

**Title: An Investigation into the Branding of Regional Event  
Management**

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this research is entirely my own work and that all text and diagrams obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged and referenced.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this Thesis to my daughter Sinainn Jane, parents P.J. and Patricia and brother Joe who have always been there to support me despite times of difficulty, this is for you.

## Abstract

Regional event management branding is evidently in an emergent phase. Increasingly academics and tourism bodies are focusing on branding in association with places, communities and more recently regions. A new phenomenon of associating events with locations is being considered to achieve branding of regions and attracting tourism. This is evident in regions such as Australia and New Zealand. The purpose of the research is to identify key determinants of regional event branding, consequently developing a model of regional event branding.

A triangulation approach is used incorporating qualitative, quantitative and action research. The methodology includes an exploratory phase that incorporates: questionnaires, a focus group, and in-depth interviews. More specifically practitioner based research is employed, where the researcher undertakes organisation of Sligo's inaugural comedy festival. Practical experience in the field of event management branding is attained.

The results clearly display a number of propositions into regional event management branding. Core constitutes in branding an event are identified in conjunction with a framework of best practice to guide both professional and non-professional personnel intending on hosting an event.

Event management branding is evidently an important area of interest in a pre emergent growth phase. Other areas are highlighted whereby further investigations into these areas will strengthen the concept and reality of Regional event management branding.

## Acknowledgements

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# List of Abbreviations

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C.E.O.	Chief Executive Officer
FM	Frequency Modulation
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
I.T	Institute of Technology
MC	Master of ceremonies
P.R.	Public Relations
R.E.B	Regional Event Branding
R.E.M	Regional Event Management
R.E.M.B	Regional Event Management Branding
R.T.E	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
U.S.P	Unique Selling Point
W.O.M	Word of Mouth
W.R.C	World Rally Championship

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# CHAPTER 1

## **Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the research is to determine an investigation into the Branding of Regional Event Management (R.E.M). This chapter will provide an overview of the study. A rationale to the necessity of the study, the research methodology incorporated and finally the research overview are depicted. Reference is made to key definitions of branding.

## **1.2 Rationale**

There is an evident rise of events within the North-West of Ireland in recent years. Some examples are the World Rally Championships taking place in Sligo over the last two years. The International World Championship of yachting was held in Sligo in 2006 and 2009 which seen a redevelopment of the original yacht club and in preparation for the 2006 event. For the Volvo Ocean Race in Galway in 2009 a quarter of a million people were expected to watch the race in 2009 ([volvoceanrace.org](http://volvoceanrace.org)). Despite an exhaustive search there are no available statistics in association to the rise of events within the North-West. Cawley (2009) of Fáilte Ireland North-West notes a significant rise in applications for funding of their Festivals and Events Initiative scheme over recent years. Despite the evident rise in events there are no theoretical models of regional event management at present. This study is a preliminary generalised study that is transferable to all events.



### **1.3 Research Problem**

The research question being addressed throughout the study is to identify key determinants of regional event branding, consequently developing a model of regional event branding.

The objectives of the study are:

- Investigate the core constituents to regional event branding.
- Identify barriers to event management branding in the North-West of Ireland.
- Design a framework to guide event management.

### **1.4 Event Management Growth**

The Global events industry is considered to be growing and highly fragmented (Silber, 2008). The industry shows an average growth rate of 6.2 percent globally since 2003 and a growth forecast of 5.5 percent through 2011 (DeSilva and Phillips, 2008). Presently there is no Policy in the Republic of Ireland in relation to event management giving scope to improve management and planning of an event. With the industry considered a pre emergent phase in the current climate event management could be a key growth area.

With literature on event management branding being in an emergent phase and government bodies in the current economic climate looking closely at new ways for creating sustainable tourism, event management could be significant in achievement of this goal. The identification of a model of sustainable regional event branding can be supportive and relevant. Destination branding recently started expanding into the tourism industry, with place branding developing over the last two decades.

Destination branding is in an emergent area of study which has just recently started to expand into the tourism industry (Balakrishnan, 2009, Pike, 2002, Tasci and Kozak, 2006). It can be argued that until today destinations are not taking advantage of their brand potential (Wagner et al, 2008). Balakrishnan (2009) suggests this; ‘there is a paucity of academic research in the field of destination branding (Cited in Pike, 2005), despite being an industry with daily revenue of over US\$ 2 billion’. Balakrishnan (2009) proceeds to explain the literature available is largely limited to image and logo design. The unique characteristics of destinations differentiate it from corporate, product and service brands. These are outlined in Figure 1.1 overleaf.

**FIGURE 1.1: The Unique Characteristics of Destination Brands**

1. Tourism is dependent on macro-environmental factors like politics, terrorism, disease outbreaks, weather/natural conditions and currency fluctuations.
2. Geographical constraints affect accessibility.
3. Inherited names and past history like heritage, culture and perception of locations evolve over time and cannot be easily changed (Shikoh, 2006).
4. Stakeholders are diverse and influential. Destinations are run by governing bodies which are politically motivated, have funding constraints and answerable to their stakeholders (Stokes, 2006; Hankinson, 2005; Pike, 2005). Media is becoming a powerful influence.
5. The diversity of target customers, the complex decision making process and the multiple choice sets make destination marketing harder (Woodside and Dubelaar, 2002; González and Bello, 2002).
6. Destinations are service dependant. Services account for over 65 percent of global GDP and are people dependant, employing 40 percent of the global workforce (ILO, 2007). Destination success also depends on infrastructure, technology and communications (IMD, 2005). Investments required are huge and need to keep global standards in mind.
7. Feedback and control issues (Pike, 2005). Destination marketing organisations do not have top-down implementation control (Pike, 2005). Perception of destinations is influenced by publicity and promotion (Correira et al, 2007) which can be distorted by global market events and other destination images. Since destination brands are complex and are constantly changing (Trueman et al, 2004; Kates and Goh, 2003) they must be managed.

**Source: Balakrishnan (2009, p.6)**

Table 1.1 below exhibits an example of Australia incorporating event management to attract attention to particular geographic locations.

### **Table 1.1 Australia's Use of Event Management to Sustain Tourism**

The business events sector is generally regarded as one of the highest yielding inbound tourism segments because of the high per-delegate spend ([www.tourismaustralia.com](http://www.tourismaustralia.com)). The business events sector has substantially grown over recent years. While there is strong international and national competition, business events is projected to provide increased opportunities for the Australian tourism industry over the next ten years, with strong appeal across all key markets. The role of Tourism Australia in business events is to position Australia as a unique, desirable and achievable destination for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions ([www.tourismaustralia.com](http://www.tourismaustralia.com)).

Sporting events are also rapidly increasing in popularity as a means of attracting attention to particular geographic (city) locations (Getz, 1998). Increasingly cities are basing their marketing efforts around hallmark events such as the Manchester Common Wealth Games and The Olympic Games. A critical issue that has emerged from the attractiveness of sport is that there is a limited amount of Hallmark events and this has led to fierce competition among cities to be successful in "winning the Business" of playing event Host, Westerbeek et al. (2002). Westerbeek et al. also note that it is the strength of a city's brand image that encourages people to visit the place. They argue that Melbourne is branded as the "sporting capital of Australia" due to three major elements, the wide range of hallmark sporting events it plays host to (such as the Australian open tennis and golf, Grand Prix Formula One, AFL Grand Final and the Melbourne Cup), the city's international standard sporting facilities and the massive community support which is evident in both attitude and attendance.

Like Australia the North West of Ireland is appealing to the events tourism sector. This is evident through the growth of public and corporate events throughout the region. Some examples are the prison service holding their annual conferences in the Radisson hotel in Sligo and the significant growth in localised festivals such the Warriors Festival in Sligo. Traditionally the Warriors Run was commenced on a Sunday, this was changed to a Saturday and consequently the numbers substantially increased in both participants and spectators alike, increasing tourism to the small seaside town of Strandhill in County Sligo. It is evident that event management branding has the scope to attract tourism to regions with appropriate policies and models for all stakeholders.

## **1.5 Limitations**

A number of limitations arose throughout the study namely:

- Lack of literature in relation to event management, with virtually nonexistent in relation to regional event management branding.
- Confusion among tourism bodies as to location and criteria to sources of funding. Resulting in loss of resources.
- The study is not a national study; the main focus is on the North-West of Ireland.
- The action research is specialised in nature as it focused on one event; a comedy festival.
- The main focus of the study is exploratory in nature.

## 1.6 Definitions

Branding has become diverse area, for clarification purposes of this study definitions of general branding, services branding, tourism branding, event management and finally region are given.

**Branding:** *“...an identifiable product augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition”* De Chernatony and McDonald (1992, p.20).

**Services Branding:** *“name that means satisfaction, quality and value to the customer”*, Gale (1994) cited in Moorthi “An approach to Branding Services” (2002, p.260)

**Tourism Branding:** *“... name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of destination experience”*, Kerr (2006, p. 277).

**Event Management:** *“Event Management is the profession that requires public assembly for the purpose of celebration, education, marketing and reunion. Each of these overarching activities is encompassed by the profession of event management”*, Goldbaltt (1997, p.4).

**Counties:** The region identified for the proposed Westlaugh Comedy Festival was primarily Sligo and the surrounding areas of Donegal, Leitrim and Roscommon. Secondary were the further stretching areas of the North West such as Cavan, Monaghan and Galway.

## 1.7 Research Methodology

The research approach incorporated is a triangulation of methods which includes qualitative, quantitative and action research. Additionally the research is undertaken in two phases. Phase one consists of exploratory research while phase two consists of practitioner based action research.

- Qualitative research consisting of in-depth interviews and a focus Group,
- Quantitative research consisting of one survey with slight modifications was dispersed among CEO's and industry personnel.
- Action research whereby practitioner based research was undertaken in organising a comedy festival.

## **1.8 Research overview**

Chapter 2 refers to all previous literature available on all areas of branding, including how branding has developed over time and may be incorporated for use in R.E.M. branding. Identified literature is that of product branding, services branding and destination branding.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology carried out throughout completion of the study.

Chapter 4 is the presentation of data and findings as a result of the methodological employed.

Chapter 5 exhibits a detailed case study. Displaying practitioner based research experience into organising a comedy festival, identifying key themes to successful regional event management.

Chapter 6 displays the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

Despite the growth of the global events industry being after an exhaustive search there are no available statistics in relation to the event sector in Ireland. In noting this tourism personnel state there is an evident rise in events within the region in recent years (Cawley, 2009). Nevertheless presently there is no theoretical model of regional event management. At this point the research problem is identified as; to identify key determinants of regional event branding, consequently developing a model of regional event branding. Such a model has the potential to encourage sustainable tourism through



regional event management branding. Since branding has become a diverse area, for clarification purposes of this study definitions of general branding, services branding, tourism branding, event management and finally the region are exhibited. For purposes of the study the research is conducted in two phases. Phase one consists of exploratory research while phase two consists of action research.

## CHAPTER 2

# Regional Event Branding

## 2.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter a review of literature related to regional event branding is investigated. Due to the scarcity of information in the area the available literature is investigated four fold. Ranging from branding to services branding, event management and finally destination branding. A move from traditional methods of branding products to specialised destination branding is evident from recent literature, as is presented throughout the literature review.

## 2.2 Branding

The use of branding is not a new idea. Business historians agree that branding itself is over 100 years old, with the majority of countries having trademark acts to establish the legality of a protected asset by 1890 (The economist, 1988). It was through 1800 to 1925 that was known as the richest period of name giving (Hambleton, 1987). From these beginnings branding has evolved as a major component of marketing strategy (Rooney, 1995).

There are many definitions of branding from theorists such as Aaker, Armstrong, De Chernatony, Gregory and Kotler. One definition that is especially appropriate is offered by Doyle (1991) cited in O'Malley (1991, p.107): *"A name, symbol, design, or some combination which identifies the product of a particular organisation as having a substantial, differentiated advantage"*. To many, a brand suggests the best choice; while others see a brand as something the customers know and will react to (O'Malley, 1991). Despite the formal definition, the purpose of branding is essentially to build the products image. This image will influence the perceived worth of the product and will increase the brand's value to the customer, leading to brand loyalty.

Organisations develop brands as a way to attract and keep customers by cementing a positive image and reducing risk. *A brand is emotional, has a personality, and captures the hearts and minds of its customers* (Sinha, 2001 p.358). Only humans can attach meaning and feeling to inanimate objects and a random collection of symbols, which suggests the appeal of branding, is not entirely rational. Once customers become accustomed to a certain brand, they do not readily accept substitutes reducing the perceived risk associated with the unknown - thus the popularity of branding.

Strong branding can also accelerate market awareness and acceptance of new products entering the market (Berry et al., 1998). Clarifying why marketers spend millions of dollars each year positioning brands through clear and consistent image-building campaigns, with efforts succeeding as evidenced by the enduring, well defined, and strong images of some of the worlds popular brands e.g. Marlboro, Pepsi. Theorists and practitioners (Gardner and Levy, 1955; Park et al., 1986; Ries and Trout, 1986) provide evidence that development, communication, and maintenance of brand image is crucial to its long-term success.

The importance of a brands image in its long term success necessitates having a framework for strategically managing the image over the long term, (Park et al. 1986). Brand managers have had limited direction for setting up such a conceptual framework, with the notable exception of brand concept management (BCM) proposed by Parker et al. (1986). BCM proposes every brand image should be based on a brand concept or a brand-specific abstract meaning and can be either symbolic or functional, comprising of one aspect of a brand's image. Park et al. (1986) advice once a concept is selected for a brand it should be maintained over the brands life for the sake of consistency.

Many of the principles of product branding can be borrowed from to create a service brand. In order to advance the theoretical framework for R.E.B. it is useful to refer to service branding literature.

## **2.2 Services Branding**

Branding is seen as one of the canons of the marketing doctrine (Jones, Hillier, Clarke-Hill, 2002). Kotler et al. (1999) suggests that “perhaps the most distinctive skill of professional marketers is their ability to create, maintain, protect, reinforce and enhance brands”. In agreement Doyle (1998, p.165) argues that “brands are at the heart of marketing and business strategy”. Although the service sector has dominated the economy of most capitalist societies, services branding has received much less attention in marketing literature than that of branding products (Krishnan and Hartline, 2001).

From literature available on services branding it is evident that there is much less available than that of branding products. Services Branding literature is based around similar principles which will be reviewed throughout this section.

Well designed induction and training programmes do help create greater staff commitment, which is an important component in strong services brands (Farnfield 1999). Successful services brands therefore depend on good internal communication programmes (Clever 1999) to support greater consistency in delivering the service experience, at whatever point the customer’s contact with the organisation occurs (Camp, 1996).

McDonald et al. (2001) argue that while much that has been written about marketing is equally appropriate to products and services and that the concept of a brand is the same for both, there is a difference between the execution of product and service brands.

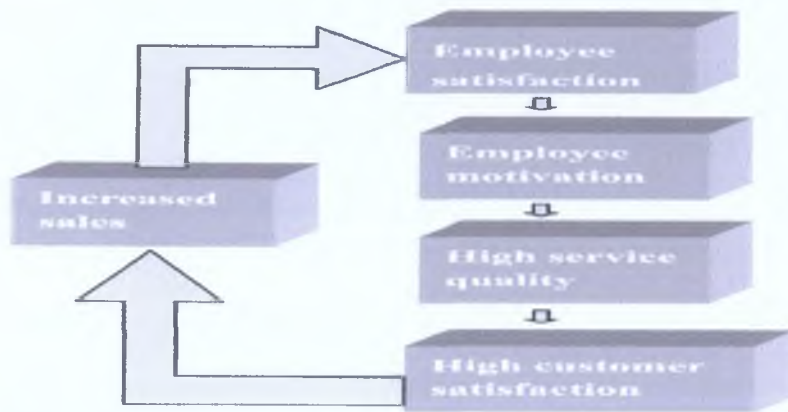
Simones and Dibb (2001) argue that *'branding plays a special role in service companies because strong brands increase customers trust of the invisible, enable them to better visualize and understand the intangible and reduce customers perceived financial, social or safety risk'* cited in Jones et al. (2002, p.286). They go on to stress that branding for services is different than branding for tangible products because it is the company which is the primary brand. Blankson and Kalafatis (1999) suggest that service brands are particularly different in that service characteristics are different from those of physical goods and that they rely on employees' actions and attitudes.

De Chernatony and Segal Horn (2000, p.1104) note three principle themes associated with successful service brands "focused position", "consistency" and "values".

The research indicates that a number of other themes also contributed to successful service brands including "systems", "models", "communication", "innovation", "relationships", "emotion", "added value", "commitment", and "competitive advantage". These issues were all considered to contribute to, or necessary but not sufficient condition for, success. What is consistently evident from all themes is the crucial role staff contributes to service branding and that staff commitment has to precede customer commitment. As Kotler and Heskett (1992) report, there is a likelihood of better performance where the focus is on service processes which will include staff awareness of their organisations' values. Understanding these values, and recognising their roles, reduces employee stress and increases commitment to delivering the service brand. De

Chernatony and Horn (2003) postulate the way that critical factors influence the development of successful services brands:

**Figure 2.1: The criteria influencing the success of services brands**



Source: Adapted from Heskett (1987)

The relevance of figure 2.1 is in the requirement to define core values. By communicating service vision, brand promise and consumer expectations, staff can better understand their role as brand builder. Coupling this with highly co-ordinated service delivery systems and organisational processes encouraging shared values enhances the likelihood of a consistently executed service brand encounter. A long term relationship of trust informs and reinforces the corporate culture in which the brand and the service delivery are embedded.

Dobre and Page (1990) also list five steps for effectively branding services these are: building a brand proposition, overcoming internal barriers, measuring delivery against the proposition, continual improvement and expansion. They also recommend developing a “service contract” internally to create ownership for the service brand across all levels of the organisation.

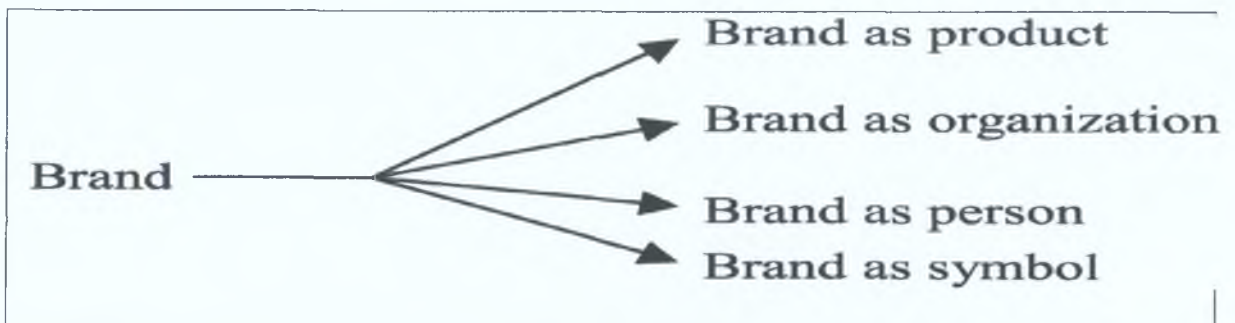
Levy (1996) contends that successful service brands can be developed based on the principles of fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) branding. These principles are:

product definition, clear product benefit identification, brand differentiation, consumer motivation, and measurement of product strength. Similar to Levy (1996), De Chernatony and McDonald (1998), suggest that the FMCG model of branding can be used, with modifications, to build service brands. De Chernatony and McDonald (1998) agree that branding efforts in the services industry do not match the rapid growth of the industry itself.

Moorthi (2002) notes nowhere in the literature are there a comprehensive approach for branding services. He attempts to remedy this situation by applying Aaker's brand identity framework to the economic classification of three types of goods and the 7 P's of services.

Aaker's (1996) brand identity framework proposes four elements under which an identity is typically developed for a brand these are: brand as product, brand as organisation, brand as person and brand as symbol.

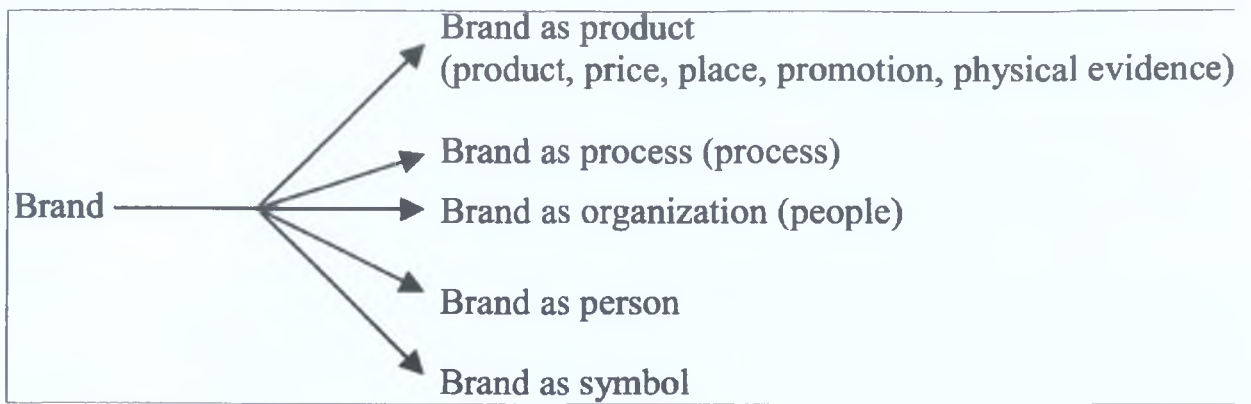
**Figure 2.2: Aaker's brand identity model**



**Source:** Moorthi (2002) 'An approach to Branding Services'

**Figure 2.3: Proposed services branding model.**





**Source:** Moorthi (2002) ‘An approach to Branding Services’

In the context of recent growth in the emergent sector of event management it may be appropriate to consider adding to brand identity categories. Moorthi adds to this by mapping “brand as process” separately as the customer is intimately involved in the process of delivery of the service (Lovelock 1992). Brand as person and brand as symbol, retain their usual meaning in the new model.

The importance of strong branding is not surprising when the high risk levels often associated with service purchase are considered. These levels of high risk can cause buyers to undertake additional information search in an attempt to reduce risk. There are usually three sources of information in such circumstances: internal, external word of mouth and external from the selling company’s own efforts.

Research points to the particular importance of word of mouth in the purchase of services and thus it is essential that service companies promote and reinforce their brands.

Doyle (1990) has identified four possible dimensions of strong branding. Although these are not intentionally directed at any particular sector, their relevance to services

marketing is not in doubt (Dibb and Simkin 1993, p.29). Prioritise quality, offer superior service, get there first and be different.

All these suggestions point to ways to create a strong differential advantage, which can then become closely associated with the brand itself. King argues that such identifying phrases (signatures) are not to be found so often in services marketing. Table 2.1 demonstrates, in certain types of services marketing this is clearly not the case.

