

WONDERFUL
COPENHAGEN



2016

CASE STUDY: IS A BRAND'S SUSTAINABILITY
COMMITMENT EVIDENT IN THEIR EVENTS?



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Positive Impact, recognised internationally as leaders in providing education and inspiration to create a sustainable event industry, are working with Wonderful Copenhagen Convention Bureau to determine the significance of a sustainable event for a brand's reputation.

Combining qualitative research gathered from brands, VMware, BBC, WWF and Enterprise Holdings with quantitative data generated by 66 members of the event industry and an interactive workshop during the Sustainable Brands conference, the intention is to determine level of commitment to sustainability in a brand's events.

Furthermore, the intention of this research is to understand what prevents brands with a culture and a commitment to sustainability from implementing best practice sustainability within their events? Do brands understand that a sustainable event represents a sustainable brand?

To bring context to this research, consider the destination selected as the host of the Sustainable Brands '16 conference - Copenhagen. The city is an example of a destination with a proven track record in sustainable meetings and events. The infrastructure that Copenhagen provides including a significant number of environmentally friendly certified hotels and venues demonstrates the ever growing opportunity that organisers of international events could seize.

While a city such as Copenhagen may consider its event and meeting industry's impact carefully, the question should be asked, is a brand's sustainability commitment evident in their events? Do brands create a culture for sustainability within their events as successfully or robustly as they do within their corporate culture? And what is the future opportunity?

FOREWORD



POSITIVE IMPACT



Research by Positive Impact and Copenhagen Convention and Visitors Bureau for Sustainable Brands

"Is a Brand's Sustainability Commitment Evident in their Events?"

YES. Nothing in life is as simple as a yes or no answer but if one response had to be given to this question, it would be yes. Here's why:

1. ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

In each and every interview, our participants were able to give multiple examples of community projects taking place through their events both internally and externally.

VMware explained some of the incredible initiatives and activities that are made available to VMware employees and event attendees including their VMware incentive trip. This trip enabled 800 people to go to China and rebuild a 2500ft section of the Great Wall in a single day, which was picked up by 27 different Chinese press outlets.

Another example of a strong community project facilitated by VMware was a result of partnering with Habitat during the year of the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The VMware team members worked on building 12 homes in a day in New Orleans, which resulted in a feature in National Geographic's "100 Places that will Change Your Life".

"What I am really proud of is the community service part of it which we've woven it into the events, we've taken it to the point where it's on steroids"

VMware



2. PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.

Our interviewees communicated that they knew what to focus on when it comes to planning their events in a sustainable way.

Enterprise spoke about how, years ago, changes were made to their packaging, paper usage, plastic bottle consumption, local food suppliers and their ways of communicating with attendees. For example Enterprise Holdings created a mobile app which provided public transport options to attendees. Enterprise explained that, "We feel responsibility lies with us as meeting planners to communicate all options to our attendees."

"We try and think about everything we purchase ... We've been using the same meeting signs for 6 years. They're canvas, made of sustainable material and manufactured by a local company in St Louis; And they've lasted for 6 years!"

Enterprise Holdings



"It's hard to imagine that any company would think there was something to be gained from not caring about sustainability issues."

BBC

Interviews also highlighted the importance of the venues that event professionals choose to work with, shining a light on the process of actively seeking to work with venues holding ideally global, national or regional sustainability standards.

The selection of local food was another common topic that the interviewees spoke of, ensuring their events highlight to guests and employees where the food has come from and why it was chosen, for example, bringing in local honey to an event is benefiting the community and supporting a greater need.

"Is a Brand's Sustainability Commitment Evident in their Events?"

3. GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

Our respondents told us that their audience (i.e. event attendees) had expectations which were non-negotiable. This demonstrates that attendees are more than aware of sustainability surrounding them and there is certainly a demand for it.

"When we roll out new efforts, attendees notice and we get positive comments in the event surveys. Now, I think it's just the standard and attendees expect us to think about impact with events."

Enterprise Holdings

"Our attendees no longer look for it, they expect it."

VMware

4. A NEW CULTURE.

The interviewees revealed that their business culture included sustainability at an overarching level. All brands recognised that sustainability is more than the 'green' factor, i.e. they are aware of the social and economic pillars that come under the umbrella of sustainability.



