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THE EFFECTS OF E-MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ON BIG EVENT MANAGEMENT

Abstract

In the light of selection of 2010 European Culture Capital, Istanbul will have a valuable and distinguished opportunity to promote and marketing itself. In order to have great success and profit, especially all the high rank of companies in tourism sector in Istanbul are aware of the fact that they have to keep up with the technological advances in the name of e-marketing towards all target audiences.

For scrutinizing the current situation of marketing in Turkish tourism sector and making notable comments for active usage of e-marketing tools, in this study, we studied on the web-site features of Istanbul 2010 project.

This paper aims at researching the effectiveness of e-marketing tools in the times of proactive marketing communications for preparing exclusively big event managements such as European Culture Capital.

Key Words: E-marketing, event marketing, Istanbul European Capital of Culture 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

Events such as festivals, Olympic games, carnivals, cultural and sportive attractions are major elements of tourism especially for the cities (Jefferson and Lickorish,1988). The attractions are grouped according to their sizes. Allen et al. (2002) classified attractions as; mega events, hallmark events, major events, MICE industry with congress and meetings and local in five categories.

Mega events are large scale events and take place in the world media. They affect all the countries and in general, there is need for large financial and human resources. (Douglas et al,2001). World Fairs, Olympic games are considered to be in this category. These type of events are categorized as “must to see” organizations and large amount of budget is needed.

Hallmark events are integrated with the specific zone, city or region and their names became almost synonym with the place of the organization. The classical examples are; Rio de Janeiro Carnival, Munich October Fest etc.

Major events, with their size and the media concern, attract a considerable amount of visitors. Formula 1, Wimbledon tennis tournament and most international sport contest are considered in this category. As Cats Musical, international cultural and art events are also considered as major events also.

MICE Industry named after meetings, incentive tours and conventions and also effects the tourism movements in the cities.

Local organizations do not match none of the categories but as they affect domestic tourism, they are considered as important events.

The event types mentioned above have considerable effects on the society’s economic, social and cultural developments that’s why they are rated as important marketing tools for the area.

Douglas et al. (2001), and McDonnell (2002) determined economic, environmental, political, cultural and social effects of these events. For tourism, in order to develop the destination images, these organizations’ positive effects cannot be neglected. On one side, it should not be taken into consideration that international organizations have also some negative

environmental and social effects, on the other side they provide notable economic benefits. (Allen et al., 2002)

Morgan et al (2002) list the effects of large scale events the cities' tourism activities as follows; increase in visits to a specific area and location, positive economic development, increase in the job opportunities, increase in destination knowledge, play a catalyst role for the development, help lengthening of the tourism season, positive approach in the sense of politics, increase in the community's pride.

The traditional 4P is applied (product-price-place-promotion) among other modern technological marketing communication activities of the events. In the event marketing literature, promotion means all the communication efforts which are made to present an event to its targeted markets (Allen et al.1999).

As Getz mentions, promotional activities are important to increase the general knowledge about the event, to create a positive image, to announce the details of the event to the audience and to remember the event and to create demand for the event (Allen et al.,1999).

In the event industry, the classical models of communication steps which tend to be based on; planning, situational analysis, objective setting, marketing communication strategy setting, development of promotional mix , budgeting , implementation and evaluation are applied. (Cooper, 1997; Tucker Knapp, 2001; Fill, 2002)

European Capital of Culture Event

The idea of having a European Capital of Culture was first put forward in 1985 when Melina Mercouri was Greek Minister for Culture. From 1985 to 2000, one city from the countries which were members of the European Union was selected each year as the European Capital of Culture. From the year 2000, the title of European Capital of Culture has been given to more than one city each year and also to cities in countries that were candidates for EU membership.

According to the Palmer Report prepared for the EU, cities have multiple objectives in this activity such as; to run a program of cultural activities and art events, to attract visitors and to enhance pride and self-confidence. Other objectives for some cities included expanding the local audience for culture, making improvements to cultural infrastructure, developing relationships with other European cities and regions, promoting creativity and innovation and developing the careers/talents of local artists.

