CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

In the following, the results of the empirical study on events management in emerging markets will be presented. The discussion is based on an analysis of interview transcripts, and the categorization of important answer categories through a process of coding. This analysis follows an extensive strategy, is to say it focuses only on the most important aspects but explains them in great detail. Moreover, this chapter applies an inter-textual approach, comparing the answers of the different interview respondents with each other. Chapter five will provide an extra-textual analysis, comparing interview results and literature findings.

The research questions provide the organizational structure for this chapter. The major sections are: importance of event marketing in IMC, critical factors, common errors, major challenges and the role of institutional voids in event management, starting points for making events management more efficient and adapting it to emerging market conditions.

4.2. Importance of event marketing in IMC

The first research question was **"How important is event marketing as a tool of integrated communications?"** Both companies and agencies agreed that events are crucial in Marketing Communication, judging them as either important, very important or of increasing importance. Indeed, none of the respondents considered event marketing to be of little importance or no importance at all.

The respondents from Audi and Porsche stated that, due to the positioning of their brands in the relatively small luxury segment, events represented a much more important tool of Marketing Communication than other communication instruments. For Porsche,
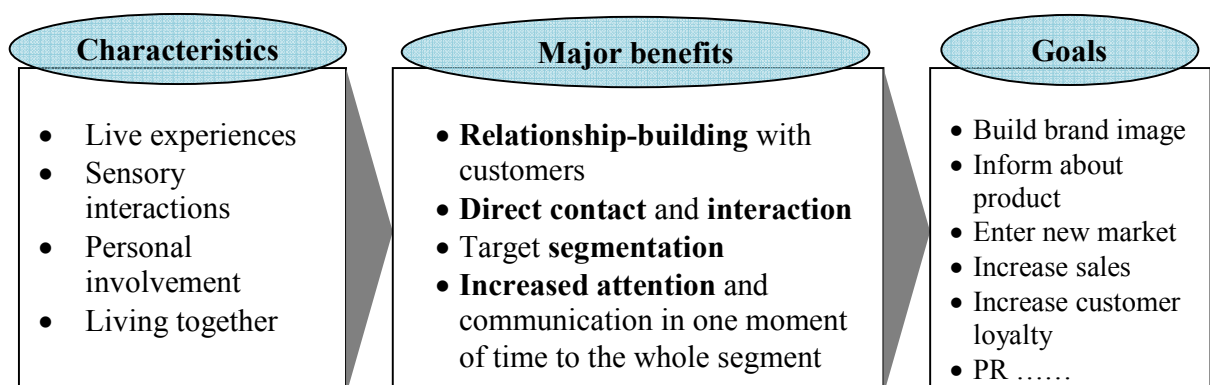
event marketing is more important than the traditional above-the-line instruments, which is why the main part of the budget in 2008 was spent on events. Most of the budget is spent on marketing events, such as trade fairs, driving schools and road shows. A detailed description of the types of events organized by Porsche can be found in Appendix B.

Only one respondent thinks that events are important and useful only under the condition that they are targeted to the correct segment and that companies have developed an effective communication strategy.

*4.2.1. Major benefits*

As the respondents from Volkswagen Brand Communication explained, marketing is increasingly focusing on live experiences through special events, thus permitting customers to not only see a product, but also to hear it, smell it and feel it. Besides these sensory experiences, so the respondents from Volkswagen Brand Communication, events encourage people to socially interact with other participants and therefore satisfy one of the basic desires of the human being: *"living together"*.

Figure 4.1.: Major characteristics, benefits and goals of event marketing

| Characteristics | Major benefits | Goals |
|---|---|---|
| • Live experiences<br>• Sensory interactions<br>• Personal involvement<br>• Living together | • **Relationship-building** with customers<br>• **Direct contact** and **interaction**<br>• Target **segmentation**<br>• **Increased attention** and communication in one moment of time to the whole segment | • Build brand image<br>• Inform about product<br>• Enter new market<br>• Increase sales<br>• Increase customer loyalty<br>• PR …… |

Among the major benefits of event marketing mentioned by the respondents were: (1) *relationship-building* with customers (mentioned 5x), (2) *direct contact and interaction* with the customer (mentioned 5x), (3) *target segmentation* (mentioned 2x), and (4) *increased attention* and *communication in one moment to the whole segment* (mentioned 2x)

