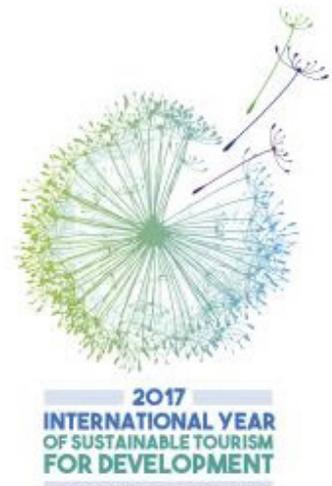




Telling the Story

Of The Power of Events During the United Nations Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.



Part 1: Executive Summary:

2017 is the United Nations (UN) Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and global not for profit, Positive Impact are telling the story of the power of events.

To achieve the UN's Global Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 agenda, there is something which the event industry enables which can not be enabled by technology, tourism, big data or any other industry. The event industry enables the one thing which human beings have, which artificial intelligence can not recreate and which is the solution to creating a world that works for everyone. The event industry enables human connection.

- James Lantham, Executive Producer of JMIC's The Iceberg

“The combination of globalisation and technology has driven the proliferation of interdependency in trade, research, innovation and connected societies. Business and professional events lie at the core of these connected societies. They provide access to the knowledge, business opportunity, education, and global talent required for communities to transition to, and compete within, the knowledge and creative society”.

Who are Positive Impact?

A global not for profit who exist to provide education and collaboration opportunities to create a sustainable event industry.

100% of our income is spent on creating a sustainable event industry. In parallel with the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Positive Impact is running a campaign with the following goals:

1. Provide 2 million education opportunities.
2. 1000 ambassadors for sustainability will be in action inspiring positive change.
3. 2 million examples of sustainability best practice will be shared.
4. Research on the social, economic and environmental impacts of business, sports and cultural events will be used at a global level.

This commentary:

The unique and potentially catalytic impact, which the event industry could have, has been explored and championed by a number of event industry bodies and throughout this commentary we have tried to signpost to and tell this story in the context of the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

This commentary is a start point. Its content includes academic input, case studies, discussion points, an imagined potential future with suggestions for policies, business practice and behaviour change.

Between August and November 2017 the Positive Impact team will provide opportunities for the event industry to provide input for the final version of this commentary which will be shared with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as a contribution to their report of the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

What is the purpose of this commentary?

1. As a starting point to telling the story of the power of events and defining the scope of the event industry's current and potential contribution to achieving the SDG's and Agenda 2030
2. To stimulate discussion within the event industry
3. To identify changes in policies, business practice and supply chain behaviour
4. To invite stakeholders to submit evidence and case studies
5. This commentary will be shared with UNWTO as a contribution to their UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper

This commentary has been written to encourage conversation, inspiration and to tell the story of the power of events.

Our data points are not perfect, our story telling could be more detailed, our suggestions for an imagined future are not exhaustive. This is not a commentary on what is right and wrong but a start point to imagine the potential role of events in achieving the sustainable development goals.

Over the next few months we will be connecting with global industry associations, sustainability champions and anyone else who wants to contribute to gather contributions. Collaboration is essential, please tell us your story about the power of events. www.positiveimpacetevents.com

What is the structure of this commentary?

1. The executive summary.
2. Key definitions, terms and a review of best practice examples of sustainability in the event industry.
3. Each thematic structure key findings will include :
Academic Commentary on a Sustainable Development Goal which matches the theme, Positive Impact Imagining the Potential Impact and key issues to consider moving forward, Case Study as an example of current evidence.
4. **Conclusion outlining key takeaways and reflecting on how the event industry can take forward the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and 2030 Agenda beyond 2017, including opportunities for immediate action and involvement in the Positive Impact campaign to tell the story of the power of events.**

In Jan 2017 The Positive Impact team began collaboration with 5 academics who each identified a sustainable development goal they would like to provide commentary on to describe the potential impact of the global event industry.

Our suggestions are in addition to the relevant contributions contained in the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper and already some core themes are clear including education, awareness raising and collaboration.

Before submitting a final commentary to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), from August and November 2017 Positive Impact will be asking the event industry to contribute by providing comment on the following questions on our website www.positiveimpacetevents.com

1. **What action do you think the event industry could take to support the 17 Sustainable Development goals being achieved?**
2. **What are the barriers the event industry is facing in taking this action**
3. **What is the future event industry which you can imagine?**
4. **What examples of best practice, ideas of initiatives or further comments do you have to share?**

How has this commentary been created?

In July 2017 the Positive Impact team (with reference to MPI's Economic Impact studies) used the commentaries to invite the reader to imagine the potential impact the industry could have and identified case studies.

In July 2017 the Positive Impact team formatted the commentary to align with the UNWTO's Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper and we matched the SDGs which we had commentary on with the UNWTO's Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper themes. We would advise readers of this commentary to read the UNWTO IY2017 discussion paper as our commentary builds upon the recommendations outlined there.

The content and layout of this commentary is structured to match the UNWTO Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper which focuses on the following thematic sections:

1. **Sustainable Economic Growth**
2. **Social Inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction**
3. **Resource Efficiency, environmental protection and climate change**
4. **Cultural values, diversity and heritage**
5. **Mutual Understanding, peace and security**

Between August and November, the Positive Impact team will ask for commentary from the wider event industry. By December 2017 the final version of this commentary will be launched. This commentary has been created with limited time and budget and is therefore only a starting point.

Part 2: Key definitions, terms and a review of past practice examples of sustainability in the event industry

While no event is the same (factors such as local infrastructure, attendee numbers and weather will create variance in every event) every event has the same intention of bringing people together for a specific purpose.

The event industry has the opportunity to create a culture for a sustainable way of working by implementing a globally recognised framework.

In 2012, ISO 20121 was launched, inspired by the London Olympic and Paralympic Games this standard takes a management system approach to creating a way of working so that at every decision point the economic, environmental and social impacts are considered and the optimal solution is chosen.

The event industry has the opportunity to measure their progress on their sustainability journey by implementing a globally recognised framework for measurement. In 2011, the Global Reporting Initiative launched an event organiser sector supplement with indicators suitable for events of all locations, shapes and sizes to report on. These indicators require event organisers and the supply chain to have a culture for sustainability in place. For example EO8 asked for ‘the % of and access to food and beverage that meets the organisers policies or local, national or international standards’

The event industry has the opportunity to use numerous checklist standards or indexes to implement sustainability best practice according to their location and event type. Examples include: APEX ASTM Standard, ICCA’s Global Destination Sustainability Index and Council for Responsible Sport Certification.

Terms and definitions:

What is the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development?

The international Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (IY2017) is a watershed moment for making tourism a catalyst for positive change.

What is Sustainable Tourism and sustainable Development?

UNWTO Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper states ‘sustainable development is about the quality of life both in the present and future’, it is about ‘expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on people and their opportunities and choices’.

The UNWTO Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper states ‘sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its future economic, social and environmental impacts addressing needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities’.

