

## ELEMENTS OF EVENT MANAGEMENT VENTURES IN KENYA

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### Abstract

Events management ventures (EMVs) being a new area of business has attracted entrepreneurs to invest. This paper explores the characteristics of entrepreneurs operating minor event management ventures in three selected counties in Kenya. The study looks at the entrepreneurs' demographic data in terms of age, gender, marital status and education level, the period the venture has been in existence, the type of ventures and events engaged in and the sources of their business. Census sampling was adopted wherein 271 out of 313 entrepreneurs were interviewed.

**Keywords:** Elements, Events, Event Management, Kenya, Minor, Ventures.

### 1. Introduction

The events sector as observed by Uysal and Xiangping, 2008; Dwyer, 2008 is one of the fastest growing areas of the tourism industry. Nevertheless, Getz (2007) and Dwyer *et al.*, (2007) point to events as important motivators of tourism forming part of the marketing plans of most destinations yet in most cases it remains largely unstructured and informal. As noted by Dwyer *et al.*, (2007), despite its great potential and positive impacts events have on a countries economy, it is faced with challenges like all other industries. Events ventures use resources and create economic costs and benefits in equal measure. Apart from provision of job alternatives, events raise the level of population participation in economic development, generate secondary income, enhance community stability, and are often considered to have minimal damage to the physical environment (Hall, 1996; Oppermann, 1996; Editner 1995). Moreover, tourism and hospitality ventures are not necessarily capital intensive and are therefore less dependent on massive foreign investment thereby limiting the financial risk involved thus encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment. The ventures also have the advantage of enabling the utilization of under exploited factors of production. As noted by Weiermair (1998), they enable entrepreneurs to develop special personal relationships with customers.

#### 1.1 The Nature of Tourism and Hospitality Ventures

Tourism, the world's largest industry, is highly fragmented, with varied services and activities, such as accommodation, transportation, shopping, and recreational activities (McIntosh, Goeldner, and Ritchie 1995). In one of the available studies on tourism ventures, Quinn, Larmour, and McQuillan (1992) indicated that 96 percent of businesses in the hotel and food industries around the world are small and employ approximately 75 percent of the employees in these sectors. In Europe, since the 1960s, there has been an ongoing rise in the number of privately owned small tourism ventures. For example in Wales, in the United Kingdom, most of the tourism businesses are small (Wales Tourism Board 1994), and in Austria, approximately 75 percent of the hospitality businesses employ no more than four employees. This sector also displays the highest relative share of self-employment; for example about 40 percent of the employees in this industry are entrepreneurs (Weiermair 1998).

Moreover, tourism ventures are not necessarily capital intensive and therefore are less dependent on massive foreign investment. This limits the financial risk involved and encourages entrepreneurship and self-employment. For example, ventures in peripheral areas, such as domestic accommodation and home restaurants, make use of existing infrastructure (Haber and Lerner 2001; Oppermann 1996). The ventures enable entrepreneurs to develop special personal relationships with customers, which may very well constitute one of the most important sources of service quality and customer satisfaction in tourism (Weiermair 1998).

#### 1.2 Concept of Events

Getz (2005) noted that a principle applying to all events is they are temporary and that 'every such event is unique stemming from the blend of management, program, setting and people'. Shone and Parry (2004) posited that special events are that phenomenon arising from those non-routine occasions which have leisure, cultural, personal or organizational objectives set apart from the normal activity of daily life, whose purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people. Douglas *et al.*, (2001) referred to events as an occasion for people to come together to

celebrate, to demonstrate, to worship, to honour, to remember, to socialise while Allen *et al.*, (2008) referred to events as specific rituals or celebrations that are consciously planned and created to mark special occasions.

