

EVENT COMMUNICATION

Theory and methods for event
management and tourism



BARBARA MAZZA



Event Communication

Barbara Mazza



Goodfellow Publishers Ltd



Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,
26 Home Close, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8PS
<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: a catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: on file.

ISBN: 978-1-915097-55-2

DOI: 10.23912/9781915097538-5667

The Events Management Theory and Methods Series

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Design and typesetting by P.K. McBride, www.macbride.org.uk

Cover design by Cylinder

Printed by Printforce, Biggleswade

Distributed by UK Marston Book Services, www.marston.co.uk

Contents

Introduction to the Events Management Theory and Methods Series	v
Preface	vii
1 Integrated communication for events	1
Organizational communication in event management	1
Relationships in an organizational network and integrated communication	6
Corporate and organizational communication in the event planning firm	9
Levels of integrated communication	12
2 Mixed event strategies and multilevel communication	23
Multilevel integrated communication	23
The enhancement of host territories	26
Creating an identity link with participants	37
Large and small events: comparing cases	40
A summary of cross-level convergences in the case studies	56
3 Event participants	63
Typology of participants	63
Consumer expectations, motivations, and behaviors	66
4 Communication: Planning and results	83
Communication planning	83
The executive project: effects, influences, and evolutive assumptions	91
5 Event communication design	110
The executive project of content creation: processes and strategies	110
Event storytelling: dramaturgy and metacommunication	113
The relationship between experience and narration in co-creation processes	117
Actions and reactions: effects and consequences of narratives and communication strategies	120
6 From experience to engagement: Theory and methods	136
Creating experiences through interaction and participation	136
Increase commitment to experiences to drive involvement and engagement	141
Turning involvement into engagement	147
Delivering immersive experiences to engage	148

7	The digital disruption	163
	From physical to virtual: the digital transformation of events	163
	Using innovative digital technologies for more agile management	170
	Eventscape technologies: creating new, digitized event experiences	175
	Technologically innovative experiential events	178
8	Evaluating the impacts of event communication	190
	Approaches from a holistic perspective	190
	The economic, managerial, and environmental dimensions of evaluation: methods and techniques	195
	Socio-cultural and communicative dimensions of evaluation: methods and techniques	197
	Communicative evaluation: an organic proposal	208
	Designing the evaluation of event communication: guidelines, tools, and parameters	210
	Exercises	221
	Answers to exercises	227
	Conclusions	235
	Index	241

Introduction to the Events Management Theory and Methods Series

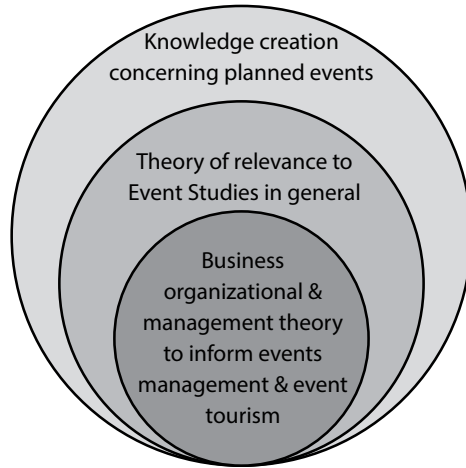
Event management as a field of study and professional practice has its textbooks with plenty of models and advice, a body of knowledge (EMBOK), competency standards (MBECS) and professional associations with their codes of conduct. But to what extent is it truly an applied management field? In other words, where is the management theory in event management, how is it being used, and what are the practical applications?

Event tourism is a related field, one that is defined by the roles events play in tourism and economic development. The primary consideration has always been economic, although increasingly events and managed event portfolios meet more diverse goals for cities and countries. While the economic aspects have been well developed, especially economic impact assessment and forecasting, the application of management theory to event tourism has not received adequate attention.

In this book series we launch a process of examining the extent to which mainstream theory is being employed to develop event-specific theory, and to influence the practice of event management and event tourism. This is a very big task, as there are numerous possible theories, models and concepts, and virtually unlimited advice available on the management of firms, small and family businesses, government agencies and not-for-profits. Inevitably, we will have to be selective.

The starting point is theory. Scientific theory must both explain a phenomenon, and be able to predict what will happen. Experiments are the dominant form of classical theory development. But for management, predictive capabilities are usually lacking; it might be wiser to speak of theory in development, or theory fragments. It is often the process of theory development that marks research in management, including the testing of hypotheses and the formulation of propositions. Models, frameworks, concepts and sets of propositions are all part of this development.