The list of the selected cities between the years 1985-2007 is as follows: Athens (1985), Florence (1986), Amsterdam (1987), Berlin (1988), Paris (1989), Glasgow (1990), Dublin (1991), Madrid (1992), Antwerp (1993), Lisbon (1994), Luxembourg (1995), Copenhagen (1996), Thessalonica (1997), Stockholm (1998), Weimar (1999), Avignon (2000), Bergen (2000), Bologna (2000), Brussels (2000), Krakow (2000), Helsinki (2000), Prague (2000), Reykjavik (2000), Santiago de Compostela (2000), Porto (2001), Rotterdam (2001), Bruges (2002), Salamanca (2002), Graz (2003), Genoa (2004), Lille (2004), Cork (2005), Patras (2006), Sibiu (2007).

As mentioned on the previous chapters, city tourism is getting more and more important. To take a part from this tourism type, cities should promote themselves. As promotional activities there is a lot to do; but first of all cities should create an attractive atmosphere and be able to reflect what they have to travellers. In that sense, being selected as a capital of culture is an important opportunity. If the selected city is well prepared for this event and if it is marketed appropriately, there is no reason not to benefit from this event.

The Selection of Istanbul as the European Capital of Culture

The decision taken in 2000 enabled the title of European Capital of Culture (ECOC) to be used for the cities which were not members of the European Union after the year 2005. This created the opportunity for Istanbul to apply for the title of European Capital of Culture 2010. In the same year the Initiative Group which includes 13 non-governmental organizations began to work. The Initiative Group has been expanded through the inclusion of members of the city's cultural and artistic communities, academicians, administrators and representatives of NGOs, with the Prime Ministry, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Culture and Tourism,

the Istanbul Governorship and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor's Office. The group prepared a dossier for Istanbul to be chosen as European Capital of Culture that was titled as "Istanbul: City of the Four Elements" and presented to the Council of Europe General Directorate for Education and Culture on 13 December 2005. The dossier is titled as "city of four elements" because it's inspired from the idea that the universe was created from the four basic elements; air, earth, water and fire.

In the presentation of Istanbul, the city's multicultural and cosmopolitan history and especially the ancient combined with the modern were mentioned. "Istanbul will use participatory and grassroot approaches to artistic and cultural productions, thereby bringing especially disenfranchised voices and groups from across Europe to Istanbul to start a process of thinking and feeling together." (Istanbul 2010 PowerPoint Presentation) The main targeted audience is people living in all parts of the city; especially people living in Istanbul who do not participate in the cultural and social activities of the city. Also young people and women were mentioned as important targets for the event. Furthermore, the improved cooperation between the state, the private and the third parties was mentioned. In April 2006, the Selection Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2010 selected Istanbul as one of the three Cultural Capitals for the year 2010, with Essen and Pécs. Istanbul's bid was selected because of its innovative program building on the roots of the city. Its bottom-up process and strong involvement of civil society were applauded and its sustainable character and intention to reach out to all parts of the local population were viewed as positive endeavors. (Report of the Selection Meeting for the European Capitals of Culture 2010, 2006).

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

E-Marketing of Events

Werthner and Klein (2002) state that consumer behavior is changing, in tourism as in other industries. As part of a general trend, tourists;

- Ask for "better" service,
- Want more specific offers, both with regard to content as well as to the entire arrangements,

- Ask for better information, about the product itself as well as to the entire arrangements,
- Are becoming more mobile and critical but less loyal,
- Are more price sensitive, comparing more and more offers,
- Tend to make more and but shorter vacations,
- Decide later leading to decreased time span between booking and consumption.

The traditional marketing tools are still applicable for the event industry, although, in the 21st century, the web gained tremendous importance in the business area as well as in the marketing applications. Internet provides an excessive speed in order to reach the targeted audience, and a cheaper way to advertise from the get-go. Nowadays, in the marketing literature apart from customers, virtual customers are also considered as important targeted markets.

