the individual elements. As a result, events are as important a part of the process as is the art of publicizing and promoting what those events are designed to do.*

For example, Diageo-owned Smirnoff Vodka makes good use of its popular “Be There” experiential campaign, involving sponsored parties and events. This major international brand markets itself traditionally based upon distribution, sales promotion, and advertising, yet it is through the use of events that they are able to add an exciting layer of hedonism appropriate to the core values of the product, namely intoxication. This is how they are able to use event marketing methods to bring the consumer into sensory contact with the brand.

Although events have been marketed and used for marketing purposes for many years, their integration into mainstream marketing has been a recent evolution, in part driven by industry fusion, and by those who have been brought together within the marketing world. Development therefore happens at the ground level, driven by market forces. For example, Smirnoff's white spirit big-brand rival, Bacardi, also uses event marketing to further the aims of their famous brand, and brands such as these are competing with one another on the basis of their event programs, as market forces shape and refine their marketing strategies.

## Events and Public Relations

Organizations similarly will use events to support public relations, which can be considered as a type of reputation management. Steve Winter explains its development.

*I started in public relations and staging, and implementing and managing special events emerged as a major by-product of our skill set. It started by creating special events in order to generate media coverage, publicity stunts, if you will. Eventually, that grew into the creation and staging of charity fundraisers which eventually evolved into full-scale event management. Today at BWFC, we create events and campaigns entirely from scratch. Events have truly become a major strategic element in the field of public relations.*

In creating a well-received event, it is possible for an organization to target a number of important audiences with positive public relations. Take, for example, an alcoholic beverage corporation. They will provide events to promote their brands, aiming their efforts at the end user. There are, however, other audiences to be taken into account. What about a government or regulatory body, which may be less than positive about the relationship between alcohol and antisocial behavior and crime? A suitably sincere event to which potential legislators are invited may achieve some legislative delay or sense of working together that will be to the corporation's advantage. Similarly, events are appropriate perhaps to the medical profession, where the positive benefits of moderate drinking could be stressed and media opportunities created and acted upon. The world of exhibitions and conferences are regularly utilized by organizations to create positive relations with suppliers and clients.



**M**cDonald's uses event sponsorship as a means of public relations. Whatever one's opinion of the food being sold by this corporation, it has become the icon of unhealthy fast food. They are somewhat scapegoated in this respect, perhaps due to their ubiquity, as they are certainly not alone in the provision of this kind of nutrition. Nevertheless, the brand has a vested interest in overcoming negative perceptions of their operation. The sponsorship of arguably the world's biggest mega-event, the summer Olympic Games, allows McDonald's to be associated with healthy living and an all-inclusive, global community, which of course is useful for an international brand. This helps shift negative public perceptions and boost sales. How this works is subtle, as on the face of it one's opinion of the brand is not going to be consciously altered by seeing their logo at the Olympic Games.

On one level, this sponsorship represents a simple association, an abstract correlation between two disparate elements. This association permits the Olympic logo to be integrated into advertised promotions and product packaging and sundries. More importantly, however, it operates as the development of a new social representation of the brand. It therefore changes the meaning of the brand. As all brands are collections of meaning, the addition of Olympic sponsorship adds a weight of Olympic meaning to the McDonald's brand. It doesn't alter the burgers, but it alters what they mean.

The reputation of McDonald's rests upon what their burgers mean, not how they are manufactured. The PR value of Olympic sponsorship represents a kind of background radiation of fitness, competitiveness, international harmony, and importance, values that will be infused in each bite of the burger bun and emitted from the air-conditioning vents in the restaurants.

*([www.olympic.org/sponsor-mcdonalds](http://www.olympic.org/sponsor-mcdonalds))*

## The Advantages of Events to the Brand Marketer

So what are the advantages of using events as a marketing tool? They are many and varied. Before we consider the nature of events and why they are so useful to the marketer, there is one consideration, however, that is somewhat overwhelming. Your competitors may well be using events to get the better of you. The use of events by brand owners and organizations is becoming more popular, as the advantages in doing so become more clearly defined. Ever heard of having to run fast just to stand still? If you are operating in a market where your competitors use events, consumers will become accustomed to that as a kind of norm. It is what they will come to expect. As events become a norm in the marketer's toolkit, the question becomes, can I afford not to use events to market my brand or support my organization's profile?

	USA	
	Brazil	
	Germany	
	United Kingdom	

**FIGURE 1.1**

Especially in Europe and America, there is a strong culture of popular music festivals. It is striking that many of the major open-air music festivals in summer are sponsored by beer brands. Beer brands cover two bases by interacting with music festivals: For one, music festivals promote a hedonistic lifestyle. They are, indeed, a purely intrinsic and hedonistic activity for most people, offering this kind of easygoingness, relaxation, and freedom. On the other hand, this lifestyle promoted by festivals is the perfect opportunity for beer brands to sell their products. As a matter of fact, beer might be the most widely sold drink at open-air festivals, where excessive consumption and inappropriate behavior seem to be good manners. That way, a beer brand can attach itself to a certain image while selling a lot of their product.