Sustainable Tourism:

- Ensure[s] viable, long-term operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation;
- Make[s] optimal use of environmental resources that form a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; and
- Respect[s] the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

Terms and definitions cont:

What is an event?

As detailed in ISO 20121 the definition of an event is a ‘planned gathering with respect to time and place where an experience is created and/ or a message is communicated’.

The event industry can be broadly explained as including three major types of events: business, sport and culture.

Business events include: meetings, exhibitions, conferences, experiential events, product launches etc.

Sport events include: Olympics, World Cups, Local team competitions etc.

Cultural events include: festivals, music events etc.

What is a Sustainable Event?

For the purpose of this commentary and using the UNWTO definition of Sustainable Tourism as a foundation, a sustainable event is ‘an event that takes full account of its future economic, social and environmental impacts addressing the needs of attendees, the industry, the environment and host communities.’

The event industry in action: #ShareAPositiveImpact.

During Positive Impact’s campaign to tell the story of the power of events, we encouraged the event industry to share their best practice on social media, using the hashtag #ShareAPositiveImpact.

Below are practical examples of the event industry in action to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.



Part 3: Key Findings

1) Sustainable Economic Growth

In the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper the UN identified the following Sustainable Development Goals as key to the area of Sustainable Economic Growth.

The Positive Impact team chose to focus on SDG 2 Zero Hunger as an example of sustainable economic growth.

This piece was written by Dr Sean Beer (Bournemouth University).



The event industry's role in economic growth is linked to SDGs 8, 9, 10 and 17

Introduction

The focus of this section is to examine how the events industry can be used as a model for public and private partnership for the achievement of Sustainable Development goals; in particular goal number two zero hunger. The UN has articulated clearly how we could solve the challenge of food poverty:

“It is time to rethink how we grow, share and consume our food. If done right, agriculture, forestry and fisheries can provide nutritious food for all and generate decent incomes, while supporting people-centred rural development and protecting the environment.

Right now, our soils, freshwater, oceans, forests and biodiversity are being rapidly degraded. Climate change is putting even more pressure on the resources we depend on, increasing risks associated with disasters such as droughts and floods. Many rural women and men can no longer make ends meet on their land, forcing them to migrate to cities in search of opportunities.

A profound change of the global food and agriculture system is needed if we are to nourish today's 795 million hungry and the additional 2 billion people expected by 2050. The food and agriculture sector offers key solutions for development, and is central for hunger and poverty eradication” (UN 2017). In terms of food, the problem is not one of global production. The world produces enough food to feed its current population.

The problem is where this food is produced and also how those with money are able to draw the food to themselves taking it from others. These two factors, production and the power to consume, are important at local and global levels.

Thoughts on events, food and hunger

When we consider the consumption of food at events the situation is not simple. Firstly we know that people who attend events consume large amounts of food and drink. But we do not know how much; it is difficult to quantify, just as it is difficult to define what an ‘event’ actually is. Secondly we know that people at events waste large amounts of food and drink, but again we do not know how much.

Much of the consumption may be ‘indulgent’ (excess to need) because people indulge at events (the anything that you can eat buffet, a standard form of event catering is a good example of something that leads to overindulgence) and indulgent food consumption may result in higher physical wastage; but in either case we do not know.

If we consumed less there might be more for those who need more; locally and internationally; but that is not necessarily the case. It might be that the food is not produced, the resources being used to produce something else that people will buy. So, as indicated above, the situation is complex.

The potential of events to alleviate hunger

The potential of events to directly alleviate hunger is open to debate. If events were designed in a way that resulted in less food consumption and less wastage, then theoretically this might decrease demand, however, as indicated above it might simply displace the power of consumption onto something else. Looking back at the ideas put forward by the UN, on the way that we grow, share and consume our food, event caterers could make a contribution to the UN development goal, based on the type of food that they procure.

They could insist on food that was from production systems that were designed to provide sustainable incomes for producers. Such products could also be tied into rural development projects. An example of this might be food certified by the Fair Trade movement or products produced by the Rainforest Alliance.

Caterers could also look to food, for example, that is produced by organic farmers and others, that might help better protect the environment. It is difficult to quantify what this increase in demand might be. It also has to be borne in mind that the catering industry is highly price sensitive and these options are generally more expensive at the point of consumption, largely because related social and environmental damage is not factored into the purchase price of our 'everyday' food. In effect we are taking out an unpaid overdraft with our communities and our environment; one that will never be paid back. The other potential knock-on effect of a move to obtain food and drink from more 'sustainable' sources, is that these options would only be available for the rich, or for those for whom food is a particularly important element of their expenditure and life.

Where events can have real impact is in education; because events are a focus for attention with which messages can be associated. Events represent an opportunity to expose people to new ideas and practices and to challenge their behaviour. Thus at an event, where you often have a captive audience, you can give people different food and drink to try. You can endeavour to explain the impact of the food and drink that they consume, on other people and the environment. This is a particularly effective method for behavioural change, when this is the primary focus of the event. However, these types of events may specifically attract those whose behaviours are already supportive to practices that are sympathetic to the UN goals. For this to be more effective practices have to be embedded into a wide range of events, so that these ideas are considered commonplace rather than exceptional. There is a certain 'chicken and egg' tension here.

Food and drink as a vehicle for communicating other messages relating to the sustainable development goals

There is a danger in looking at the potential for events to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals in a reductionist way. If there is a 'big idea' it is that the greatest impact can be seen from an holistic perspective. Everything is joined up. The Sustainable Development Goals certainly are. This exercise focuses on 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals; we could quite easily look at all 17. Even if we only examine the five goals being considered here, Food & Drink can have a direct impact on achieving those goals.

For example in terms of **Goal 4**, Quality Education, because of the focused nature of events there is an opportunity to use them as a vehicle to promote education. For example; "five pence from the cost of this bottle of water is being donated to projects to help children engage in education in the developing world."

Goal 5, Gender Equality, there is the opportunity to create positive images for all genders in the running of the catering and again messages can be linked to the food, "as a result the Fair Trade food consumed at this event we will be sponsoring a young woman through school for a year – would you like to do the same?"

Goal 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, as indicated before events can adopt more sustainable food supply chains and develop these as part of the product that they offer. Having said this they then need to be open to scrutiny. They can use this as an opportunity to give people to try new things. Events practice can challenge/reinforce behaviours for better or worse.

Goal 13 Climate Action, again as with Goal 13 events can adopt more sustainable food supply chains and develop these as part of the product that they offer.

Summary

In summary there is potential for events to support the UN Sustainable Development Goal 2, zero hunger.

The degree that they can do this directly, by decreasing the amount of food and drink that is consumed at events, and also by changing the quality of the food and drink that is consumed is debatable. The ability for events to act as an educational experience that exposes people to new ideas and challenges their existing behaviour is possibly more important. Having said this there is a need to mainstream these messages that can be presented through food and drink, not only in support of Goal 2, but in support of all the Sustainable Development Goals.