Relationship-building with the customer is of particular value for several respondents: event marketing offers them the possibility to get closer to the customer, to suppliers or to the media (Volkswagen Corporate Communication, Imagina), it enables them to maintain a one-to-one relationship with the customer (Audi), permits to "touch" him (Volkswagen Brand Communication), so that the event finally becomes an "emotional link" between the company and the customer (Audi, Porsche). The second benefit mentioned by respondents was direct contact with the client: face-to-face or one-to-one contact (Creatti, Porsche, Seat, Volkswagen Brand Communication) and the opportunity to interact with the target segment (Creatti, Volkswagen Brand Communication) are facilitated through events, since they represent what the respondent from Seat refers to as the "warm part" of the contact with the customer. Complete target segmentation was mentioned by two respondents (Porsche and Dynamic) who described the ability of adapting communication to the targeted market as a major advantage. Finally, another beneficial feature of events identified by respondents is the possibility to communicate a message in one single moment to the whole segment (Creatti, Imagina).

When asked about the importance of event marketing in IMC, more than half of the respondents made reference to mass media, emphasizing that traditional mass media did not have so much impact on small target segments (Dynamic) because of waste (Audi), that it

was much more impersonal (Volkswagen Brand Communication) and cold (Seat) and that

therefore the return on invest in events marketing was much higher (Audi). However, since

the event was the "moment of truth with a customer or a person" (Volkswagen Brand

Communication), and in the end a "sales strategy" (Imagina), it needed to be focused on the

*"what"* ("what do we want to communicate?") and the *"how"* ("how can we communicate

it?"), so the respondent from Creatti.

*4.2.2. Goals pursued*

Event marketing is important for companies because it enables them to reach

specific marketing goals such as (1) *creating image and brand awareness* (mentioned 5x),

(2) *informing about a product* (mentioned 4x ), (3) *entering a new market* (mentioned 3x),

(4) *increasing sales* (mentioned 3x), (5) *increasing customer loyalty* (mentioned 3x), (5)

enhancing *public relations or corporate image* (mentioned 2x), (6) addressing issues of

*social responsibility* (mentioned 2x), (7) *regaining a lost market* (mentioned 1x), and (8)

*promoting the industry* (mentioned 1x).

*4.2.3. Types of events*

Event marketing seems to be especially useful for companies when presenting new

products, since the type of event most cited was *product launches* (seven interviews).

Besides, agencies mentioned inaugurations, conventions, stands, anniversaries etc.,

emphasizing the great number of different events depending on the target segment and the

concept (SinLimitePro). Companies also pointed out various types of events, such as

product launches, press conferences, fairs and sponsorships. The numerous events organized

by each company are described in Appendices B to L. Basically, companies mentioned

different forms to classify their events, or by target group (final customers, internal clients, media, governmental sector, dealers), or by nature of the event (sports event, social event etc.), or simply differentiating company-created events and sponsored events.

*4.2.4. Limitations*

As far as limitations or weaknesses of event marketing are concerned, respondents stressed the following points: its higher cost compared to traditional promotional activities (Dynamic), and also the nature of the event as an intangible service (Imagina, Creatti) that is consumed in the very moment of its production; something that is live, and that cannot be improved afterwards: "If it was good, it was good – if it was bad, it was bad. There is no second opportunity" (Volkswagen Brand Communication).

4.3. Critical factors in event management

The second research question was "**What are critical factors in event management?"** In this section, respondents' opinions on both key steps to follow in events management and on critical factors within the event management process will be presented.

As far as key steps are concerned, respondents coincided on basically four steps: the first step was described as (1) *planning or pre-operation process*, including the determination of objectives, target group and budget as well as supplier selection, the creative concept and other planning issues (Imagina, Audi, Volkswagen Brand Communication). The second step is the (2) *coordination of operational issues* including the set-up on site (Imagina, Audi). What then follows is the (3) *implementation on-site* on the day of the event itself. (Imagina, Audi, Volkswagen Brand Communication). Finally, the

last step is (4) *post-operation or evaluation,* including the systematization of information and photos and the evaluation of performances (Imagina, Audi). Within these key steps that event managers have to follow, several aspects were considered to be critical for the organization of a successful event:

In planning, the *determination of clear objectives* (Creatti, Volkswagen Brand Communication, Audi) was mentioned as a critical factor: "you always need to have a clear focus on what you want to communicate with this event. So that you don't have any incongruence" (Volkswagen Brand Communication). In line with the determination of objectives goes what agencies called *closing the deal* (Imagina, Dynamic): presenting a good creative concept that absorbs the client's ideas. This includes not only the creative concept but also financial aspects (Dynamic).

Furthermore, *time* was regarded as critical (Porsche, Seat), since within only one event different time frames need to be considered (e.g. when to take care of the catering, when to send invitations etc.). Here, the *sending of invitations* and the *confirmation of assistance of participants* were seen as essential (Audi, Porsche).