Events can be categorized or grouped on the basis of size or type. The largest events are called mega events and are generally targeted towards international markets. By their size and scale, major events can attract significant visitor numbers and media coverage, as well as generating considerable tourism revenue and economic benefits. Many top international sporting championships fit into this category (Bowdin *et al.*, 2006). However, most events, however, fall into the category of minor events which anything from parties to celebrations and meetings to weddings, most community, social, fundraising and charity events also fall into this category. Many of these are planned and delivered to raise awareness or money and are organized by volunteers. Both in private and public, people like to mark, celebrate and rejoice the important occasions in their lives and remember milestones.

In this study, EMVs consisted of ventures that offer services and products that facilitate events such as outside catering, decorations or florists, banqueting and conference services, event planners and ventures involved in hiring of tents, chairs, furniture and equipment, public address systems, event grounds and bakers as shown on table 1.

## 2. Methodology

The study was undertaken in three selected counties in Kenya namely; Kisumu, Nairobi and Uasin Gishu. The target population was entrepreneurs of 313 minor EMVs. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Census sampling was used to include all entrepreneurs in the sample. Structured questionnaires were used to collect the data. Data was tested for normality using skewness and Kurtosis. The descriptive data was analysed and presented using frequencies, means, percentages and standard deviation.

## 3. Discussion of Findings

### 3.1 Demographic Information

The information elicited included age, gender, marital status, level of education, county of residence and position in the venture. From the total sample of 271 majority of the respondents, 61.3% were female which could imply that hospitality ventures could be more attractive to female entrepreneurs. Notably, majority of the entrepreneurs (88.6%) were below 40 years which could imply that this bracket is energetic enough to sustain the rigors of such ventures. On marital status, an almost equal percentage of 51.5% and 42.2% entrepreneurs were married and single respectively which means the ventures could be appealing to both married and single entrepreneurs. The vast majority of the entrepreneurs (83%) had attained education level of at least college which means the entrepreneurs are very literate and capable of taking event management to higher levels. However, the study did not establish whether the entrepreneurs had education in event management or any related discipline such as catering. This information is summarized in table 2.

### 3.2 Existence of Venture

From the findings, a majority of the ventures had been in existence for less than 5 years (n=152, 61.7%) while those above 5 years were (n=94, 38.2%). This could imply that events management is a new area of business and hence has the potential for growth.

### 3.3 Types of Ventures

Minor Event Management Ventures identified ventures they engage in from a list provided of twelve possible ventures on four anchors comprising 1=Yes, 2=Few times, 3=No. The results indicated that most of the ventures have no particular line of specialization but usually engage in ventures that attract a lot of demand at a given time. Indeed most of the identified ventures such as outside catering, decorations, cake baking, tents and chairs hire are usually seasonal which goes to show why most respondents would indicate that they engage in such ventures a few times. The results also confirm that the data collected under the types of venture was normally distributed since the skewness and kurtosis values are within -2 to +2 levels. Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests performed on each of the indicators of ventures commonly engaged in, were all significant at 1% level with p=0.001 showing that there is strong evidence of entrepreneurs engagement on the activities. The means of the indicators exhibited tendency towards outside catering and decorations. These results are presented on table 3.

### 3.4 Events Engaged by Entrepreneurs

The respondents provided information on the frequency at which they engaged in various events. The responses were on a five point likert scale. The descriptive statistics results showed that respondents engaged mostly in weddings despite the fact that weddings are seasonal in nature and not static hence entrepreneurs may not be able to maintain stable customers as

weddings change rapidly with the seasons. Business events are also on the rise hence the high engagement. The business events include marketing events and functions such as seminars, training sessions and team building activities which are on the rise. The other events rated low. This could be because the events could be private in nature thus many customers have options not to engage commercial ventures to manage the events such as christmas parties, house parties school events and birthday parties. In addition some of the activities or events are rarely undertaken such as luncheons, exhibitions, sports events, cultural events and community events. Road shows and fundraising recorded the lowest mean mainly to the fact that road shows are expensive and do not require a lot of event management and the players are few. On the other hand fundraising requires people to make contributions and not receive much payment as vendors which many ventures may not find lucrative hence not engage in. In addition, customers may not require the services of EMVs as the cost of hiring the services may be costly and unwanted. These results are displayed in table 4.