That is the rub for marketers. Often it can be a disadvantage not to be involved in a certain activity, rather than necessarily achieving an advantage by being involved. Such advantage can only be achieved by devoting time, energy, and resources to making sure you are getting it just right.

Events present a tangible, real-world presence to brands they support in any sector of the market, and they have the capacity to orientate themselves toward a number of different audience types, which makes them a particularly flexible method of marketing.

Based in Atlanta, Pomerance and Associates was founded by CEO Barbara Pomerance, a senior practitioner with extensive industry experience. She makes clear that events can be at the heart of marketing strategy, and illustrates their usefulness in converging upon significant audiences.

*Special events are strategic in building brand awareness, creating excitement and developing tactical alliances in a marketing program. For example, in an upcoming Green Business Expo Event, we are aligning government, industry, media and corporate representatives to convene for a three day program for brand awareness, credibility and media attention. As in this case, the event is the driving mechanism for the media relations and marketing objectives for the client.*

Clearly, the use of events is becoming mainstream. Given that reality, the question remains: what can I do to make my event better than the others? The best answer is to use information and research to find out what will be better. If you think that this cautious approach goes against the spirit of adventure and showmanship that is inherent to many events, remember that you are out to impress your customers, not your own ego. How do you impress someone? You find out what impresses them; otherwise there is an unnecessary risk attached to your venture.

This message appears pretty regularly throughout this text. If you want to provide adventure, for example, find out what constitutes adventure in the mind of your audience. Your idea of adventure may not correspond with others'. Some people take adventure seriously, and some are easily pleased. Know your audience.

## Events Bring Marketing to the People

Brand marketers use planned events to subtly alter our thoughts about their brands, so the event is a conduit through which brand meaning passes. Thus, the event is both an end in itself and a means to a wider corporate end. Importantly, an event is a medium in itself, a channel through which brand information may be passed.

If, for example, a bank organizes a classical music festival, it is designed to influence the ideas we have about the bank, and perhaps to attract a wealthy and cultured demographic. The event would be a strategy apt to the corporate aim of attracting wealthy depositors. Whether attending the event or knowing of it through media exposure, the target audience, in associating the bank with cultural superiority, is able to differentiate the bank from others on a meaningful basis.

**FIGURE 1.2**

These are 10 different types of events. For each event, we chose three traits that one might naturally and instinctively associate with it. There may be others, or you may disagree with some. However, every event has a personality, a collection of traits, and a character. If you are looking to market with events, think of the personality of your company, and think about what kind of event might fit.

In this increasingly virtual world, it is important to remember that events are happenings that people can become physically involved in. They involve human interaction. They give people the opportunity to be somebody and to be seen being somebody. They are fun, and they can brighten up your day. The choice to become involved is ours. This gives consumers a sense of belonging and empowerment. People like events. There is nothing false about them, they are not contrived, and they represent the way people have been behaving since records of civilized behavior began. That makes them inherently powerful as a means of influencing people.

If managed properly, and marketed thoughtfully, events are really giving people what they want. Perhaps that is their greatest strength. It is surprising, therefore, that planned events have not been more central to mainstream marketing thinking all along. Isn't marketing supposed to be something to do with giving people what they want? A casual glance at human behavior tells us that people want events and have been enjoying them whenever they have been organized for ages. They have been growing in prominence of late, however. What has brought events into the limelight?

## The Transformational Experience of Events

Much was written as the twenty-first century dawned about a new experience economy. The term came to the world's attention in an article published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1998 by B. J. Pine II and J. H. Gilmore, titled "The Experience Economy." We will cast a critical eye over this proposition, which basically espouses acquired memory of memorable experiences as being a product that people would be willing to purchase.

It is a simple enough idea. People will pay to have good experiences. It may be a simple idea, but it's certainly not a new idea.

Was there ever a time when people would not pay to have good experiences?

Nevertheless, it deserves some scrutiny, as the idea of an experience economy is largely behind the expansion of event use by marketers, due in no small part to shifts in consumer behavior toward the consumption of events as products in themselves.

Often writers use words to create profound differences between things in order to draw attention to the idea that they are promoting. That sounds a lot like marketing. So when we hear of the experience economy, we should ask critically, what does that mean? We are told that the old service economy of the late twentieth century was based upon the idea that we would pay to have activities performed for us. That might be something such as the rise of the fast-food industry, where the bother of having to prepare and cook nutritious food for our families became an activity we chose to have performed for us by industry.

