

teaching note

Beerscape: Are there best practices for hosting and inaugural beer festival?

Summary

The FeBREWary fest is an inaugural beer festival hosted in a rural community located in Southeastern New Mexico, USA. The event is hosted by the local chamber of commerce – an organization that provides support to the business community and promotes these businesses to visitors of a host community. The chamber organized this event to raise funds to build a new State Welcome Center for New Mexico and a new chamber of commerce building for the local community. Shannon is the marketing manager for the Chamber of Commerce and is in charge of the FeBREWary fest. The executive director tasked Shannon with this event three months before the event date. Before marketing the event, Shannon had four major factors to consider: (1) price of each ticket, (2) the entertainment options, (3) the quantity and names of food vendors, and (4) the quantity and the names of the breweries attending the festival. The inaugural event is over; however, Shannon must begin planning for next year. During the festival, Shannon had comment cards and a box for attendees to leave comments about the festival anonymously. While there were no major complaints, these comments will help Shannon make changes for the future. Shannon also had the emails of attendees who purchased their tickets online. Shannon sent a short questionnaire to these attendees (100 in total) and received responses from sixty-two. Attendees who completed the questionnaire received a 10% discount code to attend next year's festival. Based on the comment cards and the questionnaire responses, Shannon has some serious issues to consider if he would like to continue hosting this event in the future, increase the quality of the festival, and increase festival attendance.

Target Audience

Because the management of an event is important in various settings, this case study can be applied to different courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This teaching note's intention is geared for both undergraduate and graduate courses because of the practical application this has for anyone dealing with various social and corporate events, customers, vendors, or local authorities. The themes present in the case study can be found in many introductory and advanced courses relating to event management, food and beverage operations, sales and marketing, public relations, and property management. The courses recommended for this case study are (a) Event Management—Undergraduate/Graduate, (b) Food and Beverage Operations—Undergraduate/Graduate, (c) Sales and Marketing—Undergraduate/Graduate (d) Advanced Lodging and Leisure— Graduate, and (e) Customer Service Management— Undergraduate.

Goals and Learning Objectives

- Learn how to manage and apply elements of the servicescape in general and for a beer festival in particular.
- Comprehend how to create partnerships between local authorities, small businesses, and regional organizations.
- Acquire the skills necessary to examine elements of servicescape specific to the context of event management and the impact on event attendees.
- Demonstrate event management through the activity of planning and executing the program development, transportation, catering and foodservice, décor, housing, cultural sensitivity, safety and security, and the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Sketch a spatial layout for a festival.
- Select a site, vendors, and venue requirements for an event.
- Evaluate the design and implementation of an event.
- Compose a funding proposal for a capstone event to be targeted to the city government.

Learning Outcomes

This case study presents several practical issues for marketing managers, department heads, higher-level managers, lower-level managers, line-level employees, and local businesses. Because students, especially those in the hospitality industry, need to understand issues that could arise during an event and the different expectations and experiences of each type of customer, this gives hospitality students a unique perspective from different customers at an inaugural event. The major concepts addressed are: (1) servicescape, (2) social media marketing of an event, (3) utilizing customer feedback to make improvements, and (4) working with local authorities.

By the end of this lesson, the student should be able to:

- Discuss elements of servicescape specific to the context of event management.
- Describe processes associated with the design, planning, management, and operations of servicescapes and venues.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the main components of servicescape and venues and the development and management in both local and global environments
- Show the importance of digital marketing for event management.
- Explain the process associated with managing community relations with local businesses and organizations.

Lesson Plan

Prior to the lesson, students will read the case study and additional readings related to the festival, chamber of commerce activities, social media marketing, and customer feedback. Students will also be asked to have a general understanding and be able to discuss the following topics:

- Expectations and servicescape experiences
- Festival spatial layouts
- Online reviews and effects of social media
- The purpose and activities of the chamber of commerce
- The importance of servicescape regarding: (a) Customer satisfaction, (b) event marketing, and (c) local regulations

Discussion Topics and Questions

Attendee Comments

- Classify attendee comments by servicescape elements
- Develop a solution for each of the negative attendee comments

Questionnaire Results

- Prepare a vendor information packet based on the information provided in the questionnaire results section.
- Design an attractive event cover photo for a Facebook event page for the FeBREWary Fest
- Create marketing materials for three social media posts to attract potential attendees in your target market.
- Formulate marketing materials for one alternative form of advertising (i.e., newspaper, television, etc.) that might appeal to potential attendees in your target market.

