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Introduction to Events Management

In this chapter you will cover:

- The historical development of events
- Technical definitions of events management
- Size of events within the sector
- An events industry
- Value of areas of the events industry
- Different types of events
- Local authorities' events strategies
- Corporate events strategies
- Community festivals
- Charity events

This chapter provides an historical overview of the events and festivals industry, and how it has developed over time. The core theme for this chapter is to establish a dialogue between event managers and event specialists who need to have a consistent working relationship. Each strand of the chapter will be linked to industry best practice where appropriate. In addition, this chapter discusses the different types of events that exist within the events management industry. Specifically, the chapter will analyse and discuss a range of events and their implications for the events industry, including the creation of opportunities for community orientated events and festivals.

The historical development of events

Events, in the form of organised acts and performances, have their origins in ancient history. Events and festivals are well documented in the historical period before the fall of the Western Roman Empire (AD 476). They have an important function within society, providing participants with the opportunity to assert their identities and to share rituals and celebrations with other people. Traditionally, special religious holy days have been celebrated, for example, Christmas and Easter. Sovereign rulers and other leaders have often organised events as a way of controlling the public, as was especially the case in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In modern society, it may be argued that traditional religious and national festivals are no longer viewed as the key focus for community celebrations. Modern western society instead tends to create events which celebrate individual milestones, anniversaries and achievements. Birthday parties, wedding celebrations and house warming parties are all ways in which we get together.

These days, events are considered to make a key contribution to the cultural and economic development of the countries that hold them. Events can have a major impact on the development of cultural tourism in the host communities.

A festival can be defined as a gathering of a community or an event which is centred on some theme and held annually or less frequently for a limited period of time. Historical and cultural themes are now often used to develop annual events to attract visitors and create cultural images in the host cities by holding festivals in community settings. Increasingly, larger events and festivals are not specifically designed to address the social and cultural needs of any one particular group but instead are often developed because of the economic benefits they will hopefully bring, primarily through tourism. Such festivals attract increasing numbers of local, regional and international visitors and thus may help to develop links with the global community.

Festivals and celebrations in local communities have generally been accepted and recognised as making an important contribution to society. These local festivals create entertainment for residents and visitors, but also contribute to a sense of community, building bridges between diverse community groups and giving them an opportunity to come together and celebrate their history and the place they live in.

Technical definitions of events management

In order to understand more fully the large array of events that take place today it is important to begin by examining their objectives. Any dictionary definition of an 'event' will include a broad statement, such as 'something happens'.

The word 'event' also has specific meanings in medicine, philosophy and physics. In such disciplines we are concerned with happenings or incidents beyond the will of man or woman. When we couple this term with the concept of 'management', the definition of which includes words such as 'organisation',

‘administration’ and ‘control’, we begin to see an ‘event’ as a purposeful human creation. For events to be managed, they must therefore involve other people, and have a predetermined purpose and a location.

Event management can therefore be defined like this:

Event management is the capability and control of the process of purpose, people and place.

It follows, then, that events themselves can be defined as ‘*happenings with objectives*’.

The prime objective for an event can be strictly defined. An objective may be quantitative and financial, for instance to sell tickets and produce a profit. There may also be less tangible, qualitative objectives relating to the thoughts, feelings and emotions, during and after the event, of those attending it. These would be key objectives for a wedding or a private party.

In this section, however, we will explore the way in which ‘event objective components’ can help us to analyse the full range of international events currently being staged.

Event objective components are the building blocks of event objectives. They are divided into the three categories derived from our earlier definition of event management: purpose, people and place (see Figure 1.1).

So, in order to understand the range of events, we can attempt to classify them by their objective components. But the process produces so many permutations and overlaps that in the end we must conclude that events cannot be precisely classified. One positive conclusion, though, is that all events involve a community. This community can be local or international; it may be a certain business community or a cultural community.

If we look at events on a scale ranging from the individual to the global, a private and personal event, such as a wedding anniversary or birthday, involves the community of family and friends at a particular calendar date in the individual’s life for the purposes of celebration. Culture and community are both expressed and enhanced through the social interaction of the event. At the global end of the scale, an event such as the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2021, or the FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018, will probably involve every possible component somewhere in its tiered objectives and stakeholders. This is due to the complexity of such major events, which actually consist of a whole series of events in one. Looking at our diagram of event objective components (see Figure 1.1), we can identify the culture, carnival and celebration of the opening and closing ceremonies, the many competitors, the corporate elements and the positive changes these events bring to citizens, communities, city and country.