So a service economy sounds like we stop doing things for ourselves and pay to have someone else do them for us. It also indicates that profit is being generated by the provision of services, a rebranding of the erosion of production capacity. A service economy is one where gross domestic product is positively influenced by the provision of services, and where subsequently there are more services on offer.

More services were being provided to enable us to do less and less ourselves. We were spending our time and money having experiences, merely mundane ones. Something was missing. Where was the excitement? Increasingly, consumer society was becoming jaded. It was just more and more difficult getting satisfaction from these run-of-the-mill experiences. There had to be something more. I guess that's the downside of the instant gratification mentality. It gets more and more difficult to find satisfaction, and what was good yesterday isn't necessarily good today.

Increased satisfaction has been generated by superseding services with events. Going to a restaurant is enjoying a service, which may be deemed mundane. Going to a food festival is experiencing an event, which may be deemed exciting. Increased consumer expenditure on events has been hailed as the experience economy, where consumers are willing to pay for the feelings and memories generated by a transformational event. There must be something straightforward behind this bold and evocative terminology. There usually is. Let us continue with the proposition that everything is an event and see where that takes us.

## **FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE THE EVENT MARKETING EXPERIENCE**

1. Identify the experience you wish your guests to have before, during, and after your meeting or event. What do you want them to see, smell, taste, touch, hear, and feel?
2. Conduct research to discover whether your guests have had similar experiences in the past.
3. Conduct a focus panel or interviews to determine how you can bring their previous experience to a new and more effective level, or introduce a new experience that will be memorable and influence their positive response to the event.
4. Script the experience as though you are writing a play. Start with the introduction of the scene, then present the characters, next introduce an activity, and finally, remind them with a gift, or further purchase, of what they experienced.
5. Provide postevent experience reminders by using Facebook and other social media sites to post photos and other reminders of the live event.

## **Everything Is an Event**

When my wife received flowers on her birthday, the flowers performed a transformation upon the occasion. I daresay that had flowers not been provided, or had they been drab, the occasion would have been transformed in another, less positive way. There were even feelings and memories involved. The same goes for reading this book. You will be transformed from someone who had not read it into someone who has. The experience of reading this book will generate feelings, and some of it will become part of your memory.

And so it is for every aspect of our lives. Transformation is one moment becoming the next, based upon change, so unless a person remains psychosocially static, transformation is an everyday occurrence, and unless that person is emotionally sterile there will be feelings associated with change. I think, therefore, what we are looking at here is something more than experience and transition, because everything is an experience and life necessitates transition. To suggest that all of a sudden people are interested in experiences and the feelings and memories associated with them is not sensible. To say, however, that business has become interested in managing our experiences, feelings, and memories is closer to the mark. We have always enjoyed the truly transformational experience of weddings; it's merely that we now have wedding planners. The experience economy is therefore an extension of the service economy.

Pine and Gilmore make an interesting point when they write about experiences and transformations. They stress that consumers are themselves the product and that the event marketer is using the experience offered to inflict change upon the willing recipient of transformation. They suggest that the consumers are actively seeking transformation and that they use events to facilitate this.

Increasingly, activities that we traditionally organize for ourselves are being organized for us. Moreover, people are being encouraged to do what people do best, which is to get

together with other people. Hoarding products in the isolation of our homes is becoming mundane. Investing our capital in acquiring memories is catching on. While not wishing to be too philosophical, what's more real, the thing or the memory of the thing? People appear to be voting with their feet on that thorny issue. People are investing in their memories, and planned events are attempting to provide particularly vivid memories in order to attract that investment.

## The Marketing Mirror

“Historians and archaeologists will discover that the advertisements of our time are the richest and most faithful reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities.”

*Marshall McLuhan, communications theorist (1911–1980)*

The reason marketers are turning to events to promote their brands, organizations, and enterprises is obvious when considered from a marketing perspective. Marketing reflects society. Whatever people are doing and thinking becomes the substance of marketing communication. Let us consider the nature of advertising communication for a short while, in order to learn something about the nature of events in a wider marketing context.

Advertising in its simplest sense means drawing attention to something. Advertising has, however, been creatively constructed and is invariably drawing our attention toward the central object of the message, the brand, by an idea or a proposition, or imaginary virtue being promoted. These will in turn reflect upon the object of the advertising in some way that will be appealing to those to whom the advertisement has been directed.

