

# PRIMI, SECONDI, INSALATA: AUGMENTING AUTHENTICITY AT SPECIAL EVENTS VIA FOODSERVICE EXPERIENCES

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## ABSTRACT

Both the provision of quality food and beverage services and perceived authenticity are accepted as determinants of visitor satisfaction for special events. The aim of this paper is to draw on the authenticity literature from several fields of study to develop a broad understanding of the manifestations of authenticity as they apply to special events and set some platform for further enquiry. This conceptualisation is supplemented by two case studies. They find that authenticity and food and beverage service at special events can facilitate differentiation; food and beverage services can be appropriated to enhance event authenticity through association; and a promotion of authentic food and beverage offerings can be exploited as a mechanism for quality management. These are relevant in the context of stated practitioner implications, particularly for brand management. The contribution of this paper is that it directly focuses on an aspect of special events not previously directly addressed.

## KEYWORDS

Food and beverage, authenticity, special events, association, differentiation

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## INTRODUCTION

Special events have been described as “a one-time or frequently occurring event of limited duration” (Jago & Shaw, 1998, p.29) involving “rituals, presentations, performances or celebrations that are consciously planned and created to mark special occasions or to achieve particular social, cultural or corporate goals and objectives” (Allen, O’Toole, McDonnell & Harris, 2002, p.11). The events industry has undergone unprecedented growth in the recent past. This process of industry maturity has led to governments recognising the contribution of special events to the economy. State sponsored event development units have been established, at least in Australia, whose mission it is to promote event opportunities and often to link their outcomes to tourism success (Getz, 2002). Studies have identified that the ongoing success of special events has a positive relationship with, first, the satisfaction of visitors and, second, a sound business management approach.

Key to the satisfaction of special event visitors is the perception that the event delivers an ‘authentic’ experience (Getz, 1998).

Another aspect of business management attracting research attention, in the context of events, is the revenue base that food and beverage sales contribute to an event’s bottom line. It will be argued that this can be augmented by the provision of quality food and beverage services that are perceived as authentic relative to the event. This paper aims to demonstrate, supported with the presentation of two case studies, that the special event visitor’s search for authenticity and for quality food and beverage service can be achieved - yet reconciled - within a framework of the business management imperative of event profitability.

## **AUTHENTICITY**

Although it is acknowledged that authenticity is a vexed construct, it is necessary to overview the relationship of several concepts introduced, in the context of special events and of food and beverage consumption. Much has been written on the authenticity of the tourist/visitor experience at both the conceptual level (Boorstin, 1964; MacCannell, 1973, 1976; Urry, 1990) and that of the more localised visitor perceptions (Goldberg, 1983; Hayllar & Griffin, 2005). The cultural and social scientific literature also explores notions of authenticity for the product itself – food and beverage. A pathway shall be cut through these constructs to a discussion of how the provision of food and beverage services augments authenticity, but with reference to event management. It is argued that the very fabric of an event, an enhanced visitor experience and commercial viability can be successfully harmonised to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

### **Authenticity: Tourism and Events**

In the context of tourism and events, there has been a rich contribution to the literature on the topic of authenticity. Clearly, there is an interconnection between tourist experiences and that of the special event visitor, yet it is fair to say that no theoretical consensus has been reached on what represents authenticity in these contexts. Indeed, as Hughes reveals, authenticity is couched within a larger debate: "...a crisis of representation" (1995, p.782) that has questioned the construction of reality itself. Instead, it may be more useful to track some scholarly themes as they pertain to touristic authenticity and arrive at a point of departure for this current work.

Seminally, as explored by Urry (1990), the tourist gaze has been further examined from the alternative viewpoint of host as well as guest populations (Maoz, 2005), from the perspective of tensions between national and creative authenticity (Jones & Smith, 2005), and several works exploring the authenticity of heritage tourism as located within time and space (Chhabra, 2004; Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003; Coupland, Garrett & Bishop, 2005; Goldberg, 1983; Herbert, 1996; Hunt, 2004; Jamal & Hill, 2004). Further research into the authenticity of events has acknowledged the role of both tourists and the deliverers ('backstagers') of an event in searching for authentic meaning or, as Crang (1996) has it, a 'quixotic quest for the quintessential'. A distinction, though, must be drawn between the theoretical construct of authenticity, as it is

applied in the conceptual and empirical tourism and events literature, and authenticity as perceived by the tourist/events consumer.

