

Marketing Strategies of American and Canadian Event Planners in a Pandemic

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Abstract

Marketing of events has always been a focal point of importance for event planners. The aim of this paper is to review what has been happening in marketing of events in relation to Covid-19 pandemic and the necessity of implementing specific measures. Very little research has examined the marketing of events in relation to the impact of a global pandemic. The scope of this study reveals significant differences as well as unique similarities between the United States and Canada in terms of marketing strategies implemented during the pandemic. The main conclusion from the paper is that event planners need to be ready to adjust to such conditions in the years to come as the events industry continues to evolve globally.

Key Words: Event Planning, Event Management, Coronavirus, Covid-19, Pandemic, Marketing Strategies.

1. Introduction

Event marketing is not different from the traditional forms of marketing in terms of the component parts of the marketing mix. Events are hospitality products that contain both tangible and intangible aspects, combined together to create the overall experience. For example, events contain tangible elements such as food and beverages but also service aspects consisting of intangible experiences in a managed atmosphere, as the experiential product is produced and consumed simultaneously. This makes it extremely challenging for the event planners to control the process, especially with the impact of Covid-19 measures, requiring the event industry to undergo a major process of adjustment. The online advertisement of these marketing components was explored in this study, in relation to Covid-19 measures and adjustments, as many aspects of the marketing mix of events were affected by this phenomenon.

2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent of the marketing strategies involved in promoting event planners' services during a period of crisis such as Covid-19. In order to maintain a revenue flow, event planners have to adapt their marketing strategies to accommodate for the health mandates imposed by federal and state/province agencies to prevent the spread of the virus in group settings in the United States and Canada. Very little research has examined the marketing of services that are highly impacted by a pandemic. Therefore, exploring this major gap was the scope and aim of this study.

3. Literature Review

The event industry continues to be one of the world's largest employers and contributors of major economic activity. The term event is generally defined as people coming together to create, manage, and participate in an involvement or a series of planned happenings that collects target groups in a particular location, while various activities designed for different purposes are carried out for the participants. Certainly, from recorded time, events have taken a major role in history as part of celebration, religion, community, and even revolution events that have been focal points of importance to residents, regions, and nations (Getz & Page, 2016). Events can be art, sports, tourism and social activities, and they can also be activities organized by large scale organizers like government organizations or associations in a professional and formal format.

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Civic events, conventions, expositions, fairs and festivals, hallmark events, hospitality, incentive travel, meetings and conferences, retail events, reunions, social life-cycle events, sport events, and tourism are the examples of subfields of events (Goldblatt, 2002).

The generic term for organizations operating in the business of carrying out all event related functions is known as event management. Every event involves some level of organizational entity or a professional event planner behind it to plan, budget, market, and manage it successfully. The event planner may or may not be the person that manages the event, known as the event manager. Both the event planner and manager must possess the fundamental knowledge and experience in management, attention to detail to tailor the activities to the particular audience, and skills necessary in fundraising and obtaining sponsorships. The very essence of planning and executing an event involves a multi-faceted approach in various interpersonal and conceptualization skills. Event manager needs to act as a project manager involving the creation, development, and execution of processes for different types of activities. O'Toole (2000) concluded that event management was converging towards a systematic approach to planning and control due to its' complexity, requiring some standardization by applying the principles of project management.

The increasing use of social media and information technology made it possible for event planners to disseminate information about events, interact with attendees, seek feedback, and create year-round commitment with a target audience on social media. Event planners need to make the best utilization of various types of technology, and particularly social media sites. The components of technology affect events today in many ways while visitors become aware of the event, find out about what is offered by the event, and evaluate and recommend their impressions of the event as a personal experience (Robertson, Yeoman, Smith, & McMahon-Beattie, 2015). As part of advances in information technology, the use of mobile event apps is becoming prominent in making things possible as interactive tools and providing useful event information during events to attendees, as well as allowing attendees to provide immediate feedback at the event through polling.

Marketing events are characterized by the fact that they generate something special or even unique with an event, enabling participants to experience the brand or the company (Nufer, 2016). As the number, diversity and popularity of events have grown over the past decade, the need for effective marketing strategies have emerged as a significant consideration. Nufer (2015) suggested that event marketing is both an interactive and experience-oriented communications tool that serves the purposeful target group or scene-oriented production of specifically initiated events as well as their planning, execution and control within the context of integrated corporate communications. All events can be categorized as some level of "occurrence" with an audience that presents experiential opportunities for the audience to interact. Focusing on the experiential aspects of events has been the central attention for event marketers. This aspect of events is transferred to event marketing as experiential marketing, with the intent to convey a message to the audience involving a potential for specific set of experiences, providing an opportunity for marketers to tailor the event experiences to the expectations of event participants.