According to the World Stats statistics website, in 2007, in Europe, the increase of internet usage from between the years 2000 and 2007 is 231 % and in 2007 almost half of the European population is considered as internet user. (www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm) According to the Turkish Statistics Institute's 2007 data, in Turkey, the percentage of internet usage in Turkey is 18.94% and 90.54% of the turkish users utilize the internet to get information, 80.74% for the communications, 52.27% for education and 26.18% to communicate with governmental institutions. (www.tuik.gov.tr)

As the internet gained importance, the marketing activities through the internet should be developed in any area of business including the event industry. Hoyle (2002) lists the advantages of web marketing for an event as follows: brand building; by increasing the knowledge of the event, direct marketing; by cutting the mailing and printing costs and by allowing rapid changes and individual messages, online sales; by rapid transactions, customer support; by answering to questions rapidly, marketing research, by getting informed about the customer, content publishing services; by enabling the company information to a wide audience.

Masterman and Wood (2006) list e-marketing communications tools as; website and brochureware, internet advertising, Internet public relations, E-mail marketing, E-viral marketing,

Internet communities, database marketing, mobile telecommunications and digital television and radio. Apart from these tools, blogs and blogging concepts and their usage progressed and gained importance in order to create forums and to share ideas.

Website and brochureware

The websites and brochurewares for the event industry embrace a variety of stakeholders which expect different services from them; the attendees or visitors need the detailed information about the event, the promoters look for the past data, the information about the facilities and the location, the media searches for the press releases and the sponsors. Masterman and Wood (2006) define the most important aspect of the internet marketing communications as “to ensure all relevant websites are provided with accurate information on the event in a usable and consistent format.”

Nowadays, websites and brochureware are useful tools due to the following advantages; inexpensive way to reach the targeted audience, easy to measure the effect for example easy to count number of site’s visitors or easy to see from which site the visitors come from and to which site they move to, with a registration link it is easy to get the visitors data etc., the rapid content changes enable the visitors to get the updated information, comparing to the other marketing tools the websites are considered as much more interactive tools.

It is obvious that marketing communication activities in the event marketing are implemented in order to reach the existing and the potential event goers to motivate them to participate to the planned event. The websites, with their multifunctional nature, are considered as powerful activities. Their disadvantages do also exist as there is need to promote the website and there are no controls on them which may start visitors think about the misled information.

Hoyle (2002) lists the web site marketing guideline as follows;

- List the web address for the event on high traffic search engines and directories,
- Become listed on meeting and event calendars,
- Consider exchanging links, sponsorships or advertising with other web sites,
- Distribute news releases online,

- Include the event's web address everywhere you can,
- Identify e-mail discussion groups or lists related to your industry and become an active participant,
- Use the signature file at the end of the e-mail to provide the contact information as well as the event information,
- Exchange links with exhibitors, so their customers can become informed about the event.

Internet advertising

Banner, pop-up, click-through, advertisements on the related websites and search engines are some of the internet advertising tools. The benefits of the internet advertising can be, targeting the relevant customer groups precisely and search engine listings are more credible than any other media. However, the disadvantage, especially for the pop-ups, is that, they do not close easily and block other information. That's why people tend to skip them.

Internet Public Relations

Any kind of news concerning the event should be published on the event's web site and in the other related web pages in order to keep informed the related target groups. As nowadays, internet is considered as the fastest way of transmitting information, any kind of news about the events should be shared in the internet arena. Although, in the internet PR, appropriate information can be provided by the event organization, the information or negative publicity cannot be controlled.

E-mail marketing

E-mail marketing is considered as the electronic form of direct marketing. E-mail marketing is used by event marketers to contact the attendants with the offers, information or just event feedback. The e-mail addresses are obtained from the online registrations or online ticket sales and can be used for marketing purposes if the organization permits to use them in this way.

E-viral marketing

E-viral marketing is basically word-of-mouth marketing on the internet. An idea created about the event, if it attracts the attention of opinion leaders, the information is forwarded through internet to the other targeted groups. It can be the way to attract especially young groups to the events and also e-viral marketing is persuasive as the information is sent by a friend or colleague. This way of marketing becomes dangerous or lost when the mail turns out to be a spam or a chain e-mail.