The financial sector, retailers, travel companies all make powerful use of this aspect of branding. Evidence of strong branding in the service sector does not end with such catch phrases. Companies as diverse as Vidal Sassoon and BUPA have strong brand name images in the sense that customer's generally know exactly what they stand for. They are already clearly positioned in the consumer's minds (Dibb and Simkin 1993).

**Table 2.1: Well known services signatures**

Thomas Cook	"Don't just book it, Thomas Cook it!"
British Airways	"The world's favourite airline"
British Telecom	"It's you we answer to"
Access	"Your flexible friend"
TSB	"Positive thinking"
Sainsbury	"Good food costs less at Sainsbury"
Asda	"It Asda be Asda!"
Oracle	"Page the Oracle"
CU Assurance	"We won't make a drama out of a crisis"
Midland Bank	"The listening bank"
British Gas	"The heat of the moment"
American Express	"That'll do nicely"
McDonald's	"We've got time for you"
AA	"But I know a man who can!"
The Royal Bank of Scotland	"Where people matter"

**Source: Dibb and Simkin (1993, p.30) 'The strength of branding and positioning in services'**

While comprehending a strong brand is essential there are a range of contributions offered by various theorists that facilitate the development of successful service brands, as displayed in table 2.2 overleaf.

**Table 2.2: Contributions to the development of service brand management**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Associated Authors</b>
Brand Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Berry, Lefkowitz and Clark (1988);</li><li>• Ginden (1993)</li></ul>
Advertising and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• O'Malley (1991)</li></ul>
Staff as Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• McDonald, de Chernatony, Harris (2001)</li><li>• Grönroos (1994);</li></ul>

Berry et al (1988) believe that a well- chosen name can give a company a marketing edge over comparable competitors. They concede that a name may not make or break a company but it may be a key factor in its success or failure. Ginden (1993) points out that the point of a name is to have consumers link it to quality. Berry et al (1998) have set criteria for formulating service brand names that can also be adopted for naming other types of products. They suggest a name should have four characteristics including: distinctiveness, relevance, memorability and flexibility

It is imperative to support the name through advertising and communication. O'Malley (1991) writes that that advertising is the key to sustaining appeal of brands. It is also the key to developing brands in the first place, and should be seen as an investment.

As mentioned earlier staff play a vital part in the branding of a service. Staff embody the service brand in the consumers eyes (Grönroos, 1994). In many cases the service staff are the only point of contact for the consumer and by thoroughly training staff and ensuring their commitment to the corporate brand; its chances of succeeding are greater. The success of the Disney brand results from the firm's insistence that employees recognise that are always "on stage" whenever in public, encouraging them to think for themselves as actors who have learnt their roles and are contributing to the performance and the enjoyment of visitors. The staff of a service organisation can positively enhance the perception of consumers have of the service quality through their: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and appearance. Failing to take heed of these factors can have a negative impact on the perceived quality of the service (McDonald et al 2002).

The aforementioned themes contribute to the scholarly activity that is useful in practice. There is an evident gap in the literature to the appropriateness of these themes to event management branding.

From the literature it is clearly evident that service brand modelling is an innovative and under researched area. One notable exception is the Service Brand Verdict Model (Grace and O'Cass, 2005) that is useful to services but is not specific to event management.

One of the differences between services and product brands is that there are far more

points of contact between services brands and stakeholders, necessitating more attention to a coherent communication strategy internally and externally. The subsequent section examines the connection between branding and event management.

## **2.3 Event Management Branding**

There are significant quantities of texts available from authors such as Allen, Bodwin, Conway, Harris, O'Toole and Wolf concerning the topic of event management largely in association with organising events. Each of these texts follows quite similar principles and practices (Goldbalt, 1997; Conway, 2006). Every event has an event manager, an objective, an audience and attractions.

There is an emergent growth in event management literature due to the growing area of interest with many subfields of events such as civic events to hallmark events to fairs, festivals, social, sports, meetings and conferences etc. Despite this there is presently an evident lack of available literature on event branding.

From the literature available it is apparent that stakeholders are vital to any event as these are the people who invest in your event and must be clearly defined in order to ensure your event is a success. This is an emergent area of consideration which will be referred to further in the tourism branding section of this chapter

The Goldblatt Model for the Event Management profession is a very useful model as it provides a theoretical framework supporting and guiding an event management organisation.

**FIGURE 2.4: The Goldblatt Model for the Event Management profession**

**The Goldblatt Model for the Event Management profession:**

**THE PROFESSION**

**Event Management**

The Function that requires public assembly for the purpose of celebration, education, marketing and reunion.



**THE PROFESSIONAL TITLE**

**Event Manager**

The individual responsible for researching, designing, planning, coordinating and evaluating an event.



**SUBFIELD SPECIALIZATIONS**

Examples of subfields: Civic Events, Expositions, Fairs and festivals, Hallmark Events, Hospitality, Meetings and Conferences, Retail Events, Social life-cycle Events, Sports events and Tourism.



**STAKEHOLDERS**

Individuals or organisations that are financially, politically, emotionally, or personally invested in the event.

**Source Goldblatt (1997, p.11)**

In addition to the above framework to hold a successful event Goldblatt states it is essential to successfully manage the four areas of: time, finance, technology and human resources. At the same time as abiding by five critical stages for all successful events: research, design, planning, coordination and evaluation.

Goldblatt (1997) highlights the importance of spending time on research and planning. It might be useful to note these two areas in any construction of an event management branding model. Furthermore he gives advice on the five W's: **why** should we hold the event? , **who** will be our stakeholders? , **when** is the event being held? , Where will the event be held? And **what** is the event product you are developing and presenting?

The planning stage is where the largest proportion of time will be allocated and great attention must be paid here while meeting the goals of the event and working with information gathered in the initial step.

Goldblatt refers to an array of applicable concepts throughout both his model for the event management profession and use of the five critical aforementioned stages, it may be considered appropriate to consider and adapt these concepts for the development of literature and models on event management branding.

Globally, governments are increasingly utilising events as vehicles for regional development as they continue to demonstrate a capacity to generate positive commercial outcomes for host regions (Getz, 2007). Thus, as regional inequalities in social and economic conditions remain a high priority on government agendas, local governments should seize the opportunity to address some of these regional issues. Beattie (2002) and Whitford, (2008) see this possible by developing regional event policy from the competitive advantage of a product. Interestingly, tourism researchers have only begun to acknowledge strategy models beyond the planning paradigm (e.g. Leiper, 1997; Athiyaman, 1995; Selin, 2000), although research about network-based tourism




development is growing. Major events and festivals with tourist appeal are now widely featured in the marketing strategies of different nations (Stokes, 2005). Australian states and territories have opted to establish events development agencies within tourism marketing authorities in a similar way to the creation of Event Denmark by the Danish Tourism Board. Certainly this approach has enabled nations like Denmark to approach event tourism development separately from tourism in general (Allen et al., 2005).

Alongside government policies and agency interpretations of strategy, the governance structures for events tourism strategy are often tied to public sector motives for investing in events. These include economic benefits derived from increased tourist visitation and expenditure, media coverage that enhances the image of a host city or nation and, to a lesser extent, social benefits including the 'feel good' factor in the community (Getz, 1997, 1999; cited in Stokes, 2005).

Special events are widely documented as contributors to a destinations tourism product (Goeldner and Richie, 2006; Davison and Rodgers, 2006). These mega events can be viewed further as large-scale tourism products and integral to tourism development and marketing plans (Getz, 1989). In particular, positive social, economic, cultural impacts are commonly cited as potential benefits for event hosts (Veres and Clark, 2008).

Festivals often give attendees a reason to travel to a destination and the economic impact of the festival can be measured by the amount of spending made by attendees while in the destination (Veres and Clark, 2008). As an example of potential impact, a 2003 study for the Ontario Trillium Foundation concluded that 97 Ontario festivals had an impact of nearly \$80 million in economic return to the provinces Gross Domestic Product (Hills strategies, 2003).



The Olympic Games are unparalleled in their scale and potential impact they can have on the economies of host cities, regions and countries. The games can provide an excellent opportunity for local businesses to leverage from networking, enhancing the economic benefits of sport events for host countries. The exposure and enormous interest of the Olympic Games can provide an excellent opportunity for countries to market themselves to potential tourists, offering a unique opportunity to capitalise on their long-term market potential. Before 1984, in which Los Angeles Olympic Games made a surplus of approximately \$311 million, staging the Olympic Games was considered a financial and administrative burden to the hosting country and city. Encouraged by the financial success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games and driven by the national pride of staging such a prestigious event, most recent host countries have realised that hosting Olympic Games can be not only a financial success but also an excellent opportunity to position or re-position both the host city and destination to a global audience (Singh and Hu, 2007).

Major international hallmark events can generate substantial publicity that provides the host community with an opportunity to secure a prominent position in the tourism market (Ritchie, 1984). In host countries, the Olympic organising committee is a temporary organisation whose main task is organising smooth Olympic Games. On the other hand, the host country's destination marketing organisation is a tourism organisation that is not temporary in nature and that markets the destination before, during and after the event for tourism. For successful marketing the destinations strategies and operations involving the two knowledge domains are important and need to be coordinated and aligned carefully (Singh and Hu, 2007).

Events, particularly meeting and conventions are recognised as significant contributors to destinations because business travellers tend to spend more than leisure travelers. On a provincial scale, smaller destinations have challenges drawing events away from metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Ottawa, London and Hamilton. These larger cities have the capacity to offer a substantial number of rooms, an abundance of support services, numerous attractions, easy transportation access and venues designed to hold business related events (Veres and Clark, 2008). This illustrates an evident gap requiring research considerations.

From the brief review it is clear that event management branding is only in an emergent developmental stage. In order to progress knowledge generation it might be useful to examine the available expertise in tourism branding.

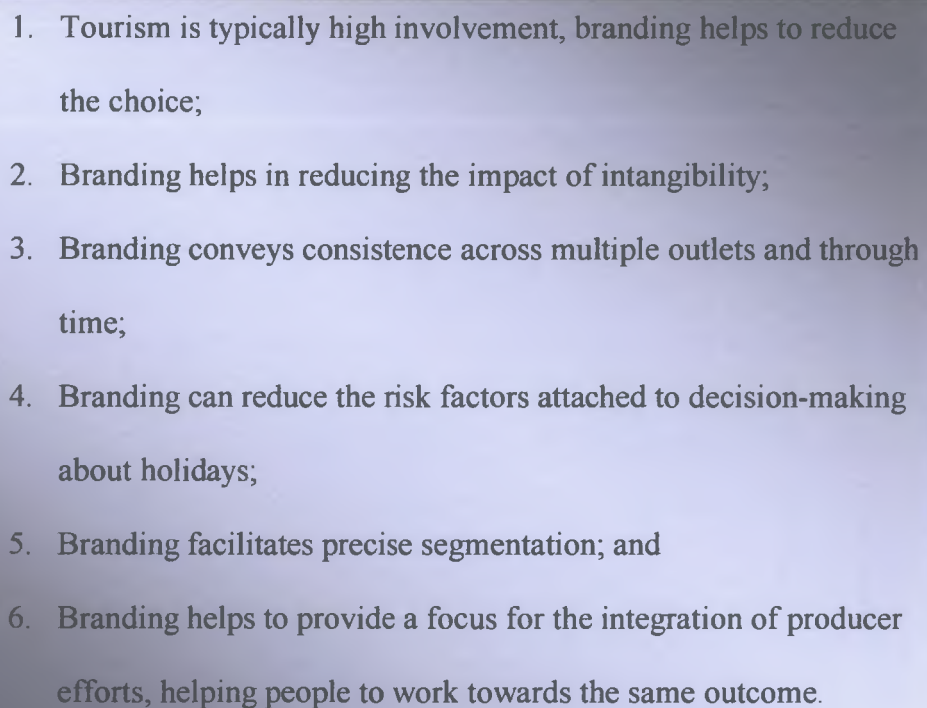
## **2.4 Tourism/Place Branding**

Destination branding is in a true progressive area of study which has just recently started to expand into the tourism industry (Balakrishnan, 2009, Pike, 2002, Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Kerr (2006, p.277) offers an in-depth definition of a destination brand as:

[...] name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of destination experience.

Further definitions have been developed by authors such as Blain et al, 2005; Gnoth, 1998; Kotler et al. 1993 and Morgan et al. 2004. These insights have lead to greater complexity in the destination branding literature (Wagner and Peters, 2009). In a tourism destination context Clarke (2000) identified six benefits of branding, as displayed in figure 2.5.

**FIGURE 2.5: The Six Benefits of Destination Branding**

- 
1. Tourism is typically high involvement, branding helps to reduce the choice;
  2. Branding helps in reducing the impact of intangibility;
  3. Branding conveys consistence across multiple outlets and through time;
  4. Branding can reduce the risk factors attached to decision-making about holidays;
  5. Branding facilitates precise segmentation; and
  6. Branding helps to provide a focus for the integration of producer efforts, helping people to work towards the same outcome.

**Source: Clarke (2000) cited in Wagner and Peters (2009, p.55)**

The marketing of tourism destinations is a complex task. The reasons for this include the interdependence of the multiple stakeholders, the fragmented resources, and an almost complete lack of hierarchy and authority, and of mechanisms of control and regulation.

Hence, in the open-ended tourism setting, researchers emphasise that networking represents a crucial and effective option in terms of mobilising information and resources, and of engaging in cooperative processes among tourism businesses. In the case of tourism business networks the 'public good' is commonly seen to represent a destinations policy making aimed at mitigating the potential negative impact of tourism processes and safeguarding 'livability' within a society (Lemmettyinen and Go, 2008).

Destination branding is considered a vital aspect of current destination management practice, as broadening tourist opportunities and travel locations have resulted in the increased substitutability and lack of differentiation amongst some destinations (Pike, 2005)

In Germany, the development of place marketing and city branding started in the mid 1980s developing over the last two decades. Over seventy percent of German cities already work with a place marketing concept and ten percent plan to do so in the near future (Datko,2006; Grabow et al., 2006). Kotler et al (1993) states in order for place branding to be successful it is crucial to understand the values, needs, preferences and behavioral choices of the specific target group. These can be divided into four target market segments namely; visitors, residents and workers, business and industry and finally export markets. However in recent marketing practice the groups actually targeted are more specific.

Tourism brands are designed to create a unique and appealing identity for targeted travellers and the host community (Reich, 1999). Establishing a brand is a central element in the strategic positioning of many tourism products and services (Temporal, 2002). For tourism destinations, it involves capturing a market position that appeals to

visitors, while respecting the broader values and goals of the community (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000).

According to Morgan and Pritchard (2002) the best tourism destination brands are clearly place specific by building an emotional link between themselves and their target markets. The portfolio of assets that help to define a destinations identity include not only privately produced amenities and services (accommodations, transportation, catering, entertainment, etc.), it also includes a wide range of public goods (such as landscapes, scenery, sea, lakes, socio-cultural surroundings, atmosphere, etc.). These can be expressed within a unique mix of functional, symbolic and experiential branding options (Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Laws et al., 2002). Functional branding communicates the problem solving capabilities of the destinations products and services, symbolic branding emphasises ties between the destinations attributes and the ego-enhancing needs of specific target markets associated with the destination. Experiential branding focuses on the sensory and cognitive features that the destination can provide such as relaxation, personal discovery, stress relief (Laws, et al., 2002).

There is no argument that the image we have of another country says a lot about how we view it as a tourist destination, as a place to invest or as a source of consumer goods and services (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Ericsson et al., 1984; Frost, 2004). Konecnik and Gartner (2007) propose and test four dimensions of a destinations brand (i.e., awareness, image, quality and loyalty) and found a positive relationship among the variables. Their conclusion was that a destination image is central to brand evaluation and brand equity, but that the other dimensions are also necessary to truly measure customer-based brand equity (cited in Boo, Busser and Baloglu, 2008). By choosing brands with particular

image associations individuals can communicate to others the type of person they are or want to be seen as, in turn enhancing their own-self image and psychological well-being (Cited in Parker, 2009, p.175). As with any brand, nations as well as destinations have individual fingerprints that are unique. It's this uniqueness that gives power to a place brand (Iversen and Hem, 2008). In essence, a place brand consists of developing an image and communicating it based on the positive values and perceptions of the place. Place branding is seldom under the control of a central authority and it involves multiple stakeholders, often with competing interests (Frost, 2004). Stakeholder consideration is vital to branding of any event and warrants further investigation.

It is argued that a coherent corporate strategy that incorporates the values of external and more locally focused stakeholders will not only enhance the company's overall value creation potential (Hillman and Klein, 2001), but will stabilise its ability to compete for market share in the tourism destination (Lewis, 1996). There is a growing need for corporate partnerships with traditional and non-traditional stakeholders so as to secure access to scarce resources (Svenson, 1998) and, the need for more distinctive and collaborative positioning in an increasingly competitive travel marketplace (Ritchie and Ritchie 1999). In reality, most destination marketing organisations depend on the support of public and private stakeholders for effective branding and positioning (Dimanche 2003). This support includes everything from agreement on the brand to be communicated, to the seamless delivery of products and services associated with that brand. Given the importance of supportive and harmonised approaches to establishing and communicating a place's identity, several overriding stakeholder considerations should be included in the development of a destination brand, as follows:

## FIGURE 2.6: Stakeholder Considerations in the Development of a Destination

### Brand

- The brand's development and its delivery should be based on a broad, participatory process that has united the spectrum of destination stakeholders and shareholders through intra-destination collaboration, rather than competition;
- The brand and its delivery should be aligned with, and support the strategic values and objectives of the destination, and in particular, the carrying capacity of its natural and cultural environment;
- The brand's strategy should be orientated toward providing value for a clearly-defined and limited target market-perhaps even just a few select segments, as opposed to having a mass volume-orientation;
- The brand should support and steward the destination in attaining/maintaining its preferred development vision (Buhalis 2000).

Source: Williams and Gill, (2004, p.8)

The more closely aligned the branding process is with these principles, the more clearly will the brand reflect the “placefulness” of the tourism destination.

From tourism literature available stakeholders can be classified into a group of primary and a group of secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders show a high level of interactivity and are vital to the survival of a destination. Secondary stakeholders are not directly involved in the development of a destination but have to be claimed as important hidden assets of a destination which are affected by the destination and may affect the destination occasionally (Clarkson, 1995; Merrilees et al., 2005; cited in Wagner and Peters 2009).




A place brand can behave just like a manufacturer's brand, providing an umbrella of trust and a guarantee of quality, which kick-start the entry of its new "sub-brands" on the marketplace (Anholt, 1998, 2004). An umbrella brand serves as a guarantee of consistent quality among the brand partners, similarly, it should be possible to market "a bundle of local goods and services" using the place's reputation as a unifying bond (Iversen and Hem, 2008). Through place umbrella branding, marketing can achieve economies of scale and message consistency in promotion of exported products and services, as well as in promotion of the country or destination itself (Iversen and Hem, 2008). According to Keller (1993) the branding strategy of a country is the most important factor affecting the strength of its association with domestic products and brands. This concept could be adapted to the branding of Regional Event Management.

#### **Example 2.1: Brand New Zealand**

New Zealand has worked for decades to develop their "Brand New Zealand" as a strong umbrella brand. By co-coordinating their marketing efforts, New Zealand's Tourism and Trade Boards have established a national Brand (Morgan et al., 2000). This differentiates New Zealand internationally and supports their key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, creative industry, as well as the textile and marine manufacturing industries. The Key objective of this program is to build a brand concept that adds value to the marketing of all New Zealand's products and services (Keller, 2003). The brand provides the platform for the brand's values, the translation of these into a suitable, emotionally appealing brand personality and the targeted and efficient delivery of that message.

**Source: Iversen and Hem (2008, p. 606)**

The use of Brand ambassadors is a relatively new phenomenon, which again like the previously mentioned umbrella brands can be heavily borrowed from in the development



of Regional Event Management Branding. This concept is being increasingly employed in place branding. Brand ambassador network is a network having as one of its main aims to promote a place's image and attractiveness, and which consists of people with a real or perceived connection with the location running the network (Andersson and Ekman, 2009). An ambassador is seen by coordinators as constituting a credible testimony of the distinctive character of the place and its attractiveness, and can through the word-of-mouth effect influence others through their networks and relationships. Communication through W.O.M. is not only perceived as cost effective relative to other promotional tools, but is also a much more effective tool when it comes to building a positive image and influencing target groups. Ambassadors can also gain access to specific target groups, leading to competitiveness of place. The networks can also be seen as a resource for mobilising local pride and boosting self confidence by making citizens of the location more aware of what values and achievements the place may stand for and be connected with. It views place brands as relationships between the place and all its stakeholders.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Despite limited availability of literature in R.E.B a clear move from branding to specialised destination branding is evident. From developments within the field of branding to services branding to event branding and finally destination branding there is scope to adapt existing branding concepts towards R.E.B. Close consideration should be paid towards stakeholder considerations as this can be the defining success to any event. From researching available literature relating to Regional Event Management Branding there is an evident gap in literature when it comes to branding in association with event management. However in noting this, the tourism sector have realised this and are

conducting research and conferences recently in this area of branding (Quinn et al., 2007). It is fair to suggest that research into regional event management branding is necessary and relevant. Progress in this area will enrich both event management and service branding knowledge.



# CHAPTER 3

## **Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology used with consideration given to the nature of the study. An innovative approach is used that involves mixed methods composed of two parts. Part one consists of exploratory based research while part two explores practitioner based research. To compliment the traditional quantitative research approach in marketing cognisance is taken of more contemporary styles. This is achieved through adapting triangulation; first qualitative research - consisting of in-depth interviews along with a focus Group, secondly quantitative research consisting surveys and thirdly action research. Diverse yet relevant methods of research both enrich and validate the results.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The research design is based on triangulation incorporating four different techniques namely, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, a focus group and action research. Wolcott (1998, p.5) suggests “triangulated techniques are helpful for cross-checking or for ferreting out varying perspectives on complex issues and events”. The Research Design is illustrated in Figure 3.1: Triangulation of Methodology overleaf.

**Fig 3.1: Triangulation of Methodology**



Each of these will now be referred to in detail.

### **3.3 In depth Interviews**

#### **3.3.1 Objective**

Ten in-depth interviews have been carried out among those involved in the event management profession. The objective of this qualitative method of research was to gain an insight into the perceptions of event management including what are the vital elements necessary in order to achieve a successful event.

### 3.3.2 Design

In design of the interview the approach adopted was the ‘In-depth Interviewing technique’, also known as ‘one to one’ interview, McDaniel and Gates (2007, p.149). Here the interviewer asks a number of semi structured probing questions which in most cases in carried out in a face to face setting which is convenient for the interviewee in special circumstances in-depth interviews can be carried out via phone or computer when appropriate. This method was incorporated as there was an outline of topics to be covered and with this method there is the freedom to vary the wording and order of questions to some extent which was appropriate for carrying out interviews in this field of event management.

