eventamin
Vision & Intelligence

EVIDENCE BRIEF
NOVEMBER 2026

EVIDENCE BRIEF · ATTENDEE BEHAVIOUR

Orchestrated, Not Delivered

How is value co-created at events?

Trade fairs bring together 4.7 million exhibiting companies and 318 million visitors a year, and their value is made by both sides of the stand. Case studies from a world ski championship to a pop-up dinner show how: organizers set the rules and signals, and attendees, local firms, sponsors and public bodies each create a different kind of value within them.

By Eventamin · How we work 12 November 2026

Worldwide, Italy, Macau, Germany, Austria, Australia, Switzerland

5 studies · 2 industry sources

value co-creation | event design | stakeholder value | attendee community | festival management | sport event management | mega-events | sponsorship value | event rules | sustainable festivals

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KEY FINDING

Event value is created jointly rather than delivered. Organizers steer it through rules of participation and signals, attendees create the emotional and social value, and local businesses and public bodies capture most of the economic value.

Five studies, 140 interviewees, 2020–2024; industry data 2026

Key findings

- **Events are joint products.** In 2025, around 1.65 billion people took part in business events worldwide, and 35 percent of the organizations surveyed expected events to become more important for building culture and engagement[1].
- **Organizers steer value through rules and signals.** At pop-up dinner events, dress codes, bring-your-own tables and secret locations made attendees invest in the event, and fellow guests enforced the norms[2].
- **Each stakeholder seeks a different value.** At a Macau festival, organizers sought to pass on heritage, the tourism office to diversify tourism and shop owners long-term benefits, while 34 of 38 tourists interviewed would recommend the festival[3].
- **Visibility comes first for host destinations.** Among the stakeholders of the 2021 Alpine World Ski Championships in Cortina, visibility, investment and new infrastructure were the most frequently mentioned value[4].
- **Attendees do not co-create equally.** German festivalgoers split into sustainable co-creators, calculating types who cooperate in return for a deposit, and experience seekers who pay little attention to the rules[5].

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FOR THE MARKET

Market outcomes

What the studies mean for each part of the industry.

Organisers & associations	The rules of participation deserve the same care as the program. Dress codes, rituals, deposits and community norms are the main levers of co-created value, and success measures differ by stakeholder.
Exhibitors & sponsors	Sponsors and exhibitors gain status by supporting the community rather than standing outside it. At the Austrian freeride contest, sponsors earned their position by protecting the norms that made the event worth attending.
Venues & destinations	The venue is part of the rules of participation. Layout and services shape whether attendees meet, take part and stay.

Events as joint products

The industry's own figures describe events as products made by many parties. According to UFI, around 32,000 exhibitions worldwide brought together 4.7 million exhibiting companies and 318 million visitors[6]. The Events Industry Council and Oxford Economics counted around 1.65 billion participants in business events in 2025, and 35 percent of the organizations surveyed expected events to become more important for building culture and engagement[1].

If value is created jointly, the organizer's role is design and governance rather than delivery. Event budgets, contracts and success measures are usually written the other way round. Five case studies of very different events show how joint value creation works and where organizers can steer it.

How organizers steer value

Organizers steer value with two levers. At White Dinner pop-up events in Australia and Switzerland, the first lever was a set of rules: all-white dress, bring-your-own tables and food, and a location revealed at the last minute[2]. The second was signaling: cues that showed participants what a good evening looks like and who belongs[2]. The rules made attendees invest time and money in preparation, which made the experience their own, and fellow guests enforced the norms without the organizer[2].

Sport events show the same division of roles. At the Big Mountain Hochfügen freeride contest in Austria, followed from 2010 to 2018, athletes and spectators carried the social side of the event, from welcoming newcomers to documenting achievements[7]. Organizers and sponsors protected the community's norms and, when groups pulled apart, aligned their goals, for example with dedicated videos for each group[7]. As the event's status grew, local firms and accommodation providers joined in[7].