Internet communities and Blogs

Internet communities are electronic based communities sharing the same interests. Online discussion groups, and forums are branches of internet communities. This creates further interest and understanding of the event and encourages the attendance. The creation of a forum helps the spread of the information as in the word of mouth. In order to prevent misuse of forums, the content can be controlled and there is the opportunity to respond immediately to the comments.

According to the Palmer-Rae report (which prepares reports and statistics for the European Union related to the cities selected as European Capital of Culture) , concerning e-marketing of the cities selected as the European Capital of Culture;

The use of internet was a low priority for three cities, two of which (Luxembourg and Copenhagen) took place before many important developments in this field.

Almost all ECOC created web sites since 1995.

After 1997 a majority used email messaging or electronic newsletters, and half had electronic ticketing services. Stockholm was the first city to attempt to exploit new technology.

The most comprehensive approaches seem to have been in Helsinki and Graz, where the ECOC used e-conferences and debates, internet broadcasting, and the use of SMS and ATM machines.

It is not easy to make comparisons between ECOC, as cities counted either the number of individual web pages downloaded, or the number of visitors to the site. Bologna counted both, and recorded 16,5 million page requests made by 200.000 visitors. Bologna was also able to measure the origin of visitors. (Palmer-Rae Report, 2004)

3. METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample of this study is the major web page of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture project.

Measurement

The major aim is to measure the efficiency of the web site features of Istanbul 2010. To do so, the Istanbul 2010 web site features, Google page ranks and backlink rates are examined and a couple of interviews are realized with the responsables of Istanbul 2010 office.

The data is collected through the internet and the web site of Istanbul 2010. When searching the web site features, Wang and Fesenmaier's (2006) web sites features of convention offices is taken into consideration. However, Wang and Fesenmaier's study is based on convention offices web sites, which shows some differences with the event industry. In this study, a new classification of web site features concerning the event industry is developed. The lack of researches about the e-marketing of the events has to be considered as the major limitation of this study.

4. FINDINGS

Nowadays, a well prepared web site development is crucial for the event industry. Istanbul is selected as the European Capital of Culture for 2010 in 2006 and at the same year the preparation period has started. An agency, including different departments such as Communications and Events department is formed. The projects and the marketing efforts of the agency which are conducted in Istanbul, in Turkey and in all related and targeted countries are indisputable. However, there are some missing parts especially concerning the e-marketing activities.

Table 1 demonstrates the web site features of Istanbul 2010 web page. According to the table, the web page of the event which will take place in 2010 stays insufficient considering the content features adapted from Wong and Fesenmaier's (2006) study on

convention offices web sites in the USA. In this study, Wong and Fesenmaier web features classification has been adapted to the event industry. On one hand, some information is found on the web page of Istanbul 2010 such as the information about the attractions, the event calendar, the reports and the information about European Capital of Culture, on the other hand most of the necessary information, especially for people who do not live in Istanbul but would like to visit Istanbul, do not take place on the web site which could be considered as the major elements for the e-marketing of such a big event. An online travel program or sight seeing places of Istanbul are missing on the website as well as the online reservations and sales for touristic facilities and event attractions.

Table 1. Assessment of Istanbul 2010 Web Site Features

Web Site Feature	İstanbul 2010 web page www.istanbul2010.org
Activities / Attraction Information	1
Banner advertisements	0
Brochure request	0
Events Calendar	1
Frequently asked questions	0
Information about "European Capital of Culture"	1
Information about Istanbul	0
Links to city pages	0
Maps	0
Online event reservation	0
Online event ticket sale	0
Photo gallery	0
Registration form	0
Reports	1
Search engine	0
Shopping information	0
Travel guides/brochures	0
Trip planner	0
Restaurant information	0
Themed products	0
Virtual Tour	0
Google Page Rank	6 / 10

1=exists, 0=do not exist

On the table 1 the google page rank is indicated as 6 out of 10. PageRank is a link analysis algorithm that assigns a numerical weighting to each element of a hyperlinked set of

documents, such as the World Wide Web, with the purpose of "measuring" its relative importance within the set. A PageRank results from a "ballot" among all the other pages on the World Wide Web about how important a page is. A hyperlink to a page counts as a vote of support. The PageRank of a page is defined recursively and depends on the number and PageRank metric of all pages that link to it ("incoming links"). A page that is linked to by many pages with high PageRank receives a high rank itself. If there are no links to a web page there is no support for that page.