Apart from time, *budget* also plays a major role in the eyes of the respondents, since financial resources need to be available on time (Seat, Audi). Especially in the case of Seat budget needs to be authorized by the headquarters in Spain (Seat).

Another critical factor that was mentioned several times was *supplier selection*, taking into account both cost and quality (Imagina, Audi, Seat, Volkswagen Corporate Communication). As the respondent from Audi stated, in the process of supplier selection the purchasing department plays a major role when it comes to negotiations. "Purchasing is our ally for finding the best suppliers" (Audi).

Finally, the implementation of *logistics, frequent staff meetings*, an *efficient and skilled event organizing team* as well as the *adequate handling of stress* were seen as critical factors in events management (Volkswagen Corporate Communication, SinLimitePro).

## 4.4. Organization/ planning errors

The third research question was "**What are common planning/ organization errors in event management**?"  When asked directly about common errors in the planning and the organization of events, companies and agencies (Volkswagen Corporate Communication, Volkswagen Brand Communication, Imagina) stressed that since the event takes place only once, it needs to be perfect, which is why there should be very few or preferably no errors in planning and organization. At the same time, however, the respondents from both Porsche and Dynamic stated that in every event there are technical and human failures, and that event management basically was a business of a very high degree of errors.

Opinions on common errors in event management varied among the respondents, and very different types of errors were mentioned, either related to technical issues or to the *"human factor"* (SinLimitePro). However, two aspects of events management can be identified which apparently are more likely to be subject to errors than others: (1) *Timing* (mentioned in five interviews), and (2) *Technical issues* (mentioned in three interviews).

The *adequate timing* of an event requires the start of the event planning process on time. However, many companies do actually not start this process of planning as early as they should (Imagina), and this *lack of planning and prevention* can lead to the day of the event turning out to be a disaster (Imagina). The timing of the event also has to do with the handling of information between companies and agencies on time. According to the respondent from

Creatti, informing agencies at the last moment about changes is a very common practice on the part of many companies. The error of the agencies is to tolerate these practices. As the respondent from Seat commented, planning errors between responsible managers can lead to high time pressures, because suddenly an event that was not even considered needs to be organized within a very short time span: "Sometimes you are against time, against the wall and they make you responsible to get it done" (Seat) .

*Technical issues* were also considered to be a major source of errors in events, especially due to technical failures and problems related to equipment. Respondents mentioned illumination, audio, screens and microphones as being likely to fail during the event (Dynamic, Seat, SinLimitePro), as well as for example problems with electricity due to human errors when placing cables (Dynamic).

Other errors that were considered to be common are summarized in the following:

First, problems tend to occur *when decisions are made too fast and without a serious consideration of different aspects*. Every decision that is not well considered can negatively affect the day of the event (Imagina).

Another error regarded as common was to *omit details* during the planning and organization of the event (Audi). Those small details, however, are frequently among the most important factors that determine the success or failure of the event (Audi).

Moreover, the *sending on time of the invitation*s to the event was also mentioned as a source of error, due to incorrect databases or failures of the dealers etc (Audi).

And finally, a *lack of control* during event planning and organization was identified as a common error.

4.5. Challenges/ problems in events management

Research question 4a) was "**What are the major challenges/ problems that companies face in event management?** The following aspects were considered to be major challenges in event management by both companies and agencies: (1) *unexpected situations* (mentioned 5x), (2) *creativity and innovation* (mentioned 4x), (3) *following set objectives* throughout the event (mentioned 4x), (4) *capturing the actual target group* (mentioned 2x), (5) *collaboration with suppliers* (mentioned 2x), (6) *time* (mentioned 1x), (7) *budget* (mentioned 1x), and (8) *perfection in the event* (mentioned 1x) (see Figure 4.2)

Figure 4.2: Major challenges in events management
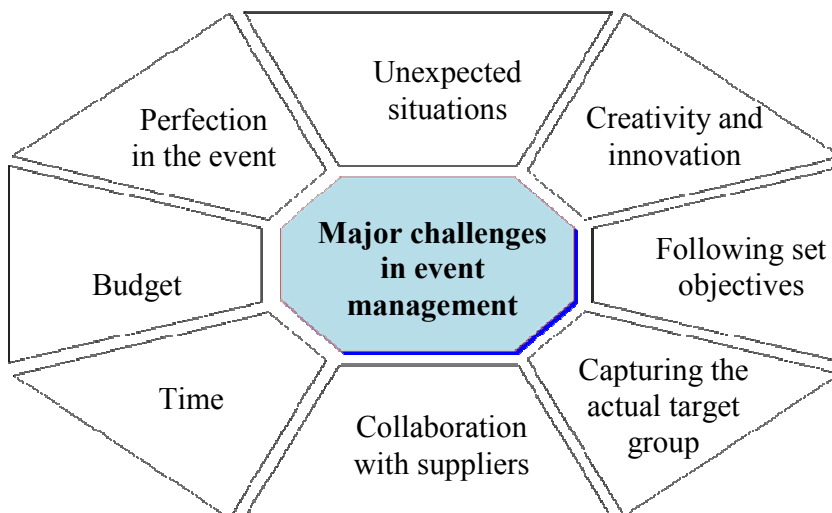


