



# How can design elements impact event branding in Sri Lanka? Insights from event planners

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## ABSTRACT

Event branding plays a pivotal role in event management and substantially influences the success of events. With the emerging concerns for events, in Sri Lanka, events have become a vital part of the cultural and social fabric of the nation, with diverse events taking place throughout the year. Hence, this study explores the influence of design elements on event branding in Sri Lanka, from the viewpoint of event planners. This qualitative study employs an exploratory strategy, undergoing semi-structured interviews with 15 event planners from registered companies with the Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition, and Event Organisers, Sri Lanka. Afterwards, the qualitative content analysis was endured to analyse the collected data. The findings revealed that design elements such as logos, colour schemes, typography, and visual imagery play a significant role in event branding, and further, event planners specifically ascertained the need to include cultural and traditional components into event branding to appeal to national and international clients. It is noteworthy to state that event planners confront several problems in executing successful event branding strategies due to financial limitations, lack of creative flexibility, and constraint of resources. However, they pinpointed the necessity of coordination between event managers, designers, and patrons to establish a consistent branding approach in the industry. The study gives implications to different industry stakeholders to establish successful branding strategies that connect the clientele and industry stakeholders and produce a memorable experience for the clientele.

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## Introduction

Tourism being the most dynamic and swiftly growing industry in the world, different kinds of tourism models began to build as a result of post post-COVID-19 pandemic. A few such emerging concepts, named as freelance tourism and sustainable tourism, are amongst them. With the restriction of limiting initiating events for those couple of years during the pandemic times, events became a demanding concept to various industries, including tourism, where novelty was expected to be promoted through the events. According to the findings of López (2022), it was analysed the value of the global event industry was 887 billion US dollars in the year 2020, and its value is predicted to increase to 2,194 billion US dollars by 2028. Hence, it is explicit that the growth of the event industry is ascertained and the demand will not fade away even for a couple of decades. International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the main organisation that deals extensively with the global event industry, provides its members with education, connections, tools, and resources to initiate meetings efficiently and conveniently, and most importantly, it categorises countries and cities by specific event-related standards.

According to the ICCA Ranking 2021, Dubai was ranked number one in the unaffected ranking, which has been a constant for years, sixteenth in the Hybrid ranking, and is the only Middle Eastern city represented in the six individual top twenty rankings. Drastically, due to various reasons, the city stood in place fifty-one in 2020 in the event ranking. Concentrating on Sri Lanka at the global level, Colombo was ranked one hundred fifty in 2019 and one hundred fifty-nine by 2020. Being a country rich with its natural location and destinations, it appears that a small-scale growth is being invested in events. However, being a developing country with various domestic muddles and difficulties, Sri Lanka has not failed in appointing legal bodies to uplift its event industry within the country, and is expected to expand globally in the near future. Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) and Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition & Event

Organisers (SLAPCEO) are in the service to facilitate the Sri Lankan event industry in attracting international tourists to the country to generate revenue in the service industry. But with the current situation of Sri Lanka, Bhowmick (2022) revealed the severe economic crisis to be the main reason for the lack of foreign services to the country to generate revenue to uplift its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is noteworthy to mention that this cause and effect greatly influenced the collapse of Sri Lanka's tourism industry with the spread of COVID-19. Facts revealed by Bhattacharai et al. (2021); George et al. (2022) showcased that in 2019 tourism industry of Sri Lanka corresponded to be the third foreign exchange earner in the country, and with the current issues, it has led it to become the eighth foreign exchange earner. Considering the high time to generate revenue for the country, the events industry has grabbed the attention of stakeholders to make events a purpose for domestic and foreign travellers to visit Sri Lanka.

