



MODULE 1

Part 2: Defining events



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Disclaimer:

These notes are adapted from the University of Cape Town and GetSmarter's course notes for Module 1 of the Events Management elective offered as part of the blended version of the UCT Postgraduate Diploma in Management and Marketing.

Learning Outcomes:

LO2: Identify the various segments of events within the industry.

1. Introduction

The events management industry is growing and changing rapidly. The 2014 ILEA (International Live Events Society) Global Business Survey was conducted across all 5,500 ILEA members in the United States, Canada, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Australasia. It concluded that business confidence levels in the industry are generally high (both in terms of growth and sales, and client spending on events), with 78% of those surveyed stating that they expect business to grow during the 2014-2015 period. According to Brian Acheson, the international president of ILEA, the event industry globally is experiencing an upward trend in the demand for event products and services, and across all event sectors, both supplier sales and client spend continues to increase (Special Event staff, 2014). Note that the organisation's name has since changed to the International Live Events Association (ILEA).

The industry is multifaceted as there are many different types of events and nuances to each, which will be further explored in these notes.

2. Defining an event

An event can be loosely defined as something that happens at a given time and place. It can also be defined as a consequence, effect or outcome. An event is just that – a planned outcome or a consequence of planning. Events can also be described as once-off or infrequent occasions outside the normal program of life and business. To the attendee, an event is an opportunity to relax and engage in a social or cultural experience outside the normal range of everyday activities. Events are always planned, arouse expectations and, in some cases provide reasons for celebration.

All events have the following common attributes (regardless of their size or importance). Events:

- **Are planned:** A date and time must be set. People must be invited. A plan of action must be devised.
- **Are transient by nature:** Events have different time periods. Some are a few hours long while others last a few weeks. However, by nature, they are always temporary.



- **Are unique:** No two events are ever the same. Even annual events differ from year to year. There will be new challenges, new attendees, new staff and new problems. For example, each wedding is unique, as it showcases the personalities of each individual bride and groom.
- **Are labour intensive:** The more complex an event is, the more likely it is to be highly labour-intensive. A high level of planning and organisation takes place across all spectrums of events, from small events to large-scale events. Different planning is required depending on event types. Organising a wedding, for example, may take different skills and less time than planning a large-scale sporting event.
- **Are intangible:** Events are not tangible offerings that can be seen, held and tested before purchase, the way that electronic goods or appliances might be tried. Intangibility is common in the service industry; a hotel stay, for example, is also an intangible experience on many levels. Therefore, it should always be the event manager's job to try and make the experience as tangible as possible. This can be achieved by offering the guests as many tangible experiences as possible, whether it be incredible food, interesting textural furniture, or small take-home gifts. Engaging the senses is key in creating a "feeling" and making the experience come "alive".
- **Have a goal or purpose:** Every event has a goal or a purpose, whether it is just for enjoyment and entertainment (for example, a dinner party), to make important decisions (for example, a UN conference) or to celebrate (for example, a wedding).
- **Offer a social experience:** People attend events for the social interaction. Events are about people; people celebrating together, people grieving together, people having fun together, people learning together and people creating change and policy together. The key word is "together"; it is always a collective experience.

Technological advancements and events:

An interesting concept relating to all events offering a social experience of some kind is the emergence of virtual events. The ability to attend an event without even leaving your home or office is changing the face of event management. It entails no mean no travel costs, venue costs, or even catering costs. It has the obvious benefits but also many challenges. Although true virtual reality events are not yet realised, there are events incorporating it into their physical events successfully. In the business world, Skype and other such video technologies have made it possible to stage meetings at any time and place without any attendees having to travel.

In summary, events can be considered tangible experiences made up of many intangible elements. The event itself is a real, concrete fact, but it is made up of intangible experiences, for example, the ambience and the sense of excitement that an event generates. Each event has a goal or purpose and targeted benefits for the attendees. An event manager needs to be able to market and develop the event with the benefits in mind and an aim to clearly communicate these benefits to the target market.



Attendees will always look for unique benefits when choosing which events to attend. Events generally create some sort of spectacle, something out of the ordinary, which could be modelled in either the visual display or presentation of the event. Additionally, events always create a sense of belonging; the emotional impact is what motivates many people to participate in an event.