Critically, this paper adopts the more fluid of the authenticity positions – that which relates to the experiential or 'existential' interpretation of authenticity rather than that assigned to the authenticity of objects (Wang, 1997). This is salient since, as Reisinger and Steiner (2005) assert, it allows the consumer of an experience a valid perception of what is authentic, free of the stated authenticity of 'experts'. Indeed, an object or event has no inherent authenticity, but only that attached to it by the belief systems and past knowledge of the consumer. For, while the theorist is occupied by the legitimate authenticity that an object (or event) represents, or its various manifestations depending on worldview or time/ space relativity, the consumer is captured by the object and its explicit relevance to them.

The object's intrinsic worth, then, is subject to the experiences of the consumer and shaped by the constructed reality on which their perceptions of the authentic were founded (Hughes, 1995). In the context of heritage reconstructions, the ability of backstagers and tourists to be self-reflexive "does not render it [the experience] inauthentic" (Crang, 1996, p.428). Indeed, this self-reflexivity allows each individual to engage with the past on their own terms – after all, any version of history depends on who is [re]telling the story.

This aligns with the Heideggerian notion that phenomena are defined in two contrasting ways – the theoretical and the practical. This paper argues that, especially in the context of tourism as a leisure pursuit, special events should be conceived of as phenomena that consumers immerse themselves in practically – thus interpreting authenticity liberally rather than critically. This, no less, underpins the essential distinction between conceptual authenticity and grounded authenticity. Clearly, there is an alignment between Wang's (1997) existential authenticity and Crang's (1996) 'reflexivity' endorsements to promote authenticity.

Work has begun to emerge on authenticity in the context of events. Several studies have probed staged authenticity in the context of (pseudo) events (Papson, 1981), and for subcultural events (Kates & Belk, 2001). Some of the aforementioned heritage tourism research

projects focus on events and actually begin to explore notions of authenticity as connected with visitor satisfaction and/or event production profitability/sustainability. Indeed, Getz advocates this approach: "authenticity can be considered as a part of the event product, because it is something that can motivate certain tourists, and it is a benefit that can at least be partially controlled by organizers" (1994, p.316). Yet the role of food and beverage provision in augmenting special event authenticity remains relatively unexplored, despite research findings in at least one study suggesting that over 60% of visitors find (what they perceive) authentic food an "important [event] feature" (Chhabra et al., 2003, p.712). The role of food and beverage provision at special events will be considered further, but not before briefly discussing food and beverage authenticity independent of the event/ tourism context.

#### **Authenticity: Food and Beverage and Culture**

That food and drink can be the object of a debate vis-à-vis authenticity is to state the obvious – these are indeed, defining cultural artefacts. However, before returning to the focus of this paper – authenticity, food and beverage service, and events – it is necessary to legitimate the position of food and drink in this debate from a cultural and sociological position. Levi-Strauss (1972) debated anthropological interpretations of food and its preparation and what they meant in the civilising process of man, from nature to culture. As Appaduria (1981) explains, within the Structuralist binary opposites framework, anthropologists have demonstrated that food "can signal rank and rivalry, solidarity and community, identity or exclusion, and intimacy and distance" (1981, p.494). Much work has pioneered the status of cuisine as a cultural signifier (Carroll, 1982; Douglas, 1975). Douglas is archetypical of the Functionalist stream of the Structuralists, who argued that food and beverage, its production and consumption, assumed the status of symbols or social laden artefacts, privileging (or marginalising) groups in society. Finally, and fittingly for the purposes of the task at hand, the post-Structuralists argue that food consumption is the act of incorporating the world into the body – an intimate exchange. This reflects the themes of this research on two counts. First, that the motivation for tourism/ events is, via the sensory organs, to soak up new experiences and, second, that the

final post-Structuralist interpretation emphasises the symbiosis, individuality and embodiment of the process.

Despite this broad backdrop, within the intimate corporeal experience of food and beverage consumption are couched issues of identification and of authenticity. Beginning with the basic unit of society, Moisio, Arnould and Price (2004) argue that food is an authentic creation of the family. To be involved with the production or consumption of 'the real thing' invokes emotions of identification and belonging. Expanding this notion, Groves (2001, p.246) relates that "the authenticity of foods... is frequently used to refer to a genuine version of a product in relation to a specific place, region or country". Into this milieu can be introduced agents of influence. An incisive essay by Jones and Taylor (2001) deconstructs the role of celebrated food writers Elizabeth David and Jane Grigson in shaping the community's views, perhaps unwittingly, on the authentic. For instance, by recreating recipes from provincial Italy in Britain, where the seasons, availability, quality and substitutability of produce, and even technical equipment differ, the authors may compromise the authenticity of the final product.

