

Case Study 2: Advertising and Marketing
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In 2009, Scotland celebrated the 250th anniversary of poet Robert Burns' birth by holding over 400 events throughout the nation over the course of ten months (Popescu & Corbos, 2010). The climactic celebratory event was The Gathering 2009, held in Edinburgh on July 25 and 26 of that year ("The Gathering 2009," 2010). Although the event was generally considered a success by attendees, the organizer lost over \$700,000 and had to file bankruptcy (Goldblatt, 2013).

In addition to being one event among many that year, The Gathering 2009 was part of a larger tourism revival effort that began in Scotland in 2001. There were two campaign logos and three vague slogans that simply stated "Join our Celebrations!," "Celebrate Scotland!," and "I'm a Scot." Marketing materials in the UK and Ireland included television, cinema, radio, a series of websites, emails, billboards, product branding, and print promotions in the form of newspaper and magazine advertisements, posters and flyers. In the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, promotions were scaled back to include only public television, a series of websites, emails, printed posters and flyers, a collaboration with National Geographic, and promotions through tourism agencies. In Europe, Russia, China, Japan and India, the event was advertised through printed brochures and articles, radio, and a partnership with Ryanair Transport Company (Popescu & Corbos, 2010).

To better promote the benefits and features of the event, the organizers could have streamlined their approach: one logo, one slogan that offered more detail, and one central website. The Gathering 2009 could have been offered as its own separate event, rather than part of an extensive series of events and a larger tourism effort, in order to clarify the event in people's minds. The popularity of traditional Scottish games and heritage had been declining in Scotland, and clan activity has a minimal role in current Scottish culture. However, those interests were on the rise in North America, and many American visitors were anticipated

(Chambers, 2009); heavier promotion in North America, particularly areas with a high population of Scottish diaspora who had a healthy disposable income, could have boosted attendance.

When the negative publicity began as a result of the organizer's bankruptcy, the event planners could have minimized the damage by owning up to the financial losses quickly and honestly; as of 2010, The Gathering 2009 was still considered a financial success (Popescu & Corbos, 2010). The event planners could have more heavily promoted that The Gathering 2009 was the first time in recorded history that over 100 Scottish clan chiefs were brought together, and the first time in 187 years that Edinburgh saw such a large collection of clans (Chambers, 2009). They could have also publicized the praise coming from attendees (Ewing, 2009; "The Gathering 2009," 2010), along with the resulting increased interest in Scotland, and partnerships with public and private sector organizations (Popescu & Corbos, 2010).

Moving forward, event planners should begin by analyzing and learning from the positives and negatives in the promotion of The Gathering 2009. A report from the Scottish Parliament ("Lessons must be learned from the gathering 2009 event," 2011) indicates that there was poor communication through all stages before, during and after The Gathering 2009, which resulted in uninformed decision-making. Organizers need to record decisions that are agreed upon during meetings, and to provide that information consistently to all stakeholders. Due diligence needs to be followed in learning and disseminating relevant financial information before decisions that affect costs and funding are made. Poor internal communication between the event planning entities will only result in poor external communication when it comes time to advertise and market the event.

Furthermore, event planners need to determine the ultimate goals and objectives of the event before any alignment with advertising and marketing can be made. Is the event's purpose to draw tourists to Scotland, to celebrate the anniversary of a revered poet's birth, to make clans relevant in modern society, or simply to celebrate Scottish history and culture — or some combination of these? Perhaps a primary goal feeds into the achievement of a secondary goal, such as an increase in tourism as the natural result of a large-scale cultural event.

Once the goals are determined, the event planners need to research their target attendees and make decisions based on the demographics of those people, perhaps through focus groups or involving the target attendees in planning committees. For The Gathering 2009, expensive ticket prices for attendees and registration fees for clans in Clan Village were a concern and potential limiting factor. The Clan Pageant was not set to begin until 10 p.m., which is late for a family with children, yet the passport that included admission to march in the parade and attend the Clan Pageant was most heavily marketed ("Gathering 2009," n.d.). Energy needs to be directed toward alternative plans in the case of inclement weather; attendance for The Gathering 2009 was impacted by stormy weather on one of the two days — indeed, beautiful summer days are said to be a rarity in the region ("The Gathering 2009," 2010).

In conclusion, while the initial goal of recreating The Gathering in 2014 did not materialize as such, a future clan gathering has the potential to be quite successful with thorough planning and marketing. In order to overcome the negativity of the past, the event planners will need to begin planning well in advance so there is time to work out managerial and financial details that are appropriate to their target audience, and to engage in a concentrated public relations campaign that highlights the improvements in the event. They will need to improve

internal communication, and make external advertising and marketing decisions based on clearly determined goals and objectives.

Reference List

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