Another area of particular interest in event marketing has been the potential of a particular event contributing to the brand equity of a destination. Several authors in the marketing literature have concluded similar results suggesting a tourism destination's brand equity is created by a combination of loyalty to the destination and destination name awareness, resulting in a competitive advantage created by the brand equity via event marketing efforts of a destination. It is possible to integrate events into cultural and social environment of cities, year-around, and use it as a marketing tool as a point of tourist attraction. Dimanche (2008) highlighted the importance of events as strong tools of communication, and further stated that destination marketers must make sure that the events as products and their attributes are well aligned with the overall destination marketing strategy. For instance, Montreal-Canada is such city, world renowned for its' year-around cultural events and activities. Other researchers highlighted the initiatives in this direction with the event industry, such as Richards & Colombo (2017) in their article on rethinking the "eventful city" as the concept of creating cities that have identities tied to events.

Some of the trends in events include the social, cultural and economic legacy i.e., the impact of the event to promote the knowledge diffusion, innovation, the education outcome of sustainable practices and networking relationship (Clark & Kearns, 2015). The area of overall environmental sustainability has been gaining greater attention within the recent years, especially from the event destination local residents' point of view. Musgrave (2011) summarized the environmentally feasible approaches towards managing events in a changing market along with issues of economic, environmental and social responsibilities as eco-friendly event industry practices. Market research indicates that consumers are interested in supporting environmentally sustainable events, and this association has indeed transferred to event planning. Mair & Whitford (2013) highlighted the importance of socio- cultural and ecological impacts of events alongside a better alignment of the relationship between events and public policy agendas.

It will be important for event professionals to understand what role this will have for the recruitment and retention of event visitors to their events, and the distinction needs to be made between events that focus on being environmentally sustainable versus events that focus simply on being “green” (Mair, 2014).

The impact of events has also been explored in terms of additional revenue injected into local economies of the event destinations. Clark, Kearns and Cleland (2016) focused their research mainly on the economic impact of events and the transformation of the destination in terms of the infrastructure, environment, facilities enhancement, growth of air transport infrastructure, destination image, and competitive positioning. Other studies looked at social impact of the events industry in terms of the employment for the host community, local wages and salaries and the development of small enterprises. Undoubtedly, events will continue to attract visitors worldwide and contribute to domestic and international economic growth, however, with the increasing complexities of our time and additional and new challenges such as Covid-19 pandemic added to the mix, there is a need for a comprehensive approach to tackling the complex, real-world issues of the event industry to ensure continuous viability. Illustrating this aspect of the event industry has been the central theme of this research project.

4. Research Methodology

Following a methodology established in earlier studies (Heroux, 2002; Heroux & Csipak, 2001, 2005; Heroux & Burns, 2000), this exploratory study was undertaken on the website content of 140 event planners in the ten largest cities in the United States and ten largest cities in Canada. There is substantial economic integration and cross-border traffic between the two countries and the hospitality industry targets business and leisure travelers of both nationalities (Church & Heroux, 1999). For this reason, many similarities have been observed in these studies of the hospitality industry in these two countries.

A sample of 70 event planners in each country was included in this research. The online Yellow Pages directory for the United States and Canada was used to identify the sampling frame of event planners in the ten largest cities in each country. The typical event planner in this study was a local independent service that catered to consumers for events such as weddings, anniversaries, bar/bat mitzvahs, etc.

Marketing strategy refers to the target market of the establishment and the marketing mix variables designed to attract these customers. The marketing mix variables are categorized according to the popular 4P framework (McCarthy & Perreault, 2000): Product; Place; Price; and Promotion. Three of these categories of variables are subdivided in this study to capture the breadth of the categories: Product consists of product variety variables and service-related variables; Place refers to the location of the establishment; and Promotion includes advertising variables. A more detailed marketing strategy evaluation grid was developed from the commonly accepted variables in the marketing strategy literature (McCarthy & Perreault, 2000; Kotler & Armstrong, 2013; Jain, 2010; Pride & Ferrell, 2014; Perreault et al., 2013, 2014; Lamb et al., 2012). The marketing strategy evaluation grid was used to collect qualitative observational descriptions and quantitative data of the event planners' marketing strategy variables. The comparison framework therefore consists of three cultural/geographic regions by 7 marketing variable ratings. (See table 1).

