

THE ROLE OF EVENT ATTENDEES' KNOWLEDGE, ENTHUSIASMS, AND ACTIVENESS ON COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract

Today, events are central to our culture as perhaps never before. Increases in leisure time and discretionary spending have led to a proliferation of public events, celebrations and entertainment. The event marketing manager must then examine the objectives of these major players – what each of them expects to gain from the event, and what forces acting on them are likely to affect their response to the event. This study to examine the relationships among event attendees' knowledge of an event sponsor's products and activeness and enthusiasm related to the area of the event for a sponsor's community involvement. This approach assumes that marketers, by adopting a consumer focus, respond only to the expressed needs of event visitors. In reality, sound marketing research can unveil the latent needs of consumers that only innovative events can satisfy. Event marketing is defined as the "practice of promoting the interests of an organization and its brands by associating the organization with a specific activity" (Shimp, 1993; Van Heerden, 2001). Data with 200 respondents are analyzed with multiple linear regressions, and hypotheses are also tested for significant influences. The result shows that event attendees' knowledge of the sponsor, enthusiasm, and activeness positively influence their desire that a sponsor be involved with the community, which can make the event special, and contribute to its imagery and branding.

Keywords: event marketing, enthusiasm, activeness positively, community

Abstrak

Saat ini *event* menjadi tema sentral dalam budaya manusia. Peningkatan waktu luang dan pengeluaran telah mendorong munculnya berbagai macam *event* publik, perayaan dan hiburan. Manajer *event marketing* harus mempelajari tujuan dari berbagai macam pemeran dalam perayaan tersebut, apa yang diharapkan dari suatu peristiwa serta hal apa yang mendorong konsumen menyukai suatu *event*. Penelitian ini memeriksa hubungan antara pengetahuan peserta event akan event yang didanai produk sponsor, dan tingkat keaktifan serta antusiasme terkait dengan keterlibatan komunitas tertentu. Pendekatan ini memiliki asumsi bahwa pemasar akan merespon kebutuhan yang tampak dari pengunjung event. Dalam kenyataan, dengan riset pemasaran yang kuat maka dapat ditemukan kebutuhan tersembunyi dari konsumen. Event marketing didefinisikan sebagai kegiatan praktik promosi kepentingan organisasi dan merek dikaitkan dengan event/peristiwa tertentu (Shimp, 1993; Van Heerden, 2001). Data diperoleh dari 200 responden dan diolah dengan regresi linear. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pengetahuan pengunjung akan sponsor, antusiasme, dan tingkat keaktifan berpengaruh positif terhadap keinginan agar sponsor terlibat dengan komunitas tertentu, sehingga event dapat menjadi lebih menarik dan berpengaruh pada branding dan citra merek.

Kata kunci: event marketing, enthusiasm, activeness positively, community

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1. Introduction

Today, events are central to our culture as perhaps never before. Increases in leisure time and discretionary spending have led to a proliferation of public events, celebrations and

entertainment. Event marketing is an increasingly important component in the promotions mix. In response to the many challenges facing traditional media, including cost, clutter, and fragmentation, the use of events in which companies can have face-to-face contact with their target audience has grown and become a valuable contributor to marketing communications programs. It is estimated that 22 percent of total marketing communications budgets are dedicated to event-related sponsorship activities (MPI Foundation, 2004). Event marketing is a tool for experiential marketing that focuses on consumer experiences, and treats emotionally and rationally driven consumption as a holistic experience (Schmitt, 1999). Experiences often involve "sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational values that replace functional

Values" (Schmitt, 1999: 26). Communicating through events involves promotional activities designed to communicate with attendees and add value to the consumption experience; events provide an opportunity to engage the consumer with a company, its brands, and the community.

Sneath et al. (2005), provide a useful working definition of marketing events. "Live events where audiences interact with a product or brand face to face". Examples of typical experiential marketing events covered by this definition are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of Marketing Events

Incentive/reward events	Product launches	Open days
Conferences	Product sampling	Publicity events
'Created' events	Road shows	Press conferences
Competitions/contests	Exhibitions	Corporate entertainment
Charity fundraisers	Trade shows	Product visitor attractions