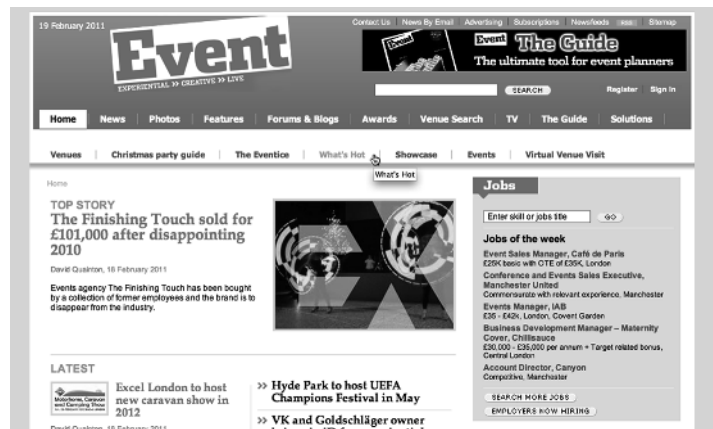
Market segments are the target of advertising. These are groups of people who have something in common. The something that they have in common forms the basis of the targeting. This can be a demographic, a behavior, an attitude, a social circumstance, or a need or vulnerability, and invariably is a combination of these. The demographic variable could simply be for gender and age, such as advertising for stair lifts, which are generally targeted at elderly females.

Behavioral variables concern common forms of behavior that are referred to in advertising, such as “effort-avoiding” behavior of characters in cleaning product commercials. Targeting by attitude can be exemplified by advertising for Lexus cars where the status of the brand is stressed rather than technical detail. The social circumstance of being in an airport, for example, could be used as a targeting mechanism for reaching potential fragrance consumers. The need to reduce monthly expenses is used as a targeting mechanism for credit providers, for example, and the array of advertising for cosmetics aimed at even young women are based upon vulnerability to anxiety about aging. When advertising is coded in a particular manner it is because the advertiser wishes to appeal to a particular consumer segment in a particular manner so as to achieve a specific outcome.

This essentially boils down to the meaning that has the strongest appeal to the identified audience. It is entirely possible to generate and transmit that meaning through association with a particular event, one that reflects something of the consumer's active experience. Just as we

view advertising as a designed method of marketing communication based upon particular variables, so also should we view brand-sponsored events, for they serve a similar purpose.

If people are getting into spending more time and resources on events, then marketers will follow where the consumer leads. If you want to be in with the in crowd, you have to go where the in crowd goes. Just to be clear about this, if for some reason we all got into tapestry, marketers would start using tapestry to get their message across. So there are very clear reasons for marketers to use events to market things. They do so because their target markets use events for their entertainment and edification, so it naturally occurs to the marketer to communicate with consumers via the medium of the event. This concept was touched on earlier. A medium is that through which something passes. It is a common enough word and has many applications. Newspapers are a medium, Twitter is a medium, and those people who claim to channel messages from the departed are mediums. A medium is something through which to communicate. For the marketer, therefore, a planned event is both a means and an end. It is a thing in itself to be enjoyed and a medium through which to communicate with consumers.



**FIGURE 1.3**

Event marketing has grown into such a huge market that there are whole web portals and sites dedicated to the art of event marketing. Whether one is an industry professional or an enthusiastic amateur, the web is bursting with ideas and information about the world of events.

If marketing is a mirror, what does it reflect? I would go so far as to say just about everything. The consumer research industry knows more about us than we do ourselves. Our hopes and dreams, our ambitions and fears, our habits and inclinations, not to mention our aspirations and weaknesses have been researched over the years. The twentieth century spawned a research industry that turned over every stone and looked in every window to find out as much as possible about consumer tastes and preferences. The twenty-first century has pushed the envelope further through utilization of Internet search details as research data, and social network communication is an abundant source of trend intelligence.

It has not been difficult for the marketing industry to discover the role played by events in the lives of many and to throw it right back at them in the form of brand event management.



## The Value of Events to the Economy

The city of Edinburgh in Scotland is home to many world-class events and attractions and serves as an excellent example of the value of attractions and events to the local economy, in terms of direct and indirect income. It is recognized that the value of an events culture is not purely financial, yet it remains an important consideration.



**FIGURE 1.4**

Event value of the city of Edinburgh.

Clearly, for the city of Edinburgh, events represent considerable value through direct income, support services, employment, and tourism. The same can, of course, be said of thousands of towns and cities worldwide. These figures apply only to major events and do not factor in the city income generated by the minor festivals and entertainment, conventions and conferences, corporate entertainment, and the myriad social events that take place throughout society.

As a fragmented industry that is not ring-fenced as an identifiable entity, events activity represents diversity of happenings and by understanding that, we see that events when viewed holistically form a whole of serious economic importance. The events industry would benefit from some centralization of perspective in order to pull it together into a quantifiable mass.