#### **Authenticity: Food and Beverage and Commercialisation**

Notwithstanding the alleged ambivalence of David and Grigson to culinary authenticity (Jones & Taylor, 2001), recent studies have identified what the (British) consumer perceives as the markers of authenticity for food. Kuznesof, Tregear and Moxey (1997) identify three factors: physical, situational and personal. Physical markers include nomenclature, labelling and packaging. Situational factors, pertinent to this study, include the presence of tourists or visitors at the locale in question, and the presence of commercial catering or retailers. Last are the personal factors, related to the breadth of personal cultural awareness and the knowledge of consumers.

Groves (2001) in a further study, formalised five dimensions of authenticity, based on the perceptions of primary household food purchasers. These dimensions are reproduced in Table 1. These findings build on the earlier study by Kuznesof, Tregear and Moxey (1997) in several ways. Brands with some heritage are afforded higher authenticity status.

Table 1 Dimensions of authentic British food products

<i>Dimensions of authentic British food products</i>	<i>Definition of dimension</i>
1. Uniqueness [to Britain]	Originally grown, reared or manufactured [in Britain]
2. Cultural and/or traditional	Presence over time association
3. Characteristics of the production process	A natural, or the original production process
4. The presence of an authority	The assurance of authenticity from a trusted body
5. Desired extrinsic attributes	Dependent on individual's own criteria for specific extrinsic attributes instincts

Groves (2001, p.252)

Favourable images of authenticity are also augmented by the perceived endorsement, or association with, an authoritative source. These two perceived dimensions of authenticity appear to share an undercurrent of process – that the authenticity of a product is acquired over a period of time, be it through brand value or authority, which is generally acknowledged by trust – a process in itself.

Significantly, Groves (2001) finds that a perception of authenticity is matched with an expectation that a premium can be charged for the product. Attached to this, though, is an expectation that the price tag is matched by standard – of quality and taste and, pertinently, the experience. The authenticity of the whole manipulates the perception of the authenticity of food and beverage. Therefore, though it is argued that authenticity is as much about the process as the outcome/ encounter, we maintain that in the context of this research it is the final engagement – in this instance at special events.

## **AUTHENTICITY AND SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **Food and Beverage Determinants**

Authenticity can be produced by a variety of stakeholders involved in special event creation, production and consumption (Hughes, 1995, p.704). The production, presentation and service of food and beverage at and for special events are representative of these stakeholders and as such have the capacity to augment authenticity in such events. The role of food and beverage in the special events industry is comprehensive and can range from events conceived and themed entirely around food and beverage to “an inconvenience that must be endured” where the food and beverage offer is of poor quality, expensive and a tedium to access (Wicks, Qui & Quan, 2005, p.3).

Authenticity is malleable and notions of authenticity influenced by changes in the economic, social, political

and cultural climate (Hughes, 1995). Consequently, authenticity generated by food and beverage services is established in a variety of ways and is multilayered. Food and beverage in special events fulfils many roles. It is entertainment, historic recreation, community representation and education. Food and beverage develops and defines culture, heritage, ethnic or regional identity, attracts consumers and enhances lifestyles of locals and tourists amongst other roles (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Within all these roles, food and beverage can enhance or minimise the authenticity of special events. This paper will limit its attention to the role of community, region and association in addressing the impact of food and beverage on authenticity. In this analysis, community and region include both micro and macro aspects - specifically, where community can apply broadly to the microcosm of the food and beverage purveyors within an event and a region, and where an area is representative of stakeholders' community and region.

### **Community and Region Derivatives**

Events need to be tailored to defined market segments to achieve commercial success because this maximises an event's capacity to attract an audience. Marketing to the characteristics of these segments intrinsically manipulates the authenticity of the produced event (Getz, 1998, p.411). The identity of the community and region an event is staged in, and how the image and identity of the food and beverage offer is marketed, are part of the manipulation of the perceptions of authenticity.

