

Enlivenment and the Gruffalo: the unfolding story of events in destination shopping centres

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International Journal of Event and Festival Management

ISSN: 1758-2954

Publication date: 4 June 2018

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-visitation 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

Citation

Trafford, D., Crowther, P. and Schofield, P. (2018), "Enlivenment and the Gruffalo: the unfolding story of events in destination shopping centres", *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 126-146. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-09-2017-0048>

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Enlivenment and the Gruffalo; the unfolding story of events in destination shopping centres. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 9 (2). <http://doi.org/10.1108/ijefm-09-2017-0048>. Doran, A., Schofield, P., & Low, T. (2018). Women's mountaineering tourism: an empirical investigation of its theoretical constraint dimensions. *Destination Marketing Organisation Networking: The Potential of University Alumni as a Short Break Market Segment*. Schofield, P., & Fallon, P. (2007). Segmenting and Profiling the Alumni Market for UK Cities Using Motivations and Constraints. Introduction This special issue has at its centre the theme Event Futures: innovation, creativity and collaboration. This theme was the basis of the Association for Events Management Education (AEME) annual forum hosted at Cardiff Metropolitan University, 5-7 July 2017. Accordingly, it is gratifying to see some of the papers presented at the Forum make their way through the editorial process, to emerge here in published format. In the paper 'Enlivenment and the Gruffalo; the unfolding story of events in Destination Shopping Centres', Strafford, Crowther and Schofield utilise a triple staged empirical study to offer greater insight of both the strategic potential of events and the future role of events in destination shopping centres.