Categorically, travellers have different travel purposes based on the nature of their travel. A few such travellers can be categorised as Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibition (MICE); Frequent Independent Traveller (FIT); Leisure; Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR). Though there are numerous types of events, Chiang et al. (2012) stated that the travellers who visit for event purposes are mostly identified to be MICE travellers who intend to take part in conferences, trade shows, exhibitions and etc. As an international event, Kandy Esela Perahera is the heart of the Sri Lankan events industry under heritage events annually conducted in the country, which attracts various national and international travellers. Comparatively, a country's sports event tourism has been identified to be an underdeveloped sector in contribution due to the absence of major recurring sporting events of international recognition. Though SLAPCEO introduced a Private Public Partnership MICE/Destination Event Development Plan to revive the event industry in Sri Lanka to make it the hub of South Asian region within the next 5 years, the existing practice gap of the industry encompasses the objectives of those institutions in the event industry are not yet fulfilled about the

tourist arrivals based on their purpose of visit (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) 2020). As per the evidence, this knowledge has a significant potential for event planners to grasp the need for Lankan events to be branded at an international level to meet the objectives of the event institutions, tallying the visitation on purpose. Dahanayaka et al. (2021); Perez Cuso (2024) further showcased a future research area as Sri Lankan events to be branded as globally developed monetary sustainability and attract a noteworthy target market to the Sri Lankan events industry. Moreover, previous findings in literature have notified scholars to focus on design elements of events that would create a memorable brand experience (Zarantonello and Schmitt 2013). With that, the aim of this study focused on examining the design elements and their antecedents that would impact on Sri Lankan event branding to boost Sri Lanka as a destination comprised with events to enhance traveller visitation focusing on the study's significance to enlighten the policy makers of government and other public/private institutions to formulate plans and procedures to embark on Sri Lankan event industry with relate to the events' design elements without harming domestic religious culture conserved.

## Literature Review

### Design Element

Designs are generally known to be of a full range from drawing, sculpture, photography, and time-based media such as film, video, computer graphics, and animation, which is of two categories: content and format. The relationship between those two categories is used to communicate visual elements for manipulation, unless it would remain unclear and inconsistent. Design elements, on the other hand, play a crucial role in any visual design that includes shape, colour, space, form, line, value, and texture (Pentak and Lauer, 2018 as cited by Bader et al, 2024). Findings of Karjalainen (2007) revealed that designs were identified to be a mode that can have a great impact on the brand image, brand's personality, and brand value. Past findings of Brassington and Pettitt (2006) explored the primary visual elements of a brand to be its name,

logo, symbols, and designs, while Abegaz et al (2015) identified in their study that events could be arranged based on emotional design elements: shapes, colours, multimedia, and voice. However, the review of Ishaq et al (2020) ascertained the importance of a brand to be a positioning tool to gain the competitive advantage in an industry. Hence, quality design elements can potentially help strengthen a brand to develop positive brand attitudes and reap the benefits well into the future.

### Logos

A logo, as a design element, serves as a means of brand identification, branding, and recall (Mohamed and Adiloglu, 2023), which entails visual recognition of a brand name (Singla and Sharma, 2022). Decades ago identified logos were identified as an essential design element that is a direct influence on consumer preferences for brands (Henderson et al, 2003). Further, their study explored that as a result, industries and organisations re-sort and re-design logos from time to time to match the customer preferences and existing trends in the market. Moreover, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) as cited by Liang et al, (2024) revealed that a logo with a brand name, colour, symbol, and/or graphical element emphasises the visual identity of a brand which can also be as promotional material, packaging, branding, marketing, and advertising.

### Lines

Length and width of line movements in an art exhibit the connection between mood and emotions (Pullman and Gross, 2004). Lines are further capable of reaching out to infinity by presenting interesting features such as feelings of relaxed, happy, free, excited, calm, and beautiful. Previous studies have classified lines under three classifications: implied line, dotted line, and mental line (Kosslyn, 2006; Tversky, 2013). The implied line is created by positioning a series of points where the eye needs to bend to connect automatically. Dotted line, represented by dots, indicates the path of occupants through space, by delivering hints at architectural elements that are out of view. Finally, the mental line represents the

lines created in the mind with no realistic features to be seen with the naked eye. Anyhow, findings of Pentak and Lauer (2018) showed the importance of the direction of a line as a design element, where it could be subjected to an infinite variety of qualities which can potentially be of different moods, especially focusing on the volume of the line, and shapes of objects.

### ***Shapes***

A shape is a visually perceived area which's whose appearance can be changed by changing the value of closed lines or selection. Scale, colour combination, and texture give value to shapes, which can be of two-dimensional or three dimensions by expressing their volume and mass. Van Gorp and Adams (2012) further explored shapes as a design element and comprehended that shapes also contain emotional and mood elements that generate positive and negative feelings in consumers, which potentially drives the visual identity of a brand on its personality. When the shapes are aligned, patterns are formed to add visual interest to empty spaces.