*4.5.1. Unexpected situations*

Several respondents view unexpected changes and situations as highly challenging in event management. When things do not occur like event managers plan them, a quick and adequate reaction and action is required. Such unexpected situations can be caused by various factors, from weather conditions to changes of presentations, illumination, food etc. (Imagina, Seat) to technical problems with video or audio equipment (Dynamic). To know

how to react to such unexpected situations is apparently not easy at all, as the conducted interviews indicate.

### 4.5.2. Creativity and innovation

Attracting attention, being innovative and offering something different from previous company events and events organized by the competition is seen as a challenging task by several respondents. During the process of conceptualization, event managers need to find a way to communicate a technology or a product in a surprising manner to the relevant stakeholders. This can be especially challenging since the way of communication differs depending on the target group (Volkswagen brand communication). Moreover, customers want to be surprised; they have certain expectations and want them to be fulfilled or even surpassed (Volkswagen brand communication). Companies and agencies are thus forced to be constantly seeking for new ideas and concepts (SinLimitePro), since a good concept that differentiates the respective company from the competition actually attracts people. As the respondent from Audi commented, the company's target segment is very small and is therefore frequently invited to events organized by the competition also located in Mexico City. So by offering something new and innovative it is more likely that people decide to participate in your event, and not in one organized by the competition. Moreover, innovative events tend to be interesting also for the media, which might lead to positive reports and comments on the event (Audi).

### 4.5.3. Following set objectives

For companies, the determination of clear objectives (Volkswagen Brand Communication), and for agencies, the transformation of these objectives into a clear

concept as well as the following of those objectives during the organization process is a demanding task. "The customer needs to come to the event and experience what you want him to experience", said one of the respondents from Volkswagen Brand Communication, which is why a "clear focus and the avoidance of incongruent actions are vital." Once companies have identified and determined their objectives, agencies need to present a creative concept in line with those objectives. Several agency respondents considered the absorption of the client's idea and the transformation into a creative concept as the major challenge in events management (Dynamic, Imagina, and Creatti). "When you manage to combine all those feelings and all those goals that the client wants, I think your event will be successful", said the respondent from Dynamic. Once developed the creative concept, agencies consider it challenging to actually stick to the objectives initially determined during the process of organization. One of the respondents from Imagina explained that keeping in mind the client's objectives is especially demanding since an event is a subjective service and not a product that can be delivered.

### 4.5.4. Capturing the actual target group

Especially for the luxury brands Audi and Porsche, capturing the actual target group is challenging. The respective target segment consists of wealthy people that tend to be busy and moreover receive invitations to events from different companies on a regular basis. The difficulty is in making sure that on the one hand, people confirm their assistance, and that on the other hand, people that have confirmed already will actually assist.

*4.5.5. Supplier relationships*

Another major challenge described by respondents is supplier relationships. The interviewee from Seat stressed the importance of finding reliable partners, because "you can put all your energy in the event, but sometimes external factors can do you harm". For the respondents from Imagina the difficulty lies in finding suppliers with the same values and working ethics that go in line with proper company policies, and to actually commit them during the organization of the event.

*4.5.6. Time & Budget*

Having too little time both for production and for implementation was considered challenging by the respondent from Creatti. The respondent from Porsche also described time as a critical factor, especially since different activities within the same event have different time frames. The respondent from Audi mentioned "doing a lot with little money" as a major challenge in events management.

*4.5.7. Perfection in the event*

Volkswagen Brand Communication stressed the difficulty of reflecting a perfect brand image to the customer during the event, although it might actually be a chaos: "There might be a lot of problems, a lot of stress. But the customer needs to feel that everything is fine. Problems need to be solved beforehand. If the customer feels the chaos – goodbye [to] the event"

Besides the factors discussed above, other challenges were mentioned that can be summarized as *operational issues*: to find adequate sites for event, to implement logistics, to install on site, to coordinate all the details, to find an efficient event organizing team etc.