Food and beverage products and services can amplify authenticity by establishing image and identity as derivatives of the community and region. Consequently, authenticity can be increased by:

- Associating dish/ingredient with a specific place
- Using local /colloquial terminology

- Associations with personalities, real or fictional
- Use and promotion of 'Naturalized' ingredients
- Reference to miscellaneous historical or fictional events

Hughes (1995, p.784)

It should be noted that these, in the context of events, overlay the more generic consumer-based findings of Groves (2001) and Kuznesof, Tregear and Moxey (1997), as identified earlier. These characteristics of food and beverage augment authenticity and are embedded in a community's identity and region (Hall & Sharples, 2003, p.5). Consequently, authenticity can be conceived of as a community product and its definition is subject to local ownership (Getz, 1998, p.410). Events provide an opportunity for tourists to experience and engage with local communities. The food and beverage offer in these circumstances plays a significant role in increasing authenticity (Redfoot, 1984) despite the reality of 'backstage' entry (MacCannell, 1999, p.412). To conceptualise this discussion we introduce two case studies which, from differing perspectives, contribute to the relationship identified between special event success and the provision of quality and authentically perceived food and beverage services.

### CASE STUDIES

Associated with qualitative research, the case study is a traditional methodology (Mertens, 2003). Although case studies can be appropriated for many purposes (Yin, 2003) the application for this work is exploratory, since the aim of this paper, both through conceptualisation and presentation of case studies, is to set a platform for further enquiry.

Case studies, as a methodology, have a history of application in event management research (e.g. Getz & Carlsen, 2006; Mules, 2004; Smith, 2005; Watt, 1998; Williams, Dossa & Tompkins, 1995). Additionally, case studies serve as a mechanism to understand the philosophy and positioning of events (Beverland, 2005). Although a criticism of case studies, like other qualitative methods, is that researchers construct meaning from the data (Shulha & Wilson, 2003), they are particularly appropriate and practical given the temporal irregularity of special events.

The case studies showcased in this work were selected for contrasting reasons, although both have been the

object of previous scholarly attention (Chessell, 1999, 2002; Weiler, Truong & Griffiths, 2004) and both demonstrate strong evidence of a documented history that served to inform the researchers' understanding of the development of the event (Beverland, 2005). The San Pellegrino Martire Festa was selected because the researcher also had access to attendees that allowed post-event semi-structured interviews to be conducted, which complemented the extensively documented event history and previous academic study. These supplemented the extant literature and researcher perspectives.

### The Winter Wine Fest: Impression Management

The Winter Wine Fest forms part of a selection of events developed as part of the Winter Wine Weekend, hosted by the winemakers and producers of the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, Australia. The Winter Wine Fest was developed by event organisers as a mechanism to profile Mornington Peninsula vineyards as leading cool climate, maritime wines of high quality (Weiler et al., 2004, p.3). Such an event encapsulates the characteristics that contribute to the development of authenticity within a special event. Held annually during the Australian June long weekend, the event profiles the vineyards in the area by offering visitors an opportunity to taste more than 150 wines (Winter Wine Fest, 2006) and sample local produce. Attendees can compare wine styles from different vineyards, talk to the winemakers and discover new wines. To supplement this tasting experience and to add weight to the authentic notion of the experience, organisers have the winemakers on hand. Chris Barnes, a wine educator, hosts a wine symposium where he orchestrates debate between a panel of leading winemakers from the Peninsular discussing topical aspects peculiar to their industry and region. The combination of these tastings, activities and accessing the 'producers' adds to the layers of authenticity on multiple levels. The sense of authenticity of region is evoked through the identification and access to local identities and the wine and the food produced from the region. Unlike some other wine tastings, where only the product is showcased, the winemakers of the Peninsula are required to be 'on hand' for the attendees (Winter Wine Fest, 2006). The association is one of quality and this also develops authenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003, p.702).

Event attendees can enjoy delicious gourmet snacks prepared by chefs from leading Peninsula wineries and restaurants as well as treats from local producers. Cooking demonstrations by leading local and Melbourne chefs are a feature of the event: chefs included Greg Malouf, Jerry Mai and George Hill (Mornington Peninsula Tourism Development Board, 2006). In the process of building authenticity, chefs demonstrate using local produce and provide the audience with samples of the food they have prepared during the demonstration. The produce can, in some instances, be purchased. Attendees, once exposed to the local ingredients, are encouraged to seek further associations with the food offers at a variety of vineyards on the Peninsula such as the Redhill Vineyard (Redhill Estate, 2006).

Authenticity at this special event is achieved through a multiplicity of avenues created through the direct and extended food and beverage offer. This is exemplified by the promotion and use of local produce that is prepared by local identities. This produce can be purchased on site at the Fest, or guests are directed to the local source of the Mornington Peninsula produce (Melbourne Food & Wine Festival, 2006). In a sense, guests gain 'backdoor' access to the products of the area in a process of 'discovery' that can be extended beyond the confines of the actual food and wine tasting arena of the Winter Wine Fest.