### ***Space and Motion***

Feelings can be created by expressing the sense of space and volume experienced. Pentak and Lauer (2018) found feelings to be changed depending on how space and weight are managed. Hence, the layout of a design and all of its components need to be aligned to position a brand as unique (Harris and Goode, 2010). In addition, Nassar et al (2024) presented colours to be a crucial element to be on the spaces and shapes to showcase the presentation style of a design. Considering the art of space, motion requires a weighted allocation as a design element in artwork. Using movement in design can convey moments of excitement, speed, and thus enhance emotions. The value generated from those design elements was identified to be the artistic application of light and distance. By adding knowledge to the theory, Nassar et al (2024) elucidated colours to be a significant antecedent in design elements used to create brand identity alongside motion.

### ***Colours***

Precise colours used in websites and their fonts and images assist a brand to be identified under different impressions (Bonnardel et al, 2011). Colour takes a special place in design elements as it is considered to be the most powerful medium that can influence users' decision-making process and emotions. Scholars have categorised colours under basic, secondary, and tertiary, where each colour appeals visual and cognitive thinking of the diversified target audience in different cultures (Lalji, 2021). Hence, cultures exclude certain colours and their usage based on the requirements of occasions aligned with the traditions and cultural expectations. As it was explored that colours are to be differentiated among different gendered persons, this design element is considered to be a complicated language that is spoken by different people on different occasions in different cities based on their experience and knowledge (Lalji, 2021).

### ***Concept of Branding***

Brands are acting as essential success elements towards organisational performance by endowing the firm with a distinctive competitive advantage over rivals in terms of premium prices, a high level of loyalty, competitiveness, etc. Ages ago in 2000s, American Marketing Organisation defined brand as, "A name, word, sign, symbol, or design which is meant to identify products or services of one seller or group of sellers and to separate them from those of rivals" while Williams et al (2022) stated a brand to be the promise of the bundles of traits that someone buys and deliver happiness. The branding of an entity and the degree to which customers relate to its brand dictate how, where, and when it engages with its customers. The company's strongest point of differentiation in today's cut-throat industry is its branding (Al-Zyoud, 2018), though brands are constantly differentiated from one another by their way of communicating. Eventually, brand trust happens to be revolutionised among the targeted audience through which a brand delivers its value. Esmaeilpour, Sayadi, and Mirzaei (2017) explored how brand trust is understood as the willingness of a customer to have confidence in the reliability of the product, where all personality traits of a customer are impacted to affect a brand and its

trust in terms of their magnitude. Further, their study revealed that trust evolves from past experience and prior experience. This perspective is also supported by Kang, Manthiou, Sumarjan, and Tang (2017), considering the time to be a determinant of impact on developing brand trust.

In the field of events, branding has become a separate topic (Becker, 2022). Events branding may be described as a critical application of standard branding principles, theories, and frameworks in order to differentiate from event arrivals and to create a connection between people and event entities (Bladen, Kennell, Abson, and Wilde, 2022). In addition, they ascertained that investigating how event brands are positioned by event organisers and understood in the minds of people continues to be a topical area of study across national-international events. Given the fact that event branding is challenging, event image perceptions are tied to event branding by the Sri Lankan industry stakeholders Wadanambi et al (2021), such as sanctioning governing bodies, organising committees, athletes and coaches, host communities, and marketing partners, possessing distinct brand image perceptions that influence the branding of an event. Hence, in the novelties in service style, practical branding involves creating or improving services with the aim of enhancing user expertise. It involves making services by applying a service style with a road to deliver a branded experience to the user. Despite this, functional branding allows an organisation to differentiate itself by completely reinforcing the worth of its whole through style; when the user interacts with the company's whole, the company seizes that opportunity to influence their perceptions (Dwivedi, 2021; Hudson, Huang, Roth, and Madden, 2016). Apparently, it is aimed toward turning each interaction into a wholesome experience by ensuring users receive a positive experience and conveying the company's brand values.

However, Wheeler (2013) explored processes that are essential for a firm to undergo branding in a prominent and convincing manner.