Community, or communities, is thus the most important of the event objective components. Communities include the international track athletics or football communities; the expatriate and descendant communities, such as a city’s Irish or Caribbean communities who come together to celebrate St Patrick’s Day or Carnival; or any field of commerce, such as the UK utilities industry community. Events are all about the vast and varied communities of people of the world. Events are where people commune!

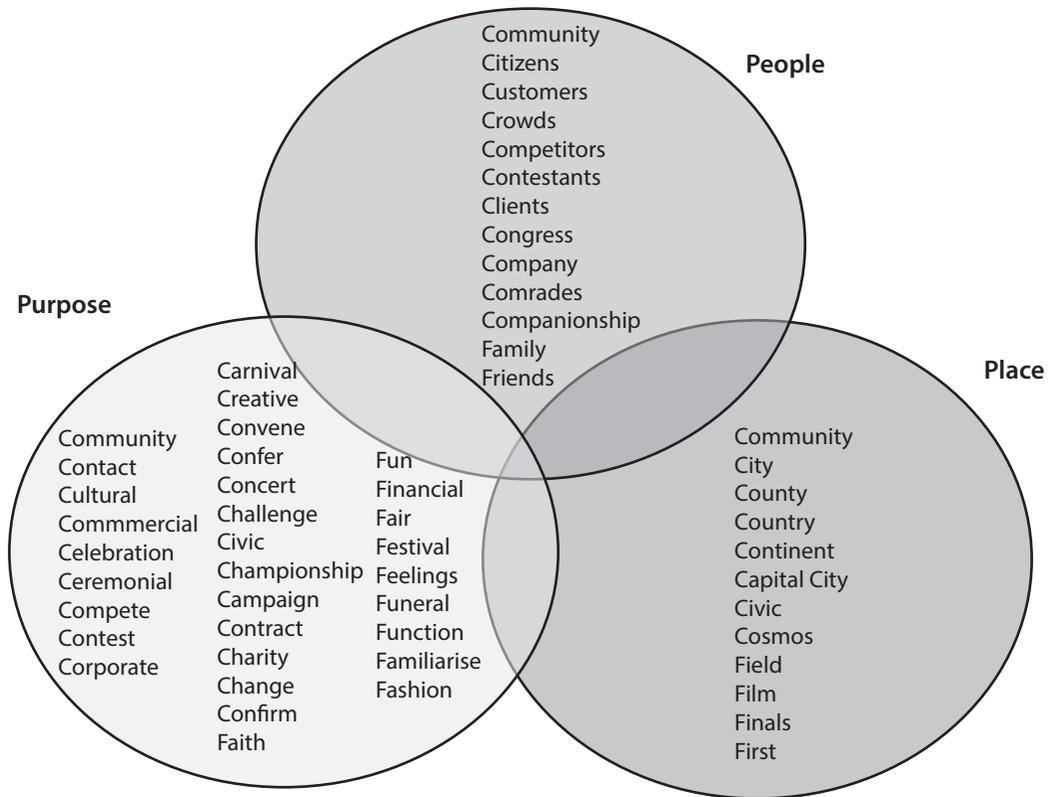


Figure 1.1: Event objective components – the ‘Cs and Fs’ of events

Size of events within the sector

Modern events vary enormously in terms of their scale and complexity and the number of stakeholders involved, ranging from community festivals to major sporting events.

The larger the event, the more objective components it will have, due to the numerous sub-events and stakeholder events which make the whole. This is particularly true, for example, of events such as the Olympic Games. Figure 1.2 shows the different types of events that have been developed around the world by organisers ranging from individuals to multinational organisations.

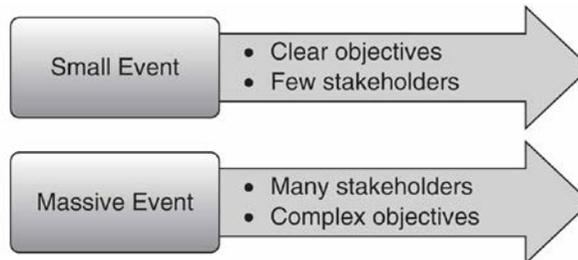


Figure 1.2: How the size of an event links to its complexity