

Millennial Generation interest is different than all other generations. They value involvements and experiences over ownerships and capital. This is a major threat for Traditional Shopping Malls.

However, the partnership between Virtual Reality companies and Shopping Malls has a double edge effect that can't be ignored. Virtual Reality is still chased by the restricted use of headsets at home or in any other place, as for Shopping Malls; it is the major shift of those public hubs from shopping places to full entertainment spaces.

Overall, consumers reported high enthusiasm of the outcomes after being exposed to the application of VR at Shopping Malls. Furthermore, consumers' behavior at shopping malls with VR-based compare quite well. Therefore, it is interesting to think about how VR can be used as a marketing initiative to enhance businesses and reach a better economic status.

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## **EVENT MARKETING CONCEPT IN THE MUSIC FESTIVAL INDUSTRY IN BELARUS**

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**КОНЦЕПЦИЯ ИВЕНТ-МАРКЕТИНГА В ФЕСТИВАЛЬНОЙ ИНДУСТРИИ БЕЛАРУСИ.** *Ивент-маркетинг стал важным направлением маркетинга, появились новые инструменты привлечения и удержания посетителей. Для успешного проведения музыкальных фестивалей необходимо использование данных инструментов как на стадии планирования, так и на финальном этапе – после проведения фестиваля. Особое внимание организаторами должно уделяться определению аудитории события, привлечению партнеров, освещению события в средствах массовой информации, социальных медиа и проведению оценке эффективности состоявшегося фестиваля. Интересен опыт проведения масштабных музыкальных фестивалей в Беларуси, отмечены проблемы и маркетинговые пути их решения для активизации отрасли.*

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: ивент-маркетинг, музыкальный фестиваль, стратегия ивент-маркетинга, ивент-продвижение, маркетинг потребительского опыта, маркетинг впечатлений.

*Event marketing has become an important marketing area, there are new tools to attract and retain visitors. For successful holding of music festivals it is necessary to use these tools both at the planning stage and at the final stage - after the festival. The organizers should pay particular attention to determining the audience of the event, attracting partners, covering the event in the media, social media and assessing the effectiveness of the festival. The experience of holding large-scale music festivals in Belarus is interesting, problems and marketing ways to solve them to activate the industry are noted.*

KEYWORDS: event marketing concept; event marketing strategy; music festivals marketing; event promotion; visitors experience marketing; experiential marketing communication.

Music festivals are the global phenomenon that is gaining considerable importance through the event tourism industry. They are growing not only in quantity but also in terms of quality and features. Even in the time of economic crisis, music festivals are seen as something of an opportunity for cities due to the economic, social and cultural impact they generate through their very nature and characteristics. Festivals are potentially powerful motivators for travel, providers of collective self-esteem and community development and, above all, a source of authentic leisure experiences that nurture the social and personal development of individuals.

The key to the music festival success lies in the appropriate event marketing strategy. Goal achievement of any festival depends heavily on event marketing, regardless of the diverse purposes of the festivals. Nowadays, the widespread use of the Internet has changed the way people communicate, purchase and make decisions. All this has triggered the reinvention of the traditional event marketing strategies.

The event marketing is designed to take advantage of the shift from maintenance to experiential consumption in the societal value system of affluent societies. Experiential consumption refers to obtaining enriching experiences through emotional benefits, by which consumers attempt to improve the quality of their lives right here and now. The communicative

innovation of event marketing derives from its four especially important for the music festival industry constitutive features [1]:

1. Experience-orientation: As personal lived experience tends to be stronger than “second-hand” media experiences in determining consumers' notion of reality, consumers are encouraged to experience the brand reality as active participants rather than being passive recipients and, subsequently, are offered a contribution to their subjective quality of life.

2. Interactivity: In contrast to the monological provision of information in classic marketing communications, event marketing offers a platform for interactive and personal dialogues between participants, spectators and brand representatives.

3. Self-initiation: Event marketing is aimed at influencing consumers emotionally by staging self-initiated marketing events. Thus, the marketer is in full control of the way in which sensual brand experiences are anchored in the world of consumer feelings and experiences.

4. Dramaturgy: In order for consumers to experience the brand hyperreality emotionally, it requires a unique and creative dramaturgy that, similar to a theatre play, brings the brand image to life and captures the imagination of the target audience.

On a global scale, festivals and other planned events with a strong cultural component are substantially increasing in numbers. In addition to enhancing local pride in culture, these events also expose indigenous minorities and an increasing number of international visitors to new peoples and their customs as well as, other purposes including contributing to the local economy, and providing recreation opportunities [3].

The span of music festivals differs, with some focusing on worldwide audiences and others reaching only a small local community. Each genre of music appeals to a different segment of audience. As per Gibson and Connell, while classical music, jazz, and opera festivals are associated with higher-educated and upper-class audiences, popular, electronic and folk music festivals are usually targeted to middle-class audiences [4].