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The event industry as the solution:

Positive Impact invite you to imagine if the event industry was the solution to food poverty in the world.

We don't have perfect data to be able to present a global story but we have found data in Denmark to help us tell this story. According to a report from Halloran in 2014 every household threw away 77kg per household.

Using the MPI Economic Impact Study for meetings in Denmark, we know that there are 6.9 million meeting attendees annually.

Using our methodology we can suggest that the Danish event industry creates approximately 121,301kg of food waste per year.

Denmark has a reputation for being a leader in sustainability initiatives, so it is fair to assume that the global average would be significantly higher.

Methodology

Taking data from Denmark as an is 77 kg (1) per household per year is thrown out . Calculated by working out the average waste per meal per family member.

Assumptions:

- A household consists of 4 people
- Each member eats the same size meal and eats 3 meals a day
- Each delegate has one meal

Calculation: mass of food wasted per household / (3 meals a day * 365 days a year * 4 people in a household)

*number of delegates: (77 kg / (3 * 4 * 365))

*6.9 million = 121,301 kg

(1) Halloran, 2014. Addressing food waste reduction in Denmark

Imagine if the following happened...

- *Legal infrastructure was changed to support post event food (and other event waste) donations or inspire innovative business solutions to post event food waste*
- *Governments and business started supporting collaboration with NGO's and charities to be able to use post event food (and other event waste) or be providing innovative services to avoid food (and other event) waste*
- *Education and awareness campaigns changed perceptions and expectations within the event industry and a good event was one where the food ran out and all materials are designed with a life cycle concept*
- *Technology innovations and event industry supply chain behaviour changes meant food (and other event waste) was tracked to avoid the creation of food (and other event) waste*
- *Events are used as the creative catalyst to inspire behaviour change*

Case Study:

Here is a case study of Giants Enterprises, their events and services at AT&T Park in America and their approach to addressing Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger

The San Francisco Giants play at AT&T park and right behind the scoreboard is a garden where vegetables and fruit are grown and used for the menu's served at the two bistros located within the garden. The garden is often used as a meeting place on game days and is a great example of changing perceptions amongst the baseball fans, educating them on sustainable sourcing and growing your own food. This area is used for school visits during the week.

The San Francisco Giants also run an annual Community All-Stars Grants Programme, which grants financial awards annually to five local non-profit organisations who provide vital programmes, resources, services and support to those in need. The support they provide includes the contribution to local food banks, an example of supporting NGOs and charities creating new solutions to existing challenges.



Image Ref:

The Garden at AT&T Park

Part 3: Key Findings

2) Social Inclusiveness, Employment and Poverty Reduction

In the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion paper, the UN identified the following Sustainable Development Goals as key to the area of Social Inclusiveness, Employment and Poverty Reduction. The Positive Impact team chose to focus on SDG 5 Gender Equality as an example of Social Inclusiveness, Employment and Poverty Reduction

This piece was written by Dr Katherine Dashper (Leeds Beckett University)



The event industry's role in social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction is linked to SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10

Introduction

While progress has been made globally towards greater gender equality, women and girls continue to suffer discrimination, inequality and violence in every part of the world.

As the UN argues, 'Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.'

Achieving gender equality must, therefore, be a priority for us all. Employment is a major area of gender inequality. Globally, only 54% of working age women take part in the formal economy, compared to 81% of men. Average female participation on boards is just 14%, and the gender pay gap remains a real problem: global average earned income for women is just \$10,788, compared to \$19,873 for men.

The events industry has potential to contribute to changing these patterns. As a female-dominated industry, events offer women many opportunities to lead, innovate and inspire. Although men still continue to dominate senior leadership and board positions, initiatives are being trialled in the sector to change this and use events – as both work and experience – to challenge gender inequality.

How can events contribute to greater gender equality?

Education

Education is one of the few areas in which boys and girls achieve near parity on a global scale, and events management shows how women can benefit from and shine through education. Specialist courses at degree and post graduate level are helping professionalise the industry. Many of these courses are heavily populated by female students – in the UK most

events management undergraduate programmes are made up of at least 80% women. These young women are trained and educated to really understand the sector, and the potential of events to transform lives and communities, and it is these women who will go on to lead the industry and show that woman can make fantastic, creative and successful leaders.

Developing female potential

There are lots of women studying events management and working within the events industry, showing that woman can and do perform in demanding, global positions. But there are still not enough women at senior levels, indicating that a glass ceiling persists, even in this female-dominated sector. Why is this, when so many women enter the industry at low and mid-level positions? Research has highlighted a number of challenges to women progressing to senior management and board positions within the events industry. Long and inflexible working patterns – the work hard, play hard mentality – that characterise much work in events is not conducive to good worklife balance and is made more challenging for women, who are much more likely than men to be responsible for childcare, looking after ageing relatives, and general household tasks. Add on the need for regular travel in many event positions, and often women with caring responsibilities opt-out of pursuing high-level roles that won't work with their busy lifestyles. But it isn't only the challenges of worklife balance that hold women back - old boys' networks help men do better from networking, and shortage of female role models in high profile positions may discourage other women from believing they too can make it to the top.

But the events industry is leading the way in trying to tackle some of these problems that contribute to continued gender inequality in the workplace. Event professionals are giving their time, freely and willingly, to help women progress, through focused mentoring to offer career support, vision and sponsorship. Research into one such development programme showed tangible outcomes for the women involved. All reported increased self-confidence, better ability to plan and strategize in their careers, and improved networking abilities. For some this led to promotion, for others to a new job or the self-belief to take the leap and set up their own businesses. These supportive and enabling career development programmes can make a real difference in the lives of individual women, as one mentee explained:

“I have made leaps and bounds in terms of my confidence and I think I just understand what kind of career woman I want to be and how I want to represent myself in the industry.”

The events industry shows that women can make it to the top in a variety of roles and companies on a global scale. Focused interventions can support this, and contribute to reducing gender inequality in the workplace.

Events can empower women

The events industry provides an exciting sector for women to work in, but events can help support the goal of eradicating gender inequality in other ways as well. The Women’s March of January 2017 showed the power of events in bringing people together to stand up to misogyny, inequality and discrimination. Events can make a difference, showing solidarity in the fight against gender inequality and violence against women and girls. The importance of such events was vividly illustrated by the placard a woman in London carried in one hand, with her infant daughter in the other:

“Why I’m marching - so she will never question her selfworth.”

Recommendations

Events can contribute to reducing gender inequality. Recommendations for how the industry can maximise this potential include:

- **Supporting flexible working options**
- **Celebrating female achievement and strong female role models**
- **Adopting open and transparent recruitment and promotion strategies to avoid unintended bias**
- **Investing in female development programmes, such as mentoring, to empower women in their own careers**
- **Recognising the power of events to highlight continued gender inequality and support solidarity in overcoming all forms of discrimination**

Summary

The UN's 5th Sustainable Development Goal – to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – is important socially, culturally, economically and politically.