An imperative to authenticity is the perception of event tourists that the food and beverage services were equal to the quality they perceived the brand images of Mornington Peninsular Wines, food and produce to have. This is maintained by brand management, exemplified by the judicial use of strict guidelines for vendor stalls with regard to product offer, level of knowledge of attending staff and presentation by event organisers (Melbourne Food & Wine Festival, 2006). Hence, the quality of a service or product has the capacity to enhance or reduce perceptions of authenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003).

Issues such as taste, image, freshness, experiences and quality are recognised as important in augmenting authenticity as they combine to develop an image that is original (and unique). Food and beverage services have an image and an identity; collectively managing such issues can be considered a form of impression management (Svejenova, 2005), which is a process of brand management. Authenticity is augmented through

the management of image; strategically this requires a commitment to quality of product and service, maintenance of stylistic consistency and an instrumental use of history and place as a positive reference (Beverland, 2005). For the food and beverage component to augment authenticity a congruent image has to be perceived by tourists across the overall event and the products and services associated with it. Event attendees make judgements on events through congruence and complementarity (Ruth & Simonin, 2003, p.19). Authenticity is manifested in the impressions and opinions people develop relative to the product (Beverland, 2005). In doing so attendees bring to the event through such 'reflexivity' (Crang, 1996) individually created layers of authenticity.

#### **San Pellegrino Martire Festa: Association**

The San Pellegrino Martire Festa in Norwood, South Australia exemplifies the notion of authenticity through association. A three-day event, the San Pellegrino Martire Festa replicates a traditional Southern Italian festival, the Festa of the Patron Saint of Altavilla Irpina in Campania (Chessell, 2002). The event commenced in the early 1970's to commemorate the arrival in Australia of the area's Italian population and for this reason is held annually on Australia Day. A dinner is hosted on Friday evening with Saturday's festivities focusing on family, fun and commercial activities such as spaghetti eating championships, wine pressing and food stalls (Chessell, 2002; McGregor, 1990).

Event attendees are encouraged to promenade through the street side cafes that have been 'created' for the event (Chessell, 1999). Here they can sit at tables set with red and white checked tablecloths and order food and beverages that evoke the essence of 'authentic' Italian family-produced cuisine. Typical of these offers are jugs of Italian style wine and shots of grappa served with strong espresso and biscotti (Mogridge, 2006). The food and beverage offer at this event is authenticated as much by the food and wine as it is by the sense of Italian location of a recreated piazza and the employment of wait staff who 'typify' Australian notions of Italian waiters, "flamboyant, gregarious and highly animated" (Thorpe, 2006).

Offers at the cafes include rustic pasta dishes and wood fired pizzas made in an Italian style with two or three toppings and a restrained use of cheese. An example is

Margherita: a pastry base topped with homemade tomato sugo, oregano and cheese. This is also served with an application of fresh prosciutto and rocket after it is taken from the oven (Thorpe, 2006). Attendees are also encouraged to eat in an Italian manner in which antipasti are offered with 'primi' and 'secondi' courses as well as 'insalata'. There is a variety of freshly made soft gelato to purchase, offered by stall vendors and street side cafes (Mogridge, 2006).

Authenticity can be claimed by association (Peterson, 2005, p.1088). Immersion in what appears to be authentic experience can produce emergent authenticity, where contrived events are eventually accepted as being authentic in nature. Simulations become so authentic that they achieve a state of hyper-reality (Baudrillard, 1983, p.58), as they develop the propensity to become more real than the thing implied by the representation.

If we accept that local and regional cultures are fabricated traditions (Tellstrom, Gustafsson & Fjellstrom, 2003) and that food and wine events are an affirmation and celebration of common cultural values, this style of event is an example of staged celebration. Staged to specifically display local culture to attract and entertain a large audience (Rusher, 2003; Getz, 1998), the consumer is an outsider who is not necessarily sharing culture with locals. Thus, the opportunity to observe and throughout the event such as in situations where cafes have been extended into the street to form an 'Italian' feel, where service staff interact with clients and are hired on the basis of their capacity to exude an 'Italian' persona and accent aids this endeavour (Chessell, 2002). Consequently, perceptions of authenticity are enhanced by the inclusion of local people "enacting according to tradition" (Chhabra et al., 2003, p.704). The San Pellegrino Martire Festa authenticates tourist experience through the influence of the dominant Italian sense of place created in part by food and beverage offerings exemplified by wine pressing and alfresco casual small scale family operated cafes (Chessell, 2002, p.668).

