



MODULE 1

Part 1: Introduction to events management



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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:

LO1: Review the history and current context of events management.

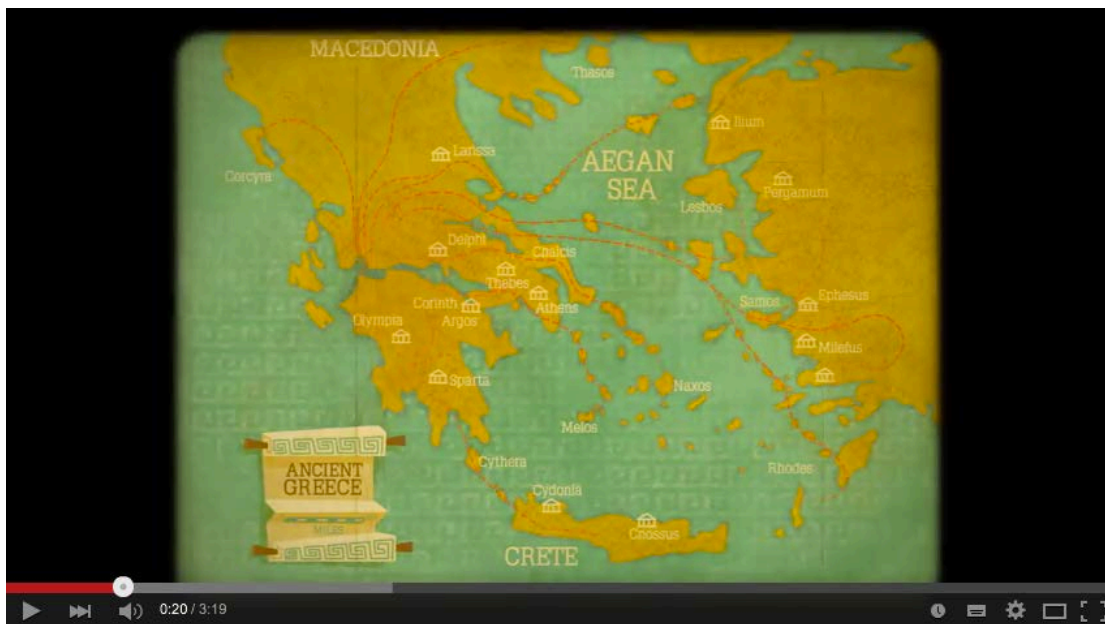
1. Introduction

The 21st century is an exciting time to join the ranks of the event management industry, as event managers are being called upon to develop and stage millions of events globally every year. These events range from 21st birthday parties, anniversaries, graduations, and bar and bat mitzvahs, to political fundraisers, fashion shows, product launches, conferences, weddings, sporting events and festivals. With a large number of events taking place each year, and the hundreds of hours spent producing each one, the industry presents many opportunities for those aspiring to enter the field.

However, along with opportunities also comes hard work and responsibility; in 2014, Forbes rated event management as a career at number 5 on the list of top 10 most stressful jobs in the world. Only military personnel and generals, fire fighters, and airline pilots preceded event coordinators on the list (Adams, 2014). This is why it is important for event managers to equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge to function optimally in this high-pressured industry. In this module, you will learn about the importance of formally studying event management, and consider the event industry from a global and local perspective.

2. A brief history of the event industry

Events have been part of daily human life for centuries. Events can be traced back as far as the beginnings of leisure and tourism, to Mesopotamia (situated in modern day Iraq), which is known to be the “cradle of civilisation” (Clark, 2008). The abundance of food and the formation of wealth in Mesopotamia led to the emergence of a small leisure class that could spend time organising and attending events instead of engaging in manual labour on a daily basis (History Wiz, n.d.). The ancient Olympic Games, held in Olympia in Greece between 776 BC and 393 AD, is one of the earliest examples of an event with an international character (Olympic.org, 2015). It can also be considered as one of the first examples of sports event tourism, as spectators from across Greece, including the neighbouring islands of Ionia and Magna Graecia, would flock to the event (Cartwright, 2013).



Video 1: This brief animated history of the ancient Olympic Games presented by TedEd explores the origins of the now world famous mega-event in an entertaining and informative way.
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdHHus8IgYA>)



Video 2: This video shows some of the highlights of the London 2012 Olympic Games, and is an excellent example of how far the Games have come since ancient times.
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgZW0QjgwIQ>)

World fairs and international expositions were among the first examples of international events. Britain and France were the principle countries participating in these types of events during the late 19th and early 20th century (The University of Sheffield, n.d.). The emergence of a larger leisure class was one of the key drivers of the event industry.