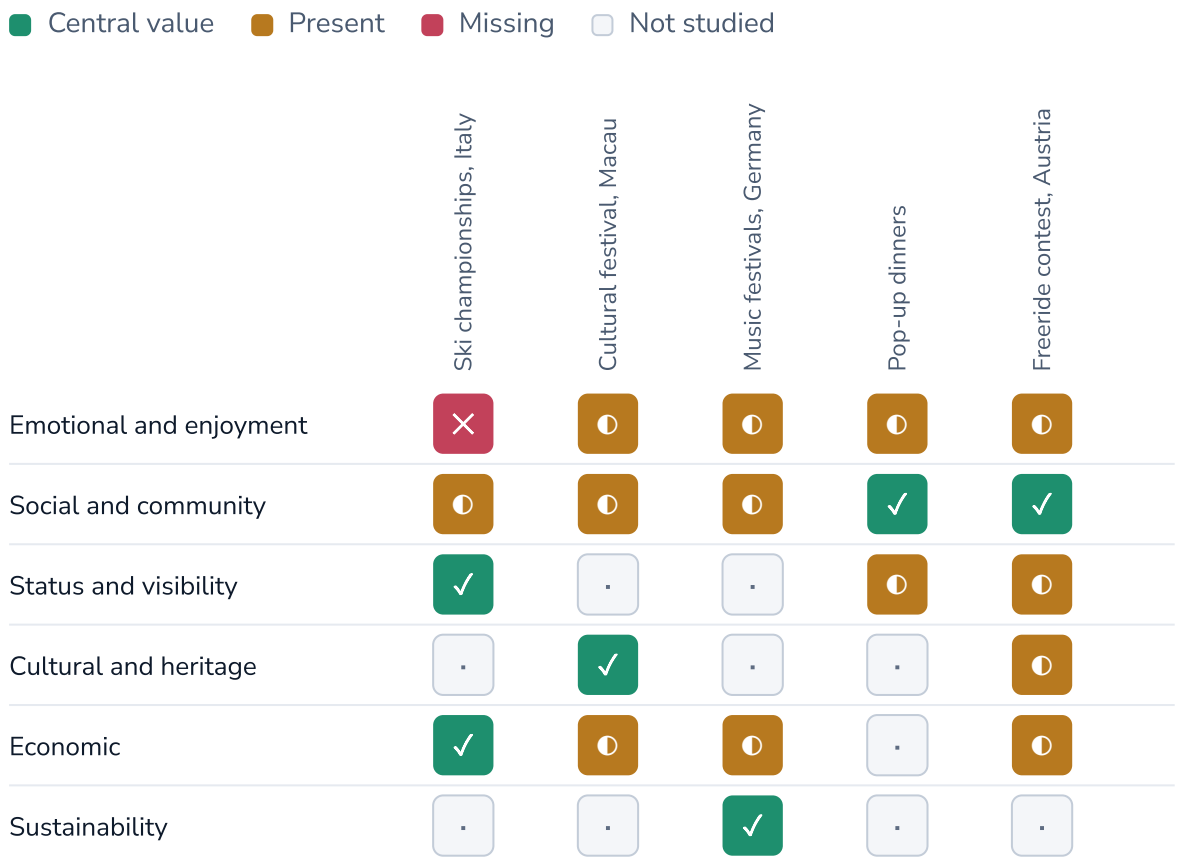
Different stakeholders, different value

A single success measure does not fit an event with many stakeholders. At a traditional festival in Macau, organizers and performers valued preserving heritage and passing traditions to young people, the tourism office valued a more diverse tourism offer, and shop owners valued long-term benefits and the festival as a community ritual[3]. Tourists, nearly all of whom had come across the festival by chance, valued the experience itself: 34 of the 38 interviewed would recommend it[3].

For the host of the 2021 Alpine World Ski Championships in Cortina, Italy, value was mostly about the destination's image. Visibility, investment and renewed infrastructure were mentioned 20 times by the stakeholders interviewed, more than any other value[4]. No stakeholder mentioned better services, and spectators, usually the source of an event's atmosphere, were absent because of the pandemic[4].

Types of value created at five events, by event

Classification of each case study's findings.



Sources: Mason et al.; Chen et al.; Werner et al.; Lugosi et al.; Grohs et al. · Release dates: 2020 to 2024 · Regions: Italy; Macau; Germany; Australia and Switzerland; Austria · Number of interviewees: 30; 53; 12; 30; 15 · Classification: Eventamin

Who creates which value

Across the five events, the pattern is consistent. Attendees create the emotional, social and status value; local businesses and public bodies capture most of the economic value; organizers set the social rules and, at some events, carry a cultural or sustainability mission [2–5,7].

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	VALUE CREATED	EVENTS
Attendees	Emotional and enjoyment, social and community, status, sustainability	Macau festival, German festivals, pop-up dinners, freeride contest [2,3,5,7]
Organizers	Social rules, heritage, sustainability rules, destination investment	Pop-up dinners, freeride contest, Macau festival, German festivals, ski championships [2–5,7]
Local businesses	Economic value, community ritual	Ski championships, Macau festival, freeride contest [3,4,7]
Public bodies	Economic value, tourism diversification, heritage preservation	Ski championships, Macau festival [3,4]
Sponsors	Economic value, status	Freeride contest [7]

Three types of attendee

Not every attendee takes part in creating value. Interviews with music festivalgoers in north-western Germany identified three types [5]. Sustainable co-creators actively help to build a clean, considerate festival. Calculating types cooperate when there is a return, such as a 5-euro deposit. Experience seekers come for contrast with daily life and pay little attention to the rest [5]. All three types value bonding and belonging [5].

Design that relies on goodwill reaches only the first group. Rules and incentives reach the second, and the third is reached through the social experience itself.

Notes on the data

The figures are based on five case studies published between 2020 and 2024, with 30 stakeholder interviews at the Cortina ski championships, 53 tourists and stakeholders at a Macau festival, 12 German festivalgoers, 30 pop-up dinner participants and 15 stakeholders of an Austrian freeride contest [2–5,7]. The value

classification in the exhibits is Eventamin's coding of each study's findings, not a measure reported by the authors. None of the studies quantifies how much value each stakeholder gains, and none covers a trade fair or congress.

Sources

● Study ○ Industry source

1 Events Industry Council and Oxford Economics. (2026, May). 2026 Global Economic Significance of Business Events [Report]. Retrieved November 9, 2026, from news.eventscouncil.org — First-hand

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4 Mason, M. C., Iacuzzi, S., Zamparo, G., & Garlatti, A. (2024). How do stakeholders co-create value in a service ecosystem? Insight from mega-events [Journal article]. *Management Decision, 62(13), 398–425*. https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-02-2023-0215 — First-hand

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First-hand

The evidence

5 studies · 2 industry sources

SAMPLE

Five event case studies with 140 interviewees; two industry statistics releases

YEARS

2020–2024 (studies); 2026 (industry data)

METHOD

Stakeholder and attendee interviews at events in Italy, Macau, Germany, Austria, Australia and Switzerland

About Eventamin

Eventamin reads the peer-reviewed research on events, exhibitions and hospitality, sets it against industry data and states what it means for the market. Every brief is published by Eventamin as an organisation: its sources, method and corrections are open.

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