



The impact of event advertising on attitudes and visit intentions



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of event advertising on peoples' attitudes and visit intentions toward event-hosting cities. One hundred and ninety-two samples were collected for this study. A 2×2 factorial multivariate-analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the first and second set of hypotheses, whereas a separate univariate-analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to test the last hypothesis. Event advertising was found to have a positive effect on people's attitude toward the hosting cities. Also, people's different levels of city recognition (well-know vs. unknown) significantly influence their attitudes toward the city. However, the effects of event advertising on peoples' attitude toward the city are greater if the city is relatively unknown. In this sense, an unknown city could benefit more than a well-known city by improving the image of the city using event advertising as a promotional tool. Lastly, image congruence affects peoples' attitude toward the event-hosting city.

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1. Introduction

Special events are one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism (Getz, 2008). Special events attract visitors to event-hosting cities and further induce more people to visit even after the event has passed (Backman, Backman, Uysal, & Mohr Sunshine, 1995; Getz, 1998, 2008). These events create a positive and distinctive image of the hosting city where a special event is held (Beeton, 2001). At the same time various media deliver specific images of the city and event to potential visitors, enabling them to make a rational choice or gain an emotional feel for new destinations to plan for an actual visit in the future (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2012; Iwashita, 2008; Lynch & Veal, 1996; O'Connor & Gilbert, 2008; Zhang, Xiaoxiao, Cai, & Lu, 2014). Chalip, Green, and Hill (2003) mentioned that exposure to media covering special events changes visitors' perceptions of the hosting city in a positive way, which may increase tourist traffic for many years following the event (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, 2000; Ritchie & Smith, 1991). McDaniel (1999) also found that visitors' attitudes toward the city are more positive when various programs in the event are paired with the image of the hosting city. In this regard, the effective use of advertising for events is an undeniably key factor in fostering visitors' participation in the events (Getz, 2008; Witt, 1988). Moreover, media coverage of

an event is considered to boost the image of the hosting city (Dwyer et al., 2000; Ritchie, Sanders, & Mules, 2006; Ritchie & Smith, 1991).

Although much attention has been focused on the merits of attracting special events to a city (Chalip & Costa, 2006; Chan, 2007; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Hede, 2005; Laffont & Prigent, 2011; Ohmann, Jones, & Wilkes, 2006; Roche, 2006; Toohey & Veal, 2007), research in special events related to event advertising is relatively sparse in the tourism and hospitality fields. To fill this gap, this study seeks to examine the role of event advertising in building a city's image with a specific reference to international film festivals. International film festivals are one of the most popular tourist attractions, which have value as special events to attract visitors to the hosting city. Bassett, Griffiths, and Smith (2002) stated that the film industry's presence in a city or the hosting of a film festival has value in creating or improving the city's image through (event) advertising (see also Di Persio, Horvath, & Wobbeking, 2008). Therefore, by revealing the critical role of event advertising's effects (e.g., delivering a positive image of a city) on event visitors and prospective tourists in their behavioral intentions, the city can promote event products and services and increase tourism to the destination. As Zhang et al. (2014) indicated, a destination (e.g., city) with a recognizable positive image has a greater chance of being selected by event-visitors or tourists. A favorable perception held by tourists can generate positive word of mouth and influence other potential tourists' behaviors (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001).

In this regard, the findings of this study can enrich the body of

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knowledge in event tourism along with event advertising and also provide insights for event marketing practitioners and city image managers. In particular, for event-hosting cities that do not have the same cognitive levels (reputation), different advertising effects should be generated depending on the level of city recognition. Therefore, the objective of this study is twofold: first, to investigate the effects of event advertising on visitors' attitudes toward a city (well-know vs. unknown city), as well as their intentions to visit the city where an international film festival takes place, and second, to further investigate whether image congruence between international film festivals and hosting cities changes visitors' attitudes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Attitude toward the city

Special events are one of the main attractions that bring visitors to the hosting cities (Getz, 2008). Through special events, cities can improve their reputation and further enhance the public image of the city (Getz & Fairley, 2004; Hede, 2005; Giffani & Rivenburgh, 2000; Ritchie et al., 2006). Ritchie and Smith (1991) examined the impact of a mega-event (e.g., Olympics) on the hosting city (Calgary) over four years before and after the event. They found that the city's image was significantly improved for a period of time after the event. Hede (2005) also identified that people's attitudes toward the city are significantly improved as their vicarious experiences of the city (Athens) increase via consumption of a media telecast of the special event.