International events were heavily influenced by globalisation; as the world became more advanced so did the events and the manner in which they were organised and attended. Historically, the organisation of private or social events was very uncomplicated. The mother of the bride, with the help of the families, the local baker and church hall for example, organised a wedding. Flowers came from the garden and the food was cooked by the extended families. Some weddings are still organised this way in parts of the world, but a vast majority of weddings in western cultures have become quite elaborate and costly affairs managed by wedding planners.

Much like today, in earlier times events would serve to break up the dull, daily routine of life, or be used to acknowledge an important activity or person. Looking through history, it is clear that people have been celebrating weddings, births, deaths, season changes, and rites of passage in various ways (some more elaborate than others) for a long time. As trade and commerce developed after the industrial revolution, the growth of more commercial events also took place; for example, business events, exhibitions and trade shows became possible due to the increased interest in and necessity of business dealings.

Events have always had a significant role to play in society. However, in the past decade or so, events have come to be recognised as an industry in their own right. The event industry is now one of the fastest growing industries in the world, with an expected growth rate of 44% by 2020 in the United States alone. It is a fast-paced and dynamic industry and, although relatively young in comparison to other more established industries, it has shown large growth and profitability (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2015). As the events industry has grown, strategic tools and professional standards have also been developed in order to manage and control the industry as a whole. Even in today's high-tech era, where a lot of people have lost touch with traditional religious beliefs of the past, they still utilise events to mark occasions in their lives.

2.1 The birth of the event industry and the emergence of professional events

Industrialisation played a major role in the development of the event industry. With an increase in work, people had less leisure time and creating a celebration meant a scheduled time away from work to enjoy oneself (Schlicke, n.d.). Some events and shows have a history that dates back over a hundred years ago. In Britain, the Daily Mail Ideal Home Show is a good example. It was first launched in 1908 and has since then mirrored changes in the social and lifestyle trends of Britain (Media 10 Ltd., 2016).

Events hold the same purpose today, acting as mirrors to society by revealing societal trends. Events are essentially reflections of moments in time, and studying their history can shed light on how people used to live.

The 1950s and 1960s are noted as the periods in which the industry started to formalise, and events as they are known today started to take shape. For example, the West Indian community established the Notting Hill Carnival in 1964 to celebrate their ancestors' freedom from slavery, and this event is still in existence today (London Notting Hill Carnival Enterprises, n.d.).

Keeping up with the times:

To remain relevant, established events have to adapt to the trends and tastes reflected in modern day society. Often events birthed out of political or social reformation, religious motivation, or superstition and ritual are still hosted and attended by thousands of people decades later, even when the original reasons for hosting the event are no longer as relevant in society. For example, consider the origins of the Notting Hill Carnival mentioned above, and think about how the 2015 version of the carnival compares to the earlier celebrations in the 1960s and early 1970s. Can you think of any other examples of events that have remained in place over the years, despite the values and motivations underpinning them not being the central focus for hosting the event anymore?

The 1970s and 1980s saw the start of custom-built facilities for events, exhibition halls, conference venues, and other similar structures. The 1984 Olympic Games, held in Los Angeles, is a prime example to illustrate the economic viability of large-scale events. Being the first fully-televised Olympic Games event, organisers leveraged media and marketing exposure to help promote and showcase the production of the event. By enlisting lucrative corporate sponsorship, broadcasting and marketing deals, and employing creative and strategic design and planning, the event was able to become the most profitable Olympic Games in the history of the modern Olympics, and approaching the Games from a commercial angle set a new precedent for future events of its kind. Spectator sports, from soccer to motor racing, also started growing in popularity and sports events rapidly became large-scale productions.

The event industry has seen a shift in the last 15 years; while it was previously perceived as forming part of the wider hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism sectors, this association has diminished as the demand for events across different sectors has grown, allowing events as a separate industry to flourish in its own right. However, it is important to remember that the event industry covers a broad spectrum of sectors, making it almost impossible to estimate the size or worth of the industry. It is also challenging to measure the number of events that take place globally, as there are many types of events, and event classifications are not always agreed upon. Organising events also often entails the use of many different companies and therefore requires the involvement of a large number of people in different occupations. In addition, due to the emerging nature of the profession and consequent overlaps with other sectors, many of the people currently employed in event management occupations do not hold formal qualifications in the event management field. However, the recent growth in the event industry has led to a rise in the demand for sector-specific skills, and more people today are studying event management with the aim of pursuing it as a career.