The diagram illustrates this approach. All knowledge creation has potential application to management, as does theory from any discipline or field. The critical factor for this series is how the theory and related methods can be applied. In the core of this diagram are management and business theories which are the most directly pertinent, and they are often derived from foundation disciplines.



All the books in this series will be relatively short, and similarly structured. They are designed to be used by teachers who need theoretical foundations and case studies for their classes, by students in need of reference works, by professionals wanting increased understanding alongside practical methods, and by agencies or associations that want their members and stakeholders to have access to a library of valuable resources. The nature of the series is that as it grows, components can be assembled by request. That is, users can order a book or collection of chapters to exactly suit their needs.

All the books will introduce the theory, show how it is being used in the events sector through a literature review, incorporate examples and case studies written by researchers and/or practitioners, and contain methods that can be used effectively in the real world.

Preface

The first question this book seeks to answer is, “Why does someone choose to organize an event?” The main answer is that they want to make something visible and build relationships.

It can be a private or public party or an entertainment occasion. It can satisfy the need to raise awareness about a theme or espouse a cause; promote a territory, product, or service; or share and disseminate knowledge among a community of experts or a wider audience. Whatever the motivation, the purpose is undoubtedly to gain recognition for the organizers and stakeholders who collaborate on the organization of the event and to create the best conditions for participants to want to partake in the event and benefit from what it offers.

Therefore, the second question underlying this book is, “What is the role of communication in event management?”

If event management concerns the complex process of managing an event, communication serves to enhance this activity and make it more effective and efficient. Communication is also much more: it is not just a tool in the service of event management but has at least a triple character. In the first place, it is the object, i.e., the actual content of the event; second, it is a container that enhances the offer of the event and helps people better enjoy the experience it provides; third, it is a strategic process that acts in a way complementary to other of an economic, logistic, managerial, or marketing processes. The goal is to make the offer of the event compelling and as responsive as possible to the objectives of the clients and organizers and to the expectations of the attendees.

More specifically, communication is the content of the event because it has the task of expressing objectives, interests, and expectations in a unitary and effective framework. It serves to meet the needs of all the actors involved. The offer of the event translates the content into something concrete that people can live through, experience, and remember. This content is therefore the engine that directs people to participate in the event as stakeholders or participants. Some communication scholars consider the event a metacommunication, i.e., the most effective way, par excellence, of achieving a set of objectives (Eco, 1979; Myllykoski & Rantakari, 2022). The event can achieve this result because, as a metacommunication, it can combine all the communication tools available within a historical period to reach people and resonate with their sensitivities and interests.

Today, the last frontiers concern the use of virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and the metaverse, but in the future, there may be other means (Dincelli & Yayla, 2022; Simge et al., 2023). The important thing is that they are used as effectively as possible to communicate the value of the event and create communities that are gathered in all possible ways (physical, digital, and virtual) around the event. Above all, the purpose of the communication about the event is to exploit all means available to create situations of aggregation and socialization (Andersson et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2021). Since the dawn of human history, the great value of events has been precisely that of gathering people who can experience a situation together. Considering that socialization is a primary need of human beings, whatever the objective or motivation that drives people to

come together, metacommunication allows the creation of conditions, in a physical manner or one mediated by traditional and digital means of communication, for making the most of all the sharing opportunities the event offers.

This heterogeneity of communication tools and situations makes the event a container of content, activities and offers from which each participant can choose to meet needs. This richness further enhances opportunities for aggregation and amplifies the value of an event. As a container, communication has the task of building a narrative that accompanies people as they forge personalized paths that meet their needs. Everyone that participates in an event is immersed in a wealth of experiences that represent the real added value the event offers and that motivates them to give themselves over to it (Björninén et al., 2020; Dawson, 2020; Bolt & Tregidga, 2023).

Finally, communication as a process has a strategic role because it supports the actions necessary for event management in building an offer that is as unique, unrepeatable, and special as possible for each participant. Unsurprisingly, communication always has a central role in event management because its managers formulate the event's offer and accompany all processes, from the conception of the idea in the pre-event to the staging during the event, and they preserve the perceived value of the event once it ends (Denicol et al., 2020; Jasper, 2021).

This volume intends to fill a gap in the research on communication about events. Some works deal with communication as a marketing lever for events or in terms of traditional and digital media, but few – including those just mentioned – examine aspects of corporate communication. Thus, even before thinking about the relationship with communicators, it is important to understand how to use communication to manage relationships with stakeholders, local administrators, governments, and the productive world.