However, the results on table 4 show that the data collected was normally distributed as the values of the skewness and kurtosis were within -2 and +2 levels. The kurtosis values were between 0.062 and 1.488 while skewness was between 0.071 and 1.431. Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests performed on each of the indicators of events engaged in by entrepreneurs, were all significant at 1% level with  $p=0.001$  showing that there is strong evidence of entrepreneurs engaging in various events weddings exhibiting the highest mean. However, corporate events were significant at 11.5% while business events were significant at 7% which could mean many entrepreneurs do not undertake these events.

### 3.5 Sources of Business

Entrepreneurs provided information regarding the frequency with which they received business from listed groups or people that included relatives, neighbours, friends, private companies, NGOs, Government establishments, customers, competitors, employees of other organizations and ventures offering complementary products/services. The data was found to be normally distributed since all skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable limits of -2 to +2.

The results as shown on table 5 suggest that minor EMVs rely on many sources for their business. While they get some business through relatives, neighbours, friends, NGOs, Government establishments and competitors, most of them receive business from the usual customers by a good word of mouth. Indeed since these ventures' products are service oriented, a good word of mouth from a customer is likely to help promote the venture. The results also notably show that ventures receive business many times from ventures offering complementary products. This is so because the ventures wish to remain relevant in business and would therefore refer or seek support of ventures with similar/like products. Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests performed on each of the indicators of sources of business received, were all significant at 1% level with  $p=0.001$  apart from NGOs at 3% level of significance showing that there is strong evidence of entrepreneurs receiving business especially from customers and friends of entrepreneurs.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, event management ventures are undertaken by young entrepreneurs mainly due to the low investment and labour intensive nature of the ventures. The ventures are more attractive to female and educated entrepreneurs. Event management being an emerging area of business venture is underdeveloped as most ventures have been in existence for less than five years. Most entrepreneurs participate in outside catering, floral or decorations of venues, provision of cake and hire of tents and chairs for events especially weddings which most entrepreneurs participate in. Few entrepreneurs engage in business events. The source of business for most of the entrepreneurs were from strong ties such as friends, relatives and neighbours whereas from weak ties include NGO's, government establishments and competitors. Most importantly is the fact that word of mouth was cited as a crucial source of business which means entrepreneurs invest in good services in reward for referrals from good word of mouth.

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Table 1: Activities of Event Management Ventures

Venture	Activities
Outside Catering	Supply of food away from the business premises.
Decorations	Provide floral arrangements and decorate event venues
Public Address	Provide entertainment in the form of music and equipment.
Cake Baking	Supply cakes, pastry and sweets for events.
Tents and Chairs Hire	Hire out tents and chairs which can be plain or dressed.
Events Ground	Let out venues for use both day and night functions.
Equipment / Drapery / Furniture Hire	Hire out catering equipment such as crockery, utensils, cutlery, food service equipment, plus hire of drapery for decorations, table linen and tables (round or rectangle).
Video / Photography	Shoot the event proceedings both still and motion.
Conference Organizers	Undertake to arrange, coordinate and plan seminars, meetings, workshops and all sizes of conferences.
Event Planning	Managing entire events from conception through to implementation and evaluation. It involves sourcing for vendors for each activity in the event.
Master of Ceremony	Conducts the proceedings of event.
Car Hire	Provision o transport services which may include limousines, buses, trucks and other fleet vehicles.