"We believe that strong business growth is built on putting the needs of our customers, the growth of our people and the health of our communities first."

Enterprise Holdings

"It's not checking the box, they have to change their culture, they have to change their mindset, they have to be public about it."

VMware

THIS IS FANTASTIC NEWS, ISN'T IT?

If our 66 survey respondents and those who spoke via interviews (BBC, VMware, Enterprise Holdings, and WWF) are a representative sample of the global event industry then, yes, this is great news.

However our conversations and a review of the research led us to the opinion that while a brand's sustainability commitments are evident in their events, there is the potential for much more to be done, and more action to be taken.

In other words, brands do not create a culture for sustainability within their events as successfully or robustly as they do within their business culture overall.



Research by Positive Impact and Copenhagen Convention and Visitors Bureau for Sustainable Brands

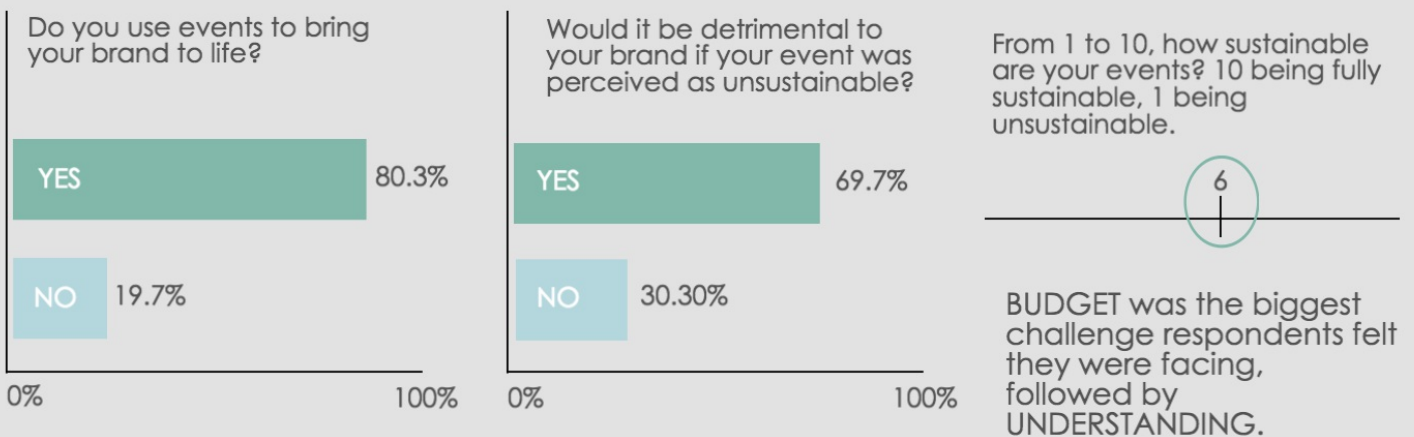
Do brands create a culture for sustainability within their events as successfully or robustly as they do within their corporate culture?

Brands do not create a culture for sustainability within their events as successfully or robustly as they do within their business culture overall

WHY DO WE SUGGEST THIS?

80% of respondents said that they "use events to bring their brand to life" yet only 70% of respondents said that "if their events were deemed unsustainable it could be detrimental to their brand."

In addition, the majority of respondents rated the current level of sustainability implemented at their events at 6/10. This is not a high rating.



These results show that almost 20% of respondents did not associate an event with an opportunity to show their brand sustainability credentials in action and the majority of respondents said they were demonstrating a relatively low level of action around sustainability at their events.

During the interview research it was a regular occurrence for respondents to veer away from speaking about event specific examples and instead start to focus on their business culture. For example, when discussing event sustainability initiatives, interviewees would often start by listing programmes held at their events, waste management at their events, and would then revert back to building certifications, or how their offices function in a sustainable way.

"In the short term, sustainable events are still an emerging theme as opposed to one that is embedded so deeply within organisations that it almost doesn't need to be said, for any organisation that can show that it is doing good things at the moment - there's reputational benefit to be had from that."