## A Variety and Diversity of Events

While earlier I suggested that everything is an event, we need some differentiation. What have become generally understood to represent planned events? There is such a wide diversity of events that it is useful to serve broad categories and understand the fundamentals of their appeal. Each variety of event is rich in tradition, and its popularity is longstanding. Events that have stood the test of time and continue into the twenty-first

century have the advantage of having persisted and have deep roots in our social fabric. There is an established basic demand worldwide for events, and it is upon this platform that competition strives to tap into that demand. Each event sphere represents an opportunity to the event planner. The categories outlined here will be developed in chapters to follow. At this stage, we will look at the nature of demand for a number of event types. There are, of course, overlaps between categories of events. A festival may be organized as a form of corporate marketing, for example. Nevertheless, events fall into a number of broad categories, and it is to these that we will refer briefly at this stage.

Festivals have a singular significance to the history of culture the world over. The earliest festivals were primarily religious. For example, the modern marketing push of Halloween began as a pagan festival of the dead in pre-Christian Europe, and trees inside dwellings in winter were part of a similarly ancient festival for the gods of the forest, which persists today as an aspect of Christmas. Festivals are as old as the hills. They are for congress and celebration, often involve feasting and merrymaking, and increasingly are associated with entertainment. There have always been festivals and they appear in every epoch and straddle all social manifestations. The nature of demand for festivals is therefore ingrained in all cultures.

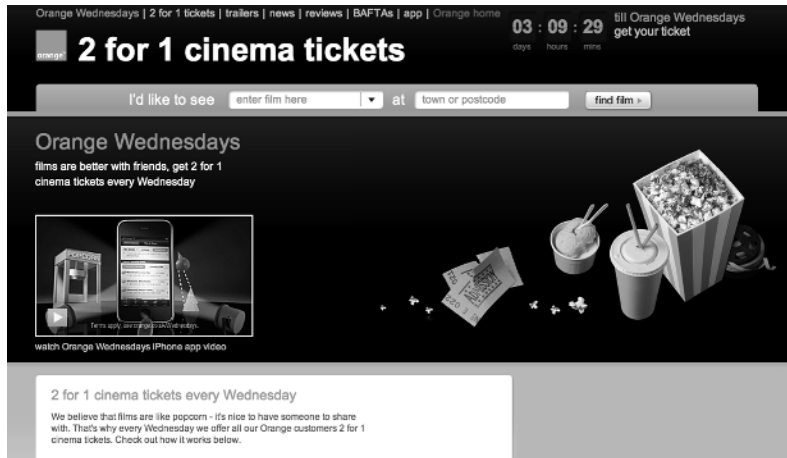
Festivals cover all aspects of behavior. There are festivals of speed, food, horses, and quilts. Enthusiastic crowds flock to festivals of antiques, dancing, popular music, and science. We find festivals of comedy and remembrance, jazz and new age mysticism. And we still have festivals of the equinox in old Stonehenge and the festival of light at the pyramids of Cairo. For all their antiquity, festivals are intrinsically linked to popular culture, and the entertainment industry, and are a major channel for talent. At one level, therefore, festivals are a branch of the global entertainment industry and are carefully managed to generate income.

Just as there are festivals that represent the mainstream of popular culture, there are also many local events the world over that play a special role for these communities, a testament to our need to have fun, to take a holiday from seriousness. Take a visit to the wife carrying world championship in Sonkajarvi, Finland, or try your hand in the world cow chip throwing championship in Beaver, Oklahoma. Festival organizers find something to celebrate in everything.

Major entertainment events represent a distribution system for global talent, a circuit around which celebrity acts race from venue to venue. The mass entertainment industry that developed during the twentieth century and the events it spawned are a significant aspect of consumption with youth cultures in particular. There are hot tickets to be had, and event marketers need to know how to warm their tickets up in a hotly competitive environment.

Some corporations have a turnover in excess of most countries. They are of such social and economic significance that their utilization of events requires particular focus. Whether as originators or sponsors of events, corporations, public and private, have been intrinsically linked to the production and delivery of a wide variety of event types. When considering corporate events, we need to make a distinction between the role of events for internal and external marketing strategies. We will illuminate the role of events within the corporate world with respect to their role as a means of workforce integration, communication, and motivation, such as the challenges facing incentive travel event marketing. Alternately, events are an aspect of the corporations' external marketing strategy, a means of promoting themselves or their brands, often thought of as falling within the PR camp.

The extent to which events are utilized by corporations should tell us something about events themselves, as the most influential organizations on the planet clearly believe that they work as a means of persuading consumers and motivating personnel.



**FIGURE 1.5**

The French mobile phone company Orange uses event marketing with a special focus on movies as their trademark consistently throughout Europe. That way, they organize open-air cinema events in Luxembourg or Switzerland and offer two-for-one ticket deals for their customers in different European countries.