Table 2: Demographic Data

		Count	Table N %
Age	Below 30 yrs	98	36.2%
	31- 40 yrs	142	52.4%
	above 40 yrs	31	11.4%
Gender	Male	105	38.7%
	Female	166	61.3%
Marital Status	Married	139	51.5%
	Single	114	42.2%
	Other	17	6.4%
Level of Education	Primary	2	.7%
	Secondary	44	16.3%
	College	225	83.0%

Source: Data Analysis

Table 3: Ventures Engaged in

	Measurement											Skewness		Kurtosis		X <sup>2</sup> df=2 p=.001
	Yes		Few Times		No		Missing		M	SD	VAR	Stat	SE	Stat	SE	χ <sup>2</sup>
	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%								
Outside catering	116	42.8	19	7.0	84	31.0	52	19.2	1.85	.947	.896	.29	.164	-1.82	.327	66.932
Decorations	120	44.3	24	8.9	76	28.0	51	18.8	1.80	.925	.855	.40	.164	-1.71	.327	62.982
Public address system	66	24.4	29	10.7	108	39.9	68	25.1	2.21	.905	.818	-.42	.171	-1.65	.340	46.177
Cake baking	64	23.6	28	10.3	109	40.2	70	25.8	2.22	.903	.815	-.45	.172	-1.62	.341	49.164
Tents and chair hire	110	40.6	21	7.7	80	29.5	60	22.1	1.86	.940	.884	.28	.167	-1.81	.333	58.303
Event ground hire	66	24.4	29	10.7	101	37.3	75	27.7	2.18	.908	.824	-.36	.174	-1.69	.346	39.684
Equip/drapery/furn Hire	84	31.0	32	11.8	93	34.3	62	22.9	2.04	.921	.849	-.08	.168	-1.82	.335	31.129
Video/photography	50	18.5	25	9.2	124	45.8	72	26.6	2.37	.860	.740	-.79	.172	-1.17	.343	79.910
Conference organizer	49	18.1	27	10.0	112	41.3	83	30.6	2.34	.865	.748	-.70	.177	-1.29	.353	62.117
Event planning	134	49.4	27	10.0	70	25.8	40	14.8	1.72	.900	.810	.57	.160	-1.52	.319	75.299
Master of ceremony	21	7.7	20	7.4	145	53.5	85	31.4	2.67	.671	.450	-1.76	.178	1.568	.355	166.677
Car hire	36	13.3	22	8.1	134	49.4	79	29.2	2.51	.793	.628	-1.18	.175	-.356	.349	116.375