As for the main trends of the music festivals industry, in 2014-2015 the following were noted: the massive jump in artist fees. Some artist fees have doubled in price in the space of a year and one festival promoter reported that he had been forced to cut his festival bill from 180 acts in 2014 to 120 in 2015 because of the steep hike in artist fees. IQ reports that the domino effect for bands lower down the bill who are trying to build their fan base is potentially devastating, given that one third

of the festivals from two years ago are now effectively priced out of the market. Despite rising artist fees, festival owners were not passing the cost on to customers by increasing event ticket prices. Instead, many festival promoters were increasing the capacity of their festival venues so they can sell larger volumes of tickets.

According to the annual IQ's European Music Festival Report 2018, the top trends that are shaping the festival industry in Europe are security and environmental friendship. Security at large-scale events has become a major consideration, as noted by one of the continent's biggest festival organizations, FKP Scorpio. Investment in safety and security measures has stepped up in the past couple of years, while some event managers who filled in this year's European Festival Report survey voiced fears over a lack of trained security personnel in the future. Another trend is the festival community's desire to operate in the most environmentally friendly ways possible.

In Europe's biggest live music market, Germany, the 2018 experience is very different. Lollapalooza Berlin's Fruzsina Szép notes: "The ones who thought they would sell out did not sell out. In Germany, there are far too many festivals and the competition is big. But the most important thing is to be really individual and creative and crazy enough to create special places, venues and spaces at your festivals that are outstanding and have the WOW effect for visitors. It's crucial to be the first with new ideas and not to copy others" [5].

According to Nielsen, 32 million people go to at least one U.S. festival a year, traveling 903 miles on average to be there [6]. There are a variety of reasons why music festivals have become a \$200 million dollar business just in ticket sales. Half of all attendees are millennials who prefer to see all of their favorite music acts in one place instead of paying a big sum of money to see one or two artists over the course of a year. Musicians are also choosing to play at festivals versus funding their own tours in order to save money and gain exposure to new fans. From a local perspective, the cities that host a festival have a lot to gain with incremental tourism related revenue. As a result, brands in America are willing to pay a lot to sponsor music festivals in a variety of ways.

What concerns marketing, it is a vital part of the entire process and helps music festivals to achieve success, which is the main objective of any festival. In order for marketing to be effective, a proper understanding of the market, products, and audience is crucial.

The most important thing in the marketing of music festivals is to carefully analyze the characteristics of the cultural product and attract visitors who will appreciate that specific product. The ultimate artistic experience is the communication that happens between the performers and the audience, and marketing should facilitate such communication according to Bernstein. Larger festivals like Ultra Music Festival or Tomorrowland use many of media resources, while smaller events may carefully target their message to one or two media. Print advertising is not limited to magazines and newspapers. It may also be flyers, posters, brochures, and virtually any printed media.

Electronic traditional media used for promoting festivals include radio, television, and any form of advertising that involves electronic delivery. Radio advertising is typically used to remind the listener about the event, whereas television is used to build excitement. Before you select a traditional media as a means to advertise your event, promoters need to examine all potential benefits and shortcomings, as it is usually more expensive than to use digital tools. Nowadays many electronic radio stations have appeared broadcasting music worldwide for free for every taste. Spots on these stations usually cost less and sometimes music festivals have their own podcasts broadcasted every week inviting special guests who will play at the festival.

Within television media, promoters can elect to cast the event broadly through major national networks or narrowly cast by selecting a finely targeted station like a music station. These decisions may require the assistance of experts in media buying or from an advertising agency specializing in radio or television media.

Using transportation media implies placing the advertising message on buses, subways, and other forms of transportation. Usually, these media are aimed at a very wide market but can be effective for festivals if this event requires large attendance from diverse groups.

Advertising merchandise are those items that are usually given away at promo acts before festivals or sold as an incentive to purchase a ticket. Advertising merch include thousands of products, however, the most typical for music festivals is clothing such as t-shirts, hats, hoodies, flags, polos and others. Some event organizers give away clothing to the media and other key influencer groups and sell the rest at souvenir stands at the festival.

Outdoor advertising was, at one time, one of the major forms of advertising in for music festivals. However, recently billboards are not used so often as the digital tools are definitely cheaper.

Festival organizers should make sure to conduct market research followed by tests to determine actual coverage of the target audience. Once they have found a medium that effectively reaches the target market, they use repetition to build reinforcement and retention.

Music festival activity in the Republic of Belarus plays a significant role in enriching the cultural life of the country, developing the innovative sector of the economy and strengthening intercultural ties.

It is important to note that the geography of the music festival movement covers both large cities (Live music festival The Bridge in Minsk, The International Arts Festival Slavonic Bazaar in Vitebsk, Classical music festival Tyzen House in Grodno, etc.) and periphery (International Festival of Folk Music "Cymbals ring and accordion" in Postavy, Mirum Music Festival near Mir Castle, International festival of chamber music Belarusian Fanfaresin Baranovichi, etc.). In the music festival activity various genres of professional and amateur art are represented - from popular, mass music styles (pop, rock, electronic) to classical music and original subgenres (techno music, swing music).

