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An industry transformed and reimaged: Events after COVID-19

Learning objectives

On completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify the various types of planned events and the associated career paths
- Describe the short and longer-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis
- Recognise the impact of the emerging transformation economy and explain the subsequent shift in emphasis from memorable events to transformative events
- Recognise the impact of stakeholder responses to the COVID-19 crisis
- Evaluate the combined longer-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the changing focus of planned events to transformative experiences
- Reflect on potential strategies for operating successfully in a transformed events industry.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis of 2020 and beyond, as well as other forces associated with the emerging transformation economy (Neuhofer, Celuh & To, 2020), the events landscape is currently in the midst of incredible levels of change and adjustment. However, before considering the transformations that are now reshaping and refocusing the events industry, it would be useful to gain a basic appreciation of the enormous scope of planned events.

Definition: events are temporary occurrences and gatherings of people, at a given place and time. They represent unique settings and have a beginning and an end.

Source: Getz, 2013.

The scope of planned events

It is partly because of the incredible scope of events that Event Studies is such a fascinating area of inquiry. The usual way in which event size or significance is categorised is as follows:

Mega events

The largest and most well-known events are the so-called **mega events**. Examples of mega events are:

- Sporting events such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup and Grand Slam Tennis Championships;
- International music festivals such as Glastonbury, Summerfest and Coachella; and
- World exhibitions.

Regarded by many as 'must see' events, mega events are widely discussed in the national and international media, and generally have a huge economic, social and cultural impact. Their legacies are often significant and long lasting.



What long-term legacies might an international music festival have?

Hallmark event

The term **hallmark event**, although not strictly associated with size, refers to events that Getz and Page (2016: 57) describe as *"those that possess such significance, in terms of tradition, attractiveness, quality or publicity, that the event provides the host venue, community or destination with a competitive advantage."* Staged repeatedly in the same location, these events eventually come to symbolise that location or destination. Hence, when people discuss the event, they automatically think of the location and perhaps, vice versa. Examples of hallmark events are:

- the Wimbledon Tennis Championships;
- the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras;
- the Edinburgh Fringe Festival; and
- the Melbourne Cup Carnival.



What might be the likely effects of changing the location of a hallmark event?

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Case study 1.1. Hallmark event: Melbourne Cup (Australia)

The Melbourne Cup is run by the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) in Australia and is the highlight of the Melbourne Spring Carnival, which runs annually in November. As this event is characterised by its location (Melbourne) it is regarded a hallmark event. It is also a mega event due to the national and international media coverage. The event is run at Flemington, 5kms from Melbourne Central District, on the first Tuesday in November and is timed to commence shortly after the end of the national sporting event, AFL grand final, and shortly before the start of the cricket season. The day is declared a public holiday and draws crowds well in excess of 100,000. Melbourne Cup Carnival remains the highest economic generator of any sporting event in Australia.

Major events

Events that are categorised as **major events** generally lack the scale or international recognition of mega events and may lack the significance of hallmark events. However, they are often large national events that gain considerable coverage in the national media and provide significant economic benefits.



Can you think of examples of major events for each of the following locations:

- *the UK?*
- *the US?*
- *Australia?*
- *Asia?*

What is it that makes them major rather than mega?

Minor events

Events that are categorised as **minor events**, generally staged in local communities targeting local audiences, and found in most localities, are often supported, sponsored or run by local government. Examples include:

- Regional arts festivals;
- Local sporting competitions;
- Local cultural and community events;
- Local demonstrations.

Did you know? Organising public demonstrations require key event skills and collaborative activities. To ensure demonstrations remain peaceful, event managers must adhere to local government policies and procedures.



Give an example of a major event and a minor community event. What are the likely key differences during planning and event execution?

Careers in the events industry

Unlike in more established industries, career paths in the events industry are not always clear or obvious. At the same time however, the events industry has been expanding rapidly over recent decades. It has become a highly competitive, global industry in which the search for talent is relentless and employment opportunities, particularly for passionate and committed individuals, continue to grow.

As a result, event career opportunities now exist in the public sector, the not-for-profit sector and the private sector, in both event specific organisations and a broad range of other organisations. Public sector jobs are becoming available at all levels of government where the scope of events and festivals, often with a strategic focus, is huge. Event careers exist in a range of different employment areas, consistent with the event management knowledge domains in the EMBOK (Event Management Body of Knowledge) model developed by Silvers (2007):

- **Administration**, in which the focus is on the efficient and effective allocation, direction, and control of all of the resources generally required to complete an event project. Key employment areas include financial management, human resource management, information, procurement, stakeholder analysis and management, systems, and time management.
- **Design**, in which the primary focus is on achieving, or at least facilitating, the experience amongst attendees that event organisers envisage. Hence, it involves the creative or artistic interpretation and operationalization of the purpose, goals, and objectives of the event project. Key employment areas include catering, content development, entertainment, the environment, production, programming and theming.
- **Marketing**, in which the focus is on shaping perceptions about the event project, facilitating business development, and cultivating political and economic support. Key employment areas include market plan