Ten in-depth interviews were carried out among various stakeholders in order to generate a large amount of detailed data to gain insights, concepts and expansion into the understanding of the area of event management. Here it was vital to gain the expertise of these stakeholders into all areas of event management, in particularly the areas of:

- Key areas to focus on in organising an event
- What contributes a successful event
- What are their perceptions to event management in association to regional branding?

### **3.3.3 Sampling**

The sampling technique for in-depth interview chosen was that of non-probability sampling. This type of sampling relies on the personal judgment of the researcher rather than on chance in selecting the sample elements, McDaniel and Gates (2007, p.393). Non-probability sampling can be gained through the various methods of: convenience, judgment, quota and snowballing sampling. For the purpose of in-depth interviews judgment sampling was incorporated. Judgment sampling is a form of convenience sampling, Malhorta and Birks (2006, p.364) define judgment sampling as ‘a form of convenience sampling in which the population elements are selecting based on the judgment of the researcher’.

The researcher selected the elements of the sample according to how they feel the interviewee has relevant expertise and is representative of the population in the field in which they are researching.

### **3.3.4 Administration**

In order to gain an accurate indication to the research problem it was deemed beneficial to interview various appropriate stakeholders within the field. Table 3.1 overleaf exhibits a list of personnel and organisations that partook in the interviews.



**Table 3.1 List of Interviewees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Rory O'Connor</b>	Sligo Live	01/03/2007
<b>Orla Mulligan</b>	Quest events	11/04/2007
<b>Colm McBride</b>	Hawkswell Theatre Sligo	19/04/2007
<b>Dave Dineen</b>	Cork Comedy Festival	20/04/2007
<b>Paul Mc Loone</b>	North-West Tourism	24/05/2007
<b>John Murray</b>	Derry City Council	30/05/2007
<b>Louise mcConville</b>	Con Brio	05/06/2008
<b>Declan Breen</b>	Sligo County council	26/07/2007
<b>John Crumlsh</b>	Galway Arts Festival	14/08/2008
<b>Sarah O'Donovan</b>	West Cork Chamber Music Festival	04/12/2008

The in-depth interviews lasted between one to one and a half hours carried out at a time and location that was appropriate to the interviewee. Of those stakeholders that it was not possible to interview in a face to face manner it was deemed appropriate to interview them via phone or email. The selected interviewees considered major stakeholders in the field and potentially of benefit to the research were associated with the areas of event management, tourism and local authorities, namely event organisers, event management professionals, local authority representatives and a major stakeholder within the tourism body.

### **3.3.5 Analysis**

Details of each interview were recorded, transcribed and collated, with the aim of constructing surveys to achieve deeper insight into the feelings, attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders into event branding.

## **3.4 Focus Group**

### **3.4.1 Objective**

An exploratory focus group was selected for the study as the research entered an exploratory phase of the process. The exploratory focus group was employed for preparing the quantitative research and to generate ideas towards the action research. Furthermore gaining insight to perceptions and feelings towards events in the region was anticipated.

### **3.4.2 Sampling**

The participants comprised of personnel who were event organisers, marketing lecturers, students and members of the general public that attended both national and international events. Ten people were invited to attend. As depicted by Domegan and Flemming (2003, p.146) eight is seen as an ideal number of participants as fewer are unlikely to generate the energy, momentum and group dynamics necessary for a successful session. Likewise groups greater than twelve may be too crowded resulting in insecurities such as speaking in large groups. In noting this it is advisable to invite more than the desired number as it

is unlikely all participants will partake. For the study ten were invited and eight arrived to partake in the focus group.

### **3.4.3 Administration**

Physical setting for the focus group is very important. A relaxed informal atmosphere encourages spontaneous comments. The selected location was in I.T. Sligo, in the library meeting room. This location was selected as there was ease of parking for participants with the room being central and easily located. In addition the room is small in size offering an intimate non threatening setting. The seats were arranged in a circle with tables to prompt ease of discussion with refreshments being served before commencement and being made available throughout the session. The session was recorded to offer ease of replaying the session and ensure vital information is not lost.

The moderator selected had previous experience of conducting focus groups, a knowledge of the topic and appropriate interpersonal and communication skills.

A moderator's discussion guide was prepared in advance of the focus group. This was prepared where the sequence and style of questioning was flexible allowing unexpected and new perceptions and ideas to be discussed. The guide also served as a checklist to ensure all required information was gathered.

### **3.4.4 Analysis**

Common themes were established from listening back to the audio recording and referring notes taken during the session. This was a very straightforward matter as the discussion guide was well planned and properly adhered to, where several questions did not need to be asked as the discussion led from topic to topic in a natural and sequential fashion.

From the analysis the information was incorporated in development of the administered surveys and used as a guide in development and organisation of the action research. In addition the views and perceptions of regional events were established from the perspective of the general public, event organisers and attendees.

## **3.5 Survey Research**

### **3.5.1 Objective**

A survey was constructed to obtain the views of both CEO's of the event industry and industry personnel; one survey with slight modifications was made to suit appending respondents. The objective of this quantitative method of research was to expand on the knowledge obtained through the in-depth interviews.

### **3.5.2 Design**

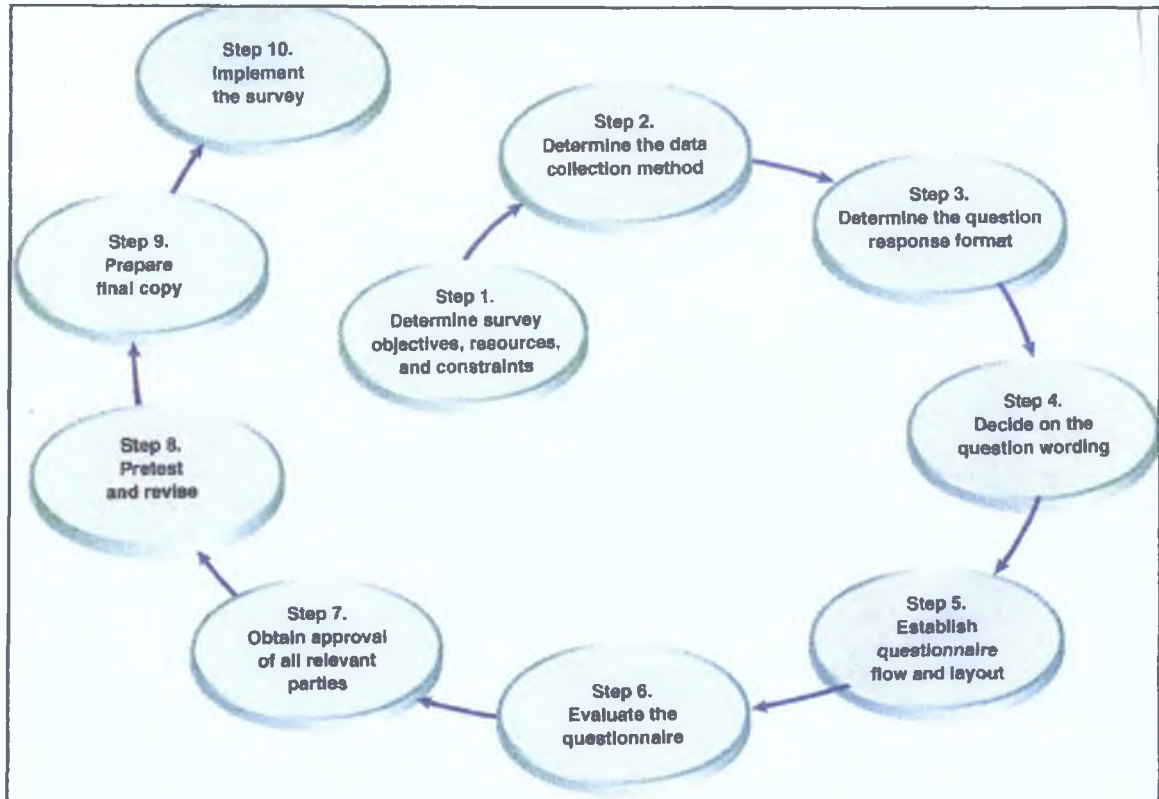
Questionnaire design is of utmost importance as poorly designed and structured questionnaires will probably yield vague and unreliable data Rogan, (2007, p.116). In designing a questionnaire for the purpose of this research it was decided that two variations of one questionnaire would be the most appropriate in order to reach both the CEO's of event management and event management professionals.

The questionnaire design process was conducted bearing in mind the ten steps used by McDaniel and Gates (2007, p.336).

Both questionnaires were designed using the following ten steps. Each step was undertaken in the same manner in designing each set of questionnaires with the exception

of step five, where there was a variation of sequence of questions and information required from each questionnaire.

**Figure 3.2 Questionnaire Design Process**



Source: McDaniel and Gates (2007, p.336)

➤ **Step one: Determine survey objectives, resources and constraints**

Both surveys sought similar information in relation to event management, branding and regional events. Industry questionnaires sought further information in the form of company experience while C.E.O. questionnaires sought further personal information.

Utilising this information can yield a successful sustainable event, resulting in a regional brand.

➤ **Step Two: Determine the data-collection method**

Due to the diverse nature of intended respondents it was decided that the most practical and appropriate method of data collection method would be self completion. Due to the nature of this the questionnaires would need to be explicit and relatively short as the researcher would not be present to clarify any queries.

➤ **Step Three: Determine the question response format**

When step two has been decided upon a decision must be made regarding the type of questions to be used throughout the survey. The three major question types used in market research are found to be open-ended, closed-ended and scale response questions.

For the purpose of this research the questionnaire was designed with the use of a number of closed ended questions with the majority of questions being open ended as it would give further scope for encouraging the recipient to share their true feeling, experiences and beliefs on the topic.

➤ **Step Four: Decide on the question wording**

There are four general guidelines according to McDaniel and Gates (2007, p.345) when deciding on the wording of questions these are; the wording must be clear and non bias, the respondent must be able to answer the question and be willing to answer the question.

The aforementioned guidelines were closely adhered to in questionnaire design for the purpose of the research.

➤ **Step five: Establish questionnaire flow and layout**

Once questions are formulated it is necessary to develop a layout for the questionnaire. There should be logic to the positioning of each section. Developing a well thought out, well constructed questionnaire is the key to obtaining a completed interview with valuable information.

Once again the aforementioned guidelines in questionnaire design were closely followed with beginning the questionnaire with questions that were easily answered while at the same time attracting the attention of the recipient. Questions most likely to require consideration were placed in the centre of the questionnaire with prompts inserted in appropriate points of the questionnaire leaving three to five lines for response where appropriate. At this stage it was deemed appropriate to design two variations of the questionnaires one for industry in order to gain the insight and benefit of their knowledge and one for CEO's of event management in order to gain the benefit of their experience and knowledge.

The key difference in design was the questionnaires designed for event CEO's had a section entitled 'personal experience' while the Industry questionnaires section was entitled 'company experience'. In design of the industry questionnaires the section detailing company details was placed at the end keeping in mind the guideline of positioning sensitive, threatening or demographic questions at the end.

➤ **Step Six: Evaluate the questionnaire**

Throughout this step of the design there was a large amount of editing carried out mainly due to shortening the questionnaires, cutting out unnecessary questions, rewording questions and reordering the sequence and layout of questions. This was carried out with the goal of achieving an accurate and true response while reaching the research objectives.

➤ **Step Seven: Obtain approval of all relevant parties**

Once the first draft of the questionnaire is completed it should be distributed to all those in management of the project. This is to gain approval while also insuring that all areas are covered and any relevant information that may have risen within the period since the project began has been included in the questionnaire/survey.

This stage was carried out by the researcher and supervisor critically analysing the prepared questionnaires in order to ensure that all necessary areas were covered throughout the questionnaires. During this stage it was also vital to gain the insights of the supervisor on the overall design and content of the questionnaire.

➤ **Step Eight: Pretest and revise**

The questionnaire must be pre-tested after receiving final approval from the authorities.

The questionnaires were tested via personnel related to the field of research, event management and marketing, there were a few minor changes to be made within the questionnaires, which were carried out to fulfill the requirements of a well designed



questionnaire. Once revised step seven and eight were carried out to obtain efficiency and effectiveness of design.

➤ **Step Nine: Prepare final questionnaire copy**

Throughout this step it was vital that any instructions were explicit such as when asking respondents to rank areas of significance place in brackets how this should be done, for example (*1 being most significant and 10 least*). At this stage it was vital in ensuring a professional looking questionnaire which was achieved through the use of headings/sections, the layout and wording of questions, clear instructions, prompting in the appropriate areas and allocating the appropriate space for responses.

➤ **Step Ten: Implement the survey**

During the implementation of survey research procedures must be followed in order to ensure that data is collected correctly, efficiently and at a reasonable cost.

For the purpose of this research it was envisaged that firstly the recipients would be contacted in advance of being sent the questionnaire. This method was carried out for a small quantity of industry with the method largely being administered for event CEO's where appropriate. However this was not feasible in the case of a large number of industry questionnaires, as a result a cover letter was constructed for each questionnaire explaining what the research was for and how the research was dependent on their view points while also thanking the respondent in advance for their time, knowledge, expertise and experience. Once constructed the cover letter and questionnaire were emailed to both industry and event CEO's.

### 3.5.3 Sampling

The sample technique chosen for distribution of the questionnaires was that of non-probability convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was chosen due to the efficient and effective means of obtaining true meaning in an inexpensive, easily accessible approach. The sample was obtained through a listing of event management companies in the 'Business Plus Journal' (2007, p.88/89), the yearbook of the 'Association of Irish festivals and Events' which provided listings for both *'festivals all over the land'* and *'Artists and Agents Directory'*. In addition a sample was chosen as a result of the personal contacts developed through the researcher at various conferences.

### 3.5.4 Administration

The questionnaires were administered via electronic mail to the email addresses of the sample selection as aforementioned. This sample consisted of forty two questionnaires for the event management industry with a response number of two. Two hundred and eighty four questionnaires- with a response number of ten were sent to CEO's of event management. CEO's would be made up of those who are expert in the field of event management and those who are involved in the introduction and running of events nationally and abroad.

An email was sent to each recipient in the form of a cover letter detailing what the research was for and how the research was dependent on their view points while also thanking the respondent in advance for their time, knowledge, expertise and experience. An incentive was offered in the form of offering a copy of the results in order to motivate response. Attached to the email was the questionnaire for either industry or CEO as appropriate. An effort was made prior to administering the questionnaires in a number of

cases in the form of initial contact with potential respondents; this was carried out to establish the correct person to send the questionnaire to while also using it as a tool to motivate a response prior to receiving the questionnaire.

### **3.5.5 Analysis**

A completed copy of the questionnaire was returned by either email or post. A copy of each was printed and separated into the appropriate category. The statistical package SPSS 15.0 was used in order to analyse and compare the results. SPSS was set up twice, firstly in order to process the results from the industry questionnaires and secondly for the CEO set of questionnaires. With the aid of SPSS it is possible to compare and tabulate the results of each set of questionnaires while displaying the findings and offering appropriate recommendations.

### **3.6 Action Research**

“Action Research is a form of enquiry that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work” McNiff and Whitehead (2006, p.7).

The form of action research carried out was where the researcher established a committee who undertook the challenge of organising an event that was new to the region and could potentially attract visitors and as a result aid in the branding of same region.

The objective of action research is to contribute to new theory; hence the role of the practitioner is to improve practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). The objective of the committee held an educational element namely to investigate the process of organising an event, incorporating the appropriate steps to undertake including; sourcing and applying for funding, location, acts, promotion, sponsorship, branding and evaluation.

The action research is presented in case study format as depicted by Kumar et al. (1999), a case study may be the only way to understand a complex situation such as planning and the sequence of decision leading from this. A case study can be defined as a comprehensive description and analysis of a single situation. Case studies are very productive sources of research hypotheses (Kumar, Aaker and Day, 1999).

From conducting the practitioners based research it was envisaged that the researcher would gain detailed insight into event management and as a result develop a framework for running a successful event with a focus on what aspects of event management help in regional branding. For this purpose the researcher organised Sligo's inaugural comedy festival. Comedy was chosen as there is a history of comedy within the region along with a significant rise in interest of comedy within the last number of years. Finally it was envisaged that established criteria in organisation of such an event although specialised in nature can be borrowed from for other events.

### **3.7 Research Ethics**

Ethical standards comprising of openness, honesty, objectivity, confidentiality, acknowledgment and storage of data are considered essential throughout all stages of the study. The research is undertaken with a view to contribute and expand on existing literature available on regional event branding. All collated data is reported honestly without bias throughout design, analysis, interpretation, peer reviewing, personal decisions, expert testimonials and all other aspects of research where objectivity is required. Wherever confidential information is supplied it is held in such a manner and only used for its intended purpose. Materials from other sources are acknowledged at all

times, while recording and storing of primary data samples demonstrates proper research practice.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

An innovative mix method research approach is used throughout the study consisting of two parts. Part one consists of exploratory/quantitative research methods, incorporating in-depth interviews and a focus group. While part two incorporates qualitative research methods consisting of interviews with relevant stakeholders and innovative practitioner based research. Despite ethical issues of unconsidered prominence within this study ethical standards are nonetheless taken into account throughout the study.

## CHAPTER 4

# Results and Findings

## **4.1 Introduction**

The research findings from this study will be presented throughout this chapter. The exploratory study will be presented three fold; qualitative, quantitative and practical based. The first section of this chapter will report the findings of the qualitative research methods, namely that of in-depth exploratory interviews together with the findings from an exploratory focus group. The use of examples will support the qualitative research, whereby event organisers depict how certain criteria led to the success of their event brand. Secondly the findings of the quantitative research method will be presented, built on best practice themes in regional event branding. Key principles complemented by the use of examples will be deducted from this.

## **4.2 In-depth Interviews.**

A number of recurrent themes developed among event management personnel. These include: USP, marketing of the event, collaboration, challenges facing the North-West, sponsorship, location, and quality of the event. Table 4.1 overleaf and figure 4.1 respectively display emergent themes as evident throughout the study.

**Table 4.1: Key Thematic Criteria for a Successful Regional Event**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>
<b>U.S.P</b>	Breen, Dineen, McConville, Mulligan
<b>Marketing</b>	Dineen, McConville, McLoone, Murray
<b>Collaboration</b>	Breen, Crumlish, McConville, McLoone, Mulligan, Murray
<b>Challenges</b>	McLoone, Murray
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Dineen, McConville, Murray
<b>Location</b>	Crumlish, Mulligan
<b>Quality of Event</b>	Crumlish, Dineen, McConville, Mulligan, Murray

Table 4.1 displays set criteria considered necessary by event management personnel in establishing successful regional branding of an event. Each of these will be referred to in detail.

#### **4.2.1 Unique selling Point**

The findings indicate a consensus among all interviewees that it is essential to have a unique selling point (USP) to any planned event. This USP should be clearly defined and once clear can be used as a significant tool in aiding attraction, as you are offering the consumer something they want that is unavailable to them elsewhere. Mulligan (2007) states that “A USP is very very important”, and maintains the success of their company Quest Events (a corporate events company) is based on this.



## Example 4.1 Quest Events

Quest is the only one of their kind in Ireland offering corporate events with a team building element, such as tank driving activities. The unique aspect of their product is that Quest not only offer the usual corporate event such as conference management or golfing, they add an extra element in that their event centre has a unique venue at the Marriott Hotel in County Meath for tank driving, hovercraft flying, driving Land Rovers and a host of other challenging activities. Quest has companies from all over Ireland attending their event centre due to the uniqueness of their product that allows team building in a whole new way.

There is no doubt that quest must add to the branding of the region as they are unique in what they do and if a corporation want to hold a team building exercise with a different element they would consider County Meath the place to go as that is where quest are located, a remote area that is central to many towns and cities with the space for the specific activities of tank driving etc.

From this it is evident that not alone can branding of an event be supported with the use of a U.S.P., regions can learn from this concept as branding of events can in turn help with branding of a region. This point was made clear during the in-depth interviews carried out. A further example depiction this view can be explained here. It was noted that if you fell into the market segment that enjoyed classical music you would associate Bantry in County Cork with classical music.

#### Example 4.2 West Cork Chamber Music Festival

Francis Humphreys started West Cork Chamber Music Festival in 1995 from his kitchen table over 3 days, 13 years on the festival runs over 9 days with a total of 36 concerts. It is now the only festival in the area yet significant enough to have a huge impact on the region in relation to bed nights etc. Not alone this but Bantry have found that people who visit the region due to their love of Classical music return again to the area for a weekend break due to their previous experience of the region.

From this it is evident that holding events can support regional branding.

In relation to the North-West of Ireland from interviewing Declan Breen (2007), (Director of Services, Community, Enterprise and the Arts, Sligo County Council) it was evident that there was huge potential to build the brand of the North-West as Sligo has infinite iconic attractions and beauty to offer. Breen feels that Sligo could build on this and offer a U.S.P. in regard to Sligo offering a good quality of life due to its natural environment, and much improved infrastructure. Hundreds of people visit Sligo each year for surfing and water activities, with the Irish headquarters being located in Easkey this avails of using the natural environment in association with an event to attract tourism to the Region. Breen feels that Sligo could add to this and follow in Galway's footsteps

and develop the Sligo Races to the same scale as the Galway Races. Once again using the natural environment combined with an event. This could be achieved upgrading the land and raise the profile of the Sligo Races to follow in the footsteps of Galway Races Crumlish (2008), (Director of Galway Arts Festival) agrees with the notion that festival/events can aid in the concept of regional branding, states “*Galway Arts Festival is a flagship event for the West of Ireland both nationally and increasingly internationally. The event generates over €2 million worth of press each year.*”

Once the U.S.P. is identified organisers need to promote this to the target audience.

#### **4.2.2 Marketing of Event**

All interviewees agreed that marketing was imperative to the success and branding of any event, with the majority using the word “*vital*”. From their expertise in running successful events the response towards marketing was that it is vital to promote the aforementioned U.S.P. and elements of the event, to create awareness via media, posters, clearly layout brochure, support from local businesses and use of a logo that will represent what the festival is about and the location in which it is held. One such festival that is deemed successful in this area is the Kilkenny Cats Laughs Festival.

#### **Example 4.3 Kilkenny Cats Laughs Festival**

The Cats Laughs Festival is a renowned and successful comedy festival held in Kilkenny each year. The name depicts the category and location of event through the use of the words cat and laugh, the latter is used to portray laughter/ comedy and the use of cats is due to the fact that the infamous Kilkenny Hurlers are nicknamed the Kilkenny Cats.

All respondents deemed it necessary that extensive exposure of an event regionally, nationally and internationally is required. For those events in the inaugural stages of development or with minimal budgets do have to forgo the vital aspect of marketing. In such cases the advice is to encourage attraction of the media to the event in question. By exploiting the U.S.P. a substantial amount of press releases can be acquired, in turn creating awareness among your audience. Gaining support from local business that could benefit from your event in the line of sponsorship. Or as many festivals such as the Classical Music Festival in Bantry are doing, sending e-mails to the segment of your market about upcoming events or exchanging brochures and posters with similar events to target your particular segment is a cost effective way of promoting any event.