This volume intends to focus on the application of communication studies to event management, paying particular attention, in addition to the processes of planning and setting up strategies and content, to the ongoing changes determined by the centrality of technological innovation. This transition is discussed both from the organizational point of view of the event, which witnesses the combination of traditional and avant-garde technologies (for example, in the development of digital, virtual, or *phygital*, events, and above all in the combination of physical and technologically mediated experiences), and from the perspective of offering consumer-friendly experiences for viewers and visitors.

Therefore, this book aims to provide the reader with a complete picture of the role of communication in event management. To do this, it uses an integrated communication approach that starts from the assumption that, in order to communicate something about an event to potential participants, it is first necessary to create the best conditions and, therefore, communicate the same message to employees, volunteers, and stakeholders. This means that, in an organic way, communication performs a bonding function between all the actors involved, and that it is essential to ensure the best possible outcome of the event for everyone.

This book proposes a reading path that is not necessarily sequential but follows the current logic of hypertext. The reader can decide to organize their reading path by focusing their attention on the aspects of greatest interest, but they will

also find, in each chapter, links to other chapters that enable them to continue their reading in a personalized way.

In constructing the book, the path the author chose was consistent with the basic premise. First, in accordance with an integrated communication approach, the aspects of organizational communication that support event managers in organizing an event are discussed. The book then develops the aspects of corporate communication that organize the distinctive features of events and serve as the basis for building narratives and experiences. They make communication more suitable for meeting individuals' needs. For this reason, the book is organized into two parts, whose tasks are, respectively, to develop theories and application methods, and to provide knowledge and approaches that are useful for translating a discipline into a real working method.

The first part defines the objectives and processes of event communication that contribute to creating the value of an event. In Chapter 1, the theme of integrated communication is explored, with specific attention to the role of organizational communication in event management, while Chapter 2 is dedicated to examining the differences in communication management determined by the characteristics of different types of events. In particular, the scope of events as mega, large, medium, or small and operating at international, national, or local levels implies substantial differences in the definitions of communication approaches and strategies. For this reason, scope is considered fundamental in the study of event communication. It helps us understand how to create the distinctive identity of an event. This aspect represents the very heart of establishing good communication. In my opinion, to forge strong communication, it is essential to start by reading Chapter 2, but it is equally necessary to have a clear idea of the direct connection between event communication and event management that is established in the first chapter.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to understanding the characteristics of the different types of participants in an event. This inquiry is necessary because it can help prepare more personalized and, therefore, effective communications. Knowing the motivations, expectations, tastes, habits, and behaviors of potential and actual participants is the basis for defining the most appropriate strategies for telling the story of an event. Finally, Chapter 4 configures the process of designing actions and communication strategies. The reader is advised to tackle these two chapters together, as they are complementary in understanding how to establish communications intended for event participants. Similarly, Chapter 4 is useful as a foundation for beginning to read the second part of the book.

This part is dedicated to deepening the latest trends in event communication and, above all, to understanding how to create effective communications by exploiting storytelling and the most advanced technologies to create immersive, all-encompassing experiences for participants. Specifically, Chapter 5 delves into design approaches and techniques to clarify how compelling content can be created. It is essential to create a unitary, complete, and authentic story of an event, but even more so to involve participants in the construction of a story in which they are the protagonists, both as co-creators and co-actors of the event on a physical level and in digital environments. Chapter 6 explores the theme of experience.

As hinted above, the goal of an event is to have people live through a memorable experience. But how can this be done?

It is not enough to have created an excellent offer, and sometimes, it's not even enough to tell an attendee about this offer to ensure their participation and, above all, positive perception of the event. Chapter 6 relates the various degrees of participation to ways of gaining experience: from viewing to participation, involvement to engagement. It thus provides a series of operational indications to create the conditions that allow the attendee to be transported by and immersed in the event. Chapter 7 completes this reasoning, focusing its attention on the potential offered by new technologies. It illustrates various tools that event management can use to enrich the offer and create an *eventscape* that allows participants to take advantage of the omnichannel approach to experience the event on a physical, digital, or virtual level – or, as is more typical of our times, in a mixed way, navigating through all possible environments. An event can also be constructed differently from those in the past due to the weight attributed to the various environments and the possible combinations between them. Elsewhere in this chapter, a review of the state of the art of the various possible combinations is presented.

Finally, Chapter 8 is dedicated to the evaluation of communication. Again, the perspective here is twofold. On the one hand, analysis methods and techniques are presented to verify the effectiveness of the communicative actions carried out during the entire life cycle of the event; on the other hand, the book explains how to make the most of the analysis results in the reporting stage. An important objective of communication is returning to clients, sponsors, lenders, stakeholders, and organizers an output that illustrates the results and advantages that the event offers. Reporting is a communication product that is very valuable for cultivating relationships that benefit the planning and maintenance of an event, especially in view of the organization of subsequent iterations. For this reason, the chapter closes the circle of the organizational process and content of event communication with the aim of providing practical methods for managing and enhancing an event and its associated communications.

