

## EMI STRATEGIC SNAPSHOT

# The Viral Impact of Events



## Talk is Still Cheap, But Effective: Major Study Highlights Viral Impact of Events

Report finds 98% of those exposed to a product will recommend that product to others after a positive experience

A new report from the EVENT MARKETING INSTITUTE, the leading authority on event marketing, offers data that indicates the real reach of events is over three times more than the actual attendance. How is this possible? Word of Mouth.

This recently completed exclusive study, *THE VIRAL IMPACT OF EVENTS: A Study on the Power of Word of Mouth Strategies to Increase the Impact of Your Events*, reveals the details and analyzes the responses of more than 1,100 individuals, with additional analytical breakdowns by gender and age.

Among the pertinent findings of the report:

**78%** told friends and family about the event

- a. 90% within two days
- b. 69% mentioned the sponsor of the event

**Nearly 50%** of event participants purchased sponsoring products (especially food & drink)

**98%** of those exposed to a product will recommend that product to others after a positive experience.

# EMI TOP 10 Executive Insights

- 1. 98%** of those exposed to a product will recommend that product to others after a positive experience
  - a. Over half tell four or more people about a positive experience
  - b. These tie into cost-per-touch
- 2. BUT 95%** also tell others when they have negative experiences
  - a. 62% tell four or more people about negative experiences with a brand or product
- 3. 78%** told friends and family about the event
  - a. 90% within two days
  - b. 69% mentioned the sponsor of the event
- 4. 85%** felt positive about the company or brand once the event was over
- 5. Nearly 50%** of event participants purchased sponsoring products (especially food & drink)
- 6. 71%** spent more than an hour at events
- 7. 90%** attended with someone else (20% were groups of five or more people)
- 8. 63%** recalled the name of the company that sponsored the event
- 9. 93%** said it is OK for the sponsor to send coupons, e-mail and advertising
- 10. 92%** are willing to give feedback at events if it is tied to an incentive

The study reveals that using well-planned and executed special events is a vital component of a comprehensive Word of Mouth marketing strategy. As you will see, this study proves that people share their experiences—positive or negative—with others. If you can put on an attention-grabbing event that leaves participants feeling good, they will more than likely talk up your product or brand to many others.

Just as important, however, is the reality that live events also provide an opportune environment to gather crucial feedback from a captive audience. The attendee responses can then be used to improve your product or service, hone your target demographic, and/or develop different marketing strategies to better reach those consumers.

The ripple effect of that initial feedback at the event is that companies can identify ways to make their wares that much more appealing to the consumer or prospect. Increased marketability and appeal of a product or service could then help drive sales growth. And when you measure and plan your events, make sure you consider not just attendees, but the large number of referrals that those attendees reach. What are you doing to make your event worth sharing and what are you putting in the hands and heads of attendees to maximize your VIRAL POTENTIAL?

- **Design experiences for group engagement: Most folks travel in small groups** (90% are two or more) and generally mingle **for a considerable amount of time** (71% over an hour), the study finds.
- **Reward people for spreading the word: A positive experience at an event will almost certainly prompt attendees to spread the word** to their friends or family members. And almost all (98%) will actually recommend the product or service to others. So the question becomes: Does this “viral” activity lead to positive awareness and purchases among those exposed to the sponsor’s product or service indirectly via the shared experiences of the attendees? The answer, according to this study, is yes.
- **Include purchase incentives every time: According to this survey, half of attendees will buy the promoted product or service** (53%) either at the event or shortly thereafter and more than half who buy will do so the same day. The use of attractive, interactive displays and knowledgeable company representatives at the event who can answer specific questions is critical to maximizing the event’s success level.
- **Don’t forget to measure the referral potential at your events: Word-of-mouth will also drive referrals to purchase.** Not only will event attendees consider switching brands (27%) as a result of their firsthand trial of the product or service, but their recommendation (or warning), will likely influence their friends and family to either buy it or steer clear of it (29% of those referred did purchase, according to respondents).

The results of our 2007 survey detailed in this comprehensive report underscore the critical need for live events as a brand-building, strategic marketing platform. Furthermore, the survey results highlight the symbiotic relationship between experiential marketing and consumer-driven Word of Mouth.

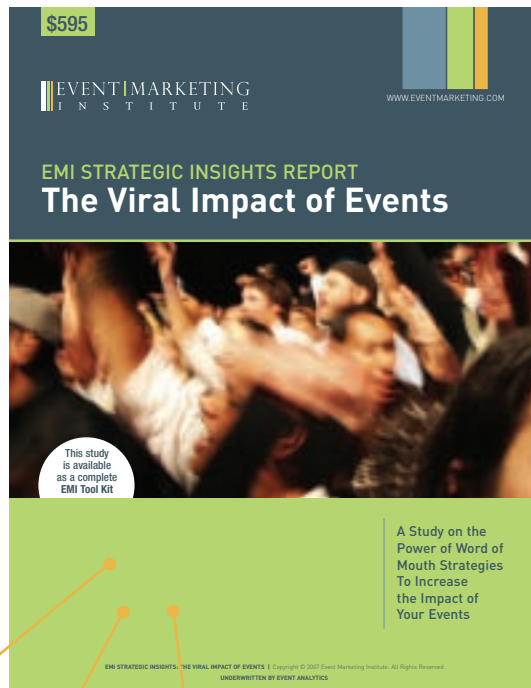
Those who had an enjoyable experience with that product can turn into brand advocates because of their positive interaction with the company, brand, and/or specific product at an event.

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