

Positive and negative aspects of edinburgh fringe festival tourism essay



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Introduction

This report will give analysis and explain different aspects of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in terms of public relations. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is the largest arts festival in the world, therefore it is important to carefully consider all the aspects and opportunities from a public relations perspective, as it is a great example of the different sides and features of public relations. After looking at the history of this festival, the report will provide an insight in the positive and negative aspects of the Fringe, name the main competitors and give SWOT and PEST analysis. Then the key public relation issues for the event will be analysed and analysis of the media environment relevant to the event will be given. Finally, a critical assessment of the success of the event's PR strategy will be considered.

History of the Fringe

The Edinburgh Fringe Festival originated in 1947 and it was created to celebrate and enrich European cultural life in the wake of the Second World War. It first started when eight acts turned up at the Edinburgh international festival uninvited and decided to perform anyway this then lead to more acts following in their footsteps in the years to come. From this, the Festival Fringe Society was formed in 1959. The Fringe, these days, is now known as the largest arts festival in world and in 2010 the Fringe featured 40, 254 performances of 2, 453 shows in 259 venues. It is held every August for three weeks in the centre of Edinburgh and there are stages all over Edinburgh for example the Hilton Hotel, Edinburgh Castle and Underbelly. It is such a special event as it caters for everyone by having various acts put

on, such as: theatre, comedy, dance, physical theatre, musicals, operas, music, exhibitions and events.

Positive aspects of the Fringe

The Fringe has been renowned for giving unknown performers a chance to be recognised as it is “made up of emerging and established artists” which is a review from edfringe.com. The Fringe has also been acknowledged for having worldwide recognition for being one of the best arts festivals in the world and this helps bring a lot of tourism into the capital city. Each year ticket sales rise incredibly as 1.8 million tickets were sold in 2009 and that increased to 1.9 million sold in 2010. This can be brought down to the effective communication from the society as they have advertised in newspapers, on posters, through television adverts, on radio adverts, on websites and they have even branched out to new technology by launching a Fringe iPhone app. The Fringe is so popular because anyone can enjoy a show as they have a range of entertainment for all audiences. They include free shows too, which are ever increasing because 558 shows at the 2010 Fringe were absolutely free, compared to 465 in 2009.

Negative aspects of the Fringe

During the research it was found that the children’s shows only made up 4% of the Fringe performance programme in 2010 and this may discourage families to come to the events as there is little choice for the children. Also the dance and physical theatre performances went down 0.5% to 4.5% in 2010 and this may be seen as the Fringe society not seeing these genres as important as others such as comedy. Another downside is that the

performance locations are far too widely spread throughout city so many
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people will have to spend a lot of money on travelling. There are a high number of performances each year so this means acts will overlap one another causing people to miss out on some shows.

Main competitors

Throughout Scotland there are numerous festivals, whether they are large or small scale. It is known from the official fringe website that the Fringe has a market share of 75% of all attendance at Edinburgh's year round festivals and annually generates £75 million for Edinburgh and the Scottish Economy. These figures from 2004/05 demonstrate the high profile of the Fringe as an event in Scotland. Despite accounting for the vast majority of the market share in Scotland, there are other events throughout the country which seek visitors.

The Magners Glasgow International Comedy Festival takes place over 18 days with 350 performances from well-known and rising comedians. The festival held at the Kings Theatre in Glasgow, specialises in comedy. This is different from the fringe where although there are comedy events, there is an array of other arts as well. For comedy enthusiasts the Magners comedy festival may be more attractive as it is specialised with more opportunity to see comedy. As the event is also only held at one location, it's more simple to find and easier to experience many performances without trekking across the city. It may be on a much smaller scale than the Fringe but the less busy atmosphere may be much more appealing to some individuals.

The Stanza poetry festival which is held in St Andrews is described by Visit Scotland as 'where music, film, dance and poetry work in harmony'. The

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stanza poetry festival could be seen as a small scale Fringe festival however it primarily specialised in poetry. Within this, the aim is to combine other arts into the poetry. This unique selling point is a strength to the festival. Held at the Byre theatre in St Andrews, the festival is not incredibly well-known. This may have been due to a weakness in pr strategy and demand for this kind of event.

