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ENSURING HOLISTIC SAFETY IN MULTICULTURAL EVENTS: LESSONS FROM THE WWW.ETNOMODA.EU PROJECT

Abstract:

This article discusses practical approaches to ensuring safety in multicultural events, focusing on organizational and logistical challenges. Using the long-standing experience of the www.etnomoda.eu project, it briefly explores the broader concept of safety - extending beyond physical security to include cultural, psychological, and logistical aspects. The article highlights strategies that address the needs of diverse cultural and age groups while linking them to the broader framework of safety.

Introduction

Safety is a fundamental concern in organizing any large-scale event, especially those that involve participants from diverse cultural backgrounds and age groups. Beyond physical protection, safety encompasses psychological well-being, cultural sensitivity, and efficient logistics. These aspects are particularly critical in multicultural events, where effective management can foster inclusivity and mutual respect among participants.

This article draws on the experience of the international project **www.etnomoda.eu**, which hosts festivals and competitions in fashion and cultural performance. By analyzing the challenges and solutions encountered during these events, the article provides insights into managing safety holistically, with a focus on practical recommendations for organizers.

The Broader Concept of Safety

In the context of multicultural events, safety extends far beyond physical security. It includes:

1. Psychological Safety: Ensuring participants feel respected and valued, particularly in culturally diverse settings. Misunderstandings or conflicts can arise from cultural differences, and organizers must proactively foster an atmosphere of mutual respect.

2. Cultural Safety: Managing intercultural sensitivities is key to preventing conflicts or discomfort. For example, certain gestures, symbols, or even dress codes can have different meanings across cultures, requiring careful consideration in event planning.

3. Logistical Safety: Events involving diverse participants often require specialized logistical arrangements, such as accessible venues, multilingual signage, and clear communication of event guidelines.

These dimensions of safety align with the broader understanding of the term as discussed in academic and practical contexts, where safety is seen as both a legal requirement and a moral obligation for organizers.

So, the broader concept of safety in event management can be categorized into physical, psychological, cultural, and logistical aspects (Silvers, 2008; Kowalski, 2015). Physical safety pertains to protecting participants from harm, while psychological safety ensures a respectful and inclusive environment. Cultural safety focuses on managing intercultural sensitivity to prevent conflicts, and logistical safety involves risk management related to transportation, crowd control, and accessibility.

Insights from the www.etnomoda.eu project

The www.etnomoda.eu project provides a valuable case study for understanding how to implement these principles in practice. This project hosts international festivals and competitions that bring together designers, performers, and cultural representatives from various countries and age groups.

Key Challenges:

1. Cultural diversity: participants often come from vastly different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, leading to potential communication barriers and misunderstandings.

2. Age-specific needs: the events attract individuals from different age groups, requiring accommodations for accessibility, safety protocols for children, and tailored communication strategies.

3. Event scale: managing large crowds while ensuring the comfort and security of all participants is a logistical challenge.

Implemented Solutions:

1. Pre-Event Orientation: training for staff and volunteers focused on intercultural communication and conflict resolution.

For example, the event organizers sought to find volunteers who shared a cultural background with the participants expected to attend the competition.

2. Inclusive Design: event programs shall be created to accommodate diverse audiences, ensuring that every participant felt included and valued.

In particular, posters and certificates for events within the project were created in English, and in some cases, when the organizers' qualifications allowed, in the language of the participant's home country. A certificate of participation is often a highly motivating factor, and issuing it in a language that is both understood and recognized in the participant's country is an act of respect and support from the organizers.

3. Collaboration with local authorities: close cooperation with local security services and cultural organizations helped mitigate risks and enhance the event experience.

In cases where the event was held in large public spaces, such as a major shopping mall, prior agreements were made to coordinate with the mall's security services. Additionally, arrangements were reached to ensure the most favorable conditions for the fashion show, including cooperation from the mall's regular tenants.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the experience of the www.etnomoda.eu project, the following recommendations can help organizers ensure safety at multicultural events:

1. Thorough planning: conduct risk assessments that include cultural and age-specific considerations.

2. Effective communication: use multilingual materials and clear communication channels to address diverse participant needs.
3. Focus on inclusivity: ensure that venues and programs are accessible to all, regardless of age, culture, or physical ability.
4. Collaborate with stakeholders: work with local authorities, security professionals, and cultural organizations to align safety measures with local requirements and expectations.

Elaborating on practical recommendations, one can recall situations such as those when models in wheelchairs participated in a fashion show organized as part of the project. The organizers had to address several important considerations, some of which were not immediately obvious. It was not only about ensuring ramps for the models' access or securing a venue with appropriate facilities but also about providing conveniently located, wheelchair-accessible restrooms, arranging backstage assistance, and accommodating the specific needs of each model depending on the nature of their mobility limitations. Additionally, for safety during mobility on stage, it was necessary to select outfits from designers that not only met the aesthetic goals of the fashion show but also allowed for safe and practical movement in the respective attire, whether on wheelchairs or crutches.

The unique experience of organizing the Etnomoda.eu project is closely tied to the diverse social status and varying levels of preparedness of its participants for large-scale events. Sometimes, the project welcomes large, professional teams with extensive experience, while at other times, individual tailors from remote provinces participate. The organizers' responsibility is to ensure an equal level of awareness among all participants about their rights and opportunities. This includes raising awareness about their intellectual property rights, explaining how their rights over personal portfolios submitted to the organizers or photographs taken during the fashion show should be respected.

It also covers their right to proper representation during the show and in post-event press releases. Ensuring that all participants have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities is a vital aspect of creating a safe and comfortable environment for the competition. Achieving this requires more than drafting a comprehensive set of competition rules for participants to sign. It involves additional explanatory work on a personal level, often conducted

with the help of volunteers. This interpersonal engagement ensures participants fully understand the framework of the event and their role within it. This is why organizing such events is a meticulous and challenging process, particularly in terms of ensuring safety in its many forms.

Another example of practical experience that can inform recommendations is the approach to managing age diversity among participants by segmenting them into different festival or competition divisions. Participants of different age groups should have separate changing areas and social spaces, and their performances should be scheduled at different times. This approach significantly enhances both their physical and psychological comfort, fostering a greater sense of security for all involved.

Finally, a practical example of how the safety and comfort of representatives from various ethnic and religious groups can be ensured: event organizers must analyze in advance which groups will participate in their event and, from the perspective of ethical standards and specific requirements, coordinate the work of different teams involved. This includes hosts making announcements via microphones, jury members, sound technicians, volunteers, and award committees—all of whom should be briefed on how to conduct themselves to avoid offending anyone's feelings or beliefs and to minimize the risk of conflicts, as much as possible within the framework of a large multicultural event.

Organizers often prepare standardized prizes for all participants, but in the context of large intercultural events, it is worth considering how appropriate a particular prize might be if a representative of a specific culture were to win. It may be prudent to plan for different prize options to suit various cultural contexts. Such small details and considerations form the backbone of organizing a major event. Many similar examples could be cited, but the key conclusion is that ensuring safety at a large-scale event of this kind requires effective coordination among all those involved in its organization.

Conclusion

Safety in multicultural events is a multifaceted concept that requires a holistic approach.

The www.etnomoda.eu project shows how practical strategies can ensure not only physical security but also cultural and psychological well-being. By addressing these broader dimensions of safety, organizers can create inclusive, enriching, and safe environments for all participants.

References

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