

Around the world

Can events be exported abroad and what qualities are needed for them to be a success? Steve Monnington of Mayfield Media Strategies explains

It's now a well-established practice for successful B2B events to become global brands. Once an organiser has gained the support and trust of the bellwether exhibitors for their sector and gained a reputation for providing quality content the model can be rolled out into different markets either as a licence agreement or through a network of local offices. Trade events have their global nuances but at the end of the day it's all about selling.

There's been a lot of excitement about consumer exhibitions in recent years – experiential marketing has been a buzzword and consumer exhibition organisers are keen to get a slice of the action. In theory getting a group of people with a common interest into one place to be entertained, experience and buy brands that interest them is a no-brainer. The reality is that it is a difficult challenge – marketing and features are expensive and the end results often depend on walk-up ticket sales. Transport problems or weather can blow the budget in one swoop.

So it's not surprising that having invested in creating a successful domestic

event organisers often turn their thoughts to replicating their shows in other markets with the belief that armed with the knowledge of their first launch they have a short-cut to success.

The reality is more complicated. The first challenge is overcoming the cultural barriers. People usually attend a consumer event with a desire to be entertained and what one nationality find entertaining doesn't always crossover to another. Financial culture is also a major hurdle – in the UK people may be prepared to pay a premium for shopping and content in a dedicated environment, other nationalities are frequently less generous.

The main advantage that trade exhibitions have in going global is the opportunity to export their relationships and reputations with global sponsors and exhibitors. Consumer marketing is generally organised on a more regional basis and a global relationship with an external organiser is a rare commodity. If a lead sponsor or partner to the event will extend their support on a global basis this is a key step towards successful replication.

We are often approached by consumer exhibition organisers, which don't have



any international sponsors but believe they have developed a format that could be successful overseas and are looking for an international partner to work with. Mostly they believe that their concept and experience of developing it is

enough to enable them to licence the project and receive an income stream from a local organiser willing to pay for the privilege of being associated in some way with the mother brand.

Our experience has shown that generally this doesn't work out like this as however successful the format, it is very hard to convince an overseas partner that it is worth paying for. This is partly because they are sceptical that a foreigner understands their market and partly because they see no worth in buying a brand unless it is known in their market and comes with some pre-established commercial support. Joint venture partnerships however, where both parties share the risk and reward, are better received and are a more viable concept.

One exception to this is MPH/Top Gear Live, which has leveraged its partnership with Shell V-Power to take the show on a world tour. The success of this event brand overseas is primarily down to the fact that it has ready-made global recognition and appeal due to its relationship with Jeremy Clarkson and Top Gear. It tweaks its format according to the region by changing the line-up of presenters to include a local personality and the global commercial support from Shell provides real value to the licensee.