Women make up over half of the world's population, but still suffer discrimination in their homes and workplaces, and live with the constant threat, often reality, of violence. Achieving this goal has proven challenging, but real steps forward are being made. The events industry can play a role in this, showing that women can achieve anything in their careers, and that by bringing people together we can make a difference and create a more equal, sustainable and prosperous world for everyone.

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The event industry as the solution:

Positive Impact invite you to Imagine If the event industry was the solution to gender equality

We don't have perfect data to be able to present a global story but we have found data in the UK to help us tell this story. According to Dr Dashper's commentary, 80% of event management students in the UK in 2016 are women.

Using the MPI UK Economic Impact Study from 2011, we know that there are 423,500 full time equivalent jobs created directly due to the meetings sector. Using this information, if 80% of these jobs go to women that will be 338,000 women in the meetings industry workforce. Understanding the potential number of women in our industry in the future is an opportunity for business and government to focus on the event industry to launch, trial and support initiatives for gender equality within the workplace.

Methodology

Figures taken from commentary done by Dr Kate Dashper on behalf of Positive Impact.

Number of women in the workforce was calculated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent jobs (423,500) by 0.8 (80%) to get 338,000.

Imagine if the following happened...

- *Governments and business started supporting collaboration (such as education and mentor schemes) to support equal leadership in the world and used the event industry as a test bed for innovation.*
- *Research was undertaken and data gathered from the event industry to understand the barriers and opportunities for the top job roles to reflect the demographics across the industry.*
- *Education and awareness campaigns changed perceptions and expectations within the event industry and the industry became a leader in innovating to create careers with a work life balance and other gender equality areas including anti trafficking.*
- *Collaboration was facilitated for individuals across the global event industry who champion gender equality.*
- *Events are used as the creative catalyst to inspire behaviour change for example.*

Case Study:

Here is a case study of Meeting Professionals International and their approach to addressing Sustainable Development Goal 5 Gender Equality.

Meeting Professional's International is the world's largest association for people involved in meetings and events with around 17,000 engaged members in more than 90 chapters around the world. In 2016, they launched an certificate programme called Women in Leadership. In less than 12 months the education programme, sponsored by Visit Dallas and American Airlines has been delivered in locations worldwide.

The education experience provides women at different stages of their careers and with different backgrounds the opportunity to share their experiences, benefit from their peers learning and be empowering with tools and techniques to create their future careers. A discussion took place in a recent workshop between someone starting their career, who suggested there was no gender inequality in the industry, as she had not experienced any, and someone at the peak of her career who was able to explain the challenges of being one of a smaller number of female leaders in the industry.

This conversation highlights that an industry with a large number of female workers may not see gender equality in leadership roles, and there is an opportunity to address this with education and awareness.

Image Ref:

Women in Leadership Certificate San Francisco February 2017



Part 3: Key Findings

3) Resource Efficiency, Environmental Protection and Climate Change

In the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper the UN identified the following Sustainable Development Goals as key to the area of Resource Efficiency, Environmental Protection and Climate Change. The Positive Impact team chose to focus on SDG 13 Climate Action as an example of Resource Efficiency, Environmental Protection and Climate Change.



The event industry's role in resource efficiency, environmental protection and addressing climate change is linked to SDGs 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15

This piece was written by Dr Andrea Collins (Cardiff University).

Introduction

The organisation and staging of events can have significant environmental impacts. Some impacts are explicit, such as land use for stadia, or emissions created by visitors travelling to and from events.

Other environmental impacts can be implicit, such as carbon emissions generated from the production of food and drink or merchandise sold at events. It is becoming increasingly important for the Event Industry to appreciate the environmental impacts of events, and how to stage them in a more sustainable way. Consideration of the environmental impacts of events and taking action is central to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. An enhanced understanding of the key drivers of event environmental impacts can also help the Events Industry be more cost effective. This commentary addresses the following questions:

Why is there a need to consider the environmental impacts of events?; When should environmental impacts be considered?; and, What environmental impacts need to be considered?

It concludes with suggestions for further research.

Why consider the environmental impacts of events?

Managing, planning and staging of events involves the use of resources, and impact is commonly considered in terms of money, human resources etc. However, the planning and staging of events also involves the consumption of natural resources, such as land, water, energy. There is a need for the Event Industry to understand more fully and be more accountable for their environmental as well as the economic impacts of events, and to understand the inter-relationships between the scale of economic and environmental impacts. The measurement and monitoring of event environmental impacts can enhance our understanding of the environmental

risks facing an event, and alert the Event Industry to the threats effecting event sustainability, and how, for example, this might affect the number of visitors that can travel to an event.

Events at all scales can have a direct and indirect impact on health effects. However, where event-led consumption creates environmental impacts, these can also have associated negative health effects. For example, travel related emissions in urban areas, or increased noise levels due to traffic congestion. So, a comprehensive analysis of the costs and benefits of events should also consider any associated environmental impacts.

When consider the environmental impacts of events?

Evaluating the economic and environmental impacts tends to follow an event, and the conclusions drawn from that analysis may inform future event management strategies and the management of impacts. However, research conducted as part of the UK Sport eventIMPACTS showed that the earlier environmental factors, measurement and management are incorporated into event planning, this can result in fewer negative outcomes. In other words, environmental considerations should be considered at the earliest stages of event planning, especially in the case of one-off events, and event managers should show how economic and environmental outcomes are interconnected, and any subsequent trade-offs. This approach will enable event managers to demonstrate clearly that they are considering and addressing the wide range of costs and benefits associated with events, and make progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 13.

What environmental impacts should be considered?

Everyday human activities can have a wide range of impacts on the environment. Some consumption behaviours can be more environmentally damaging than others and compromise the ability of the earth to provide resources in the future.

Events can have a range of environmental impacts, which can vary in nature, timescale and geographical scale. During an event's lifecycle, different levels of environmental impacts can arise, for example, the construction of a stadium, hosting the event at the stadium, and developing legacy outcomes.

Prior research shows that event managers will focus on environmental impacts linked to: energy and water use, waste production and management; food and drink; and travel and transport. However, they also need to consider clearly the 'boundaries' of an events' environmental impact.

For example, environmental impacts might be: Direct impacts, local and immediate. The local environment will be directly affected by construction activity. For example, loss of biodiversity, increased carbon emissions due to increased vehicle use, increased production of waste.

Direct impacts, global and long term. Greenhouse gas emissions (climate change linked emissions) can have direct and local effects, but also long term global effects.

For example, carbon emitted during the development of event-related infrastructure, or visitor travel to/from an event (local and international travel) can contribute to long term global impacts in terms of temperature change and rising sea levels. Event managers can consider fuel and energy use associated with construction activity and visitor travel, and how this relates to Greenhouse gas emissions.

Indirect impacts. These can be global and local. For example, visitor purchase of goods (event merchandise, food and drink) and services (overnight accommodation) at an event. Producers of these good and service will also make purchases (e.g. fuel, energy, water use) to produce their outputs. This indirect activity will have environmental impacts and associated carbon emissions.