Google assigns a numeric weighting from 0-10 for each webpage on the Internet; this PageRank denotes a site's importance in the eyes of Google. The PageRank is derived from a theoretical probability value on a logarithmic scale like the Richter Scale. The PageRank of a particular page is roughly based upon the quantity of inbound links as well as the PageRank of the pages providing the links. It is known that other factors, e.g. relevance of search words on the page and actual visits to the page reported by the Google toolbar also influence the PageRank. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PageRank>)

According to the page rank of Google Istanbul 2010 has 6 out of 10 and has 50,150 backlinks which means that Istanbul 2010 web site's link is found on 50,150 other web sites.

5. CONCLUSION

Istanbul has made lots of improvements during the last years. Istanbul has transformed since 1980's very rapidly and still changes every year. Nowadays, Istanbul is trying very hard to raise its standards and to show to the rest of the world that it is a modern city with modern facilities.

ECOC in 2010 will be an opportunity to present unknown sides of Istanbul. This event by itself would not be useful in order to reach those purposes. It will be such a milestone for the city if everything goes right. As mentioned before marketing activities should be thought as long term activities. Successful events should be followed by continuous marketing plans and activities. This is not only important for the economic improvement it is also important for the Turkey's relations with the European Union as it demonstrates efforts to be a part of it.

Marketing strategies, web site features and recognition levels of Istanbul hosting venues were examined in this study. Although the data were collected only through internet, there were noticeable and arguable results as follows:

Istanbul 2010 web site is visited by internet users, the site gives information about the attractions and the European Capital of Culture project but gives inconsiderable information about travel facilities and online ticket sales which must be developed immediately.

Istanbul 2010 web site shows no statistics about previous events which have been organized successfully in Istanbul, is an important handicap. Providing that sort of statistics immediately may attract people either on capacity levels or on image levels of Istanbul.

E-marketing tools, which have been detailed in the previous chapter of this study, are not used yet in order to attract people to the web site and accordingly to the event which will take place in 2010. Considering that people use more and more the internet and its features, e-marketing tools should not be ignored. For the case of Istanbul 2010, although blogs with the link of Istanbul 2010 or some of the internet communities discussing about the event do exist, they are not followed up by the responsables of Istanbul 2010 Agency or internet public relations activities are not realized yet.

More and more, affecting the travellers' decision-making gains importance as the competition groves among the tourism products. The internet usage percentages given in this study are taken into consideration, using the internet as a major tool for marketing communication should not be neglected, especially for the event industry. In this study, we would like to point out that despite the increasing use of internet, the actual marketing efforts are not growing accordingly and it is a major handicap to put the event on the map. In an event like "European Capital of Culture" which will last for the whole year 2010 and which involves varied activities, internet would be a beneficial tool to spread the information about the activities and to regenerate domestic and incoming tourism to the city. Together with the web page, blogs, e-mail groups, internet advertising and e-pr activities should be developed in order to attract people for the activities from the different target groups. In our research, we found that Istanbul 2010 webpage has a 6/10 page rank which is a considerable amount and this figure shows us that people are interested in that web page and they are visiting the page. Then, by improving the features of the page, it will not remain just an informative web page

but will be a useful website for this event fanciers as well as a beneficial marketing tool for the event organizers.

Taking this study's limitations into account, a further research which investigates Istanbul 2010's e-marketing efforts and how the tourism sector would perceive this event, the survey (questionnaire) method as well as web site searching would be much more productive.

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