Although the comedy and poetry festivals cannot really contend with the fringe due to its mass scale, they are strong in some ways as they specialise in events for a specific target audience. However on a larger scale, the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo can be seen a more pressing competitor. With performances from 40 countries, the Tattoo invites visitors from all over the globe to not only visit the event but also perform. Whereas at the fringe, it can be presumed that a large amount of the acts will be British. 35% of the 217, 000 audience each year are from overseas which is advantageous as it means there is a great mix of cultures. The fringe see's similar figures for its overseas percentage however towers over the tattoo with its number of visitors. The tattoo is one main event whereas the fringe is many events over a long period. Therefore it is difficult to compare the two as they are in completely different formats. However unlike the fringe, the tattoo is shown on television with 100 million viewers worldwide. This illustrates the publicity of the tattoo making it the fringe's main competitor in Scotland. However as the fringe is the largest Art's festival in the world, naturally it will come out on top of other Scottish festivals.

SWOT and PEST analysis

Through the SWOT analysis it was found that:

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- Strengths – Brings tourism to Scotland, there is a range of entertainment available and its largest arts festival in world.
- Weaknesses – Acts overlap one another, too big so travel costs increase and there are not enough acts for children so may discourage families.
- Opportunities – Emerging acts can become recognised, it entices different cultures to experience Scotland and it creates more job opportunities in Edinburgh.
- Threats – The festival faces competition from rival festivals, environmental issues may prevent the festival taking place and they may have a lack of funds to support such a big event.

Through the PEST analysis is was found that:

- Political – It creates an environment where countries can combine and it also gives politics a light-hearted nature (by putting on plays about David Cameron, etc.).
- Economical – Brings money to Scotland and it also encourages tourism.
- Social – There are more tourists around and it enables the Scottish culture to be recognised.
- Technological – A new website has been launched and so has a new iPhone app, in order to promote the Fringe.

Analysis of the key public relation issues for the event

Analysis of the media environment relevant to the event

Opportunities and threats in terms of media relations

Edinburgh Fringe is a huge Festival, so there is a chance that it will get a lot of coverage – both good and bad. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is the largest arts festival in the world so media will want to cover it. Also, there are a lot of opportunities to get media coverage outside Scotland and UK, especially in the European countries that are known for their love for arts such as France, Germany and Italy.

However, if something goes wrong there will definitely be a huge interest from the media therefore everyone will know about it. As Edinburgh Fringe is such a enormous event, taking place over several weeks , with so many performances going on and so many people attending there is a chance for great success as well as great damage in terms of media relations.

The key media

Firstly, the key media are the print media and web sites – history shows that newspapers and the websites of these newspapers are the sources of reviews and media coverage in general for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Secondly, the electronic media is a vital key media because this festival is all about the arts therefore photographic examples are very important. Thirdly, the radio is also one of the key media as people really like hearing the interviews with the event organisers and the performers of the acts from the Festival. And finally, the television, especially important during the Festival – people can see what's happening in the Festival, see something they like

and decide to attend. Television also captures the mood and the atmosphere of the festival best.

What would appeal to journalists and attract coverage

The popularity of the festival in social networks such as twitter, facebook, etc, as well as having its own blogs creates the word-of-mouth effect that's not media generated so people get involved themselves and are not encouraged by the media but by other people. Media usually are interested if a lot of people get involved in this – they are intrigued – why is it so popular among the publics, is this a new phenomenon and why. It also attracts media because it seems more genuine this way – the company hasn't spent lots and lots of money for campaigns to attract the attention. The media also like to write about events that are attended by celebrities because this guarantees the interest of the readers or about events that no one had expected or are shocking.

Bad stories – Fringe 2008

The resignation of the Edinburgh Fringe director, Jon Morgan, came at the end of a summer of bad news stories for the Edinburgh Fringe festival in 2008. Underlying them all is the question of how to cope with the unprecedented popularity of the world's biggest arts festival. Most of the stories were about a new computer system that struggled to do the job. The £350, 000 Liquid Box Office crashed on its first day of operation, causing sales to be suspended for a week. Then it had trouble printing tickets, resulting in delays in postal bookings. Once the Fringe began, it sold too many tickets for certain shows, leading to reports of “weeping youngsters” being turned away. Finally the Fringe had to scrap the advertised two-for-one

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“ ticket frenzy” on the final day, as the system couldn’t cope. One of the bad examples is also the self-styled comedy festival which was a marketing exercise designed to attract sponsorship (which it failed to do) and spread the costs of advertising between the big four venues: Assembly, Gilded Balloon, Underbelly and Pleasance. It caused consternation by including only the comedians who were playing in those venues and threatened to damage the profile of the Fringe itself. The central box office takings had dropped by 10% that year.