American Express served a classic marketing campaign that was linked to a nonparticipatory event and demonstrated a leap in brand marketing thinking. American Express is widely acknowledged as the originator of today's cause-related marketing. In 1983, after a few pilot programs, American Express launched a short-term campaign to donate a penny for the restoration of the Statue of Liberty every time an American Express transaction occurred, and \$1 for each new account opened. The three-month campaign ended with \$1.7 million for the restoration of the Statue of Liberty. American Express transactions increased by 28 percent in the first month alone, and new card applications increased by 45 percent.

The restoration was there for all to see and of course gathered much media attention. While there was little personal involvement by consumers, there was a great deal of emotional involvement in this event. Corporations now routinely think in these terms. Trees being planted, babies in developing nations being inoculated—these are events that invite emotional participation and that are understood by corporate marketers to represent powerful promotional messages to approving consumers.

*(www.americanexpress.com)*

Just as the origin of events lies in the organization and expression of culture, so their modern roots as planned and managed occasions are evident in the evolution of social and professional associations. This is a natural outcome of having large numbers of associated individuals scattered over often large distances, the event being in the most fundamental sense a gathering. There is something quite powerful in the convergence of like-minded people, or somehow related individuals. Associative organizations are therefore heavily involved with events and represent a major component of the events marketing world.

Take, for example, the major religious event sphere that operates in multimedia formats and requires particular treatment for the sensitivity of its branding. It would not do for such an event to be thought of in the wrong way by clumsy communications. A religious congregation, which is to say gathering, needs to be marketed in a manner that reflects the ethos of the faith. The marketing of events therefore is not merely concerned with process and information channeling, but with subtlety and tone whereby the feelings and emotions that we want to generate about the event, and the idea of the event, become a focus of marketing communications. All associations have their reason for being. It can be commercial in nature, bringing together people from different walks of life in order that supply chain networks are formed through social interaction. They can be social in nature such as when those with a cause to promote form official gatherings to strengthen and focus their efforts. Whenever there is a common denominator between geographically scattered individuals, the event-based association is the mechanism for congress and exchange.

There are a wide variety of social events that are increasingly subject to professional event management. These range from the celebrations of family life that play such an important role in cultural identity to the increasing opportunities afforded by the phenomenon of an aging population. Social events are a kind of infrastructure. Social event marketing therefore has a low-key pervasiveness in everyday life. Nothing typifies this phenomenon more vividly than the emergence of the wedding planner, a role that has come to dominate the preparation of nuptial celebration. The growth in this business is a classic representation of marketing dynamics. Once the wedding planner was the preserve of the wealthy who had a need of professional intervention due to the scale of their operation, and through the social necessity of perfectionism in this respect. Slowly but surely the uses of professional intervention trickled down the social ladder, as a means of expression of perceived social classification. What began as middle-class aspiration became social necessity. Now the use of wedding planners is fairly widespread. It's not that families are no longer able to muck in and get the thing done, but that social mores dictate that professional intervention is expected if one is to be considered a certain type of person. Then, of course, as with any manifestation of consumer behavior, it becomes not a matter of whether a wedding planner is being used, but which one, and so on and so forth. Ultimately, aside from the business of actually getting the wedding organized, the wedding planner represents a price tag that is visibly attached to the event. Social events are therefore being branded by their professional management.

As we live in continuously dynamic times, and as behavior patterns are changing so swiftly from generation to generation, we need to be up to date with changes in consumer behavior regarding events, since marketing must perpetually study consumer

behavior if it is to remain relevant. Take, for example, the influence of eco-concerns among young consumers who look to the future with concern as to the world that they are destined to inherit. If an event is held to have green credentials, it can act as a potent targeting mechanism for a certain cross-section of the population.

Dramatic shifts in demographics, in particular the extending of the active life span, have given us an ever-expanding senior sector, which itself represents an ever-fragmenting landscape of senior cultures and subcultures. To merely classify a consumer as being over 60 makes about as much sense as classifying a consumer as under 60. Nevertheless, the aging population combined with advances in lifestyle, medicine, and social outlook has spawned an events industry geared up to cater to the needs and interests of this active and demanding population.

We have to confront the influence of technological forces upon event marketing theory and practice, as communication isn't what it used to be. The evolution of the phone into a mobile multimedia communications device has had the most profound effect upon how people relate to one another, and consumer behavior patterns continue to change before our very eyes. As well as the newfound rapidity of intercommunication and its significance to the manner in which event marketing is performed, technological advance in this respect poses new challenges to the event marketer in terms of keeping up with the dynamics of change and trend. Increased speed of intercommunication makes it all the easier to become out of touch with what is happening in rapidly evolving culture.

