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Vision & Intelligence

EVIDENCE BRIEF
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EVIDENCE BRIEF · INDUSTRY EVENTS AND MARKETS

Events Change Minds Before Rules

What can events without formal authority change?

Most events have no power to make rules, yet organizations expect them to matter more for building culture and engagement. Studies of a disability technology conference in India and a small festival in Switzerland show what events without formal authority can change, and where they stop.

By Eventamin · How we work 12 November 2026 India, Switzerland, Worldwide

3 studies · 1 industry source

agenda-setting events | event influence | communities of practice | advocacy events | weak field mandate | festival funding | accessibility conference | event legitimacy | niche festivals | culture change

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KEY FINDING

Events without formal authority change how a field thinks and what it considers appropriate, and they build communities of practice and expert communities. They do not change laws or the wider industry on their own, and the legitimacy they gain brings funding with conditions attached.

Three studies, 2008–2023; industry data 2026

Key findings

- **Minds, not rules.** At a 2012 conference on assistive technology in Bangalore, around 300 participants reshaped how disability and accessibility were understood; a planned session on the legal framework was dropped, and the officials who control quotas and equipment were absent[1].
- **Momentum online.** The conference's online audience grew from 50 to 270 during the event, and its Facebook page gathered more than 6,500 people[1].
- **A small festival built its own field.** A Lausanne festival of alternative adult film grew from 1,844 entries in 2013 to 6,000 in 2019 and from 23 to 120 volunteers, building a community with its own norms rather than changing the mainstream industry[2].
- **Legitimacy changes the funding mix.** The festival's first edition was 85 percent self-financed; by 2016, foundations provided 31 percent, ticketing 28 percent and city and canton subsidies 27 percent, with conditions attached[2].
- **Mandate decides reach.** Events with formal authority can set rules, while events without it act as hubs that shape agendas indirectly[3].

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FOR THE MARKET

Market outcomes

What the studies mean for each part of the industry.

Organisers & associations	Events without a formal mandate gain influence by defining terms, setting norms and building communities in sequence; manifestos, juries and prizes turn a gathering into a reference point. Rules change only when decision-makers are in the room.
Venues & destinations	Cities and regions that fund niche events gain visibility and community, and set conditions in return, from safety to education goals; those conditions shape the event's content.
Academia	The influence of events without authority shows in language, norms and communities long before it shows in rules; studies need to follow these events over several years.

Events with and without authority

Most events cannot make rules. Some events hold formal authority, such as professional bodies that set standards, while most act indirectly as hubs where people network and agendas form[3]. Organizations increasingly value this indirect role: 35 percent of those surveyed by the Events Industry Council and Oxford Economics in 2026 expected events to become more important for building culture and engagement, and 27 percent for learning[4].

Two case studies show what events without authority can change.

What events without formal authority changed, by case

Classification of the studies' findings.



Sources: Kulkarni; Ruiz et al. · Release dates: 2018; 2023 · Regions: India; Switzerland · Classification: Eventamin

A conference that changed the conversation

A one-and-a-half-day national conference in Bangalore in January 2012, hosted by a nongovernmental organization with the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, gathered around 300 participants on access to higher education and work for persons with disabilities[1]. They included faculty, nongovernmental organizations, researchers, parents, industry bodies and successful professionals with disabilities[1].

The conference worked on minds rather than rules. Speakers first defined terms such as accessibility, assistive technology and inclusion, then framed accessibility as a national task and a business opportunity, and finally turned to joint action, including job offers made on the spot[1]. A planned session on the legal framework was dropped, and the government officials who control quotas and the distribution of assistive technology were absent[1]. The online audience grew from

50 to 270 during the event, and its Facebook page gathered more than 6,500 people[1].

A festival that built its own field

A small festival can build a field beside the dominant one. La Fête du slip, a festival of sexualities founded in Lausanne in 2012 to promote alternative adult film, set out to challenge the mainstream industry[2]. It grew from 1,844 entries in 2013 to 6,000 in 2019, its volunteers from 23 to 120 and its permanent team from 15 to 37[2].

Rather than change the mainstream industry, the festival built an alternative subfield with its own norms: a manifesto of 14 principles, a short-film competition judged by experts since 2015, and spaces where isolated independent producers share technical and business know-how[2]. It joined a European network of alternative festivals and opened to the arts, media and local institutions, while avoiding partnerships with mainstream events[2]. The study notes that the wider industry was not changed[2].