### 4.5.8. Occasions when it was difficult to organize a particular event

Not only were companies' and agencies' respondents asked directly about the major challenges and problems in events management, but they were also asked to describe previous events that in their experience for some reason were particularly difficult to organize. While some interviewees described situations that were related to one of the factors discussed before, such as unexpected situations or time, others remembered situations that indicated challenging aspects of event management different from those mentioned before: (1) *communication and coordination issues* (2) problems with the *government* and (3) the *complexity* of an event. The following extracts from the interviews exemplify each point with a live experience described by the respondents.

Communication and coordination issues.

"Very often trucks are not allowed to pass certain streets because they are loaded with equipment… So, it is common that your client didn't do the scouting, and you arrive there and there are only two kilometres missing and you can't pass through the centre of the city…Sometimes you arrive and your time schedule is already tight, and you realize that there never was any scouting and your client didn't tell you that and you have to find a way to move your whole equipment to another vehicle, this is complicated.

*Source: Interview with Dynamic*

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*Problems with the government.*

"You can have organized everything perfectly with the government and then suddenly some secretary or governmental institution that was not informed comes and cancels your event two hours before it was supposed to start. This would almost have happened with a seminary in Puebla. Everything was ready. We had to close everything because for some reason the tents did not satisfy established security regulations. So the fire workers came and closed the place. In two hours it was supposed to start. Thanks to the contacts and to the relations you have you can get out of such situations"

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*Source: Interview with Volkswagen Brand Communication*

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*The complexity of an event.*

"Some events, such as the World Road Show and the SIAM fair, are more complicated than others. For example, during the SIAM we have an exhibition stand that consists of 20000 single parts, and it is a challenging task to be checking which to buy, which to rent and which to produce yourself in order to safe costs. Porsche as important brand needs to verify which parts can be produced in the emerging market Mexico, because the parts need to be in line with Porsche Corporate Design. Those events are extremely complex, all the details must be correct."

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*Source: Interview with Porsche*

## 4.6. Role of institutional voids

Research question 4b) was "**Which role do institutional voids play in event management?**" Since the theoretical concept of institutional voids is not commonly known, respondents were not directly asked if they had experienced problems due to institutional voids. Instead, interview questions focused on three aspects identified earlier as areas in which companies and/or agencies might have encountered difficulties related institutional voids: logistics, government issues/ corruption, human resources.

### 4.6.1. Logistics

The four respondents from the interviewed agencies stated that they generally take care of the coordination of all the logistics necessary for the success of the event

(SinLimitePro, Dynamic, Imagina, Creatti). Only the respondent from Creatti added that in some special occasions, e.g. in the case of an event in province, the company hires an external operator for transportation. The only difficulty mentioned in relation to logistics was by the respondent from Creatti who described a challenging situation with the coordination of logistics in Bahamas, because the client had not given detailed instructions to the people who were sent abroad.

As far as companies are concerned, they either take care of logistics themselves (Audi, occasionally Porsche), or they hire experienced event agencies that offer logistics services (Volkswagen Corporate Communication). Seldom do they work with external logistics providers (Porsche). Companies did not report any difficulties with the coordination of logistics. The respondent from Audi considered it important to have the smallest possible number of suppliers because this facilitates coordination.

*4.6.2. Government issues*

Experiences related to the handling of government issues (e.g. permits) varied greatly among the interviewed company and agency representatives. While four respondents regarded government issues as either difficult (Dynamic, Creatti, Seat) or sometimes difficult to handle (Imagina), the remaining respondents stated not to have encountered problems in this respect (Porsche, Volkswagen Brand Communication, Audi).

By those who encountered hurdles, the process necessary for obtaining a permit (e.g. to close a street) was described as long and sometimes difficult (Dynamic, Creatti, Seat, Volkswagen Corporate Communication), because "unlike in other countries, they want to charge you taxes for many services" (Imagina) or because "you don't have any idea whom

to address" (Seat). Most permits are needed for closing streets for events such as test drives, in which the *"Policía Federal de Caminos"*, the *"Policía Federal Preventiva"* and the *"Secretaría de Comunicación y Tansporte"* are involved (Volkswagen Corporate and Brand Communication, Seat, Porsche, Audi). As the respondent from Audi mentioned, the bigger the event the higher is the probability of facing difficulties with the government.

The respondent from Dynamic mentioned another problem: *corruption*. As the respondent from Dynamic reports, it can happen that event organizers are arrested during the set-up: "You are working there and then suddenly the police show up and say no, you are not authorized to work here… So they arrest you, you have to pay some money…That's common, very common."