Each chapter could become another book due to the complexity of approaches, processes, and practices that each stage requires. Therefore, the book does not aim to be exhaustive but to satisfy the need to understand the main operating mechanisms of events and include each of them in a complete framework to provide an integral view of the main processes and latest trends in event management.

A final consideration concerns the value of case studies. In each chapter, case studies have been included that exemplify the best practices of the topic under examination. Several factors were considered when choosing the cases to provide the reader with concrete applications that show how the concepts expressed in each chapter are applied in the concrete management of event communications. Each case is described, and the features that characterize it and justify its place with respect to the topic addressed in that chapter are highlighted. Another aim was to provide a large and diversified series of examples. Thus, events of different sizes and scopes are represented, from mega-events, such as the Olympics and universal exhibitions, to small ones, such as the Silver Skate Festival. A broad representation of different cultural contexts is also guaranteed. Events from almost all

continents are represented, even if they are concentrated in Europe and America. Only Chapter 8 presents no case studies, but it does present exercises, which are detailed in the annexes because the objective of the chapter was to analyze and evaluate the results that communicative actions produce. Given the importance of applying methods and techniques, the choice for this chapter was to offer simple opportunities to directly test some aspects of the evaluation, to better verify the application possibilities of the methods, and above all, to understand their use well. This approach complements the objectives of this chapter.

In general, case studies and exercises help us better understand how the theoretical approaches and concepts described are not far removed from their applications. On the contrary, they are the foundations of a method that can be applied. A method provides a toolbox from which you can draw useful tools to work with. Technologies, circumstances, tastes, habits, fashions, and trends change over time, but methods do not. Understanding them means being able to adapt each tool to the needs of the moment and knowing how to make the most of every cognitive element to understand the context and better organize one's activities. This is the primary objective that guided the planning and writing of this book.

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About the authors

Barbara Mazza is an associate Professor (Roma, Italy) and a qualified full professor since 2023, in the Department of Communication and Social Research of the Sapienza University of Rome, where she teaches Communication for Business Management and Event Management and Communication. From 20017/2018 to 2023/24 she is President of the master's degree course '*Organization and Marketing for business communication*'. Since 2015 she has been the local coordinator of several research projects at the national, European (Erasmus Plus) and international levels, and a member of IRNIST, International Research Network in Sport Tourism. It is a scientific research network involving scholars from 38 universities in 17 countries around the world. She has also published many articles on events, sports events and sport tourism. *e-mail*: barbara.mazza@uniroma1.it.

Niccolò Piccioni is a doctoral student at the Department of Communication and Social Research, Sapienza University of Rome (Rome, Italy). The curriculum of study falls under the marketing and management fields. The main research interest is consumer-brand relationships and how digital technologies impact this. He deals with issues concerning the change brought by new technologies on the consumer journey and in consumer experiences. In particular, he focuses on physical and metaversal experiences in tourism and hospitality and the effects they generate on brands and businesses. He also studies the behavior of individuals concerning the consumption of funeral products and services, as well as the managerial practices that characterize innovative startups with high social impact. He contributed to the drafting of Chapter 7.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge Dr. Niccolò Piccioni for contributing Chapter 7 to this book. He participated in the planning and drafting of the entire chapter and contributed especially to the drafting of the opening section and the case study.

I'm grateful to all the practitioners who shared with me their experiences and provided research data for the book.

The case study for Chapter 3 was prepared with the assistance of Italian Rugby Federation (F.I.R.) which manages the Six Nations tournament in Italy and I'm grateful for their participation. Especially, I want to acknowledge a special thanks Luigi Bernabò, events manager, Andrea Cimbrico, communication manager and Claudia Parola, social media manager, for their valuable input in drafting and reviewing the case study.

The case study for Chapter 5 was prepared with the assistance of Salone del Mobile.Milano and I'm grateful for their participation. Especially, I want to acknowledge a special thanks to Marketing & Communication Office Salone del Mobile.Milano for his valuable input in drafting and reviewing the case study.

The case study for Chapter 5 was prepared with the assistance of Frankfurter Buchmesse and I'm grateful for their participation. Especially, I want to acknowledge a special thanks to Juergen Boos, Director of the Frankfurt Book, for his valuable input in drafting and reviewing the case study and reviewing.