## Events Are Becoming Everyday Occurrences

Planned events are consumed just like any other product or service, and in the experience economy they are becoming increasingly commonplace. To produce an event and expect it to be intrinsically interesting because it is an event would be like producing a shoe and expecting it to be intrinsically interesting because it is a shoe. The implication of this is that consumers are more likely to be critical and demanding, and less predictable in their choices.

The events market has become just as difficult to capitalize upon as any other mass market offering. When events were less common, consumers were more likely to be in awe of the special excitement represented by something out of the ordinary. Today, events are a mass market experience commodity, and subsequently, we cannot take for granted that consumers will be impressed by what has already been done, or from their view, what has already been experienced. Event planners have been striving to provide more and more opportunities for transition and the acquisition of memories. It has caught on, to the extent that they have become ordinary. How long will it be before consumers are looking for something more? Should we look beyond the experience economy to predict what will come next? How, therefore, should we think about planned events? Yes, they are all different, sometimes unique even, but we live in a world of unprecedented choice and unprecedented communication about that choice.

### **FIVE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR EVENT STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD**

1. Find out what event consumers want that they feel they are not getting and give it to them.
2. Think of the ways that your event positively differs from others, and base your communications strategy upon those differences.
3. Take a global sweep of event practice and innovate in your market based upon what you discover.
4. Think of new ways to describe what your event is about to differentiate it from other similar events.
5. Maximize your promotional effort—appear unique.

There are always alternatives. It would be folly to assume otherwise. Just because you have organized an event that is in most respects excellent does not ensure success, any more than a restaurant with an experienced and skilled chef can guarantee customers. How many cherished enterprises have hit the wall? That is the nature of our efforts; if misdirected they will not bear fruit. Why should events be any different?

Someone out there has to decide to attend or wholeheartedly participate if they have to attend. Someone has to choose you, and moreover choose you over something else, be that different events, other forms of consumption, or distraction or lack of involvement. What do you have to offer that's so special? How do you know you are doing the right thing? It's a crowded marketplace and you are going to have to get noticed for all the right reasons. The need to get serious about event marketing is pressing. Only the fittest brands survive in the marketplace. Many new offerings fail quickly due to the pressures of competitive markets.

This is a sobering thought. As the events market becomes increasingly competitive, you have to fight for your share of the event spending and have to outmaneuver your competitors in order to survive.

## **The Scope of Event Marketing Activities**

In the chapters to follow, we will be taking an in-depth look at how to market a number of event types. In each case, we will be drawing from a range of initiatives that represent the scope of event marketing activities. It is time to introduce them so that we will be able to juggle them later without having to pause and define them all the time. I have been trying to stress that marketing is central to the planning, delivery, and promotion of a planned event. In chapter 3, we will go into some depth about the theory and practice of strategic event marketing; at the moment, I just want to familiarize you with

the tools of the trade. In many ways, marketing is like chess. There are a few easy-to-understand rules, but it's very difficult to play well, and you are unlikely to win against someone who knows how to play better than you do.

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*Events are almost impossible to tune out. You cannot change the channel or press the skip button. That's a distinct advantage over other forms of marketing.*

The commercial sponsorship of events has become a central role of the events marketer and is recognized as the major component of fundraising to provide profit or income-generation targets. Event sponsorship and event marketing are often spoken of interchangeably. It is therefore necessary to define sponsorship as a subset of strategic event marketing practice. Event sponsorship is of particular relevance to cause-related events, which have become an established practice. The brand identity sought by corporate marketers is connected to the positive meanings associated with popular causes. How should we best go about raising sponsorship? If we consider the growth in popularity of event consumption, we must face the fact that there are ever more competitors out there looking for sponsorship, and when increased competition becomes a factor, event marketers need to consider how best to market their event to potential sponsors, who may well be in a position in which they will choose you or somebody else. The question must therefore be, why should they choose you? Given the centrality of sponsorship to the funding of planned events, this becomes a very important question.

The Internet defines the modern age. Having been around before it became mainstreamed, it seems awesome that such a thing could be—how so much information can be instantly available to everybody. It seems almost incredible yet has quickly become entirely ordinary, as things do. Of course it brings its own problems, but its capacity for social interaction, albeit virtually, has revolutionized the way we live. When air travel became commonplace, people began to talk of the shrinking world and the global village. The Internet has rendered distance irrelevant. Children, and adults who should know better, play computer games online against people from all over the world. However that may be, electronic marketing is an integrated and mainstream aspect of any event marketing communications activity, and as such deserves particular attention.

The communications potential represented by the variety of social networking channels, and electronic personal communication generally, has been particularly relevant to the success or otherwise of planned events. Experience of this has evolved the marketing

concept in terms of the relationship between the senders and receivers of marketing communication and represents an exponential acceleration of consumer word of mouth.