As marketing is considered such a vital element in event management Dineen (2007) (Cork Comedy Festival) alongside Murray (2007) (Derry City Council) felt that marketing of an event should be either outsourced to a professional agency or have one person associated with the event to undertake all marketing elements of the event alone. The reasoning behind this is that without successfully marketing your event and having dedicated marketing personnel your event will not succeed nor reach its full potential. It is felt that marketing undoubtedly aids in establishing an event brand through communications, as Murray (2007) (Derry City Council) states that effective marketing communications will create positive word of mouth which in turn will result in repeat business. Murray (2007) has witnessed this through the Annual City of Derry Jazz and Big Band Festival, organised by Derry City Council which created tourism in the region of seven thousand in year one that grew to approximately twenty three thousand by 2007. Marketing communications can be enhanced further through collaboration of all stakeholders.

### 4.2.3 Collaboration of Tourism, Council and Event Management Bodies

As previously mentioned effective marketing communications can substantially increase tourism in a region. Paul McLoone (2007) of Fáilte Ireland North-West States Festivals and Events can be “huge” in attracting tourism to a region with many events such as the Ryder Cup held in Kildare as a once off event in the region and the annual event of Galway’s Arts Festival. In relation to regional event management branding the concept of marketing communications has been deemed fundamental. McLoone feels that this concept can be expanded to strengthen the brand. In respect to tourism bodies there are two aspects to how Tourism can support events.

1. Buy in: this is where international exposure is gained and where the government gives 4-5 million Euro to sport tourism events with the sponsoring criteria of international publicity. e.g. Ryder Cup.
2. Grow national events that are already in place here. There are 52 festivals that North-West tourism supports in the region as they enhance the experience for the visitors. If an event is ran cross border both governments will support it by both governments giving 2.7 million Euro each. This region can sleep 23,000 people. So if running an event you must decide on your market and cater for day visitors and overnight visitors you must be realistic and keep in line with figures available. Of this 23,000, 8,500 beds are available in Sligo and 12,500 in Donegal with the rest in the North West.

Fáilte Ireland are currently undertaking a Three Year Strategy in order to increase tourism to the North-West region, traditionally the region is associated with beauty, culture and heritage. While improving these natural resources they are also considering the benefits

of supporting events in order to attract international tourism to the region, which has declined by thirty three percent since 1999.

The strategy will include buying into three international events. At present there are a total of five festivals, one in each county that has the potential of attracting international visitors. Three of these events with the most international potential will be bought into and the tourism body will add professionalism to the further two events, resulting in an enhancement of the experience for the visitor.

In addition to this there is the aim to increase the numbers of visitors into Knock from 650 000 to 1 000 000 and from 450 000 to 800 000 to Derry. Also to set up flight from Manchester to Sligo airport, Scotland to Derry, Heathrow to Knock, in addition the Gatwick link is nearly confirmed.

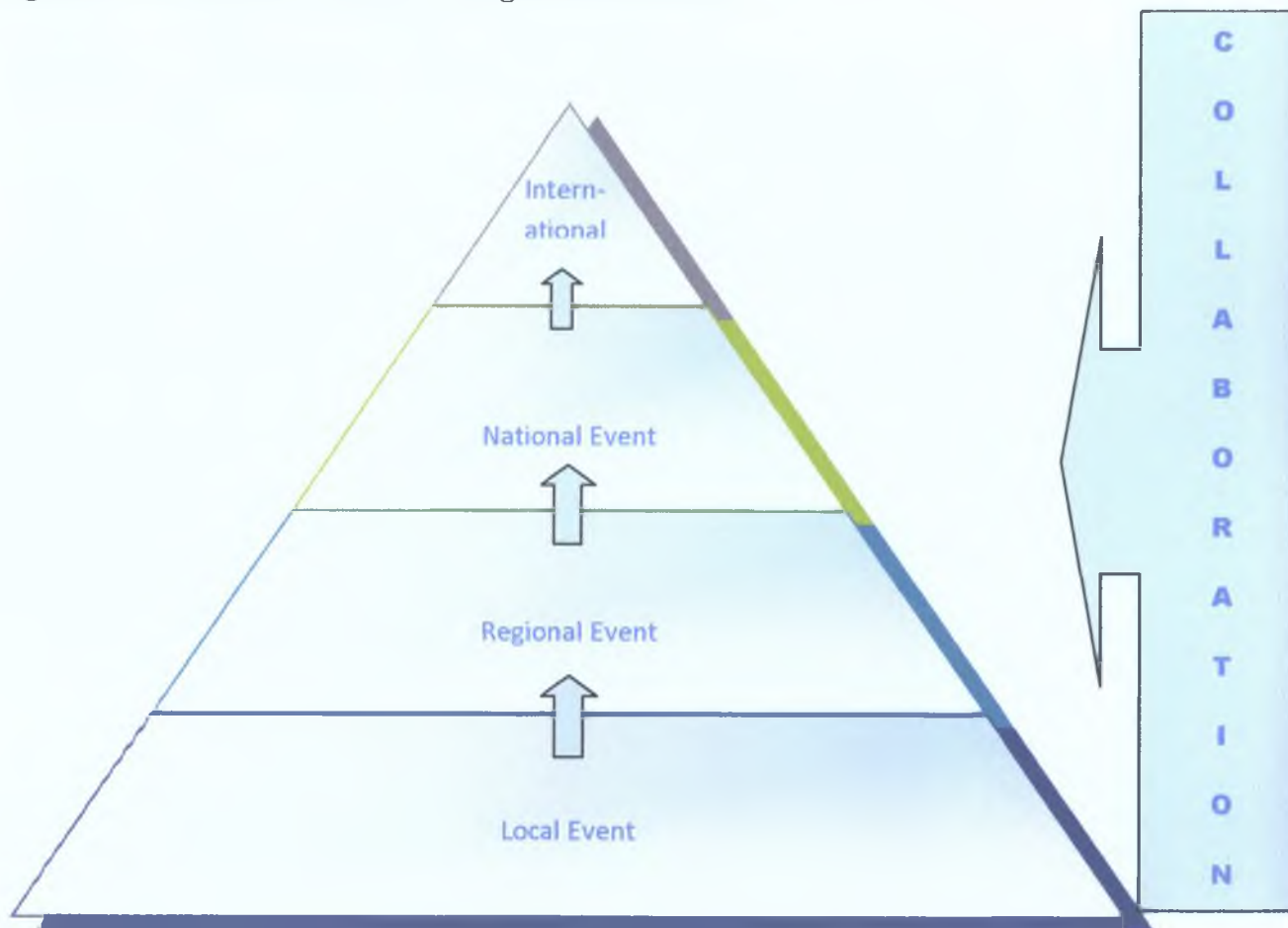
It is evident that Murray (2007) (Derry City Council) is in agreement with the concept of tourism aiding the branding of event management as mentioned in the marketing communications section. Murray expands further with a significant strategy stating; gaining the support of the local council behind an event will add sustainability to any event. Another important strategy as mentioned by Murray is the benefit of securing the support of the local community when organising an event. This can add a personal element of event management in which McConville (2008) (Con Brio) deems necessary to add sustenance to any event.

In support of the above points Crumlish (2008) (Galway Arts Festival) states that from his experience events can aid the concept of regional branding, he explains *“Galway Arts Festival is a flagship event for the West of Ireland both nationally and increasingly internationally. The event generates over €2 million worth of press.”*

From this empirical evidence there is scope to develop the emergent area of collaboration between all marketing, management, tourism and local authority bodies in the branding of regional event management. There is an apparent and extensive gap in literature around this essential area.

As is evident from the study collaboration holds significant potential as an effective tool to regional branding, with the potential for further expansion creating an International brand. As is displayed in figure 4.1 below.

**Figure 4.1 Growth of a Brand Through Collaboration**



Once an event is established it can stay at local event level for many years never surpassing this point or simply disappearing. With collaboration of all stakeholders to an

event this need not be. Collaboration can push a local event to the next phase securing regional event status. With the increased recognition and attendance the once regional event then has potential to develop to national event status. Once national status is secured and effective collaboration is achieved and built upon the national event will convert to an international event status, supporting R.E.B.

The concept of collaboration is an extensively underdeveloped area holding potential for further development and investigation.

The emerging theme of collaboration could be utilised to assist challenges faced by an event.

#### **4.2.4 Challenges facing the North-West**

Both Murray (2007) and McLoone (2007) are in agreement that all regions face challenges when considering branding. The most prominent challenge facing the North-West of Ireland stems back to the time of the troubles faced in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland was branded unsafe as a destination to visit. Murray notes that tourists both nationally and internationally were very reluctant to visit due to the branding of the North as a troubled region however since the peace process this has begun to turn around. As bands come to Derry to take part in their events they see the troubles are in the past and see the “Real” welcoming Derry. From this word of mouth grows and as a result during the Derry Jazz and Big Band Festival now all hotels and B&B's are booked out annually. It is a slow process to change the brand image but by supporting the new brand image with a strong communications campaign and the W.O.M. gained a new positive brand can be achieved as is the case with Derry.



Similar to this the North-West has had to overcome the same challenge in attracting international tourism, as the region was branded with the same perception due to North-West containing the word 'North'. Nationally also stemming back a considerable time span the North-West faced the challenge of attracting national tourism as the perceived distance to the region was considered a lot further than is actually the case. McLoone firmly believes the only way to overcome these challenges and change the brand image that exists is to undertake an extensive marketing campaign. We see this in action through the media advertising of the "Discover" campaign that displays the attributes of a region/county through non personal means of communication.

Similar to rebranding of a destination sponsorship can enhance the event brand.

#### **4.2.5 Sponsorship of Event**

The results of the in-depth interviews displayed a clear consensus that in the present economic climate sourcing sponsorship can prove problematic. Murray (2007) argues this as valid reasoning for acquiring the support of your local council and community alike. In stating this when sourcing sponsorship it is essential that the type of sponsorship being sought is appropriate for the event at hand. For example if you are organising an event for children you will not seek sponsorship from an alcohol based product as this will not only send the wrong message but will also not reach the intended target audience, damaging both the reputation and success of both event and sponsor. A final point to consider in sponsorship is to keep control of the event at all times referring back to the events goals and visions, avoiding sponsors altering the intended mission of the event for their gain.

While sponsorship needs to appropriately fit the event the same should be considered for location.

#### **4.2.6 Location of Event**

When considering location of an event it was recognised that the venue/location is of great importance, whether the event is local, regional, national or international. The location needs to be suitable for the intended event this could include many factors and every event will require different elements. For example West Cork Chamber Festival requires an extra location this year as the festival expands. They require a venue of appropriate size and acoustics, the new venue will be the local church. The seats may not be of utmost comfort but this will be compensated as the size, acoustics and atmospherics are perfect for classical and chamber music.

Additionally location can be a factor in creating a sense of public ownership; and is considered an attribute in the success of Galway Arts Festival as Crumlish (2008) states:

*“The Festival location is important as is the festival’s broad appeal and great sense of public ownership”*

This may be considered especially relevant to public funded events, nevertheless among respondents it is considered holding a USP can advance tourism attraction.

A U.S.P., marketing, collaboration, challenges, sponsorship and location all show the way to branding an event. Yet it is imperative the basic elements are not overlooked.

#### **4.2.7 Quality of Event**

In establishing an event brand it is essential not to forget the basics to achieve a successful brand. These are as follows: there needs to be passion and a feeling that the event is something worth doing, the audience needs to be clearly specified, similar events within the region should be avoided and it’s the detail that matters. As it is imperative that most time should be spent in planning your event it is essential that the last minute detail in executing the event is not forgotten. For example in a stage production ensuring

acts are available on time and satisfied with all elements, lighting and sound are appropriate and adequate staff for ticket sales, ushering etc. All interviewees agree that any event should start small taking into consideration the aforementioned themes. In undertaking this, scope will be shaped for the growth of regional event branding.

Figure 4.2 below exhibits the criteria for a successful regional event as explained throughout this chapter. This figure is an adaptation of former table 4.1. Further research demonstrated that the criteria of; quality, location, sponsorship and marketing of the event are considered as standard practice. Holding a U.S.P., identifying challenges facing an event and the establishment of collaboration are considered emerging themes. It is deemed necessary to the success of any event that the emerging themes need to be considered in conjunction with the standard practice criteria.

**Fig 4.2: Criteria for a Successful Regional Event**

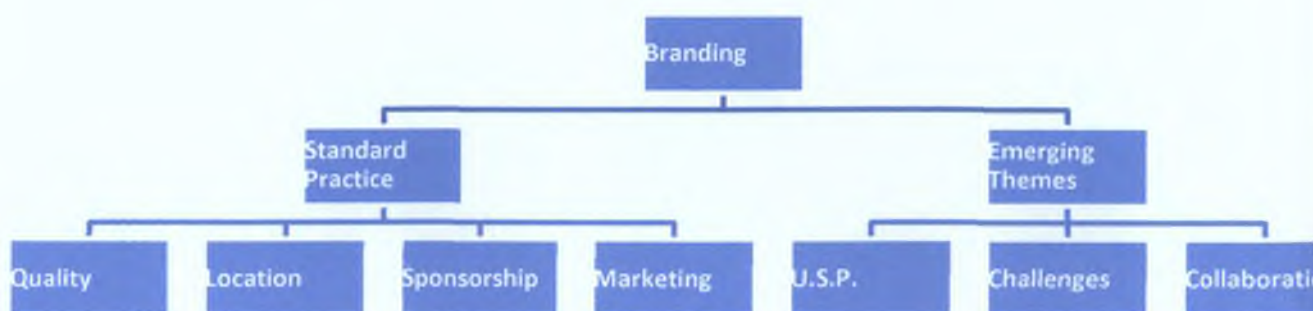


Figure 4.2 exhibits criteria of considered standard practice for branding a successful regional event. In addition to standard practice criteria a number of emerging themes are displayed. These themes should support the already standard practice themes to create a successful regional event.

### **4.3 Focus Group**

The views of the participants from the exploratory focus group were found to be congruent with those of the interviewees. The main theme established was one of collaboration. A theme where all official bodies associated with an event in association with the support and enthusiasm of the local community will achieve a sustainable success with future potential.

Throughout the discussion it was established that events are “huge” in creating awareness and promotion of a region in conjunction with the extra benefit of adding a social factor for the local community. A gap in the market was identified here for the Sligo region where there is a lack of significant events that brings the entire community together. (With exception of the W.R.C. which is not an ongoing event over a significant duration.)

One main barrier was identified in association with event management for creating a successful regional brand. This is particularly prevalent in areas where lack of communication towards change is as a direct result of non-collaboration of stakeholders, resulting in immense difficulty of achieving regional branding through organisation of an event. The participants felt this to be a significant barrier to overcome surrounding the North-West region. There were many events identified within this region such as Sligo

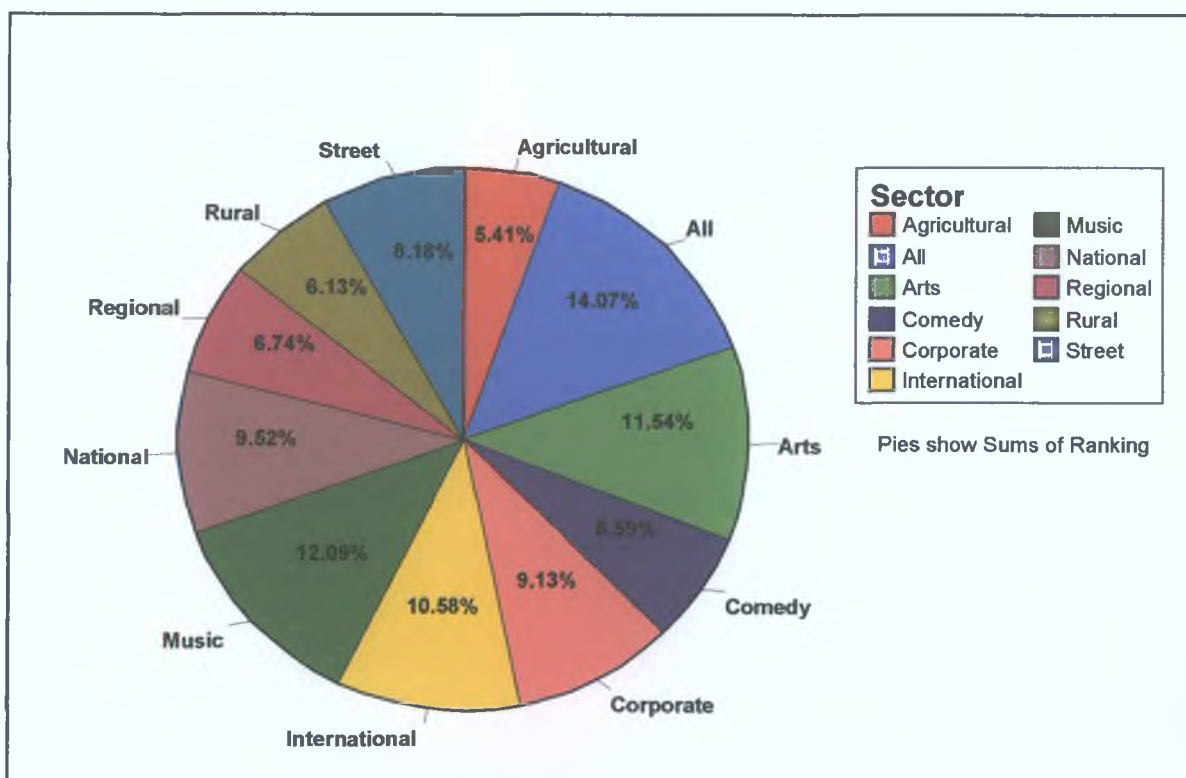
Arts Festival which was remembered with immense passion by all, the success of this event was attributed to the unity, collaboration and joining together of all bodies previously mentioned. The demise of this event was associated with the letting go of O'Dea (Chief Organiser) from the committee. Other events were identified throughout the same region though it was felt that even though these events held potential for the region the 'small town mentality' and non-collaboration of communities was acting as a barrier thus affecting the regional brand of a beautiful yet fun location to visit.

Galway and Wexford were identified as areas where communities and official bodies collaborate to overcome these barriers. This results in a sustainable event. In Wexford the Classical Music Festival commenced in 1952, today people from all countries attend the event. This is alleged to be due to the entire community collaborating by offering free board at local Bed and Breakfasts. All local shops display an opera themed window. They offer something unique and personal that is unavailable elsewhere to the market. This undoubtedly offers explanation to why Wexford hold one of the biggest opera music festivals in the world.

#### 4.4 Results of C.E.O. Survey Findings.

As a result of the surveys carried out among event C.E.O.'s a number of themes emerged contributing to the study. All participants considered event management to be a growing industry. The majority of participants believed that all sectors in the industry were gaining significance, while others believed individual sectors were gaining significantly over others. Figure 4.3 overleaf displays the classification of each sector that was considered as gaining in significance.

Figure 4.3: Ranking of Event Sectors



As previously mentioned a majority deem all events to be gaining significance while agricultural events are deemed as gaining least significance. Taking this into account it must be pointed out that there is slight difference between each sector which authenticates the view that all events are gaining in significance.

A major theme emerged at this stage of the research, based on a relationship between event management and regional tourism. The C.E.O.'s commented that the reasoning behind the growth of the event management industry was the need and desire to raise the profile of an area through attracting tourism both nationally and internationally, generating additional revenue in the local economy as a result. The most important aspect of event management is owing to many factors with event personnel considered the most prominent and significant aspect. To achieve a successful event these personnel will be skilled in appropriate areas such as people management, co-ordination, experience, dedication and work with utmost efficiency as they endeavour to host a successful and profitable event. As aforementioned there is a large array of factors here however the most prominent with the exception of event personnel are marketing communications and funding/sponsorship.

Communication is considered essential with "good" effective advertising been delivered to the identified target audience encouraging a wide profile event due to the wide yet appropriate publicity. Gaining funding or sponsorship is also considered a vital aspect of event management whether it be from public or private sources as there is a consensus that without this support a viable event will not take place and will not attract tourism to the regions. Other aspects of considered importance are; working within budget, ease of access to the event logistically and information based, include a U.S.P in the event,

organise an event of high quality that is considered value for money, and the ability to event to reinvent the event in order to sustain its success.

As mentioned marketing communications is central to the success of any event, this is evident from figure 4.4 which ranks the marketing tools of considered importance to event management.

**Figure 4.4: Ranking Marketing Tools**



From figure 4.4 it is evident that all aspects of marketing are important in their own way, depending on the event at hand. In many cases the “total package” will be deemed necessary at various stages as event management relates to the entire event. Individually true promotional value of an event comes from positive, early and eye-catching publicity



or media coverage and word of mouth is the most important marketing tool along with the internet as it is an essential form of information in the present climate. Sales promotion and direct marketing are felt to be of least importance (as marketing tools gaining only 8.72 percent in ranking of importance).

A further theme established from the survey findings is in relation to the importance of funding to event management branding in bringing communities together and increasing tourism resulting in enhancement of a region. It was found that ninety nine percent of participants state that corporate funding is important to regional event management branding, while one hundred percent of participants agree that public funding or support is important. Numerous events would not have the ability to take place without funding. Events in receipt of corporate or public funding gain the benefit of legitimacy associated with the event creating additional P.R. exposure and enhancement. Supporting events benefits the cultural wealth and economic influx of corporations while also adding a feel good factor associated with the company. Largely public funded events are organised for the benefit of the local community and deemed vital in increasing tourism in a region. Public funding can also give the incentive to event organisers to undertake additional voluntarily roles to the benefit of the region. Funding is a vital element in creating communication for an event especially with rising costs of advertising and insurance.

Participants who took part in the survey mentioned a considerable variety of global events that they considered successful, comprising of both national and international events. Of the global events mentioned the main three considered were the Edinburgh Festival, the Ryder Cup and the Olympics. The main factors that attributed to the success of these events support the criteria mentioned throughout this chapter. These factors are:

overall excellent event management with good coordination and effective marketing communications including advertising, wide publicity through various methods such as public relations generating a high profile event and achieving recognition of the event brand.

Ease of Access is another factor for the success of these events as information is readily available with events easy to access. Choosing the appropriate acts to gain wide publicity resulting in attracting visitors with gradual growth is also deemed significant. Another prominent factor mentioned a number of times largely attributing to the success of these events compared to many others is funding and sponsorship. For example Edinburgh International Festival secures five million euro of public funds annually. This significant budget allows the best acts to be secure, better communication and as a result increased tourism and wealth to the region.

From the personal experience of the C.E.O.'s respondents the following themes emerged; the relationship between event management and regional branding, factors that result in a unique event experience, the importance of collaboration and factors that sustain the growth of regional event management.

The complete set of C.E.O.'s who participated in the survey (bar one who was unsure) strongly believe that event management can play a key role in regional branding. The principle conviction on the relationship between event management and regional branding is that by organising an event of considered quality this promotes the image of the region in a positive light. The more events in a region will raise the profile of a region securing better facilities, access and increased accommodation of higher standards. This

could be due to the fact that as an event grows in stature increased and higher standard of facilities are demanded. This demand increases the wealth, economy and image of a region. Amalgamating all above factors results in a positive external image of the region, aiding regional branding.