### 4.6.3. Human resources

Opinions of companies and agencies concerning the access to talented and experienced personnel also varied greatly. Especially agency respondents considered it difficult to find skilled personnel with previous experience in event management (Creatti, Imagina). "You have to educate them, you have to take them by the hand some three to four months so that they can learn, you have to travel with them, buy them all the necessary tools. There is no specific career and it's very difficult to train them – all of them. It's a lot of money, time and effort" (Creatti).

The majority of the respondents, however, thought that finding talented personnel was not such a challenging task (SinLimitePro, Seat, Porsche, Audi). "Actually, there are many companies working in events, so there are people who know," stated the respondent from SinLimitePro. And the respondent from Porsche commented: "Depending on the type of tasks different abilities and skills are required.  For Porsche as an international company

with a good reputation it is not difficult to find and hold skilled and experienced employees. This might be different in the case of small agencies." Closely related to this comment is what the respondent from Audi said: "It is not difficult to find people with experience, but what can be a challenge for companies is being able to pay them".

When asked about common profiles of people in events management, marketing and communication were mentioned as common areas of studies for people working in the administrative area of event organization (Creatti, Imagina, Dynamic). However, since managing an event requires expertise in different areas and combines knowledge of different fields of studies, there is no specific career for people who want to work in event management (SinLimitePro, Imagina, Creatti, Dynamic). Whereas in some countries, such as Canada or Australia, courses of event management are already offered in universities (Seat), there is no such option for people interested in becoming event managers in Mexico (Creatti, Seat, SinLimite).

More important than having a specific academic background are experience (Audi) and some special characteristics and qualities that help in becoming a successful event manager, such as service attitude (Imagina), being a fast learner (Imagina), having the common sense (Imagina, Audi), and having a lot of energy (Porsche).

4.7. Starting points for making event marketing more efficient

Research question 5a) was "**How could event management be organized/ reorganized in order to make it an efficient instrument of integrated communications?"** Research questions 5a and 5b are different from the previous research questions, inasmuch as they have a much broader focus and need to be discussed more profoundly. Interview respondents did not directly propose strategies for organizing event management more efficiently. However, some aspects (Table 4.1) were mentioned that will be presented here and that will serve as starting points for further analysis in Chapter 5.

Table 4.1: Starting points for companies organizing events

| Starting points for.... | |
|---|---|
| **...making events management more efficient** | **...adapting events management to emerging market conditions** |
| *1. Supplier relations*<br>- supplier selection<br>- existing relationships (long-term relations, coordination, purchasing departments, control)<br>- agencies services | 1. *Important factors for doing business in Mexico*<br>- culture of events<br>- the event itself<br>- cultural and other factors |
| 2. *Strategic alliances* | 2. *Companies strategies* |
| 3. *Event evaluation* | 3. *Handling of government issues* |
| 4. *Organization skills* | |

*4.7.1. Supplier relations*

This section will discuss both the relations between the interviewed companies and the supplying event agencies, as well as the relations between event agencies and their suppliers.

*Supplier selection.* The brands incorporated in the Volkswagen Concern have very strict entry criteria for suppliers (Seat, Creatti, Volkswagen Corporate Communication). The respondent from Seat named the creative concept, quality, price and trust as major criteria for supplier selection. "It's important that you have several alternatives and that you don't go with the first because there is no time. We invite minimum three suppliers to present their concepts before making the final decision." Careful supplier selection was seen as very important for the success of the event. Trustworthiness was therefore considered as being critical (Volkswagen Corporate Communication, Seat).

*Existing relationships between companies and agencies.* Four aspects of the relationships between companies and supplying agencies will be discussed in the following: (1) *long-term relations,* (2) *coordination,* (3) *purchasing departments*, (4) *control.*

The first is the existence of *long-term relationships* that companies and agencies establish, in the case of Dynamic with Volkswagen more than 20 years (Dynamic). As the respondent from SinLimitePro reports, such long-term relationships have certain advantages: "You already know their values, what the brand really is, everything it implies. You already know what you can do and what you can't do" (SinLimitePro).

The second aspect refers to the *decision-making* and *coordination* process between companies and agencies. Agencies criticized on the one hand that sometimes too many people were involved in decision-making: "Sometimes clients want to be the protagonists during the implementation on-site, and this is where we have a lot of decisions made by a lot of people." (Dynamic)

On the other hand, one agency respondent criticized the difficulties caused by the *involvement of the purchasing departments* of big companies in the event organization

process: "Honestly, the purchasing departments do not know how to buy this event, this medium. They don't know it because it's not something tangible. They all go for the price, and later on they realize that what was supposedly cheap, turns out to be more expensive. This is the problem with the big companies: people from purchasing do not know how to purchase media" (Creatti).