In a competitive marketplace, it has become essential for events to stand out from each other and give the attendees the added value they seek. Not only have events themselves changed over the years, but event attendees have also changed. Event attendees are more discerning about which events they attend; they are more educated about what events are available (due to social media and the World Wide Web); they are also more price conscious, and seek added value for their money; they have higher expectations and are more seasoned event goers because of their increased experience in attending events. Because event attendees are becoming more critically aware of event management aspects, event managers must always be on the cutting edge of their field, not only fulfilling attendee expectations but exceeding them.

2.1 A framework for defining events

The world of events covers a wide spectrum of planned cultural, sporting, political, lifestyle and business occasions. Events are a unique form of tourist attraction, ranging in scale from mega-events such as the Olympic Games, to community-based festivals. Events are, however, increasingly being viewed as an integral part of tourism development and marketing planning, even though the majority of events have most probably arisen for non-tourist-related reasons, such as conducting business, competitions, cultural celebrations or the need to raise funds for charity or government coffers.

Below are a number of categories and subcategories that events can be broken down into.

2.1.1 Special events

A special event recognises a unique moment in time with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs. They are non-routine occasions that have leisure, cultural, personal or organisational objectives, set apart from the normal activity of daily life.

The major special events market is the one that people tend to be most familiar with, as these events tend to be held on a larger-scale and generally secure good media exposure. Figure 1 illustrates the characteristics that define a special event.

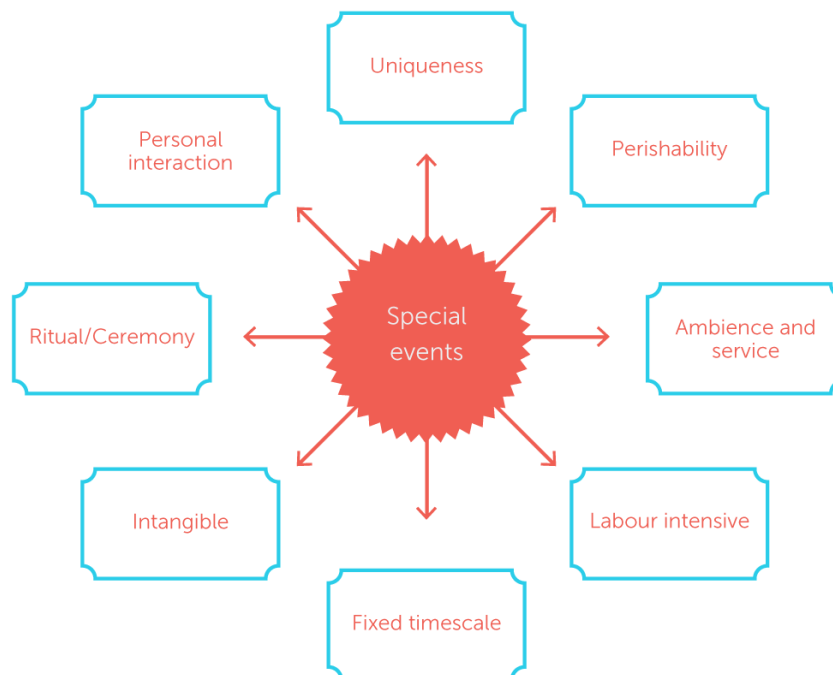


Figure 1: Characteristics of special events.

A wide range of event sectors fall into the major special events market, from sporting events, like the ICC Rugby World Cup, to business and trade events, such as large-scale conferences. Major special events are large-scale events (usually national or international) that are high in status or prestige, and which attract large crowds and media attention. They may be expensive to stage, involve tradition or symbolism, attract funds to the region, lead to demand for associated services, and leave behind legacies (positive or negative) to the host destinations.

Major special events can be subdivided into two categories: mega-events and hallmark events.

2.1.2 Mega-events

Mega-events can be identified as “sport, cultural or business events that can attract very large numbers of event attendees or have a large cost or psychological effect on host destinations”. By virtue of their size and significance, mega-events will yield unusually high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige or economic impact for the host destination. To classify as a mega-event, the event should have an attendance in excess of one million people, have a development expenditure budget that runs into millions (or billions) of US dollars, generate a vast amount of exposure through media coverage, and have the global reputation of being a “must-see” event (Tassiopoulos, 2010:12).