Table 1: Summary of the Marketing Strategy Variables Evaluation Grid

Marketing Mix (4Ps)

Product:

Product variety variables: Breadth of product line, assortment of accompanying products, size variations, quality, private labels/brands, special features, overall evaluation. (6 variables, maximum score of 30)

Service variables: customer services, customized/standardized, computerization, hours of operation, guarantees, customer satisfaction (complaint handling), overall evaluation. (6 variables, maximum score of 30)

Place:

Location variables: Primary/secondary road (visibility), site evaluation (nearness to target market), outside appearance, private/public parking availability, detached building versus strip, general ease of access, access to disabled, décor, privacy, overall evaluation. (8 variables, maximum score of 40)

Price:

Pricing variables: Relative high/low prices, competitive in region, group reductions, coupons/rebates, bundle or value pricing (packages offered), variety of payment options (credit cards), overall evaluation. (6 variables, maximum score of 30)

Promotion:

Advertising variables: Print media, broadcasting media, direct mail/internet, special promotions (sales, coupons, contests), outdoor ad and/or signage, advertising theme—testimonial, comparison, informative, humorous, etc., personal selling, overall evaluation. (7 variables, maximum score of 35)

Summary rating:

Overall marketing strategy evaluation: addition of the overall rating in the 5 categories.

The observational research was conducted by international marketing students who were familiar with the marketing concepts. Observers received training on a variety of dimensions of the research process. They received a detailed explanation of each of the variables in the Marketing Strategy evaluation grid and how each variable is operationalized. They were provided with a link to their assigned event planner website, how to record their qualitative observations, and how to determine a quantitative score (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being superior implementation) for each variable. For example, for breadth of product line, students would look at the assortment of events, venues and services offered and make a judgment on the rating scale as to its appeal to consumers (5 would represent an outstanding assortment, beyond expectations; 3 would represent an average assortment usually found for event planners; and 1 would be the minimum one would expect). This methodology was effectively applied in other tourism marketing contexts (Heroux, 2002; Heroux & Csipak, 2001, 2005; Heroux & Burns, 2000).

The trainer and trainees performed a “walk-through” of the research process prior to visiting the websites to ensure their understanding and consistent implementation of the data collection. Observation grids were designed to record detailed notes of how each marketing strategy variable was implemented. Then, the observers had to assign a score (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 representing superior implementation of the strategy) for each variable in an attempt to quantify the observational data. Each item within a variable category was weighted equally in this research. The data collection thus consisted of qualitative data, the recorded observations, and quantitative data, the assigned scores for each variable.

The observers also identified pandemic-specific information regarding (1) marketing adaptations of event policies (Covid-19 information, scheduling flexibility, reduced or no cancellation fee, price reductions to generate a revenue stream during uncertain times, as well as size of party limitations); (2) Social distancing (in facilities, physical barriers and signs, modifying layouts, communal spaces, and staggering/rotating attendees); and (3) sanitizing protocols (restrooms and facilities, ventilation, employee safety training and use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), and food service precautions).

5. Findings

The findings are discussed below in terms of quantitative results and qualitative results. Table 2 presents the **quantitative results** of the scale ratings for each of the five categories of marketing strategy variables. No significant difference was found in marketing strategy variables as evidenced on event planners’ websites between the two countries. The Product variable category received the highest ratings, followed by the Service category. The lowest ratings were found for the Pricing category of variables in both countries.

5.1 Product

Event planners’ websites provide a lot of information regarding the variety of events they plan, as well as options for each type of event. Quality is emphasized through photo galleries, reviews and testimonials. They also provide information on the scope of events based on venue or party size. Special features or specialties (e.g., themed weddings) are also showcased, while less information is provided on any accompanying branded products.