The central question here is does R.E.M. assist in regional branding? From the study it is found that the answer is yes. With the development of a U.S.P., collaboration, training, access to funding and consumer profiling a successful R.E.M. brand can be established. A number of themes have been established to support this and are referred to in this section of the study.

A large range of factors were displayed in describing what makes an event experience unique namely; an event should contain a U.S.P., a superior event should be offered and ensue organisation. The most prominent factor is for any event to include a U.S.P or “Wow factor”. Consequently your audience will depart conversing enthusiastically to others, which in turn generates positive word of mouth attracting an increased audience to a subsequent event. A superior event is customer focused with ease of access through a high quality website. Personnel should be assigned to pay attention to small details that ordinarily may be considered insignificant yet could impact on the overall perceptions of the audience. Superiority may also be defined through customers considering they have received “value for money”. A well organised event is capable of making an event experience unique through coordination, friendly staff, and an appropriate venue allows for an enjoyable experience which brings out the best in people, leaving them with a positive perception of the event.

All participants agree that in the context of regional event management collaboration between event management professionals, arts and tourism bodies is important. This conviction considers that insights, backing and support of all bodies are extremely important for well attended, smoothly ran events that run at a profit. These bodies have the ability to assist each other by pooling their resources and skills to offer a better package saving significant resources such as time and money.

**Principle 1: Partnership and cooperation is endeavoured to be the way forward to R.E.M.B.**

Three areas were established from the experience of CEOs in how regional event management can be supported and sustained. Firstly there is a call for increased assistance for marketing and training courses through low cost community development training in event management which will profit the local economy over time.

**Principle 2: Training will support sustainability to an event and local community.**

Secondly increased access to funding is called for with a simpler process for applying for and obtaining said funding. This can be achieved through collaboration with all corporate and state funding bodies, on a term basis preventing problems such as clashing of events as a result of increased communications made possible because of collaboration. This theory can be strengthened through public enthusiasm and support sustaining regional event management.

**Principle 3: Collaboration and policy development will result in increased effectiveness and efficiency of an event.**

Thirdly accurately profiling your audience, delivering and communicating concisely, powerfully and memorably the key message will ensue sustainability of any event.

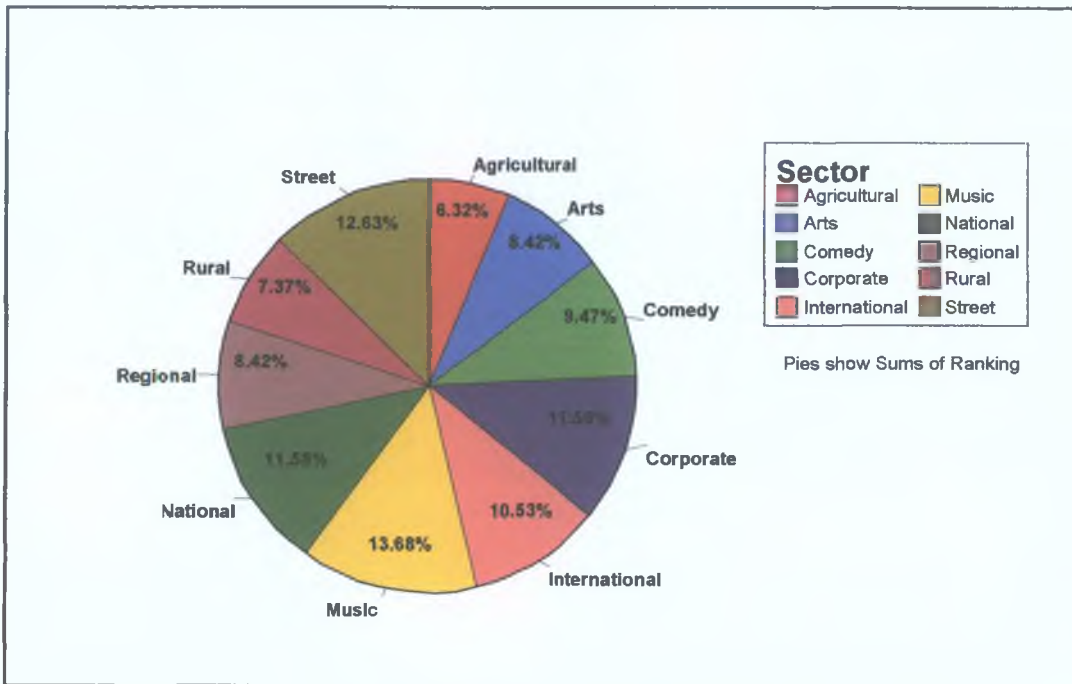
**Principle 4: Communication is paramount to any successful event.**

Finally a number of factors were devised as result of expert opinion to the steps involved in event management planning from concept ideas through to planning, marketing, execution and evaluation of events. Many concepts had similar elements with evident gaps. This information is presented in the next chapter in conjunction with action research implemented to establish a framework for best practice in organising and branding a regional event.

#### **4.5 Results of Company Survey Findings**

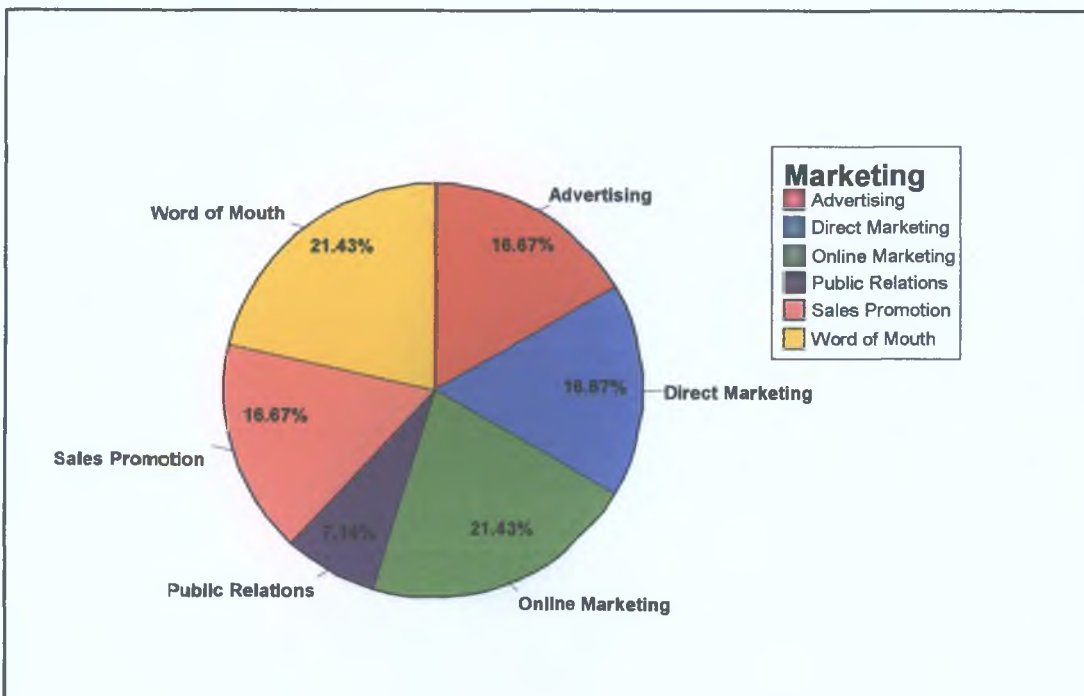
The structure of the surveyed companies falls under the category of limited companies, their main business focus being corporate entertainment events. From the results of the companies surveyed it was found that the participants were largely in agreement with CEOs of the industry on all themes. There was a consensus that event management is considered a growing industry with all sectors gaining recognition (see figure 4.5). Again all sectors received indication of sector growth with a slight percentage difference between each sector, indication overall growth. Both surveys displayed agreement by considering rural events achieving the least sector growth within the industry.


**Figure 4.5: Ranking of Event Sectors**



In analysing figure 4.6 below it is evident that participants consider all marketing tools of importance to event management, with public relations lagging behind other forms.

**Figure 4.6: Ranking Marketing Tools**





The findings from the company survey in relation to skills required to host a successful event management company coincides with the concepts of C.E.O.'s regarding significant factors of event management. High-quality organisational skills, excellent marketing communications, attention to detail, expect the unexpected, the ability to create innovation, profiling your audience and hosting a quality event are the primary skills required to host a successful event. This reverts back to the focus of the study, leading into the area of branding in two aspects – importance of branding in a company and regional branding in association with event management. Branding of a company is considered with extreme importance as the logo and tagline associated with a company needs to give the correct impression and perception of the classification within which a company is situated. For example event management company's specialising in corporate entertainment events require a professional logo depicting events that also has a fun element attached. Leading on from this Regional Branding is of considered importance with event management. This is as branding is stated to go “hand in hand” with event management enhancing awareness of any event despite its allocation on a scale, i.e. a large or small scale event.

In regard to an event containing a U.S.P. to obtain a successful event was once more in agreement and considered vital to add value to the supplier in the eyes of the consumer and in order for clients to recognise the company that can best serve their needs as a result. Finally collaboration between all bodies involved in event management was considered important within the industry.

## 4.6 Conclusion

As a result of the in-depth interviews carried out a number of criteria into establishing regional event branding are identified. Many of these such as quality of the event, location, sponsorship and marketing are considered standard practice within the field of event management. In noting this a number of emerging themes are established, holding considered importance to a REM brand, namely holding a USP, identifying challenges facing the event and establishing collaboration. Collaboration is considered to be in a pre emergent phase yet deemed essential in sustainability of a R.E.M. brand, with the capacity to grow to an international brand attracting increased tourism to a location.

The results of the administered surveys are deemed in agreement with interviewees, with a number of themes developing. Again the strongest theme emerging is one of collaboration between all stakeholders resulting in less confusion and increased efficiency and effectiveness. In addition there is a call for policy development and increased training in event management to support both event organisers and communities alike, again supporting the notion of collaboration.



## CHAPTER 5

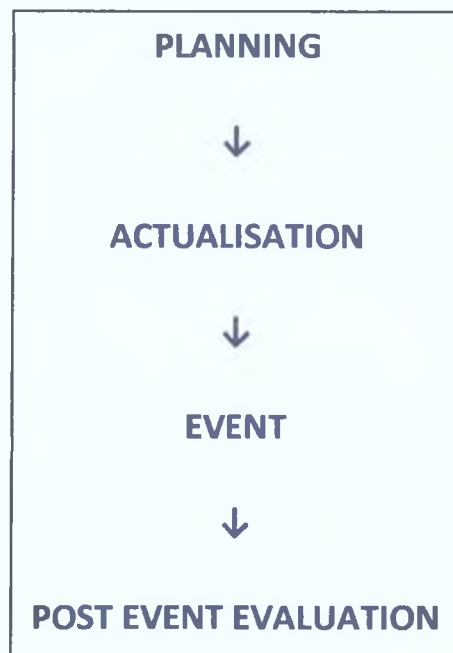
# Case Study of Westlaugh Comedy Festival

## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of Westlaugh Comedy Festival was to gain a practitioner based research experience. During the course of the action research key themes of regional event management branding are identified. Action research signifies working throughout as a practitioner based researcher, from this propositions will emerge throughout the chapter.

The following is an analysis of participant based action research utilising the case study method. This analysis will engage four phases as outlined in figure 5.1 below. Furthermore figure 5.2 exhibits the key findings required for R.E.M. branding.

**Figure 5.1 Four Phases in analysis of an event**

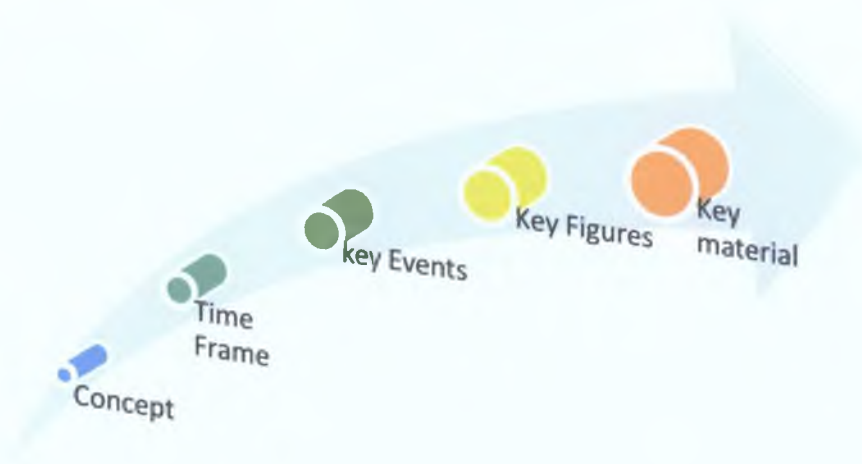


Each of these will be looked at in detail.

## 5.2: Planning

The planning phase consists of the concept, time frame, key events, key figures and key material, beginning with devising an overall concept in which to plan, host and evaluate an event to research best practice in organising and branding a regional event. The planning phase of the event is where a substantial amount of time will be allocated as once an event is planned extensively other phases will proceed with few problems.

**Figure 5.2: Main Components of the Planning Phase**



Comedy was devised as the initial concept and development of this concept progressed into a two day comedy festival targeted at an audience ranging from approximately three to forty years of age. During concept development in regard to demand careful consideration was taken towards viability of planning a comedy event. Research was undertaken to establish was there a target market for comedy in the region in conjunction with an exploratory focus group to establish the time of year when such an event would

not clash with similar events in the region or elsewhere. Here it was established that the best dates to hold the Festival would be on Friday the fourth and Saturday the fifth of April 2008 as it did not clash with any other events or holidays at the time.

The time frame for planning the comedy festival commenced approximately 11 months prior to the festival, during which time key events materialised. Once the concept was devised a location to host the event was sourced. All possible venues were researched examining into areas such as suitability for purpose, capacity, rental costs, and distance from centre of Sligo town, parking facilities and packages offered. From the various locations viewed The Glasshouse hotel in Sligo town centre was confirmed by early November 2007 as the most suitable venue for the comedy festival. The function room was ideal for a comedy club layout in that capacity was not extensive yet was intimate enough to hold an audience of one hundred and sixty comfortably at each gig. This was the first event of its kind it was seen as appropriate not to expect extensive crowds on the first year of any festival. However if a venue is sold out the atmosphere will add to the experience as opposed to a large venue being half full resulting in lacking of atmosphere. The view of start small and grow was the concept devised. The Glasshouse also offered a package deal by offering the function room to the festival with no charge as all profits would be donated to charity, in addition to this they offered an accommodation package for customers providing they were staying at the hotel for the two nights of the festival they would receive a discount of sixty Euro per room. The Glasshouse was also deemed suitable with easy access to the hotel and with the facility of an underground car-park available free of charge for attendees of the festival.

Once a venue was sourced a committee was formed to offer support and provide a professional structure to the festival, consisting of chief organiser whose background is in

marketing and event management, a member of lecturing staff from the local Institute of Technology, a member of Sligo Marketing Forum, a CEO from an audio visual company who worked with many events and a manager from a hotel situated within the region. This committee was deemed appropriate as it contained the necessary expertise in organisation, communication and interpersonal skills required for R.E.M. These skills are Marketing, Branding, Tourism, Event Management and Finance.

### **5.2.1 Marketing Plan**

A marketing plan was devised to give details regarding the various steps in planning that were undertaken to this stage. The plan incorporated a situational analysis, S.W.O.T. analysis, objectives and goals of the festival, classification of target audience and the marketing strategy to be incorporated.

### **5.2.2 Situational Analysis**

The situational analysis displays huge potential to build a co-brand around comedy and Sligo as there is no comedy festival within the region. Scope as a culture of comedy exists with Spike Milligan, Eugene Lambert and Pauline McLynn all holding close relations with Sligo. With an already existing small comedy club held in the 'Model Arts Centre' in Sligo town, each month a comedian performs and each month as stated by Aoife Flynn (2007) (the Model Arts Centre) each gig hosting a commercial comedian is "sold out with large waiting lists for cancellation tickets". This is where the concept was devised from. The S.W.O.T analysis exhibited the following:

**Strengths** -Time of year as during spring a need for some activity during this time of year is found to be greatly anticipated. U.S.P. to make Sligo comedy festival different

from others workshops will be added to give it something extra. Consumer demand, as is evident due to consistent sell-out of comedy events in the locality.

**Weaknesses**-The main weakness envisaged was that this is the first time Sligo Comedy Festival is being held. Though with guidance from others involved in the area such as Aoife Flynn (2007) this weakness shall not be detrimental.

**Opportunities** - Culture of comedy in the region, large demand for comedy in the region, No comedy festival in the region, appropriate audience in the region and added realisation of the region and perception of distance reduced.

**Threats** - Possible future competition by means of other Comedy Festival and perceived distance of geographical location.

The Long term objective of the comedy Festival was to build a successful international comedy festival in Sligo through a number of phases, beginning with establishing a local/regional brand with the following goals:

- To run a successful 2 day comedy festival.
- To help brand the region.
- To increase tourism numbers.
- To increase quality of life via increased choice of entertainment.
- To increase awareness of sponsorship brand.
- Add to building perception of the North-West as a regional event location.

Once the objectives and goals were established the target audience could be defined. It was found that the target audience could be broken into three segments, local, tourist and family. The local audience were those who live within the region that have a love for comedy. Sligo holds a great love and history for comedy as earlier explained. Comedy is evidently growing throughout the country with the growth of comedy clubs and specialised comedy shows on TV. Tourists shall gain recognition of the brand that Sligo is a fun and beautiful place to visit. And finally the Comedy Festival has scope for not only adults but also the younger audience.

**Proposition 1: Conducting a situational analysis will aid in establishing the context of an event.**

The marketing strategy was considered through the use of the P's mechanism of the marketing mix. Namely that of product, price, place and promotion.

**Product**

The product would consist of a core and supplementary product, the core product would be the comedy gigs themselves which are held in the evening. The supplementary product is workshops, which will be available to the target audience of people from the age of 7 years upwards. The product offered something for all target groups, where profits that are earned through 'fun' would go to charity. In addition there would be accommodation offered at reduced prices for those attending the festival.

## **Price**

The price set for the comedy gigs would be set at a realistic and competitive price in conjunction with that of other comedy gigs and to make it accessible to that of the target audience.

## **Place**

The Comedy Festival was held in Sligo, the capital in the North-West of Ireland also known as “The Gateway City” and renowned for its beauty by those who have visited. Throughout Sligo there is a great love for comedy which is evident from each time a comedy gig is hosted in Sligo through the Model Arts Centre or The Hawkswell Theatre. This displayed an opportunity to gain recognition for Sligo through a love for comedy which has been under utilised from the years of Spike Milligan.

Sligo as a region has much to offer and holds huge potential with its beautiful natural environment. By enticing tourism to the area through the comedy festival this could bring recognition to Sligo and its beauty; helping discover the region through the publicity and positive word of mouth generated. Sligo is part of a minority where its natural beauty has not been destroyed; this is in a preliminary stage of recognition and promotion according to the enterprise section of Sligo County Council.

## **Promotion**

Promotion of the Festival would be undertaken by means of above the line and below the line promotion. Promotions used at both national and local levels. The methods would include advertising gained through national and local newspapers, national and local media, promotion through local and national radio and Word of Mouth communications. Other methods of promotion that would be used are; brand name, logo, slogan, public relations, sponsorship and a website.



A catchy and appropriate image and slogan would be created in order to associate comedy and Sligo together in order to refresh or renew people's ideas or perceptions of the area and associate Sligo as a fun place to visit with much to offer.

This was envisaged to be achieved in many ways including brochures, posters and posting information on the festival to appropriate promoters.


A lively yet easily navigated website was also envisaged be constructed to make the festival easily acceptable to the public holding all relevant information.

A range of benefits were also listed for a possible sponsor of the event that would have the potential to reinforce and attract new customers to the sponsor fortifying a positive image of the company. Securing public funding was also considered fundamental before, during and after an event.

**Proposition 2: Careful consideration of the marketing mix can achieve creativity.**


### **5.2.3 Budget**

Once the marketing plan was devised as a structure to base organisation of the festival on, the next stage was constructing a realistic budget covering all possible income and expenditure. While preparing the budget it was essential not to underestimate expenditure and overestimate income. In order to combat this full audience capacity was halved to calculate income, possible funding sources were not included as of yet as at this stage funding was not sourced. Nevertheless an outline budget needed to be prepared in order to apply for funding needs. All expenses needed to be estimated this was achieved through contacting various printing companies to obtain quotes on printing of leaflets, posters, tickets, signage etc media sources were also contacted for the same reasons

The logo for Sligo, featuring the word 'Sligo' in a stylized, green, sans-serif font. The letter 'S' is significantly larger and overlaps the 'l' and 'i'. The 'l' is blue, and the 'i' is green. The 'o' is blue. The logo is positioned vertically on the left side of the page.


including radio and newspapers. At this point after researching TV advertising it was clear from the outset that obtaining promotion via television was unlikely due to the rising costs. In relation to budgeting for comedy acts as there is only one comedy agency in Ireland they were contacted directly to acquire quotes for comedians along with information to relationship between quality of comedian and price. The concept for a comedy workshop was deemed unsuccessful during expenditure research. It was considered a specialist field where despite a love for comedy in the region there may not be calls for this type of workshop. Sourcing an administrator for the workshop proved increasingly difficult and rendered unsuccessful. From this disappointment the concept of hosting comedy gigs for children developed and research was conducted into the field with a value being included in the budget. Additional costs such as uniforms accommodation etc. were all included in the budget. Resources that were sponsored were displayed to demonstrate local support and add legitimacy to the event when applying for funding.

Ten months prior to the event sources of funding were investigated with it being the inaugural year of the festival it was decided that public funding was the best avenue to follow. From this there were four prospects of funding identified; these were TEAM Network in I.T. Sligo, Fáilte Ireland, Sligo Arts Council and Sligo County Enterprise Board. TEAM Network provided funds of five hundred euro. The Festivals and Cultural Events Initiative Grant was applied for through Fáilte Ireland, the festival was successful in gaining receipt of funding from this grant, the funding was intended to be issued for website development costing three thousand euro, Fáilte Ireland would offer a maximum of one thousand five hundred towards this fee and would be dependant on how much you invest in website development. Notification of this offer was not received until the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, which would not fit into the time frame for development and launch of a



website. As a result and after consultation with Fáilte Ireland the offer was reissued to the same value for general marketing activities. While the festival was successful in gaining the aforementioned sum of funding it was unsuccessful in other avenues. When researching possible funding avenues the comedy festival was limited with regard to securing funding through Sligo Arts Council and Sligo County Enterprise Board. Members of the organising committee attempted to contact Sligo Arts Council on numerous occasions over a two month period to no avail. A meeting with Sligo County Council was arranged where it was advised to apply for funding with both the county enterprise board funding department and the arts council. In spite of this when approached regarding funding the County Enterprise Board stated the Arts Council allocates the funding sought by the festival. It is within this area where the concept of collaboration could create efficiency and effectiveness in R.E.M. branding.

