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## **A Comparative Generational Analysis Of A Cultural Event**

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### **Abstract**

Like most products, special events are marketed to specific target markets. One such event, however, held in Melbourne, Australia, in May 2005, was marketed more broadly to the Melbourne community. The cultural event was developed to stimulate discussion, which one social commentator noted is currently deficient ...‘there is a prevailing element of defensiveness, wariness and caution in our public discourse’ (Jones, 2005). The event sought to fill this void in community life and encouraged members of cross-sections of the community to participate in the event. One evaluative measure of success of the event was, therefore, the post-consumption evaluations of attendees. By using generational segments (ie. *Traditionalists, Baby-boomers, Generation X and the Millennials*) as the bases of comparison, few statistically significant differences were found with regard to post-consumption evaluations of the event. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to conclude that the event was successful in that the generational segments were generally homogenous with regard to the post-consumption evaluations of the event. The results, however, provide opportunities for improvement in the event’s marketing and management in the future.

### **Introduction**

Like most products, special events are marketed to specific target markets. One such event, however, held in May 2005 in Melbourne, Australia, was marketed to Melbourne’s community. The cultural event was developed to stimulate public discussion in Melbourne, which one social commentator noted is a result of ‘a prevailing element of defensiveness, wariness and caution in our public discourse’ (Jones, 2005).

The special event sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Australia. This is evinced in the number of special events that are being staged, as well as their size and production, and by the professionalisation of the sector through special education, accreditation and associations (Harris *et al*, 2000). Special events are being used as part of economic, tourism and cultural strategies. Special event evaluation is a burgeoning area of special event research. Some of the earliest research undertaken to evaluate special events was on sporting events in Australia [see, for example, Burns, Hatch and Mules (1986)]. Much of what has followed in this area of special event research has been focussed on the economic impacts of special events. This has been identified as a deficiency in special event research (Fredline and Faulkner, 2002). This paper seeks to contribute to addressing this deficiency.

The cultural event was used as part of governmental economic and cultural strategies. The event was designed to promote Melbourne and Victoria as a destination of innovation for economic purposes and as a destination that promotes intellectual debate. Melbourne’s residential community was encouraged to participate in the event. While a range of evaluative measures can be used to indicate the success of the event, attendees’ post-consumption evaluative judgements are used as the method of evaluation. It is useful to evaluate the event at the aggregated level, but it is also worthwhile to consider sub-sections of the community in evaluative studies to whether there are underlying differences in sub-sections of the

community. The current study used segmentation, based on generational research, as a means of exploring this issue. The aim of this study was to gain information in relation to attendees' post-consumption evaluative judgements using generational segments as a means of comparison.

The paper continues with a brief summary of special event research and the four major generational segments. Information is then provided on the case study, the research methodology and the data collection described. The results are then presented and discussed and conclusions made with regard to the success of the event. Limitations of the research are stated and recommendations are then proposed for further research on the topic of special event marketing and evaluation.

### **Special Event Research**

Special events play an important role in many modern cultures. At their core, special events, or “onetime or infrequently occurring events of limited duration” (Jago, 1997, p. 56), provide attendees with opportunities to escape from the routines of their daily lives (Getz, 1997; Jago, 1997). As such they provide opportunities for leisure, social and cultural experiences, beyond everyday experiences. While special events provide opportunities to escape the routines of daily life, they also provide attendees opportunities for intrinsic development.

Special event research has progressed particularly in recent years (Hede, Jago and Deery, 2002). Considerable research has been undertaken to understand what motivates people to attend special events [See, for example, Backman, *et al*, 1995; Crompton and McKay, 1997; Delpy Neirotti, 2001)] and on the economic impacts of special events. Over the past few years, however, there has been a noticeable increase in research that has evaluated special events from a social perspective [See, for example, Fredline and Faulkner (2000); Green and Chalip (1998); Delamere, Wankel and Hinch (2001)]. Special event evaluation is now very much focused on the Triple Bottom Line (economic, social and environmental evaluation), however, there is still room for improvement in each of these areas of evaluation.