Although mega-events are not always expected to be financially successful (due to the large costs and multiple uncontrollable variables involved in creating them), there is an increased expectation globally for these events to become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable (Tassiopoulos, 2010:13). Mega-events also involve political decision-making and strategic government priority setting. Examples of mega-events include world fairs and expos, telethons such as Live Aid, the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, and the IAAF World Championships in Athletics.

Mega-events:

- Leave behind legacies or result in urban renewal;
- Involve tradition or symbolism;
- Involve prestige and status, usually a political approval process;
- Incur large costs;
- Stimulate demand for related services;
- Incorporate festivals or other events;
- Attract large crowds (usually over a million visitors);
- Attract funds to the region;
- Are of international scale;
- Are once-off or infrequent occurrences; and
- Have the reputation of a “must-see” event.

(Jago & Shaw, 1998)

In comparing mega-events to hallmark events, Spilling (1998, cited in Tassiopoulos 2012:13), classifies mega-events as major once-off or recurring events of limited duration that are held with the purpose to stimulate a destination and to enhance its appeal and profitability in the short or long term, while hallmark events are specifically linked to tradition and the iconic attractiveness or image of a destination. What is important to realise is that there are not always clear boundaries between the different event categories, and frequently one will find that events can embody characteristics of multiple event categories (Tassiopolous, 2012:13).



2.1.3 Hallmark events

Hallmark events, such as the various national government elections of countries, the Munich Oktoberfest in Germany, the Tour de France (throughout France and its bordering countries), the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (in South Africa), the Edinburgh International Festival (in the UK), the Rio Carnival (in Brazil), the New Orleans Mardi Gras (in the US) and the various New Year's Eve celebrations around the world (for example, in New York, London and Sydney) can be referred to as iconic events that embody the spirit and ethos of a destination. They are synonymous with the name of a destination or mark an important historical anniversary. Hall (1992:2, as cited in Tassiopoulos, 2010:11), defines hallmark events as:

Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourist destination in the short or long term. Such events rely on their success or uniqueness, status or timely significance to create interest and attract attention.

Hallmark events:

- Are large-scale in a relative sense only;
- Can be held on an international or national scale;
- Are tied to a specific place;
- Attract funds to the region;
- Attract large crowds;
- Are of infrequent occurrence;
- Incorporate festivals or other events;
- Stimulate demand for related services;
- Incur large costs;
- Involve prestige and status;
- Involve tradition or symbolism;
- Leave behind legacies or result in urban renewal; and
- Result in the events and destination becoming synonymous.

(Jag & Shaw, 1998:28)



Hallmark events and mega-events do share some similarities, making it difficult to distinguish them from one another. However, one of the biggest differences is that mega-events are always internationally recognised on a major scale, involving the cooperation of governments, the international community and the global media.

The best way to think about it is to compare a hallmark event like the Rio Carnival to a mega-event like the Olympic Games. This may make the differences seem more apparent. The Rio Carnival, although well known, is not watched around the world by millions of people. It does not attract the same international participation and interest as the Olympic Games, and it does not cost nearly as much as hosting the Olympic Games. It also does not require the same scope of event infrastructure. Yet, on a national and local scale, it is a large-scale event that is very much a part of the Brazilian culture and a wonderfully-popular tourist attraction.

Table 1: A comparison of the key characteristics of mega and hallmark events, using the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games as examples of mega-events, and the Grahamstown Festival and Rio Carnival as hallmark events.

Key characteristics of the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games (mega events), and the Grahamstown Festival and Rio Carnival (hallmark events)	
FIFA and the Olympic Games	Grahamstown Festival and the Rio Carnival
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Millions of viewers worldwide - Held every 4 years in a different host country - Make use of custom built facilities - Promoted as providing economic growth and an increase in spend - Have a history, brand, mascot, and logos - Cost billions to stage - Include subsidiary events (launches, dinners, sponsor evenings, social events) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Events and destinations are synonymous - Large expenditure and set ups - Held annually - Classified as national events - Linked to an increase in tourism - Enjoy large attendance



3. Event sectors

Classifying events according to their size and scope is a useful starting point. However, this is not the only way to classify an event. Events can also be categorised according to their nature or objective, in other words, the sector that they most closely align with. This section considers some of the most prominent event types, grouped according to their relevant sectors.