Additional impacts

One potential difficulty with assessing the environmental impacts of events is identifying the boundary of event responsibility. For example, attending the Olympic Games or Football World Cup will involve international air travel and result in carbon emissions. However, a visitor may combine the trip with a visit to friends/family, or an extended vacation. In this instance, only a proportion of the carbon emitted should be associated with the actual event. Another important consideration is 'net event impact'. For example, what spectators at the Tour de France consumed on a race day versus what they would have consumed at home. So the event would only be responsible for the 'additional' consumption and associated impact connected to being a spectator at an event.

Summary

In terms of achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 13, there is a need for the Event Industry to undertake a more comprehensive analysis of the impacts of events, and mitigate as far as possible any negative environmental impacts.

This commentary has discussed the importance of considering the environmental impacts of events, the stage at which they should be incorporated into event planning, and also what types of impacts need to be considered.

Further research is needed in the following areas: the development of a comprehensive framework that can be used by the Event Industry to assess event impacts (economic, social and environmental), inform future event planning, and compare the impacts of different types of events and over time. Alongside this, there is a need for enhanced understanding on the effectiveness of different strategies being used to mitigate event environmental impacts.

The event industry as the solution:

Positive Impact invite you to Imagine if the event industry was the solution to climate action required in the world.

We don't have perfect data to be able to present a global story but we have found data in the US to help us tell this story.

According to MPI's Economic Impact Study in 2011, 250 million overnight stays happened due to meetings in the USA. According to International Tourism Partnership Hotel Footprint Tool, the average occupied hotel room in the US produces 36.4 Kg CO₂e meaning the carbon footprint of hotel stays due to meetings was 9.1 billion Kg CO₂e in 2011.

According to the Mexican Tourism board's Economic Impact Study in 2011, meetings generated 24.3 million room nights in Mexico. According to the Hotel Footprint Tool, the average occupied hotel room in Mexico produces 61 Kg CO₂e per day, meaning the carbon footprint of the delegates having to stay overnight due to meetings was 1.4 billion Kg CO₂e.

If the event industry in Mexico identified best practice carbon saving behaviour or innovated (e.g. asking all meetings to give their attendees information on carbon saving best practice such as turning lights off), we can estimate that their footprint could be reduced to match the average levels in the USA, meaning a carbon footprint reduction of 597.78 million Kg CO₂e yearly.

Methodology

The average occupied hotel room carbon footprint was taken from the International Tourism Partnership carbon benchmark data.

The amount of carbon produced in the year was calculated by multiplying this average by the number of room nights. This assumes that each delegate had their own room. Number of nights was taken from the American and Mexico Meeting Professionals International economic impact reports for meetings.

Imagine if the following happened...

- *Governments, global NGO's and others focused their attention on gathering and sharing data on carbon footprinting from the event industry in addition to their focus on individual tourist behaviour. (Currently data is shared by global hotel chains to International Tourism Partnership and this data could be used as a start point to understand the impact of the event industry). The rationale for this focus would be that an event can have a significant number of individuals attending the event and their behaviour can be influenced by a small number of people (ie the people who choose the hotel or who communicate to the event attendees) as oppose to the behaviour of an individual tourist.*
 - *Collaboration was facilitated for individuals across the global event industry to create an industry working group to understand how to use global frameworks and measurement systems to address climate action at every stage of an event.*
 - *Collaboration was facilitated across the global event industry to create roadmaps so events and their supply chain are empowered to address climate change.*
 - *The story of the value and purpose of events was told to raise awareness within and outside the event industry on the industry's vital role in acheiving the Sustainable Development Goals and to mitigate effects of climate change so people understood the vital role of people continuing to come together face to face.*
 - *Events are used as the creative catalyst to inspire behaviour change.*
-

Case Study:

Here is a case study for Interface Inc, and their approach to addressing Sustainable Development Goal 13 Climate Action.

To celebrate the company going into their 25th year, Interface Inc decided to have a run a “One World, One family, A Celebration” event for a week in April 1997, inviting all their different subsidiary companies from around the world.

It was to be hosted at the Grand Wailea Hotel and Spa in Maui. Around this time, the founder of the company, Ray.C Anderson had set up a EcoDream team who were skeptical, believing the hotel to be too grand and that the locals would not want them there. It was decided that the event should be about working with the local community and the hotel, as well as their employees to make sure the event was a sustainable as possible.

This involved attendees making an effort to cut their environmental impact through tasks such as reusing towels and eco soap, as well as brainstorming ideas with the community about how they could leave a lasting legacy. The event educated not only the attendees but also the guests and hotel staff on the impact of climate change, and cutting their carbon footprint significantly during the trip. Additionally, it also left a lasting legacy in the form of the The Hoòkupu Trust, a community fund.

This case study example was taken from the book ‘Mid Course Correction’ written by Ray Anderson

Part 3: Key Findings

4) Cultural Values, Diversity and Heritage

In the Year of Sustainability Tourism for Development Discussion Paper the UN identified the following Sustainable Development Goals as key to the area of Cultural Values, Diversity and Heritage

The Positive Impact team chose to focus on SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production.



This piece was written by James Musgrave (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Dr Steve Henderson (Leeds Beckett University).

The event industry's role in promoting cultural values, heritage and diversity is linked to SDGs 8, 11 and 12

Introduction

We are experts at consuming. Continuing to consume ever more and pride ourselves on our ability to devour new and innovative products and experiences. And this is no different in the event industry.

For example, consider waste as an indicator of our consumption patterns. According to WRAP only 15% of waste is recycled in the events industry. In 2013, it was estimated that the meetings sector alone produced over 1 billion tonnes of waste worldwide. That's a lot of waste. Now, put this into context. As we continue to encourage individuals to consume our event experiences, we simply use more resources. But imagine that as event managers we could help stop this pattern repeating itself. And imagine if events were the catalyst in changing people's habits and behaviours towards more responsible consumption patterns. Well, it is possible and it does happen.

For example, UK festivals use the 'Love Your Tent' campaign to encourage festival goers to take home their tents and exhibition centres are utilising campaigns such as 'World Obesity Federation's Healthy Venue Awards programme' to encourage healthier dining options. But how can this be done more systematically and without customers considering this to be a hindrance to their enjoyment of their event?

The problem in trying to change consumption patterns

The key to making systematic changes in consumption at events about how we present value to our customers. But before we look at the value proposition, we need to identify why and how our consumers make their decisions. Let's put it another way. Our customers (delegates, attendees, buyers) make choices about travel, eating, drinking and possibly accommodation in order to attend our events. To complicate things, they often have pre-formed attitudes that shape their

behaviour and dictate how they travel, what they eat, drink and where they stay. In part, these behaviours link back to what they see as socially acceptable, what they have done in the past and what is easier for them at the event. In other words, it is perceived value – maximising what they have gained or minimising its cost. Trying to change these perceptions and, hence, their consumption patterns is not an easy ask.