After a four months lapse in time a meeting to discuss funding was secured with the Arts Council whereby it was advised to fill out a form for the Small Arts Festivals Scheme, round one for festivals taking place between January 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2008 as the festival should be eligible. Unfortunately after processing the relevant forms a letter was received from the Arts council stating that it was “with regret that the festival was unsuccessful in gaining funding due to delays in adoption of the 2008 budget by a Sligo County Council elected members”. Also with a charity element associated to the event they would not supply funding, although this had been discussed in the meeting. From this experience it is evident that securing funding can be a limited time consuming process with no guarantees. Other forms of sponsorship successfully obtained the final aspect of sponsorship was offered by a AVA a local audio visual company who sponsored all aspects of lighting and sound needs for each event.



Once funding was secured and the budget was updated contact could once again be made with the comedy agency, which would not be in a position to confirm acts until January for the festival in April. Various acts were discussed as availability and budgets were confirmed, acts were required that would attract audiences yet would be held within budget. From this it was confirmed after contact once more that the Comedy Duo of I DARE YA! From RTÉ would perform their show on the Friday night and Dermot Whelan from The Panel on RTÉ and 98FM was booked to perform on the Saturday night in association with John Lynn and Jarleth Regan, two up and coming comedians. As previously mentioned the target audience included children consequently the accomplished Conor Lambert was booked in November and confirmed in January to perform his legendary Punch and Judy show. Local comedian John Colleary was approached before Christmas to check availability to perform MC on both nights of the festival. Colleary was approached as he is well known throughout the region and associated with a significant fun element. Colleary MCs at all local comedy events and performs at countless national and international comedy events

In addition to key material such as developing a marketing plan and budget preparation previously mentioned, marketing is an element where a significant amount of time and resources are allocated and considered vital in achieving success in branding any regional event. As the acts were secured and all concepts devised marketing communications can commence. An International marketing class from I.T. Sligo were engaged to develop a brand, logo or slogan as they see fit that would communicate the message of the comedy festival to the intended market. The class were informed of all relevant details and constructed a report and design. On February 25<sup>th</sup> 2008 presentations of designs and concepts were portrayed with one selected to brand the festival. The chosen design

contained a logo and name, the poster and leaflet was decided to incorporate the designs of two groups. The background from one group was combined with images, font and layout from another. The chosen name was 'Westlaugh Comedy Festival'. This was considered appropriate as West depicts the Region and Laugh depicts fun, portraying what the festival is about. The logo incorporated a picture of W.B. Yeats face with a red nose encompassed in a yellow circle with land of laughs desire in a red ribbon across the bottom. The colours depict fun and Yeats gives hint to the location being Sligo with the red nose been synonymous with comedy. Sligo's is perceived through use of the slogan "*Land of Laughs Desire*", the Slogan for the comedy festival is a play on this by replacing the word land with laugh again portraying comedy within Sligo.

Tiger Print from Sligo town was selected for all printing purposes as a result of previous experience and tasks completed for committee members. Their confirmed efficiency and ability to undertake tasks in a limited time capacity at high quality was a significant factor for the needs of the festival as the promotional campaign was to begin within the first week of March a month before the festival. An extensive communications campaign began on St. Patrick's Day the 17<sup>th</sup> of March by entering a float in the Sligo Parade where two local teenagers dressed as Classic Punch and Judy, arguing with each other as the parade proceeded through the town. Four children and three adults wore T-shirts displaying the chosen charity Barnardos name and symbol while holding banners promoting the festival displaying the name, logo and Sligo to aid recognition of the brand. Leaflets were handed out as the act continued with sweets attached to stickers displaying the logo and slogan, and handed to children in the on looking audience.

During this time posters were displayed in filling stations, shops, schools, local third level institutions and factories in all surrounding areas. The tourist office in Sligo also

displayed posters and leaflets in addition to facilitating ticket sales in their shop without commission, the poster and leaflet campaign was supported with a public relations campaign.

#### **5.2.4 Public Relations**

A partnership approach was taken for public relations between Sligo Comedy Festival and regional media. Two weeks before the festival the Sligo Post newspaper composed a three quarter page story depicting the details of the festival and encompassing a picture of the chief organiser and an eight year old child displaying the poster and logo of the festival. This was supported by a smaller piece in the following week. In addition to this the further two local papers namely The Sligo Champion and Sligo Weekender created a small piece on the festival, both running for the two weeks prior to the festival. The week leading to the weekend of the festival regional radio stations Ocean FM and I 102-104 structured ticket giveaways for two seats at each show by asking the listeners various questions relating to comedy. Ocean FM organised giveaways during their morning programme for the children's gig one morning and for the I Dare Ya! Show on the Friday night. I102-104 performed the competition on their morning programme "I Work" for the Saturday night show; both stations claimed to be inundated with calls and performed the giveaways with no charge in support of the charity and regional festival.

Further advertising was achieved by advertising regionally in The Observer newspapers reaching further elements of the target audience located in Tyrone, Lurgan, Portadown, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Ballymena and Antrim.

Reminder advertising was carried out in the days preceding the event with additional leaflets being distributed throughout canteens in local factories schools and colleges etc, a

stand was erected in the main concourse of the local I.T. promoting and selling tickets for the upcoming events. On the Friday of the event an additional stand was erected in the concourse of the local Tesco mall to provide information and remind the public of the upcoming event and facilitated additional leaflets being distributed. The local radio stations reminded their listeners of the festival throughout the preceding days and on each day of the festival. Leaflets were distributed to local schools dealing the Punch and Judy show.

**Proposition 3: Sponsorship/support associations can attach legitimacy to an event.**

### **5.3: Actualisation**

The context of the Westlaugh Comedy Festival can be described as a charity based event aiding regional branding. When choosing a charity committee members had to be careful in regards to the relationship between the charity and comedy as not to offend. After careful consideration and absence of a recognised local charity to fit this bracket a national/global charity that would benefit local children and their families was chosen. This charity as previously mentioned was Barnardos Children's Charity. The Barnardos charity is highly recognised and displays their fundraising techniques appropriately through their slogan "*Raising money through fun*". This slogan fits in with and represented the foundations of Westlaugh Comedy Festival and was chosen as a result.

The relationship between Westlaugh Comedy Festival and the charity element aiding branding of a region can be explained through means of positive and cultural context. The

positive context clearly shows as a result of market research conducted a clear demand for both comedy and family activities within the region. The views of charity and comedy define the cultural context. With a favourable view of the chosen charity through enhanced use of their slogan adds a feel good factor for those attending the festival as they are engaging in fun yet raising funds for a good cause which results in benefits to their region. A relationship between the context, creativity and collaboration can aid in R.E.M. branding.

**Proposition 4: Co-branding can depict event representations.**

#### **5.4 Event**

The event outcomes incorporates all areas from marketing as previously discussed to event set up and performance on the night. During the planning stage it became evident that advertisement via television was too costly for the shoestring budget of the festival and had to be substituted with other forms of promotions as previously mentioned. Another element that was deemed inappropriate due to lack of facilitators and target audience was that of the anticipated comedy workshops which were replaced by Conor Lamberts Punch and Judy show.

In regard to the set up of the event the Glasshouse set the function room and staging area up in a comedy club layout on the Friday morning of the festival, with round tables to the front centre of the stage and rectangular shaped tables either side. All tables were covered in white linen with candles set in the centre and rows of seating situated to the back. Before the Punch and Judy show certain tables toward the front were removed as



appropriate to ensure all children present would have a clear view of Punch and Judy. These tables were restored to their original location for the Saturday evening performance. The management and staff of the Glasshouse proved efficient and effective help by any means possible without delay enhancing the experience of organisers, acts and audience.

In previous weeks to commencement of the festival the lighting and sound company had been consulted in relation to needs for the specific events. On Friday afternoon a member of the company set up the lighting and sound as needed and rang the organiser of the festival to explain the set up, workings and requirements. In addition a contact number was left in case of a crisis as a technician was not required to engineer the equipment during performances, it was a simple task of turning on lighting, adjusting brightness and turning on microphones.

All acts arrived at the venue approximately an hour to an hour and a half prior to each performance. Sound and lighting checks were performed and adjusted as required, an extra screen was added as a backdrop provided by the hotel on the Friday night. On the Friday night comedians collaborated with the M.C. and worked out order of proceedings approximately three quarters of an hour prior to commencement of event. On the Saturday nights it was decided that the three comedians could work the show without an M.C. and organised the order of proceedings between themselves. Conor Lambert had his own sound and only required a single light placed facing the staging area. Set up and performances for each event were performed devoid of any major problems with one notable exception where all supplied microphones ceased to perform half way through the final performance. Nevertheless the Glasshouse had an in-house sound system that

complemented the installed system, a microphone from this system was employed ensuing the entire experience adding fun and laughter to the event resulting in enhancement of the performance.

Despite wide publicity of each event a significant number of tickets were available on the day of each performance and in effect available on the door. A table with two volunteers was positioned outside the function room door where all events were to take place. The volunteers dressed in T-shirts portraying the Barnardos name and logo, their responsibility was to provide information and offer ticket selling facilities. The majority of ticket sales were secured at this location. Both evening events were programmed to begin at eight o'clock yet as attendees were still only arriving and purchasing tickets at the desired inauguration time of eight o'clock the events did not commence until nine o'clock. Despite the delayed start the audience did not seem fazed as this was considered common in the comedy circuit, taking into consideration the relaxed nature of the target audience. The mid day children's event began within five minutes of programming, this was appropriate as children could not be expected to have the patience to wait.

**Proposition 5: Inevitably crisis will occur, however with careful preplanning it need not signify the termination or ruin of an event.**

## 5.5: Post Event Evaluation

Post event evaluation is assessed via positive outcomes and negative outcomes.

The positive outcomes enabled commencement of the branding process. Building a positive image for the event brand incorporated a number of factors such as charity, misbranding, venue and vehicle.

Choosing a **charity** deemed appropriate was considered with great precision. A link needed to be established associating comedy and the selected charity while ensuring no offence was created due to the delicate nature of numerous charities in relation to comedy or laughter. Subsequent to careful consideration Barnardos was established as the chosen charity as they work throughout the country using all monies raised helping disadvantaged children and their families incorporating their slogan “raising money through fun”. This also captured the intended goal of Westlaugh comedy Festival aiding in establishment of the brand.

### 5.5.1 Positive Outcomes

A number of positive outcomes have been established in branding the event. These are; misbranding the location and the vehicle.

**Misbranding** resulted in immense benefit to the festival due to the context of the festival and the manner in which the mispronunciation was handled by the presenters. Here the radio station was inundated with calls regarding this. In this case misbranding in association with the festival name occurred on Ocean FM throughout the ticket giveaways taking place on the morning programmes, which proved an important asset to the Festival. One of the presenters persisted in mispronouncing the Festival as “Westlife” (an internationally renowned boy band from Sligo) as opposed to “Westlaugh”. This

could have proved disastrous, nevertheless due to the relationship of wording and location this led to a copious amount of banter between presenters and audiences. Resulting in increased airtime and laughter while gaining additional publicity and enhancement of the brand.

The **venue** was an important aspect of the festival as the setting and layout as aforementioned was ideal for comedy while staff of the hotel were eager and willing to cooperate in any way possible always been available when needed ensuring everything ran smoothly enhancing the experience of all involved.


Finally the **vehicle** itself proved efficient in establishment of the brand, which could be clearly observed following each event. During the first event the comedians had requested the audience to participate by sending them a text message containing a dare for all comedians involved to carry out. At the finale of the event the comedians read out the best four dares and the audience clapped for their favourite, which would be carried out by the comedians involved. There was great enthusiasm here with the entire audience getting involved following the comedians to the scene of the dare and calling for the comedians to continue their act.

Prior to the children's event many parents were anxious that their children would be too young for the show, their fears were alleviated on commencement of the event where all children were enraptured by the show getting involved with every opportunity. On exiting the show parents were commenting on how enjoyable the experience was for them as well as the children stating there is a demand for more events of this kind within the region.

Following the final event of the festival members of the committee were approached numerous times by members of the audiences stating how much they enjoyed the events showing enthusiasm for the festival to continue and not disappear after the inaugural year. In addition all comedians involved portrayed their appreciation of a well organised event, where even as problems surfaced a major crisis was not incurred as they were dealt with efficiently and effectively enhancing their experience and ensuring an enjoyable on their part. The comedy agency later verified this response again from the comedians. Precisely as positive branding outcomes are encountered so are negative branding outcomes.

### **5.5.2 Negative Outcomes**

As discussed many positive outcomes in branding of the Westlaugh Comedy Festival were encountered, nonetheless various negative outcomes were also encountered. The most prominent negative outcome encountered was the event falling short of budget resulting in lack of profits to donate to Barnardos: However Barnardos were quite satisfied with the positive publicity, promotion and awareness achieved through association with the event. Many successful events sustain a loss during their first years until a brand is established. Additional funding from associated bodies where there is a lack of involvement in community funding with a charity or educational element could help combat this. The goal of Westlaugh Comedy Festival was to attract visitors to the region while benefiting those less fortunate through a quality event. However after much deliberation and poorly communicated information received from certain funding bodies time and resources were wasted where Westlaugh discovered even though all funds raised on a long-term basis were to go back into the community. Along with enticing visitors to the region and enhancing the brand of the region, the festival was ineligible to various



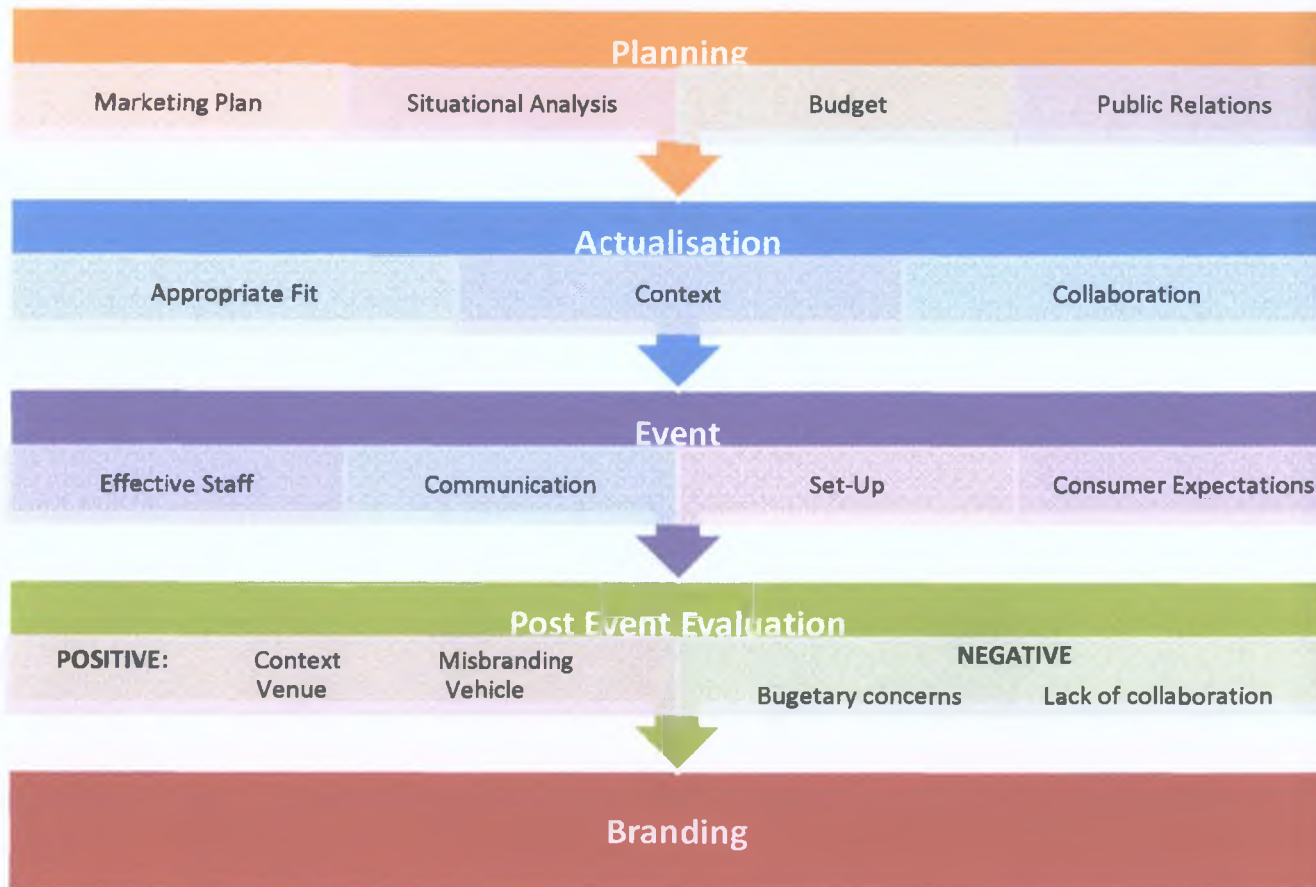
assistance due to the charity and educational elements attached. Overall poor communication and certain eligibility criteria are unfortunate as without all governing bodies associated to an event such as the Arts Council, the event lacks authenticity. As difficult as it has been to obtain funding in recent years there is a fear in the present economic climate this will become increasingly difficult. Westlaugh was fortunate to receive assistance in the form of a grant covering fifty percent of the costs of establishing a website for the festival incorporating the Fáilte Ireland link and logo. Information of this funding was received two weeks prior to the event prohibiting possibility of an effective website being established and launched. Due to the circumstances an offer was reissued to cover fifty percent of direct marketing costs containing the Fáilte Ireland logo. This offer was accepted graciously yet payment was not received until eight months following the event. This was felt to be inequitable length to have to wait for funding with creditors asking for payments.

**Proposition 6: Collaboration of all stakeholders to an event- such as local authority departments can result in increased productivity and decreased loss in resources.**

The smallest attendance of the festival was during the first event. This was deemed to be due to the fact the comedians had performed the same show a number of weeks prior in another location of Sligo Town. Organisers of Westlaugh were aware of this conversely fears over loss of attendance were alleviated as it was communicated that the performance for Westlaugh would be a separate performance with intense promotion to their audience at the prior performance. It was not until the subsequent gig that the organisers were informed this was not the case, thus impacting on audience numbers and branding of the event.

As a result of the practitioner based action research the four phases in analysis of an event have been developed to create a R.E.B. This is displayed in figure 5.3 overleaf.

**Figure 5.3 Key findings in Branding of a R.E.M.**



As exhibited previously in figure 5.1 there are four phases in analysis of an event. From this there is potential to develop the analysis resulting in regional event branding. Involving taking the standard four steps of planning, actualisation, the event itself and post event evaluation and analysing each into a range of steps. Once followed in a sequence should result in regional event branding.