Looking to the future:

Where do you see the event industry 10 years from now? How do you think the way in which events are planned will have changed? These are interesting questions to ask, yet difficult ones to answer due to the rapid rate in which the world is changing.

One way to start thinking about what the future of the industry holds is to ask some targeted questions, such as the following:

- How are event organisers going to use events to communicate to all generations?
- How will all the currently available data that is “mined” using sophisticated software and marketing tools change the way events are produced? Will there be greater customisation and more targeted events due to increased information?
- Will more events become virtual, especially within the business sector?
- How will developments in technology affect the way people hear about, market, produce and budget for events?

If you are interested in reading more about the future of the events industry, the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) releases white papers which is a good place to start. (See its Resources page for the downloadable white papers.)

3. Why study event management?

The field of event planning is fast-paced, creative, innovative, energising, and offers significant earning potential. The importance of on-the-job experience in the event industry cannot be stressed enough. Experience is not only what employers look for; it is also what sets one event manager apart from another, as at any given event, site situations that are best dealt with by an experienced event manager may arise. It is for this reason that each event should be viewed as an opportunity to learn in practice.

Although the best way to learn about events is through real-life experience, it is also essential to develop a greater understanding of the planning operations and procedures that are crucial to the successful outcome of an event. As with most industries, the event industry and the related industries in which events operate need people who are skilled from both a practical and theoretical perspective.

Smart tips:

If you are looking to get a head start in the event industry, get stuck in wherever you can. Volunteer at events to get real on-site experience. Experience will only make you more valuable to future employers.

If you have your own event business, it is important that you do not lose sight of what it means to be an event manager. It is best practice to go to event build-ups and ensure that you are part of the overall development of any events.

Events have become increasingly popular pastimes, as well as prime vehicles for marketing, publicity, education and business. This creates the need for properly-trained event managers. For instance, the management of events has become increasingly important within the hospitality, tourism, leisure and sports sectors. If event management skills are not present within an organisation, businesses often elect to hire event managers to produce a myriad of events on an annual basis.

The scope and diversity of the event industry makes it simultaneously challenging and exciting. As an event manager, you may be working on a breakfast meeting for 15 people one day, and on a major sporting event that will attract tens of thousands of visitors the next day.

3.1 Events in a global context

The event industry has grown enormously over the last two decades. Recent research conducted by Joe Goldblatt, a Certified Special Events Professional (CSEP) and founder of the International Special Events Society (ISES), indicates that the annual global special event spend is in the region of approximately 500 billion (Entrepreneur Media Inc., 2016). According to US government census information, job growth within the field of event management is on the rise (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2015). Globalisation has added to this surge as multinational corporations are calling on event managers to plan meetings and incentive events for their international staff complements. The players in these large corporations often need to come together in one central location, and for this reason event managers are needed to coordinate these international gatherings. However, there is also an indication that demand for event managers has started to level out, as the event industry is directly susceptible to fluctuations and downturns in the economic and political environments.

The industry tends to reflect the current market state. Therefore, from an economic point of view, some years are more lucrative than others. In times that individuals and organisations have less disposable income (such as during economic recessions), there will be less demand for events, as events are discretionary (non-essential) expenses.

The social events market has grown considerably over the past 10 years, and people are celebrating birthdays and anniversaries across the globe by hosting flashy events. The children's birthday party business is also booming, with parents spending a considerable amount of money on elaborate birthday parties to commemorate important milestones in their children's lives.

Along with increased demand for special events, and perhaps because of it, the industry has become much more sophisticated. Twenty years ago, a good party was a tablecloth and a centrepiece and event managers were not taken seriously, but today it is a sought-after profession (and quite a competitive one at that). Event managers are increasingly being held to certain standards, and it is becoming a more specialist industry consisting of trained professionals with knowledge and invaluable experience. Event managers are essentially responsible for the safety of guests or attendees of an event and some events carry more risk than others, thus the role of the event manager carries great responsibility, and there is immensely more accountability on the part of the event manager than ever before.

According to published information, South Africa, New Zealand, Korea, Singapore, Australia, Canada, the UK, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are the leading countries in the development of event strategy (O'Toole, 2010:40-41). This is due to various factors. For instance, these countries frequently host large-scale international events, thereby ensuring that their event management strategies are honed and put into practice on a regular basis.

Events are essentially global products. Most countries in the world produce them and will continue to do so. Some event types, such as concerts, weddings, sporting events, political events, trade fairs, and cocktail parties, can be classified as “universal”, since they are held around the world.