BBC

IS IT A BAD THING THAT BUSINESSES HAVE MORE EVIDENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN THEIR CORPORATE CULTURE THAN IN THEIR EVENTS?

It makes sense that an internal brand culture will need to change to focus on positive social, environmental and economic initiatives BEFORE that focus can be placed on events which are often external facing initiatives that bring a brand to life.

"Truly for me, sustainability is to do with changing someone's mind, you change their mind, it'll ripple out. It's the pebble in the water, it'll make a big splash but then it ripples out and out."

VMware

Research by Positive Impact and Copenhagen Convention and Visitors Bureau for Sustainable Brands

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OPPORTUNITY?

Over the last 10 years at Positive Impact we have provided education and undertaken research with the vision of creating a sustainable event industry. With that context combined with the data from this recent piece of research undertaken for Sustainable Brands Summit and powered by Copenhagen CVB, we have the following suggestions on how a brand could demonstrate their sustainability commitment in their events to the same extent as they demonstrate sustainability within their corporate culture:

1. UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF AN EVENT.

Events bring a brand to life and bring people together giving them the chance to create, collaborate and innovate. Meeting Professional's International (the world's largest association for corporate and association event professionals) uses the tagline 'When we meet we change the world' to communicate the power of events.

The more that brands understand the impact an event has, the more they will understand how essential it is that sustainability is part of the DNA of the event.

Community programmes - "It's another way to connect. What they (attendees) don't realise until after is it's this positive experience that they take away that the business gave to them. That's the ROI. It's a win win. They look back at the business. "The business gave me that experience."

VMware

"This industry has no idea the power it has. They've been told they're party planners, they've been told that they're not strategic, we (the meetings industry) have been trying to tell them the opposite for years but unfortunately the planners don't believe in their own voice, and they don't listen to themselves."

VMware

2. WHERE YOU HAVE YOUR EVENT MATTERS.

An interesting finding from the conversations we had during this research was how event professionals mentioned providing local honey and other local food to delegates as part of lunches, dinners, tea breaks or gifts! The bigger picture behind this is that event professionals understand that how they spend their money can have an impact.

Venues and hotels were a topic that came into conversation during interviews. The respondents are certainly considering the sustainability credentials that the chosen venue should have, but on occasion, there's a lack of global standards and a lack of geographical choice.

LOCATION,
LOCATION,
LOCATION.

"You vote with your cheque book, you support companies with your meeting dollar. By choosing partners that are doing the right thing in sustainability, and telling them, this is important to us - we think that it makes for a greater gain and we're all pushing the ball forward."

Enterprise Holdings

Clearly, where you choose to host your event will influence what local and sustainable experience you can provide to your attendees. Take Copenhagen as an example...

Copenhagen - Capital of Sustainable Meetings

DESTINATION



Copenhagen is known as one of the most environmentally friendly cities in the world and have repeatedly used mega events to strengthen and extend their sustainable brand and showcase their green efforts to both a local and global audience.

Copenhagen as a destination has focused on sustainability for years, but efforts escalated when Copenhagen hosted the UN Global Climate Change Conference in 2009 (COP15). During, and after this event, the majority of hotels became eco certified with the likes of Green Key and more. In 2012 Copenhagen held the EU Presidency Conference. This event was ISO 20121 certified (the global standard for sustainable event management). On both occasions the efforts were rewarded with a great deal of attention, publicity and stakeholder engagement with the brand, 'Copenhagen' and Denmark.

As a result, Copenhagen has certified experience in hosting state-of-the-art events with a sustainable profile. Copenhagen's sustainable portfolio is so comprehensive that it is easier to hold a sustainable event than a non-sustainable one.

If you want international events that create change in the world, in your city, there will be specific requirements in regards to sustainability that you need to adhere to. Copenhagen has this infrastructure in place.

The team in Copenhagen see advantages when using your event as a key way to communicate a message of sustainability through their certifications as well as initiatives such as #BeeSustain and Meetovation.

GROWTH



FACTS



The city is safe, clean, surrounded by water, with green space and one of the world's most cycle and pedestrian friendly cities.

In 2014 Copenhagen was named the European Green Capital. Therefore, organising a sustainable event here is no great challenge

Close to 70% of all Copenhagen hotel rooms hold an official eco-certification and many of the city's convention venues are Green Key certified.