Table 2: Event Planners Marketing Strategy Variables

Variable	United States N=70		Canada N=70		Overall sample N=140		Significance	
	Mean	St dev	Mean	St dev	Mean	St dev	T test	Sig
Product Total	22.714	4.672	22.220	6.007	22.471	5.357	0.518	0.564
Breadth	4.013	1.027	3.838	1.241	3.928	1.135	0.989	0.324
Depth	3.888	1.216	3.897	1.350	3.892	1.279	0.026	0.978
Size	3.819	1.292	3.735	1.502	3.778	1.394	0.362	0.717
Quality	3.972	1.162	3.926	1.225	3.950	1.189	0.301	0.764
Brands	2.986	1.674	2.941	1.819	2.964	1.739	0.052	0.957
Features	3.555	1.320	3.573	1.396	3.564	1.352	-0.080	0.936

Service Total	19.305	4.549	19.044	4.578	19.178	4.547	0.4700	0.638
Service level	4.402	0.882	4.411	1.068	4.407	0.973	-0.051	0.958
Customized	4.180	0.968	4.220	1.950	4.200	1.081	-0.554	0.579
Computerization	3.472	1.462	3.250	1.558	3.364	1.508	0.989	0.324
Desk hours	3.013	1.648	3.044	1.633	3.028	1.635	0.098	0.922
Guarantees	1.875	1.125	1.838	1.322	1.857	1.220	0.174	0.861
Cust. Satisfact.	2.333	1.453	2.205	1.366	2.271	1.408	0.545	0.586
Place Total	17.777	7.132	17.470	8.156	17.628	7.620	-0.011	0.991
Prime Location	3.458	1.472	3.073	1.538	3.271	1.511	1.532	0.127
Appearance	2.138	1.436	2.191	1.478	2.164	1.452	-0.034	0.972
Parking	2.085	1.431	2.136	1.423	2.110	1.422	-0.021	0.982
Detached	2.100	1.524	2.106	1.618	2.102	1.564	-0.013	0.989
Ease of Access	2.628	1.580	2.651	1.593	2.639	1.580	-0.077	0.937
Disabled Access	2.528	1.733	2.242	1.598	2.389	1.669	1.051	0.294
Decor	1.800	1.292	2.000	1.508	1.897	1.399	-0.593	0.553
Privacy	1.985	1.429	2.200	1.631	2.088	1.528	2.088	0.554
Price Total	13.847	4.244	14.058	5.060	13.950	4.643	0.181	0.856
High/Med/Low	3.257	1.247	3.029	1.525	3.144	1.391	1.108	0.269
Competitive	3.114	1.440	3.147	1.417	3.130	1.423	0.241	0.809
Group reductions	1.458	0.918	1.558	1.070	1.507	0.992	0.410	0.638
Coupons/rebates	1.569	1.265	1.691	1.295	1.628	1.277	-1.574	0.117
Bundle/value	2.097	1.435	1.882	1.377	1.992	1.406	1.228	0.221
Credit cards	2.458	1.868	2.426	1.814	2.442	1.835	0.627	0.531
Promo Total	17.031	5.086	16.750	4.838	16.885	4.951	0.119	0.905
Print	2.708	1.682	2.573	1.695	2.642	1.683	-0.374	0.708
Broadcast	1.583	1.207	1.955	1.587	1.764	1.412	1.412	0.596
Web, direct	3.888	1.640	3.106	1.656	3.253	1.648	0.284	0.776
Sales Promos	1.742	1.326	1.606	1.201	1.676	1.264	0.174	0.861
Billboards	1.414	1.096	1.545	1.192	1.477	1.141	0.884	0.378
Ad theme	3.628	1.282	3.560	1.479	3.595	1.405	-0.530	0.596
Personal Selling	2.842	1.420	2.772	1.422	2.565	1.416	0.170	0.864
Strategy Total	90.236	17.907	89.397	19.720	89.828	18.746	0.095	0.924

5.2 Service

Websites emphasize the high service level provided by event planners to meet their clients' needs. They also focus on the customization component to make every event unique to meet client expectations. Less information is provided regarding hours of operation, and few offer guarantees and customer satisfaction policies.

5.3 Place

Ratings for the Place variables tend to be lower than for Product and Service variables. Other than identifying the location of the event planners' business, other Place variables are not well developed on the websites. Limited information is provided regarding type of building, parking, access to the disabled, décor and privacy.

5.4 Price

Pricing receives the lowest ratings of the marketing strategy categories.

General statements regarding range of prices (mostly based on venue and party size) may be provided, as well as whether credit card payments are accepted. However, pricing strategies like value bundling, group discounts or promotional coupons of rebates are rarely mentioned on websites.