Lu and Fine (1995) evaluated the impact on customer's perceptions of food authenticity in ethnic restaurants. Their findings indicated that ethnic appearance and role performance of cooks and waiters in ethnic restaurants are crucial to customer's evaluations of the authenticity of the food. It can, therefore, be concluded that the appearance and performance of food and beverage

service providers contribute to the development of authenticity in food and beverage service in events.

### **Culture, Community and Environment**

Cultural distinctiveness designed to differentiate food and beverage products by utilising local and regional products can develop a food and beverage offer that captures the 'terroir' of the region by encapsulating the essence of the combined effects of culture, community and environment. Food and beverage can be expressive of a regional environment as well as a regional culture (Hall & Macionis, 1998). Given that authenticity is anchored in a national or local geography which induces a localities heritage (Peterson, 2005), food and beverage services that evoke a region's 'terroir' can augment authenticity. Authenticity, leveraged through a 'terroir' proposal, promotes food and beverage offers that represent a tradition, such as dagwood dogs in side show alley; home grown or locally produced goods for sale at the cake stall of the local school's fete; or using local/regional product as represented by the Barossa Food Festival where the humble Australian 'chook' has reached lofty heights in gourmet circles (Hughes, 1995, p.784). Such food and beverage services do not augment authenticity through regional reflection alone, since authenticity is also enhanced by being original and offering a unique approach (Jones, Anand & Alvarez, 2005).

Peterson (2005) argues authenticity is enhanced through a unique or original proposition. Consequently, events that offer food and beverage services that are both culturally and/or geographically distinct also maximise authenticity by embracing and providing food and beverage services that are simultaneously original and unique because they have become recognised as being expressive of the distinctive identity of a particular community and geography (Hall & Sharples, 2003, p.5).

### **CONCLUSION**

There exists an interrelationship between tourism, food and beverage and the economic, social, cultural and physical impacts. This is manifested in the context of the food and beverage offer and service at special events (Rusher, 2003). Food and beverage offers in special events can serve as the *raison d'être* or as a peripheral service to the tourist experience (Fields & Stansbie, 2004). This paper has synthesised the authenticity literature from several fields of study and positioned them in the context of special events. The presented case

studies have demonstrated that, first, food and beverage is expressive of a region, community and its culture. It can, therefore, be used effectively to thwart the effects of homogenisation by building differentiation for a destination or a community. Differentiation provides an opportunity for the development of a unique or original product offer, which serves to build authenticity for an event. Second, food and beverage services can be appropriated to enhance event authenticity through association. Managing the identity and constructing an image that effectively reaches the appropriate target market for an event extends authenticity. Finally, a promotion of authentic food and beverage offerings at special events is a mechanism for quality management.

### **Practitioner Implications**

Consumers with different levels of cultural capital search for different cues to signal authenticity (Holt, 1998) and connotations of authenticity shift over time (Postrel, 2003). Given this customer propensity, it serves event practitioners to regard their role as that of a brand manager. Brand managers are inherently concerned with maintaining the relevance of their brand and maintaining brand image. Essentially, event practitioners and food and beverage providers facilitate the creation and delivery of an authentic experience through brand management (Beverland, 2005).

By deliberately creating and managing authenticity at varying levels through authenticating agents, events can remain relevant over time without complete reinvention or relaunch. Thus, events can continue to draw attendees and maximise profitability by the manipulation of the degrees and types of authentic perceptions and experiences that attendees are exposed to.

Authenticity is essentially a "claim that is made by or for someone, thing or performance that is either accepted or rejected by relevant others" (Peterson, 2005, p.1083). Food and beverage offers in special events represent all these elements and benefit from the judicious application of brand management techniques by event practitioners to remain authentic.

It is recommended that empirical work can be built on these presented conceptualisations. This paper has contributed to the understanding of food and beverage as well as perceptions of authenticity in the context of special events. To explore the motivations of special

event visitors and to measure the impact that perceived authentic food and beverage services have on visitor satisfaction and intent to re-attend special events are natural progressions from this work. Developing a framework for understanding and controlling the authenticity of food and beverage services at special events would both enhance visitor satisfaction and contribute to its profitability for the organisers and other stakeholders.

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*The International Journal of Event Management Research*  
is a double-blind, peer reviewed journal.

ISSN 1838-0681