Previous research (Wood and Masterman, 2007) mentioned successful marketing events needs seven event attributes (the 7 'I's) which enhance the event experience: Involvement; Interaction; Immersion; Intensity; Individuality; Innovation; Integrity. A recent survey of marketing executives at major U.S. corporations indicates that event marketing offers the greatest ROI, followed by advertising, direct marketing, public relations, sales promotion, and internet advertising (MPI Foundation, 2004). In the automotive and healthcare industries, event marketing has become an important component in companies' promotional strategies. According to a recent study, 53 percent of automotive executives and 44 percent of healthcare executives view event marketing as an important communication tool, indicating that their ROI from event marketing continues to strengthen (MPI Foundation, 2004). Firms in other industries (e.g., airline, consumer goods) are also beginning to spend a greater proportion of their promotional dollars on event marketing (IEG Sponsorship Report, 2000). Firms use event marketing to accomplish a variety of goals. Brand awareness, sales, and image enhancement are the common reasons for participating in event marketing. The unique appeal of event marketing is the sponsor's ability to blend its message into a gathering that engages consumers (Sneath et al., 2005). Understanding how consumer attitudes influence event success is particularly important for organizations contemplating long term sponsorship relationships; event related outcomes are likely to be influenced by both the firm's communications strategy and attendee-specific antecedents to behavior (Sneath, Finney, and Close, 2005). According to Sneath et al. (2005) researched attendees at a major sponsored event and found positive links between sponsorship and favorable brand perception and indications that purchase intention was also favorably influenced by the attendees brand experience. A study undertaken in 2007 gives a different view of current evaluation practice showing on Table 2.

**Table 2: Return on Investment (ROI) and
The Consumer Experience at Marketing Events**

Consumer Experience	2005	2006
Return on Investment	2005	2006
Sales volume	54.2%	66.0%
Expressed purchase intent	41.1%	39.9%
Brand preference altered	27.9%	29.3%
Other (brand awareness, loyalty, email hits, etc.)	7.9%	7.4%

Source: Johannes (2007)

PPM research (www.ppm-manajemen.ac.id, November 2010) showed that 95% of companies have used event marketing, and 78% of these companies agreed that event marketing is effective and has very important functions, such as to introduce new product or brand; to maintain customer loyalty; to demonstrate the product advantage; and also to improve sales.

According to the data that mentioned in table 2 and prior research by PPM, showed the importance of conducting the event marketing because of its effectiveness for introducing new products, brand preference altered and also improve sales volume. This study aim to investigate the relationships among event attendees' knowledge of an event sponsor's products and activeness and enthusiasm related to the area of the event (i.e., sports) for a sponsor's community involvement.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM, 2005) define *marketing* is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably. Thus, Event Marketing is the process of maintaining a match between the needs and motivations of an event's audience and its program of activities and supporting service. There are many motives for event attendances: (a) socialization or external interaction, (b) family togetherness, (c) escape from everyday life, as well as recovering equilibrium, (d) learning about or exploring other cultures, (e) excitement or thrills, (f) event novelty or ability to regress.

At a practical level, the following list shows the marketing activities that an event marketing manager may undertake to produce a successful festival or event: *first*, by analyze the needs of the target market to establish the design of the event experience and the way in which it will be delivered. *Second*, by predict how many people will attend the event and the times that different groups or market segments will attend. *Third*, by research any competitive events that could satisfy similar needs, to devise a unique selling proposition, *fourth*, by estimates the price or value that visitors are willing to exchange to attend an event –for example, ticket price or donation. *Fifth*, by decide on marketing communication, including the media mix and messages that will reach the audiences of the event, *sixth*, by consider how the choice and design of venue(s) and the methods of ticket distribution fit with the needs of attendees. *Last*, by establish the degree of success of the event in achieving its marketing objectives.

Sponsorships involve the acquisition of rights to affiliate or associate with a product, event, or organization for the purpose of deriving related benefits. Professionals describe how firms can succeed at sponsorship. Organizations must have a clear idea of what they want to accomplish. Sponsorships are a "lever" used by marketers to engage customers (Sneath, et al., 2006).

Event marketing is defined as the "practice of promoting the interests of an organization and its brands by associating the organization with a specific activity" (Shimp, 1993: 8; Van Heerden, 2001). Recall that a sponsorship may relate to an activity *or* to an organization. Event marketing often involves sponsorship; but this is not always the case. Compared to sponsorship, which involves payment for the association with an activity, individual, or organization, event marketing refers to the staging of an event and/or efforts by a firm to associate with another

entity's event with *or* without paying a sponsorship fee. The main finding is that event marketing offers better ROI than any other marketing communications medium (Sneath, et al., 2006).

Sneath, et al., 2006 suggested event marketing often occurs within the context of a sporting event. Therefore sports marketing refers to sponsorships or event marketing that involves athletes or an athletic event. Sports marketing is an important method of promotion: roughly two-thirds of the sponsorships in the United States are associated with athletic events (Mi-Megasite, 2006). Sports marketing are one way for a firm to show social responsibility and promote itself and/or its products simultaneously to community members (Lachowetz and Irwin, 2002).