5.5 Promotion

Event planners' primary promotion tool is their website and social media presence. This is supported by some print advertising in selective media such as newspapers supplements, bridal publications, and local business magazine to attract corporate events. The advertising theme is prominent and consistent in the media used. Most event planners depend on personal selling to close the deal when the first contact is made by prospective clients.

5.6 Pandemic Strategy Accommodations

Table 3 presents the frequency that various alternate pandemic strategy accommodations are offered by event planners in the US and Canada. For the overall sample of 140 event planners, only a minority of event planners provide information regarding any COVID related adaptations or accommodations on their website. The most common policies are schedule flexibility (34.28%); use of COVID information on their website to show prospects how they can still plan events safely (27.86%); social distancing in facilities (26.42%); size of crowd/party limitations (25%); modifying the layouts to allow for social distancing (25%); stagger, limit or rotate attendee attendance times to limit the number of people from mingling (24.29%); and COVID precaution food service with masks and disinfected utensils and surfaces or even use of disposable utensils and plates. Other adaptations were mentioned by fewer than 20% of the sample websites. Information regarding physical barriers and signs for distancing, restroom and facility sanitation, and ventilation and air circulation requirements were least likely to be mentioned on event planners' websites. More American event planners provided information regarding scheduling flexibility than Canadian event planners (40% and 28.57% respectively). On the other hand, more Canadian than American event planners provided COVID information on their website to show prospects how they can still plan events safely (32.86% and 22.85% respectively). In this study, we examined the information provided on the websites of event planners since this is their primary tool for reaching prospective clients. However, it should be noted that event planners might also provide more information through personal selling after they have been contacted by prospective clients, or on their social media platforms. They may spend time addressing a variety of questions pertinent to the clients' specific events.

Table 3: Event Planning Strategy Accommodations

Strategy Accommodations: Covid-19	US N=70		Canada N=70		Overall N=140	
	Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%
Marketing Adaptations						
Use of COVID information on their website to show prospects how they can still plan events safely	16	22.85	23	32.86	39	27.86
Scheduling flexibility	28	40.00	20	28.57	48	34.28
Reduced or no cancellation fees	10	14.29	13	18.57	23	16.43
Price reductions due to fewer events to get income stream	13	18.57	12	17.14	25	17.86
Size of crowd/party limitations	19	27.14	16	22.85	35	25.00
Social Distancing						
Social distancing in facilities	19	27.14	18	25.71	37	26.42
Physical barriers and guides such as signs	10	14.29	10	14.29	20	14.29
Modifying the layouts to allow for social distancing (Smaller events with larger rooms, this is something completely opposite of traditional event industry practice, which was "larger	19	27.14	16	22.85	35	25.00

the crowd the bigger the room”)						
Availability of communal spaces like lounges for people to mingle during intermissions	13	18.57	14	20.00	27	19.29
Stagger, limit, rotate attendee attendance times to limit number of people from mingling (also quite opposite of the traditional norm of event industry)	18	25.71	16	22.85	34	24.29
Sanitizing						
Sanitizing protocols at events	15	21.42	12	17.14	27	19.29
Restroom and facility sanitation	11	15.71	9	12.86	20	14.29
Ventilation and air circulation requirements	11	15.71	10	14.29	21	15.00
Employee safety training and use of PPE (personal protection equipment)	12	17.14	11	15.71	23	16.43
COVID 19 precaution food service with masks and disinfected utensils and surfaces or even use of disposable utensils and plates	16	22.75	16	22.85	32	22.86
Emergency policies	13	18.57	9	12.86	22	15.71

Table 4 presents the results of the ratings (scale of 1-5) for the COVID strategy adaptations. Inspection of Table 4 reveals that only one variable related to COVID adaptation reflected significant differences between Canadian and American event planners. Canadian planners were more likely to use COVID related information on their websites than American event planners to show prospects how they could still plan events safely.