**Figure 5.4 Emerging Propositions into R.E.M Branding.**

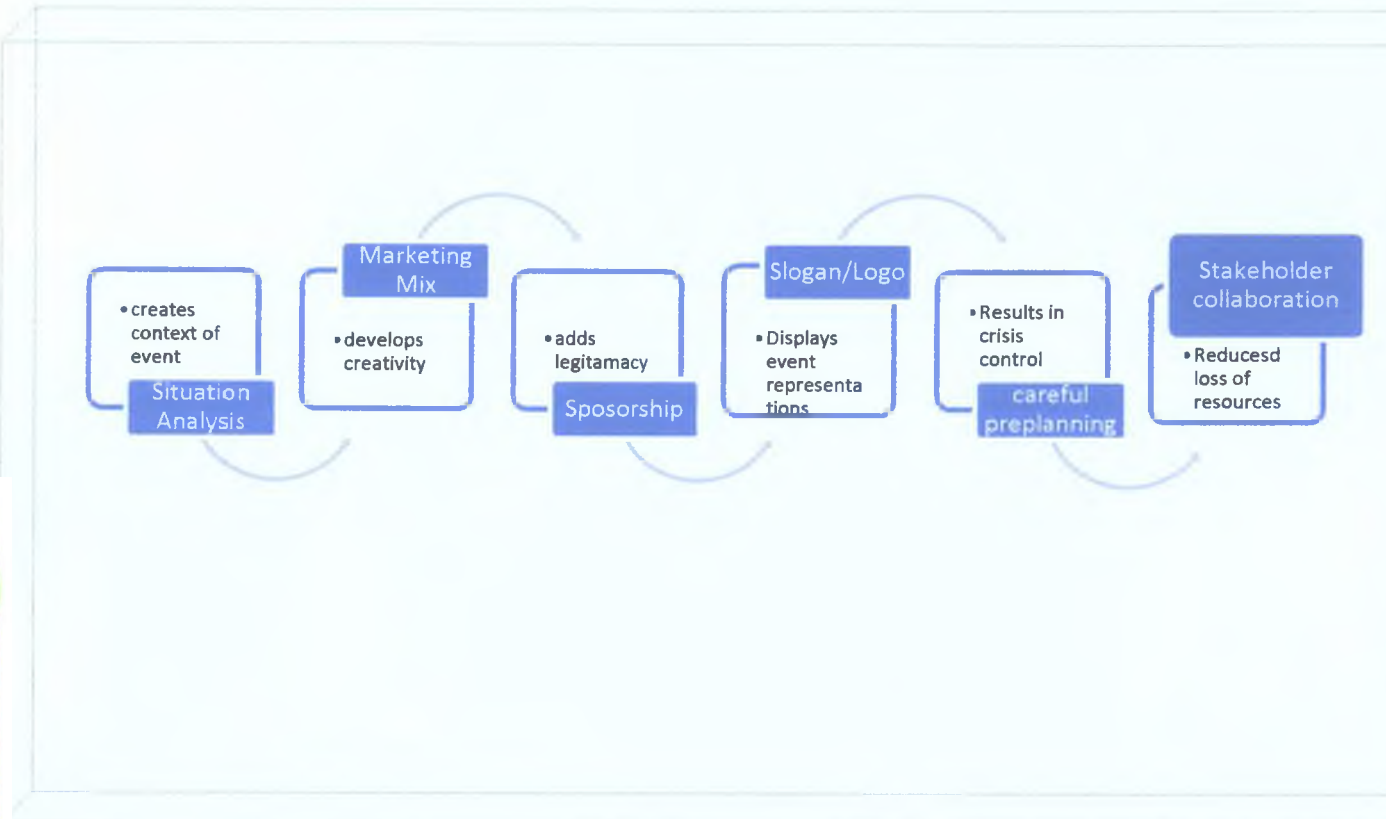


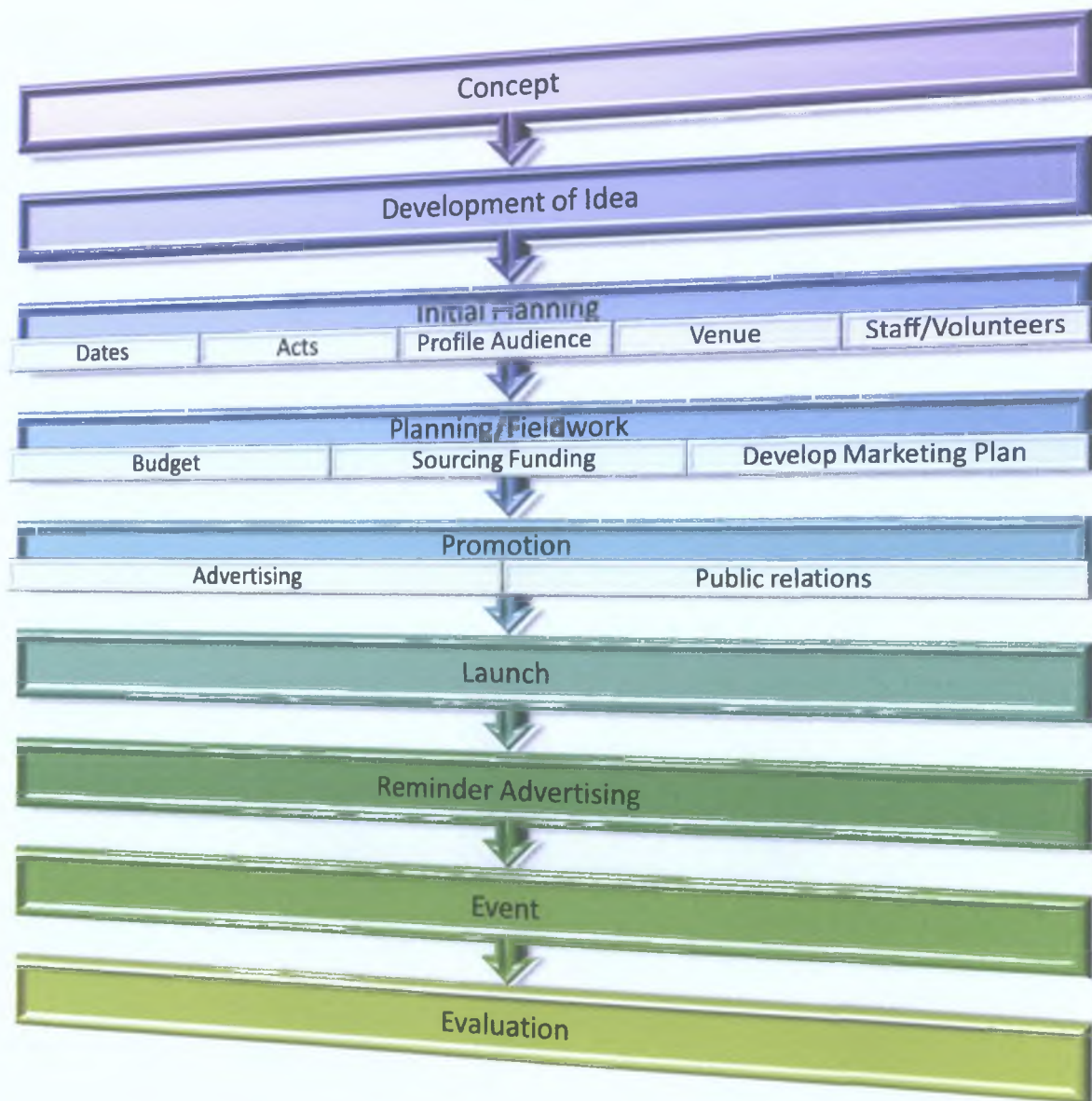
Figure 5.4 demonstrates how the emerging propositions as a result of the practitioner based research can support and sustain regional event management branding.



## 5.6 Framework for Regional Event Planning

From the practitioner based research supported by in-depth interviews, questionnaires and an exploratory focus group a framework for event management planning has been devised. This framework is as a direct result of research carried out on expert opinion. The framework incorporates various steps involved in regional event management branding.

Figure 5.5 Framework for Event Management Planning



First and foremost a brand concept or idea is born. From this the concept is developed into the actual type of festival or event to be planned. It is essential at the planning stage that significant time and preparation resources are allocated towards it.

The initial stages of planning incorporates decisions on: where, when and duration of the event, the type of act/s to take part in the event, knowing who your target audience are and how many staff/volunteers are required and experiences held in order to give the audience what they are looking for resulting in branding of an event.

Following the initial steps of planning budgetary considerations, sources of funding and a marketing plan must be considered prior to promotion and launch of the event if it is to be of considered success. Firstly it needs to be established what funds are available and a budget needs to be drawn up displaying the quantities where funding is required in various areas. At this stage costs are envisaged and organisers need to investigate and apply for all possible avenues that could secure funding irrelevant of amount. Not only can sources of funding aid an event by injecting funds into the event, depending on the source can add legitimacy to an event. For example Fáilte Ireland having an association with The Galway Arts Festival. It is essential a marketing plan is developed to achieve effective communications of an event.

Post planning stage sees the commencement of fieldwork or actualisation of the event. Promotions of the event occur at this stage, this be broken down into two areas: advertising and public relations. It is vital both are undertaken one month to two weeks prior to the event, as if communications commence too early the audience are more likely to associate a large amount of time lapse between now and the event resulting in forgetting. Once communications is set out among the desired audience a launch of an

event is imminent. This should be undertaken one to two weeks prior to the actual event, this offers a sense of belonging and ownership to the audience while again encouraging further promotion of the event through inviting media and W.O.M. communications.

Post-launch promotions must be conducted to appeal to those who may have overlooked initial communications while also reminding others the event is rapidly approaching.

Directly prior to the event it is essential that final checks are carried out ensuring all planning is executed to the desired standard, resulting in smooth running of the event.

On conclusion of the event an evaluation is vital. This establishes areas of success within the event while also investigating areas whereby the event can improve for the future, building a brand for the event and region alike.

The practitioner based research of Westlaugh Comedy Festival provided facilitated, inductive theory building.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

From the practitioner based research it is evident that R.E.M. branding is achievable once all steps are followed sequentially and the correct supports are enabled. Six propositions have been devised as a result of the action research to support R.E.M. branding. These are; conducting a situational analysis will support in establishing the context of an event, careful consideration of the marketing mix can achieve creativity, sponsorship/support associations can attach legitimacy to an event, co-branding can depict event representations, inevitably crisis will occur, however with careful preplanning it need not signify the termination or ruin of an event. Conclusively among all methodologies and

reinforced throughout the practitioner based research it was apparent that collaboration of all stakeholders to an event- such as local authority departments can result in increased productivity and decreased loss in resources.

## CHAPTER 6

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## 6.1 Introduction

The research question addressed throughout the study is; is to identify key determinants of regional event branding, consequently developing a model of regional event branding.

The key research conclusions presented throughout this chapter will realise the proposed objectives of the original research proposal. These objectives are:

- Investigate the core constitutes to regional event branding.
- Identify barriers to event management branding in the North-West of Ireland.
- Design a framework to guide event management.

## 6.2 Conclusions

The purpose of the research was to conduct ‘A study into event management branding, with a focus on the North-West of Ireland’.

For this purpose literature in branding, services, event management and tourism were referred to in connection with quantitative and practitioner based research methods. It was established this emergent area has the potential to develop a theory of event management branding from an inter-disciplinary field.

From literature reviewed it was demonstrated that branding is at the heart of marketing (Kotler, 2003 and Muzellec et al, 2004) and has become increasingly popular as an area of research evolving as a major component of marketing strategy. The considered purpose of branding is essentially to build a products image influencing the perceived worth and increasing the brands value to the customer. In contrast to product branding,

service branding literature indicates that there is a lack of research into models of service branding. It should be noted that what is available borrows heavily from product branding principles. From the literature it is clearly evident that service brand modeling is an innovative and under researched area.

In relation to event management branding there is an increasing amount of literature on event management but there is limited literature available on event branding at present. From literature available there is an emergent theme that stakeholders are vital to any event as these are the people who invest in your event and must be clearly defined in order to ensure your event is a success. From the brief review it is clear that event management branding is only in an emergent stage. In order to progress knowledge generation it was considered beneficial to examine the available expertise in tourism branding.

From investigation into the area of tourism branding it became evident once again that stakeholders hold an emerging area of investigation. Also the principles of place branding can be heavily borrowed from for the purposes of event management branding.

From reviewing all available literature in association with R.E.M. branding an evident gap in literature was exhibited. Though in noting this, the tourism sector have realised this and are conducting research and conferences recently in this area of branding (Quinn et al., 2007). It is fair to suggest that research into regional event management branding is necessary and relevant. Progress in this area will enrich both event management and service branding knowledge.

## **6.3 Core constituents in branding an event**

The study suggests a number of constituents emerged in order to achieve a successful regional event brand. These are holding a U.S.P., effective marketing of the event, collaboration of all stakeholders to support and sustain regional branding, recognising the challenges facing the location, achieving appropriate fit between sponsorship, location and the event, and finally all aforementioned constituents support the quality of event. Nonetheless the basics cannot be overlooked and planning of any event can signify success or failure.

Figure 4.1 demonstrates the above mentioned core constituents (Chapter 4).

### **6.3.1 Unique Selling Point**

It transpired a unique selling point is vital to the success of any event, and needs to be clearly defined to be employed as a significant tool in aiding attraction. Once clearly defined an event embracing a USP can undoubtedly aid in branding of a region as is the case with the Galway Arts Festival.

### **6.3.2 Marketing of Event**

Marketing of any event is considered vital to create awareness via media, posters, brochures, support of local businesses and use of logo to represent what is contained within the festival and the location the event is being held. For example The Cats Laughs Festival embraces success in these areas. Despite obtaining a shoestring budget or substantial budget it is vital to obtain as much exposure as possible. If on a shoestring



budget it is advisable to “sell” the U.S.P. of the event to the media in order to attain considerable interest resulting in significant press releases and air time along with securing sponsorship of local businesses. Use of online email facilities, and swapping brochures and leaflets with similar festivals are means of achieving cost effective vital promotion of any event. It is advised to have at least one individual employed in the role of marketing of the event as without successful promotion an event will not succeed.

### **6.3.3 Collaboration**

From the research methodology incorporated and reinforced through the practitioner based research the concept of collaboration is strongly recommended arising at all levels. Collaboration between all marketing, management, tourism and local authorities in the branding of regional event management is in a pre-emergent phase where there is an evident gap for development. From research carried out it is apparent that events attract tourism to a region in turn supporting branding of a region. Tourism authorities have presently displayed an interest in this field by applying methods such as buy-ins and aiding growth of national events that are actively taking place. By events obtaining support of local authorities and professionals in the field legitimacy is added. While events that obtain the support and enthusiasm of the local community add the personal element which in turn leads to sustainable regional branding.

### **6.3.4 Challenges facing the North West**

The considered challenge facing the North West as described by Murray (2007) (Derry City Council) is the perception of the ‘troubles’ of the North. Despite the peace process being in effect for a considerable time period, tourists still hold the perception Ireland is an unsafe destination to visit. This is due to the wide publicity of activities such as the Omagh and Enniskillen bombings. The perceived distance of the North-West to areas such as Dublin is also a major challenge to the North-West. Despite the opening of new major routes and increased transport methods and facilities the perception is still active that the North-West is of considerable distance, distracting tourism from the region. To combat this strong advertising campaign in association with W.O.M publicity will be employed. As a result of a focus group carried out another prominent barrier considered facing branding of the North West is the lack of communication among communities obstructing events gaining deserved success. Once again the concept of collaboration is felt of essence here, to inform communities and organisers alike of activities achieving a sense of community ownership.

### **6.3.5 Sponsorship**

In the present climate obtaining sponsorship through private or public means is increasingly difficult. In stating this it is essential to obtain sponsorship that is appropriate to the event at hand. Keeping control of your event at all times is an essential element to consider while sourcing sponsorship of an event.

### **6.3.6 Location**

Like sponsorship location needs to be appropriate for the event at hand as each event holds different requirements for example Cork Chamber Festival requires set acoustics for their events. Location of an event can aid a sense of public ownership and a significant attribute to any event and event branding.

### **6.3.7 Quality**

To achieve a successful brand it is essential to remember the basics such as passion for the event, a clearly specified audience, not clashing with similar events and pay particular attention to the minor details as they are of considered importance. The significant amount of time in organising any event will go into the planning phase as once this is completed with great care and consideration all other elements such as actualisation, the event itself and post event evaluation should follow. Finally all events should begin small and expand over time.

## **6.4 Framework to Guide Event management**

Collaboration of research gathered from both a primary and secondary focus resulted in a devised framework to guide event management branding in the North-West of Ireland. In stating this, figure 5.4 is viable to be used for any event in any location as there is a perception that all regions face similar criteria of different forms. The devised framework takes extensive consideration of existing academic literature facilitating an innovative, in-depth approach to regional event branding.

In development of the Framework for Regional Event Planning it is necessary to relate back to theorists whose findings were considered in development of this framework. Goldbalts model for the event management profession, fig. 2.4 (p.25) effectively states each event needs an event manager, a clear concept and identified stakeholders. The devised framework substantially builds on the foundation of Goldbalts (1997) model by incorporating his findings in the concept and development of ideas sections of the framework. On development of the Framework Goldbalts (1997) five critical stages of event management (research, design, planning, coordination and evaluation) are closely followed.

Clarks six benefits of destination branding is found to be highly appropriate to all areas of event planning and is incorporated throughout all stages ensuring all benefits are met in appropriate sections of the framework. This adds structure and guidance to those within the events industry ensuring all benefits identified by Clarke (2000) are met.

The developed framework (fig 4.4, p.106) recognises the importance of Williams and Gills stakeholders' considerations in development of a destination brand to the initial planning stage of the framework. Such considerations such as clearly defining the audience is an example here of how existing literature is incorporated into the devised framework. Williams and Gills (2004) considerations in association with previous mentioned theorists and practical experiences are incorporated into the initial planning stages of the framework continuing the development of the framework in achieving a regional event brand.

Iversen and Hems (2008) state "it should be possible to market a bundle of local goods and services using a places reputation as a unifying bond". They employ New Zealand as an example of a country that has worked for decades to develop their "Brand New

Zealand”, by coordinating efforts this has been made possible. The overall framework for event management branding has been developed for such purposes aiding in not alone branding of a region but with the umbrella effect as a tool in collaboration of all stakeholders building unity among a brand adding value to all product offerings within a region or country. This also relates of Clarkes (2000) and Williams and Gills (2004) considerations to destinations branding as previously mentioned.

The developed framework for event management planning builds on findings from theorists such as Goldblatt (1997), Clarke (2000), Williams and Gill (2004) and Iversen and Hem (2008) in association with primary and participant based research approaches. The research results in an extensive and complete guide for all stakeholders in achieving regional branding. Successful regional branding and message consistency of a region form a knock on effect of all products of a country achieving benefits such as economies of scale.

The primary research focus was achieved through in-depth interviews, questionnaires among relevant stakeholders and an exploratory focus group. The primary research focus was placed upon the participant based action research.

## 6.5 Recommendations

From the information compiled and reviewed into an investigation into R.E.M branding a number of recommendations has been established.

- Collaboration: increased communication among stakeholders in organising an event is highly recommended. Increased communication between organising bodies such as government funding bodies and event organisers is essential; nevertheless.
- Communication: between organisers and local communities is paramount. This offers a sense of ownership and pride increasing likelihood of success and regional branding.
- Local partnerships: building relationships between communities and event organisers by communication and collaboration has been discussed; this could be supported further by the formation of groups either among the community and/or with other communities hosting similar events who can offer support and guidance. Partnerships can be developed here providing increased communication of an event and region through exchanging promotional materials and experiences of each event.
- Benchmarking: research and learn from experiences of other countries or regions such as New Zealand who have been successful in regional branding. Establish if and how their principles incorporated in branding of the country can be utilised in Ireland.

- Training: personnel involved in organisation and running of events should be encouraged to partake in training programmes whereby best practice can be delivered increasing the effectiveness of events.
- Accredited courses: the development and expansion of accredited courses in the area of event management will help support and sustain a growing industry. Offering structure, guidance and best practice to students who become leaders in their field resulting in branding of Ireland as a major player in the event industry.
- Policy development: Policy development in the area of event management is of benefit to tourism bodies and organisers alike. Development of specific guidelines and less time wasted on referrals to other departments facilitates best practice and increased efficiency and effectiveness leading to branding of R.E.M.
- Guided framework: the developed framework is designed from extensive research into aforementioned theorist findings and practitioner based research. This framework is developed for use by all involved within the events industry. By incorporating this framework and following it closely through all stages of an event it will guide the event manager to achieving R.E.M.B.
- Centre of excellence: create a centre of excellence where all information regarding event organisation can be easily accessed. This can simplify challenges and offer support and guidance to those endeavouring to increase and sustain tourism through event management branding.

## 6.6 Directions for Further Research

- Collaboration: Future study into the area of Collaboration whereby all stakeholders involved in an event will work together for common goals. Increased communication in this area can increase productivity and reduce waste of resources, such as time wasted researching sources of funding among various avenues while this information could be centrally communicated from one source. Groups could be formed to offer support and advice to others from their experiences etc, government departments could collaborate to encourage centralised information resulting in sustained tourism through R.E.M. Not alone will increased communication benefit event organisers, it can encourage the local community to come together and welcome events in the area, encouraging a sense of ownership and pride within the community. Groups that work collaboratively can obtain greater resources, recognition and reward.
  
- Policy development into the area of R.E.M would result in holding a centre of excellence for all areas of event management. A policy describing best practice in organising and hosting an event. This would ensure fairness across all sectors of event management making it easier for those identifying a gap in the market to establish an event that would be of benefit to the region. With all specialised information being located in one area.
  
- From the findings of the study into R.E.M. branding a further study could be investigated and built on the criteria previously identified into how events can aid branding both nationally and internationally.



- Multiplier effect: A study into how tourism for the events sector creates jobs in the tertiary, primary and secondary sectors of the industry. Also how many times money is spent by the tourist throughout the region.

## 6.7 Limitations

- Lack of literature in relation to event management, with limited literature in relation to regional event management branding.
- Poor response rate to surveys despite numerous attempts at follow up.
- Interviewees low response rate post confirmation of availability and interest in the study.
- Confusion among tourism bodies as to location and criteria to sources of funding. Resulting in loss of resources.

## 6.8 Conclusion

From the study it is evident that R.E.M. branding is in an emergent phase. In noting this a number of core constituents have been established throughout the study to ensure a successful event. Each constituent needs to be examined and planned with great detail.

From the various methodologies incorporated and expert opinion a framework to guide event management has been established with the goal of creating a R.E.M. brand.

As a result of the study a number of recommendations are established namely; increasing communication among all stakeholders including the local community, building and development of partnerships both locally and with similar events, extension and development of training and accredited courses in event management and policy development. The final recommendation is to create a centre of excellence ensuring ease of access to all information regarding event management.

Scope for future research is identified with a main theme of collaboration arising on numerous occasions throughout the study. All participants to the study deemed collaboration vital to the success and sustainability of any event. Collaboration is presently an under developed area requiring direct attention. Further scope is established in the area of policy development into guiding best practice in all areas of event management branding. Supplementary study can investigate how events can support branding and how events tourism creates jobs in the tertiary, primary and secondary sectors of the industry.

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publishing executive

# Appendix

# Appendix 1.

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## **Focus Group:**

**Date: May 29<sup>th</sup> 2007 at 8 PM**

**Location: I.T. Sligo library meeting room.**

**Topic: Festivals/Events**

## **What are your views on events?**

Events are a great means of marketing a tourism destination and would be great for the North-West. The Rose of Tralee was mentioned a number of times as an event that was hugely successful in promoting a region. It was also mentioned how events are also good for people of the area as they also add a social factor as well as publicity.

Events can be used to associate an event/Festival with a region or area hence getting it publicity and creating awareness. However in Sligo there is no such festival and it is felt that there is great scope due to population and the great natural environment.

**Problems** in association with Sligo came up a number of times throughout the discussion. It was felt across the board that there is a very “small town mentality” whereby if somebody wants to achieve something or organize something there are many barriers that arise mainly the begrudery of Sligo people. There is a sense of “who are

you? What do you think you are doing?” etc. The view was maybe it is due to the fact that Sligo is so small and it is extremely difficult to get them involved in anything. Not only will Sligo people not pull together to make an event a success it is strongly emphasized that the Chamber of Commerce are very unapproachable and unhelpful and have interest in promoting local Arts, Sligo Live is an example here where they would not support yet has so much potential. Many feel that their concept is wrong from the beginning that all they are interested in is money and are not forward thinking, see everything as a threat, however if they put the social and cultural aim first the money without a doubt would follow. As in Wexford festival people just spend, spend and spend at the event.

Other barriers seen if you wanted a top class event is that there are no 5 star hotels or really posh restaurants within Sligo Town. It only caters for middle of the road. Sligo needs to get over the small town mentality.

Also Sligo is not seen as a tourist town even though there is much potential and natural attractions, this is felt due to the poor tourist office in the town, where you have to pay to put out brochures in the past, however this is now free.

**Are there any events that stick out in your mind, within the region or otherwise?**

- **Sligo Arts Festival-** was remembered with great passion and enjoyment where there was street activities and something for everybody. It had a fantastic organizer (John O’Dea) however he was let go from the committee and it was felt that this was the beginning of the decline of the Sligo Arts Festival.

- **Fleadh Cheol Festival-** this was great however it turned “Disgusting” as people were falling around drunk early in the day resulting in anti-social behavior, children being scared and civic order problems. There is a need to guard against these issues when organizing an event.
- **Sligo Live-** organized by Rory O’Connor, folk music, aimed at everyone from young people to old, the market is not very clear. It was very successful the first year as started small however they tried to get too big too quick and this seemed to fail. There also seems to be discrepancies to when it is being held this year as people saying different times.
- **Letterkenny Comedy festival-** known all over the world to be great
- **Yeats summer school Sligo**
- **Coral festival**
- **Rory Gallagher festival- Ballyshannon**
- **Kilkenny Arts Festival**
- **Cork Jazz festival**
- **Wexford Opera festival-** This is an extremely well organized and successful festival where it was felt that it is such a huge success as the whole town pulls together( started in 1952).they have a unique selling point whereby they do minor operas and people come from all over. B&B’s are free and all the shops do an opera themed window. At present there is a new theatre being built one of the biggest worldwide.
- **Spain-** in Spain there are many street festivals where everybody gets involved and participates in it. People book out places for it a year in advance.
- **WRC-** this is the World Rally Championship that is an upcoming event to be held in Sligo in November. This has such high potential for the area but there is



the feeling that people don't actually realize how big this actually is and the potential it holds for Sligo. Sligo was one of the areas tested to hold this event last year and they made such an impact it was decided to have the WRC here. There will be huge media coverage and holds so much potential, however it is feared that if the town doesn't pull together or offer extras that they will lose the event the next time. The chamber of commerce should be delighted at this however there seems to be nothing from them.