*Figure 2.1: Brand identity development process of Wheeler, 2013*

*Source: Brand identities for cities: enhancing graphic designer expertise in city branding practice by Wardani and Wahyurini (2014)*

### **Antecedents of Design Elements in Implementing Event Branding**

A design is a knowledge-rich multidisciplinary synthesis of human culture, technology, and materials in aesthetics and communication science. It focuses on people's needs and values and works as a means of stimulation that a brand will move beyond the control of individuals and experiences created through collaboration to satisfy their values and aspirations. Today, it is explicit in literature that branding has evolved through several fields of thought, ideas, and disciplines from high design branding and principles (Foroudi, 2020; Sharp and Romanuk, 2016). According to previous findings of scholars (Gaha, 2023; Pedersen, 2020), high design's primary starting point is to consider evolving values and people's needs, ultimately aimed at the use of design as a negotiator to stimulate more sustainable interactions between people, objects, and environments. This strategy represents a progression from traditional views of branding, as brands must focus on developing meaningful long-term relationships with stakeholders (Bevolo and Brand, 2003).

Dwivedi et al. (2021) stated that with the busy lifestyle of modest customers, attention to brand has lacked in their consumption behaviour, opening a door for stakeholders to attentive on directions in making a brand swiftly attract the rightful audience. Hence, designers have opted to implant the brand name in the mindset of customers, restructuring the shape, structure, and packaging of the product. Specifically, in developing countries (Nwoke, 2021), including Sri Lanka, malfunctioning brands fail to recall customers' engagement timely manner, thus the frequency of displaying the brand in multimedia is much needed considering those fluctuating desires and interests of customers. To support this circumstance, Esmaeilpour et al. (2017); Gaha

(2023) ascertained sharp design changes to have a substantial impact on the brand by diversifying the designs of a limited range of products of the same brand or of a new brand that is operating in a niche. The design diversity of products potentially has an effect on the consumer and can cause them to lose interest in the brand. However, design is significant to practice for building and continuing relationships with the respective target audience, aiding in presenting the brand name and logo, and descriptive information about the brand. With that, this study aimed to investigate the role of design elements in the Sri Lankan context from the perspective of event planners.

### Methodology

This study depended on respondents' behaviours, knowledge, and responses on the influence of design elements on event branding. Hence, considering the objectives of this study,

the researcher adopted a qualitative research methodology through an inductive approach. The targeted population comprised event planners from registered companies with the SLAPCEO in Colombo, and the sample included 15 participants who gave their consent to participate from the 28 contacted event companies, of which only 15 respondents gave their consent to participate.

Through the purposive sampling technique, it enabled to identification of participants with relevant knowledge and experience that were needed in meeting the study's objectives. And, interviews were conducted to gather primary data using semi-structured interview guidelines, and interviews were audio recorded after obtaining prior approval from the respondents. Under a phenomenological research design, content analysis was used to analyse data to achieve the objectives of this research. Accordingly, interviews were transcribed, and significant codes and categories were identified to address the study's objectives.

*Table 3.1: Profile of the Respondents*

| Respondent of the study |                |                          |                           |   |                      |  |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| SN                      | RespondentCode | Designation              | Experiencein the industry | Main tasks  | Number of eventsdone | Category ofevent                                       |
| 1                       | T 01           | Head of event and design | 13 years                  | Designing and event coordinating                        | 500+                 | Conferences, corporate                                 |
| 2                       | T 02           | Events manager           | 20 years                  | Event handling  | 800+                 | Conference, meeting, and exhibitions                   |
| 3                       | T 03           | General manager          | 11 years                  | Event handling  | 200+                 | Exhibitions, conferences                               |
| 4                       | T 04           | Assistantmanager         | 8 years                   | Event coordinating                                      | 150+                 | Conventions, conference                                |
| 5                       | T 05           | Event manager            | 12 years                  | Coordination between the client and different suppliers | 250+                 | Mainly international MICE, someleisure (International) |
| 6                       | T 06           | Event coordinator        | 3 years                   | Event coordinating                                      | 50+                  | Meetings, conferences                                  |
| 7                       | T 07           | Project manager          | 5 years                   | Event coordinating                                      | 50+                  | Conferences and workshops                              |

