

Title

The gestalt of event creativity

Purpose

This paper identifies the gestalt characteristics of creativity within outdoor events. It focuses on the creation and production of events and not on the event itself or the way that it is experienced. It is therefore interested in the processes and attributes of working in outdoor events, within various roles and responsibilities. The concept of gestalt helps to identify the defining features of a phenomenon that unfolds over a period of time.

Design/methodology/approach

The Creativity in Events research project included a mixed-methods approach that identified the nature and understanding of outdoor events through interviewing 10 providers of different types of outdoor events. These were identified as cultural festivals, music festivals, outdoor sporting events, outdoor trade shows and outdoor corporate events. From these the salient characteristics of creativity were identified and transformed into a survey of people undertaking different job roles from Director to volunteer across the sector. Overall 233 useable questionnaires provided the data that was analysed to identify whether the outdoor event sector was creative and in what ways, across the different roles.

Findings

This paper is an overall summary of the main characteristics identified through both the qualitative and quantitative stages of the research project. It approaches the results of these from an overarching meta-analysis based on gestalt principles. Six facets of event creativity were identified. These were: fluency, originality, imagination, elaboration, environment and complexity. The characteristics of divergent and convergent practices, alongside cognitive and affective features offered a complex but gestalt understanding of creativity in outdoor events. These featured collaboration across the creative event process; the creative familiarity offered by the necessity of compliance, and the necessity to be both pragmatic and creative.

Research limitations/implications

The gestalt concept itself recognizes that not all characteristics of a phenomenon, such as creativity, are constant and that there are highs and lows and potentially conflicting attributes. In attempting to identify and research the creativity of events results in a reduction and shaping of something quite messy and complex. Only in this way though can certain characteristics be recognised and further explored. Otherwise we just leave events as something that is only learnt through practice and experience.

Practical implications

A better understanding of creativity in events is important for improving practice, education and research. The processes and practices developed and taught need to recognise both the divergent and convergent approaches. The work environment and collaborations are necessary to support the

success of outdoor events.

Originality/value

Whilst the importance of creativity in the production of events has been recognized, there has been little research undertaken as to its characteristics. Creativity itself has predominantly been researched within the individual, with some emphasis on the organisation but very little on a whole sector.

Keywords: creativity, outdoor events, gestalt