Table 4: Event Planning Strategy Accommodation Ratings

Strategy Accommodation	US N=70		Canada N=70		Overall sample N=140		T	Sig
	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.		
Marketing Adaptation	8.463	4.347	8.469	4.375	8.466	4.344	-0.011	0.991
Use of COVID information on their website to show prospects how they can still plan events safely	1.529	1.125	1.969	1.467	1.746	1.318	-1.958	0.052
Scheduling flexibility	2.128	1.578	1.893	1.510	2.014	1.544	-0.321	0.748
Reduced or no cancellation fees	1.385	1.053	1.484	1.112	1.432	1.079	-0.666	0.505
Price reductions due to fewer events to get income stream	1.485	1.085	1.453	1.053	1.469	1.066	0.630	0.529
Size of crowd/party limitations	1.779	1.369	1.718	1.326	1.750	1.344	-0.241	0.809
Social Distancing	8.029	4.892	7.875	4.705	7.954	4.785	0.181	0.856
Social distancing in facilities	1.794	1.409	1.875	1.517	1.833	1.457	0.129	0.896
Physical barriers and guides such as signs	1.308	0.851	1.421	1.095	1.363	0.975	0.250	0.802
Modifying the layouts to allow for social distancing (Smaller events with larger rooms, this is something completely opposite of traditional event industry practice, which was “larger the crowd the bigger	1.764	1.339	1.625	1.188	1.696	1.265	0.299	0.765

the room?)								
Availability of communal spaces like lounges for people to mingle during intermissions	1.441	0.998	1.484	1.083	1.462	1.036	0.124	0.901
Stagger, limit, rotate attendee attendance times to limit number of people from mingling (also quite opposite of the traditional norm of event industry)	1.588	1.122	1.562	1.110	1.575	1.113	-0.091	0.928
Sanitizing	9.397	6.932	9.250	6.964	9.325	6.922	0.119	0.905
Sanitizing protocols at events	1.617	1.246	1.562	1.258	1.590	1.247	-0.504	0.614
Restroom and facility sanitation	1.500	1.239	1.437	1.139	1.469	1.187	0.589	0.556
Ventilation and air circulation requirements	1.544	1.320	1.515	1.259	1.530	1.286	0.555	0.579
Employee safety training and use of PPE (personal protection equipment)	1.573	1.296	1.593	1.353	1.583	1.319	0.377	0.706
COVID 19 precaution food service with masks and disinfected utensils and surfaces or even use of disposable utensils and plates	1.617	1.258	1.734	1.416	1.674	1.336	0.423	0.672
Availability of COVID 19 emergency communication and response protocols, with staff trained on how to respond	1.617	1.338	1.484	1.247	1.553	1.291	-0.068	0.945
COVID Total	25.985	14.629	25.734	14.523	25.863	14.522	0.095	0.924

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Event planner in the United States and Canada appear to implement similar marketing strategies on their respective websites. This suggests that similar event planners' marketing strategies would appeal to both American and Canadian consumers, and that event planners who choose to enter the other market can do so with limited adaptations in their marketing strategies. Product and Service variables are well-developed on the websites in both countries. However, there remain opportunities for improvement regarding customer satisfaction policies and guarantees. For the Place variables, more information could be provided on access to the disabled and privacy. Since the lowest ratings were found for Price variables for both countries, event planners could investigate how to develop this content on their website to differentiate their services from the competition. An a la carte price list might be difficult to implement due to the customization of event planning services, as well as the need to update the price information regularly. However, pricing information could be stated in the form of group size discounts or other promotional offers, as well as value bundling of services packages in different price ranges.

Since only a minority of event planners provide information on pandemic-related accommodations on their website, the majority of event planners could benefit from developing this content on their website. They may include information on schedule flexibility, how they can help their customers plan events safely, and incorporate social distancing in acceptable ways such as limitations in the size of parties for different types of venues, modifying layouts and attendance staggering or rotation. They can also include general statements on foodservice safety precautions as well as facilities sanitation and ventilation of the venues they represent. Given only one significant difference between the US and Canada on pandemic variables (Canadian event planners providing more Covid-19 related information on their website), it appears that the majority of event planners in both countries could consider using such content to their advantage to inform consumers of their adaptability to crisis situations to help consumers with event planning in challenging times.

7. Limitations

First, this study was somewhat limited with respect to the industry segmentation since it only looked at the event planning services catering to consumer events and not corporate events. Many of the websites in this study mentioned briefly that they could plan corporate events, however, this was not their primary occupation. The study could be extended to include corporate event planning services. Second, a larger sample size would have been beneficial to make comparisons in the international context. Third, this study looked at event planning services in a specific pandemic with the characteristics of the coronavirus (Covid-19).

However, a different pandemic or crisis might require very different adaptation of marketing strategies, so there may be limited applicability of these results under different crisis situations. Finally, the findings of this study might not translate to a globally applicable set of implications.

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