|    |      |                             |          |   |      |  |
|----|------|-----------------------------|----------|---|------|--|
| 8  | T 08 | Programme manager           | 6 years  | Event coordinating  | 150+ | Conferences, corporate                 |
| 9  | T 09 | Director                    | 15 years | Coordination event, the relationship between the client and different suppliers | 500+ | Weddings                               |
| 10 | T 10 | Director                    | 15 years | Event coordinating  | 300+ | Leisure events                         |
| 11 | T 11 | Director                    | 18 years | Mice event handling   | 300+ | MICE                                   |
| 12 | T 12 | Director                    | 5 years  | Event coordinating and promotions   | 50+  | Sport, conference, leisure meetings    |
| 13 | T 13 | Managing director           | 20 years | Coordination between the client and different suppliers                         | 500+ | Hybrid events                          |
| 14 | T 14 | Project manager             | 10 years | Event handling  | 200+ | Exhibition                             |
| 15 | T 15 | Events & promotions manager | 10 years | Event coordinating and promotions   | 200+ | Meetings, conferences, and exhibitions |

*Source: Survey Data, 2024*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To achieve the objectives of the study, it was necessary to explore the role of design elements in event branding in Sri Lanka from the perspective of event planners. The first objective of this study focused on identifying the key design elements that contribute to event branding in Sri Lanka. Results also unveiled the complex dimension of event branding, where it is not only features such as visual and contextual cues that contribute to the development of the entire brand image of events, but also technology. Many factors came to have significant relevance in developing event brands that are meaningful to local audiences.

One of the major challenges bore by event organisers in Sri Lanka was to create a unique brand identity that represents the spirit of the event in an increasingly competitive market. Design elements were usually identified as colour schemes, typography, and motifs, which were

frequently described as means of conveying the event's character. Event planners highlighted the value of these visual components in not just facilitating recognition but also in building an emotional bond with the audience. These components, if strategically chosen by the planners, allowed them to create brand identities not only visually attractive, but also in tune with the organisers' beliefs and the goals of the event.

The event type and the event's function were shown to significantly modulate design element selection. According to the respondents, corporate events often employed sleek, minimalist designs that conveyed professionalism and sophistication. Regarding cultural or festival events, conventional design elements embody traditional icons, motifs, and colours prevalent locally to present the cultural essence of Sri Lankan heritage. The designers stepped out to emphasise the correspondence between design and function of the event in creating a coherent brand experience that truly could be to the

purpose and objectives of the event. The theme and intent of an event were identified as guiding perspectives that inform every aspect of the event's design, from the visual identity to the tone of communication.

The venue of an event also played a central role in shaping its design. Planners noted that the design choices for indoor events differed greatly from those for outdoor events. Indoor facilities provided a more controlled setting so that people could use lights, decorations, and projections to better associate with the branding experience. Outdoor events, however, presented additional challenges, requiring designs that could withstand weather conditions and adapt to large, open spaces. Despite these challenges, outdoor events also offered unique opportunities for creativity, particularly through the use of large-scale visuals and installations that could interact with the natural surroundings. The venue, therefore, acted as both a limiting factor and a creative opportunity, requiring organisers to tailor their design approaches accordingly.

Cultural influences were identified as another significant factor in the design process. Event organisers stressed the need to capture traditional elements, but at the same time, that would resonate with the local community. In a culturally complex country like Sri Lanka, the application of native art, symbols, and native colours was crucial in designing an authentic experience. Integration of language, on the other hand, was critical for the inclusiveness and communication potential of the branding. Event organisers realized the requirement of designing in a way that would be accessible for a wide range of people by usually providing Sinhala, Tamil, and English in order to meet the needs of their audiences. This cultural sensitivity in design was not only about aesthetic choices but also about fostering a deeper connection with the community and ensuring that the event's branding reflected local values.

Moreover, socioeconomic factors influenced the design decisions made by event organisers. Planners noted that the demographics of the target audience were a key consideration when

designing event branding, in which events directed to high-net-worth individuals frequently incorporated sophisticated, opulent design features that would communicate social distinction and prestige. On the other hand, events aimed at younger, more diverse groups tended to favor modern, playful designs that aligned with contemporary trends. This reflected a broader trend where the event's branding needed to be tailored to the expectations and preferences of its specific audience. As such, demographic considerations were seen as a crucial factor in ensuring the branding resonated with the intended attendees.