Funding Proposal

Compose a proposal for the city government in which the festival will be hosted in order to obtain funding for next year's festival. The following information should be included in the proposal:

- Title of event: feBREWary fest
- Executive summary
- Purpose and goals of the event
- Description of the target population
- Plans for marketing and advertising
- Organizational and staffing arrangements

Description and action plan, integrating the solutions from question two, regarding the servicescape elements including:

- Ambient condition
- Spatial layout

- Use the existing layout provided as a starting point
- Signage
- Cleanliness
- Transportation services
- Food vendors
- Budget
- Schedule of major tasks and activities
- Accommodations for accessibility
- Risk management plan

Discuss how organizers could adjust the festival in the event of a global crisis (such as SARS, Ebola, and COVID-19.). When doing so, consider the following aspects:

- Local, national, and international restrictions (health, travel, licensing, training, etc.)
- Use of technology (Digitalization, internet, tracking apps.)
- Organization of the festival (Exclusive and smaller-scale accessible or moving to the online environment)
- Impact of rescheduling and cancellation to host organization, customers, vendors, and other local stakeholders (e.g., regulatory authority, health department, etc.)

Instruction

It is recommended that this case study be taught over a minimum of five class sessions: (1) servicescape in the event industry (LO 1, 2, & 3), (2) site and vendor selection (LO 3, 4, & 5), (3) understanding the guest service experience and the role of social media (LO 4), (4) managing community relations with city governments and local businesses and organizations (LO 5), and (5) a presentation of proposals by groups of students. By breaking up the class into these five sections, students will have the opportunity to work together and learn more about the issues and topics being introduced in the case study.

The first session, the elements of servicescape in the event industry, are critical for event management. This session will be beneficial for students to understand how servicescape elements impact an attendee's overall festival experience and how the different elements create a competitive festival in a dynamic event market. The class would follow these steps: (1) introduce the topic of a festival [8 minutes]; (2) introduce the impact of servicescape elements for a festival compared to other similar businesses and the impact these elements have on the overall attendee experience [15 minutes]; (3) begin a class discussion on why the servicescape elements are essential for a beer festival and create a list of key themes students believe should be at a beer festival [5 minutes]; (4) introduce the case study to the class and provide a timeline for when each of the sections of the discussion topics and questions will be due [5 minutes]; (5) explain how festivals and

event venues are often exclusive in regard to location and the concept of barriers to entry [10 minutes]; (6) split the class into groups of 3-4 students each to brainstorm (a) potential locations for an event venue in their local area, (b) if the festival would be better held indoors or outdoors, and (c) their best option for the festival and why they chose their particular location [4 minutes]; (7) have each student complete a one minute free writing assignment listing ten breweries and three food vendors they would like to have at the festival [1 minute]; and (8) conclude by (a) assigning questions one and two from discussion topics and questions and (b) introducing and assigning Reimer and Kuehn (2005) for students to have a deeper understanding of how the service escape elements impact the overall attendee experience [2 minutes].

The second session would explain selecting vendors and venues. The instructor would (1) begin the session by introducing the topic of venues and vendors [10 minutes]; (2) discuss the prevalence of beer products and their impact on festival success, that is, discuss the importance of quantity and variety of breweries [10 minutes]; (3) have the students work individually to analyze the two industry reports (i.e., Buell, 2015, 2016) which highlight beer festival activities, vendors, and success factors [15 minutes]; (4) have students form groups of 2 to 3 and search for America on Tap Craft Beer Festivals online [1 minute]; (5) have the groups search the website to compile a list of (a) the locations for each of the festivals on the website, (b) the names and number of vendors for each respective festival, and (c) the entertainment provided at each of the respective festivals, [20 minutes]; (6) have each group brainstorm the different activities and vendors they would like present at the festival to attract the optimal number of attendees [3 minutes]; and (7) conclude the session by assigning question three from discussion topics and questions.

The third session would focus on the guest experience and the role of social media. The section would focus on two areas: marketing the festival to attendees by emphasizing key elements, the guest experience and the role of feedback provided after a festival, and the role of social media, that is, how social media impacts attendee expectations and experience. The instructor would (1) provide a presentation and lecture on each area [20 minutes]; (2) explain the importance of the target population [10 minutes]; (3) explain that different customers have different expectations based on their specific needs (ADA, non-smoking, parking, etc.) [5 minutes]; (4) discuss the competition regarding layouts and service and how a festival uses these two items to create distinctive competencies for a competitive advantage [7 minutes]; (5) have the students pair into groups of two and (a) brainstorm the ideal target population for this festival based on the questionnaire results, (b) search online for different advertisements related to beer festivals, (c) determine the best marketing strategies to attract potential attendees from these target markets; and (6) conclude the session by assigning question four, five, and six from the discussion topics and questions [1 minute].

The fourth session would focus on the role of community relations when working with the city government and local businesses and organizations. The instructor would (1) introduce the topic of community relations [12 minutes]; (2) present why community relations are of particular importance in non-profit organizations [6 minutes]; (3) introduce sponsorships and provide examples of events that require sponsorships (i.e., golf tournaments, festivals, conferences) [6 minutes]; (4) bring in a guest speaker from a local non-profit organization to discuss their organization, how the organization conducts fundraising activities, and the organization's successes and failures when conducting fundraisers [20 minutes]; (5) provide an overview of the expectations associated with the presentation of the funding proposals to be presented in the final class session [5 minutes]; and (6) conclude the session by assigning question seven from the discussion topics and questions [1 minute].

Additional Readings

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