3.1 Cultural events and festivals

For the most part, festivals are established traditional celebrations with long histories, many stemming from religious or cultural backgrounds (Tassiopoulos, 2010:13). However, many new festivals have also been created in recent decades, and these festivals are often music-related. An example of a well-known festival is the Glastonbury Festival that started in Britain in 1971. It is an iconic British music event that has developed its own unique event landscape with a mixture of music and entertainment and creative stalls and campsites.

Up-and-coming South African festivals:

African festival markets have, in recent years, become more popular. And South Africa boasts a growing festival market, with music, food, and wine festivals becoming commonplace on the country's event calendar. Some of South Africa's more popular music festivals are Rocking the Daisies, Up the Creek, and The Cape Town International Jazz Festival.

AfrikaBurn is an intriguing cultural and art festival which has shown significant growth since its inception in 2007. Its changing demographic is fascinating. It may be argued that it started as movement, which was attended by predominantly young artists and enthusiasts. Now it is a diverse and all-inclusive festival, attracting a broad range of attendees from children to adults in their late 60's. For event managers, AfrikaBurn's future progression is a must to watch closely. An important factor to consider when analysing event attendee demographics is the question why attendees attend certain events.

Heritage events, which are closely linked to festivals, are characterised by historical themes or the celebration of a dimension of a community or cultural group's heritage (Tassiopoulos, 2010:13). They can be seen as tools that assist in interpreting community life, because they bring people into direct contact with historical facts, objects, or ways of life, thereby increasing knowledge and appreciation of traditions. According to Tassiopoulos (2010:13):

Festivals can thus be defined as celebrations with a public theme where the social and symbolic meaning of the event is closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognises as essential to its ideology and world-view, social identity, historical continuity and physical survival.



The events at a festival often incorporate symbolic elements related to the theme of the festival. By including symbols, rituals and messages that reinforce the festival's heritage, organisers are able to make the event destination's heritage come to life for both visitors and residents. This, however, requires a real and authenticated first-hand sensory interaction with the resources of that destination and not merely "staged authenticity", which refers to events that are created with the intention of fooling observers into thinking they are experiencing and interacting with the authentic artefacts (Tassiopoulos, 2010:14).

Sport, recreation, and food are also important festival elements. Festivals have grown and developed into interesting landscapes where social interaction, music, food and culture combine to create a desirable atmosphere for festivalgoers.

3.2 Business and trade events

Corporate events form a major part of the South African event industry, with companies planning events on a regular basis. The corporate events market is a lucrative one due to the frequency of events and the considerable corporate budgets involved. Large companies have the budgets to spend on these types of events and the market is expanding rapidly, both internationally and in South Africa. The budgets allocated to these events can differ depending on the size of the company, purpose, and type of event, and the range and scope of events within this sector is large and diverse. Common corporate events include corporate meetings (such as a shareholders' meetings or annual general meeting), training seminars, year-end functions, team-building events and product launches.

Additionally, business or trade events also include fairs, trade or consumer shows, and exhibitions. The distinction between trade and consumer shows is that while trade shows are normally targeted at individuals working in specific industries or professions, consumer shows are held with the purpose of attracting the general public and do not centre exclusively on business matters. The terms "fair" and "exhibition" are often used interchangeably (especially if a fair takes a commercial angle or has a purpose of educating attendees) and the term "exposition" is applied to both trade and consumer shows (Tassiopoulos, 2010:14).

Some expos or exhibitions are both trade and consumer shows. For example, the Travel Indaba in Durban runs over four days; the first two days are for the trade only and the last two days are open to the public.

3.3 Educational events

Educational events are intended for the dissemination of knowledge and discussion of poignant topics. These events take place so knowledge can be shared and discussed. These events are generally by invitation only and involve organisations and specialised groups of individuals.



The 20th century advancements in transportation and communications technology facilitated a rapid rise in the popularity of knowledge presentation and exchange-centred meetings, especially within the scientific, medical, and business communities. This increase in knowledge-centred meetings and events has resulted in a meetings subsector industry, and along with it a professional specialisation in meeting planning, complete with a professional designation (certified meeting planner (CMP)), and advocacy bodies such as Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA). Various types of meetings that are included under the educational events banner include conventions, seminars, webinars (live web meetings), retreats, workshops, conferences, and symposia (Tassiopoulos, 2010:14). In South Africa, small meetings of this type are held in conference venues or hotels, while larger meetings are often hosted at convention centres.