The Copenhagen City Council is working to become the world's first CO₂- neutral capital by 2025. In 2015, Denmark ranked number one on the Climate Change Performance Index, a success based on positive development in recent emissions and good policy execution.

AIM:

Copenhagen's ambition is to be the first CO₂ neutral city by 2025

Research by Positive Impact and Copenhagen Convention and Visitors Bureau for Sustainable Brands

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OPPORTUNITY?

3. ASK FOR THE SAME THINGS AS EVERYBODY ELSE.

It is evident that there is no consistent approach to the requests about sustainability initiatives made by event professionals to their supply chain.

WWF is privileged but also challenged with holding events all over the world and through this an innovative take on trying to educate the supply chain was revealed. If a venue was lacking in some areas of sustainability, WWF will try to bring some ideas or education to the table.

This is a huge missed opportunity for the event industry because the frameworks and standards exist and there could be global consistency.

If everyone was making the same requests, in other words, if every brand was asking for ISO 20121 and GRI EOSS, the industry would change overnight.

WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE BE ASKING THE SUPPLY CHAIN FOR?

"It is about raising the level of awareness beyond the event and beyond us as event organisers in this case.

Creative approaches for people to find out themselves what could be done, to be curious about it, to learn and to hopefully even come up with their own ideas for what they could be doing towards making things more sustainable."

WWF

There are two international frameworks which people could be asking for:

1- ISO 20121. This standard creates a culture for sustainability within an event. In other words, at every decision point the social, economic and environmental impacts should be considered and the optimal decision made.

2- GRI EOSS (Global Reporting Initiative Event Organisers Sector Supplement). This is a framework created to encourage measurement and reporting on sustainability. It even includes key areas that the event industry could report on.

If everyone in the event industry was reporting on the same areas then suppliers would become accustomed to providing the same data resulting in a global understanding of the social, economic and environmental impact of events.

We can learn from the sustainability standards within the construction industry. If the construction industry has created a programme for sustainability in the form of LEED, that has been so widely adopted, what is preventing the event industry from adopting their global standards?

4. TAKE ACTION.

The final, but most essential step is to simply, take action. There needs to be a shift from talking about what could be done, to trying things out and getting peoples' hands dirty. This is the only way to make progress.

"If everybody got together, and held every planner's feet to the fire so that they had to build in 'give back', in some way shape or form within one of their programmes, one time during the year, we would change the world in one year."

VMware

"They need to get rid of the, "We've always done it that way and that's how it's going to work" and start paying attention to the next generation."

VMware

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BACKGROUND ON THIS RESEARCH.

This research has been created for presentation at the Sustainable Brands Conference 2016 in Copenhagen.

The research consisted of four interviews with global brands, VMware, BBC, Enterprise Holdings and WWF.

The research will be shared on 27th September 2016 during a keynote from Positive Impact's, Fiona Pelham and an interactive panel session with Paul Salinger from Oracle, Lee Spivak from WasteManagement, Copenhagen CVB's Ulrika Mårtensson and Inge Huijbrechts from Carlson Rezidor.

The partners who made this research possible were Copenhagen CVB, Positive Impact and Sustainable Brands.

"We want our employees to know that we are thinking about sustainability as a company and at our company events."

Enterprise Holdings



If you feel inspired to start using any of these ideas or learnings in your own work, please let us know by tweeting and using the hashtag #shareapositiveimpact.

The more best practice sharing that happens the quicker a sustainable event industry will happen. Taking action is essential to make that change. This is the only way to make progress. If you want to be more involved and champion sustainability email info@positive-impact-events.com to become a Positive Impact Ambassador and we will share materials with you that help to raise awareness.

Undertaking this research was inspiring because we had the opportunity to see how the event industry is able to think of the bigger picture and the positive impact that can be had beyond an event. The following quote from VMware demonstrates the thinking of a planner who understands the bigger picture, the value of sustainability initiatives to the planet, their business brand and their events:

"For me it's so much bigger. It's more of a mindset, a community mindset. Some people will go down the path saying carbon footprint, or saying local farm to table, it is so much more than that."

VMware