However, the nature of these events can differ immensely depending on which country is hosting them. Many European and Asian countries for example celebrate several unique cultural and religious events throughout the year which each have their unique look and feel.

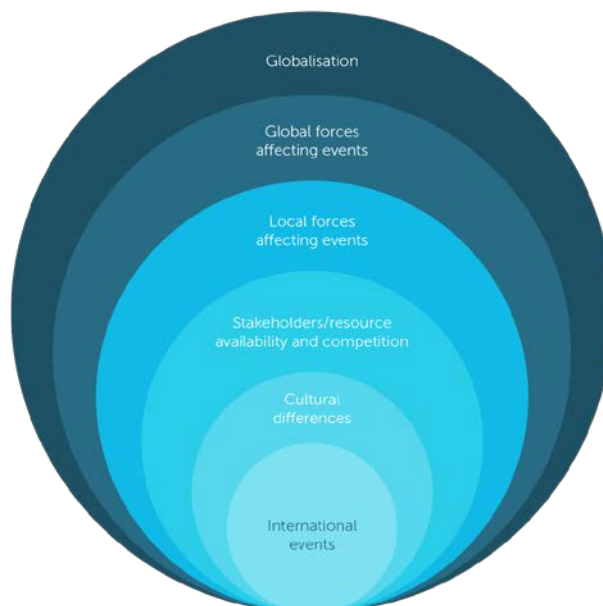


Figure 1: The international events environment.

Below are some examples of internationally recognised events:

Oktoberfest in Germany

This is a 16-day festival held in Munich, Germany in late September. The festival attracts 5 million people each year. It is the world's largest fair and was first held in 1810.

Full Moon Party in Koh Phangan, Thailand

This party attracts approximately 10,000 to 30,000 people each month during the full moon. It is a party on Raad Rin beach in Thailand, known to have the loveliest view of the full moon. Party-goers gather here each month for a night of dancing, food and entertainment. It is mostly tourists that attend these parties.

Chelsea Flower Show in London, England

This is a garden show held over 5 days by the Royal Horticultural Society in Chelsea, London. It is the most famous flower show in the world and is attended by many international travellers. On average, it attracts 157,000 people each year.



Video 3: A visitor to the 2014 Chelsea Flower Show gives viewers a tour of some of the beautiful flowers and features on display. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rrb7ThiLOKA>)

Venice Carnival in Venice, Italy

This is an annual festival, with roots in Pagan tradition, starting 40 days before Easter, attracting 30,000 people on average. The carnival is known for its pageantry, eccentric masks, masquerade balls, parades and music.



Video 4: A promotional video for the Venice Carnival. (Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeFhUV0JzzI>)

The Rose Parade in Pasadena, California

This is a New Year's celebration that originated in the 1800s. It is most well known for its parades, motorised floats and marching bands. It is attended by and televised to hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.



Video 5: An interview with two float participants to give viewers a glimpse into the construction and considerations involved in creating two of the first ever certified California Grown floats for the 123rd annual Rose Parade. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TyfM9LqipE>)

3.2 Events on a local scale

The South African events industry has shown a marked growth since 1994 (South African Government, n.d.). This growth could be attributed to the reorientation of the tourism industry towards marketing the country as a business, sports, cultural and lifestyle destination. South Africa, like many countries worldwide, has experienced the power of events, not only from an economic standpoint but also from a nation-building and destination reputation point of view. A number of regional and city event strategies have been developed under the national strategy. South Africa is particularly interested in events that develop the skills of its population and promote the country as an international events destination in order to meet its economic growth imperatives. South African Tourism (SAT) and the event industry work together in a mutually beneficial partnership to bring events to the country that benefit the country and the industry alike.

Since hosting the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup, South Africa has proven that it is capable of hosting large-scale international events. There was considerable doubt about whether the country had the infrastructure, the intellectual capital and the skill set to host an event as large as the World Cup, but those fears were laid to rest after a successful outcome. South Africa is now, more than ever, an international contender when it comes to hosting large-scale international events. The FIFA World Cup showcased the power of an event to change the course of a country's industry, and demonstrated the unique ability of events to bring together a nation and uplift communities. The 2010 World Cup was a shining example of an event that left a lasting positive legacy and promoted South Africa in a very favourable light. It illustrates the power of events to bring about accelerated social and economic changes that could often take years to achieve through political negotiations.