Finally, market trends related to technological advancements were increasingly influencing event branding strategies. The usage of novel technologies, including augmentative reality (AR), augmented virtual reality (VR), and participatory digital visuality, was an increasing feature in Sri Lankan events. Event planners recognised the potential of these technologies to engage audiences in new and dynamic ways, offering immersive experiences that went beyond traditional branding approaches. The application of such technologies, though relatively recent in Sri Lanka, was considered to be a crucial differentiator for events and a factor to draw in technology-inclined audiences. It was accepted that keeping up to date with the technological field was important to keep up with relevance and provide one-of-a-kind, memorable experiences.

Findings of the second objective of the study, which examined antecedents of design elements in event branding. Three primary categories were used to analyze the antecedents that drove the use of design elements such as technology improvements, event objectives, and target audience. Design decisions were shown to be significantly influenced by the demographics and preferences of the target audience. In order to produce designs that appeal to the audience, respondents emphasised the significance of knowing their age, cultural background, and interests. For example, whereas adults admired traditional and minimalist aesthetics, youngsters were drawn to contemporary and inventive

designs that used digital media and interactive aspects.

*"The success of an event's branding lies in its ability to connect with its audience. We design with the audience in mind, ensuring that every element reflects their preferences and expectations."*

(T 09, Personal Communication, 2023)

The other important antecedent to the design decisions was the purpose of the event. These events include corporate conferences, weddings, festivals, and exhibitions, which require a different approach towards branding. Events in the corporate sector are intended to appeal in a professional and simple way, where the design elements evoke feelings of trust and competence. In contrast, events that were celebratory in nature used vibrant colours, dynamic typography, and images to reflect their vibrant and festive nature. Religious and cultural events had to be performed with much emphasis on authenticity, using traditional motifs and symbols that would coincide with the event's spiritual or cultural importance.

Technological change had huge impacts on innovative event branding. The respondents identified that planners were able to create immersive and engaging experiences with the integration of digital tools such as projection mapping, VR, and AR. These technologies have helped event planners increase audience engagement in events and create unforgettable experiences through the amalgamation of classic components with contemporary design techniques. For instance, augmented reality programs have allowed the participants to experience Sri Lankan heritage in virtual form, thus animating the cultural motifs.

With regards to the third objective, the findings identified a number of challenges that event planners face in implementing effective design strategies for branding. Respondents further outlined another major limitation as the budget, where most claimed that financial constraints often limited them from reaching and using

sophisticated tools and equipment for the job. Most planners are doing simple designs since they are relatively cheap and fit within their budgets.

Despite the limitations, respondents showed determination in delivering quality branding through finding innovative solutions and maximising the resources available to them. The other challenge was cultural sensitivities in maintaining a balance between traditional aesthetics and modern design direction. This, as stated by the participants, means a need to respect the cultural and religious values of consumers while trying to create an appeal to the diversified tastes of audiences. For instance, the application of colours or signs should not be overused or misinterpreted. The organisers of events worked around these complexities with the help of cultural consultants and other stakeholders to ensure the authenticity and, at the same time, sensitivity of the designs. Further, legal issues, such as intellectual property rights, were also identified as challenges from the study, as reported by respondents that the utilisation of protected motifs, logos, and patterns more often than not ended up in court. This also complicated the design process. In relation to this, event organisers singled out originality and legality in the production of branding tools. Also, some technological challenges have been thrown up, particularly for the countryside planners who have limited access to modern tools and experiences. Though digital developments did bring a number of possibilities to enhance event branding, for their implementation, large investments in training and infrastructure would be required. The interviewed stressed that it is high time for industry players and governments to join forces to eliminate this gap, and for the wider diffusion of new technology.

The following summary tables outline the key categories and subcategories, summarising the main findings on the interplay of design, context, and challenges in effective event branding in Sri Lanka.