As Cornwell and Maignan (1998) indicated, event advertising is considered "advertising with events" or the practice of promoting the interests of a city and its brand by associating the city with a specific activity (special event). Although prior literature (Close, Krishen, & LaTour, 2006; Jun, 2010; Sneath, Finney, & Close, 2005) related to event advertising has primarily focused on event sponsorship, studies of event advertising have also dealt with the relationship between the city or product experience and special events, as well as the emotional association of events with brands or destinations (Wohlfeil and Wohlfeil, 2006; Wood & Masterman, 2007). Practically, event advertising is adopted to increase sales, brand awareness, and brand/city image (Sneath et al., 2005). Event advertising can also help attain these goals through the voluntary participation of visitors, and this factor can be applied to all event advertising regardless of the event type. The key elements of successful events are providing opportunities to participate in the event-object, the event-content, event advertising, and the social interaction considering tourists' interests (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2006).

Previous research (Bassett et al., 2002; Gasher, 2002) noted that film industries are one of the significant event-sectors, creating a city image by combining various factors (e.g., photography, music, video, stagecraft, advertisement, and motion picture), which further influence potential visitors' attitudes toward the hosting city (Di Persio, Horvath, & Wobbeking, 2008). Every year film festivals are organized internationally to provide an opportunity for event-participants to mingle with people from different countries and organizations and share their opinions about movies, the festival and hosting city, which may change their attitudes toward the city (Kamera, 2008). In particular, Prentice and Andersen (2003) pointed out that film festivals bring positive attitudes to the hosting city. As such, film festivals can build a favorable image, reputation and even cultural exchange for the cities hosting the special events (Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Kamera, 2008).

Green, Costa, and Fitzgerald (2003) also stated that increasing people's exposures to event advertising ameliorates the image of cities. What is shown or mentioned about the city in the advertising

has a significant effect on people's attitude toward the hosting city. Thus, an advertisement that covers an international film festival may increase people's positive attitude toward the city. Similarly, Xue, Chen, and Yu (2012) mentioned that the content of media reports is a critical determinant of visitors' image of the city, especially for those who have not visited the city. As such, the special events enable building an image of the city through positive media coverage (e.g., event advertising), which may change attitudes toward the event-hosting city (Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali, 2003; Xue et al., 2012). This discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: Attitudes toward the hosting city are more positive when film festival information is provided with city information in the event advertisement.

2.2. Intention to visit

Tourists' behavioral intentions are formed through a rational choice and decision process (Hennessey, Yun, MacDonald, & MacEachern, 2010). As Vogt, Winter, and Fried (2005) indicated, intentions are assumed to accurately predict their actual behavior. Previous research on consumers' behavioral intentions shows a positive relationship between people's attitudes and their intentions or actual purchasing behaviors (Armitage & Conner, 2000; Petty & Krosnick, 1995; Vogt et al., 2005). This line of research supports the idea that tourists' actual behaviors are explained by their intentions to select the city as a tourism destination. Several researchers (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Choi, Tkachenko, & Sil, 2011; Hennessey et al., 2010; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005; Woodside & MacDonald, 1994; Zhang et al., 2014) also mentioned such factors as travel stimuli (advertisement) and external variables (image of destination) that could play an important role in creating destination awareness, thus influencing tourists' intentions to visit a destination. For example, knowledge about the image of a destination (e.g., city) held by tourists may influence their intentions to visit the city (Zhang et al., 2014). Hennessey et al. (2010) also found that advertisements, as a part of total marketing campaigns, stimulate tourists' intentions to visit and actual visits to a destination. The components in the advertisements promoting their interest in visiting a destination include special events created by tourism industries, and destination's public and private sectors (Middleton, 1988).

As Riley and van Doren (1992) commented, films made at a destination are likened to events in terms of their appeal, uniqueness, status, and timely significance. Films (or movies), like an event, increase visitation to the filming location by about 19%–74% during the year following each movie release. Special events, such as film festivals can enhance visitors' experiences by providing various movie programs, and with these positive event experiences, visitors spend more time in the hosting city (Getz & Cheyne, 2002; Connell, 2012). Chalip et al. (2003) also indicated that event advertising has an effect on destination image, which in turn increases tourists' intention to visit a destination. Similarly, Barros (2012) mentioned that events have a positive and significant impact on the probability of a visitor returning to the city. In this regard, tourist's visit intention will increase by means of event advertising, which delineates a special event (e.g., film festival) along with the hosting city. As such, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2-1: Intentions to visit the hosting city are higher when film festival information is provided with city information in the event advertisement.

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