Events can change patterns of consumption

Certainly, there are challenges to changing consumption patterns. But we, as event managers are in a privileged position and can alter this behaviour using several strategies. Most importantly, we have control of the event space and can alter the setting in which consumption takes place. For example, we can alter the features and layout of the room so that customers have easy access to water fountains and healthier snack items. The event space can also be positioned using audio and visual prompts to reinforce responsible choices. For example, Water Aid uses volunteers, placards, kiosks and education points positioned at key points at festival sites. These installations assist volunteers to explain the importance of sanitation and hygiene for women and girls in developing countries, whilst at the same time, handing out tap water to thirsty revellers. And this leads us on to another technique available to us – the power of the group – social pressure.

Most our customers will experience events with others such as colleagues, friends and family. These groups are important as they can establish behaviours that are socially accepted.

Within organisations, we have used dress code to help form that group and subtly enforce rules in a way that makes them acceptable within the group. Our customers may be encouraged by this but may wish to conform to behaviour in a more aspirational way.

For example, sports events have encouraged more recycling by ensuring the professional athletes promote change and reinforce recycling as a socially acceptable activity. We can also use events to reward responsible consumption with value in a more overt way.

For example, volunteers at festivals help customers sort out their litter and separate it before it goes into recycling bins and then give out stickers as a thank you in contributing to a 'no trace' strategy. Meeting planners thank delegates who use virtual lanyards rather than printed ones. And attendees at concerts get discounted travel tickets when they travel by public transport.

These initiatives all add up. It contributes to a sense of something bigger and reinforces a moral compass to more socially accepted behaviour at events. Once again, we can only do this as we are able to control the environment within which the behaviour occurs. In other words – the event.

So how do we make sustainable consumption easier and add value at the same time?

First, we can consider the value a particular behaviour provides for an individual customer. Let's go back to the earlier example where healthier food and drink is easier to get to and usually the first choice in the meeting room. Encouraging this 'convenience' approach adds value to the experience as it reduces cost in terms of effort to the customer.

Second, value can be added by incorporating a feeling that effort spent is not only helpful to others but enhances in social status for the individual. A notable example of this is Hotels for Hope, where a dollar is donated to charity for every hotel night booked. This exchange provides a wider philanthropic benefit to society, whilst at the same time, provides a sense of moral satisfaction and status for your customer.

In other examples, someone attending Christmas Markets may see the financial value gained by returning mugs that were sold with a deposit. Some delegates may see the personal value in being served fresh food in a VIP style seating area. Clearly to change people there needs to be a 'what's in it for me' intrinsic approach as this is a value exchange – 'you do this and I'll get that'. Third, sights, sounds, smells and action all reinforce a longlasting memory of the experiential aspect of any event.

And this immersive practice can bring about some change to consumption patterns. There are the simple actions – asking delegates to participate in a community project such as 'Beach Cleaning', which can alter long-term perceptions as participants see the negative outcome of behaviour. Then there are the more extreme.

Placing locally sourced fruit trees in conference centres so delegates can pick their own lunch provides an action that embeds the preferred behaviour. Finally, using different perfumes in exhibition booths or air conditioning units can convey vast emotions of feelings – desire, relaxation, power and recollection. Used in tandem, these experiential initiatives can link to other activities that reinforce sustainable choices.

In summary, changing consumption patterns to more sustainable requires influencing the event space. Yet knowing how your consumers make choices before and during the event can help them to modify or abandon their current behaviour.

Summary and recommendations for future practice

These examples show that consumer consumption can be influenced by the choices and behaviours learned and brought to events; that behaviour has intrinsic and extrinsic points of influence; and that the physical environment can influence consumption.

These examples show that as event planners and venue managers we can manage all these aspects. But, of course, these are isolated examples and not common across our industry. Further research is needed to establish the most effective techniques used across the event industry to support the achievement of responsible consumption and production.

First, we need to test some assumptions. We need to agree, as an industry, which new behaviours are the right long-term behaviours. Once the right behaviours have been agreed, the right techniques need to be implemented.

Changing individual consumption patterns is extremely challenging and cannot be done by using marketing slogans. These multi-faceted social problems require a multi-faceted

solution. One that integrates event agencies/organisation, suppliers, support services and other stakeholders to manage the event space. Once everyone has agreed on a strategy, then we can really test the influence change behaviour technique has on consumers. What is more exciting is that if managed correctly, the techniques used at events could have an indirect effect on consumption patterns both at home and at work in a manner that is truly life changing.

The event industry as the solution:

Positive Impact invite you to Imagine if the event industry was the solution to responsible consumption and production.

We don't have perfect data to be able to present a global story but we have found data in the US to help us tell this story. An event is a controlled environment so there are many ways which an event can implement initiatives around responsible consumption and production. For this example, we will focus on meat used in meals.

According to MPI's US Economic Impact Study, there were 225 million attendees to meetings in the US in 2011. We will assume that each attendee ate one meal containing meat. If those meals were changed to meatless meals, it would save approximately 611 million Kg of Carbon.*

Methodology

**320 miles of car travel saved in carbon yearly if one portion of meat was cut out per week (2) /52 weeks in a year x number of attendees for the year x number of kg of carbon released per mile on average (3):*

*(320/52)*224,947,000*0.441 = 610,544,824.615*

(2) <http://www.earthday.org/take-action/about-meatless-monday/>

(3) <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/greenhouse-gas-emissionstypical-passenger-vehicle-0>

Imagine if the following happened...

- *The story of the value and purpose of events was told to raise awareness within and outside the event industry on the industry's vital role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and to mitigate effects of a global downturn or the effects of global terrorism incidents so people understood the vital role of people continuing to come together face to face.*
 - *Government and business told the story of the business benefits of events so people understood the vital role of people continuing to come together face to face.*
 - *Education and awareness campaigns changed perceptions and expectations within and outside the event industry and the industry became known for providing opportunities for people to come together peacefully and face to face connectivity was a sign of a strong institution.*
 - *Governments and business developed strategies to create a local event industry in line with supporting their local and national development plans.*
 - *Research was undertaken and data gathered from the event industry to demonstrate the extent that knowledge exchange and collaboration takes place during face to face meetings and how this contributes to peace, justice and strong institutions in the world.*
-

Case Study:

Here is a Case Study for the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and their approach to addressing Sustainable Development Goal 12, Responsible Consumption and Production.

AASHE specializes in improving sustainability in the higher education sector and decided to find ways to incorporate these green practices into their event planning. They hold an annual conference and Expo attended by over 200 sustainability officers from Universities and Colleges.

They hold meatless Mondays during this, which the attendees enjoy. Kimberly Smith, the association's director of conferences and events said, "People are more health conscious, and they want to continue it at our conference. Of course, everyone is very aware about sustainability. They expect to see us follow it through. We have to set the standard for them."

This initiative also helps with planning the menu, since 25-30% of attendees are lactose intolerant, vegetarian, vegan or glucose intolerant. They also send out the menu to attendees beforehand to check for any other allergies. They plan to go fully meatless at their 2017 conference.