Source: Data Analysis

Table 4: Events Engaged in

	Measurement										Statistics									
	Never		Few Times		Many Times		All the Time		Missing					Skewness		Kurtosis		Chi Square		
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>VAR</i>	Stat	SE	Stat	SE	$\chi^2$	df	<i>P</i>
Weddings	4	1.5	21	7.7	70	25.8	168	62.0	8	3.0	3.53	.709	.502	-1.43	.150	1.488	.299	247.738	3	.001
Birthday parties	53	19.6	84	31.0	68	25.1	32	11.8	34	12.5	2.33	.971	.944	.184	.158	-.944	.315	24.823	3	.001
Business events	43	15.9	57	21.0	77	28.4	48	17.7	46	17.0	2.58	1.028	1.058	-.149	.162	-1.11	.323	11.996	3	.007
Xmas parties	89	32.8	76	28.0	37	13.7	21	7.7	48	17.7	1.96	.972	.944	.715	.163	-.520	.324	55.152	3	.001
Community events	88	32.5	63	23.2	45	16.6	23	8.5	52	19.2	2.01	1.016	1.032	.582	.164	-.856	.327	41.584	3	.001
Conferences	96	35.4	35	12.9	53	19.6	38	14.0	49	18.1	.1	1.157	1.340	.378	.163	-1.38	.325	42.757	3	.001
Corporate events	54	19.9	67	24.7	65	24.0	44	16.2	41	15.1	2.43	1.050	1.102	.071	.160	-1.19	.320	5.930	3	.115
Cultural events	99	36.5	61	22.5	29	10.7	25	9.2	57	21.0	1.91	1.030	1.062	.839	.166	-.521	.331	66.150	3	.001
Exhibitions/trade fairs	90	33.2	64	23.6	34	12.5	29	10.7	54	19.9	2.01	1.054	1.111	.676	.165	-.799	.329	44.622	3	.001
Funerals	87	32.1	36	13.3	57	21.0	53	19.6	38	14.0	2.33	1.195	1.428	.158	.159	-1.53	.318	23.189	3	.001
Graduation	70	25.8	81	29.9	49	18.1	30	11.1	41	15.1	2.17	1.007	1.015	.429	.160	-.902	.320	26.730	3	.001
House parties	99	36.5	53	19.6	40	14.8	29	10.7	50	18.5	2.00	1.077	1.159	.649	.164	-.934	.326	51.416	3	.001
Luncheons	102	37.6	40	14.8	47	17.3	33	12.2	49	18.1	2.05	1.127	1.269	.534	.163	-1.19	.325	53.712	3	.001
Road shows	137	50.6	29	10.7	25	9.2	22	8.1	58	21.4	1.68	1.038	1.077	1.234	.167	.062	.332	176.089	3	.001
Fund raising	144	53.1	35	12.9	14	5.2	19	7.0	59	21.8	1.57	.959	.920	1.584	.167	1.234	.333	212.868	3	.001
School events	125	46.1	50	18.5	24	8.9	19	7.0	53	19.6	1.71	.976	.953	1.178	.165	.193	.328	131.761	3	.001
Sports events	134	49.4	33	12.2	22	8.1	26	9.6	56	20.7	1.72	1.066	1.137	1.184	.166	-.079	.330	160.907	3	.001

Note: N=271; 1=Never, 2=Few Times, 3=Many Times, 4=All the Time

Source: Data Analysis

Table 5: Sources of Business to the Venture

	Measurement										Statistics									
	Never		Few Times		Many Times		All the Time		No Response		M	SD	VAR	Skewness		Kurtosis		Chi Square		
	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%				STAT	SE	STAT	SE	$\chi^2$	df	P
Relatives	23	8.5	158	58.3	58	21.4	24	8.9	8	3.0	2.32	.759	.576	.669	.150	.223	.299	184.650	3	.001
Neighbours	30	11.1	132	48.7	79	29.2	21	7.7	9	3.3	2.35	.786	.618	.301	.150	-.248	.300	119.771	3	.001
Friends	13	4.8	61	22.5	136	50.2	54	19.9	7	2.6	2.88	.787	.619	-.388	.150	-.165	.299	119.364	3	.001
Private Co.	21	7.7	79	29.2	98	36.2	49	18.1	24	8.9	2.71	.881	.776	-.149	.155	-.716	.309	55.623	3	.001
NGO's	66	24.4	76	28.0	61	22.5	44	16.2	24	8.9	2.34	1.058	1.118	.209	.155	-1.17	.309	8.692	3	.034
Government	84	31.0	74	27.3	46	17.0	33	12.2	34	12.5	2.12	1.047	1.096	.499	.158	-.966	.315	28.603	3	.001
Customers	16	5.9	41	15.1	56	20.7	140	51.7	18	6.6	3.26	.950	.902	-1.00	.153	-.202	.305	137.087	3	.001
Competitors	105	38.7	101	37.3	37	13.7	9	3.3	19	7.0	1.80	.818	.670	.777	.153	-.033	.306	107.937	3	.001
Employees of other orgs	59	21.8	113	41.7	50	18.5	24	8.9	25	9.2	2.16	.901	.811	.492	.155	-.449	.309	68.244	3	.001
Ventures offering complimentary products	24	8.9	86	31.7	59	21.8	94	34.7	7	2.6	2.86	1.022	1.044	-.204	.150	-1.20	.299	120.280	3	.001

Note: 1=Never, 2=Few times, 3=Many times, and 4=All the time: Source: Data Analysis, (2012)

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