Table 4.1: Summary of *Categories of Objective One*

| Objective One   | Categories             | Subcategory                               |
|---|------------------------|---|
| To identify design elements of event branding in Sri Lanka. | Brand uniqueness       | Brand values and personality              |
|   |                        | Brand colours, fonts, and visual elements |
|   | Event type and purpose | Event theme                               |
|   |                        | Event purpose                             |
|   | Venue                  | Indoor events                             |
|   |                        | outdoor events                            |
|   | Cultural factors       | Traditional design elements               |
|   |                        | Language                                  |
|   | Socioeconomic factors  | Target audience demographics              |
|   |                        | Perception of Luxury                      |
|   | Market trend           | Innovative technologies                   |

Source: Survey Data, 2024

Table 4.2: Summary of *Categories of Objective Two*

| Objective Two   | Category          | Subcategory                           |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| To examine the antecedents of design elements on event branding in Sri Lanka. | Demographics      | Age                                   |
|   |                   | Occupancy                             |
|   |                   | Income                                |
|   | Event objectives  | Business goals                        |
|   |                   | Lead Generate                         |
|   |                   | Brand Awareness                       |
|   | Brand identity    | Brand image and reputation            |
|   |                   | Consistency with other brand elements |
|   | Trade development | Use of technology and digital media   |
|   |                   | Emerging trends and innovations       |

|  |          |                                    |
|--|----------|------------------------------------|
|  | Heritage | Historical and cultural traditions |
|  |          | Cultural values and beliefs        |
|  | Location | Virtual                            |
|  |          | Geographic location                |

*Source: Survey Data, 2024*

*Table 4.3: Summary of Categories of Objective Three*

| Objective Three  | Category             | Subcategory                             |
|--|----------------------|---|
| To identify Challenges using design elements on event branding in Sri Lanka. | Legal considerations | Copyright infringement                  |
|  |                      | Intellectual property rights violations |
|  |                      | Regulatory compliance                   |
|  | Limited resources    | Budget constraints                      |
|  |                      | Venues                                  |
|  |                      | Lack of skilled manpower                |
|  |                      | Technology                              |
|  | Tradition factors    | Religious and traditional values        |
|  |                      | Language                                |

*Source: Survey Data, 2024*

Concerning Wheeler's model reviewed in literature, the summary of categories showcased how the design elements were researched and identified by the respective respondent group, and classifying and designing strategies to enhance the identity of the event industry in Sri Lanka. The final objective of the study was to analyze what challenges exist using design elements in the Lankan event branding, and it delivered the need to create touchpoints for the respective target

audience that the respondent group is targeting to create an event experience. With that, the study's findings supported Wheeler's model as an application to the Sri Lankan event industry to brand events through design elements.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the design elements that were crucial in event branding and in acting as an

important tool to craft distinctive and memorable event experiences. The pivotal elements, such as logos, typography, colours, and culturally relevant motifs, were needed in establishing a strong brand identity for the event. Those elements have not only added visual attractiveness to events but have also contributed significantly to audience participation and brand identification. Event designers worked through significant constraints of finances, culture, and legalities to create this approach to design. Working with advanced technologies, the study further highlighted a way to lift event experiences to a higher level, merging traditional aesthetics with modern branding techniques. Cultural integration was a priority to keep upfront by the designers of events in their plans, so that traditional motifs and patterns are used reflectively for realistic and relatable branding. Furthermore, investing in training and technological advances was a necessary tool for the planners to use to innovate in a way that answers evolving demands by audiences. These enabled to development of culturally sensitive branding strategies in which collaboration between designers, planners, and cultural experts was fostered. Secondly, the implications of a simplification of the legal framework to allow clear indications of intellectual property rights would encourage creativity within the legal boundaries. Moreover, recommendations of the study are targeted at adopting cost-effective solutions, such as open-sourcing tools and shared resources, which can ensure quality design without budgetary limitations.

Overall, design elements have played an enormous role in developing event branding, making the experience unforgettable. They act as an energetic tool of visual communication, cultural representation, and audience interaction. In recognising such influential factors, the implications of the study are aimed at event planners and the event industry that need to be in a position to develop identities that capture positions within diverse audiences' minds using design strategies appropriate for their events. The impact of design elements in event branding is bound to continue evolving, and it requires all stakeholders to accept the forthcoming trends and take full advantage to bring the status of

event branding in Sri Lanka to a globally accepted one.

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