This case study example was taken from Meetings and Conventions Blog.

Part 3: Key Findings

5) Mutual Understanding, Peace and Security

In the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion paper the UN identified the following Sustainable Development Goals as key to the area of Mutual Understanding, Peace and Security.

The Positive Impact team chose to focus on SDG 16, Mutual Understanding, Peace and Security.



This piece was written by Dr Suzanne Dowse (Canterbury Christ Church University) and Dr Thomas Fletcher (Leeds Beckett University).

The event industry's role in promoting mutual understanding, peace and security is linked to SDG 16.

Introduction

Across both the developing world and within the UK, events are increasingly presented as a means of facilitating a range of social benefits for the host country and its communities.

Amongst other things such benefits include: sustainable economic development, urban regeneration and enhanced national identity as well as facilitating community cohesion and well-being.

However, events and mega sports events in particular, are also known for the negative consequences they may also have for the host country and its communities. For example, they are frequently associated with corruption (Qatar 2022 FIFA Football World Cup), soaring economic costs (Athens 2004 Olympic Games), environmental degradation (Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics), securitisation (London 2012 Olympic Games) and gentrification (Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games). Alongside these issues sits an established history of social justice concerns, including, for example, the violation of human rights (Beijing 2008 Olympic Games) which currently has a low profile in the contemporary events literature.

This notwithstanding, the prevalence of negative social outcomes has drawn attention to the ethical responsibilities of event owners who award their events on the basis of a “competitive” bidding process. Aligned to this interest, this commentary is concerned with exploring debates around ethical hosting, especially in the context of developing nations. Broadly, we are concerned with asking whether it is appropriate for developing nations to be awarded mega-event hosting opportunities when event owners know that, in these countries, community rights and interests are likely to be placed at risk, not least by the diversion of public resources away from social priorities, such as housing, education and healthcare.

The ‘known unknowns’ of event hosting

The established nature of social justice concerns associated with mega-event hosting has not led to an agreed mechanism for dealing with them. One way forward, as promoted by social justice groups, is for mega-event owners to establish a human and social rights framework capable of protecting and promoting the interests of those impacted by event delivery. Yet, while this has generated some positive progress, for example, FIFA has recognised the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, meaningful outcomes are yet to be identified and the sincerity of event owners to see past their own, predominantly financial, interests remains in doubt.

In part, the lackadaisical approach to establishing mechanisms to promote and protect the interests of local communities could be attributed to weaknesses in the current knowledge base about the actual outcomes of events; particularly for specific groups, such as children. Given that this information is required for informed public policy decision-making, this is a significant issue. Ostensibly, this knowledge gap results from the dominance of the economic justification for hosting which has historically absorbed evaluative attention. However, another aspect of this knowledge is likely to be grounded in the difficulties of measuring important, but intangible, social outcomes like ‘wellbeing’ and community cohesion.

The current lack of clarity over the potential benefits of event hosting is rendered additionally problematic by the increasing number of mega-events awarded to developing countries which generally lack the resources and infrastructure than their developed peers. These countries are also frequently absent of the economic, political and social stability of the traditional industrialised host which inevitably complicates the achievement of positive outcomes because it makes hosting more risky which inevitably has resource implications.

The riots witnessed in the run up to the Rio 2016 Olympic Games are a case in point. While understandable, the key issue underpinning concerns about the positive potential of event hosting is that the owners and organisers prioritise event delivery, regardless of the social problems that might exist, or be compounded by, doing so. Problematically, while the effect of hosting is unlikely to be neutral, little attention is paid to how and how far positive outcomes may be countered by the negative outcomes of the pressures of delivery.

For example, events may risk exacerbating social instability through the way in which the diversion of resources from other social priorities is interpreted as a manifestation of the subordination of some social groups over others. Delivery priorities may also result in the suppression of civil rights as perceived in the relocation of community groups in South Africa and Brazil for the 2010 and 2014 FIFA Football World Cups respectively.

When these issues are drawn together, that the interests of event hosts, and their communities – particularly those in the developing world – are generally inadequately protected or promoted in hosting processes, appears inevitable. This is unacceptable, for while it is recognised that hosting is strategically complex, there is no defensible reason why operational decisions should be exempt from meaningful processes designed to protect social rights and interests. Similarly, there appears to be no justifiable reason why event owners should not be responsible for ensuring the implementation of such safeguarding measures.

What might be done to ensure ethical, responsible and sustainable event hosting?

1) Establish from the outset a clear rationale for event hosting with associated evidence and evaluation frameworks

If the true aims of hosts are clear and the reasons why they may or may not be delivered on are identified, event owners and governments can be made accountable for the impacts of hosting and also for the degree to which outcomes match the promises made.

2) Promote public engagement in the period leading up to a bid and subsequent event planning

Given the significant financial investment required to successfully host a mega-event, it is absolutely essential that all stakeholders are engaged meaningfully in this process, which includes local communities (and sub-sections thereof) who should be empowered to understand and appreciate the opportunities and pitfalls associated. The growing public engagement in the decision to bid evident in the use of referendums (Krakow, 2014, Boston 2015 and Hamburg 2015) confirm the appetite for this and that support is not guaranteed. However, while this development is encouraging, it has not extended to all hosts nor is it clear that the ability to influence relevant decision-making processes extends into the event preparation period.

3) Better acknowledgment of individual national contexts

Whether a nation (developing or otherwise) should host a mega-event is a legitimate question and the answer ought to be made on the basis of an informed understanding of the ways in which individual contexts will be impacted by the delivery processes associated with the event. In other words, it is important for event organisers to empower agreed and prospective hosts and their communities by sharing the experiences of hosting – both good and bad - and ensuring that lessons learned are appropriately framed as variable and nuanced according to individual circumstances.

4) Manage expectations

How the demands and expectations of stakeholders in hosting projects are managed is an important area that has not generally received a great deal of academic attention. This is despite the fact that such relations and expectations are an important feature of delivery outcomes and the overall hosting experience. Indeed, the paucity of information about the relationships between hosts and key stakeholders raises a number of ethical issues regarding the capacity of host governments to retain control of the parameters of event delivery in ways that facilitate national interests.

5) Avoid exploitation

Organisational inexperience in the management of mega-projects and potential weaknesses in the governmental structures of developing nations, increase risks of exploitation by event owners through, for example, disadvantageous contracting processes. It is imperative that the demands event owners and governing bodies place on hosts are managed transparently, thereby enabling meaningful scrutiny and challenge.

Conclusion

The historic tendency for events to be hosted by developed countries means that much of what is known reflects delivery in these contexts.

However, there is a substantial difference in developed versus developing national contexts which makes a simple transfer of lessons learned and resultant expectations from one to the other inappropriate. This does not mean that countries at a lower stage of development should be excluded from hosting projects, this would be wholly inappropriate.

However, it does mean that frameworks should be established which ensure that decisions to bid and award are grounded in an informed understanding of individual national contexts and the measures required in the delivery process to both safeguard and promote the rights and interests of all community groups.