Some of Belarusian tour operators have already made attempts to promote such music festivals as Viva Braslav and Lidbeer abroad, namely, at exhibitions in Baltic countries and Germany. Unfortunately, there was not a lot of interest in such a tourist product abroad, as in our country there are not so many well-known music groups at these festivals to persuade international tourists to visit our festivals.

In fact, in Belarus, there is already an organization that supports and develops the festival movement in our country. It is The Association of Belarusian Festivals. At the moment, its team is a community of more than 190 people mainly represented by the organizers of festivals.

They are interested in the maintenance of the traditional and the development of modern culture, domestic and inbound tourism, and try in every way to contribute to the affordable and high quality leisure of the people of Belarus and the guests of our country [8].

There are five biggest Belarusian open-air festivals that took place in 2019 and attracted more than 335 thousand people altogether. These are Lidbeer, Freaky Summer Party, Viva Braslav, A-fest and Rock za Bobrov. Three of these festivals were organized by the Belarusian brewing companies with the intention to promote their own brands of beer, but the festival marketing campaigns were conducted by the

promotion groups and agencies such as JetSounds and Allstars. Such a collaboration is mutually beneficial for both sides as it allows the promotion groups to save their own budget relying on brand sponsors, while the brands can shift the responsibility to agree with the artists and advertise the festivals to the promotion groups who have great experience in this area.

All the festivals took place in summer and had an open-air format. Two of them, Viva Braslav and Lidbeer, offered the camping site for the visitors which is a very popular trend nowadays. Three of the events were organized in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, while the other two took place in the regional centers, Lida in Hrodna Region and Braslav in Vitebsk Region.

Two events, Lidbeer and A-fest stand out from these top 5 as they had a free entrance and for this reason managed to gather more than 100 thousand visitors during the day. The other three were not so crowded and attracted 20-25 thousand people.

However, each of these music festivals has something unique and differs from the others, therefore let us review each of them separately.

Belarusian promotion groups and event organizers use various channels of communication to promote their product, namely, a music festival. In this paragraph, we are going to review and compare their event marketing strategies. The case of three festivals from Belarusian brewing companies will be analyzed in details. In addition, we will consider how festival organizers collaborate with famous brands and what benefits they gain from this.

All major festivals of our country realize that the usage of social media offers the possibility of being completely aware of customers' needs. By being active on the largest social media, the organizers are not only able to assess the needs of the customers, but to have easy access to the customers' feedback – the level of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, as well as the reasons for such opinions. However, not all the promotion groups use this instrument for this reason; the main goal for many of them is to attract as many visitors as possible.

Festival organizers should investigate what social networks are used by the audience of a festival. Currently all festivals are present in Facebook and V Kontakte, but only a few of them have official Instagram pages. And only one of them is using public channels in Viber and Telegram messengers. These are the powerful instruments for communicating directly with the audience. Moreover, the engagement in Instagram is higher than in other social networks.

What concerns the organization issues, first, festival organizers have to take into account the customer needs and interests conducting the audience research before planning a line-up for the festival.

By analyzing the reviews of the visitors after the festival in social media they will be able to identify the problems that the attendees experienced. It is important to answer both positive and negative reviews showing that organizers do not ignore the audience. The negative reviews should not be deleted if they contain constructive criticism, so that the followers know that their opinion is valued and taken into account.

Belarusian music festival organizers should pay more attention to providing all the necessary amenities for the comfortable pastime of the visitors. People come to relax and enjoy themselves, and they do not want to spend a lot of time standing in the queues to the toilets and food selling points. Thus, it is necessary accurately estimate the number of people that will attend the festival, predict the demand for tickets and calculate the amount of necessary amenities.

The issue with the high prices for food and drinks at the festivals can be resolved by the agreement with food catering services to keep prices low in return for the low rent price of the place at the festival. Festival organizers should pay more attention to collaborating with brand sponsors to cover their costs instead of trying to cover them at the expense of food providers.

Each of these festivals has different positioning and marketing communication strategies. They use various channels of communication to promote their product, including websites, social media pages, and outdoor advertising, radio and television commercials. However, they do not pay enough attention to the findings of their foreign colleagues. For example, the trend of involving influencers for promoting the music festivals is still not popular among our promotion groups.

The survey conducted among the festival visitors allowed to identify the main problems and to suggest the following recommendations for general improvement of the industry:

1. Belarusian festival organizers need support from the government to ensure good conditions for the organization of festivals.
2. It is necessary to establish cooperation between festival organizers and promotion groups for the successful development of the industry.
3. It is necessary to conduct a rating of festivals that will help in raising their quality level.



4. Assistance in promoting festivals and increasing the general awareness of music festivals is required as well from the part of authorities and public institutions.

5. Changes in current legislation regulating the organization of mass events, including festivals are required. In particular, the rules regulating the security measures at the festivals as they prevent festival visitors from enjoying the festival.

6. Special trainings need to be organized for the specialists in visual and audio production to increase the quality of sound and special effects at music festivals.

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