### **What type of events/festivals would you like to see?**

- Many counties have been spoilt however Sligo still has its natural beauty and more care of its natural beauty should be taken.
- Spanish Film festival- at the moment there is a film here and a film there however a full festival to show Spanish films.
- Comedy Festival- As whenever a comedian comes to town they are sold out. There is much scope and interest in Sligo for comedy.

### **Ideas for comedy in Sligo.**

Start off small initially you can always build from there.

Bring over international comedians however be carefully here as sometimes comedy does not translate across cultures etc.

Have a few new comedians but mostly famous ones as there is a bigger market for this.

Spike Milligan is originally from Holborn Street so possibly tie him into it in some way or Goons festival. It could be a big angle for marketing, flights etc.

Time of year is important as if its early summer to late September people wont come because of prior commitments. Spring time is felt to be more ideal as not over done perhaps tie it into the St. Patrick's festival as there is nothing else to do here but drink and it may pull people together.

As in association with involving a charity it wouldn't affect foreign people attending however it may The Irish. If including a charity don't put the price of the ticket for this reason, involve a local charity such as lifeboats or a children's charity is very marketable, Animal Welfare charities, stroke victims, violence against women (waves), Heart disease, housebound. Be careful when involving a charity as can have a look at me element and can be overdone, stronger regulations are needed here. Instead of having charity elements maybe have a scholarship fund set up via competition to create interest.

**Funding** can be very difficult to obtain. The following are avenues to consider:

Failte Irealnd

Local Authorities

Chamber of Commerce

Corporation

Local company

Soft Drinks companies- keep away from alcohol, need something else to do.

Newspaper sponsorship- Free publicity- press releases, W.O.M. etc.

There is a need to sell the festival to them, prove that your association is good and offers something different/ unique that will be of benefit to them.

Also flood the area with literature to get recognition, sponsorship will be sought for postage. Organize interviews with national Radio stations.

# Appendix 2 - Surveys

---

## 2.1 Survey one distributed to CEO's of the industry:

### Event Management

1. Do you consider event management to be a growing industry?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. If yes, please rank from one to ten which sectors you feel are gaining significance in the industry. (1 being most significance and 10 least)

Corporate events

Music festivals

Regional events

Arts festivals

National events

Street festivals

International events

Agricultural festivals

Rural events

All

Comedy festivals

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please state reasons for your answer:

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3. When considering events list the top three Global events that initially come to mind:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

4. In your opinion what factors add to the success of the aforementioned events ahead of all other events?

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5. In your opinion can event management play a key role in regional branding?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please state reasons for your answer:

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**6. What do you believe to be the most important aspects of event management?**

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**7. In order of importance please rank from one to seven ( 1 being most important) which of the following marketing tools you feel holds most importance to event management:**

Public relations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sales promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Word Of Mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Direct Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>
All	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	_____

**Comment:**

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**8. Do you consider corporate funding important in regional event management/branding?**

Yes                       No                       Don't know

**Comment:**

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**9. Is public funding/support important to regional event management?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Comment:**

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### **Personnel Experience**

**10. In your opinion what makes an event experience unique?**

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**11. In your view please list the steps in event management planning.**

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**Would you like a copy of the results from this survey?**

Yes

No

***Thank you most sincerely for both your time and effort in filling out this questionnaire, it is greatly appreciated.***



## 2.2 Survey one distributed to event management professionals:

### Event Management

1. Do you consider event management to be a growing industry?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. If yes, please rank from one to ten which sectors you feel are gaining significance in the industry. (1 being most significant and 10 least)

Corporate events

Music festivals

Regional events

Arts festivals

National events

Street festivals

International events

Agricultural festivals

Rural events

All

Comedy festivals

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please state reasons for your answer:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. When considering events list the top three Global events that initially come to mind:

- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

4. When considering events list the top three national events that come to mind:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

5. In your opinion what factors add to the success of the aforementioned events ahead of all other events?

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---

6. In your opinion can event management play a key role in Regional branding?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please state reasons for your answer

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7. In the context of regional event management is it important for event management professionals, arts and tourism bodies to work in conjunction with each other?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Company Experience**

**8. Is branding of your event management company important to you?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**If yes please comment?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**9. In your view what are the necessary skills required to run a successful event management company?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Do you feel it's important to have a unique selling point in event management?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please Comment:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**11. In order of importance please rank from one to seven ( 1 being most important) which of the following marketing tools you feel holds most importance to event management:**

Public relations

Advertising

Sales promotion

Word Of Mouth

Online marketing

Direct Marketing

All

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Do you feel that location is an important factor for event management?**

Yes

No

Don't know

If yes please state reasons for your answer:

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## Company details

### Age of company:

< 5 yrs

5-10 yrs

10 yrs +

### Main business focus:

Corporate entertainment events

Conferences

Private events

Charity events

Publicity

All above

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### What is the legal structure of your organisation:

Consultancy

Charity

Limited co.

Public co.

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Is your company:

Irish owned

International

If international please state parent country \_\_\_\_\_



**Would you like a copy of the results from this survey?**

Yes

No

*Thank you most sincerely for both your time and effort in filling out this questionnaire, it is gratefully appreciated.*



# Appendix 3 – Action research

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**Westlaugh Comedy Festival.**

## **3.1 Marketing Plan**

Overleaf

# SLIGO COMEDY FESTIVAL



## PROGRAMMING PLAN

**Sinead Canning**

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14th - 5th April 2008

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first Sligo Comedy Festival (SCF) will take place in April 2008 that will put the North-West firmly in the national comedy circuit. Sligo is people rich, rich in heritage and landscape, setting the foundation for what could become the country's most successful comedy festival. The SCF has a number of unique selling points; established comedians hosting both gigs during the festival in addition to comedy events and workshops for adults and children. A charity element is another major U.S.P. for Sligo comedy festival in conjunction with the timing of the festival. It is evident from the situation analysis there is huge potential to build a co-brand around comedy and Sligo.

The objective of SCF is to build a successful international comedy festival in Sligo. This will be achieved through the following goals:

- To run a successful comedy festival.
- To help brand the region.
- To increase tourism numbers.
- To increase quality of life via increased choice of entertainment.

A S.W.O.T. analysis highlights possible weaknesses and threats which when carefully managed can be overcome through the strengths and opportunities. There are three target audiences, these are: 1. Local, 2. Tourists, 3. Families.

The marketing strategy involves the core product – a two day comedy festival with workshops. Pricing will be competitive with discounted pricing been available re: special package offers. Sligo's gateway status with growing reputation as a cultural centre makes it an attractive location. Promotion is critical to event success and a promotional plan is available on request.

Funding of Sligo comedy festival will be a combination of grant aid and corporate sponsorship. The promoters are acutely aware of the win – win relationship between sponsor and event. The key benefits from co-branding are highlighted.

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## SITUATION ANALYSIS

At present there is no comedy festival in the Sligo region, covering that of Sligo city and county, South Donegal, Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon. There is a culture of comedy in the region with Spike Milligan originating from Sligo through his father who is from Holborn Street, Eugene Lambert of many Hilarious puppet shows one of the most renowned being that of Wonderly Wagon descending from Sligo and Pauline McGlynn namely Mrs Doyle of 'Father Ted' with close relations in Sligo, to name two highly recognised names in the field of comedy. Along with the cultural aspect there is a small comedy club held in the 'Model Arts Centre' in Sligo town, each month a comedian performs and each month as stated by Aoife Flynn of the model Arts centre each gig hosting a commercial comedian is "sold out with large waiting lists for cancellation tickets".<sup>1</sup>

From looking at the current situation came the concept for 'Sligo Comedy Festival', as according to Breen (2007) events are of major importance in a region.<sup>2</sup> This festival will be held over the weekend of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2008. This will incorporate a well recognised MC, Mr John Collery who is renowned for his field of comedy and 'getting Audiences going' across the country, and two commercial comedians over two nights accompanied by 2 up and coming comedians. There will also be a comedy workshop held on the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup>, whereby a comedian will educate the younger audience with a workshop on how to be a clown in addition to a separate comedy show aimed specifically at children conducted by a renowned member in the field of children's comedy for many years.

There are a number of unique aspects to this comedy festival that together form the unique selling point and thus add to the creation of the brand. This brand will help sell and create a successful comedy festival, also as it is held in Sligo, people will associate Sligo as a fun and happy city to visit or stay. The unique aspects are: not only will it hold only commercially well recognised comedians in its first year, there will also be comedy workshops which is a relatively new concept here to help display comedy and bring people together that share a love for comedy. There is nothing similar within the region

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<sup>1</sup> Seventy-five percent of all gigs are sold out, that is all gigs including non commercial comedians. – sourced from an interview with Aoife Flynn of the Model Arts centre September 2007

<sup>2</sup> "There is a need for major events, and Sligo has so much to offer".-as referred to by Declan Breen of Sligo County Council (Community Enterprise) July 2007.

with so much potential a gap in the market is evident. The other major U.S.P. to this festival is there is a charity element attached. No other comedy festival gives all its profits to charity as this one will. The nominated charity is that of Barnardos who work directly and indirectly with over 12,000 disadvantaged children (whose well-being is under threat) and their families across Ireland every year.

## **S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS**

### **Strengths:**

- **Time of year** is a major strength, as from conducting a focus group and discussions a lull of events during spring and a need for some activity during this time of year is found to be greatly anticipated.

- **U.S.P.** to make Sligo comedy festival different from others workshops will be added to give it something extra.
- **Consumer demand**, which is evident due to consistent sell-out of comedy events in the locality.

**Weaknesses:**

- The main weakness envisaged is that this is the first time Sligo Comedy festival is being held. However with guidance from others involved in the area such as Aoife Flynn from the model arts centre this weakness shall not be detrimental.

**Opportunities:**

- Culture of comedy in the region.
- Large demand for comedy in the region.
- No comedy festival in the region.
- Appropriate audience in the region.
- Added realisation of the region and perception of distance reduced.

**Threats:**

- Possible future competition by means of other comedy festival.
- Perceived distance of geographical location.

## **OBJECTIVES AND GOALS**

**Objective:**

- To build a successful international comedy festival in Sligo.

**Goals:**

- To run a successful 2 day comedy festival.
- To help brand the region.
- To increase tourism numbers.



- To increase quality of life via increased choice of entertainment.
- To increase awareness of sponsorship brand.
- Add to building perception of the North-West as a regional event location.

## TARGET AUDIENCE.

The target audience can be broken into three segments.

1. **Local-** the local audience is those who live within the region that have a love for comedy. Sligo holds a great love and history for comedy as explained earlier in the plan.
2. **Tourist-**comedy is evidently growing throughout the country with the growth of comedy clubs and specialised comedy shows on TV, tourists shall gain recognition of the brand that Sligo is a fun and beautiful place to visit.
3. **Family-** the comedy festival has scope for not only adults but also the younger audience through means of the workshops.

The aforementioned target audiences will be reached through means of media such as TV, radio and print communications, promotional leaflets will also be sent to local Arts organisations, surfing communities, B&B's, hotels etc. Sligo

## MARKETING STRATEGY

The marketing strategy will be considered through the use of the P's mechanism of the marketing mix.

### ➤ **Product**

The product will consist of a core and supplementary product, the core product is the comedy gigs themselves which are held in the evening and the supplementary product are the workshops, which will be available to the target audience of people from the age of 7 years upwards. In addition there will be accommodation offered at reduced prices for those attending the festival.

### ➤ **Price**

The price set for the comedy gigs will be set at a realistic and competitive price in conjunction with that of other comedy gigs. The price will be set in order to make it accessible to that of the target audience.

➤ **Place**

The comedy festival will be held in Sligo which is the capital in the North-West of Ireland also known as “The Gateway City” and renowned for its beauty by those who have visited. Throughout Sligo there is a great love for comedy which is evident from each time a comedy gig is hosted in Sligo through the Model Arts Centre or The Hawkswell Theatre all tickets are sold out in advance with waiting lists for any possible cancellations. This displays an opportunity to gain recognition for Sligo through a love for comedy which has been waiting to be utilised for many years from the years of Spike Milligan.

Sligo as a region has much to offer and holds huge potential with its beautiful natural environment, by enticing tourism to the area through the comedy festival this will bring recognition to Sligo and its beauty; it will help discover the region through the publicity and positive word of mouth generated. Sligo is one of the few counties left where its natural beauty has not been destroyed and is only starting to be recognised and promoted according to the enterprise section of Sligo County Council.

➤ **Promotion**

Promotion of the festival will be done by means of above the line and below the line promotion. Promotion will be both national and locally based.

The methods will include Advertising gained through:

- ⇒ National and local newspapers.
- ⇒ National and local media. Whereby the festival will be promoted through local and national radio and also through television.

Other methods of promotion that will be used are:

- ⇒ Brand name, Logo, Slogan. A catchy and appropriate image and slogan will be created in order to associate comedy and Sligo together in order to refresh or renew peoples ideas or perceptions of the area and associate Sligo as a fun place to visit with much to offer.
- ⇒ Public relations and sponsorship. This will be achieved in many ways including brochures, posters and posting information on the festival to appropriate promoters.
- ⇒ Website. A lively yet easily navigated website will be constructed to make the festival easily acceptable to the public. Holding all the

## SPONSORSHIP

There are many benefits for the main sponsor of the comedy festival, some of these benefits are:

- ⇒ Goodwill from supporting a charity.
- ⇒ Positive PR, goodwill and brand values/integrity.
- ⇒ Innovative and refreshed recognition of their product to their target audience as their name will be included in/on everything.
- ⇒ Secure publicity before, during and after the festival.
- ⇒ Co-branding: the association of comedy with their company, thus people will look at the company in a positive light as comedy is all about fun and enjoyment with a major “feel good” factor. Resulting in not only an association with a sense of “happiness” when the product is referred to but also fun, thus positive reinforcement in the minds of the consumer.

The above benefits have the potential to reinforce and attract new customers to the sponsor while also reinforcing the image and views people have of the company. **A separate promotional plan is available on request.**

## TIMEFRAME

The following is a summarised action timeline:

<b>Task Action</b>	<b>Month</b>
<b>completed</b>	
⇒ Deciding on date for festival *	July 2007
⇒ Researching locations to host gigs and workshops *	July 2007
⇒ Booking of appropriate locations *	August 2007
⇒ Drawing up marketing plan *	September 2007
⇒ Drawing up publicity plan *	September 2007
⇒ Applying for public funding *	September 2007
⇒ Applying for corporate funding *	Oct/Nov 2007
⇒ Research availability of comedians/magicians, clowns *	Oct/Nov 2007
⇒ Booking of comedians/magicians and clowns	Oct 2007/Jan2008
⇒ Selecting appropriate designed name and logo	December 2007
⇒ Design of posters, brochures, tickets and web site	December 2007
⇒ Web site going live	January 2008
⇒ Printing of posters, brochures and tickets	January 2008
⇒ Publicity	Jan-April 2008
⇒ Setting up locations	April 2008
⇒ Comedy festival	April 2008
⇒ Removal of posters etc	April 2008

**3.2 Development Plan**

# Development Plan



08

# Sligo Comedy Festival

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## Mission

*‘To establish Sligo Comedy Festival as Ireland’s Premier comedy event’*

## Vision

*‘Sustainable regional brand development in three phases – local, national and international’*

## Introduction

Sligo Comedy Festival is being undertaken in order to help establish Sligo Comedy Festival as Ireland’s Premier comedy event. This will be undertaken in three phases over the next five years in order to achieve sustainable regional brand development. The North West has much to offer and comedy is proven to be of significant popularity as Aoife Flynn from the Model Arts Centre explained that over 75% of all comedy gigs in Sligo are sold out previous to the gigs with massive waiting lists for cancellation tickets. As there is as at present no Comedy Festival active in the region this presents a gap in the market. With stakeholder buy in a community working together as a whole there is the potential for this event to entice visitors to the North West and brand the region as a fun, exciting and beautiful location to visit.

## Development Plan

The mission of Sligo comedy festival is achievable through three phases of development as follows:

### *Development phase 1:*

Phase one will be completed from year one to year three of Sligo Comedy Festival. During this period the event will function as a Local/Regional event. The event will be publicised primarily through out the North-West. An intensive promotional campaign through local media including print, radio and a portal website will be used. In addition a direct mail campaign will be complemented with personal selling through school visits and in town promotions. The local community will be encouraged to actively contribute to their region through attending events in their vicinity. Volunteerism will feature strongly from a logistical perspective. This will create good will and a sense of pride within the community and their region.

### *Development phase 2:*

Phase two will build on and grow from phase one; this phase will be completed over years three to five of the event. The main target audience will be local/regional as of phase one with the addition of a national audience in order to establish S.C.F. as a national event. A national audience will be targeted through a media campaign of national advertising such as national media, radio and T.V. including adding links for the S.C.F. website to corresponding or relating sites that are familiar to itself and appeal to a specific segment of the market. Advertisements will also be sought to be included in tourism literature and magazines aimed at communities such as the surfing communities etc. This will entice families and young professionals to the North West hence building the brand of the north-west as a fun, vibrant and friendly location to visit with benefits to all.

### *Development phase 3:*

Phase three will be carried out from year 5 where S.C.F. will grow to an International event attracting international visitors to the North West while also building the regional brand. This will be developed by means of an advertising campaign such as print, radio, T.V., A developed website with appropriate links and press releases in overseas tourism magazines and newspapers etc.





	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>
<b>Period:</b>	Start up 2008-2010	Growth 2011-2012	Expansion Post 2013
<b>Sponsorship and Media Promotions:</b>	Local / Regional	National	International
<b>Venue</b>	Singular	Two- Three locations	Multi - Locations
<b>Duration</b>	Weekend 2 Days	Long Weekend 4 Days	A Week 7 Days
<b>Audience Numbers: (Approximately)</b>	320	Increase by 50% 480	Increase by 50% 720
<b>Stakeholder Buy in:</b>	Local Authorities Tourism organisations Hoteliers	Local Authorities Tourism organisations Hoteliers Catering Organisations Businesses	Local Authorities Tourism organisations Hoteliers Catering Organisations Businesses Community volunteer Groups
<b>Forward Planning:</b>	Mid – Term review 2009	Strategic Planning Process	Implementation of Strategic Plan

### 3.3 Logo and slogan

A copy of the sticker handed out at the St. Patricks day parade where sweets were attached to target a young audience.



3.4 Punch and Judy poster/flier

1st WestLaugh  
Comedy Festival  
presents

Barnardos  
No child is left behind

**PUNCH &  
JUDY**

**IN AID OF BARNARDOS**

**SATURDAY, 5TH APRIL**  
**13.PM**  
**GLASSHOUSE HOTEL - SLIGO**  
**PRICE: € 10**

\*TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM 10.00 AM ON 1ST APRIL

Sligo

3.5 Poster/flier displaying acts, sponsorship and charity associated with the festival

**Sligo COMEDY FESTIVAL 2008**  
Fun for everyone!

**Friday, 4th April @ 8.30pm**  
„I dare ya!“  
with Andrew Stanley Demian Clark 18,- €

**Saturday, 5th April @ 1pm**  
Puppet Show  
„Punch & Judy“  
by Conor Lambert 10,- €

**Saturday, 5th April @ 8.30pm**  
**Comedians:**  
John Lynn  
Jarlath Regan  
Dermot Whelan 20,- €

**@ GLASSHOUSE HOTEL, SLIGO**

**Barnardos**  
No child gets left behind

3.6 Tickets for the festival



**WESTLAUGH** 2008  
**COMEDY FESTIVAL**

*Saturday 5th April @ 8.30pm  
in Glass House Hotel  
with Comedians  
John Lynn, Jarlath Regan  
e³ Dermot Whelan*



Ticket €20



**WESTLAUGH** 2008  
**COMEDY FESTIVAL**

*Friday 4th April @ 8.30pm  
in Glass House Hotel  
"I DARE YA"  
with  
Andrew Stanley e³ Damian Clark*



Ticket €18



**WESTLAUGH  
COMEDY FESTIVAL 2008**



*Saturday 5th April @ 1pm  
in Glass House Hotel*

*Puppet Show*

***PUNCH & JUDY***

*by Conor Lambert*



Ticket €10

### 3.7 Press Release



The weekend of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of April promises to be one filled with fun and Laughter with the first ever **West Laugh comedy festival** taking place in the Glasshouse hotel, Sligo in aid of **Bernardos Children's Charity** – Raising money through fun .

The fun and frolics kicks off at 8.30 pm on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> with the hilarious and unique duo of Andrew Stanley and Damian Clark performing their brand new entertainment show with a difference called **I DARE YA!** as seen on RTE 2, where the viewer gets to determine the content as the viewers pick the dare and the lads do them.

Damian emerges from Australia and no one could doubt his energy and enthusiasm which not only excites audiences but keeps them on the edge of their seats and holding their sides.

Damian's reviews speak for themselves:

*"The future of Australian comedy"* – The Comedy Channel

*"The number 1 event to see, cream of the crop"* – Dublin Magazine

Andrew has performed at all the top comedy festivals such as Edinburgh, Kilkenny, Melbourne and Liffey laughs. Andrew is fast becoming one of Ireland's top comedians with his varied style of audience interaction and his skill and ability at telling observational stories that gain and hold the audience attention.

*"Everescent and upbeat.....bursting with playful energy"- Chortle.co.uk*

Together the style of both Andrew and Damian work fantastically together and complimenting each other while leaving the audience crying out for more.

Not forgetting the kids, at 1 pm on Saturday the renowned Conor Lambert puppet Shows will host the unmissable punch and Judy show. Its a modern adaption of the traditional Punch and Judy where punch is left to mind the house however as Judy is gone things get interesting as the Guards are called. One to watch.

Finally at 8.30 pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> a trio of **Dermot Whelan (the panel) along with John Lynn and Jarlath Regan** will end the weekend with non stop wit and laughter.

Dermot Whelan burst on to the comedy scene in 2004 and in his first year performed at the Kilkenny Cat's Laugh Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival, along with many other festivals. Dermot is Host of the weekday breakfast show on 98fm, host of the *offside show* and a resident on *The Panel* on RTE 2.

Jarlath Regan's style of comedy is laidback and relentlessly funny with his inspired one liners and razor sharp observations. Jarlath has worked extensively for TV and radio and has worked with and alongside the likes of Ardal O'Hanlon and Tommy Tiernan, He has also performed at many of the renowned comedy festivals and has numerous favourable reviews behind him such as

*"Young, gifted and green" –The Star*

*"This is stunning stand-up" – Dublinks*

John Lynn is an instant hit with audiences due to his laid back delivery of material. John burst onto the scene and his talent is displayed through the evidence that within months of starting stand up John appeared in RTE's Liffey Laughs, for a newcomer this is a remarkable achievement. John has also performed at the likes of the Edinburgh festival and is described as;

*"Catch John now as he races up the comedy ladder with the speed of some kind of demented Delamere" – Lisa Richards*

*"Hilarious" – The View*

Tickets for all shows are available at Sligo Tourist Office (Temple Street).