Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the growing, and multifaceted, role for events within destination shopping centres. With particular focus upon The Gruffalo experience (GE)—a three week pop-up experiential children’s activation—the study offers insights and provides a conceptual framework, relating to the emerging and future role of events.

Design/methodology/approach

The study emerged from a privileged opportunity to research The GE, enabling a visitor questionnaire survey (n=1,305), using a non-probability sample, and four in-depth interviews, which were extended by an additional seven respondents.

Findings

There is a noteworthy role for events as “enlivenment”; attractors to increase visitation, repeat visitation and equally to impact dwell time and boost footfall and sales for tenants. The study revealed a need for a developed event portfolio, with various fundamental tensions relating to objectives, tenants, integration with wider strategy and customer experience.

Research limitations/implications

By interlinking events with shopping, re-visitiation intention is improved and therefore not only does it deliver short-term return but longer-term payback. The vast assortment of events, and stakeholders, means a strategic and reflective approach is required. A limitation of the study is that there is limited existing research on this topic upon which to compare the overall findings, or specifically the survey data and analysis.

Originality/value

This early research study into events within destination shopping centres has revealed a prolific and advantageous, but also emerging and intricate, relationship. There is an absence of extant literature and therefore this paper makes a notable contribution to this unfolding area.

Keywords

Event portfolio, Commercial events, Destination shopping, Marketing events, Shopping centre experience, Strategic events