Community involvement - consumer expectations: Consumers expect sports organizations and athletes to engage in socially responsible activities (Roy and Graeff, 2003). *Community involvement - measurement:* Firms sponsoring sporting events are increasingly under pressure to measure the benefits the sponsoring organization gained from the sponsorship (Mescon and Tilson, 1987). *Community involvement - impact:* If a sporting event is linked to a nonprofit firm, consumers indicate that they are more likely to buy the event sponsors' products (Irwin, Lachowetz, Comwell, and Clark, 2003).

H₁: An event attendee who is more knowledgeable about a sponsor's products (e.g., automobiles) is more likely to appreciate a sponsor's community involvement.

H₂: An event attendee who is more active in the area of the event (e.g., sports) is more likely to appreciate a sponsor's community involvement.

H₃: An event attendee who is more enthusiastic in the area of the event (e.g., sports) is more likely to have an appreciation for a sponsor's community involvement.

3. Research Method

The questionnaire consists of several parts. The first part asks participants to identify, from a list of media and interpersonal sources of communication, how they heard about the event. Respondents were asked to answer classification questions (age, expenditure, and gender).

A total of 200 surveys were completed by 80 female and 120 male adults, during five-day event in Pontianak, Indonesia. The major age of respondents are 30 years old, with a minimum age of 18 and maximum of 45 years old. Nearly fifty percent had monthly expenditure between IDR 1,000,000 – 1,500,000. We used 7-point scales (1 disagree to 7 agree) to assess respondents' product knowledge, activeness in and enthusiasm for sports, attitudes toward community involvement.

4. Research Results

Frequencies of top five source of information about the event were sport publication articles (32% of respondents), friends/relatives/word of mouth (21%), newspaper articles (19%), short-message send via phone cellular (12%) and other source like radio program, magazine article. The hypothesized relationships were tested using multiple linier regression analysis with SPSS 18 for windows. The items of questionnaire were valid and it's reliable also. Test of classic assumption (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity) were done and passed. Figure 1 shows the model and the coefficient of regression as the result of multiple linier regression analysis.

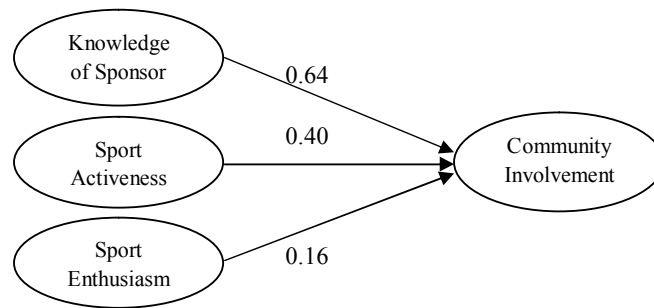


Figure 1. Hypothesized Model with Results

The data showed that event attendees' knowledge of the sponsor. Enthusiasm and activeness positively influence their desire that a sponsor be involved with the community. Specifically, active, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable of the sponsor's product, consumers are shown to be more appreciative of a company's involvement with the community than those who are less active, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable.

An appreciation for the sponsor's community involvement is more likely to positively enhance the attendee's perceptions of the sponsor's brand (Yamaha motor cycle). Attendees who perceive that the sponsor is community-oriented are more likely to agree that their opinion of the title sponsor has changed for the better as a result of the event. The regression equation is showed below.

$$\text{Community involvement} = 0.64 \text{ knowledge of sponsor} + 0.40 \text{ sport activeness} + 0.16 \text{ sport enthusiasm}$$

This set of analysis in line with the prior research (Sneath, et al., 2006), that event attendees' knowledge of the sponsor, enthusiasm, and activeness positively influence their desire that a sponsor be involved with the community. For the recommendation, We suggest practitioners (marketing manager, event marketing manager, brand or product manager) support for incorporating event marketing and sponsorship into a communications strategy, especially when the event attracts people who knowledgeable, active, and enthusiastic, in an area that is synergistic with the sponsor. A key recommendation is that event sponsorship is a way to further engage the consumer with the sponsor's products via establishing community involvement. By investing in event marketing, firms can signal to consumers that they are involved with the community.

It appears that personal interaction with the sponsor's products during the event may lead to more favorable outcomes than sponsorship alone. First-time event attendees may be better candidates for persuasion, as such; the "newness" of an event has the potential to influence first time attendees' desires to become involved with a sponsor's brand, which could result in more favorable brand attitudes and increased purchase intentions. Thus, effectively engaging the consumer with event marketing entails actions that demonstrate a connection with the community, as well as with the brand.

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