The event industry as the solution:

Positive Impact invite you to Imagine if the event industry was the solution for peace, justice and strong institutions.

We don't have perfect data to be able to present a global story but we have found data in the UK to help us tell this story.

According to MPI economic Impact study 1.3 million meetings were held in the UK in 2011, in more than 10,000 venues. In the US during 2011, 1.8 million events happened with 22.5 million attendees.

The event industry understands that every time people come together and meet there is an opportunity for collaboration, cooperation, an opportunity to share viewpoints and to listen, a unique opportunity for human connection and that is how we will meet the Sustainable Development Goals. With this perspective this means that in 2011 there were 1.3 million opportunities to promote peace in the UK and 22.5 million people experiencing the opportunity to peacefully collaborate in the U.S.

Methodology

Figures taken from UK and US Meeting Professionals International economic impact studies.

Imagine if the following happened...

- *The story of the value and purpose of events was told to raise awareness within and outside the event industry on the industry's vital role in achieving the SDGs and to mitigate effects of a global downturn or the effects of global terrorism incidents so people understood the vital role of people continuing to come together face to face.*
- *Government and business told the story of the business benefits of events so people understood the vital role of people continuing to come together face to face.*
- *Education and awareness campaigns changed perceptions and expectations within and outside the event industry and the industry became known for providing opportunities for people to come together peacefully and face to face connectivity was a sign of a strong institution.*
- *Governments and business developed strategies to create a local event industry in line with supporting their local and national development plans.*
- *Research was undertaken and data gathered from the event industry to demonstrate the extent that knowledge exchange and collaboration takes place during face to face meetings and how this contributes to peace, justice and strong institutions in the world.*

Case Study:

Here is a Case Study for VMware and their approach to addressing Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

On June 14th 2017 VMware organised for its employees to take part in a Service Learning event. Empowering employees to work with local community groups to improve their community sites provided a unique opportunity for employees and local communities to collaborate together, form peaceful relationships, learn from each other and produce results together. The inspired VMware employees worked to improve the community spaces while at the same time an engaging with the community.

They achieved more than the local community expected, donating their tools to the community for future use and provided schools with classroom packs. The community groups described the collaboration as “jaw dropping”. VMware plan thousands of events annually with the intention of delivering their events in a way that leaves their event location better than they found it.

Image Ref:

VMware

This is an example of how events give people the opportunity for human connection and collaboration and create a foundation for people to serve, learn and be inspired with the intention of moving business forward while bringing peace in the world.



Part 4: Conclusion

Telling the Story of The Power of Events During the United Nations Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

The purpose of this commentary is to provide a start point to inspire input from the event industry on the unique and potentially catalytic impact the event industry could have on achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In this commentary, in addition to academic input, case studies and impact estimates we have offered over 24 suggestions on imagining an event industry which is the foundation for achieving the sustainable development goals, which are a roadmap to creating a world that works for everyone.

Our suggestions are in addition to the relevant contributions contained in the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Discussion Paper and already some core themes are clear including education, awareness raising and collaboration.

Before submitting a final commentary to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), from August and November 2017 Positive Impact will be asking the event industry to contribute by providing comment on the following questions on our website www.positiveimpacetevents.com

1. **What action do you think the event industry could take to support the 17 Sustainable Development goals being achieved?**
2. **What are the barriers the event industry is facing in taking this action**

3. **What is the future event industry which you can imagine?**
4. **What examples of best practice, ideas of initiatives or further comments do you have to share?**

Events provide unique experiences for human connectivity and have the potential to inspire behaviour change. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals will only be met by people collaborating, innovating and communicating. Events are vital. They facilitate knowledge exchange, enable unpredictable collaborations and inspire creativity. Collaboration is essential and we look forward to hearing your stories, ideas, challenges and comments about the power of events.

Next Steps and how to get involved

Between August and November, the Positive Impact team will ask for commentary from the wider event industry.

By December 2017 the final version of this commentary will be launched. This commentary has been created with limited time and budget and is therefore only a start point. If you would like to provide any content or research, information can be found at: www.positiveimpacetevents.com

We are committed to gathering contributions from everyone.

If you are inspired by the approach we are taking and would like to support this work by becoming an ambassador or by sponsoring the campaign information can be found at: www.positiveimpacetevents.com/unyear-of-sustainable-tourism-for-development

The findings of this commentary will be used to shape future Positive Impact campaigns, we are committed to giving

everyone the opportunity to contribute. If you would like to be involved or have ideas to share please see:

www.positiveimpacetevents.com

We also encourage everyone to share their best practice examples anytime on twitter, facebook and instagram using **#sharepositiveimpact** so we can promote and curate examples of sustainable events in action.

Supporters:

This commentary is only possible due to the support of our sponsors and we thank all our sponsors for supporting our campaign to tell the story of the power of events during the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. To see our complete list of sponsors please visit

www.positiveimpactevents.com/unyear-of-sustainable-tourism-for-development

Reed Exhibitions & IBTM Events (Platinum Sponsor)

“Reed Exhibitions and IBTM Events are proud to support Positive Impact’s research on ‘Telling the Story of the Power of Events’;

How events can support our reaching of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We know that gathering data and sharing insights is vital to understand the future of the global event industry. We believe that events can have a positive social, economic and environmental impact, and the more our government, businesses and communities understand this, the more events will be used to make a positive difference in the world. This commentary will support the global conversation about the power of events, and through IBTM Events, we will be sharing education and opportunities for action to tell the story about the power of events. In addition, we have undertaken research across the Reed Exhibitions portfolio to understand the positive impacts of our exhibition events.”

- Kerry Prince, Portfolio Director, Reed Exhibitions & IBTM Events

Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors’ Bureau (Research Sponsor)

“The Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau believes research is crucial to help destinations develop their sustainability strategy and offer destinations innovative ideas to accelerate further development of sustainable meetings and events.

Sustainability is a way of life in Greater Palm Springs, a beautiful and popular Southern California destination. Environmentally-conscious initiatives include the use of wind turbine farms and solar fields; successful water conservation efforts; farm-to-table dining; electric vehicle recharging stations and sustainable public transportation, including Tesloop service to and from many cities. The destination is also home to the first carbon-neutral resort in North America: Two Bunch Palms. Greater Palm Springs has also been a longtime supporter of healthy and fair working environments and equality for the LGBT community.”

- Vicki Higgins, Vice President of Destination of Development, Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau



Appendix:

This piece of work was only possible because of financial support from our sponsors and encouragement from our association, media, university friends and many passionate sustainability champions in our industry who have supported Positive Impact's work as a not for profit dedicated to creating a sustainable event industry. If you would like to be part of the community championing the work we do please contact us. Thank you.

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As a starting point to encourage contribution and conversation this piece of work has been shared with the following to request their commentary or for them to share this request with their communities. We know we have not reached everyone so if you are not on the list please contact us so we can include you at info@positive-impact-events.com

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