Take viral advertising campaigns, for example. It's all about how to turn people into media channels. We know that if something is interesting enough, for whatever reason social networkers will pass it on, and so on and so on. The message spreads like a virus from individual to individual. It's not just viral advertising that spreads this way. Word gets about, just as it always has, only now faster and over greater distances. Event marketers therefore use consumers to do their communication for them. This is not so radically different a system as it might at first appear, as word of mouth has always been of great importance to marketing communications. It does, however, accelerate the process. If an event appears to be a viable proposition, word will get out that this is indeed so, and increasingly electronic communications are what makes that happen.



**FIGURE 1.6**

Experiences being absorbed, memories being formed.

That is not to say that online marketing has entirely superseded traditional promotional activity. The Internet has become a terribly crowded place, and there are some advantages to be had for the event marketer by considering traditional media channels and long-standing marketing methods. Posters are still being produced, flyers continue to be distributed, and advertisements in a variety of media regularly appear. Nevertheless, the electronic media pull like-minded people together, and traditional promotional activities work upon the platform of intercommunication provided online. For event marketing, electronic platforms have become the baseline.



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## CHAPTER SUMMARY

From a consumer perspective, it can be difficult to distinguish when an event is part of an overarching marketing strategy. When I attended the aforementioned “T in the Park” music festival (see the preface), what was the nature of the thing? It certainly represented an aspect of the brewer’s marketing strategy, a particular attempt to associate the brand with youth culture. The music business uses festivals to make money, alongside concerts, music sales, and downloads. The musicians involved in the festival were using it in conjunction with a number of other festivals; it was one aspect of their promotional activity, and indeed their income. When mass entertainment is inherent to an event, it is invariably part of a wider marketing strategy.

There is, in other words, an events industry, just as there is an advertising industry and an alcohol industry. We began this introductory chapter by stressing that planned events represent things to be marketed and a means of marketing things. This is about looking at events in different ways rather than looking at different kinds of events. Take the National Religious Broadcasters Convention and Expo 2010 held in Nashville, Tennessee, one of the premier events in the U.S. religious industry’s calendar. On one hand, this is an event to be marketed, and the use of high-profile players in the religious market as celebrity attractors is central to its appeal in acquiring attendees. On the other hand, the event can be considered as a means of marketing certain broadcast channels, particular evangelists and their wares—books, DVDs, educational programs, religious tourism organizations—and a host of other products and services.

We have to therefore see events as being two different things simultaneously. They are things to be marketed and a means of marketing things. This is a commonplace idea that surrounds us all the time. Retail chains fall into this category. They market the goods they distribute and are themselves marketed to maintain market share and profitability.

If you think of your event, whatever it may be, in this dualistic way, you will maximize the benefit of the event to both the event organizer and the attendees. You will appreciate a convenient truth. Any event will be most effectively marketed by thinking of it as a means of marketing something else. That something else can be tangible components, such as a leading TV evangelist. On the other hand the something else can be a meaning, such as fundamental Christianity.

The last word in this chapter is therefore that you should consider your event as a means of marketing tangible and intangible benefits. Strategic event marketing is about assessing the optimum event content in both these respects.

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## CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How are you adding the appropriate excitement, creativity, and enthusiasm to your event?
- How will you manage to get your event noticed by the people you need to reach for your event to be a success?

- Are you up to speed with e-communication for your event?
- Do you understand the development of events as promotional devices for brands?
- Are you able to effectively integrate your event into the marketing mix for brands?
- Are you conversant with the advantages of events as marketing vehicles for brands?
- How do you go about providing a transformational experience for your event attendees?
- Are you aware of the nature of the experience economy and its implications for event marketing?
- Have you considered the role of planned events in the lives of a variety of consumer types?
- Are you aware of the wide diversity of event types on offer in the contemporary events market?
- How, when events have become common occurrences in the lives of many, are you going to make your event special?
- Are you aware of the range of event marketing activities at your disposal?

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## USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://marketing.about.com>

A lot like the *For Dummies* guides, about.com provides clear, straightforward insight into marketing. If you are new to the area, you might want to check this site to become comfortable with some of the key ideas.

<http://www.pcma.org>

PCMA, the Professional Convention Management Association, is one of the world's largest professional bodies for event managers and meeting professionals. Their website provides useful and valuable resources for event managers.

<http://www.eventia.org.uk>

Eventia is a British professional body for event managers. Their site contains a blog with helpful articles as well as recent news about the event industry.

<http://www.cognizantcommunication.com/filecabinet/EventManagement/em.htm>

The academic journal *Events Management* is a really useful resource.

<http://eventsecrets.com/>

Eventsecrets offers useful information about event management and inspiration, in particular for trade shows and smaller events.