### **Generational Segments**

Four generational segments exist in western societies. Each has its own profile which it is thought is attributable to the context of their formative years. The *Traditionalists* (also referred to as the *Maturers*) were born anytime after 1900, and before 1946. They experienced high levels of deprivation in their formative years, when they experienced two world wars and the Great Depression. It is these years that have influenced the *Traditionalists* in their attitudes and behaviour. After the Second World War, the *Traditionalists* produced the largest generational segment in western society, the *Baby-boomers*. In 2005, there are 4.1 million *Baby-Boomers* in Australia (Anon., 2005). *Baby-boomers* are self-indulgent and, despite the fact that they once had a shared commitment to bettering society when they were young, they soon began to build their own careers and raise families (Dychtwald, 2005). Many *Baby-boomers* are now focussing on their future, particularly in relation to their superannuation.

Excessive individualism (Eitzen, 2000), which Inglehart and Abramson (1999) suggested is a consequence of the shift in value systems towards post-materialism, is strongly exhibited by *Generation X* (those born after the *Baby-boomers* 1961-1981). *Generation X* is sometimes referred to as the *Echo-Boomers*, as their representation in western societies, although slightly

less than the *Baby-boomers*, echoes the *Baby-boomers*. Members of *Generation X* are self-centred, often cynical and are at odd with their parents and older generations, as well as being driven by hedonistic values (Weiss Haserot, 2004). The youngest of the four generations, *The Millennials* (born 1982-2003) is, however, quite different from *Generation X*. They have more in common with their grandparents (ie. the *Traditionalists*) than their parents (the *Baby-boomers*) (Nelson, 2005). While *The Millennials* are, as expected, technologically savvy.

### **Background to the Event**

The 2005 Alfred Deakin Innovation Lectures were held in Melbourne following the successful 2001 Alfred Deakin Lectures, which were held as part of Victoria's Centenary of Federation celebrations. The 2005 Alfred Deakin Innovation Lectures were curated by Jonathan Mills, who was the Director of the Melbourne International Arts Festival and were strongly supported by the Victorian State Government. The Lectures attracted a substantial number of sponsors from the corporate, education and philanthropic sectors. The 2005 Alfred Deakin Innovation Lectures were launched in regional Victoria. Of the 28 lectures that were staged over the two-week period, beginning in April 2005, a few Lectures were staged in outer metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, but most Lectures were staged in the City of Melbourne at the Town Hall. Just over 40 lecturers, with international reputations in their field of expertise, were attracted to participate in the 2005 Alfred Deakin Innovation Lectures and approximately 16,000 people attended the Lectures during their staging.

### **Research Instrument and Data Collection Method**

The researchers and producers of the event developed a post-consumption questionnaire to gather information with regard to attendees' evaluations of the 2005 Alfred Deakin Lectures. Three key areas of the questionnaire are reported on in this study, namely, 1) satisfaction with attributes of the event; 2) perceptions of the characteristics of the event; and 3) behavioural intentions with regard to cultural events. Prior research on special events and expert knowledge in the field of cultural event management were used to develop a context-specific questionnaire. For satisfaction with the event, the work of Gandhi-Arora (2002); Gorney and Busser, (1996); Hede, Jago, and Deery (2004); Mohr *et al* (1993); Thrane (2002), was considered. For example, it was decided to measure satisfaction at both the attribute-level (*the ticketing, the website, the brochure and the descriptions of the lectures*) and at the global level so that the nuances in the satisfaction responses could be identified and then be compared to global satisfaction response for validation. Perceptions of the event were measured using items (ie. *challenging, rigorous, creative, met the needs of the public, achieved imaginative results, different, personally interesting and professional interesting*) that were proposed by the producers of the event, as these specifically related to the producing organisation's Key Performance Indicators. Post-consumption behavioural intentions were measured via repeat attendance at the event, attendance at cultural events generally and recommending behaviour. Likert-style questions (seven-point) were developed for each of the items being measured. The year in which respondents were born was collected which enabled comparative analysis between the generational segments to be undertaken.

Data were collected at a sample of the lectures using the 'two-staged' approach to data collection (Pol and Pak, 1994). In Stage One of this approach, contact details of attendees were collected *in situ*. In Stage Two, a random sample of participants of Stage One was then

contacted by phone in the two weeks following their attendance at the event. The two-stage approach to data collection was used to improve the response rate to the survey and the quality of the derived data. Attendees were handed an invitation to participate in the study and then self-selected to participate in the study or not.