Gathering and analysing event-related information in South Africa is still in its formative stages. Currently, the entry of event details into databases by event organisations is largely voluntary, which makes it difficult to derive an empirically-sound analysis of the event sector in South Africa. Contact Publications, an event data-gathering initiative, collects raw data about national and international events that take place in South Africa, which it publishes in regular reports. It has found that, in terms of events, the provinces can be grouped into the following three clusters (Tassiopoulos, 2010:30):

1. **High cluster:** This includes Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Gauteng largely leads the cluster, probably due to the fact that it has a wide array of event-related venues and is also the business hub of the country. The Western Cape has consistently been the second most popular province in the industry, most likely because of its reputation as an international tourist destination and natural beauty. Most events in Gauteng take place within the greater Johannesburg area. In the Western Cape, they are mostly hosted in and around the greater Cape Town metropolitan area.
2. **Medium cluster:** The Eastern Cape has consistently led this grouping. Other members are Mpumalanga and North West Province.



3. **Low cluster:** This is consistently led by the Free State, with other members being the Northern Cape and Limpopo.

There seems to be a need for the effective implementation of a national events development strategy that will focus on improving the capacity of the medium and low cluster areas to host events. Smaller towns and out-of-the-way areas are starting to host events to draw people to the area and boost tourism numbers. In most cases, this strategy works rather successfully, however, the tourism boost is often short lived and these towns and cities then need to look at more sustainable ways of incorporating events throughout the year to boost tourism numbers as well as the economy.

Contact Publications has also found the following (Tassiopoulos, 2010:30):

- Business events (mainly meetings and exhibitions) form the largest segment, followed by cultural events (art and entertainment), and then recreational events (largely national and international sporting events). It is interesting to note that sporting events, although widely televised, do not outrank business events in terms of market segment. Even though business events are largely out of the public eye, they still dominate the event industry.
- The national event season in South Africa has two peak periods – May and September. There is a general downturn in events after September as business traditionally gears down for the festive season. December, January and February are generally considered “slow” months, though December to March is a very popular period for special social events and festivals. Large-scale national events are often scheduled for off-peak tourism dates to help draw more tourists to a destination during low season.

A classic example of an event that falls out of peak season and attracts thousands of domestic and international tourists and participants is the Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon, held in Cape Town over the Easter weekend each year.

Research on the socio-cultural impact of events reveals that there are both positive and negative impacts (Etiosa, 2012; Langen & Garcia, 2009; Silvestre, 2009). Events generally offer benefits to all involved, but it is important to remember that events, specifically large-scale events, affect a wider range of people than one would expect. For example, an event held in a residential area affects the residents in the area (and not always positively). The cost and benefits of an event should therefore be carefully considered with special emphasis on the host community’s perspective.



Table 1: Examples of well-known South African events within the three most prominent provinces for hosting events.

Province	Well known events
<p>Western Cape:</p> <p>The Western Cape hosts some of the country's most internationally recognised events. Cape Town in particular has a very sizeable event market largely due to the beautiful scenery and the experienced event management companies in the city. Cape Town tourism works very closely with event partners to boost the event industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour • Absa Cape Epic • Klein Karoo Kunstefees • Two Oceans Marathon • Good Food and Wine Show • CT Fashion Week • Darling Wild Flower Show • Hermanus Whale Festival • Rocking the Daisies music festival • MCQP Street Party • J&B Met
<p>Gauteng:</p> <p>Gauteng province, and particularly Johannesburg, hosts the most business events in the country – undoubtedly because it is South Africa's business centre. A large number of these events take place in convention centres and hotels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings Africa • Hobby –X • Rand Show • The Cradle Festival • Discovery702 Walk the Talk • Inanda Africa Cup • Joburg Day • Getaway Show • Whisky Live
<p>KwaZulu Natal:</p> <p>KwaZulu Natal does not have as prolific an event schedule as Cape Town and Johannesburg, but it does host some big events. For example, the Travel Indaba is held in Durban each year and is attended by thousands of overseas delegates. The Durban International Conference Centre is a popular choice for both national and international conferences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dusi Canoe Marathon • Travel Indaba • East Coast Radio Big Walk • Comrades Marathon • The Sardine Run • Durban July • BMW Polo Series

Events and cultural diversity in South Africa

South Africa is a nation of diverse cultural, religious and linguistic communities. Organising culturally-inclusive event offerings that meet diverse cultural expectations is a key challenge for local event managers, but South Africa is making progress towards sustainable and inclusive multicultural events. Youth events are the driving force behind creating more culturally-diverse events and bringing together different cultures and races. The developing festival market in SA could prove to be a good facilitator of this.



4. Conclusion

Events are all about asking the right questions: Why? What? When? Where? Who? How? After reading through the notes in this module, you should have a clear overview of the international and local event industry and the role events play within society.

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