Good stories – 2009

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe was suffering the backlash of the media on the back of a box office meltdown in 2008. The UK was in the middle of the storm of the so called ‘ credit crunch’ and many predicted the 2009 festival would be an expensive luxury that would be avoided by all but those most faithful to the festival. Under these circumstances it was a client that commissioned Whitespace to take a ‘ blank canvas approach’ and re-think the traditional approach to marketing. The result was a genuinely original and creatively challenging campaign concept and materials featuring over 100 viral videos, and, for the first time ever, a multiple set of covers for the Fringe Programme – all on a very limited budget and under extremely tight deadlines. Whitespace created the concept of an iconic and metaphorical ‘ egg’ that symbolised the fact that the Fringe is always different, and that one can never be sure what lies within. Whitespace filmed the scientific ‘ discovery’ of a seemingly indestructible egg among Edinburgh’s tramworks. The resultant film became the viral centrepiece of the campaign. Having taken the egg to a secret Fringe laboratory overseen by Professor Ed Hegg, a

series of filmed experiments ensued as he tried to reveal the egg's contents. The story was launched several months before the Fringe. Dr Ed Hegg received a page of coverage in the Scotsman; pre-launch publicity not normally received by the Fringe. Whitespace then developed a range of printed collateral, from T-shirts to banners, displays to ticket wallets and press passes, as well as a campaign microsite and a social media campaign. This included Dr Ed Hegg's twitter page and blog along with shooting over 100 video experiments for inclusion on the microsite. The result was an increase of nearly 9% in ticket sales and a programme reprint. The fringe site reached 32, 906 unique visitors with a low bounce rate and dwell time of, on average, 4 minutes. 10% of all fringe site visits resulted in a visit to the booking section of [www. edfringe. com](http://www.edfringe.com) and 21% of all visits resulted in a desired action.

Good Stories – Fringe 2010

“Fringecover was the top trending Twitter topic in Scotland on Thursday 25th and Friday 26th March and it was the second most tweeted topic across the UK.” Inspired by the Fringe's principle that anyone with an idea and a vision can bring their show to Edinburgh; Whitespace invited the Twitter community to tell Johanna Basford the most unusual thing they'd like to see at the 2010 Fringe supplemented by #fringecover. For two days, from 10am to 10pm on Thursday 25th and Friday 26th March, Johanna recreated Twitterers' suggestions in real-time in her own unique illustrative style.

The Whitespace creative team then applied Johanna's illustrations to all aspects of the Fringe's promotional materials including, three cover versions of the programme; the ticket, its wallet and envelope; the Fringe shop's <https://assignbuster.com/positive-and-negative-aspects-of-edinburgh-fringe-festival-tourism-essay/>

window display and pop-up exhibition panels. Audiences at the Fringe festival in Edinburgh bought nearly 2 million tickets last year, once again beating the previous year's record. Kath Mainland, the event's chief executive, said the sale of more than 1.95m tickets for more than 40,000 performances had shown the festival was "the greatest show on earth". The Fringe said this year's event, again dominated by comedy, had outstripped last year on most measures: there were 40,254 performances of 2,453 shows at 259 venues, involving more than 21,000 performers. More than 550 shows were free.

A critical assessment of the success of the event's PR strategy

Conclusion

This report has analysed different public relations' aspects of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It has provided research on the background and history of the event, analysis of the event, analysis of the key public relations issues for the event, analysis of the media environment relevant to the event, as well as a critical assessment of the success of the event's PR strategy. One of the clear thoughts after the analysis of the festival is that the Fringe has definitely experienced bad times in terms of public relations; however, the organisers have only learnt from their mistakes and chosen much better PR strategies that have resulted in growth in the ticket sales, despite the very bad economic situation. Audiences have come to know the Edinburgh festival fringe as the place to see every kind of art; from the most imaginative children's theatre to topical and incisive comedy and theatre which challenges audiences to discuss and re-consider not only their world

but the world in general. Kath Mainland, the event's chief executive has said:
“ Edinburgh is without doubt the world's leading festival destination and audiences continued to be inspired and enthralled by the many and varied events on offer.”