## Results and Discussion

The response rate to the *in situ* survey was approximately five percent. When later contacted, almost 90% of those attendees intercepted, who had agreed to a telephone interview, also agreed to participate in the telephone survey. The resulting sample size was 350. While the response rate to the *in situ* survey (Stage One) is quite low, the final sample size (n=350) compensates for this inadequacy in the research. The high response rate to the second stage of the data collection method demonstrates the high levels of involvement from those that committed their participation to the study.

The sample comprised *Traditionalists* (17.9%); *Baby-boomers* (34.2%); *Generation X* (40.5%); and *Millennials* (7.4%). Compared to the literature on the composition of generational segments, the results show that there was a larger proportion of *Generation X* in the sample than what might be expected (i.e. given that the *Baby-boomers* are the largest generation segment and that *Generation X* ‘echoes’ the *Baby-boomers* in size). The results, however, indicate that a reasonably representative sample, with regard to the generational segments, was obtained for the study.

The mean scores are provided in Table 1, as are the results of the tests of statistical significance between the segments using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). As can be seen from Table 1, not all the Levene’s Test of Homogeneity of Variances exceeded 0.05, meaning the variance in these variables across the segments is not equal. In this situation, the underlining assumptions of ANOVA are not satisfied and the ANOVA test is not reliable. Of the 15 ANOVA tests, only two of the results were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) across the segments, namely 1) satisfaction with the website and 2) the perception that the lectures which were presented as part of the event were rigorous.

The differences in relation to the website can be clearly understood based on the exposure the generations have had to new technologies. Similarly, it is interesting to note that while there are differences across the segments with regard to perceptions that the lectures were ‘rigorous’, the Tukey HSD post hoc test shows that the *Traditionalists* and the *Millennials* are a homogenous subset of the sample. This is an interesting finding given that the literature indicates the *Millennials* are more like their grandparents, than their parents (the *Baby-boomers*).

**Table 1: ANOVA results**

	Test of Homogeneity of Variances		ANOVA		Traditionalists	Baby-boomers	Generation X	Millennials
	Levene Statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.	Mean scores (on seven-point scales)			
<b>Satisfaction</b>								
Ticketing	0.05	<b>0.99</b>	2.38	0.07	3.1	3.9	4.1	4.3
Overall satisfaction	1.38	<b>0.25</b>	0.31	0.82	6.1	3.9	4.1	4.3
Website	2.35	<b>0.07</b>	3.08	<b>0.03</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Brochure	4.05	0.01	3.20	0.02	6.1	5.6	5.5	5.4
Lecture descriptions	3.42	0.02	5.60	0.00	5.8	5.4	5.0	5.4
<b>Perceptions</b>								
Achieved imaginative results	0.20	<b>0.90</b>	2.46	0.06	5.5	5.0	5.1	5.6
Different	0.52	<b>0.67</b>	0.404	0.75	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.5
Personally interesting	0.56	<b>0.64</b>	1.32	0.27	6.2	6.1	6.1	6.5
Met public's needs	0.83	<b>0.48</b>	0.17	0.92	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.5
Rigorous	0.88	<b>0.45</b>	7.14	<b>0.00</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>
Creative	1.10	<b>0.35</b>	1.44	0.23	5.8	5.5	5.5	5.6
Challenging	2.95	0.03	6.91	0.00	6.0	5.8	5.3	5.8
<b>Behavioural intentions</b>								
Attend in future	0.51	<b>0.68</b>	0.44	0.73	6.3	6.5	6.3	6.4
Recommend	0.88	<b>0.45</b>	0.26	0.86	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.3
Attend more public events	1.36	<b>0.25</b>	0.62	0.61	5.6	5.8	5.8	5.5

### **Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research**

The aim of this paper was to explore for differences between generational segments in relation to post-consumption evaluative judgements as a result of attendance at the event. While not all the differences between the segments were statistically significant they do provide insights into the generational segments and their post-consumption evaluation of the event. In terms of an overall evaluation of the event, the results are quite favourable. The event was designed to be one for Melbourne's community and was not marketed to, and for, one particular segment — the high levels of homogeneity between the segments with regard to their post-consumption perceptions is one measure that indicates the event was successful. The analysis here is preliminary. The results indicate that further analysis of the data is warranted, such as using the Brown-Forsythe test for equality of variances. SEM may also uncover relationships between the constructs that can be used to improve the outcomes of the event in the future. Furthermore, this research goes some way to address deficiencies in special event research with regard to evaluation in that it looks beyond its economic impacts.

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