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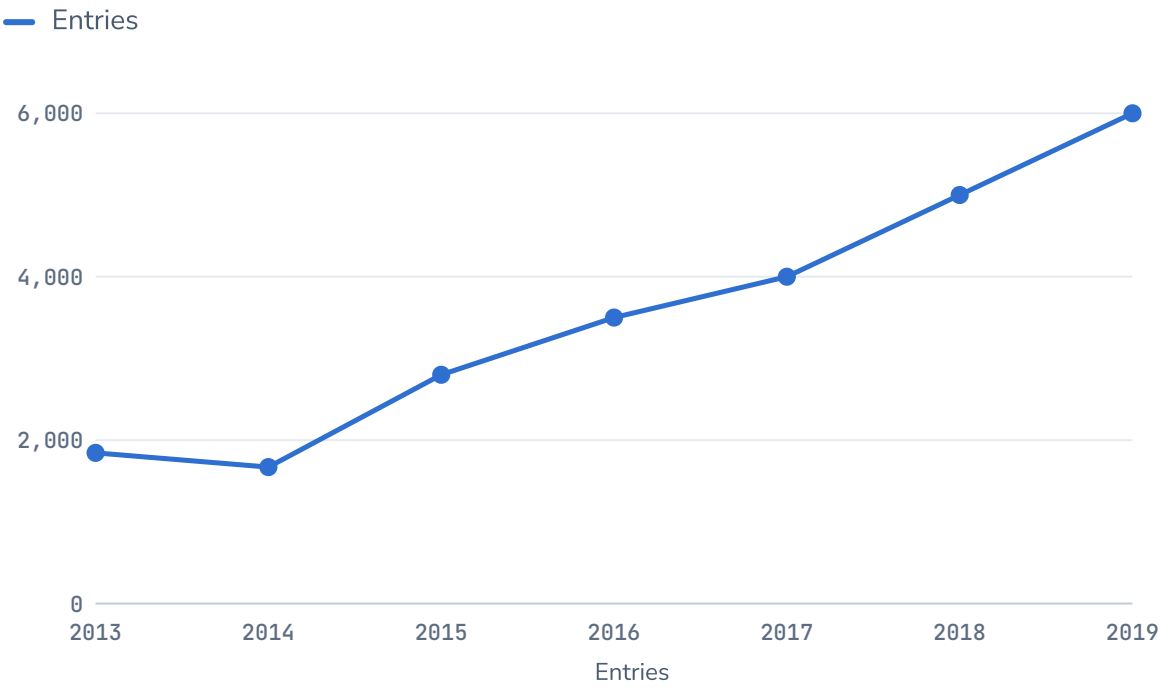
Number of entries to La Fête du slip in Lausanne from 2013 to 2019

Number of entries.



Source: Ruiz et al. · Release date: 2023 · Region: Switzerland (Lausanne) · Period: 2013 to 2019

Legitimacy and its price

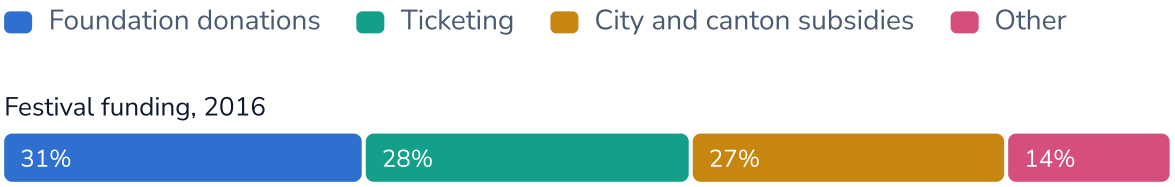
Recognition brings money and conditions. The festival's first edition was financed 85 percent from ticket sales and participatory funding[2]. By 2016, foundation donations provided 31 percent of its resources, ticketing 28 percent and subsidies from the city and canton of Lausanne 27 percent[2]. Subsidies depended on meeting local policy goals such as safety, sex education and respect for sexual minorities, which led the organizers to stress the artistic side of the program[2].

The study identifies three positions for events that seek change: aligning with the dominant field, staying autonomous, or opening to related fields; the festival combined autonomy with openness[2].

POSITION	GAINS	RISKS
Alignment with the dominant field	More resources, legitimacy and power [2]	Dilution of the aim to change the field [2]
Autonomy as a separate subfield	Keeps the event's purpose and identity [2]	Limited influence and resources outside the subfield [2]
Opening to related fields	New knowledge and wider influence [2]	Too much distance from the original community [2]

Sources of funding of La Fête du slip in Lausanne in 2016

Share of resources.



Source: Ruiz et al. · Release date: 2023 · Region: Switzerland (Lausanne) · Year: 2016

Notes on the data

The figures are based on three studies published between 2008 and 2023: a conceptual review, a discourse analysis of one conference in India and a case study of one festival in Switzerland built on 43 interviews from 2016 to 2021 [1–3]. Neither case study measures effects on the field beyond the event; both describe attempts. Other funding in 2016 is the remainder of the shares reported. The classification of changes is Eventamin's coding of the findings.

Sources

● Study ○ Industry source

1 Kulkarni, M. (2018). Discursive work within weak field mandate events: The case of a conference on assistive technologies for persons with disabilities [Journal article]. *IIMB Management Review, 30(4), 291–304*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2018.08.001 First-hand

2 Ruiz, É., Guichardaz, R., & Le, K.-M. (2023). C'est la 'Fête du slip' ! When a Weak Field Mandate Event Tries to Change an Organizational Field [Journal article]. *M@n@gement, 26(4), 35–51*. https://doi.org/10.37725/mgmt.2023.6722 First-hand

3 Lampel, J., & Meyer, A. D. (2008). Field-Configuring Events as Structuring Mechanisms: How Conferences, Ceremonies, and Trade Shows Constitute New Technologies, Industries, and Markets [Conference paper]. *Journal of Management Studies, 45(6), 1025–1035*. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2008.00787.x First-hand

4 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

The evidence

●●●● **3 studies** · 1 industry source

SAMPLE

Three studies: a review, a conference with around 300 participants and a festival studied through 43 interviews from 2016 to 2021; one industry survey

YEARS

2008–2023 (studies); 2026 (industry data)

METHOD

Discourse analysis of a conference in India, a longitudinal case study of a festival in Switzerland, a conceptual review

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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