3.4 Sports events

Sports events are some of the most well-known events worldwide. For example, one need only think of the popularity and media coverage that events such as Super Rugby, Barclays Premier League, and the Wimbledon Championship enjoy. Sports events are also closely linked to tourism, so much so that a new division of tourism called sports tourism has emerged.

The majority of sport events today are organised and competitive. A large variety of sports is played worldwide, and sports events have become a lucrative subsection of the events industry. It is important to note that sports events have many commonalities with other events, including service orientation, an element of celebration and drama, media coverage, and similarities in organising and operations (Tassiopoulos, 2010:14).

Although similar to other types of events in many ways, sports events do require their own unique planning framework. They tend to be more operationally and logistically orientated as routes often need to be developed, managed and secured, especially for long-distance racing events. As a result of the vast event area, the risks of holding these events are higher, because each aspect of the route needs to be carefully thought out and managed.

Sports events are particularly prevalent and popular in South Africa (due to the country's rich sporting heritage). Some examples of South African sports events include the Cape Town Cycle Tour, the Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon, the Vodacom Durban July, and the Volvo Ocean Race.



3.5 Art and entertainment events

According to Tassiopoulos (2010:15), art events can be fall into two distinct categories:

1. **Performing events:** These events usually involve performers in front of passive audiences. Visual events such as art exhibitions, music concerts, and traditional theatre performances are examples of performing events.
2. **Participatory events:** At these events, the audience is not separated from the performer, and the audience has the opportunity to contribute to the production or creation of the art and entertainment. These events generally appeal to a niche market and not to the broader public. They are not too prevalent in SA as yet, but are likely to grow over time. They are generally not big budget and not highly publicised.

Arts events are diverse in scope, purpose, and size, and can be placed anywhere on a continuum from temporary to permanent, regular to once-off, professional to amateur, free to fully paid for, single genre to multiple genre, and festive to competitive (Tassiopolous, 2010:15). Can you think of any events that you have attended that fall on either side of the extremes in each category on the continuum?

3.6 Private events (social life cycle events)

Archaeological evidence indicates that human beings have been celebrating social life cycle events such as funerals, weddings, and building and destruction ceremonies from as early as 60,000 years ago (Tassiopoulos, 2010:15). Modern day social life cycle celebrations are characterised by festivities and are used to celebrate and recognise different aspects of the human life cycle including birth, coming of age, marriage, death, and other milestones relevant to a particular culture's customs. Some examples of social life cycle events include birthday celebrations, engagement parties, weddings, anniversary celebrations, baby showers, graduation parties, bar and bat mitzvahs, and funeral receptions.

These types of events are taking place on a daily basis across the world. People like to celebrate special occasions with events, and these events are highly personal to the client and thus require special consideration from the event manager. From an event planning perspective, it is also important not to underestimate the economic significance of these private life cycle events, as they can often turn into elaborate occasions and can range in budget and scope from a simple party to an elaborate function costing millions. They generally require a creative approach, and décor and design, catering, and entertainment are crucial elements to consider.



Video 1: This cinematic video clip from Aleit Wedding Coordination captures the detail, suspense, and significance of a wedding as a social lifecycle event. (Source: <https://vimeo.com/91435168>)



Video 2: Hannes Loubser, the Creative Director at Wedding Concepts, shares some useful insights regarding weddings and the importance of wedding planning. (Download link: https://s3.amazonaws.com/UCT_PG_Programmes/PG+Dip+2015/EM/EM+Short+Course+re-edits/EM+Short+Course+M1+-+Herman-SD.mp4)

