

Creativity and Innovation in Events

Traditionally events have been known for their predictable design; a venue, catering and music with one unique selling point, and structural planning method. Bradford (2016) writes that it was common for events managers to produce a twelve-month events regime and abide by it. However to accommodate consumer trends and ensure customer satisfaction, the events industry needs to continue growing and developing, and this example of strict methods would not allow a business to “improve, or react to situational changes” (Bradford, 2016).

Pchelin & Howell (2014) theorises that there are more psychological and economic benefits from purchasing experiences rather than physical goods. It could be suggested that one of the reasons traditional events consumers have maintained their interest in events is due to experiences having a lasting positive effect. However, as traditional consumers have attended many events and crave interesting experiences, this has now led to an increasingly high demand for creativity in their design. Others suggest that it is the ‘Millenials’ who have had a significant impact on the contemporary events industry. Sullivan (2018) writes that this emerging market has enforced a change in the traditional design of the wedding industry preferring shorter weddings with personal attributes.

This increasing desire for creative events has generated an influx in new event businesses with contemporary, technological designs. In result of this competition, it is crucial for all existing companies to define what creativity and innovation are and determine how to best incorporate these ideas into their event design.

Amabile (1998) describes creativity as having three distinct qualities: motivation, creative thinking, and expertise. Each of these components are equally as important as the other and are the main functions to individual creativity. It is also suggested that a group of people containing these creative attributes would provide a broader range of innovations and ideas than one person alone. Regarding creativity in event design,

Tassiopoulos (2010) theorises that creativity can be used to develop a traditional event structure into one that is themed or based on a single topic. Whether this is a chosen theme or one that promotes the reasoning for the event, if all design attributes contain elements of this theme, the consumer is more likely to become immersed into the event and subsequently determine the event as a success.

Drucker (1999) describes innovation as a tool used to exploit change. This change is more commonly used to describe the development of an existing business, however, can sometimes be used when referencing a new business design. Either way, this concept represents the act of changing a traditional process into a new and contemporary model. This theory could suggest that innovation in events indicates the extravagant and unseen construction and execution that is sometimes witnessed in contemporary events.

Entrepreneurship is the most difficult of the three concepts to define. A range of literature can suggest their beliefs on the topic however not one can be deemed an exact definition. One paper theories that there are six different ways to become entrepreneurial: the 'Great person', the psychological characteristics, the classical, the management, the leadership and the intrapreneurial theory (Cunningham, J.B. and Lischeron, J., 1991). However other papers overlook the way in which someone achieves entrepreneurship and focuses more on how enterprise can be used to overcome challenges and implement economic growth (Hamdan, 2018).

Although these three concepts could be defined individually, other theories suggest that creativity, innovation and enterprise are in direct relation with each other. That it is through creative thinking that innovative designs are produced (Harvard, 2003), or that creativity and innovation are consequences of the interaction between colleagues within an enterprise (Robinson, et al. 2010). Others try to simplify the connection by defining them as, creativity; the new idea, innovation; applying the idea to an existing design, and entrepreneurship; the ability to ensure value from the new approach (Kastelle, 2013).

Event design refers to the process in which an event is planned and constructed. Many theorise that the design of an event can have a direct correlation to the experience had by its consumers. If an event's design is poor and uninspired, then the experience had will reflect this standard (Berridge, 2007). Developing an event's design to include factors of creativity and innovation can not only allow for a new, exciting experience for its customers but also help with navigation, money handling and excessive queueing. The development in technology and rise in innovative design have also increased the expectations consumers have of the industry to emulate these advancements (Jackson et al. 2009).

In 2016 Niantic Labs revolutionised the popularity of Augmented Reality with their AR mobile game Pokemon Go. Although AR had been used before this product, very few had witnessed a perfectly working application. Over 522 million people downloaded the game sparking a worldwide interest in AR and the need for people to experience it (Hoggins, 2018). Apple CEO Tim Cook stated: "I don't think there is any sector or industry that will be untouched by AR," (Vogue, 2017). This technology is now being incorporated into events.

The Roskilde Festival developed a downloadable AR application that coincides with their event design. This product allowed users to scan the landscape at the festival to view pop up information of where the nearest food outlet, charging port, e.t.c, was from their current location. The product shows the customer how many meters away the destination is and in what direction to walk in. When a customer aims their phone in the direction of a stage, the app also shows what band is currently performing but also a schedule of what groups would be playing there later in the day (Roskilde, 2018). This product allowed the festival to provide a unique experience for its customers while also allowing for ease of navigation. It was by having a well-structured plan within Roskilde's event design that allowed them to share this inclusive information with its consumers. Without a confirmed idea of where each outlet would be or the exact time each act was performing, this product would not have been as successful.

Events managers have also been trying to use innovation to reduce the risks that occur with money handling. Although profit is one of the fundamental basis' to any business, there are many risks. Internal theft, misplacement, and safe storage are just a few of the dangers that occur when handling money (Hall. J, 2018). Some events have tried to tackle these issues by opting to use tokens instead. Events such as Swansea's Winter Wonderland allow customers to purchase tokens to experience their various funfair attractions (Rees, 2014). This method results in fewer employees having to handle money which in turn could improve the possibility of a risk-free payment system. However, as the customer is given tokens, some of which are too large to hold an adequate amount in a standard wallet or purse, this could result in many tokens being lost or stolen. These tokens, along with the tickets sold for other Winter Wonderlands are also non-returnable or refundable (Hyde Park, 2018). This could result in many displease customers who are unable to return tokens they do not have time to use, or cannot get their money reimbursed if tokens have been stolen. Deriving from these issues, companies like Event Genius Pay (2018) or NUtickets (2017) have emerged offering event businesses cashless opportunities. Similar to AR in festivals, these companies have enabled businesses to integrate Radio Frequency Identification technology into their event design. This year Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest have partnered with NUtickets to offer their customers RFID wristbands. These bands allow customers to purchase their tickets, food, and beverages without any physical money exchange. This technology not only allows for a quicker purchase, or safer transaction but benefits the customers' experience by reducing queue time and removing the issue of potentially losing a wallet or card (Oktoberfesthaus, 2018).

In contrast to these examples, creativity and innovation can sometimes be challenging to execute. An example of this is the Event ConneQion Expo, 2008. The irony of this event is that it was advertised to exhibit creative concepts and innovative ideas (NuSu, 2008), yet utilised neither of these concepts in their own event design. During a school visit, 65 student analysis the event and recorded their opinion of the event's design. Many, if not all of the student had negative responses. Some noted how

the space was underutilised with plain white walls drawing their attention from the exhibit booths. Others mentioned how they felt they were having to look for creativity within the open space rather than being overcome by it (Tassiopoulos, 2010). This example confirms the necessity of an in-depth event design which ensures creative ideas are executed effectively.

In conclusion, creativity, innovation and enterprise can have a substantial impact on the success of an event. With the rising development in technology and the increasing number of businesses emerging, it has been never more crucial for event companies to become as creative in their design as possible. The consumers of events have become uninterested in creative ideas that would have been a brand new concept no more than ten years ago (Bradford, A. 2016). This rapid growth in expectations has led to nearly all sectors of the industry being urged to change and advance. Even corporate networking events which are not intended for leisure have begun to incorporate new creative elements into their design (Zoldan, 2017). As demonstrated in the aforementioned case studies, it is as easily possible for an event to accomplish new and creative innovations as it is for an event to be under constructed and unexciting. Therefore creativity, innovation and enterprise can be fully applied to events and have a direct result on their success.

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