Finally, the respondent from Volkswagen Corporate Communication considered *control* to be very important, and to *not just leave everything in the hands of the supplier*, because "suppliers not always do thing in a professional way".

*Agencies services.* Of the four agencies that were interviewed, three claimed to be offering integrated services (SinLimitePro, Creatti, Dynamic), and one of them stated that actually everything was completely done in-house (Dynamic). These three agencies, all suppliers of Volkswagen México, considered integrative services as beneficial for companies, since these do not have to deal with suppliers other than the responsible event agency (Dynamic, SinLimitePro). "This is an added value because the client's event will be coordinated by only one company, and not by a company that sources things from other suppliers" (Dynamic).

*Relationships between agencies and their suppliers.* Whereas one agency does everything in-house (Dynamic), two agencies reported to be making use of supplying services in some cases (Creatti, SinLimitePro). The fourth agency (Imagina) is highly dependent on supplier services, sometimes up to 80% of the services are sourced from other companies (Imagina). Interview respondents mentioned the two sides of the medal: on the one hand, strategic alliances with reliable and specialized suppliers can improve the final

service to the client (SinLimitePro, Imagina); on the other hand, committing suppliers is not easy (Creatti, Imagina). "The problem is that they need to understand and feel what we want to do" (Creatti). Failures can affect time schedules, quality, sometimes costs, and personnel (Imagina). Therefore it is vital to "find a person that has the same ethics, the same values like you" (Imagina).

*4.7.2. Strategic alliances between event organizing companies*

The respondent from Audi mentioned strategic alliances with other brands addressing the same segment, but not competing in the same product category. "In order to attract more people, we allied with other luxury brands like American Express or Aeroméxico. We put a car on auction, and Aeroméxico and American Express gave away additional presents. A good and innovative concept attracts people" (Audi).

*4.7.3. Event evaluation*

Not all interviewed companies systematically evaluate events. While some consider event evaluation as an integral part of the event management process (SinLimitePro, Dynamic), others do only partly evaluate events (Audi), or they do not evaluate them at all (Imagina, Seat) because of a lack of time or information (Seat, Imagina)

Those who evaluate events mention internal feedback as well as the identification of errors and opportunities for improvement as major benefits (SinLimitePro, Dynamic).

*4.7.4. Organization skills*

Interview respondents basically agree on certain characteristics an event manager needs to have in order to be successful. The *ability to improvise in unexpected* was mentioned as vital in events management (SinLimitePro, Dynamic, Volkswagen Brand and

Corporate Communication, Seat, Imagina). Moreover, event managers need to be able to

control their emotions and *be resistant to stress* (Imagina, Porsche, Volkswagen Corporate

Communication, Seat). At the same time, *having the common sense* (Imagina, Audi,

Porsche) and *being able to make decisions quickly* (Dynamic, Volkswagen Corporate

Communication) were considered as critical. Other factors that were mentioned were

*flexibility* (Imagina, Volkswagen Brand Communication, Seat), *availability* (Seat), *patience*

(Seat), and a certain *ability for planning* and calculating (Porsche).


4.8. Starting points for adapting events management to emerging market conditions

Research question 5b) was "**How could event management be adapted to emerging**

**market conditions?**" Just as with research question 5a, the aspects that will be described in

this section will serve as a fundament (see Table 4.1) for the overall conclusions provided in

Chapter 5.


*4.8.1. Important factors for doing business in Mexico*

When asked about important factors for organizing events in Mexico, interview

respondents mentioned both factors directly related to the event and others that have to be

considered when doing business in Mexico in general and therefore also affect event

managers.


*The culture of events in Mexico.* Two respondents considered that the events culture in

Mexico was not equally developed as in other countries (Imagina, Creatti). "People tend to

see an event like pure fun, something to relax. They see it like a big party, costs and not like

an investment" (Imagina). However, as the respondent from Creatti stated, "the event

culture is developing step by step. They are becoming aware of the importance" (Creatti).

*The event itself.* Several respondents mentioned particularities related to the

programme and the nature of the event itself. Events in Mexico need to be warmer (Seat),

longer (Volkswagen Brand Communication, Seat), louder (Volkswagen Brand

Communication) – briefly they need to be massive (Volkswagen Brand Communication).

Of particular importance for the event to become a success also are drinks, especially

alcoholic drinks (Imagina, Audi). One respondent from Volkswagen Brand Communication

compared events in Mexico to events in Germany, where they are a lot smaller and more

serious. The respondent from SinLimitePro had an opposed opinion, stating that events were

equally serious and had the same content than in other countries.