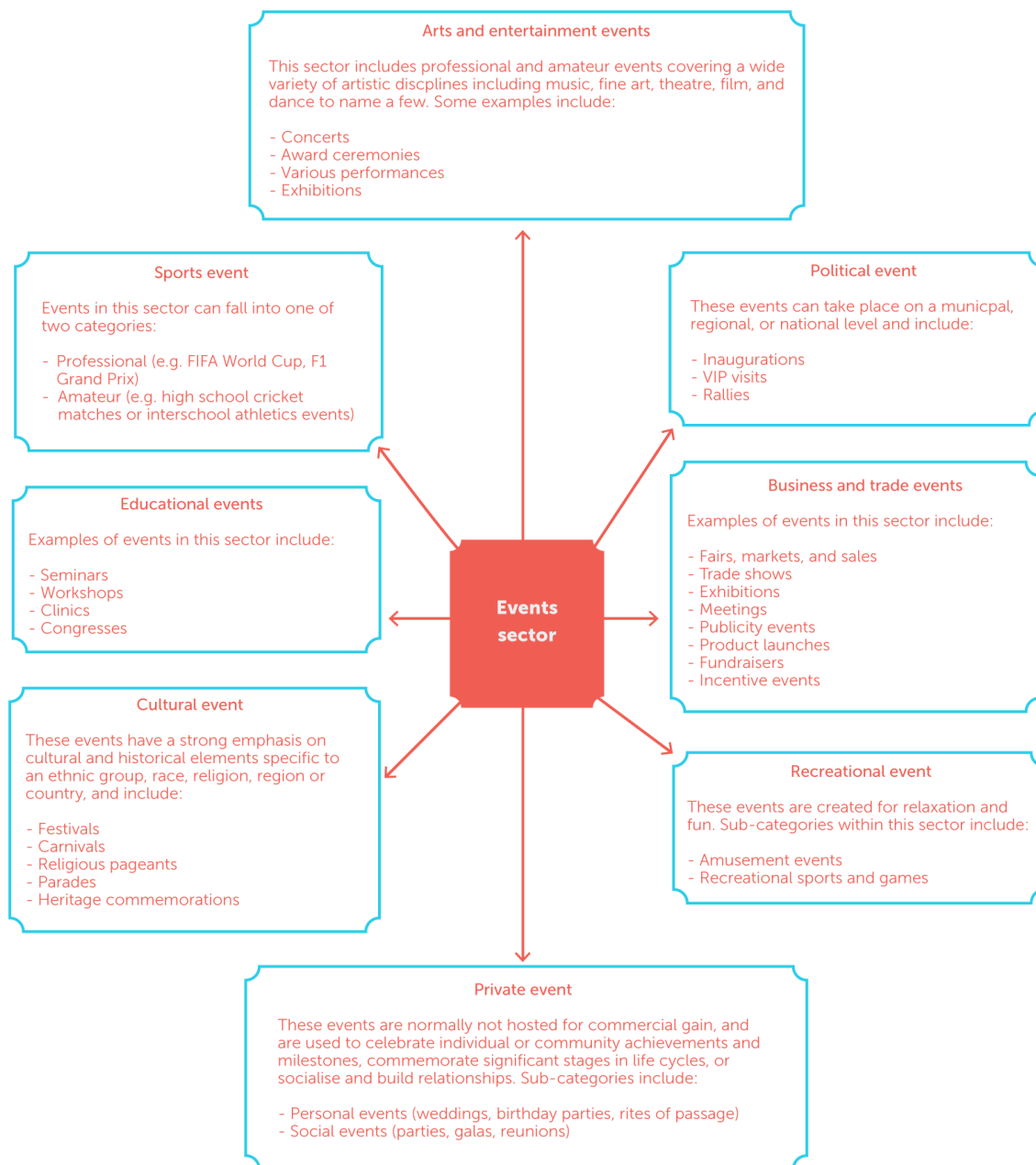


Figure 2: Broad event sectors within the event industry. (Adapted from: Gertz, 1997, cited in Tassiopoulos, 2010: 10)



3.7 Recreational events

Recreational events are a smaller segment of the event industry and often get incorporated into one of the bigger sectors such as private or sporting events. They involve predominantly amusement-oriented events. These are not events that mark any special occasion, and they are not personal in nature. Instead, they provide entertainment as their key function. They often involve games, rides and other forms of entertainment. They can often be community based. For example, the annual Cape Minstrel Carnival is held on the streets of Cape Town on the 1st and 2nd of January to usher in the New Year.

3.8 Political events

Political events are quite prevalent in most countries. South Africa has a wide range of political events ranging from inauguration celebrations to dignitary visits and political rallies. There are also many parties and dinners held within government, or on behalf of political parties. Large-scale political conferences, such as the National Conference of the African National Congress (ANC), and other politically-based educational and informative events fall on the higher end of the political event spectrum. Political events typically cover quite a broad spectrum of event types, however they are quite unique in their planning, look and feel. They are generally big budget events and require a lot of adherence to protocol; security is a big planning factor.

3.9 Considerations in event classification and working in the industry

It is not always easy to classify events according to sector. Sometimes, an event may fall into more than one sector and other times they may have characteristics of two or more sectors. The best way to try and classify it would be to ask what the strongest characteristic is. For example, is a political conference an educational event or a political event? It falls into both sectors, but its political motivation makes it a better fit for the political sector.

Event managers may choose to specialise in one or more of these categories, or they may work on all of them within their career. This will depend on personal preference or the company that they choose to work for. For example, in big corporations, event managers will tend to focus on business and trade events. If they work for a small event company, they will most likely work on private and recreational events. If an event manager chooses to work for a large event production company or an event infrastructure company, they will probably work on a variety of events, possibly from all segments of the event industry.

In South Africa, the biggest markets are currently business and trade events, which have the highest spend (they contribute the most to GDP) and frequency (there are more business events taking place than other types of events in a calendar year). These are followed by sporting and private events. Since the success of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, South Africa is being taken seriously as a contender to host large-scale sporting events. The weather throughout most of the country also lends itself to sporting events, along with South Africa's rich sporting heritage.



Private events are on the rise, and the wedding industry in particular is growing rapidly with both national and international clients selecting South African venues for their weddings. Due to favourable exchange rates for international travellers in developed nations, it is sometimes cheaper for a bride and groom to fly their wedding party to South Africa and stage their wedding in the country than it is to host it in their country of origin.

Although the planning and management tools used to produce events are fairly universal across the industry as a whole, each category does require its own unique set of skills. For example, planning a wedding is very different to planning a large political event. The basic planning framework and management skills still apply, but the way in which the event is executed and the finer details would be very specific to that category. A wedding demands emotional involvement, attention to the smallest detail, and a large emphasis on creative elements. A political event requires the planner to understand protocols and the nature of government processes and time frames. These skills come with experience and are refined over time, and specialists in their field learn specific skills relevant to the niche they choose.

3.10 Benefits of events

Events benefit various role players, namely the guests, the sponsors, the destination and the event owner. Table 3 outlines some of the main benefits of events for the various stakeholders involved.

Table 2: The benefits of events to stakeholders.

The main benefits of events to different stakeholders	
<p>Benefits to the guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sense of belonging through a shared experience - Networking and business development opportunities - Education and information - A visual spectacle - Entertainment - A unique experience – all five senses are used to experience an event 	<p>Benefits to the destination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upliftment and empowerment for areas and communities - Added attraction as a tourist destination - Increase in tourism numbers (and thus an increase in spend across the sector) - An enhanced sense of community and strengthened national pride - A unique local atmosphere
<p>Benefits to sponsors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to a global audience or a niche audience - Fulfilment of sales and marketing objectives - Return on investment (ROI) - Face-to-face engagement with customers - A strengthened product or brand image 	<p>Benefits to the event owner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An opportunity to see a return on investment and to generate a profit - A platform for discussion or negotiation



When studying events, it is important to understand why they are hosted, as table 2 indicates their benefits for different stakeholders. Businesses, for example, use events to promote themselves; therefore, events form an integral part of business marketing strategies. There are obvious benefits to hosting an event which include:

- Company exposure (without overtly selling the brand or product);
- Access to a targeted audience (especially, when attendees pay to attend); and
- Face-to-face interaction (facilitating a more personalised way of communication).

Even though mega-events bring massive benefits to the hosts. One of major benefit is raising the profile of the host city. After mega-events, host cities benefit from increased recognition and tourism. When South Africa hosted the Rugby and Soccer World Cups they were defining moments for post-apartheid South Africa and had major positive social as well as economic impacts. In the case of South Africa, these events helped to improve global perceptions of the newly democratic nation.

Long-term investment and job creation is another important benefit that comes from preparing for a major event. Cities usually have to upgrade existing infrastructure and transport systems, as was case with the Soccer World Cup in South Africa. Now, many major South African cities benefit from an upgraded transport system. This fosters enthusiasm and community pride. Lastly, mega-events offer a short-term cash injection into the economy.

Positively outweighing the negative:

Hosting and security costs, upgrading and building new infrastructure, short-term facilities usage, possible negative publicity, higher tax rates, and so on are negative aspects of hosting large-scale events. Nevertheless, the benefits tend to outweigh the costs.

4. Conclusion

Gaining an understanding of the various segments in the events industry and having knowledge of various types of events is important for events managers. You need to understand the context you may be working in so that you can manage a particular type of event effectively.



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