*Cultural factors affecting event organization in Mexico.* In the eyes of the

respondents, cultural particularities play an important role for the organization of an event.

The *working method* in Mexico is seen as quite different to those in European countries or

in the United States (SinLimitePro, Dynamic). Two respondents exemplified the Mexican

method of working comparing it with the way German workers handled things during the

set-up of the stand for the auto-show (SinLimitePro, Dynamic). "The Germans are much

more organized, they work from eight in the morning till seven in the evening, we work 24

hours. It is incredible, because they say: in Mexico you have one person doing something

and four watching how he or she is doing it. Obviously, we need more personnel, more

hours etc." (SinLimitePro) "They have a perfect, clean set-up and a perfect timing. It's

already a system. Here in Mexico it's different, we don't have the same planning tools"

(Dynamic). "In Mexico everything is done at the last moment." (Creatti and Porsche)

Another factor mentioned by Porsche and Audi is the fact that a participant's

confirmation does not necessarily mean that the participant actually will assist. "In the

luxury segment we target a particular clientele; these people get invited by our competitors

as well, so confirming assistance before the event is critical for success "(Porsche).

*Other factors.* Besides cultural differences contractual factors were mentioned,

especially in relation to overtime regulations. "Mexican workers can work until they have

finished their job. German workers, for example, have a certain limit of extra hours that

cannot be exceeded" (Volkswagen Brand Communication).

Concluding, and with the words of the respondents from Volkswagen Brand

Communication, "the basis is the same in all countries, there are the same basic rules, e.g.

having a concept or following general processes. So under normal circumstances the

planning process in different countries is very similar". However, some particularities

related to organization or timing need to be considered when "changing form the first world

to the third world", as (Dynamic). "On the other hand, I think we are more sensitive to

handling errors and problems than people from Europe or the United States. That's our plus:

quick decision-making." (Dynamic)

*4.8.2. Companies' strategies*

The respondents from Porsche and Seat basically stated that actions and events were

adapted to the local particularities of the Mexican market, but always in line with the

headquarters in Germany and Spain, respectively. So Seat, for example, needs to obtain

authorization of all events in advance (Seat). The challenge is creating a consistent corporate image, while at the same time responding to local market needs (Seat).  The same is the case with Porsche, where global formats in line with the corporate image exist. Wording, however, is in the responsibility of the employees working in Mexico (Porsche). Audi reported to be following a completely local strategy (Audi).

*4.8.3. Handling of government issues*

In many emerging markets, government issues make business operations more difficult. The problems companies and agencies are confronted with were presented in Research question 4b. This section summarizes respondents' opinions on how to solve such problems.

(1) *Handing in the correct documents on time*, (2) *having contacts* and knowing whom to address, (3) a *strong corporate relations department* and the (4) *collaboration with agencies* were cited as important factors in handling government issues.

As one respondent stated, it is important to hand in all the necessary documents on time (Imagina). What seems to be more important, however, is to have contacts and a network of personal relationships within the relevant secretaries that help to obtain permits (Creatti, Seat, Volkswagen Corporate and Brand Communication). The Volkswagen Concern in Mexico integrates a department (Vicepresidencia) which is in charge of government issues and helps the different brands to get events authorized (Volkswagen Corporate and Brand Communication, Seat). The respondents from Volkswagen Brand Communication mentioned that being an internationally recognized company with good reputation, and not a local and unknown company, also helped in the establishment of

relationships with government institutions at influential levels. "Our prestige as a brand helps us to establish trusting relationships with government institutions which support us in carrying out our (trans)actions". Companies also avoid the direct confrontation with governmental institutions by outsourcing event organization to agencies (Volkswagen Corporate Communication, Porsche), who then are responsible for obtaining authorizations.

4.9. Conclusion

For all respondents, event marketing as a tool of MC is of increasing importance since it enables companies to build relations with targeted customers through direct interaction with them. This facilitates the achievement of a number of marketing goals, such as improving brand image or informing about a product. In order for event marketing to be efficient, companies need to determine clear objectives, need to start planning on time, and consider other factors such as budget and operational issues. Common errors occur both due to technical and human failures, especially as far as timing is concerned. Event managers consider unexpected situations, the need to be constantly innovating, capturing the actual target group and supplier relations as major challenges in events management. Institutional voids affect event managers particularly in the handling of government issues. As interview results indicate, the areas of supplier relationships, event evaluation and strategic alliances can serve as starting points for making event management more efficient. Likewise, cultural factors, companies' strategies and the handling of government issues can serve as starting points for the development of recommendations for adapting events management to emerging market conditions. The following chapter will concentrate on presenting respective recommendations more in detail.